

The Relation of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Goals to Well-being (SWB and PWB)

Edward L. Deci

University of Rochester

There are many things that people aspire to in their lives, including, for example, affluence, affiliation, and generativity. Research indicates that the various life goals tend to fall into two categories-intrinsic goals such as personal growth, physical fitness, and community contributions, and extrinsic goals such as amassing wealth, gaining adulation, and presenting an attractive image. Individuals vary in terms of the importance they place on these different goals. Research indicates that vigorous pursuit of intrinsic goals is associated with better psychological health (PWB), whereas the vigorous pursuit of extrinsic goals is associated with poorer PWB. Furthermore, although making progress in any goals that people hold to be important may increase their happiness (SWB), it is the attainment of intrinsic goals, and not of extrinsic goals, that contributes to their PWB. Recent research has also found that emphasizing intrinsic versus extrinsic goals to others, such as your children, has different consequences for the others' behavior and well-being. This presentation will focus on the different types of goals, considering their developmental antecedents and their consequences for effective functioning. It will also link the effects of the different goals to the satisfaction of people's basic psychological needs.