



Discover Your Motivational Style

Introduction: Why Motivation Style Matters

We all want to make lasting changes — but what drives us to take action, stick with a goal, or lose momentum? Research shows that understanding **how you're motivated** makes it easier to choose strategies that actually work for *you*.

This guide draws on two robust and well-established psychological frameworks:

- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** – Deci & Ryan (1985+)
Explores the difference between **intrinsic motivation** (driven by interest or purpose) and **extrinsic motivation** (driven by rewards or external pressures). It emphasizes the psychological needs of **autonomy, competence, and relatedness**.
- **Regulatory Focus Theory** – Higgins (1997)
Describes how people pursue goals either through a **promotion focus** (seeking growth and gains) or a **prevention focus** (avoiding losses and staying secure).

By combining these, we can identify **four distinct motivational styles** — and find practical tools that suit each one. This guide includes a quick self-assessment, style breakdowns, and a toolkit to help you follow through.

Part 1: What Drives You? (Motivation Style Quiz)

Tick the option that feels *most true* for you in each case. Try not to overthink it.

1. I feel most energized when:

- ☐ a. I'm doing something I care deeply about
- ☐ b. I know I'll be recognized or rewarded
- ☐ c. I'm avoiding mistakes or staying in control
- ☐ d. I'm meeting someone else's expectations

2. I take action when:

- ☐ a. I see personal meaning in the task
- ☐ b. There's a visible reward or milestone
- ☐ c. There's a looming risk or deadline
- ☐ d. I've promised someone I'd do it

3. I avoid tasks when:

- ☐ a. They feel pointless or disconnected from my values
- ☐ b. No one will notice if I don't do them
- ☐ c. They feel risky or uncertain
- ☐ d. There's no external pressure to act

4. I'm most likely to follow through when:

- ☐ a. I'm excited by the process or outcome
- ☐ b. I know it'll lead to success or recognition
- ☐ c. I've planned for everything that could go wrong
- ☐ d. I've made myself accountable to someone

5. I prefer goals that:

- ☐ a. Help me grow as a person
- ☐ b. Lead to measurable or visible success
- ☐ c. Reduce anxiety and maintain control
- ☐ d. Are tied to a team or obligation

6. I feel proud when:

- ☐ a. I've done something that aligns with my values
- ☐ b. Others acknowledge or reward my work
- ☐ c. I've avoided a mistake or prevented a problem
- ☐ d. I've kept a promise or fulfilled a duty

7. I'm more motivated by:

- ☐ a. Curiosity or passion
- ☐ b. Earning something or hitting a target
- ☐ c. Avoiding failure or risk
- ☐ d. Not letting others down

8. When I lose motivation, it's often because:

- ☐ a. I don't see the point anymore
- ☐ b. The reward doesn't feel worth it
- ☐ c. I feel overwhelmed or uncertain
- ☐ d. No one else expects me to keep going

9. I like systems that:

- ☐ a. Give me flexibility and purpose
- ☐ b. Offer rewards or external feedback
- ☐ c. Reduce risk and keep things predictable
- ☐ d. Build in accountability from others

10. I succeed most often when:

- ☐ a. I'm inspired and connected to my "why"
 - ☐ b. There's something to gain or win
 - ☐ c. I've thought through all the possible pitfalls
 - ☐ d. I'm part of a group or obligation
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Tally Your Results

Count how many of each letter you selected:

| Mostly A's → **Intrinsic / Promotion** |
| Mostly B's → **Extrinsic / Promotion** |
| Mostly C's → **Intrinsic / Prevention** |
| Mostly D's → **Extrinsic / Prevention** |

Part 2: Understand Your Motivation Style

Intrinsic / Promotion-Focused

You're motivated by **growth, purpose, and meaning**. You thrive when your goals align with your personal values and you have the freedom to explore and improve.

Watch out for: Losing steam with routine or disconnected tasks

Try: Creative challenges, personal "why" statements, progress tracking

Extrinsic / Promotion-Focused

You're driven by **success, recognition, and rewards**. You love setting big goals and seeing measurable progress.

Watch out for: Burnout if external motivation drops

Try: Visible milestones, public commitments, reward systems

Intrinsic / Prevention-Focused

You're motivated by **stability, responsibility, and doing things right**. You work hard to avoid mistakes and stay in control.

Watch out for: Paralysis from over-planning or perfectionism

Try: Checklists, structured routines, realistic standards

Extrinsic / Prevention-Focused

You're motivated by **obligation, accountability, and avoiding negative outcomes**. You often act to meet others' expectations or stay out of trouble.

Watch out for: Procrastination without external pressure

Try: Accountability buddies, external deadlines, reminders

Part 3: Your Motivation Toolkit

If you're Intrinsic / Promotion:

- ☐ Create a personal vision board
- ☐ Set goals based on identity or values
- ☐ Track progress over perfection
- ☐ Use journal prompts like "Why does this matter to me?"

If you're Extrinsic / Promotion:

- ☐ Set up external rewards for milestones
- ☐ Share goals publicly for extra motivation
- ☐ Use gamified tools (like streaks, scores)
- ☐ Compete with yourself or others

If you're Intrinsic / Prevention:

- ☐ Make detailed plans and back-up options
- ☐ Use checklists and habit trackers
- ☐ Focus on long-term consistency
- ☐ Block time for high-focus, low-interruption work

If you're Extrinsic / Prevention:

- ☐ Set external deadlines and accountability partners
 - ☐ Use calendar reminders and alarms
 - ☐ Break big tasks into "non-negotiable" small steps
 - ☐ Report your progress regularly to someone else
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Part 4: Make It Real

One goal I'm working on:

My motivation style is:

I'll use these 2–3 strategies from my toolkit:

My next *tiny* step (within 24 hours):

Optional: Dive Deeper into Motivation

Looking to explore further? Try these models:

- **Gretchen Rubin's Four Tendencies:** Discover if you're an Upholder, Obliger, Questioner, or Rebel → Take the quiz
 - **Achievement Goal Theory:** Are you mastery-driven or performance-focused? Learn how that impacts your goal-setting style.
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