

PART 5

Domains of Application



## Teacher Motivation

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**Abstract**

Teacher motivation involves the desire to teach and one's interpersonal style toward students while doing so. A teacher's own personal motivation revolves around the extent of psychological need satisfaction experienced during the act of teaching, and it manifests itself in terms of teacher enthusiasm and job satisfaction. A teacher's motivating style toward students revolves around what teachers say and do during instruction to motivate students to engage in learning activities, and it manifests itself in terms of autonomy-supportive versus controlling teaching. Because there are meaningful benefits to both students and teachers when teachers give autonomy support, we first identify what autonomy-supportive teachers uniquely say and do during instruction, and second explain how teachers can purposively become more autonomy supportive toward students. The chapter concludes by addressing the practical question of whether autonomy support is realistic and easy-to-implement and by offering directions for future research on teacher motivation.

**Key Words:** autonomy support, autonomy-supportive teaching, motivating style, structure, teacher motivation, teaching efficacy, teacher enthusiasm, teachers' psychological need satisfaction

**Introduction**

To understand teacher motivation, two stories need to be told. The first concerns the teacher's own motivation. This half of the story begins with an analysis of the reasons why someone might want to become a teacher, revolves around teachers' day-to-day experiences while delivering instruction, and concludes with a consideration of how well versus how poorly teachers function in terms of enthusiasm and satisfaction versus exhaustion and frustration. The second concerns teachers' interpersonal motivating style toward students. This half of the story begins with an analysis of autonomy-supportive versus controlling teaching, revolves around whether teachers take their students' perspectives and support their initiatives (autonomy-supportive teaching) or neglect their students' perspectives and prescribe what their students should think and do

(controlling teaching), and concludes with a consideration of students' and teachers' flourishing with autonomy support but suffering from psychological and behavioral control.

The present chapter tells both of these stories. The greater emphasis, however, is on teachers' motivating styles, and this is so for two reasons. First, our 15-year-old program of research has sought a deep understanding of what motivating style is; where it comes from; why it matters; how it is expressed in teachers' words and actions; how it affects students' motivation and functioning; whether it can be developed or changed; and how it is informed by personality, context, and culture. Now that this research literature has matured, we would like to pass along what we have learned. Second, a focus on teachers' motivating styles affords this chapter with an opportunity to

connect with the other chapters in this Handbook, because an analysis of teachers' motivating styles serves as a template to understand the motivating style of any supervisor, including the workplace manager, CEO, entrepreneur, parent, coach, therapist, doctor, or dentist.<sup>1</sup>

### A Teacher's Own Motivation

#### *Why Become a Teacher? Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Goals*

Why become a teacher? While some preservice teachers say that they forged the goal during childhood, most preservice teachers say that they are still working through this career decision (Schutz, Crowder, & White, 2001). The goal to become a teacher typically arises from one of the following antecedents: a desire to work specifically with children or adolescents; a belief that one possesses the abilities required of teachers; the sheer joy one experiences while teaching; the desire to contribute constructively to the next generation; a desire to do what one can to reverse social inequalities; the seeking of job security; the appeal of a profession that allows time for personal projects and for one's family; an initial spark from a critical incident in which one successfully enacted the role of a teacher (e.g., tutoring, teaching religious school); a past teacher who was especially admired—to the point of emulation; and the suggestion, recommendation, or encouragement of family and friends (Alexander, Chant, & Cox, 1994; Chivore, 1988; Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbott, Dallatt, & McClune, 2001; Richardson & Watt, 2005, 2006; Schutz et al., 2001). Once under consideration, the goal-setting and decision-making process is then filtered through social-cultural factors, such as the status and pay of the profession, as well as its demands, circumstances, conditions, and lifestyle. In communities and countries in which teachers invariably enjoy high social status (e.g., Asian and African nations), this decision-making process often starts with (rather than is modified by) a consideration of these sorts of contextual factors—even to the point that social-contextual factors, rather than personal preferences, give rise to the goal to become a teacher.

From a self-determination theory (SDT) perspective, *why* one adopts the goal of becoming a teacher matters. This is because engagement and well-being are not so much the product of *what* one is striving for as they are *why* one is striving for it (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). To make the distinction between the *what* versus the *why* within

any goal pursuit, SDT researchers distinguish between intrinsic goals and extrinsic goals (Kasser, 2002; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Commonly cited reasons to become a teacher that represent intrinsic goals include enjoying teaching for its own sake, personal satisfaction from contributing to one's community, a desire to help others, and the pursuit of one's own personal growth. Commonly cited reasons to become a teacher that represent extrinsic goals include seeking a high salary, job security, career status, social respect, or a means to a more desired end (e.g., to have one's summers off).

People who pursue a goal for intrinsic reasons, compared to those who pursue that same goal for extrinsic reasons, experience more favorable levels of adjustment, learning, performance, and well-being (Vansteenkiste, Simons, Soenens, & Lens, 2004; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). The reason for these differences is that the pursuit of intrinsic goals engenders an inward orientation that affords frequently recurring opportunities for psychological need satisfaction (of autonomy, competence, and relatedness), whereas the pursuit of extrinsic goals engenders an outward orientation that distracts one away from intrinsic need satisfactions (Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010). Research on the different reasons that people decide to become a teacher generally confirms that intrinsic reasons to teach predict relatively better levels of instructional effort and persistence (e.g., how much teachers prepare for class, how long they stay in the profession) and professional development (e.g., how open they are to new instructional methods and in-service training opportunities; Watt & Richardson, 2008). Intrinsic goals to teach also lead teachers to adopt a greater mastery-oriented approach in their professional practice (Malmberg, 2008). When teachers make progress in realizing these intrinsic goals—when they enjoy teaching, when they relate well to students and to colleagues, and when they see personal growth in their students and in themselves—they report high levels of teaching enthusiasm and satisfaction (Dinham & Scott, 1998; Scott, Stone, & Dinham, 2001). This research is important because it shows that the pursuit of intrinsic goals predisposes the teacher to experience a higher quality of motivation to teach.

#### *Are You Good at Teaching? Teaching Efficacy*

Teaching efficacy is a future-oriented, competency-based expectation a teacher holds in reference to his

or her capacity to bring desired outcomes to fruition (e.g., enhance students' engagement, learning, achievement). This expectation is a balanced judgment that integrates the teacher's perceived capacity to carry out particular acts of instruction on the one hand and the perceived demands, circumstances, constraints, and obstacles within the teaching situation on the other hand. The model of teaching efficacy offered by Tschannen-Moran and colleagues (1998, 2001) suggests that teaching efficacy reflects the integration of (1) a teacher's appraisal of whether a specific teaching task will be easy or difficult, simple or complex; (2) a self-assessment of one's personal teaching capabilities specific to that specific teaching task; and (3) a self-assessment of one's personal teaching vulnerabilities and limitations specific to that specific teaching task (e.g., when teaching students new vocabulary words, teaching efficacy reflects the difficulty, complexity, and environmental constraints of the lesson to be taught; how resourceful the teacher feels in delivering the day's learning activities; and how unprepared or overwhelmed the teacher feels in delivering the particular lesson).

Teaching efficacy is important to a teacher's motivation for many reasons. It predicts teacher enthusiasm (Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1984) as well as its conceptual opposite—teacher burnout (Fernet, Guay, Senecal, & Austin, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Teaching efficacy also predicts commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992), and it predicts extent of job satisfaction (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003; Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, & Malone, 2006; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Teaching efficacy also predicts teachers' in-class functioning in terms of their effort and persistence devoted to the delivery of instruction and also to its planning (Allinder, 1994). Teaching efficacy further predicts teachers' persistence in the face of setbacks, and it predicts teachers' constructive (rather than critical) reaction to the errors their students make (Ashton & Webb, 1986), as well as their general optimism versus pessimism about student learning (Ngidi, 2012). A strong and resilient sense of teaching efficacy, once formed and tested through the trials of teaching, predicts how long teachers stay in the profession (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010), presumably because highly efficacious teachers are able to do what less efficacious teachers are unable to do: produce gains in the quality of their students' thinking (Anderson, Greene, & Loewen, 1988), motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles,

1989), and achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992).

Rather than thinking of teachers' goals and sense of efficacy as stable and enduring characteristics, both are better conceptualized as developmentally fragile (Alexander, 2008). Constantly, the teaching profession communicates new goals and requirements for teachers to pursue, and many of these profession-imposed goals are extrinsic goals. Similarly, the teaching profession gives rise to new challenges, obstacles, constraints, and difficulties for teachers to cope with. For these reasons, the profession is stressful (Malmberg, 2008). The profession also places an emotionally taxing and heavy workload on teachers that is paired with a relatively low salary. As a classroom teacher, one has responsibilities for the learning of others; for dealing with a multitude of imposed external demands; and for orchestrating the behaviors of a motivationally, cognitively, and socioculturally diverse students (Alexander, 2008). That is, there are plenty of occasions within day-to-day teaching to doubt one's teaching efficacy.

A mismatch between teachers' initial expectations versus their actually-experienced rewards and demands may lead to early attrition. Schools typically lose 40% of their new K-12 teachings in their first five years of the profession, and this is true in the United States (Budig, 2006; Roness, 2011) as well as the United Kingdom (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2006). These are bleak statistics for anyone reflecting on teacher motivation. But, many teachers do find their way to greater passion, enthusiasm, and satisfaction (Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet, & Guay, 2008; Maskit, 2011). But, it is important to note that gains in teaching efficacy are not enough to provide a strong sense of professional satisfaction; teaching itself needs to be enjoyable (Fernet et al., 2012; Moe, Pazzaglia, & Ronconi, 2010).

### *Is Teaching Fun? Teachers' Psychological Need Satisfaction*

What makes a task (or job) interesting and enjoyable is an intriguing question. In an SDT analysis, the answer to this question is that interest and enjoyment emerge out of the experience of psychological need satisfaction (in terms of autonomy, competence, and relatedness) during activity engagement (Deci, 1992; Krapp, 2002; Tsai, Kunter, Lüdtke, Trautwein, & Ryan, 2008). Whether teaching is fun or not—whether teachers experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness need satisfaction while teaching and interacting with students, colleagues,

principals, and parents—depends a great deal on the sociocontextual classroom and schooling environments. One framework used to understand teachers' psychological need satisfaction versus frustration is to consider teachers' extent of professional support versus pressure from above, from within, and from below (Pelletier, Seguin-Levesque, & Legault, 2002; Reeve, 2009; Soenens, Sierens, Vansteenkiste, Dochy, & Goossens, 2012). Support versus pressure from above refers to how constructive versus coercive teachers experience interactions with administrators and parents, how heavy educational policies and societal expectations force on teachers the twin burdens of responsibility and accountability to produce students' learning, performance, and targeted behavior. Support versus pressure from within refers to teachers' own autonomous versus controlled motivations to teach and to the autonomy- and control-oriented beliefs and personality dispositions they harbor. Support versus pressure from below refers to teachers' day-to-day perceptions about how motivated and engaged their students are (or are not) and to their beliefs about the nature of student motivation.

The more teachers experience pressuring constraints and coercions from above and from within, the more they tend toward emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of students, and a controlling motivating style during instruction (Soenens et al., 2012). Furthermore, the more teachers perceive pressures from below, the less likely they are to use autonomy-supportive instructional strategies and the more likely they are to use controlling ones (Sarrazin, Tessier, Pelletier, Trouilloud, & Chanel, 2006; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007). Similarly, when teachers see their principals promoting intrinsic goals for teaching that encourage them to find challenge, meaning, and a sense of purpose in their teaching, the more teachers experience high autonomy and low burnout; but when teachers see their principals promoting extrinsic goals for teaching that use contingent rewards to motivate their compliance with rules and policies, the more teachers experience high burnout and low autonomy (Eyal & Roth, 2011). Overall, a teacher's experience of psychological need satisfaction is affected—for better or for worse—by a wide range of job-related conditions, and how much psychological need satisfaction teachers experience foreshadows their enactment of an autonomy-supportive classroom motivating style (Taylor, Ntoumanis, & Standage, 2008), which leads us into the second half of the story about teacher motivation.

### A Teacher's Motivating Style toward Students

A teacher's motivating style manifests itself during instruction as the tone of his or her sentiment and behavior while trying to motivate and engage students during learning activities (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981; Reeve, 2009). For instance, a teacher might try to encourage a student to read a book, follow a rule, or improve performance. Motivating style captures the quality of the teacher's sentiment (the tone of interaction) and behavior (what the teacher says and does) while trying to spark, encourage, and sustain students' initiative and active involvement in the activity. It can be conceptualized along a bipolar continuum that ranges from a highly controlling style on one end of the continuum through a somewhat neutral style to a highly autonomy-supportive style on the other end of the continuum (Deci, Schwartz, et al., 1981).

Autonomy support is whatever the teacher does to vitalize and support students' classroom experience of autonomy. (Autonomy is the inner endorsement of one's actions—the sense that one's goals, plans, thoughts, emotions, and actions emanate from oneself and are one's own [Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000]). More specifically, it is the interpersonal sentiment and behavior teachers provide during instruction to identify, vitalize, nurture, and develop students' inner motivational resources (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Reeve, 2009). For instance, in practice, a teacher who relies on an autonomy-supportive style at the beginning of a lesson would first anticipate and assess students' interest in the upcoming lesson. The teacher would then seek to vitalize that interest by offering an instructional opportunity capable of sparking situational interest (e.g., offering a challenge, piquing curiosity). Once vitalized, the teacher would then work to nurture and grow that interest—throughout the lesson, but also developmentally as in the cultivation of an enduring individual interest in the topic.

The opposite of autonomy support is a controlling style, which is the interpersonal sentiment and behavior teachers provide during instruction to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific teacher-defined way (Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon, & Roth, 2005; Reeve, 2009; Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Soenens et al., 2012). In practice, controlling teachers discount, neglect, or outright thwart students' inner motivational resources (especially autonomy need

satisfaction) and, instead, motivate and engage by (1) telling or prescribing what students are to think, feel, or do and (2) applying subtle or not-so-subtle pressure until students forego their own preferences (their own inner motivational resources) to adopt the teacher's prescribed way of thinking, feeling, or acting. For instance, the controlling teacher would prescribe a course of action (e.g., "revise your paper," "follow the rule," "try harder," "participate more") and add a twist of compliance-pushing pressure until the student did indeed enact the prescribed action (e.g., by invoking an urgent deadline, by uttering pressuring language).

### ***Benefits from Receiving and Giving Autonomy Support***

In many respects, students' perceived autonomy is only a latent potential. This is true not only of students' perceived autonomy but also of all inner motivational resources, including their interest, curiosity, preference for optimal challenge, and so on. For student autonomy to actualize itself to the point that it energizes and directs students' classroom activity, its latent potential needs to be vitalized and, once vitalized, supported. This is what autonomy-supportive teachers do so well—they identify students' inner motivational resources, vitalize them during instructional activities, support their flourishing, and developmentally strengthen them to the point that the student gains a greater capacity to motivate himself or herself. Another way of saying this is that autonomy-supportive teachers provide students with an interpersonal relationship that affords them with opportunities to experience learning activities within a motivational climate of personal autonomy.

Students benefit when teachers support their autonomy (Assor et al., 2002; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, 2009; Reeve & Jang, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students taught by autonomy-supportive teachers, compared with students taught by neutral or controlling teachers, experience and display more constructive *motivation* (e.g., perceived autonomy, intrinsic motivation, curiosity, internalized valuing; Deci et al., 1981; Reeve, Jang, Hardré, & Omura, 2002; Reeve, Nix, & Hamm, 2003), greater classroom *engagement* (e.g., behavioral engagement, class attendance; Assor et al., 2002; Assor et al., 2005; Black & Deci, 2000; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Barch, & Jeon, 2004; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997), healthier

*development* (e.g., creativity, self-worth, preference for optimal challenge; Deci, Nezlak, & Sheinman, 1981; Deci, Schwartz, et al., 1981; Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984; Shapira, 1976), enhanced *learning* (e.g., conceptual understanding, deep information processing, self-regulation strategies; Benware & Deci, 1984; McGraw & McCullers, 1979; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, et al., 2004; Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005), improved *performance* (e.g., grades, standardized test scores; Black & Deci, 2000; deCharms, 1976; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Soenens, & Matos, 2005), and greater *well-being* (e.g., psychological well-being, vitality, biological well-being; Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Levesque, Zuehlke, Stanek, & Ryan, 2004; Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). These benefits occur for students in preschool (Koestner et al., 1984), elementary school (Deci, Schwartz, et al., 1981), middle school (Vansteenkiste, Simons, et al., 2005), and high school (Reeve, Jang, et al., 2004), as well as for undergraduate (Black & Deci, 2000) and graduate (Sheldon & Krieger, 2004) students, and for students with special needs (Deci, Hodges, Peirson, & Tomassone, 1992), in after-school programs (Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, & Valsiner, 2007), and for those in classrooms around the globe (outside of North American and Europe), including those situated in China (Vansteenkiste, Zhou, et al., 2005), Singapore (Hagger et al., 2007; Lim & Wang, 2009), Korea (Cheon, Reeve, & Moon, 2012; Jang, Reeve, Ryan, & Kim, 2009), Taiwan (Hardré et al., 2006), Israel (Assor et al., 2005), Brazil (Chirkov, Ryan, & Willness, 2005), and Russia (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001).

Teacher-provided autonomy support benefits more than just students. Teacher-provided autonomy support further benefits the teachers who give it. When teachers give autonomy support, they experience greater personal accomplishment and lesser emotional exhaustion from their teaching, compared with their relatively controlling counterparts (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). They also experience greater psychological need satisfaction while teaching, feel more efficacious while teaching, and report greater job satisfaction (Cheon & Reeve, 2014). Some research even shows that when asking who benefits more—the person receiving autonomy support or the person giving it—the answer is actually the latter (Deci, La Guardia, Moller, Scheiner, & Ryan, 2006)!



### ***Autonomy Support: What It Is, How to Practice It***

What one autonomy-supportive teacher says and does during instruction varies widely from what another will say and do. Still, autonomy-supportive teachers all tend to share three fundamentals: (1) adopt the students' perspective and frame of reference during instruction; (2) invite, welcome, and incorporate students' thoughts, feelings, suggestions, and behaviors into the flow of the lesson; and (3) enact some constellation of the following five instructional behaviors discussed in the paragraphs below. Here, it is important to point out that these five acts of instruction have been empirically validated as autonomy (Reeve & Jang, 2006) and engagement (Reeve, Jang, et al., 2004; Reeve & Jang, 2006) supports and therefore can function as recommended practice to support student autonomy.

Before detailing what autonomy-supportive teachers say and do during instruction, it is important to emphasize that any instructional effort to support students' autonomy involves prerequisite perspective taking and acknowledging. Such perspective taking is reflective mental work in which teachers proactively take, appreciate, and ask about their students' perspective on the forthcoming classwork. For instance, they would develop their lesson plans in response to such questions as, "Will students find this interesting? Is this lesson relevant and useful to my students' goals and aspirations? If I asked students how they might improve the lesson, what would they likely say—would they want to revise the lesson in some way?" At the start of instruction, autonomy-supportive teachers often openly solicit and integrate students' ideas, suggestions, and contributions. This might be as simple as "Any suggestions?," but it might also be as involved as an open discussion about the lesson or about the class more generally. It may take the form of a formative assessment. Throughout the lesson, autonomy-supportive teachers monitor students' engagement signals so that they can take in information about how well their instructional strategies are tapping into and involving their students' motivational resources, because the more teachers respond to students' engagement signals the more likely they are to become in synch with their students (Lee & Reeve, 2012).

#### **VITALIZE INNER MOTIVATIONAL RESOURCES**

Students walk into any classroom possessing a host of latent motivational resources, including their inherent psychological needs (for autonomy,

competence, and relatedness), intrinsic motivation, intrinsic goals, self-endorsed (internalized) values, individual interests, curiosity, and a preference for optimal challenge (see Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004). (Of course, they also walk into classrooms with smartphones, an intention to update their Facebook page, a desire to talk with their friends, the strategy to hide and listen only when the teacher says "this will be on the test," and the goal to do as little work as possible.) Vitalizing inner motivational resources means adapting instruction so that it taps into and involves students' inner resources to the point that students' classroom activity is initiated and regulated by these inner resources. That is, the reason why students begin working on a lesson and the reason why they continue to do so because it is satisfying (enjoyable), meaningful (important), goal-relevant, curiosity-piquing, challenge inviting, and so forth, and not because they have to obey a directive, fulfill a request, or prepare for Friday's test. It is a particularly useful ingredient within a teacher's repertoire when introducing a learning activity and seeking initial engagement. For instance, when designed to vitalize inner motivational resources, the first moment of instruction might begin with a curiosity-inducing question, such as when a language teacher asks, "In which country are more people trying to learn the English language—the United States or China?" Such a question might pique (i.e., "vitalize") curiosity because, surprisingly, there are five times as many people in China trying to learn English. Or, a mathematics teacher might use the first moment of instruction to offer an optimal challenge, "Here is a question/problem for you; let's see if you can figure it out. . ." Similarly, an English teacher might begin the day's lesson by promoting an intrinsic goal for writing, "Today we are going to read a passage by the writer Philip Roth. As you read, notice how good the writing is. Ask yourself what makes this such good writing, and use your answer to discover how to become a better writer yourself." The idea is that students' naturally want to do what is curiosity-arousing, optimally challenging, and relevant to their personal goals. In contrast, controlling instruction ignores or by-passes such opportunities to vitalize inner resources and, instead, relies on artificial or pressuring sources of motivation to try to manufacture student engagement.

#### **PROVIDE EXPLANATORY RATIONALES**

A rationale is a verbal explanation as to why putting forth effort during a learning activity might be



a useful thing to do (Reeve et al., 2002). Providing rationales means communicating to students the usefulness of an activity or a recommended course of action. Explanatory rationales are particularly engagement-fostering when the personal utility of the request or activity is unknown to students. For instance, as students face a learning activity that they initially find to be unappealing (e.g., “Do we really have to do this?”), teachers can help support students’ otherwise fragile motivation by providing explanatory rationales, such as “The reason I’m asking you to do this is because. . .” It is a particularly useful motivational support when teachers ask students to engage in an activity, procedure, or rule that is, from their point of view, uninteresting, unappealing, or simply “not worth doing.” The idea is that honest, valid, and satisfying rationales afford students an opportunity to internalize the value of what others (e.g., teacher, community) find worthwhile. If internalized and accepted as one’s own, if the teacher-provided rationale is believed to be useful enough to justify the students’ attention and effort, then the now self-endorsed reason becomes capable of acting as an inner motivational resource for that student (i.e., as a self-endorsed value). In contrast, when students do not understand why the teacher is making a request of them, they often view the request as arbitrary, imposed, or simply meaningless busywork.

Together, vitalizing inner resources and providing explanatory rationales afford classroom teachers with a one-two punch in how to introduce a learning activity or a teacher request: when the task is potentially interesting then focus on vitalizing an inner motivational resource, but when the task is expected to be unappealing to students then focus on providing explanatory rationales.

#### **RELY ON NONCONTROLLING, INFORMATIONAL LANGUAGE**

Noncontrolling, informational language is teacher-provided communication that is non-evaluative, flexible, diagnostic, and constructive. Noncontrolling means avoiding messages that communicate external evaluation and pressure (“you should . . . you have to . . . you must. . .”); informational means offering insight that students can use to understand, diagnose, and solve a problem (e.g., poor performance, disengagement, disrespectful behavior). For instance, when a teacher relies on noncontrolling and informational language, he or she would begin a discussion of students’ poor performance or irresponsible behavior by asking

the student about it, “I’ve noticed that you made a surprisingly low score on the test. Do you know why that might be?” Such language is a particularly useful to supporting students’ motivation when communicating requirements and responsibilities, when offering feedback, and when addressing motivational and behavioral problems. The idea is to address the problem yet still preserve the student’s sense of ownership and responsibility (i.e., perceived autonomy) for regulating their own behavior and for diagnosing and solving their own problems. The teacher essentially takes on the role of an ally who helps the student make progress in improving his or her adjustment, citizenship, and development. In contrast, controlling language would verbally push and pressure the student toward a teacher-specified behavior or solution without enlisting the students’ problem-solving effort (e.g., “you must improve your grades”).

#### **DISPLAY PATIENCE TO ALLOW TIME FOR SELF-PACED LEARNING**

Time constraints, high-stakes testing, and panic-laced telephone calls from parents make it easy to understand why teachers are sometimes not patient, but the reason to be patient (motivationally speaking) comes from a deep valuing for the student’s autonomy and an understanding that learning processes, such as conceptual change, and the building and revising of sophisticated knowledge structures take time. Displaying patience means that students need both time and space to explore and manipulate learning materials, formulate and try out hypotheses, set goals and make plans, make mistakes and start over, monitor and revise their work, and alter their problem-solving strategies. Displaying patience as students struggle to understand a concept or adjust their behavior is a particularly useful motivational support when students involve themselves in learning activities that are unfamiliar, complex, or involve new skills, new ways of thinking, and new ways of behaving. In practice, patience involves postponing advice or intervention until understanding and appreciating the student’s perspective and goals. It also means timing teacher support until it is requested or clearly needed (e.g., hints when students seem stuck). In contrast, controlling instruction impatiently rushes in to show or tell students the answer or solution according to the teacher’s perspective and timetable (i.e., “Here, let me show you how to do it.”), thereby by-passing the learning opportunity. Teacher patience facilitates student autonomy and learning; teacher impatience

pushes pressure and compliance (e.g., get the right answer, enact a targeted behavior).

#### ACKNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPT EXPRESSIONS OF NEGATIVE AFFECT

As students struggle through motivational conflicts and behavioral problems, they often experience negative emotion that leads them to complain, resist, protest, sulk, and display a “bad attitude.” Acknowledging and accepting such negative emotionality means taking it to heart and even welcoming such expressions as potentially valid reactions to unexplained rules, confusing assignments, unwelcomed requests, unrealistic expectations, unreasonable demands, or imposed structures. Acknowledging and accepting negative affect is a particularly useful motivational support when students work through conflicts that pit what teachers want students to do (e.g., read a book, revise a paper) against what students want students to do (e.g., something different, something less demanding). For instance, sensing a rising tide of negative affect, an autonomy-supportive teacher might acknowledge a motivational problem (e.g., “I see that you all are not very interested in today’s lesson.”), accept the negative emotionality (e.g., “Yes, we have practiced this same skill many times before, haven’t we?”), and welcome suggestions as to how to resolve the problem (e.g., “Let’s see; what might we do differently—any suggestions?”). The idea is that students’ motivational problems and negative feelings, if unaddressed, interfere with their engagement and learning. Soothing negative feelings therefore becomes a prerequisite to motivationally readying students to accept the forthcoming lesson and to learn and really benefit from it. In contrast, controlling instruction does not see students’ resistance as valid (“You’re immature; you’re irresponsible.”) and, hence, it counters or tries to change students’ negative emotionality into something more acceptable to the teacher (e.g., “Quit your complaining; grow up; get to work.”).

#### *Becoming More Autonomy Supportive*

On average, most teachers are not autonomy supportive during instruction (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010; Reeve, Jang, et al., 2004; Sarrazin et al., 2006; Tessier, Sarrazin, & Ntoumanis, 2008, 2010). Rather, most teachers need to learn how to be autonomy supportive. Fortunately, intervention-based research in which teachers participate in informational and mentoring sessions on how to support

students’ autonomy shows that teachers can learn to become significantly more autonomy supportive toward their students (Cheon et al., 2012; Cheon & Reeve, 2013; Su & Reeve, 2011). This positive training effect has been shown to occur for both preservice (Reeve, 1998) and veteran teachers, including both middle-school (Cheon et al., 2012; deCharms, 1976) and high-school (Reeve, Jang et al., 2004) teachers.

In their meta-analysis of the teacher training literature on how to become more autonomy supportive, Su and Reeve (2011) located 20 empirical investigations in which the research team initiated an intervention program designed specifically to help teachers and others (e.g., workplace managers) learn how to be more autonomy supportive. In general, these studies first invited classroom teachers to participate in a training intervention that was based on SDT principles and provided skill-based training of how to enact the earlier-discussed autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors and then assessed the course-specific outcomes experienced by the students of the trained teachers. The two general findings have been that trained teachers do generally learn how to be more autonomy supportive during instruction, and the students of trained teachers show meaningful and substantial gains in terms of their motivation and indices of positive classroom functioning, such as engagement. The average training effect size for all studies was  $d = 0.63$  (95% confidence interval, 0.43–0.83), and it was  $d = 1.33$  (95% confidence interval, 1.18–1.49) for those interventions judged to employ particularly well-designed interventions.

Some of interventions were more effective than others. According to Su and Reeve (2011), the relatively more effective interventions tended to include most of the following: (1) a training experience that featured the full range of the autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors; (2) a brief (2 hours) initial training experience; (3) an intervention that focused more on skill (how to be autonomy supportive) than on content (what autonomy support is); (4) a group discussion component where teachers could express their concerns and share ideas; (5) a reliance on both electronic media and supplemental reading materials to deliver the intervention; (6) an explicit effort to address participants’ pretraining beliefs, values, and personality dispositions that would otherwise conflict with the training message; (7) supplemental follow-up activities to serve as a booster effect to the original training session; and (8) a continuing flow of support throughout the intervention’s

implementation, as through the availability of an on-going mutual support group. These characteristics identify best-practices training programs.

### ***Autonomy Support and Structure***

The starting point of autonomy-supportive teaching is to appreciate, value, and take the students' perspective during instruction. Such an approach to instruction does not, however, downplay the importance and necessity of appreciating, valuing, and taking the perspective of the teacher and the larger perspective of the school, parents, state, or culture. The principal way that teachers communicate their (or the school's) expectations, standards, requirements, priorities, goals, plans, and needs is to provide students with a highly structured classroom experience, (Jang et al., 2010; Reeve, 2006). For instance, to make their perspective and priorities salient, teachers communicate what they expect students to do, define their standards as to what does and does not constitute good work, set goals for students to pursue, provide directions for students to follow, scaffold students' learning and motivation, provide feedback, analyze strengths and weaknesses, and so on.

Teachers generally do a good job of communicating and promoting the needs and preferences of the school and its curriculum (Jang et al., 2010). However, the problem with structure is that it can, potentially, overscript learning and therefore undermine students' perceived autonomy, sense of personal responsibility, or what Richard deCharms' (1976) called "personal causation." But structure's opposite—permissiveness—is no better than is overscripted structure, and it is potentially even worse (Hickey, 1997). A key classroom challenge autonomy-supportive teachers routinely face, motivationally speaking, is therefore how to introduce students to school-valued expected outcomes, goals, priorities, communications, rules, rewards, feedback, and other structure-enhancing elements in autonomy-supportive, rather than in controlling, ways.

A teacher's plans, priorities, and goals (i.e., perspective) can be expressed in autonomy-supportive ways. Furthermore, when trained raters observe teachers they consistently find that autonomy-supportive teachers are *more* likely, not less likely, to offer their students a highly structured learning environment (Jang et al., 2010; Sierens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Soenens, & Dochy, 2009). That is, the same teachers who clearly communicate their expectations, set high standards,

introduce classroom goals for students to pursue, and show strong classroom guidance are the ones who are more, not less, likely to vitalize students' inner motivational resources, provide explanatory rationales, rely on noncontrolling language, display patience, and acknowledge and accept negative affect. This means, in practice, that teachers do not need to overhaul what they do in the classroom to become more autonomy supportive. Rather, what it means is that teachers need to adapt what they already do (provide structure as they implement their lessons plans) so that they support autonomy rather than control behavior.

From this perspective, autonomy support need not be a stand-alone approach to instruction. It can be integrated into a highly structured approach to motivating and engaging students to the point that the teacher's decision is not to enact autonomy support or structure but, rather, it is how to provide students with high levels of both autonomy support and structure (Jang et al., 2010). This dualistic perspective on a teacher's motivating style (provide both autonomy support and structure) is becoming a popular and effective approach to provide students with optimal classroom instruction (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009; Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2003; Taylor & Ntoumanis, 2007).

### ***C'mon, Get Real: Autonomy Support Is Unrealistic and Too Difficult!***

We have conducted about 12 large-scaled interventions with teachers over the last decade to help them become more autonomy supportive toward students (e.g., Reeve, 1998; Reeve, Jang, et al., 2004; Cheon et al., 2012; Cheon & Reeve, 2013, 2014). Prior to the intervention experience, teachers tend to believe that autonomy support is a bit unrealistic and too difficult to implement, given the demands and reality of the classroom situation (Reeve et al., 2014). Because autonomy-supportive teaching is often believed to be difficult to implement, we typically find it necessary to conduct these teacher intervention programs in three phases, as follows.

#### **PHASE I: INTRODUCE AUTONOMY SUPPORT**

We begin each teaching training program with a conversation and PowerPoint presentation to define autonomy support, introduce empirical evidence on its benefits, and model examples of the five categories of autonomy-supportive instructional behavior. As we present this information, teachers' typical stream of consciousness goes something like

this: Autonomy support—what is that? Oh no, you can't just let students do whatever they want. C'mon, get real: This sounds like a lot of work! Okay, this might work for highly motivated students, but good luck trying this with some of my students!

**PHASE 2: IT IS “AUTONOMY SUPPORT AND STRUCTURE, NOT AUTONOMY SUPPORT OR STRUCTURE” PRECEDED AND FOLLOWED BY GROUP DISCUSSION**

After teachers have had a chance to digest the concept of supporting students' autonomy and to discuss its feasibility in their own classrooms, we introduce the concept of teacher-provided structure, acknowledge its role in effective instruction and in motivating and engaging students, endorse the instructional goal of high structure with high autonomy support, and provide modeled examples of how teachers might provide classroom structure in highly autonomy-supportive ways. As we present this information, teachers' typical stream of consciousness goes something like this: Okay, structure sounds good. I see that you are not trying to totally change my motivating style, but rather trying to overlay autonomy support onto what I already do. This still sounds like too much work though; I don't have time to do all of this—it sounds kind of nice, but it's naïve, it's unrealistic. We then invite teachers to participate in a group discussion in which they voice their concerns; identify potential obstacles; and share, suggest, and critique possible autonomy-supportive acts of instruction. These discussions quickly gain momentum as teachers hear creative ideas and instructional strategies from their fellow teachers. We then ask teachers to try out one or more of the previously mentioned autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors and ask them to return for one more group discussion.

**PHASE 3: GROUP DISCUSSION AFTER EXPERIMENTING WITH AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION**

After teachers sample autonomy support within the context of their own instruction (e.g., provide an explanatory rationale for a request, acknowledge and accept a student's complaint, prepare a lesson to spark students' interest and curiosity), they invariably have an experience—or series of experiences—in which students respond with immediate spikes of engagement. Teachers themselves report experiencing at least an occasional surge of enthusiasm accompanied by a healthy dose of

psychological need satisfaction. In this second group discussion, teachers again voice their concerns; identify obstacles; and share, suggest, and critique autonomy-supportive acts of instruction. But the sense of autonomy support as being unrealistic is typically gone.

**A FOURTH PHASE**

In one study, we continued the teaching intervention into a fourth phase by following-up teachers who participated a year earlier in a teacher intervention program (Cheon & Reeve, 2013). The goal of the study was to ask whether teachers were still autonomy supportive toward students and whether they continued to experience benefits, such as psychological need satisfaction, teacher enthusiasm, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction. Specifically, we asked teachers: Compared with a year ago, are you now more autonomy-supportive, less autonomy-supportive, or about the same as last year? Every teacher (physical education teachers in Korean middle schools) reported being more autonomy supportive. When we asked them why, some explained that they were more autonomy supportive because their students were now so much more engaged than before (i.e., because of student benefits), whereas others explained that their teaching was now so much more enjoyable and effective than before (i.e., because of teacher benefits). Some teachers volunteered that they had no interest in returning back to their pretraining (controlling) motivating style; their reasoning was that it was much easier, less conflictual, and a greater joy to teach a class of highly engaged students than it was to teach a class of highly unengaged students.

What these trained and highly accomplished teachers told us was that, once learned, autonomy support was actually easier and more realistic than was controlling teaching. It is a reliable and replicated finding that one primary reason why teachers are controlling during instruction is because their students are unmotivated and misbehaving (Sarrazin et al., 2006). That is, when unmotivated, listless, and disengaged, students “pull” a controlling style out of the teacher's repertoire (Pelletier et al., 2002). But, autonomy-supportive teacher training programs act as opportunities for teachers to build a more autonomy-supportive style into their instructional repertoire. What autonomy-supportive teaching does is promote students' autonomy and engagement during instruction (Cheon et al., 2012; Reeve, Jang, et al., 2004). Once students become autonomously motivated and highly engaged, the pull for a controlling

style evaporates. When students are highly motivated and engaged, teacher control seems out of place—even inappropriate. Under these conditions, teachers no longer believe that autonomy-supportive teaching is either unrealistic or too difficult.

## Conclusion

“How can I motivate others?” Perhaps you read this chapter to find a constructive, practical, and satisfying answer to this question. As pointed out by Deci (1995), however, the question itself is stated in a problematic way because “motivating others” implies taking charge and doing something to them, such as persuading, modeling, inspiring, or just plain yelling at students. A constructive way to rephrase this question, as pointed out by Deci (1995), is as follows: “How can I create the conditions under which people can motivate themselves?” This paraphrase guides practitioners toward an autonomy-supportive style, because it presumes that others are fully capable of motivating themselves. What others need from you is some support in vitalizing their otherwise latent inner motivational resources. The practical purpose of the present chapter is to provide the rationale and classroom practice behind this recommendation. Overall, our suggestion is to deeply appreciate the students’ perspective, welcome their thoughts and suggestions into the flow of instruction, and find or create new ways to vitalize students’ inner motivational resources, explain your requests and instructional activities, communicate with noncontrolling and informational language, be patient, and acknowledge and accept students’ negative emotionality as they work through the process of creating the conditions under which students can motivate and engage themselves.

## Future Directions

1. What predicts and explains teacher motivation? Teacher motivation is a multifaceted construct, consisting of the positive faces of enthusiasm, efficacy, satisfaction, and well-being, as well as the negative faces of burnout, inefficacy, dissatisfaction, and ill-being. These aspects of teacher motivation are affected by contextual factors; personal beliefs and values; and relationships with colleagues, administrators, parents, and students. It would be a welcome advance to create a framework that integrated this complexity into a full understanding of teacher motivation and its fruits (e.g., skill development, professional retention).

2. How reciprocal is a teacher’s motivating style on the one hand and students’ motivation, engagement, and behavior on the other hand? Most investigations in the teacher motivation literature use a cross-sectional, survey-based research design. These studies have generated a preliminary understanding of how teachers affect students and how students affect teachers. But teacher-student relations are reciprocal, dynamic, and developmental. This literature now needs longitudinally designed investigations that can tap into and model the complex interrelations that occur within teacher-student relationships.

3. Is teacher-provided autonomy support the opposite of teacher control, or do autonomy support and control represent two distinct aspects of a teacher’s motivating style. The question here is whether being autonomy supportive necessarily means that one cannot be controlling, or whether teachers can be both autonomy supportive and controlling, even during a single teacher-student interaction.

4. Do teachers benefit from giving autonomy support? It is clear that students benefit from receiving a teacher’s autonomy support. It is beginning to look like teachers too benefit not only from receiving autonomy support (as from principals) but from giving it as well. This research is quite new, and it is a promising new area of investigation that holds the potential to contribute important findings to teacher motivation.

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