

# The North Wind & The Sun

By Tony Kemmochi, Psy.D.

## Slide Summary

Motivation plays an important role in both athletic performance and mental health. It is a source of mental energy that allows athletes to persevere through various psychological and physical challenges, from overwhelming pressures to vigorous trainings.

## Types of Motivation

### Intrinsic vs Extrinsic



**Intrinsic:** Internally generated values and purposes, such as love, joy, curiosity, growth, excitement, etc.

**Extrinsic:** External rewards, such as awards, money, recognition, approval, etc.

**Overjustification:** Loss/reduction of intrinsic motivation due to excess exposure to extrinsic motivational factors. A common reason for athletes to lose love for sports and quit.

**Caution:** Excess reliance on extrinsic motivation can lead to psychological struggles because loss of external rewards or failure to obtain them leads to disappointment, sadness, fear of failure, self-criticism, low self-esteem, etc.

**Culture:** In a collectivistic culture, where one's self-concept is an extension of a whole group/clan, the distinction is less clear.

## Positive vs Negative



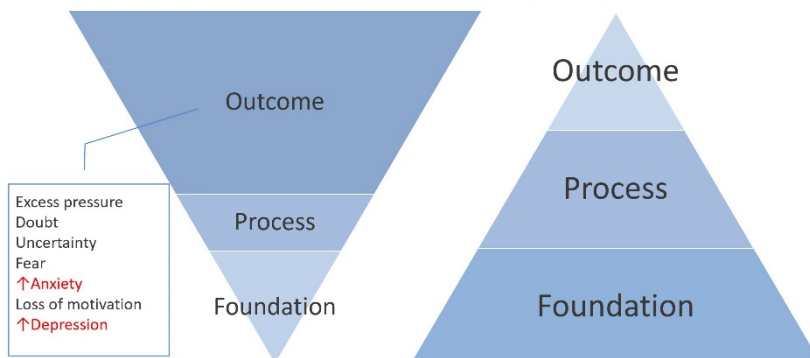
Positive: Motivation to get what one wants.

Negative: Motivation to avoid something.

Caution: The avoidant nature of negative motivation and its focus on negative aspects of life can contribute to psychological struggles.

Tip: One can positively charge negative motivation (e.g. transforming “I need to practice more so I won’t mess up” to “I will practice more because I want to master this skill”).

## Outcome vs Process

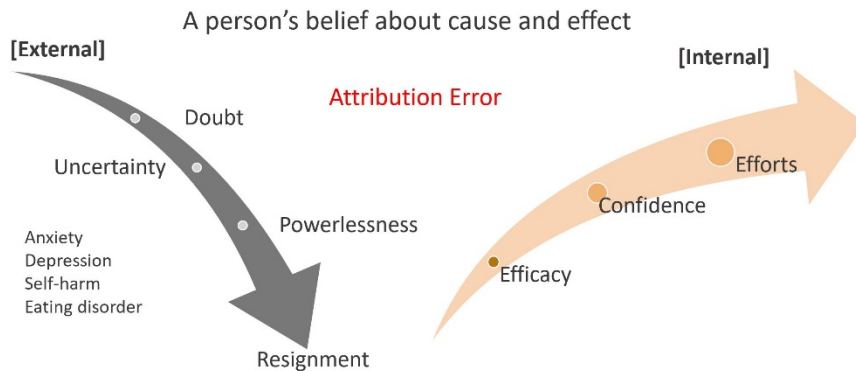


Outcome: Overly emphasized by the society. Creates excess pressure and anxiety, especially because one cannot control future outcomes. Also a common reason to lose motivation (e.g. “We’re losing anyway, so why bother”).

Tip: Build strong foundation (reasons why athletes play sports) and focus on process

(quality of experiences regardless of outcome), and appreciate outcomes that follow the process. Outcome is a goal and a result but not a purpose.

# Locus of Control

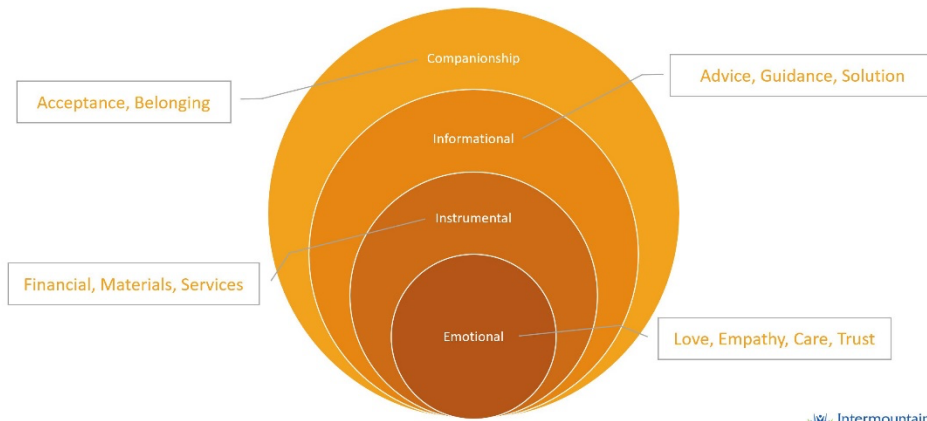


External: Causal attribution assigned to external factors. Less credit and power given to self, which leads to powerlessness and external blame.

Internal: Causal attribution assigned to self. Increased ability to hold self accountable and to recognize one's own power to create desirable outcomes.

Caution: Attribution error distorts one's understanding of power and control. External attribution error creates misguided blames assigned to external factors (e.g. "It's all your fault that...") while internal attribution error creates misguided self-blame (e.g. "It's all my fault that...").

# Support System



Emotional: Most important but often overlooked, especially in the traditional "tough mentality" in sports.

Instrumental: Excessively emphasized in sports. Overshadows other support systems and creates an

illusion that athletes are given adequate support when the rest of support is inadequate.

Informational: Information is power. However, athletes are often "told" what to think and do, which prevents them from building self-efficacy and confidence. Avoid "spoon-feeding" answers and challenge athletes to brainstorm.

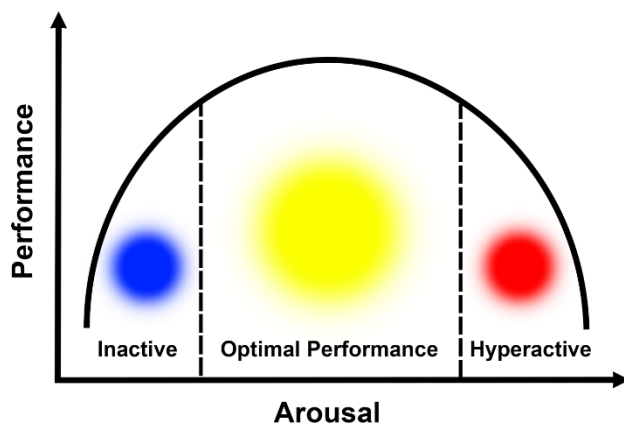
Companionship: Important to remember that athletes may not "feel" accepted contrary to how it may look from outside. Popularity is not same as acceptance or belonging. In fact, being extraordinary can feel isolating because it means that a talented athlete is that much "different from everyone else."

Tip: For all support levels, it is important to remember that "perceived" support determines their efficacy. If a receiving athlete does not "feel" supported, it is pointless. Remember that a resource does not automatically mean support. Some resources can feel imposing and can be more about supporters' self-satisfaction, rather than actually benefiting athletes. Please check in with athletes.

## Intensity of Motivation

Contrary to general belief, more is not better. Too much motivation and psychological and physiological excitement can have negative impacts. For example, overly motivated athletes may engage in excessively vigorous training routines and end up with overuse injuries. Some may develop excessively strict eating patterns that turn into eating disorders. It is important to question if it is healthy motivation or obsession that you are observing.

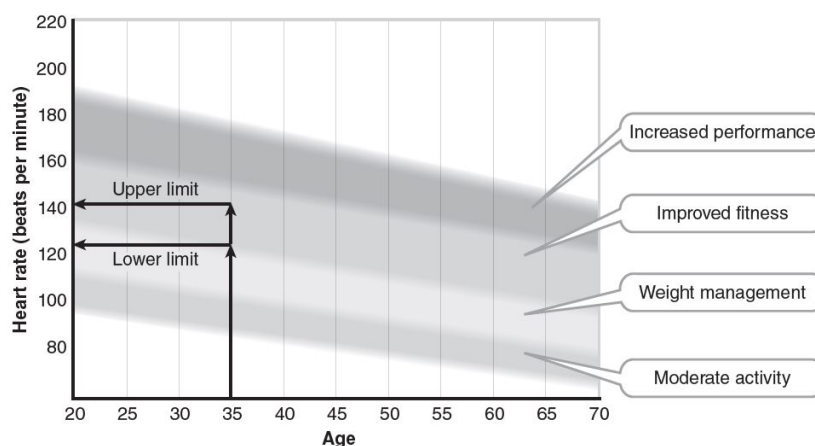
### Optimal Performance



Optimal performance is achieved when a person is “aroused enough,” not when they are extremely aroused. Some athletes attempt to overly excite themselves; however, excess arousal leads to declined performance and more errors (e.g. precise motor coordination becomes more challenging when agitated).

Tony Kemmochi, Psy.D.

### Target Heart Rate



Target heart rate for increased performance changes throughout lifespan. Take both age and target goals into account to determine a desirable intensity of training activities.

**FIGURE 3.2** Target heart rate zones based on age-predicted maximal heart rate for males and females. From <https://www.nsca.com/education/articles/kinetic-select/sport-performance-and-heart-rate/>

## **Adrenaline/Epinephrine & Cortisol**

Stress hormones that enhance our ability to “react” to threats. While they serve important purposes, excess and prolonged exposure to them is associated with chronic issues such as Anxiety, Panic, Depression, Insomnia, GI issues, Cardiovascular diseases, Cognitive decline, etc.

(<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20046037>)

It is important to incorporate self-regulation activities in routine practices so that athletes are not constantly hyper-aroused. Practice can also help them develop skills to moderate their arousal at will (e.g. emotional regulation, relaxation technique, biofeedback, etc.) Some common mental skills are:

- Breathing exercises
- Mental Imagery
- Motivational self-talk
- Journaling
- Use of symbolic objects
- Sensory stimulation
- Mindfulness