

Adult Intrinsic Motivations for Learning

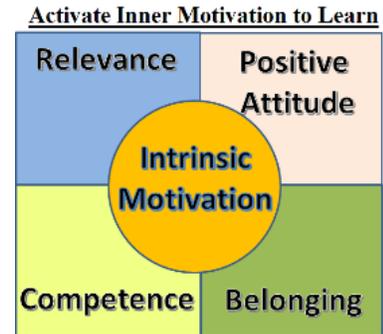
Research points to at least four key factors that release inner motivation and inspire adults to become lifelong life-learners. The interconnection of all four accelerates learning in adults (adapted from “*Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*” by Wlodkoski. Chapter Three, “Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn,” is worth the price of the book).

1. Relevance: *Demonstrating value by relating learning to life:* A desire to find meaning is fundamental to humanity. Adult learners in particular dislike busywork. Adults need to know the reason for learning something. So relate learning to life. God’s image-bearers are active beings who desire to shape the course of our lives in relevant ways. *First*, create thoughtful and challenging learning experiences *within the group* that tap into the rich perspectives, exquisite variety, and deep-seated values of adult learners. Such an environment where meaning-making roams about promiscuously is the source of surprising new births.

Second, this fluid learning community stimulates personal, relevant responses that propel learning *out of* the formal classroom into significant arenas of our real-life experiences, connecting truth with daily life. God’s people possess a strong need to apply what we have learned in our concrete and real world. We cannot respond to life and remain unchanged. As we bring these experiences back to the group, this releases life and learning in others.

2. Positive Attitude: *Creating positive attitudes towards learning:* Our attitude predisposes us in a certain direction, positively or negatively. Particularly since many western Christians have negative past experiences with learning, realistic, positive expectations are essential at the beginning. *Joy* is God’s the hallmark of God’s design for learning. Affirm in one another a favorable outlook towards learning. Provide a basis for hope. Inward motivation is released when learners see that what is coming will be valuable to them. Without this expectation, their will to take ownership and to learn rusts shut. With this belief, learners will make the indispensable choices to put out full effort, leading to active buy-in and ownership, which in turn is a key to learning. Adults need to take responsibility for their learning. Regardless of what they might add as imperfect learners, every member is vital, like each part of a body is. Communicate unqualified acceptance and a strong belief in their capacity as lifelong life-learners designed in the image of the Trinity.

2. Belonging: *Connecting with each other accelerates growth:* Creating a community environment in which both the learners and teachers feel respected and connected to one another develops a relaxed, stimulating place to learn. Cooperation is the norm for learning since we are social beings. As a community of learners, as mutually-accepting, encircling partners, we care as much about the learning of our peers as we do about our own learning. Perhaps on the horizontal plane, nothing is quite as powerful as community as a high-learning, no-shame culture. When we respond with authenticity from the center of who we really are, our desire to make sense of things and search out our full range of capacities grows. This fluid, playful, inclusive collaboration with one another develops a different relationship with discovery, frees us to tell our 1st-person story, enhances retention, opens up rich possibilities for relevant action, and maximizes growth as we become influence-able influencers.



4. Competence: *Experiencing growing competence in skills, values, &/or character:* As image-bearers, God created us to rule...to explore, perceive, evaluate, think about and change our surroundings to promote positive effects. We want to matter! Growing competence taps into our God-given yearning to count, to experience significance. Learning something valued is the single most powerful motivation for adult learners. This makes the process pleasurable and desirable....and fun! Success cultivates expectancy for continued success to improve skills, values and character. Successful learning drives us to learn more. So early-on in the process, encourage incremental, easy-to-learn, “*quick-hits*” success in crucial leverage points. Everyone is then inspired to learn when information is not just accumulated and hoarded by individuals, but willingly shared. *Each one teach one* as one learner in community shares a positive experience.

Stop now and ask yourself, “*Why are these four key ingredients so important to recapture healthy learning?*”

How do these four key motivational elements interact?

Solid learning theory is behind how Jesus taught and what we are attempting to reproduce in sowing a new culture like Jesus.