



YOUTH ERA'S

MOTIVATION IN ACTION



INTRODUCTION

As YSS, many have had youth who answer all open-ended questions with “I don’t know” or change subjects often. It can be a challenge to elicit motivation and have these youth engage with goal and skill-building conversations. This tool seeks to address this by describing what motivation really is, advice on goal-setting, and tools to boost engagement.

BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

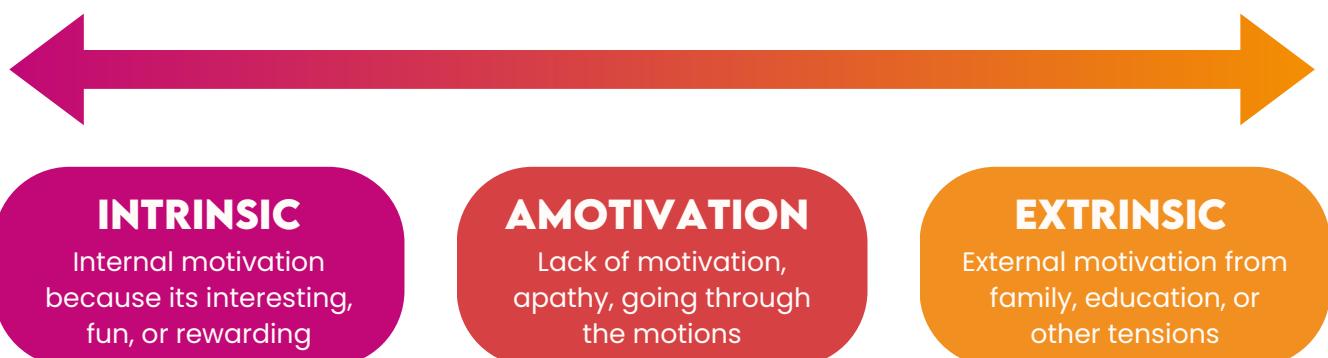
In order to get to engagement and goal setting, YSS must be aware of and address the barriers that exist for engagement. Some of which might include:

- Past **negative experiences** with service providers
- Being **system-weary**
- **Stigma** and wanting to **fit in** with peers
- **Constraints from adults**, such as parents, caregivers, or system partners
- Lack of **personal identity**
- Lacking the **knowledge and skills** to properly set goals

Many of the youth YSS serve have never been placed in a position of power in their relationship. They often lack the knowledge and skills to take autonomy and make decisions and goals for themselves. As YSS, we aim to address these barriers by learning our youth’s strengths, empowering them, and equipping them with the skills they need.

TYPES OF MOTIVATION

There are three types of motivation— amotivation, extrinsic, and intrinsic. When engaging youth, YSS should strive to build intrinsic motivation. Adolescence is a period when youth are able to build intrinsic motivation deliberately through skill-building and carry this on into adulthood. Positive development is strongly linked to intrinsic motivation and is correlated with increased engagement.



COMPONENTS OF MOTIVATION

Self-Determination Theory provides a model of motivation and provides that people are motivated to meet goals through three universal psychological needs.

AUTONOMY

The need to feel that we are in control of our own behaviors and goals and that we have the option to choose what we do.

COMPETENCE

Our desire for self-improvement. Its our need to achieve and develop our knowledge and skills.

RELATEDNESS

Our need for a sense of connection with others. The need to experience belonging and attachment to other people.

Self-Determination Theory also considers the **locus of control**, which is how an individual perceives what is in and outside their control.

- **Internal locus of control:** this youth believes that their actions are controllable and what happens to them is within their influence. They attribute their success to their own efforts and abilities.
- **External locus of control:** this youth believes that what happens to them is out of their control and may be attributable to other people, or external factors. They feel less empowered to solve situations, are more skeptical, and have higher anxiety.

It's true that many things that happen to us are out of our control and influence. Explore the **Spheres of Influence** with your youth to shift towards and internal locus of control by encouraging autonomy, making peace with what is outside their control, and empowering them to take initiative over what is in their control.



TIPS TO BUILD INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

- Focus on the **process rather than the results**
- Be **autonomously engaged** yourself!
 - Are you intrinsically motivated to support your youth? Reflect on how you can develop your own goals to improve your peer support practice. When the YSS is motivated to learn and improve, that behavior is modeled to the youth.
- **Increase youth autonomy** in sessions
 - Continue to emphasize that the youth has equivalent power to the YSS to determine how sessions go, what the goals are, and how they choose to engage. However, remind them of your personal and professional boundaries.
- Encourage **active participation**
 - Try experiments, role play, simulation, and skill application
 - Encourage the youth to be curious about you, peer support, chances for growth, the world, and anything at all
 - As you get to know your youth better, cater your sessions to their interests to make it appealing to them
 - Connect them with outside groups and workshops that align with their interests
- **Keep it novel!** Use new resources and strategies every session until you find what clicks
- Focus on the **internal benefits**— on how it makes them feel rather than what they can get for doing it
- **Encourage independence**— give them space to work on tasks and skills alone and to reconnect with you when needing assistance or when they're finished

QUESTIONS TO ELICIT MOTIVATION

- What brought you to peer support? What makes you continue with it?
- What is your biggest worry or challenge right now?
- What do you think is getting in the way of meeting your vision?
- What are you most looking forward to in the next few years?
- What are some big changes happening in your life?
- What do you need to feel ready for [identifying goals/starting goals/etc.]?
- If nothing changes, what's at stake for you?
- What experiences or skills do you have that you can use to be successful?
- What would [important person/friend] say about your strengths?
- I heard you say... and noticed this theme. What do you think about that?
- You mentioned... What's the smallest step you can make towards it?

GOAL SETTING

Goal setting can be especially challenging for youth, since this may be the first time they are self-directing change and given complete control over the process. Identify your youths strengths, encourage them, and create goals that leverage those strengths for success. Follow a goal-setting framework, such as SMART (below), CLEAR, or IMPACT, so that the goal can be clearly defined.

- **Specific:** the goal should be clear and well-defined
- **Measurable:** include precise amounts, dates, or metrics so you can measure progress
- **Attainable:** the goal is possible to achieve. Set realistic, but challenging goals
- **Relevant:** the goal is consistent and relevant to the path the youth wants to take
- **Time-bound:** the goal has a concrete deadline

TIPS FOR GOAL SETTING

- Remember that **knowing what they want is a huge step!** Keep this in mind by meeting the youth where they're at, being patient, and avoiding judgement. Go at the pace of the youth and avoid pushing them towards goals
- **Be curious**— actively listen to notice themes in what the youth talks about and expresses interest in. When you notice desire to improve, leverage it by asking questions. Learn more about your youth— What are their values and beliefs? What do they think about the systems they're navigating?
- **Normalize where the youth is at.** Remind them that its normal to experience these things and strategically share some of your own lived experiences
- **Build up other supports.** Connect the youth to their interests, peer groups, or other community events to build overall confidence. By expanding their experiences, they are able to consider a wider range of goals
- **Dig deeper.** Once a youth has identified a goal, be curious why its important to them and find the deeper motivations, values, and beliefs. Encourage them to identify the benefits of the goal
- Help the youth **develop a step-by-step plan.** Create some concrete steps to work towards their goal and support them in completing them
- **Anticipate obstacles and setbacks.** Work with the youth to identify them ahead of time and plan to address them
- **Celebrate the process and any successes.** Provide praise for engagement and *thank them* for having skill-focused or tough conversations
- **Remain individualized.** Each youth is different and will need a different approach to support

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