

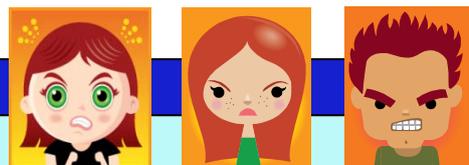
## Provide Rationale in an Autonomy-Supportive Way

Most people typically use external contingencies to motivate others, such as a deadline (Amabile, DeJong, & Lepper, 1976), reward (Eisenberger & Armeli, 1997), or goal (LaPorte & Nath, 1976). Unfortunately, such methods, often lead to relatively poor functioning and outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Learning is more effortful when deemed to be meaningful (Bruner, 1966; Rogers, 1969). Experimental studies (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Sansone, Weir, Harpster, & Morgan, 1992; Sansone, Wiebe, & Morgan, 1999) have shown that providing a rationale causes participants, working on an uninteresting task, to generate “interest-enhancing strategies” (e.g., perform the repetitive task in a different way each time), hence transforming a boring task into a more interesting one.

A rationale is a “verbal explanation of why putting forth effort during the activity might be a useful thing to do” (Reeve, Jang, Hardre, & Omura, 2002, p.185). When participants hear the rationale of an uninteresting activity, they perceive the task as an important one and puts in more effort. However, **if the rationale is communicated with controlling language or without acknowledgement of negative feelings, self-determination and engagement is not enhanced** (Reeve et al., 2002).

Thus, to motivate students to be engage in an uninteresting task, we need to provide a rationale in an **autonomy-supportive** way (Reeve et al., 2002; see [practical tip 20](#)) and acknowledging negative emotions.



### Practical examples:

- 😊 Acknowledge and accept negative affect expressed by students and communicate an understanding of students' perspective. Acknowledge that resistance is understandable.
- 😊 During disagreements, acknowledge students' points of resistance and solicits students' input with “Yes, the assigned book is long. 300 pages. Does anybody have a tip or suggestion about how to read 300 pages in a week?”
- 😊 When imposing a limit on students' behaviour, provide a rationale to clarify not only why the limit is being imposed but also why it is a positive (i.e. personally useful) one.

(Reeve, 2006)

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**Key definitions:**

<b>Autonomy-supportive</b>	Environments that minimize the salience of external incentives and threats, avoid controlling language, and acknowledge the learners' frame of reference (Black & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Autonomy-supportive teaching involves behaviors that seek to promote students' tendency to engage in learning because they value this activity or find it interesting (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007).
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