

# What's Your Motivation Style?

By Marcia L. Conner

Motivation is the force that draws you to move toward something. It can come from a desire or a curiosity within you or can be from an external force urging you on. In either case, you make the decision to seize or to skip a chance to learn. Motivation styles vary for different situations and topics but nonetheless, you draw on them all the time, especially when you try to learn something challenging. If you can recognize your predominant motivational style, you can identify the situations that best satisfy your needs. Likewise, you can't motivate anyone else. All you can do is invite them to learn.

Take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire assessing your preferred motivation style. Begin by reading the words in the left-hand column. Of the three responses to the right, circle the one that best characterizes you, answering as honestly as possible with the description that applies to you now. Count the number of circled items and write your total at the bottom of each column. These questions have no right or wrong answers. Your response offers insight about how you're motivated to learn.

<b>1. I'm proud when I...</b>	Get things done.	Help other people.	Think things through.
<b>2. I mostly think about...</b>	What's next.	People.	Ideas.
<b>3. To relax, I tend to...</b>	Do whatever it takes to accomplish relaxation.	Hang out and talk with friends.	Read or surf the web to learn new things.
<b>4. I like to do things...</b>	Now or on a schedule.	When it works for everyone.	When it feels right to me.
<b>5. When online, I like to...</b>	Search and retrieve.	Write emails, instant message, or chat.	Look around and linger.
<b>6. Projects should be...</b>	Finished on time.	Done in groups.	Meaningful to me.
<b>7. In school, I liked to...</b>	Ask constant questions.	Make friends.	Explore.
<b>8. Schedules...</b>	Keep order.	Help coordinate people.	Are a useful tool.
<b>9. I like to be recognized for...</b>	Being organized, neat, productive, efficient, and punctual.	Noticing other people, being kind, fair, thoughtful, and considerate.	Being clever and smart, making discoveries, and solving problems.
<b>10. In terms of completing things...</b>	I finish what I start.	I like to enlist the help of other people.	I believe that life is a journey, not a destination.
<b>Total</b>	Goal:	Relationship:	Learning:

The column with the highest total represents your primary motivation style. The column with the second-highest total is your secondary motivation style. You're likely to be motivated most in one area, with some overlap in a second area.

Your primary motivation style: \_\_\_\_\_

Your secondary motivation style: \_\_\_\_\_

If you're **goal-oriented**, you'll probably reach for your goals through a direct and obvious route. This might lead you to a reference book, your computer, or to call an expert—whatever means is available. You usually prefer meeting in-person when it's the most effective method and don't find learning, itself, much fun.

If you're **relationship-oriented**, you take part in learning mainly for social contact. When you meet and interact with people, you learn things along the way. You may not like working independently or focusing on topics (separately from the people) because that doesn't give you the interactivity you crave.

If you're **learning-oriented**, the practice of learning, itself, drives you. You search for knowledge for its own sake and may become frustrated by anything that requires you to spend more time on procedure and process than on actual learning.

There is also a fourth motivation style I that haven't yet addressed, primarily because it's far less common than the other three styles and because you might not think of it as a motivation style at all. That style is **thrill-oriented**, drawn not to any particular thing but, rather, away from anything that people perceive as tying them down, bounding them, or pulling them in any predictable direction. This isn't to say that thrill-oriented learners can't acquire goals, relationships, or curiosity, but if any of these feel too time-consuming, invasive, or binding, the learner becomes restless and perhaps experiences a compulsion to go in another direction—any other direction—to feel free. If you're thrill-oriented, you're likely to be impulsive and you want to remain impulsive; you seek out thrills and flee anything that doesn't offer you that sensation. All of us at one time or another feel impulsive or have an urge to do something else, but we usually moderate these urges when they come, instead of always following where they lead.

**More information on each style, along with suggestions on how to maximize your motivation, is available in the book *Learn More Now* (Hoboken, NJ; John Wiley & Sons, 2004).**

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This assessment was published in *Learn More Now: 10 Simple Steps to Learning Better, Smarter, and Faster* (Hoboken, NJ; John Wiley & Sons, March 2004). Learn about the book at and read an excerpt at <http://marciaconner.com/learnmorenow/>. Join the Ageless Learner mailing list to receive information about issues related to assessments and learning across the lifespan at <http://agelesslearner.com/joinus.html>.

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