

Summary of Research

September 2013



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Physical activity and well-being: The role of goals, motives, and psychological needs

If you'll recall, about a year and half ago you participated in an online study. As a participant, you were asked to complete 2 online surveys separated by 6 months.

A Few Definitions to Get Started

Goals: *what* a person is expecting to obtain from activity

Intrinsic Goals: Goals set that have to do with you and not anyone else. For example: "I engage in activity for my health" or "I engage in activity to acquire new skills" or "I engage in activity to increase my energy".

Extrinsic Goals: Goals set that are based on others or recognition. For example "I engage in activity to be slim and look good to others" or "to improve my appearance"

Motivation: explains the reason *why* you may engage in physical activity.

Autonomous Motivation: motivation that is self-determined and not imposed by others. For example: "I engage in activity because it is consistent with my goals" or "I engage in activity because it is fun" or "I engage in activity because it is part of who I am".

Controlled Motivation: motivation that is externally imposed by others or by internal pressures such as guilt. For example "I engage in activity because my friend/spouse wants me to" or "I engage in activity because I feel guilty if I don't".

Psychological Needs: According to one theory, all humans are born with three psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Competence: the need to feel as though you can complete optimally challenging tasks.

Autonomy: the need to feel as though you have a choice or that you act on your own volition.

Relatedness: the need to feel as though you share meaningful connections with important people.

Background Information

People engage in physical activity for varying reasons, have different goals, and experience different feelings towards physical activity. It is important to examine these variables because they may be associated with outcomes such as well-being experienced in physical activity contexts.

Previous research has shown that setting intrinsic goals, having autonomous motivation and fulfilling psychological needs is important for predicting future behaviour and well-being. This is true for different domains such as academic, work place, and sport, yet researchers have yet to specifically examine physical activity contexts over time.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this investigation was to examine how goals, motivation, and needs relate to well-being and physical activity over 6 months.

Results

- Intrinsic goals were related to increases in physical activity.
- Physical Activity was related to increased vitality.
- Feeling competent was related to increased Physical activity.
- Having autonomous motivation for physical activity was associated with greater well-being.
- One of the possible reasons intrinsic goals and autonomous motivation were related to increased well-being and physical activity was because of opportunities to fulfill the 3 psychological needs.

Implications of the Research

Select physical activity goals for your own reasons! Find your own motivation for physical activity rather than having others motivate you! Finally, choose activities that you feel personally capable of doing!

Remember: ANY physical activity counts! A unique finding of this research was that people don't have to engage in structured repetitive exercise to get the benefits! Physical activity includes exercise, sport, gardening, walking, commuting by bicycle, household chores etc.



Tips for Increasing Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness

- First, please talk to your doctor before becoming or changing your physical activity behaviours.
- Select optimally challenging activities based on your current capabilities
- Celebrate meaningful successes
- Make sure you make the choice
- Engage in activity with a friend or spouse
- Remember, you have options
- Communicate with others who share your activity interests
- Set goals for health, social affiliation, or mastery
- Find activities you enjoy and find personally interesting

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. Without your willingness and effort, this research would not have been possible, and I am sincerely grateful for your participation!

Second, I'd like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Peter Crocker for helping me formulate this research and his guidance during my Ph.D.

Third, I'd like to thank my collaborators, Dr. Diane Mack and Dr. Philip Wilson from Brock University, and Dr. Bruno Zumbo from UBC who have helped me in countless ways.

Fourth, I'd like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for supporting this research.

Finally, I'd like to thank my labmates in the Exercise and Sport Psychology lab for all their support and insightful thoughts about this research.



A formal report of this research will be published in an academic journal called *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*. The citation for the academic manuscript is:

Gunnell, K. E., Crocker, P. R. E., Mack, D. E., Wilson, P. M., & Zumbo, B. D. (2013). Goal Contents, Motivation, Psychological Need Satisfaction, Well-Being and Physical Activity over 6-months: *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2013.08.005>

