

Colorado Probation Research in Brief

Self-Regulation of Goals and Performance: Effects of Discrepancy Feedback, Regulatory Focus, and Self-Efficacy

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Key Words: Case Planning, Motivation, Performance, Feedback, Coaching, and Self-Efficacy

Summary/Conclusions

Goals are one means to motivate and measure performance. This study examined the influence of feedback and self-set goals on realizing a goal hasn't been met and revising goals for new tasks. The study also evaluated self-efficacy and mindset of individuals in a goal revision process. The findings suggest that the strongest predictor of goal revision was the discrepancy between goals and actual performance. Self-efficacy influenced to what degree goal revision occurred. When people believed they were capable of increased performance, they would set increasingly difficult goals.

Limitations of Information

The study population was 297 undergraduate students from a northeastern university, which may not be consistent with probationers or probation staff in Colorado. The tasks of the study participants may not be reflective of probation oriented tasks (e.g. MI, case plan goals, or professional development). Lastly, the experiment lasted 40 minutes from start to finish. It is unclear how the time between goal creation, feedback, and task influenced results.

Caveat: The information presented here is intended to summarize and inform readers of research and information relevant to probation work. It can provide a framework for carrying out the business of probation as well as suggestions for practical application of the material. While it may, in some instances, lead to further exploration and result in *future* decisions, it is not intended to prescribe policy and is not necessarily conclusive in its findings. Some of its limitations are described above.

Goal Revision and Self-Efficacy

Prior research has identified that goals can increase motivation and evaluate performance of individuals. It is hypothesized that goals motivate individuals through discrepancy. The distance between current performance levels and the goal creates a process in which individuals are increasingly motivated toward goal attainment.

The study consisted of 297 university students selected from a northwestern university's research pool. Individuals were asked to play the board game Operation. Researchers primed participants to either be focused on scoring the most number of points (promotion focused) or to make the fewest mistakes (prevention focused). Before beginning the game, participants completed a short self-efficacy test. After the first attempt the participants were told they either exceeded or were below the average score by 50 points. Before the second and third trials, participants completed a self-efficacy test and set a goal. After each attempt, researchers provided individuals with feedback on performance with their goal. Prior to the fourth attempt, participants set a goal and were asked if they would like to continue with Operation or complete a puzzle instead.

The results of the study found that as individuals set goals and received feedback regarding their performance, they revised goals according to the discrepancy between current performance and their personal goal. Mindset (promotion

or prevention focused) was not shown to influence positive goal revision; however, self-efficacy significantly predicted goal revision. When individuals believed they had the ability to complete a task, their goal and performance both increased positively.

Practical Applications

- ✓ Collaborate with the probationer to create case plan goals that are probationer centered.
- ✓ Write goals in a SMART format with action steps. Action steps allow an officer to give feedback about progress regarding case plan goals.
- ✓ Officers may consider collaborating with a probationer to find a more attainable case plan goal to build increased self-efficacy with more difficult case plan goals.
- ✓ Review case plans regularly. This provides a venue for positive feedback and case plan goal revision.
- ✓ When case planning with probationers, affirm progress, struggles, and strengths the probationer possess. This can lead to achieving more challenging goals.
- ✓ Try using the Elicit Provide Elicit feedback technique. The last elicit is a great place for staff to set future performance goals.
- ✓ Share 4 positives per 1 negative when giving performance feedback.
- ✓ Use affirmations to recognize hard work or struggle to increase self-efficacy.