

## **IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK IN PE**

When a teacher speaks to his/her students, what he/she says and how it is said is important in determining their motivation towards PE and exercise in their leisure time. From self-determination theory, social factors that support autonomous motivation, such as the behaviours of significant others (e.g. PE teacher), enhance autonomous motivation and behavioural persistence in educational contexts (Black & Deci, 2000; Reeve, 2002). Research has also shown that students' perceptions of teachers' positive general feedback are related to intrinsic motivation in PE (Koka & Hein, 2005).

Pihu, Hein, Koka and Hagger (2008) tested the effects of perceived positive general feedback and learning strategies on physical activity behaviour. When students perceive that their teacher has provided information on how to perform better, has allowed them to work independently, and has given them the opportunity to use learning strategies, they are more likely to feel that the teacher has supported their autonomy, felt more involved in the learning process and felt more competent. These are important factors in promoting their intrinsic motivation in PE and leisure-time physical activity. When teachers are autonomy-supportive, their students are also more likely to be physically active in their leisure time.

### **Provide positive feedback**

Provide praise and encouragement, particularly for self-referenced sources, such as student effort and improvement.

### **Help students to use learning strategies**

Teachers that provide students with knowledge about the use of learning strategies enable them to feel more independent in the learning process and perceive that their autonomy has been supported. Practically, teachers are advised give hints to students on how it would be easier to learn new skills, using statements such as: "When you are practising a skill, try to think how it is like something you already know", "When I'm explaining to you a new skill, rehearse it in your mind", or "It might be helpful to talk yourself through the practice".

### **Support students' autonomy**

Teachers can support students' autonomy by giving them time to practise on their own and giving them time to communicate between themselves. When students have been taught how to use learning strategies and given time to practice independently, they will likely start to rehearse the new skills and relate them to what they already know (e.g. "I try to go over in my mind the correct way to perform the skills I have learnt in PE"). These kinds of instructional hints reflect the behaviours that students perceive to be autonomy-supportive and enhance intrinsic motivation to practise not only in PE but also in their leisure time.

## **KEY DEFINITIONS**

**Autonomy** is the degree of volition one feels in pursuing the activity and the need to feel congruence between an activity and one's values (Deci & Ryan, 2000). E.g. "I feel like I can make a lot of inputs in deciding how my job gets done"

**Autonomous motivation**: Reflected in feelings of choice, leads to more exploratory and flexible modes of behaviour because the experience of choice allows the child the freedom to adopt a more open and flexible stance. SDT posits five types of perceived motivations that can be placed along a continuum of perceived autonomy. The least autonomous motivation is termed external, followed by introjected, identified, integrated and intrinsic (the most autonomous).

- External: involve threats, punishments or material rewards (controlled; not autonomous)
- Introjected: controlled by the desire to avoid feeling guilty, ashamed, or unworthy of self- and others' evaluations (relatively controlled)
- Identified: identify the importance of the behavior with own values and goals (relatively autonomous)
- Integrated: reciprocally assimilating the identifications with other aspects of the person's self (relatively autonomous)
- Intrinsic: engagement in an activity for its own sake; characterized by enthusiasm, spontaneity, excitement, intense concentration, and joy (most autonomous)

**Autonomy-supportive environments** are those that minimize the salience of external incentives and threats, avoid controlling language, and acknowledge the learners' frame of reference (Black & Deci, 2000)

**Self-determination theory** is founded on the premise that there are innate psychological needs for autonomy (to feel self-determined in one's actions rather than feeling controlled), competence (to feel competent in dealing with one's environment), and relatedness (to feel that one has satisfying and supportive social relationships) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

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