

To be able to explain the role of motivation, we have to know what motivation is. It can be defined in many different ways.

"...The action or an act of motivating something or someone. The stimulus, incentive, motives for action towards a goal, resulting from psychological or social factors; the factors giving purpose or direction to behaviour." English Oxford Shorter Addition 1993

'The internal mechanisms and external stimuli which arouse and direct our behaviour'. Sage 1974

All of the statements above share the same opinion and mention a drive to reach a goal. These goals are achieved in many different ways because there are various types of motivation. Motivation is extremely important, without it there would be no reason for anyone to perform.

There are two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is when athletes are motivated to perform for themselves, for example, fun, enjoyment, and personal satisfaction. Extrinsic motivation is the opposite. It is when athletes are motivated from factors outside the performer. For example, rewards in the form of money, trophies, and medals. Rewards such as these act as a reinforcer.

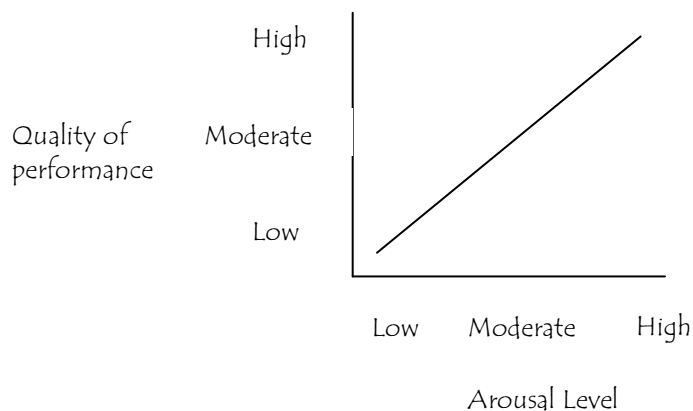
It is best to use a mixture of the two to improve motivation. It is said that people who are motivated purely by extrinsic needs, tend to drop out of the sport. However, people who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to continue participating because they have an inner drive.

Many athletes compete in a sport because they love to play it. We see this in many of the major sports. In football, players such as David Beckham earn thousands of pounds every week. If these players were only motivated by the money they earn (extrinsic motivation), most of them would not continue to perform. Therefore, there must be some element of intrinsic motivation.

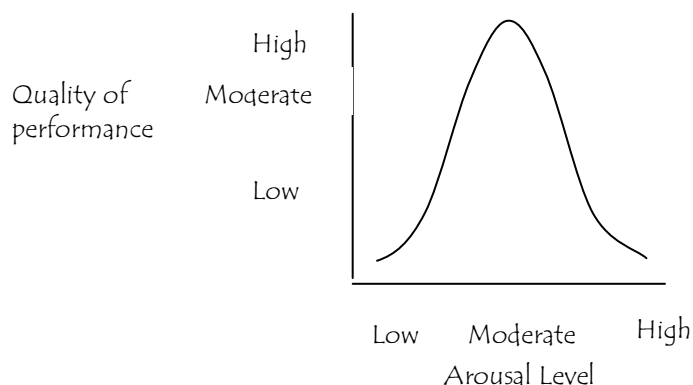
I am an athlete who is motivated both extrinsically and intrinsically. For example, in a Physical Education lesson, we were told to do a series of activities, and whoever performed the best, will receive a prize. This motivated me to run, throw, and jump, as far and as fast as I could. However, the prize was only temporary. Once the prize is received, there was a lack of motivation to continue performing. This is why there must be a mixture of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

An example of my intrinsic motivation is at school. I play for the school senior netball team. I cannot progress any further in the team because there is not another netball team after that. Therefore my goal is reached. However, I still continue to go to training sessions because I enjoy playing the sport.

Motivation affects our arousal levels because our motivation is the result of whether we are under or over aroused. Arousal is the intensity aspect of motivation. Our arousal level will affect our sports performance. There are two major theories in the relationship between arousal and performance. These are known as the *Drive Theory* and the *Inverted U Theory*. The *Drive theory* was first developed by Hull in 1943. He observed that a high arousal level would result in a high performance. He represented it in a graph similar to the one below.



The *Inverted U Theory* is a popular theory amongst sports psychologists. Yerkes and Dodson put it forward the theory in 1908. According to this theory, there is an optimum arousal level. This is when there is the right balance of arousal for the athlete to give their best performance. The performance steadily increases until it reaches the optimum arousal level. Once pasted the optimum arousal level, the performance starts to decrease. It can be shown in a graph and explains why the theory is called the *Inverted U Theory*.



When over aroused, a huge amount of stress is put upon an athlete and their decision can often be rushed, inaccurate, or erratic. This can result in a poor performance. We see examples of this in sport. For example, in Euro 1996, an English footballer, Gareth Southgate, stepped up to take a penalty. He had to score the penalty otherwise England would be out of the competition. Southgate missed the penalty. The reason he missed the penalty could have been because he was over aroused.

Likewise, when under aroused, there is a lack of motivation for an athlete to perform. Sometimes there is no concentration from the athlete because they do not care what the outcome of the game is. The athlete might take less care over their game, letting their performance slip.

Being an athlete I have been both over and under aroused. The two extremes do not help my performance in sport. For example, being assessed in netball, I was over aroused by the pressure of being observed on my game. This caused me to make inaccurate passes. However, when playing year 10s in a match, my concentration lacked resulting in a poor performance. This was because I was not aroused enough. There did not seem like there was anything for me to achieve. As a result my performance slipped.

The feedback given to an athlete can increase or decrease our motivation therefore affecting our overall performance. There needs to be a right balance of both positive and negative feedback. Too much of one could demotivate an athlete causing their sports performance to decrease. However, both are essential for enhancing a sports performance. Negative feedback should not be given on its own. It can leave the athlete feeling that they are not good at the sport. Nevertheless, negative feedback is still essential for the athlete to perform successfully. Once the performer is aware of what they are doing wrong, they can correct it. Once they are performing better, this will motivate them to continue.

Likewise, positive feedback has its advantages and disadvantages. Positive feedback can motivate a performer because if they know they are performing effectively, it would encourage them to progress. However, too much positive feedback can boost the performer's ego so much that there is less motivation for them to continue training. Therefore, if they do not come to training, their performance would decrease.

Through playing sport I have become aware of both positive and negative feedback. For example, at a football match I played, I was praised for my overall game. However, I was told that when I crossed the ball, it was not always accurate. This has encouraged me to go to training sessions, to improve on my skills as a footballer.

In conclusion, motivation is a very powerful tool and if used correctly, it can enhance a performance. Motivation influences the decisions we make, our learning, the performance in the sport. Generally, people who are highly motivated are more likely to learn and practise skills than those who are not. It is important to have the right balance of the different types of motivation to enhance a sports performance. A slight increase or decrease of one can drastically affect the athlete's performance.

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