

Cognitive Theories of Motivation: Quick Reference Comparison

	Attribution Theory	Expectancy-Value Theory	Self-Efficacy Theory	Goal Theory	Self-Determination Theory
Key Theorist(s)	Bernard Weiner (1970s-1980s)	Victor Vroom (1960s - organizational) Jacquelynne Eccles (1980s-present - education)	Albert Bandura (1970s-present)	Carol Dweck (achievement goals) Locke & Latham (goal-setting)	Edward Deci & Richard Ryan (1970s-present)
Core Question/ Focus	"Why did this happen?" How people explain success and failure affects future motivation	"Can I do this?" & "Do I value this?" Motivation = Expectancy × Value. Both beliefs about success & task importance matter	"Can I successfully perform this task?" Beliefs about capability to execute specific actions to achieve goals	"What am I trying to accomplish?" Purpose and type of goals shape effort, strategies, and persistence	"Why am I doing this?" Quality of motivation; intrinsic vs. extrinsic reasons for acting
Key Concepts	• Locus (internal vs. external) • Stability (stable vs. unstable) • Controllability <i>Common attributions:</i> - Ability, Effort - Task difficulty, Luck - Learned helplessness - Attributional retraining	Expectancy: • Belief you can succeed Value (4 types): • Attainment (identity) • Intrinsic (enjoyment) • Utility (usefulness) • Cost (negatives)	4 Sources: • Mastery experiences • Vicarious experiences • Social persuasion • Physiological states <i>Domain-specific beliefs about capability</i>	Achievement Goals: • Mastery (learning) • Performance (ability) Goal-Setting: • SMART goals • Specific & challenging • Growth vs. fixed mindset	3 Basic Needs: • Autonomy • Competence • Relatedness <i>Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation continuum</i> Overjustification effect
Impact on Motivation	Attributing success to effort → ↑ motivation Attributing failure to lack of ability → ↓ motivation Controllable attributions maintain hope for change	High expectancy + high value = HIGH motivation Low expectancy OR low value = LOW motivation Both components must be present	High self-efficacy: • Choose challenges • High effort & persistence Low self-efficacy: • Avoid challenges • Give up easily	Mastery goals: • Persist despite difficulty • Deep learning Performance goals: • Quit when difficult • Surface learning	Need satisfaction → intrinsic motivation Need frustration → extrinsic or amotivation Quality of motivation matters more than level
Primary Applications	• Education (feedback) • Therapy (depression) • Sports psychology • Attributional retraining Teaching adaptive explanatory styles	• Academic choices • Career decisions • Health behaviors • Marketing/advertising Explaining choice & task avoidance	• Education • Clinical interventions • Health promotion • Organizational behavior Building confidence in specific domains	• Classroom instruction • Performance reviews • Personal development • Training programs Setting effective goals & fostering mastery	• Education (engagement) • Workplace motivation • Parenting • Health behavior change Fostering autonomous motivation