

## Why Is It So Hard To Motivate People?

Everyone has motivation. When people say they don't have any motivation they usually mean that they don't really want to do what other people think they should want to do.

To motivate someone you have to find out about them and what their needs are. People are very motivated by the need to feel good about themselves and the need not to embarrass themselves. We like to feel we have influence in the world, and we enjoy achievement. We are motivated by the need for social contact.

Improving our long-term health is generally not a strong motivator. When people talk about why they stopped smoking it is more often to get rid of the stain on their teeth or the smell of their breath than to avoid lung or heart disease.

Money is a poor motivator. When people are working for money but feel their work is meaningless and their efforts unrecognised productivity suffers.

When people try to help other people, they often appeal to what they assume is the other person's motivation, or what they think should be their motivation. "Don't you want a good job?" they say to homework shy children, not realising that kids find it hard to think about tomorrow, never mind next month or next year. "Think about what you're doing to your liver," they say in desperation to the alcoholic, failing to recognise the self hatred and desire for oblivion, temporary or maybe permanent, which accompanies addictive behaviour.

Motivational Interviewing is a process developed to motivate people who substance abuse. Instead of haranguing the addicted person or explaining the error of their ways to them, the counsellor listens carefully and respectfully. The counsellor's job is to help the addict to weigh up the benefits and disadvantages of their addictive behaviour without judging or coercing. Presuming the rest of us are right and the addictive behaviour is counter-productive, the addict will be able to see this too once they are accorded sufficient respect and space.

When you give people who are doing what seem like stupid, self-destructive things a good listening to, instead of a good talking to, you begin to see that they are acting quite reasonably in difficult circumstances and you are humbled.

Joseph Campbell talked about "following one's bliss". He said that in order to lead a fulfilling and purposeful life a person needs to identify what is really important to them and to live according to those priorities. What is your bliss? Did you follow your bliss today?

Responses to this article are warmly welcomed.

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