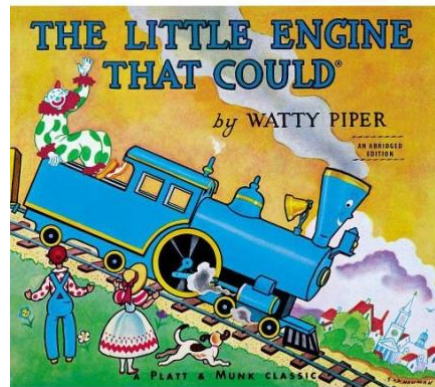


The Key to Lifelong Piano Study: How Autonomy Fosters Intrinsic Motivation

Candidate for the Assistant Professor of Music, Piano Pedagogy at UA

April 22, 2024 | 10:00-11:00am

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Starting Questions

What keeps you motivated to practice & perform?
What keeps you motivated to teach?

The Little Engine That Could

- “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.” As a catchy and memorable phrase, it perfectly depicts a person’s tireless attempt to actively master their internal drive and emotions in reaction to their environment.
- The generalized feeling of motivation—the internal or external drive to complete a task and act on those forces—can be the single most determining factor in human behavior.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

- Developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in their 1985 seminal publication *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*.
- SDT is one of most historically influential theories of human motivation A comprehensive framework in psychology that focuses on the motivation behind human behavior and the factors that influence it.
- SDT posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and provides a greater understanding of what constitutes human well-being.

Intrinsic Motivation – Autonomous Motivation

- Intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation; I play piano because it’s fun.

- Autonomy is the need for a sense of choice in one’s actions; Feeling that one’s behaviors and decisions are self-determined and not imposed by external forces.

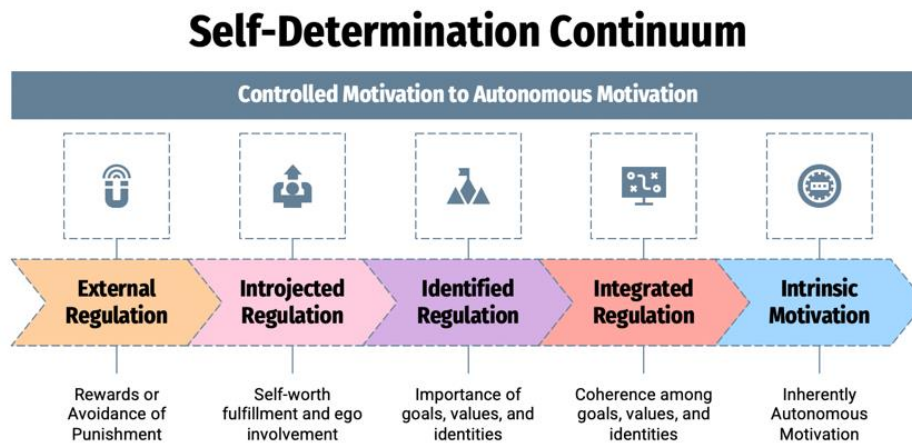
Extrinsic Motivation - Controlled Motivation

- Controlled motivation involves acting from a sense of pressure and having to engage in actions to achieve an outcome.
- Autonomous and controlled motivations differ in terms of their underlying regulatory processes and their resulting experiences

Interactive Effects of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation

- Tangible rewards: control behavior and therefore diminish intrinsic motivation (Deci et al, 1971, 1999).ⁱ
- Verbal rewards=positive feedback: can both enhance and undermine intrinsic motivation. Interpersonal context for the feedback influences whether it will be interpreted as informational or controlling, thus enhancing intrinsic motivation, or undermining it.
- Reward given independent of the task and when rewards were unexpected do not undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci et al, 1999).
- Age-effects of extrinsic rewards for children: negative consequences for further interest, persistence, and preference for challenge (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001).

Different Stages of Extrinsic Motivation



**Controlled Motivation to Autonomous Motivation Continuum.
Recreated from Gagne and Deci, 2005.ⁱⁱ**

Implications for Teaching

- Practice is an effortful activity that involves choice and fluctuating motivation
- A decline in motivation to practice can be reversed with instructional practices designed to foster children’s intrinsic motivation

Instructional Practices to Foster Autonomy and Intrinsic Motivation to Practice

1. Provide meaningful choices for the student to make
 - a. The choices must be significant for them to build motivation

- b. [“Repertoire Swaps: Achieving Diversity and Inclusion through an Effective Repertoire Selection Device”](#) (*Piano Magazine*, Autumn 2020)
- 2. Promote self-expression through collaboration support**
- a. Have students communicate their learning to others.
 - b. Presenting to peers establishes ownership over their learning.
 - c. For graduate piano students: Attend [Collegiate Connections](#) April 26th @11am EST (Free!). Next year, (hopefully) we can present a session! Connect with your peers and use this platform to get your name out there.
- 3. Encourage student questioning**
- a. **Assignment:** Ask the student to write 5 questions about every new piece they receive, and have them bring those questions to the next lesson. Instills it as a habit so it naturally occurs over time
 - b. Immediately after an activity, have students generate questions verbally or in writing for them to pursue
 - c. Connect student’s questions to related repertoire, exercises, conceptual knowledge, and activities
 - d. Ensure there is a match between their questions and the material that they are learning to avoid frustration from unanswered questions.

The Little Beggar
LE PETIT MENDIANT

Andante

PIANO

Édouard M. COMBE.
26, Boulevard Beaumarchais 75013 PARIS

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- 4. Activate background knowledge**
- a. Summarizing, organizing concepts, and linking background knowledge with current concepts will spur their motivation
 - b. Example: Rachmaninoff Etude-tableaux Op. 33, No. 8 in G Minor
 - c. Background knowledge:
 - i. Voicing Melody over Accompaniment figure
 - ii. Key of G Minor: Scales/Arpeggios
 - iii. Chords in all inversion
 - iv. Created beautiful phrase shapes
 - d. New: Moving melodic line throughout the staff



5. Promote an individual approach to learning.

- a. When students initiate their own questions, they have a sense of autonomy over their learning which in turn makes shaping their learning and curriculum clearer.
- b. [No Book Beginners; Tim Topham, Keynote Speaker @ 2024 MTNA Conference](#)



6. Focus on improvement

- a. Focusing on individual improvement rather than how students compare with others will keep them motivated on their own learning, knowledge, and goals.

7. Provide students with specific (memorization) practice strategies

- a. Ensure this specificity occurs at each lesson and that students understand how to approach their practice
- b. This allows them to carry their inspirational “aha!” moments from the lesson into their home practice.
- c. “I’m very mistrustful of tactile memory. I think it’s the first thing that goes.” - Andre Watts (1946-2023)
- d. Memorization Practice Tips, do all memorized
 - i. Alternating Measures: play every other measure
 - ii. Outline Memory: downbeats only
 - iii. Alternating Tempi: 5 set tempi for each piece
 - iv. Drop Out: drop out RH but continue to play LH

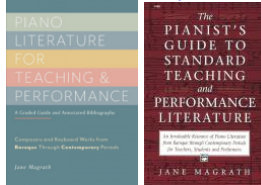
8. Cultivate deliberate self-awareness

- a. When students can establish awareness of their learning, students learn to be aware of when to implement different learning strategies
 - i. “What practice strategy do think would help this passage?”
 - ii. What was effective? What was not effective?
- b. Check out “Priming Gen Z to Save the Arts” – an article I published on the cover of April/may 2024 *American Music Teacher* (MTNA journal)



9. Offer a greater variety of levels and types of repertoire

- a. Don't limit less advanced repertoire to advanced students;
- b. Different levels and types of repertoire are not meant to emphasize difference in ability levels but allow students opportunities for success.
- c. [LEVELING Repertoire: Piano Literature for Teaching and Performance \(2021, new edition\) by Jane Magrath \(1995 version is excellent to own, smaller\)](#)



- d. Learn to pop songs! A variety will be motivating for students:
- e. [Golden Hour by JVKE](#)

golden hour

Words and Music by
ZACHARY LAWSON
and JAKE LAWSON

Flowing $\text{♩} = 63$

The image displays a musical score for the song 'Golden Hour' by JVKE. It includes a piano accompaniment part with chords such as A major triad (A4), E6/G#4, F#m7, E major triad (E4), and A major triad (A4). The vocal line includes the lyrics: 'It was just two lov-ers, sit-ting in the car, lis-ten-ing to Blonde, fall-in' for each oth-er. Pink and orange skies, feel-in' su-per child-ish, no Don-ald Glov-er. Missed call from my moth-er, like, "Where you at, to-night?" Got no al-i-bl. I was all a-lone, with the love of my Me...'. The score is in 3/4 time and features a flowing, rhythmic accompaniment.

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ⁱ(<https://www.progressfocused.com/2020/09/classical-research-edward-deci-1971.html>)

ⁱⁱ Gagne and Deci, 2005.