

Public Abstract

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Title:INTERNALIZING INTROJECTED GOALS THROUGH REFLECTIVE WRITING

Research in psychology shows that people are more successful in accomplishing their goals when they are motivated by feelings of autonomy, rather than of guilt or self-pressure, towards the goal. Given that individuals are faced with personal objectives that are often motivated by self-pressure, what can these individuals do to increase feelings of autonomy towards their goals? Previous research suggests that individuals will increase feelings of autonomy towards a goal if they recognize the personal importance and value of the goal. In this study, I examined an intervention to increase autonomous feelings towards the goal of "keeping up with schoolwork" in which participants wrote about their goals repeatedly over 3 weeks. Results showed that participants with higher ACT scores who wrote repeatedly about the importance and meaningfulness (the "big picture") of academic work experienced greater benefits in accomplishing their academic goal. However, participants with lower ACT scores who wrote repeatedly about their daily activities experienced greater benefits. These results show that it is not always beneficial for students to think of the "big picture" of their goal, particularly when students lack the aptitude towards the goal. When experiencing difficulty with goals, individuals may be better off focusing simply on how to accomplish the goal, rather than on the big meaning behind the goal.