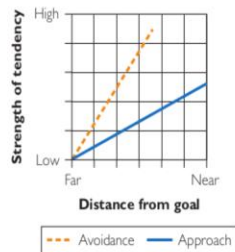


Figure 11.11 Approach and Avoidance Over Time.

As we get closer to a goal, the avoidance gradient becomes steeper than the approach gradient. Projects that seem desirable a few weeks in the future become more undesirable as the deadline approaches.



incentive theories

theories proposing that we're often motivated by positive goals

INCENTIVE THEORIES. As valuable as drive reduction theories have been to psychology, they don't explain why we often engage in behaviors even when our drives are satisfied. For example, drive reduction theories would predict that once Maya Angelou, Pablo Picasso, or Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart completed a masterpiece, their desire to generate another one would decrease, because they would've quenched their creative thirst. Yet the opposite often happens; creative success seems to breed an even greater desire to create.

As a consequence, psychologists have come to recognize that drive reduction theories of motivation need to be supplemented by **incentive theories**, which propose that we're often motivated by positive goals, like the pleasure of creating a great painting or the glory of finishing first in a track meet. Many of these theories, in turn, distinguish *intrinsic motivation*, in which people are motivated by internal goals, from *extrinsic motivation*, in which people are motivated by external goals. If we're intrinsically motivated to do well in a psychology class, we're driven primarily by our desire to master the material; if we're extrinsically motivated to do well in this class, we're driven primarily by our desire to get a good grade.

As we discovered earlier in the text (see LO 6.2b), behaviorists define reinforcement as any outcome that makes the behavior that preceded it more likely. Yet there's evidence that certain rewards that we might expect to be reinforcers may *undermine* intrinsic motivation, making us less likely to perform behaviors we once enjoyed (Deci, 1971; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Mark Lepper and his colleagues (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973) identified preschool children who were especially interested in drawing and randomly assigned them to three conditions: (1) One in which children agreed to draw pictures to receive an award (a fancy certificate with a gold seal and red ribbon); (2) one in which children drew pictures without knowing they'd receive an award, which they later all received; or (3) one in which no children received an award. Two weeks later, the experimenters again gave children the chance to draw pictures and observed them behind a one-way mirror. Interestingly, children in the first condition—who engaged in the activity to achieve a reward—showed significantly less interest in drawing than did children in the other two conditions. Many psychol-



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Replicability
Can the results be duplicated in other studies?

In everyday life, approach and avoidance drives often conflict, resulting in difficult decisions. For example, we may be tempted to eat a delicious desert (an approach drive) but also tempted to avoid it because it's bad for us (an avoidance drive); similarly, we may be tempted to eat an apple because it's good for us (an approach drive) but also tempted to avoid it if we aren't fond of apples (an avoidance drive).

cantly less interest in drawing than did children in the other two conditions. Many psychologists and some popular writers have interpreted these findings as implying that when we see ourselves performing a behavior to obtain an external goal, we conclude that we weren't all that interested in the behavior in the first place (Kohn, 1993). "I was only doing it to get the reward," we tell ourselves, "so I guess I wasn't really interested in it for its own sake." As a result, our intrinsic motivation for that behavior decreases.

Not all psychologists accept this interpretation (Carton, 1996; Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996). For one thing, some researchers haven't replicated the undermining effect (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). Still others have offered rival explanations for these findings. One is a *contrast effect*: Once we receive reinforcement for performing a behavior, we anticipate that reinforcement again. If the reinforcement is suddenly withdrawn, we're less likely to perform the behavior. So we're not that different from a rat that's reinforced with a chunk of cheese for completing a maze. When the rat gets to the end of the maze and unexpectedly finds no cheese (the origin of the expression, "Rats!" perhaps?), he's less likely to run the maze quickly the next time (Crespi, 1942; Shoemaker & Fagen, 1984).

Ruling Out Rival Hypotheses
Have important alternative explanations for the findings been excluded?

It may be an oversimplification, though, to categorize activities narrowly as either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Much of what we do probably reflects a mix of both motives. In fact, the most rewarding activities—where our true passions may lie—ideally reap both personal (intrinsic) and financial (extrinsic) rewards, such as when our career choices or daily activities match what we love doing for its own sake (Reiss, 2012).

In which behaviors or activities do you engage that are primarily externally motivated? Which activities do you enjoy?