



Internal Motivation:

- > interest or drive
- > the process that arouses, sustains and regulates human and animal behavior

So you think you have internal motivation? You had better make sure. Consider the following follow up questions:

Do you really want to change?

How sure are you?

Can you easily identify strong, heartfelt personal reasons for wanting change?

If after asking yourself those questions you still feel sure that you want to change and you scored an A on the Internal Motivation section of your Change Initiative then perhaps you do have internal motivation.

It is important for counselors and other helpers using the Escalator with others to take care to watch out for people's natural tendency to overestimate their own internal motivation to change. Change is challenging and hard work. If it weren't hard work then people would change easily, but unfortunately most do not. There can be a huge gap between the motivation to change and readiness to change. Consider cigarettes and how many smokers sincerely and strongly want to quit but they are nowhere near ready to take any action, for example. Still, a sincere internal motivation for change is critical even if a person is not ready because it is the spark that will eventually ignite the flames of desire and inspiration. This identified strength area of internal motivation is focused on bringing a person closer to the point of a sincere desire and readiness to change. This is a challenging task but the following are specific activities designed to enhance this area of strength:

Dissecting the Heart

"Dissecting the Heart" is an early stage activity in the Escalator for those with the strength area of good internal motivation. Motivation is often associated with the "head" – including our ability to think, reason and plan. In reality, however, internal motivation at times can be anything but reasonable or well thought out. If you think about why we do what we do, so often we are guided by our wants and desires, and how often are these desires lacking in logic and reasonableness! Internal motivation does not originate in the figurative head, (where we think and reason). Rather, internal motivation stems from our figurative hearts. Our figurative heart is where our feelings, desires and wants originate. Our "heart" is often quite illogical and unreasonable. This does not mean that all of our feelings are unreasonable and illogical however what may originate within our figurative heart cannot be counted on to be based on sound reason and logic. To illustrate, think about how many things we may desire in our "hearts" that are contrary to what is actually good for us. There are a million romance novels sold each year based on love affairs stemming from "forbidden desires" from the misleading hearts of lovers young and old, many of which end in tragic consequences. Our figurative heart can drive so much of what we do and what we want but at the same time what our heart wants now often is not always the best decision, especially over the long term.

If we want to understand internal motivation we have to delve into the complex world of feelings and desires which can often be confusing, mysterious and complex. Thoughts on the other hand usually have easier to trace roots. Thoughts can often be traced in a logical stepwise manner backward to understand where they came from.



For example:

Question -A man driving his car says to himself: “Why am I am thinking about my grandmother right now?”

Answer – (Tracing thoughts backward) - “I just drove past a sign that said “Jameson Pancake House” on the side of the road...”Jameson” was the last name of the head nurse at the nursing home where my grandmother lived just before she died...That is why I am remembering grandma!” – In this example thoughts are closely related and easy to follow.

Feelings and desires however, often come from a much deeper place within us that more often than not, cannot be easily traced back. Feelings can often trace back to childhood experiences that we have since long forgotten about or are not as easily called to mind.

For example:

Question - “Why does my sister’s new boyfriend get on my nerves and get me angry so easily when he is nothing but nice to me and he actually seems like a pretty cool guy?”

Answer –This person’s sister’s boyfriend has subtle mannerisms similar to an older cousin who bullied and teased him at childhood family get-togethers, however the person may never make that connection because it is so obscure and deep rooted. Feelings are often much more complex and deep seeded as in this example

So the main point when examining internal motivation is that one has to “dissect” this mysterious and often irrational heart we all possess in order to try to understand our desires. What we think we want and what we really need are often quite different. That is the biggest obstacle to successfully assessing and understanding internal motivation.

When it comes to substance use issues the gap between what one thinks they want and what one says they want and then what they actually want in reality is a quandary that counselors wrestle with on a daily basis. Most often, it is an external motivator that brings a person to the point where they are ready to try to change. An arrest, the threat of divorce or job loss, threat of expulsion from school, DUI’s and other legal consequences are by far the most common reasons people seek help. All of those issues are external motivators. Still, there are those individuals who come in to a treatment program, even when coerced who will say that they recognize that they have a problem (insight) and then say that they really do want to stop using in spite of the external motivators and consequences they face if they do not stop. That may in fact be true in many cases, however sadly the irrational desire to keep using substances even in the face of consequences is often much stronger than one’s verbalized self- report of internal motivation to stop using. That explains the extensive efforts by many in substance abuse treatment to continue using by deceiving counselors, probation officers, family members and other agents enforcing external reasons for stopping use. Conversely, there are others who seek substance abuse treatment reportedly “on their own” (internally motivated) who often later reveal an external reason for seeking treatment that they did not disclose at the outset. All of this can sound confusing and it often is, however the main point is that internal motivation can be very ambiguous indeed.

As a result of the difficulty with regard to dissecting internal motivation, this activity for enhancing internal motivation actually starts with probing deeper into the figurative heart to determine the true source of one’s motivation. Often the result of this “Dissecting the Heart” activity is that people may discover that they really overestimated their level of internal motivation. People who get through the first series of questions in the Dissecting the Heart activity who still are able to recognize that they



truly are internally motivated are at a huge advantage. This is because internal motivation is such a critical factor with regard to making progress in the upward change process. However, before actually starting this activity there is one more critical aspect of internal motivation that needs to be reviewed; the role that guilt often plays in internal motivation:

The Day After – Bottling the Feeling and Saving it for Later-

If someone discovered a way that we could just “bottle” the feelings that most of us feel the day after a consequence in a way that it could be stored for later use, that person would be a billionaire. Many have felt those dreadful feelings that occur soon after going overboard with a bad habit or shortly after doing something that we thought for sure that we would never do. Perhaps after a food binge, an uncontrollable spending spree, after an anger outburst, or for those who abuse substances after a night of bingeing or overuse, or even the day after an arrest all can elicit an intense feeling of dread, guilt, remorse and even disgust. Those feelings that occur right after a consequence or a binge are often very motivational in nature. The desire to avoid feeling the guilt, remorse, dread, etc., associated with a consequence or episode of loss of control can lead to well-intentioned promises for future change.

Some of these well-meaning promises may include, for example:

- > “Never again! I promise now I am going to change my ways – for good!”
- > “This is definitely the last time, I will make sure of that and do whatever it takes to prevent this from happening again”
- > “I am going to focus more on positive goals and making myself a better person instead of doing this again”
- > “I am never going to touch a drink or drug again! It’s not worth all of this trouble”
- > “You’ll see, I will be a new person with a totally new attitude- I have learned my lesson!”
- > “That’s it, no more of this nonsense, the changing starts now, for good this time!”
- > “I feel disgusted and I never want to feel this way again, that’s it, time to stop!”

For many who make these well-intentioned promises, in most cases on some level they really believe that they are telling the truth and they mean to follow through with these promises. Fortunately in some cases, people make good on their promises for self- improvement and they make lasting life changes for the better. Sadly however, in most cases, these sincere promises may not bring about lasting change. Time can work against us in many cases and situations. With time, the roaring wave of emotionally-charged motivation that can be introduced right after a consequence or other mistake, can erode to a mere trickle, the farther away we get from the situation. Those intense feelings that provided the needed push toward change in many cases can gradually weaken for a variety of reasons, and with that old behaviors can creep back in.

If there were just a way to save those intense inspirational feelings that we are discussing, in a bottle so they could be re-opened and reused later for motivation; that would be miraculous. For example, imagine a person who was on a diet, if they could, at any time they wanted or needed, remember the exact feeling experienced after bingeing on huge decadent cake, feeling that full, disappointed and disgusted feeling of remorse and regret that comes after the food binge is over. If someone could feel those feelings fully, before the next cake comes along, they may be much less inclined to take a slice a second time. To be able to “unbottle” the stored feelings from the first binge could be critical in preventing the second one, weeks, even months later.



The same situation can be true for substance use issues. For example, if someone were to drink too much and then get arrested for their drunken behavior or decisions, then soon after the arrest there can be strong feelings to stop drinking going forward, as we have been discussing. Over time those strong feelings motivating abstinence can diminish to become feelings simply motivating an effort to just “cut down” or try to control drinking. If there really never was a drinking problem in the first place and the arrest was just a fluke, then efforts to control or limit drinking should work. For people with a more serious drinking issue, however, those efforts to control drinking may not work as evidenced by situations starting up again where the amounts consumed are larger than intended or other similar signs of a problem may return. If at any given point in this gradual process of decline, the person could somehow “unbottle” those old feelings that originally motivated abstinence earlier then that could prevent the person from going down the same path that lead them to the first consequence *before* another consequence occurs.

Alcoholics Anonymous refers to this phenomenon as “Keeping Your Memory Green”. Learning to remember the “lows” and the related negative feelings and consequences related to substance use in the past can keep someone sober today. When it comes to the fictional idea of “bottling the feelings” the emphasis is on how useful it would be if you literally could re-open the bottle of these feelings when you needed them to experience the motivational power of “the day after” effect, when consequences are new, and feelings of motivation for change are still “fresh”. Unfortunately however, in many cases, as time passes, people forget how bad it felt to get into trouble and with that their motivation to make changes often decreases along with it.

In the end, there really is no easy answer the issues involved with sustaining the drive to change when the feelings that motivate people to change start to subside over time. Nevertheless, it is very important to recognize the power that feelings of can play with regard to the start of internal motivation.

Link to [Dissecting the Heart Parts 1 to 3](#)

The Dissecting the Heart internal motivation building activity is also on the www.takingtheescalator.com/therapy-tools page

Enhancing Internal Motivation:

Similar to the difficult task of trying to increase insight, enhancing internal motivation is also extremely challenging. The good news is, however, that if there is even a small degree of insight, the potential to increase internal motivation increases exponentially. The more that a person is able to recognize a problem, the greater the chance there is for a sense of internal motivation to develop. An insightful heart is like kindling for the sparks of motivation to be lit and blown upon to hopefully start a flame of internal drive for lasting positive change.

With that said, if there is a dual issue of lack of insight and lack of internal motivation, it is important to try to work on insight first. To try to motivate someone who does not even recognize a problem is often an exercise in futility for both the helper and the helped. Therefore when working with a person who has low insight and low internal motivation, (Change Initiative CCC, CCB or CCA), the issue of low insight should take precedence. If efforts were already made using the previous section on increasing insight were unsuccessful, it is appropriate to start working on issues of internal motivation when efforts to help increase insight may seem exhausted. However, if insight remains low, efforts at increasing insight should not be abandoned by the counselor or helper and should be regularly revisited.



Getting Started with Enhancing Internal Motivation:

Based on the brief Change Initiative assessment, the person who needs to increase and enhance internal motivation is acknowledging one of the following:

- I am not sure how much I *want* to change (if at all)
- If it were totally up to me, I would not change or I do not want to change (despite what others may tell me)
- I think I need to change but I just do not want to do the work

Internal motivation is all about *desire*.

desire: to wish or long for; crave; want

Desire is often associated with something pleasurable. It is not very unusual at all for someone to desire something that quickly or easily brings joy, satisfaction, or pleasure such as delicious food, promiscuous sex and for many: drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, these very things that are so commonly desired are often not good for you when compared with their less desirable but more healthful alternatives. (For example contrast how often one may experience a desire for chocolate as compared with a desire for broccoli). When these factors are considered, it really emphasizes how challenging the task is to help someone to increase internal motivation for change. When trying to build a desire to change, you are essentially working on learning to start to desire something that is most often not at all instantly gratifying and is often seemingly much less pleasurable than the alternative. (For example, learning to desire the broccoli over the chocolate, to put it in perspective) If upward change always brought with it instant results with powerful reinforcing rewards then it would be easy to build internal motivation. The truth is, however, that the rewards experienced by upward change are usually only realized gradually over the passage of time. There is usually a degree of struggle, hard work, perseverance, and even pain involved in achieving a lasting upward change. Sure there are some examples out there of the guy who decided to stop doing drugs and instantly his life got better and better and he never looked back. That sadly may be the exception and not the norm when it comes to upward change and substance use issues. For some, the prospect of upward change can seem comparable to a person who needs to lose 200 pounds. The thought of one day being 200 pounds lighter may be enticing but people realize that the effort and hard work needed to achieve that goal includes a huge amount of self-sacrifice, self-denial, sweat, dedication and extreme perseverance. That leads us to the question, how does one build up their level of desire for change to the point where they are ready to take on such a challenging long term endeavor, and then stick with it?

Another way to look at the challenge of building internal motivation is that the critical element for success is somehow “tipping the scales” between the desire for instant gratification (in this case use of drugs and alcohol) and the desire for positive lifestyle change (living a better life without abusing or depending upon substances) The people who successfully change are those whose desire for that better lifestyle outweighs their desire for the quick and easy pleasure experienced though substance use/abuse. Again, staying with the diet analogy, the person who loses the weight is the person whose desire to be thin (living a better healthier lifestyle) outweighs the daily desire to experience the pleasure of overeating or eating unhealthily. Another way to word the essential question at hands is: How do we tip the scales from a desire for instant pleasure toward a desire for a better way of living?



A second critical challenge in this process is the degree of effort involved with sustaining desire once it has been increased. Let's return to the analogy of comparing the initial work involved with building internal motivation and desire to the work involved in lighting a spark by rubbing two sticks together then gently blowing on that spark to get it to turn into a flame of desire for change. The job is not over once the flame is lit as there are winds that can easily blow out the flame if it is not nurtured and fed with a supply of more fuel, which is the second task in the process of internal motivation building. In the case of the change process, the ability to prevent relapse and setbacks is often directly correlated with sustaining internal motivation and desire for upward change. Often the scales of desire can tip backward and the desire for that instant pleasure and escape associated with bad habits (such as substance use) can temporarily outweigh the desire for change resulting in relapse or setback.

Logically then, it makes sense to start with the first step in the process of building internal motivation: lighting that initial spark of desire:

Igniting the Spark of Internal Motivation:

How do you get someone to start to desire a certain food? To do so, you need to appeal to their senses. The smell of the food, the appearance, or a small taste of the food can be the start of a desire to sit down and eat the food that has been prepared. Similarly a woman who wants a man to desire her may do so by appealing to the eyes by putting on an alluring dress or perhaps to the sense of smell with a desirable perfume or the ears with her smooth seductive voice. The same goes with helping someone form a desire for upward change when it comes to substance use issues. It has to be presented in a way that looks, smells, sounds, and tastes enticing and desirable.

Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12 Step programs have been using this principle successfully for decades. The concept of "attraction not promotion" (Alcoholics Anonymous) is built on this concept and has had great success. The idea is that when people who are abusing drugs and alcohol go to 12 Step meetings and actually see and experience other people who have improved their lives through sobriety, then they themselves will eventually want what others in recovery have (attraction). The desire and internal motivation in these individuals stems from seeing and learning about what they could have if they too embark along the road to recovery.

Motivational speakers take the AA principle of "attraction not promotion" to the next level by actively promoting what they view as a better way of life. A motivational speaker may essentially say to his audience: "Look at this, you too can have this if you want it badly enough" Motivational speakers aim to appeal to people's emotions and senses and provoke within them a need and an increased will to experience something new, exciting and improved; a better way. This has to be done in a sincere and believable way in order for it to work. For people to really want to change and then stick with it the idea has to seem realistic and attainable. The message of change must be conveyed in a way that



both promotes hope while overcoming any doubts and fears. In a sense, perhaps a bit more subtly, those who are helping others who lack internal motivation need to be able to play the role of motivational speaker and cheerleader.

Internal Motivation Building Activity – *Identifying “Flammable” Areas*

If the goal we are looking at here is to ignite the spark of internal motivation then it is important to be able to find out those personally relevant areas that have the potential to instigate an increase in one’s desire to change. There are many people who use drugs and alcohol regularly or abusively that have little or no desire to stop. Despite that, there are very few people who use drugs and alcohol regularly who cannot see any benefits to stopping, even if they have no desire to do so. In other words, just about everyone, even the most unmotivated individuals are able to identify at least a few potential positive things about not using. The key starting point for developing a sense of internal motivation when there is little or none present is to identify those areas which a person recognizes a potential benefit of behavior change. Any area where a person recognizes the potential benefits of behavior change is a “flammable” area when it comes to igniting the spark of internal motivation. In order to clarify any confusion, consider the following examples below:

1. **Michael** is a 32 year old Union Iron Worker who is physically dependent on opiates that he used to get legally from a doctor for chronic back pain but now since he uses more than prescribed he has to buy some pills illegally as well. Michael recognizes that his opiate use is at least somewhat inconvenient, if not problematic, because he realizes he is at the point where he has to use daily more than he is prescribed or else he will experience opiate withdrawal and unbearable pain. Michael openly admits that he has no desire to stop using (no internal motivation) because he believes he needs the pain pills in order to hold down his physically taxing job.

After completing the “Flammable Area” exercise, Michael still reports that he has no desire to stop using opiates. Nevertheless, Michael, through participating in the exercise is able to identify the following potential benefits of not using the pills:

1. Money would be saved as the prescriptions can be costly
2. He would feel more awake as the pills make him drowsy and sleepy
3. He would have more energy on weekends to play with his 3 year old son if he wasn’t sedated on pain pills
4. Due to tolerance, he runs out of pills before the script is renewed on occasion resulting in Michael having to get pills illegally which is stressful, costly and risky and he would rather not have to do so.

These four areas are future “flammable” areas from the perspective of increasing internal motivation. The flammable areas identified are potential areas for growth of internal motivation because they are based on identified areas of desire

2. **Laura** is a 41 year old housewife who drinks a bottle of wine daily. Laura reports that she does not experience blackouts and she has never been arrested or had any legal problems. Laura reports that she drinks in part due to generalized anxiety for the past several years especially since she became a mother. Laura has 2 twin daughters age 7 and she lives in a large house in a wealthy area as her husband is a successful lawyer. Laura does not want to stop drinking but rather she wants her husband to stop complaining about her drinking.

After completing the “Flammable Area” exercise, Laura has not changed her view on not wanting to stop drinking, however she is able to identify the following potential benefits of not drinking if she ever did decide to stop:



1. Laura's husband would stop complaining about her drinking if she stopped
2. She would be able to get up in the morning with a clearer head as she often has a mild hangover
3. Laura admits that on the few occasions she ran out of wine, she was very irritable with her daughters as she needs the wine in order to relax at the end of the day
4. Laura has had to have cleaning service come out for wine spills on carpets and furniture at least three times in the past 6 months
5. On more than one occasion at family parties in the past several years, Laura embarrassed her husband with something controversial she said while drinking, thus causing an argument

3. **Tim** is a 24 year old daily heroin user living with his parents. Tim's parents have sent him to top notch rehabs across the country 8 times already since he has been 16 and he has had some periods of abstinence after rehab but he usually goes back to using within about 90 days after getting out of residential treatment, give or take a few weeks or months either way. Tim openly recognizes that he is addicted and knows he should stop, however he states that his love for getting high is just too strong for him to sustain any sincere motivation to stay sober outside of the pressure he gets from his parents. Because Tim has a history of severe Bipolar Disorder, his parents feel extra responsible for trying to help him and they refuse to ask him to move out.

After completing the "Flammable Area" exercise, Tim admits he sees and understands a lot of the good reasons for stopping heroin use but he also admits he still feels minimal internal drive to do anything about it on his own. Still, Tim reports the following potential internal motivators for change:

1. Tim realizes that at some point his parents will give up on him and finally kick him out as he cannot go on like this forever so eventually he will need to stop using
2. He realizes that if it was not for the intervention of his parents who got him good lawyers he may have already been in jail by now
3. Tim realizes that overdose is a distinct possibility although he admits he has trouble really convincing himself of that despite several close calls in the past
4. Tim recognizes that he is passing up a good opportunity to be a part of the family business which could one day be an excellent lucrative career for him if he could only stop using

Even when faced with something as challenging as a group of pro-marijuana teenagers, the flammable areas exercise can at least help with recognition of some of the benefits of stopping marijuana use that most teenagers will admit too:

- ❖ Money is saved when marijuana is not being used
- ❖ There is the benefit of not having to worry about trouble from police, parents, and school or employment personnel when there is no use
- ❖ Many teens will admit that they feel more alert when they stop for an extended period and some youth in athletics will admit they breathe better when they are not smoking marijuana.

Link to [Flammable Areas Internal Motivation-Building Activity](#)

Flammable Areas Activity - internal motivation building activity is also on the www.takingtheescalator.com/therapy-tools page



Analysis: You should now keep this list for future thought as well as open discussion with those who you trust and who care about you, as well as those helping you such as your counselor. A flammable area is just like it says; these issues can one day “catch fire” in the sense that at some point something can trigger a stronger internal desire in you to want to change yourself for the better. Usually for something to spark a desire for change, it needs to be something that you care about. These areas that you listed are things that you have identified that you do care about and they can be fuel for future motivation. One thing that you can try is to copy this final list of things that you care about to a conspicuous place where you can see it every day. The more you think actively about these potential motivators, the better the chance that the spark of motivation can be lit within you. It is very similar to the concept of someone who is on a diet pinning a picture of someone thin on their refrigerator as a motivator not to binge eat. In a counseling situation, this list should be reviewed periodically for motivation building and can be the periodic focus of motivationally focused counseling sessions.

Igniting Flammable Areas: Once you have identified “flammable areas” it is important to try to “ignite” them in order to get the fire of internal motivation burning inside of you. Emotions are like gasoline on a fire so if there are ways to stimulate your emotions with regard to your personal flammable areas you can start the fire of internal motivation. For example, if you identified your children being disappointed in you as a flammable, motivation-building area, then a simple heart-to-heart, emotion-filled conversation with your children could be the spark that gets you moving forward. Remember, that is just an example, however it is important to be creative and think about ways that you can focus on your flammable areas in order to increase motivation.

The goal is to start to learn what it is going to take to get these flammable areas “ignited” in the sense that we can get the flames of internal motivation burning and churning us forward. Since there may be little or no current motivation, we need to explore ways that we can start the process of moving forward and upward and increasing internal motivation by identifying and accepting small steps in the early stages of that process.

In order to ignite a flammable area of motivation, the process starts with being as honest and realistic as possible. One way is to try to honestly, brainstorm what would have to happen for you to be willing to start making positive lifestyle changes.

For example:

Flammable area - *Relationship with my children – “If I were to stop using drugs I would not have to worry about my kids ever finding out”*

Question: What specifically would have to happen for you to be willing to start actually making change in this area?

Answers:

- *My kids would have to find me passed out drunk and unable to get up*
- *I would have to do something I regretted while drunk that hurt or endangered the kids (like drunk driving with them in the car)*
- *My kids would have to start crying about how much they want me to stop doing drugs*
- *If someone called Child Protective Services on me or if I got arrested and my kids found out I would think about quitting*
- *If I went to jail or the hospital because of my substance use and my kids found out*
- *If I started to feel like a bad parent because of my use I would think about stopping*
- *If I lost my job and I could no longer afford to care for my children that would be a big deal*



Process - Review your list and meditate on some of the things you listed. This next step takes honesty and may be very difficult but nevertheless give it your best shot. Use your helpers for assistance with expanding your viewpoint to be as honest, open and realistic as possible. Honestly think about each one and ask yourself the following question. (Remember be honest) –

Even if just a little, have I actually done (or come really close to doing) any of these things?

For example, if you said you would consider changing if you got arrested. In thinking about it deeper, have there been situations when you maybe should have or really could have been arrested?

Conclusion: The Flammable Areas activity should at least have you thinking about and looking a little deeper into your personal motivators for change. These life areas have meaning to you and should remain part of your regular work with regard to building internal motivation for upward change. Over time, things often occur unexpectedly that can change your perspective in any one of these areas at any time. No matter the outcome up to this point, it is helpful to try and answer the final two question for discussion and meditation at the end of this exercise below:

- What are you willing to consider doing with regard to making actual changes in your substance use in order to prevent these things from happening? (Even if only a little, as some change is better than no change)
- What specific small steps do you think that you may need to take in order to start making these changes happen. Be specific (Use your counselor or other helpers available for some suggestions if you need help)

Internal Motivation Building Exercise: [Decreasing the Negative & Increasing the Positive](#)

The seemingly simple concept of being able to “love the good and hate the bad” is at the core of internal motivation. If you think about it, someone who is truly motivated is actively utilizing that phrase. A person motivated at the highest possible level has achieved a state of mind where they hate anything that will get in their way and they instead learn to love that which helps them with their goals and progress. The mere sight of drugs would disgust such a person rather than entice them. A day going to bed after doing the work needed to remain sober and emotionally stable brings a feeling deep satisfaction and happiness to this internally motivated soul. In this particular case we are discussing what would be considered the ideal, however even those who are lacking in motivation can learn from that superlative example. Developing internal motivation involves the gradual process of learning to love those things that are good for our development and building an aversion, dislike or even hatred for those things that jeopardize our progress. Obviously, that can indeed be a challenging but extremely necessary process. To illustrate and help with understanding of this concept consider the following analogy – The Chocolate Cake Illustration:

The Chocolate Cake –

Suppose there were a room full of people gathered for some purpose that had nothing to do with eating. At a point in the meeting, imagine that someone unexpectedly brings out a large chocolate cake and hands everyone a slice, encouraging them to enjoy it. How might people in the room react?

The most common reaction would be a sense of joy and appreciation, resulting in the simple action of taking the cake, then eating and enjoying the unexpected treat.

However, suppose someone in the room was struggling with food addiction and they had just spent the whole day eating salad and health food according to their dietary allowance. This person is going to the gym right after the meeting like they do every other day. Suppose that chocolate was one of this persons identified weaknesses as they can remember many food binges started by a strong craving for chocolate. How might this person react to the same piece of chocolate cake?



Obviously the person engaged in the active upward change plan is going to feel differently than we had originally guessed people would react to the cake. Although this individual may appreciate the person's well intended kindness and generosity for sharing the cake, it would be understandable for this person to view that piece of cake sitting in front of them with contempt, even looking at the cake itself as an enemy to their progress. This person would realize that, at this point in their upward change process, that cake could be a huge setback. Therefore, guided by the intense motivation flowing through this person's veins, he (or she) quickly steps back from the table and utters an assertive "No Thank You!" Later, as this motivated individual is at the gym that evening, there is an extra feeling of gratitude and pride for not eating any of the cake.

This is more of an ideal example but it really illustrates the point: Developing motivation is directly tied to our values. Our values, which are essentially what we consider important, effect how we think, feel and behave. In the Chocolate Cake example, the motivated person developed a strong sense of value and priority toward their personal change process which strongly overpowered any old desires such as the former sense of enjoyment from binging on chocolate. The motivated person in this example had learned to value what is beneficial for them (love the good) while things they formerly valued like the chocolate cake, were no longer important and even seen in a negative light (hating the bad).

One may argue that you do not have to "love the good and hate the bad" in order to experience a success in the change process. Someone might cite the example of a person who quit smoking cigarettes who for years who still has cravings and harbors an inner desire to enjoy a cigarette but he never succumbs to the desire. It is true that there are those types of examples. Still, even that person has had a shift in the values that affect their behavior. The importance a person places on not smoking outweighs the value assigned to the feeling of pleasure or satisfaction that may come with a cigarette. Therefore, the process of loving the good and hating the bad has still taken place even with that individual, just to a lesser degree. The overall motivation-enhancing process of shifting one's values toward appreciating what is healthy and good while shifting value away from the negative behavior is what this is all about when it comes to the concept of loving the good and hating the bad. The ideal again for the ex-smoker would be to be disgusted by the thought of cigarettes while loving the improved lifestyle of being a nonsmoker with all the benefits that come with that lifestyle such as improved health and hygiene while saving large amounts of money. Both examples are just different stages along the same spectrum which in itself is the nature of the change process which is not a "one size fits all" process.

So the purpose of this exercise is to enhance internal motivation through consideration of our values and priorities. This involves thinking about what it takes to develop a "love" (or at least a "like" or appreciation) for the positive aspects of upward change while learning to develop an aversion to or "dislike" of those things that are not so good for us. Shifting our values and priorities away from the negative and shifting our priorities and values toward what is good for us is a challenging and often extremely gradual learned process. Let us consider a few thought provoking questions to at least consider what is involved in getting these motivational processes started:

[Click here to go "DECREASING THE NEGATIVE & INCREASING THE POSITIVE"](#)

Decreasing the Negative & Increasing the Positive- internal motivation building activity is also on the www.takingtheescalator.com/therapy-tools page



Action -As with the vast majority of these internal motivation-building exercises, this is just a start. The concept of “loving the good and hating the bad” is an extended process that one exercise does not possibly solve. Nevertheless, this exercise stimulates the thinking necessary to start the motivational process moving in the right direction. This exercise, if done honestly and openly, illustrates that there are reasons for wanting to build motivation for change if we just pay more attention to them. Some of the ideas brought out in this exercise with regard to learning to “love the good” include developing an appreciation for healthy alternatives and ideas about “hating the bad” include acknowledging things that aren’t so good that may need changing. These areas are excellent items for future meditation and motivation-building discussion with those who are concerned about you. If you have a counselor, definitely use the personal motivators identified in this activity for future sessions. If you are in a group, take some time to discuss these issues with your peers and maybe someone can help you get inspired to give change a try and build some internal motivation



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