

### ***Goal-Perspective Theory of Motivation:***

#### ***An introduction by Professor Stuart Biddle, Loughborough University***

In Module 1 we learnt that there are two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within (internal). This player is motivated by personal factors, and the sheer pleasure of playing the game:

- **Enjoyment**
- **Learning new skills**
- **Personal mastery**
- **A sense of achievement**

Extrinsic motivation is external. This player is motivated by external rewards and forces – the activity is a means to an end:

- **Trophies / Medals**
- **Recognition**
- **Selection**
- **Parental pressure**

We now want to go a bit deeper into these types of motivation and look at how they relate to the goals players have and what gives an individual a feeling of success when playing the game. This is important because confidence is built upon achieving your goals and having lots of feelings of success.

#### **Task Goals**

Intrinsically motivated players will strive to reach 'task' goals that reflect personal improvement and skill learning. For example, in a training session the player with this 'task' goal wishes to learn more, to practice more, and get better at the skill, regardless of how others are doing.

#### **Ego Goals**

An extrinsically motivated player, on the other, may be operating an 'ego' goal. This is when he or she strives to be better than someone else, score more goals, or simply win. Whether the player chooses a task or ego goal in a certain situation is related to two things: the individual and the environment.

Individuals have a tendency to favour task or ego goals as a matter of course. In other words, some players are more 'naturally' task oriented, others are more ego oriented. These are tendencies built up over several years to create individual differences in goal orientations.

Task oriented players define success as personal improvement, mastering skills and so on. Research has shown that this is related to feelings of enjoyment and intrinsic motivation. Such players tend to think that success is produced through trying hard and view sport ability as something that can be changed through learning.

These factors are largely within the control of the player. The ego oriented player, on the other hand, defines success as demonstrating superiority and winning, and if one can win without trying too hard - even better. It means you must be really good! These players believe that success requires high ability rather than effort, and that sport ability is a 'gift' and fairly stable. These factors are less controllable by the player. If confidence is based only on winning and beating others, you are likely to come unstuck when faced with better players and teams.

Although it may look as if task is good and ego is bad, this is too simple. We know that players can be high in task and high in ego orientation at the same time. In fact, this is likely to be the profile of most successful players. However, the research is quite clear on one thing - a task orientation is motivationally positive. Task orientation, therefore, is good, either alone or in combination with a high ego orientation. Players who are only high in ego orientation risk encountering motivational and confidence problems. It is a fragile form of motivation.

### **Motivational Climate**

In addition to differences in goal orientations, the goals adopted on the pitch in matches or training are also related to the environment - or climate - created. This is often the result of strategies adopted by the coach or club as a whole. Two main 'motivational climates' have been identified. A task (or mastery) climate is when players see that success is defined in terms of effort and improvement, players have some choice of activities, new strategies are encouraged, and mistakes are seen as a part of learning. Research has shown that positive motivation and feelings, such as enjoyment, stem from this type of climate. An ego (performance) climate is when interpersonal comparison is encouraged, success is defined normatively (ie, against others rather than against yourself), players worry about making mistakes, and the focus of the coach tends to be on the best players. Research has shown this type of climate creates negative feelings, low enjoyment, and higher anxiety.

The cues and feedback given by significant adults is important in determining goals and attitudes towards competition, especially for children for whom social approval is paramount. With this in mind, parents promoting competitive success, focusing on winning and being better than other children may be referring to their own goal orientation. Whilst other parents endorse less competitive goals and value the formation of positive peer relationships and being accepted as part of a team. Research shows that the latter parental attitudes provide a better opportunity for the development of successful peer relationships. Therefore, the role of parents, teachers and coaches is vital in setting the motivational climate as one of competition, mastery or recreation. By making certain cues, rewards, behaviours and expectations prominent, a

coach can express their favour towards competition not mastery as goal orientated behaviour. To enhance motivation, children often need to be evaluated for their improvement and mastery, not performance outcome and ability.

Creating a task climate with young players is strongly encouraged in order to keep players optimally motivated. How can this be achieved? The TARGET method can be used method, which breaks a session down into six key elements:

Task, Authority, Recognition, Grouping, Evaluation, and Time.

Strategies for achieving an intrinsically motivating task climate are shown in Table 1.

<p><b>Task:</b> Coaching activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Variety &amp; individually challenging activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Focus on process not only outcome</b></li> <li>• <b>Emphasise enjoyment</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Authority:</b> How the coach operates and communicates with players</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Democratic &amp; positive coaching style</b></li> <li>• <b>Give players ownership – let them design their own practices and games</b></li> <li>• <b>Encourage problem solving and player feedback</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Recognition:</b> What is rewarded?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reward personal progress and improvement</b></li> <li>• <b>Publicly reward <i>effort</i> as much as <i>skill</i></b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Grouping:</b> Use of groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be flexible – allow ability friend groupings</b></li> <li>• <b>Mix most and least skilled players with care</b></li> <li>• <b>Encourage group problem solving</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Evaluation:</b> Use of feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Give lots of positive feedback</b></li> <li>• <b>Allow players to evaluate themselves</b></li> <li>• <b>Be careful with public evaluation</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Timing:</b> Scheduling of activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Realise that young players get bored very quickly</b></li> <li>• <b>Allow time for practice and improvement</b></li> </ul>

## Task

When players succeed at challenging activities they grow in confidence. Set the level of the activity at a level that stretches them. It can sometimes be better to work backwards - start out with a more challenging activity and simplify it if it is beyond the players. This can give you a better idea of the level of individuals in the group and will help you to differentiate the challenge

to meet individual needs. Help players to focus on the process of doing things in the right way rather than just the outcome (e.g. sticking to a possession game even when losing and under pressure).

Keep the individual practice within the whole session short (15-20 mins max) and then move on. Game-type activities are also much more motivating to young players than line drills and help to bring out the intrinsic enjoyment of playing football.

### **Authority**

Set up the practice and let the players play. Allow them to make decisions. Allow them to make mistakes. Allow the practice to flow. Let the players to have some say in the session and don't be afraid to ask for their opinions.

By encouraging a 2-way communication process you take the pressure of yourself as the coach who has to have all the answers, and you help to promote autonomy and decision-making in your players. You'll be amazed at how much even a team of 8-year-olds can do for themselves. Give players the chance to design their own games and activities – act as a facilitator not dictator. Good coaching will help add the final touches to a great player; the raw talent, skills and abilities of players like Rooney and Ronaldo came through hours and hours of free-flowing, open, and enjoyable 'street-style' football. Michael Jordan, basketball player for the Chicago Bears, considered by many the greatest American athlete of all time believes that love of the game is the most important thing a young player can learn, "Let them just enjoy the game. What they have to learn from a young age is the love of the game. And once they develop that, then the mental side is easy. I didn't really receive instruction until junior high school. First, I just loved the game and let my skills develop. I believe in playing early and learning late." In his early development he played lots and lots of 1 on 1's against his brother.

### **Recognition**

Be a positive coach and give genuine praise and encouragement. These are more effective in the long term than tangible rewards. By recognising and rewarding effort and personal improvement (as much as skill) you will shape a task climate. You don't have to say anything when things are going wrong, players know when they make a mistake. If you do pick up a mistake focus on *positive coaching* – i.e. emphasise what you want to see rather than what went wrong.

### **Grouping**

How you group players will affect motivation. Unit practices and groupings can help create pride in those units. Usually players of similar ability will be grouped together to help practices flow better – these also tend to be friend based. Careful use of mixed-ability groups can motivate the player of lesser ability and help the better players to focus on self-improvement rather than social comparison.

## **Evaluation**

You can be flexible here and ask players to evaluate themselves, individually, and as a group. Players can also assess each other – peer feedback – but monitor this as some players may not like it. Assessment based on effort and personal improvement will help promote a task climate. Public evaluation should be used carefully, especially with female players.

## **Timing**

Stick to the practice timings that you planned. If you feel players need more time to show improvement it's better to revisit the practice next week rather than let the players get bored. If individuals are not progressing as hoped for, try to give extra attention after the session or set homework for them.

## **Summary**

In conclusion, motivation is enhanced when young players work for improvement and believe that effort will lead to enhanced skills. Is this anti-competitive? Absolutely not! To win you need to play at the top of your game (your game!). You need to train hard, improve skills, and learn from mistakes. If this is done, winning will follow.

**Stuart Biddle is Professor of Exercise and Sport Psychology in the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Loughborough University.**