

Facts and Myths about Motivation

Fill in the gaps with the words from the box:

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1. Giving rewards for activities that people already find enjoyable can decrease their motivation. (FACT)

Researchers have found that when extrinsic motivation (such as money and prizes) is given for actions that people already find intrinsically rewarding or enjoyable, they become less internally motivated to pursue those activities in the future. For example, children have been shown to stop engaging in activities of 1) _____ once they've been given a tangible reward for it. This is called the overjustification effect. But why does a reward diminish our intrinsic motivation? One theory is that people tend to pay more attention to external rewards rather than their enjoyment of the activity. As a result, they think that their participation in the activity is the result of the external reward instead of being due to their internal appreciation of the behaviour. Another possible explanation is that people sometimes view external reinforcement as a 2) _____ force. Since people feel like they are being "bribed" into performing the behaviour, they assume that they are doing it only for this outside reinforcement.

2. You can always draw on your willpower as its reserves are inexhaustible. (MYTH)

Researchers have found that for particularly difficult or 3) _____ tasks, your reserves of willpower can quickly become depleted. That is, you only get a certain amount of willpower on any given day, and once you've exhausted that supply, you'll find yourself feeling much less able to do the right things and act on the motivation that you may feel. For the scientific background underpinning this issue, consider a really fascinating study by researchers at Columbia University, which found that judges tend to make more rulings in favour of prisoners at the start of each of their three decision-making sessions. Rulings made later in the sessions were far more likely to favour the judges' interests; a result the researchers chalk it up to "decision fatigue." Essentially, the more decisions we make, the more likely we are to become fatigued by these choices. The researchers suggest that when willpower 4) _____, coming up with sources of internal motivation becomes more important.