

Dennis Burns
Grading Essay 2016
Motivation

Introduction

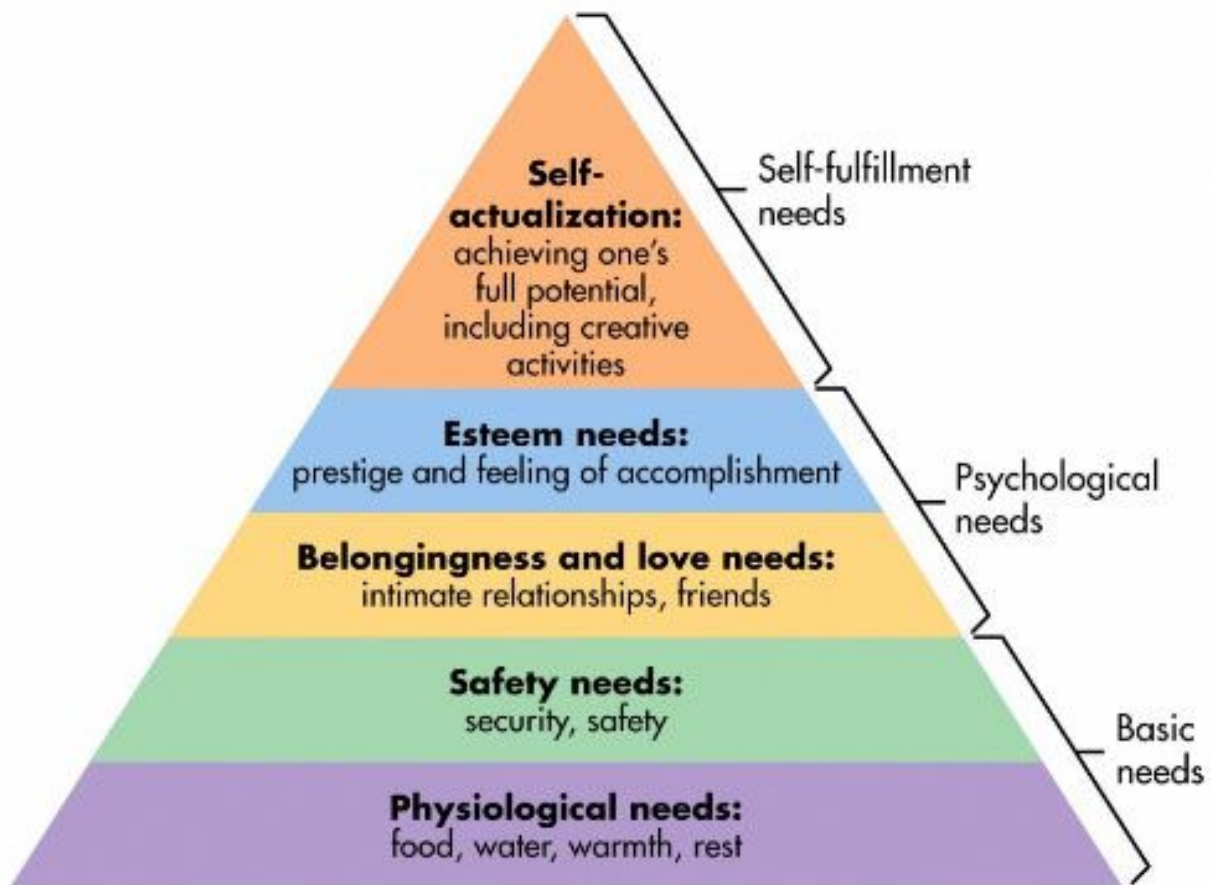
Motivation¹ is literally the desire to do things.

The subject of motivation, especially in regard to my grading, came about very early in the process of deciding why I wanted to grade. It had occurred to me that it had been six years since I last graded and was it about time I did so again.

One aspect of motivation that I want to explore is why is there a desire to grade at all. I also wanted to explore how do other factors in my general life affect the level of motivation to Grade. Finally is there something I will discover along the way that could be seen as an important milestone

To help with answering some of these questions and to try and put some subjective science around the subject, I decided in January to score myself monthly based on several criteria, and whether or not these things affected my journey.

Trying to pick them randomly led me to look at Marslows hierarchy of Needs Pyramid² which attempts to understand what motivates us.



¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/motivation>

² McLeod, S. A. (2016). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

Starting from the base of the pyramid I looked at the criteria and came up with the following measures to score against each criteria;

Basic Needs, plus Physiological & Safety;

I have a relatively secure job and a safe loving home ie, I am not without the basic necessities of life, So the constants I decided to measure was in two areas

1. Time commitment at work and
2. Pressures involved at work.

Psychological

Belongingness and love;

How I feel about these could be affected by my own levels of

3. General Health
4. Fitness
5. Injuries

Plus any,

6. General family pressures

Esteem

7. Industry Training groups (my outside work interests)
8. Taekwon-Do, Instructing, Club and iTKD Board work.

Self-Fulfilment

Self-Actualisation and achieving one's full potential,

8. My general feeling about how motivated I am, specifically in regards to the grading journey.

Next was to try and understand, that once I had decided to go for the grading were there some common steps that people go through to retain the desire to achieve a goal.

I settled on the following seven steps, taken from an article on the Seven Motivating Steps towards your goal; namely (my responses in blue)

1. Think a lot about your goal and try to find out whether you want it, need it and can achieve it with the means you have. Sometimes, you may need to complete smaller tasks and achieve minor goals that will lead you to the bigger one eventually. Also, find out, if your goal is worth the suffering.

The aim here was firstly to get buy in from my family and in particular my wife. The initial phase as noted above did not vary significantly for the, then current regime of two trainings per week with interspaced extra-curricular events.

This would need to ramp up over the upcoming period so that by two months out there was some form of grading preparation on a daily basis.

I then developed a 150-step plan to my goal, (Initially 200 steps but realised this was not achievable) breaking down grading requirements into the areas I needed to work on.

This plan had to have a degree of realism whereby once the grading date was confirmed I started the 150-step plan needing to achieve 150 sessions in the lead up to the grading and had 265 days to achieve it.

Lots of small bites and smaller goals to achieve along the way.

The key being to ensure failure in a small step didn't affect the achieving the overall goal

2. State your goal in a perfectly clear way.

My Goal is to grade to 4th Dan.

3. Think about your goal regularly and remember the benefits you will receive with it, but do not turn it into an obsession.

The benefits of achieving my goal will be:

I will have achieved another step in my Taekwon-Do Journey,

My understanding behind the principles and general knowledge of Taekwon-Do will have increased, which will make passing it on more enjoyable,

I will enjoy attending IIC's and NZ Instructors conferences.

4. Visualize your goal as if you have already achieved it and do not let your fears get into your mind.

I try and use creative visualisation in most aspects of my life, both in determining outcomes of various meeting and work scenarios to learning new things.

5. Read more about your goal and people who have already achieved it.

In this my inspiration is those who have and are taking this journey, from my original Instructor, Mr Hastings, through to Mr Kraiger and more recently Master Patterson.

6. Think as if you have already achieved your goal.

This goes hand in hand with visualising your goal as if achieved, success feels good.

7. Believe in your success and remember that each small success on the way towards your goal is your victory

I have a firm belief in the theory of 'fail forward', or 'fail fast, fail often'.

A concept I found many years ago (though I can't pin point it to a particular source) trying to discover the best way to implement new software & procedures at work. The people who learnt quickest and became more productive quicker, make lots of small mistakes often, versus those who hunkered down and finally realising they had not achieved a particular goal had to go back and start again.

My favourite quote in this regard is

"Failure is only the opportunity to begin again, only this time more wisely"
- Henry Ford

Over the following sections I will explore the following:

1. Why grade at all,
2. How has the hierarchy of needs measurement impacted on the general score in relation to the motivation to grade,
3. Did I keep to the seven Steps noted above,
4. An insight I picked up on the way.

The conclusion will hopefully make it easier for me to understand the driving force behind my desire to grade, what I have changed/influenced to make it easier.

Why Grade at all

The first question to ask in regards motivation is why grade at all.

I started Taekwon-Do relatively late in life (late 30's) and to achieve 3rd Dan status is a very rewarding and a measure of success in its own right. So the status quo is a good place in which to begin to understand why I want to grade.

Initially my Taekwon-Do journey was one of family and fitness and a desire to do something with my Son & Daughter who were training with me at the time. Once they had given up, it initially reverted to a keeping up of fitness.

About the time of joining Spirit Brooklyn and a Blue Belt, I started to think that attaining a Black belt was an achievable goal, and looking back it was seen as a goal in itself. With that goal achieved I then understood that achieving 1st dan was only part of a journey and that there was more still to learn.

2nd and 3rd Dan passed in a blur each step in a journey, that I didn't in reality know I was heading.

Having been a third Dan for six years, I realised that I didn't need to grade again to enjoy the various aspects of Taekwon-Do

I assist and at time Instruct at Instructing at Kelburn,

Being Board Chairman I don't need to be a 4th Dan to do that, (though a lingering doubt remains about whether in a Martial Art environment, others expect it),

Training when I got a chance, taking time before and after practice to do my Dan patterns etc.

I don't need Taekwon-Do for my Self-esteem, as noted before I have a fantastic Family, Work is going well and my status a black belt in Taekwon-Do forms only one part of my own self esteem

So having worked on stabilising a very Bad back, I had by the end of 2015 reached a point where I was again enjoying training in Taekwon-Do, was understanding my physical limits and ready for new challenges.

I have always strived to improve myself in all aspects of my life and the need to develop and grow is fundamental to my psyche. So having set the foundation, health wise, it was this need to continue to grow that convinced me that my next goal in Taekwondo-Do is to:

Grade to 4th Dan.

In doing so, I want to:

- Achieve another step in my Taekwon-Do Journey.
- Increase my understanding behind the principles and general knowledge of Taekwon-Do and make passing it on more enjoyable.
- Enjoy attending IIC's and NZ Instructors conferences

An aside to this when establishing my goal was whether my goal was to:

Grade to 4th Dan or Grade for 4th Dan.

My initial thoughts were based on I want to go for Grading and give it my best shot and in line with the motivation of achieving another step in my Taekwon-Do journey, the process of grading should be reason enough to start.

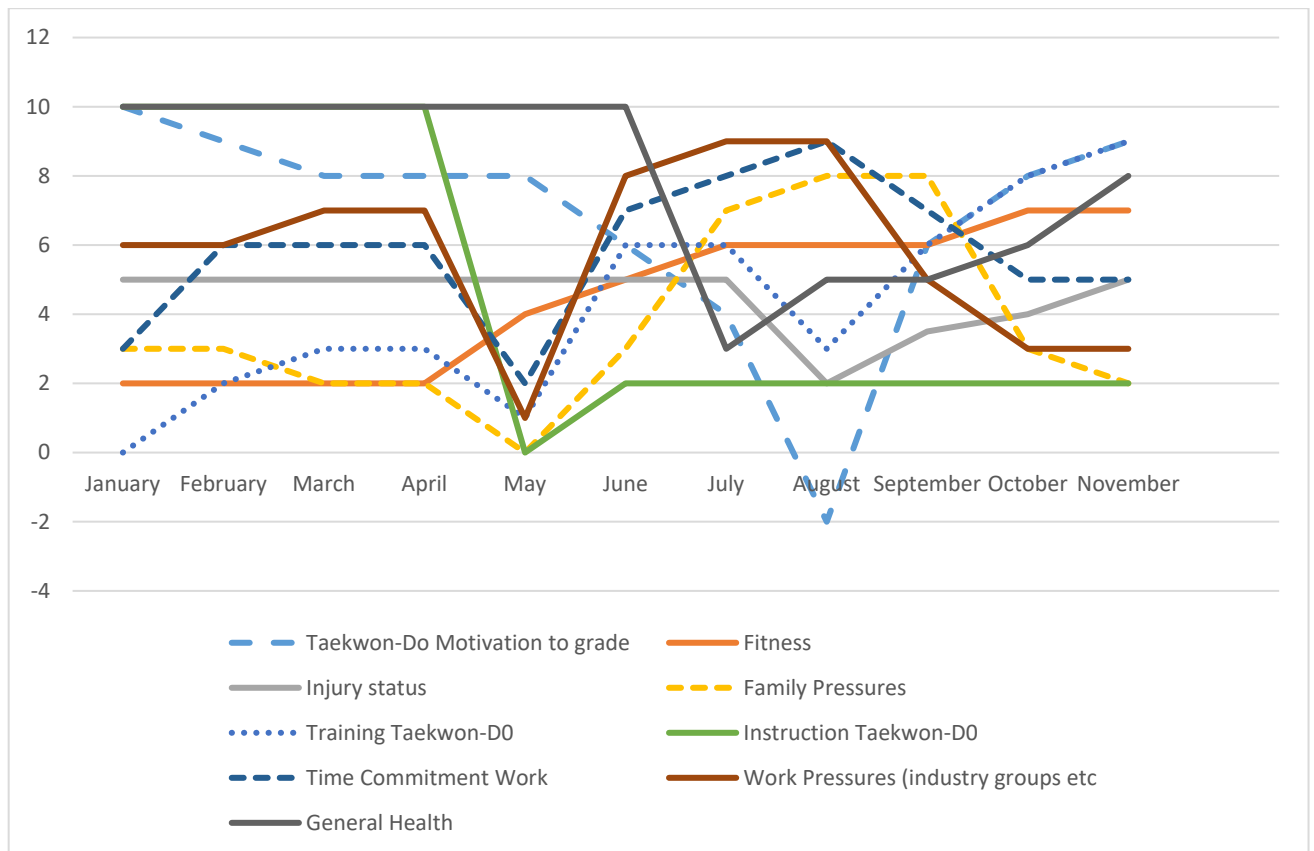
However, on reflection the end point was not definitive enough, why start the journey (even if is enjoyable in its own right) without a specific end point in mind.

The key, to getting started was to set a defined and achievable goal and have an enjoyable journey. They go hand in hand, without either of these the motivation to grade is lost.

Hierarchy of Needs

As mentioned I have been scoring myself out of 10 in the following key areas

1. Time Commitment at work
1-10 when 10 is in excess of 50 hours a week and 1 is I am twiddling my thumbs looking for something to do
2. General Health
The bench mark of 10 is good health and stable back injury
3. Fitness
The bench mark of 10 is achieve a satisfactory set of results in pre-grading test
4. Injuries
The constant of 5 is no new Injuries
5. General family pressures
"0" is good and no family pressures
6. Industry Training groups (my outside work, work interests)
"0" is good and no pressures
7. Time Taekwon-Do, Instructing, Club and International Taekwon-Do Board work.
"10" is the bench mark based on assistant instructor role at Spirit kelburn and my Board work
8. Taekwon-Do motivation to Grade My general feeling about how motivated I am
"10" is good and I am highly motivated to grade



Notes

April Figures are distorted as we were away on holiday in Europe

Though a 'busy' representation of what I am trying to understand though this scoring has led to a confusing picture. But overall I think this can be summarised as follows;

Motivation to grade is highest:

1. At the start of the journey when realism has yet to set in,
2. During the journey small goals (steps) are being achieved,
3. The family is happy,
4. Work stress is less,
5. My Health is good

Motivation to grade is lowest

1. I was injured in training (pulled Hamstring),
2. I was really busy at work and also organising and undertaking a Nationwide Industry training course,
3. Diane was scheduled to have knee replacement surgery.

Which of these items was the causal effect, I cannot work out, but suffice to say this was a pretty low point in my Motivation (desire) to Grade.

Was the price I was paying too high?

In priority order I have always placed my personal health, fitness and self-esteem first, followed by Diane and the family, then work and finally Taekwon-Do. Though they are all intermixed, one being beneficial to all and vice versa.

The day I lost my motivation to grade and to quote my post to fellow Snr Dan gradees

"The first time ever, I put on my dobok, drove from Greytown got to Petone ...

And kept going back to work....

Motivation at an all-time low. Sore hammy, crook tummy, back hurting, lots of work, house alterations, Patterns not sticking. Aghhhhhhhhh!"

I need to stop and reassess, and what better way than to take a long and lingering bath so that I could relax and think about why I felt I wanted to grade and what will get me going.

I started by thinking about what I would feel in later years, if I had

1. Given up and the Senior Dan Grading had taken place without me,
2. Carried on did my best, went for the grading, only not to pass,
3. Carried on did my best, went for the grading, and passed.

Obviously, scenario 3 was the feel good situation, and the first scenario left me feeling decidedly cold, but neither was still not enough to pull me out of my general malaise.

The hard one was going hard out, doing my best and not quite making the mark, ie wasting time and effort.

I then remembered some thoughts put forward by Guest speaker Philip Rush (firefighter & long distant swimmer) a couple of years back when I attended the annual Wellington Sportsman of the year event.

When asked on stage if he has any regrets after an illustrious career including current world record holder for the fastest two and three-way swim of the English Channel, swimming the English Channel 10 times, Cook Strait 8 times (including one double crossing)

He replied, there was only one regret. He proceeded to recount his experience back in 1987, after more than 28 hours in the water, and just completed his three-way swim of the English Channel. Whilst still in the water his coach asked if he wanted to go for a fourth crossing.

His regret – he didn't try and so to this day doesn't know whether he could have.

This was quite a powerful message, but for the first time it sunk in and felt it pertinent to me. I don't want to lie in the future bath tub and have regrets.

Coincidentally, his not going for three-way crossing to four, mirrored my desire to go for 4th Dan.

The message had sunk in, the overall goal was what I wanted to achieve, and the best way to reach my goal was to celebrate the small steps I had achieved, and that failure was part of the journey I had to undertake.

So, I took the next step – put on my Dobok and headed back to training.

The Seven Steps

Assessment against the seven steps

1. The aim here was firstly to get buy in from my family and in particular my wife. The initial phase as noted above did not vary significantly for the then current regime of two trainings per week with interspaced extra-curricular events. **Achieved.**

This plan had to have a degree of realism whereby once the grading date was confirmed I started the 150-step plan needing to achieve 150 sessions in the lead up to the grading and had 265 days to achieve it - **On Track. .(one month out)**

Lots of small bites and smaller goals to achieve along the way, the key being to ensure failure in a small step didn't affect achieving the overall goal. **On Track (one month out see section on Motivation loss).**

2. My Goal is to grade to 4th Dan. **On Track.**

3. The benefits of achieving my goal will be.

This is as stated in section 1, and in line with my goal visualise achieving these.

4. Visualize your goal. **this is consistent and something I do on a daily basis to remind myself to take the next step.**

5. Read more about your goal and people who have already achieved it. **One of the benefits of training with Phil Sung is being with my seniors and have someone to both look up and be mentored by.**

6. Think as if you have already achieved your goal. **I pat myself on the back after each successful session. One more step achieved.**

7. Believe in your success and remember that each small success on the way towards your goal is your victory. **I have emptied my bucket, am open to improving all aspects of my Taekwon-Do, I am more questioning of the way to do things.**

Overall I have seen that looking at these steps and thinking about them regularly has helped maintain my motivation.

Motivation Insights

Mr Kraiger and the Empty Bucket

I was at training at Phil Sung and I was paired with my second Instructor Mr Kraiger, who is also part of the Snr Dan training group and we were discussing how it seemed to him that I was more open to changing the way I do my Taekwon-Do and seemed to be taking on the new ways more openly almost like I had “emptied the bucket”.

This struck a chord with me, and on looking back on the grading journey so far, I worked out that my “bucket emptying” happened that particular that night in August when my motivation to grade was at its lowest.

I had reached a point where my bucket was overflowing and I was just unable to take on more.

I had at that point had to let some things go.

This is also when I opened up the condensed encyclopaedia and started daily looking for ways to improve my knowledge and understanding of the science of the Art of Taekwon-Do

The Conclusion

The driving force behind my desire to grade, has been two fold;

- To continue to grow and develop in Taekwon-Do and
- The desire to have no regrets

The setting of my goal, has let me understand and plan for the journey I was undertaking.

Understanding what role motivation plays in that journey and how it affects my self-esteem and the achieving of a goal has been instrumental, especially in regard to;

- Firstly, taking the step to decide to grade.
- Re-energised me when needed.
- Enabled me at my lowest point (when my motivation to grade was at its lowest), to pick myself up and reengage in the path I had chosen.
- Consistently thinking about my goal and the seven steps has enabled me to open my mind to the possibilities of new opportunities to learn.
- Accepting failure as part of the journey to achieving my Goal.