

## Motivation

### Theories of Motivation

In the history of psychology's exploration of the motivating factors behind behavior, four theoretical perspectives have proven the most influential: instinct theory, drive reduction theory, incentive theory, and arousal theory.

**Instinct theory** came out of the growing evolutionary understanding of the origins of behaviors. It assumes that some complex behaviors are not learned and can be explained by a genetic predisposition to the behavior. This approach is most often applied to explain species-typical behaviors (ex. cats cleaning themselves).

**Drive reduction theory** states that a physiological need creates a psychological state that pushes the organism to behave in ways that reduce the need.

**Incentive theory** holds that the motives we are drawn to are due to learning. We learn to associate some stimuli with rewards and others with punishment, and we are motivated to seek the rewards.

**Arousal theory** suggests that some behaviors are motivating because they increase arousal; that is, that they stimulate the organism or individual in some needed fashion. The basic idea is that we want to maintain an optimal level of arousal.

*See the list of motivated behaviors below. For each behavior, identify which theories could be used to explain why the behavior occurs and describe how that theory would explain the behavior.*

Behavior	Theories	Explanations
A human infant rooting to find the mother's nipple		
Studying alone rather than with friends to do better on a test		
Getting a glass of water when you are thirsty		
Going for a walk when you are worried or restless		
Working on a difficult jigsaw puzzle		
Crying when hurt or upset		
Developing a lasting, intimate relationship		

## Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Sometimes making choices can be very stressful. Let's review the different types of choices that can cause us internal conflict.

**Avoidance-avoidance conflict:** Choosing between two unattractive alternatives

**Approach-approach conflict:** Choosing between two pleasant alternatives

**Approach-avoidance conflict:** Choosing or avoiding an attractive option that has some negative aspect(s) to it.

**Multiple Approach-avoidance conflict:** Choosing between two attractive alternatives that each have negative aspects to them.

*In this exercise, you will personalize your own response to stress predicting the intensity of stress that various conflict situations would generate. For each situation, label the conflict pattern it represents (see in bold above) and estimate on a scale of 1 to 10 how much stress each situation would generate for you personally.*

Conflict	Type if Conflict	Your Stress Intensity Rating
1. Going to the dentist to have an aching tooth repaired.		
2. Choosing between your favorite ice cream with a waffle cone and your favorite cobbler at Beth Marie's.		
3. Discovering that your new and very attractive dating partner has chronic bad breath.		
4. Choosing between a 7 a.m. and an 8 p.m. class.		
5. Deciding between a one-week vacation at Disney World and a one-week camping trip in the mountains.		
6. Choosing between breast removal and chemotherapy after a diagnosis of breast cancer.		
7. Selecting one of two highly rated colleges that have admitted you.		
8. As a vegetarian, being asked whether you want steak or ribs.		
9. Choosing to stay with a spouse that you have two kids with but don't love anymore or to separate.		
10. Deciding whether to buy a low-priced, beautiful used car that needs a major repair on its engine.		
11. Having plastic surgery to correct a bump on the bridge of your nose.		
12. Deciding whether to sneak out and see your love knowing that you will be grounded if caught.		

13. Choosing to live in a lovely house in the country or an upscale apartment in the city.		
14. Your mom gives you the option to start studying or do the dishes.		
15. Deciding which store you want a gift certificate to for your birthday.		