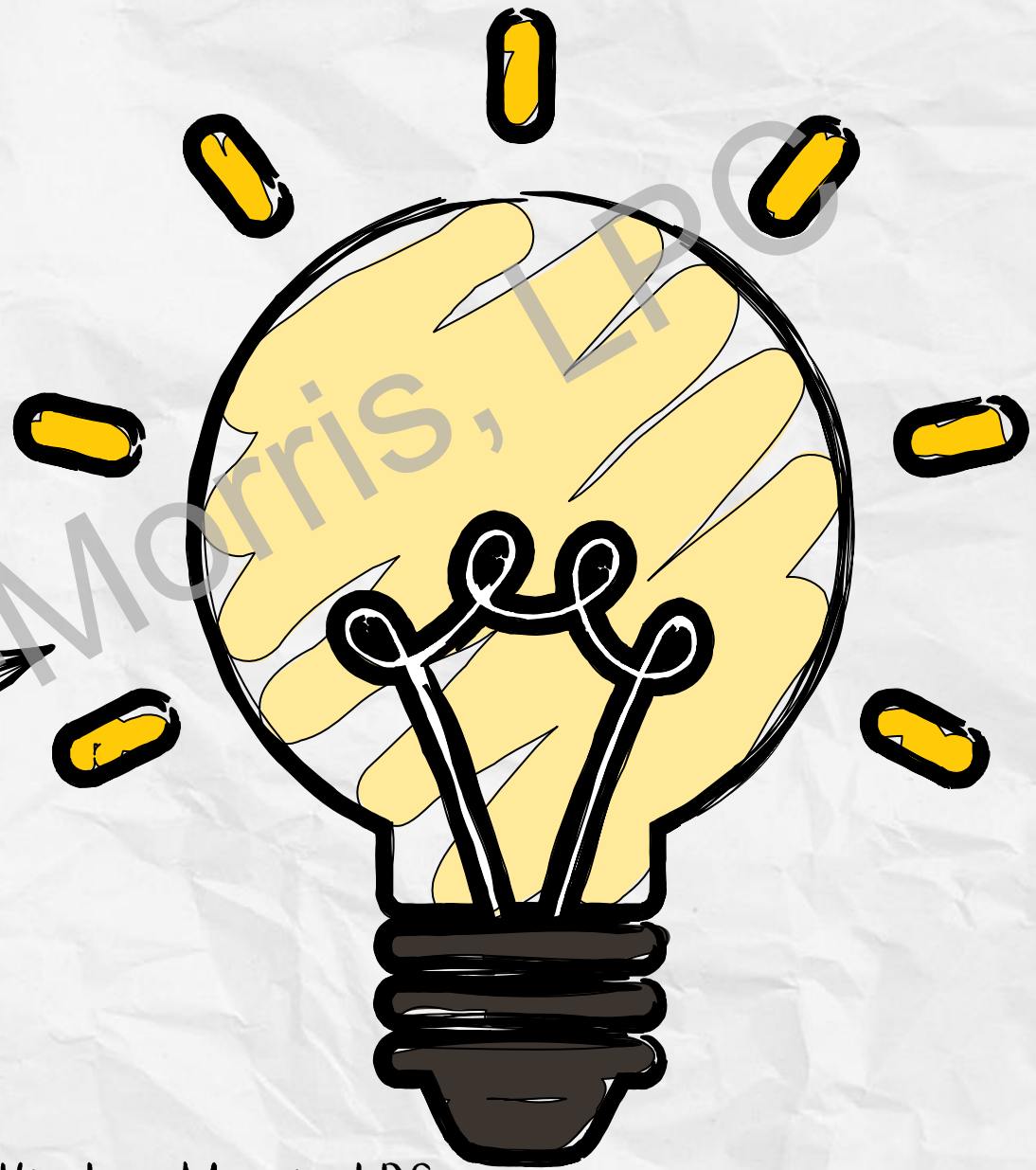


For the Love of Learning

Motivation and Underachievement in
Gifted & 2e Learners



Emily Kircher-Morris, LPC

What is motivation?

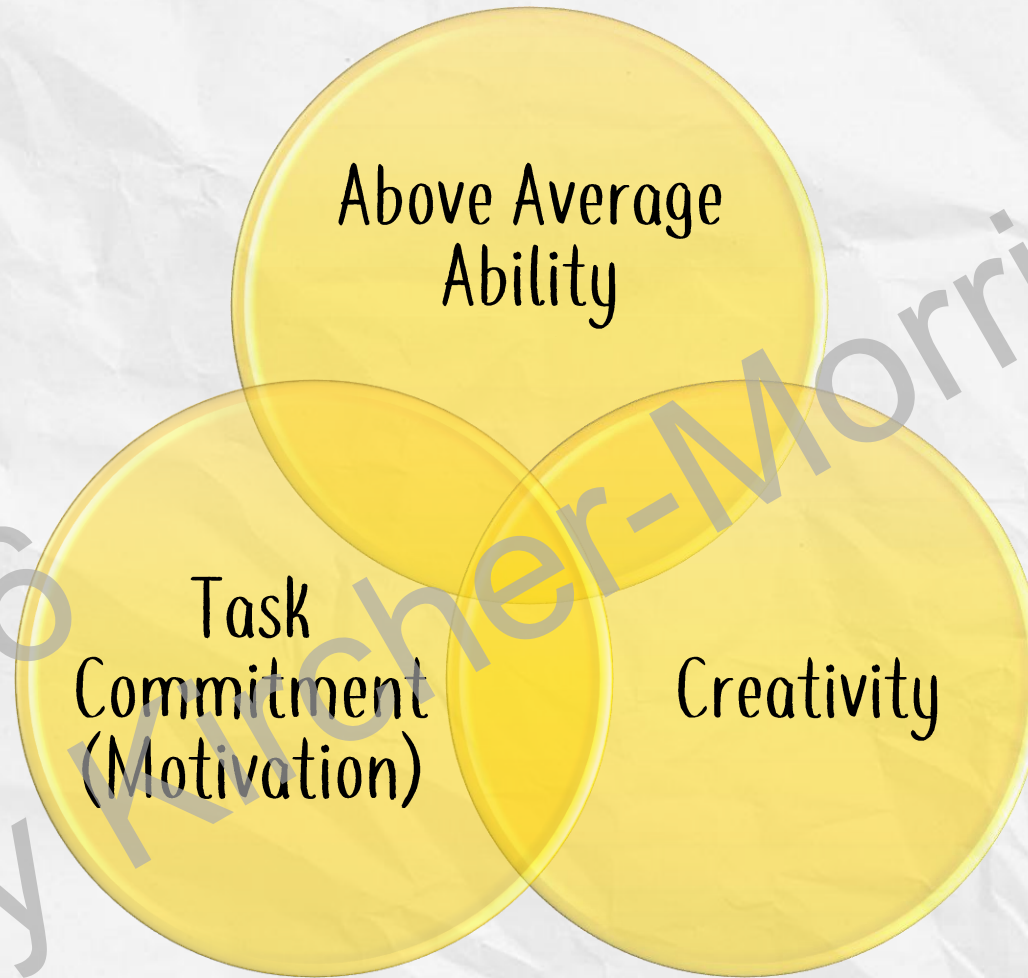
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What is motivation?

- Motivation is:

- The inner energy that directs and regulates behavior
- Choosing some goals and not others
- Starting work toward a goal
- Persevering in the work toward the goal
- Influenced by both personal characteristics and social environmental factors
- A determining factor in high- and low-achieving students

Renzulli's Model of Giftedness



Motivation: Fact or Fiction Activity

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**Students who struggle academically are
usually just lacking motivation.**

A student's prior knowledge in a subject area predicts their learning success better than other factors.

Teacher enthusiasm and energy are the top factors for student engagement and motivation.

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**High self-esteem leads to better academic
performance.**

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**Competition and rankings motivate
students to perform better.**

**Providing students with choices increases
their intrinsic motivation.**

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Underachievement

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graph TD; A[Underachievement] --> B["True Underachievers"]; A --> C[Selective Consumers]; B --> D[Influenced by Learning Disabilities]; B --> E[Environmental Barriers];
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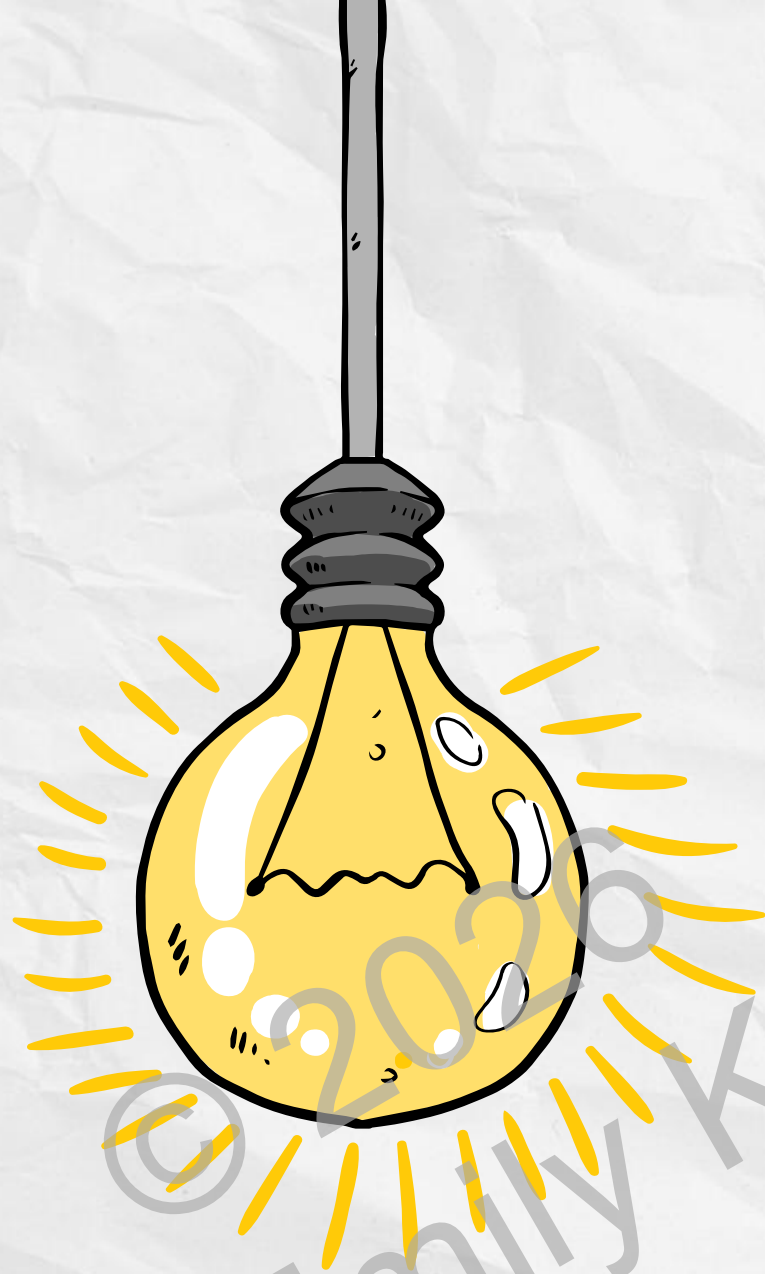
A flowchart illustrating the concept of Underachievement. The root node is 'Underachievement', which branches into two categories: 'True Underachievers' and 'Selective Consumers'. 'True Underachievers' further branches into two sub-categories: 'Influenced by Learning Disabilities' and 'Environmental Barriers'. A hand-drawn arrow points from the bottom right towards the 'Selective Consumers' box.

**“True”
Underachievers**

Selective Consumers

**Environmental
Barriers**

**Influenced by
Learning Disabilities**



Self-Determination Theory of Motivation

The Three Ingredients for Motivation



AGENCY



Agency (Autonomy)

- + Providing choice
- + Explaining the “why”
- + Acknowledging feelings
- Offering tangible rewards
- Non-negotiable deadlines
- Imposed goals

Ronnie

“Art classes are dumb. I want to be an artist, but all they ever want me to do in art classes is draw the things that aren’t my style. Why should I waste my time in a class that is going to make me draw bowls of fruit or portraits or something, when I can teach myself to draw the style of comics that I like on my own?”

The Three Ingredients for Motivation



AGENCY



COMPETENCE



Competence

- + Providing optimal challenge
- Too much or too little challenge
- + Giving clear and neutral performance feedback
- Negative performance feedback
- + Strengths-based lessons

Anisha

“All through school, I’ve been promised that if I do well in my classes, when I get to high school, I’ll get to take challenging coursework. But now, when I ask a question to my teacher, they just tell me it is something that will be covered in the next level of chemistry classes. Why should I even bother to answer the teacher’s questions when she won’t answer mine?”

The Three Ingredients for Motivation



AGENCY



COMPETENCE



CONNECTION

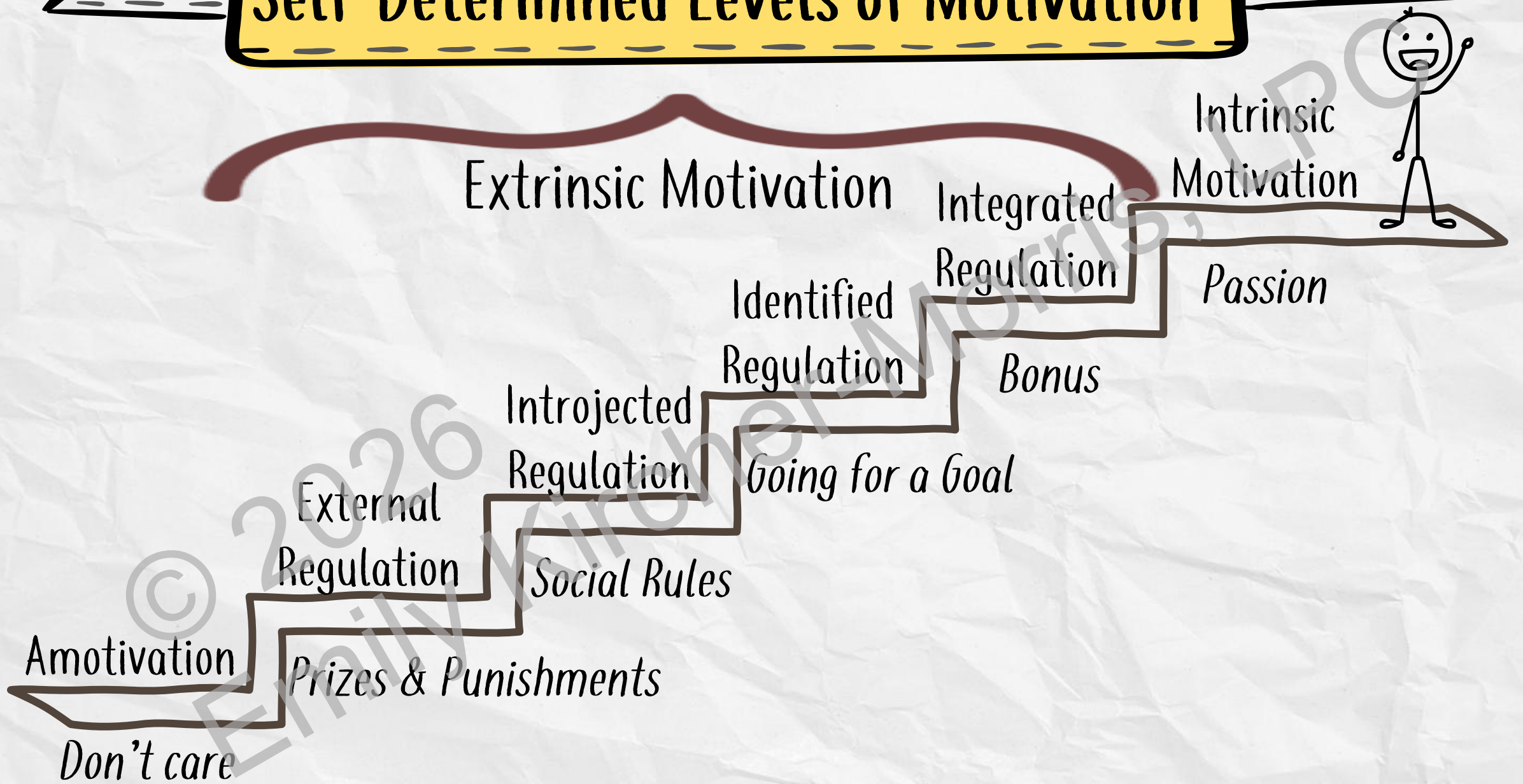
Connection (Relatedness)

- + Respect and caring
- + Inclusive environment
- + Security
- + Interest-based learning
- Competition
- Criticism
- Cliques, exclusive traditions

Jaden

“I’m a perfectionist. I know this about myself. It takes me a long time to think about things before I get started on them because I like to have it all mapped out in my mind. When my teacher tries to remind me to get started while I’m still thinking, it just reminds me that she really doesn’t get me at all. I feel frustrated and I’m even less likely to want to do the assignment at all.”

Self-Determined Levels of Motivation



Prizes & Punishments



Interest-Based Nervous Systems

- P: Play (Humor, Creativity, Fun)
- I: Interest
- N: Novelty
- C: Competition/Collaboration
- H: Hurry-up (Urgency)



1	Intrinsic motivation Passion	You want to do something because you love to do it. Doing the activity is its own reward.
2	Integrated regulation Bonus	You want to do something you enjoy and there is a bonus of some external positive outcome.
3	Identified regulation Going for a Goal	You may not especially enjoy an activity, but you do understand and value the benefits that come from doing it.
4	Introjected regulation Social Expectations	You know you have to do something because it is expected, even though it isn't something important to you.
5	External regulation Prizes & Punishments	You do something either because you are going to get a reward or because you want to avoid a punishment.

Factors Influencing Motivation in Gifted, 2e, or Neurodivergent Learners

Trauma

- Hypervigilance leading to difficulty concentrating.
- Learned helplessness reducing effort or engagement.
- Diminished intrinsic motivation from disrupted sense of safety.

Processing Speed

- Students with slower processing may feel overwhelmed, disengaged, or inadequate.
- Reduced task engagement due to inability to keep pace.
- Decreased self-efficacy from ongoing struggles.

Executive Functioning

- Students become overwhelmed or discouraged by difficulties completing tasks.
- Feelings of incompetence or frustration reduce engagement.

Executive Functioning

- Task Initiation
- Time Management/Estimation
- Planning/Prioritizing

Future Orientation

- Difficulty with delayed gratification reduces sustained effort.
- Lack of clear goal-setting limits task value and engagement.

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Rejection Sensitivity

- Avoidance of challenges or decreased effort due to fear of criticism.
- Increased anxiety impacting task engagement.

Pathological (Pervasive) Demand Avoidance

- Task resistance due to perceived loss of autonomy.
- Defiance or withdrawal as protective responses to anxiety.

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Anxiety and Perfectionism

- Fear of mistakes or judgment reduces willingness to take risks.
- Anxiety may lead to avoidance of tasks or disengagement.
- Perfectionism can cause students to focus on flaws rather than progress.

Social Connectedness and Belonging

- Strong connections increase engagement and willingness to participate.
- Lack of belonging may lead to isolation and withdrawal.

Sensory Sensitivities

- Discomfort or overwhelm can reduce ability to focus and engage.
- May result in task avoidance or behavioral challenges.

Cultural and Familial Influences

- Beliefs about success, failure, and effort influence student engagement.
- Cultural mismatch between home and school expectations can create tension.



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