



Motivation and Insight:

These two factors, motivation and insight are crucial indicators with regard to defining what this whole upward change process is all about and for learning about what is needed for this process to move forward and upward. Motivation itself has two key facets; internal and external. Both are very different, with internal motivation being the more important of the two. However, quite often without external motivation, many would never get the chance to gain internal motivation because external motivators (such as the legal system for instance) are often the starting point for getting help.

Individual defense mechanisms inherent to human behavior prevent people from instantly recognizing and accepting unpleasant truths. In this uncertain world, our brains have adapted to the necessity of resisting initially believing or accepting negative or unpleasant information, particularly about ourselves. Imagine if somehow we instantly recognized and accepted all that was wrong with us, our lives, our behaviors, our families, etc. That would be a lot to handle all at once. Therefore, when someone hears that they are not just using substances harmlessly for fun but rather they are out of control and may never be able to use without consequences again, this challenging truth is extremely difficult to accept. People want and need evidence in order to accept the truth because there is so much untruth out there confusing the matter.

A good way to experience something similar to this is to go on line and look up a disease. Often, when you start reading the list of symptoms, if you happen to have a few symptoms it can become easy to convince yourself that you have all or most the symptoms of some kind of harmful disease. The same is true about when we watch the news. There are many terrible crimes committed in this world and if we let our minds and our imaginations go wild with regard to thinking about them, it is not difficult to become overanxious that these terrible things will certainly happen to us and our loved ones. Therefore, to be able to filter out negative information has become a necessary coping skill in this challenging world. With that in mind, it is not difficult to understand why someone may not be so quick to accept the reality of a substance abuse or dependence problem right away.

A second potential contributing factor in the difficulty of accepting negative information is the hope that seems inherent to most people's childhood. (For some who grew up in severely negative situations, or who witnessed a large degree of negative things in childhood, this may not be the case) Most people as children and adolescents may occasionally think about negative things happening to them but for the most part the underlying belief and hope is that these negative things will never happen in adulthood. For example, most people do not grow up believing that one day they will get cancer, or get divorced, or become injured or disabled, for example but for some people those and other negative things unfortunately eventually do happen later in life. By the same token, most people do not grow up with a belief that "one day I will be addicted to heroin" or "one day I am going to be an alcoholic" so accepting those beliefs later in life can be a challenge if that ends up being the case.

So insight can be a challenge but like many things that can be difficult to attain, insight is a beautiful thing. Insight is always good and beneficial, even when we gain insight into what is not so good in our lives. The more we can learn about ourselves including both our strengths as well as our shortcomings, the more we can grow and change for the better. Insight can be powerful, yet fear inspiring. The key to viewing insight in a positive light, is a direct function of one's level of motivation.

Motivation is like the channel through which one can funnel the power of insight. If gaining insight is like turning on a water spigot, then motivation is like having a hose connected to the end of that spigot which allows the person who turned on the spigot to direct the flow of water where it is needed most. Insight without motivation can be overwhelming. Imagine learning an uncomfortable truth about yourself but having neither the energy nor the know-how to do something about it. Motivation is a driving force helping us use our newly gained insight and at times empowering us to dig even deeper and gain even more insight.



That brings up another point about the relationship between motivation and insight. Motivation facilitates the sense of discovery needed to gain insight. Today's world often keeps us so busy that we often spend our lives skimming across the surface in life, like a water skier cutting speedily over a body of water. Motivation, however (particularly internal motivation) can cause one to be more like a scuba diver as opposed to a water skier. The scuba diver takes the time to go deep into the water to discover what is beneath the surface (therefore increasing insight.) The hope is that the motivated scuba diver, in his insightful search beneath the surface will find hidden treasures in among the many dangers lurking within the murky depths.

Therefore, the Escalator is based on this unique relationship between motivation and insight. The Escalator is not the first model for upward change and recovery based on motivation and insight. Nevertheless, the Escalator helps counselor's, family members and substance user/abusers to conceptualize a unique but honest path through the change process specific to where one is along the spectrum of both insight and motivation. The Escalator deals with and accepts what is realistic as opposed to what is ideal or out of reach. For example, based on a traditional 12 Step based model, it is easy to identify what the "ideal" is with regard to that type of recovery. Adhering to concepts such as "One Day at a Time", avoiding "People, Places, and Things", and "Meeting Makers Make it" for example are easily identifiable and proven effective aspects of an "ideal" path toward recovery or upward change. If one follows those and other similar time-tested and proven rules, they will be successful in recovery on a long term basis. Few would argue with that. However, as stated earlier, that is the *ideal*. What about the person who does not want to, or refuses to stop associating with negative people, places and things? What about the person who refuses to go to meetings? Is that person doomed to failure in his recovery if he does not follow the ideal course? Some recovery strategies would say yes, that person will fail. Some recovery and change strategies depend upon the clever work of a trained therapist facilitating the identified substance user to increase motivation for change and therefore move toward a more ideal recovery. There is truth and validity with regard to both of these viewpoints but the upward change process itself is not contingent upon absolutes based ideals or leaning upon the motivation-enhancing abilities of a trained therapist, at least not in the beginning.

The Escalator takes the concept of "person centered" to a new level by allowing individuals to focus on the "here and now" and the "real" as opposed using the ideal as the measuring stick for progress and development. For example, if someone was faced with the challenge of learning to play the piano you wouldn't base their progress by comparing them to Mozart or Beethoven. Rather, progress is based on each person's ability to play the few notes that they have learned to play, no matter how simple. What the Escalator offers is a set of unique strategies for helping a wide variety of people from the full array of levels of insight and motivation to begin their own individualized upward change process. This upward change process is based entirely on the viewpoint of the substance user and what they themselves determine to be realistic and achievable. The gold standard, so to speak is to enhance internal motivation and insight thereby allow each individual to engage in a meaningful change program based on relevant personal goals and values. We should never let go of ideals and they are important to strive toward however the gradual, individualized and personalized road toward those ideals is still a path worth traveling even if we never fully reach our idealistic goals.

When it comes to quitting bad habits, breaking addictions, and making changes, a significant amount of people are not motivated, especially internally. When it comes to writing books for the unmotivated, it is a losing proposition for the writer. Why? Because how many unmotivated people will take the time to read a book about change? If they were willing to read, then that would mean that they are at least somewhat motivated. Really when it comes down to it saying that you feel "sick and tired of being sick and tired" can be viewed as just another way of just saying "now I am motivated for change" Not everyone that needs help feels that way, especially early in the process.