

# MOTIVATION

## Why is this relevant?

Responding to covid-19 is going to require effort from workers over a prolonged period of time. This might span weeks, months and years. Ensuring that workers stay motivated is crucial for being able to provide effective care throughout the disease outbreak, and to protect their own psychological well-being.

## Core constructs/concepts

Motivation is more than how much effort someone is putting in (i.e., quantity). It also reflects the reasons why an individual engages in an activity (i.e., quality), and explains how they might behave, think and feel in the pursuit of important goals.

Motivation quality ranges on a continuum. This includes:

- Intrinsic motivation: doing something for the enjoyment and pleasure it provides (highest quality)
- Identified regulation: doing something because it is important and has recognised value
- Introjected regulation: doing something to avoid feelings of guilt
- External regulation: doing something to receive some kind of extrinsic reward
- Amotivation: a lack of motivation and limited interest in the activity (lowest quality)

There is wealth of literature that suggests higher quality motivations (intrinsic and identified regulation) are associated with more adaptive responses including better health and wellbeing, higher levels of performance and intentions to persist. As motivation quality decreases (introjected and external regulation) or disappears (amotivation) individuals are at risk of maladaptive responses including feelings of stress, illbeing and burnout. During the initial response, covid-19 workers are likely to be driven by higher quality forms of motivations. However, over time, and due to the extreme demands placed upon them, workers' motivation quality may decrease.

One way to ensure that quality motivation is maintained and promoted, is to focus on satisfying individuals' basic psychological needs. Core basic psychological needs include:

- Autonomy: a sense of agency and ownership
- Competence: a sense of effectiveness and mastery
- Relatedness: a sense of connection and belonging

Evidence suggests that when a person has these needs satisfied, they are more likely to endorse quality motivations, and display/experience a range of positive



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behavioural and psychological responses. In contrast, when needs are frustrated, this tends to lead to lower quality forms of motivation and individuals experiencing a range of negative behavioural and psychological outcomes.

A person's social context can significantly contribute to the satisfaction or frustration of their psychological needs, and thus impact upon their motivation, performance and health. Via what they say and do, leaders, peers and others in a person's social support network can create social-contextual environments that are either supportive or thwarting of needs.

Motivation is linked to a range of key processes relevant to the covid-19 response including coping behaviour, resilience, fatigue recovery and mental health.

## Practical recommendations

- Focusing on basic psychological needs provides a general framework for how to maintain and promote quality motivation during the covid-19 outbreak.
- Workers should be encouraged to develop strategies to enable them to feel a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness whilst engaging in their work. This will have an onward impact upon motivation and a range of positive outcomes.
- Leaders and peers should be encouraged to think about how what they say and do might impact upon their teammates' feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness.
- Leaders may consider how they can facilitate need satisfaction. This might shape how tasks are allocated, how feedback is provided, how team members are encouraged to provide input to clinical decision making, and the type of support they offer to those they are responsible for.
- There may be situations that result in need frustration (i.e., the thwarting of autonomy, competence and relatedness). These situations should, ideally, be kept to a minimum to avoid damage to motivation over the long term.
- Efforts to ensure a person feels a sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness day-to-day can pay dividends. Daily need satisfaction has been linked to high performance, better quality sleep and stress-recovery, all relevant to covid-19 workers.

### Relevant literature

- Vallerand, R. J. (1997). Toward a hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 29, pp. 271-360). Academic Press.
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- van Hooff, M. L., & Geurts, S. A. (2015). Need satisfaction and employees' recovery state at work: A daily diary study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 20(3), 377.