Quick Reference Guide to Motivational Theory

**Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivation:**
- Students are affected by both *intrinsic* (inherent) and *extrinsic* (external) motivation.
- Researchers have found that students who are intrinsically motivated tend to use cognitive strategies like elaboration and organization, which foster deeper, conceptual understanding.
- Some students may be driven by a desire to achieve, although that desire may be situationally specific.

**The Takeaway:** Be aware of the internal and external satisfactions that a student may find in attending and participating in a classroom.
- Structure syllabi and lesson plans in ways that indicate that you value learning as much as good grades.
- Offer students opportunities to improve over the course of the semester.

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**Expectancy-Value Theory:**
Students choose activities that:
1. they value *and*
2. they expect to succeed in.

Motivation = value  x  expected success, and BOTH must be present.

**The Takeaway:** Help to instill confidence as well as interest in students.
- Take the time to explain the relevance of what you are teaching, even if it seems obvious to you.
- Have high expectations for student success, and provide the support so that students can achieve those expectations.

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**Mastery and Performance Goals:**
1. **Mastery Goals:** understanding and mastering course content
2. **Performance Goals:** achievement relative to other students

**The Takeaway:**
- Instructors can encourage a particular goal orientation by choosing criterion-referenced grading (mastery) or grading on a curve (performance)
- Instructors can encourage mastery goal orientation by respecting intellectual risk-taking and creating an accepting classroom atmosphere.
**Attribution Theory:**  
Three aspects of causes:  
1. **Locus** (internal/external)  
2. **Stability** (stable/unstable)  
3. **Responsibility** (controllable or not)

Students who understand the causality of their failures and successes as internal and controllable (studying enough) are more likely to be able to understand how they can improve.

Students who believe that the cause of their failures or successes is stable and uncontrollable (luck in the selection of exam questions) may be more pessimistic about their ability to improve.

**The Takeaway:** Help students to identify and understand the causes of the difficulties they have in class as changeable:
- by improving study skills
- spending more time preparing
- etc…

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**Three Indices of Motivation:**  
1. **Choice:** Students who are motivated to learn choose tasks that will help them to do so. Researchers have found that students want to feel a sense of control.
2. **Effort.** Students who are motivated to learn will work hard at those tasks.
3. **Persistence.**

Choice + Effort + Persistence = Achievement.

**The Takeaway:** Let students feel a sense of control, and effort and persistence may follow. Allow students to choose or suggest:
- paper topics
- test questions
- due dates
- reading assignments

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