

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTRINSIC GOAL FRAMING IN PE

Various recent studies in education have shown that the way socializing agents (e.g. PE teachers) frame an activity yields implications for individuals' quality of performance (Vansteenkiste & Lens, 2006). Specifically, it was shown that focusing exercisers' attention onto external indicators of worth (e.g. physical appeal) undermines performance compared to framing the same activity in terms of intrinsic goals (e.g. health and physical fitness) because individuals are no longer able to get fully absorbed in the activity and instead become concerned with proving their self-worth. Extrinsic goal framing also shifts individuals' attention away from the activity at hand. In contrast, intrinsic goal framing promotes a task involvement. Thus, PE teachers who want to promote exercise performance might do well in pointing towards the intrinsic instead of extrinsic goal relevance of the exercise activity (Vansteenkiste, Matos, Lens, & Soenens, 2007).

Focus on mastery when learning new skills

When individuals need to learn new material, the best approach seems to be a focus on mastering the techniques that are required to optimally execute the exercises, as suggested by various achievement goal theorists (Duda, 1996; Nicholls, 1989). Refrain from setting up situations whereby students have to compare themselves against other students when learning new exercises. It forestalls active learning and impairs performance as students' attention is wrongly focused on doing better than another student rather than learning the skill.

Focus on intrinsic rather than extrinsic goals

References to the extrinsic goal of physical appeal and attractiveness are likely to have placed individuals' self-worth at stake. Many individuals in our current post-modern society are exposed to various types of extrinsic goal messages of the media that aim to provide them with a sense of worth and meaning (Cushman, 1990). Hence, individuals in an extrinsic goal condition are likely to consider the exercise activity as a mean to improve their figure and to validate their self-esteem, which, however, leads them to be less deeply absorbed in the activity at hand.

Prudent use of competitions

When students have become competent at a skill or game, competitive situations might lead them to go back to continue their behavior in order to fulfill the purpose of showing superiority compared to others, and might encourage them to rehearse and improve on the skill they already deeply processed. Students that thrive on competition might even perform well, provided that they managed to be task involved during the initial learning process itself. As ego-approach goals prompt more effort in learning, the prudent use of competitions may have a positive effect on students' sports performance.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Ego approach goals: Motivation for action stems from self-esteem related or external evaluative pressures

Extrinsic goal: Goals with strongly salient extrinsic content (e.g., wealth, image, and fame).

Intrinsic goal: Goals with strongly salient intrinsic content (e.g., relationships, growth, community, and health).

Task-involvement: Condition where the motivation for a high level of involvement in an activity stems from its intrinsic properties, such as its challenge or novelty

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