

Facts and Myths about Motivation

Fill in the gaps with the words from the box:

seal their fate malleable innate underpinned
shame their own accord ebb and flow incentives

1. Comparison to high achievers motivates people to perform better. (MYTH)

“When parents compare their children to their more successful peers, they may 1) _____ as underachievers,” says Penelope Lockwood, Ph.D., an assistant professor of psychology at the university of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada. This conclusion is 2) _____ by the following experiment: college students were asked to think about their accomplishments. Next, half of the subjects read an article about a superstar student who now had a booming career. The others read about a zoo. Subjects who'd read about the student and were "primed" with their former success rated themselves less positively and reported being less motivated than those who'd read about the zoo. While it's easy to imagine yourself as the next Michael Jordan or Madonna, Lockwood found, when we set their victories next to our own limited resumes we may realize that we can't reach their heights of success, leaving us feeling inferior. So, comparing ourselves or our loved ones to high achievers won't 3) _____ performing better – it will likely leave us feeling worse.

2. Praising ability can decrease motivation. (FACT)

When a child solves a math problem, praising the child by saying "You're so smart!" actually makes them more likely to give up in the future when they encounter a problem that is very difficult. Why? Psychologists suggest that stressing 4) _____ ability (intelligence, appearance, etc.) leads people to hold a fixed view or mindset of their traits and characteristics. Instead, experts suggest that praising the effort and process that went into solving the problem ("You worked really hard on that!," "I like how you worked through that and came up with a solution!") helps kids see their abilities as 5) _____. Instead of believing that they are either smart or dumb, they view themselves as able to improve through effort and hard work.

3. Intrinsic motivation is always better than extrinsic motivation. (MYTH)

There are two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. They are highly personal, dynamic and can 6) _____ depending on the day or month. Intrinsic motivation comes from within — the joy, interest, or sense of purpose you find in the activity itself. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from external rewards or consequences, like praise, recognition, or financial 7) _____. While intrinsic motivation is generally more sustainable in the long run, extrinsic motivation can be a helpful starting point or a way to reinforce desired behaviours. So, it's not that intrinsic motivation is better than extrinsic, or that extrinsic beats intrinsic. They are both valuable tools.

