

Motivation – in-depth psychological trick

Motivation tends to be one of those words which gets thrown around a lot. The common tendency is to think that motivation is that 'drive' to go and do something. That could be going to the gym, starting a new diet, or aiming to improve yourself in some way. Initially we tend to be like "yeah! I'm motivated!". Most people don't think about it in any more depth than that. So, in this blog post I wanted to just draw your attention to some deeper principles about how motivation works and how our psychology works so that once you understand the principles at a core level, you can actually find ways of making yourself more motivated to do certain things.

Motivation basically is 'the degree of value that you attach to an activity'. This value is what determines your motivation. An important thing to note is that your brain makes decisions as to what it wants to do by subconsciously or sometimes consciously comparing the values of the possible activities to be carried out. Let me give you an example. Let's say you're on the sofa watching TV, and you really value watching TV, you love watching Netflix, and you've recently started a new series as well, making you want to watch it even more. At the same time, you've recently started a new fitness regime, going to the gym three times a week, but you're not really into sports, and you don't particularly like going to the gym. When you started, you initially has a lot of 'motivation'. However, when you crash on the sofa after a long day at work and you're thinking "I just don't want to go the gym, I would rather watch an episode of Netflix", you then perceive yourself as having a lack of motivation for going to the gym. What's really going on beneath the surface is that you don't see the value of going to the gym as outweighing the value of watching an episode of Netflix. So, the value difference is the key thing here.

As a side note, value is calculated through a complex process mostly subconsciously. It's calculated by weighing up what value is this activity giving you vs what value is this activity taking away from you, and these can be both short or long-term.

So, now that you understand how the motivation equation works, you can now start playing around with the variables a little bit so that they work in your favour. Going back to our example, you can either choose to increase your perceived value of going to the gym or you can decrease your perceived value of watching Netflix, so much so that the difference between the two is so large that you decide to go the gym automatically, and whether or not you are 'motivated' to go to the gym isn't something that even enters your field of awareness. There are ways of doing both, but in this post I'm just going to cover a simple way of how you can increase your perceived value of going to the gym.

The simple trick is this – ask yourself why you want to do something 5 times. What I mean by this is, if you say "I want to go the gym". You ask yourself "Okay, why do I want to go the gym?" to which you might answer "Because I want to get in shape". Ask yourself again "Why do I want to do that?". "Because I want to find a romantic partner". "Why?". "Because I want to get married one day". "Why?". "Because I want to have kids". "Why?".

“Because I wish to have a fuller experience of life”. This is called high construal thinking. It’s when you’re thinking with perspective and seeing the bigger picture. This is the opposite of low-level construal when you are focusing in on the small details of something. So, by levelling up 5 times you are adopting a high level of construal thinking.

Now, when you have to make that decision as to whether to go to the gym or watch Netflix, you’ve intertwined your decision, which before seemed quite trivial and something which was not that big of a deal, to something which is important, and which is a big deal. Because, if you don’t do that, you’re now acting out of integrity with your core values, and so you’re going to feel a lot more uneasy about jacking on the gym. So, essentially what you’ve done is you’ve increased your perceived value of going to the gym through adopting a higher-level construal and intertwining your goal with deeper core values, which naturally you going to be are more inclined to play-out.

That’s the simple trick. Ask yourself why five times. Fiddle around with the equation. There are no hard and fast rules with this. You want to be smart. In the same way you want to use your biology to your advantage, you want to use your psychology to your advantage. I apologise for the rather cerebral explanation for motivation, but this is a really simple trick if you’re looking to boost your motivation for something, going deeper than the usual “here’s tip 1, 2, 3 and 4 for how to be motivated” yadayadayada. I hope you liked it, and I’ll speak to you again very soon.

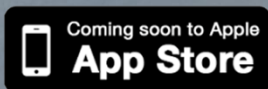
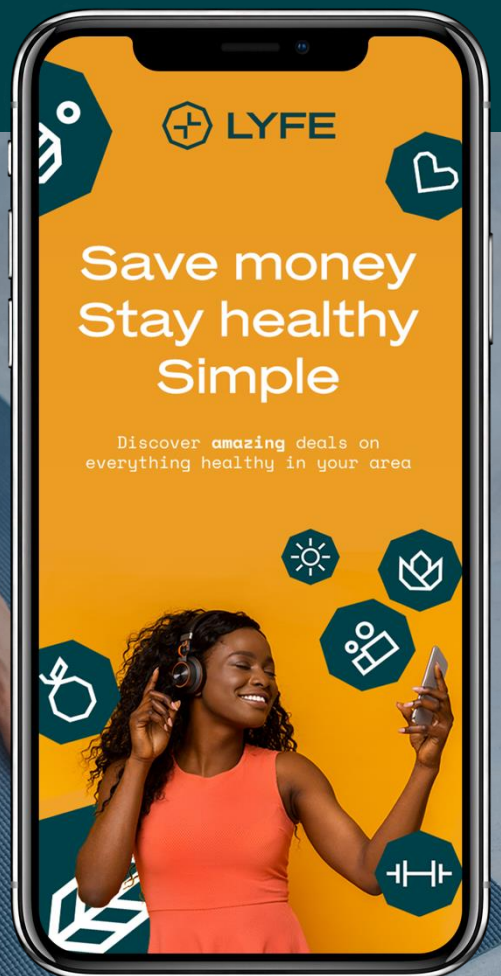
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