



SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY AND THE (~~LANGUAGES~~) CLASSROOM: PRACTICAL WAYS IN TO ACTUALISATION?

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COMING UP

- Self-Determination Theory & the link to actualisation
- Classroom environments that support motivation/integration

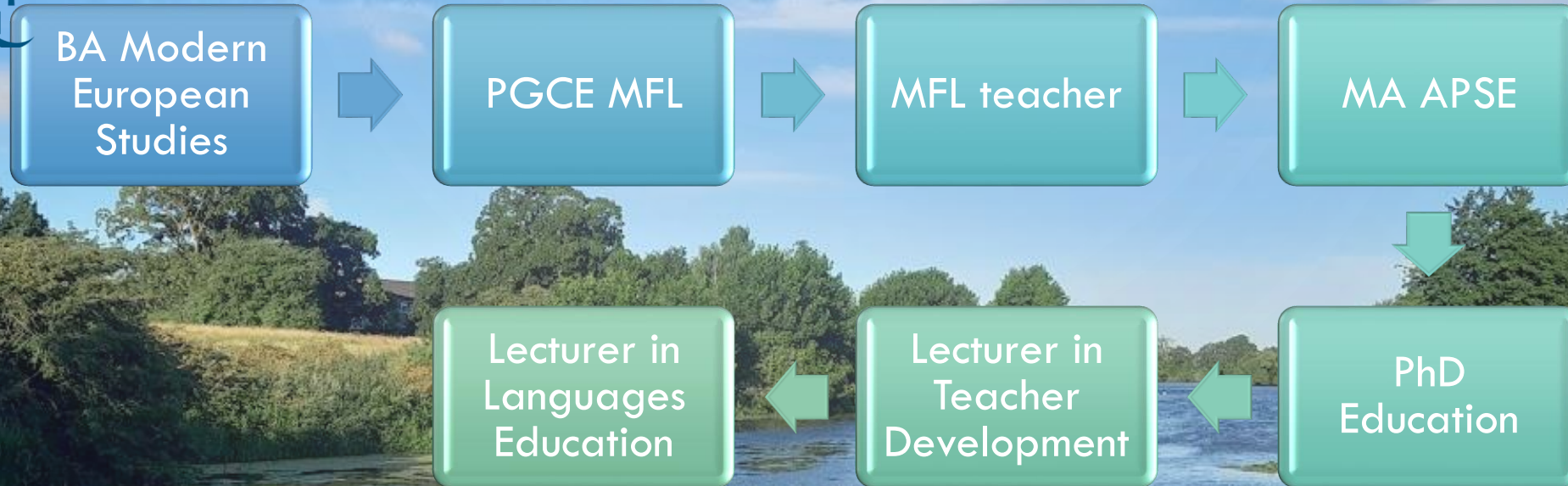


ABOUT ME

MFL: Modern Foreign Languages

PGCE: Teacher training

APSE: Applied Professional Studies in Education



Research focus: Student motivation to learn a language in school

the international language is English why do I need it when I'm not of to a country where they do not speak a language I do not know

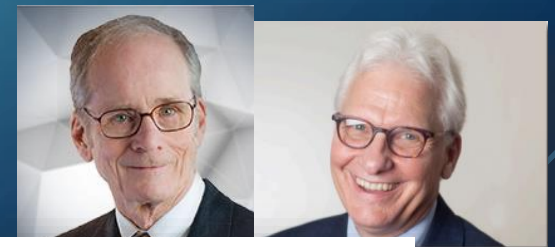
I AM HAPPY SPEAKING MY LANGUAGE WHY WOULD I WANT TO LEARN ANY OTHER

you should not learn other languages because everyone should learn English

THERE BORING AND WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO THEM EVERYONE SHOULD SPEAK ENGLISH



SDT is a broad theory of motivation and wellness originating in psychology



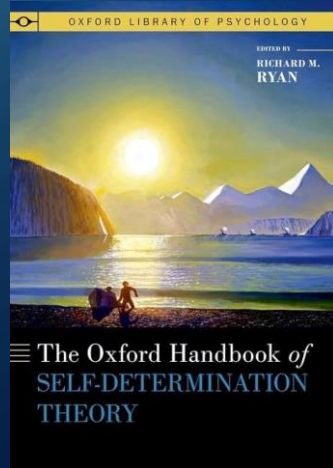
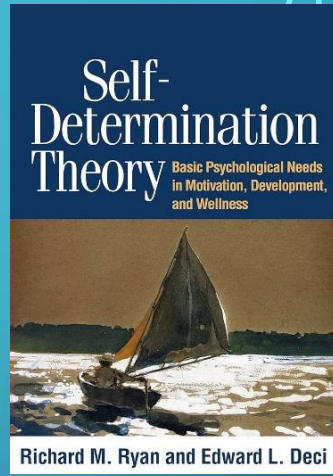
www.selfdeterminationtheory.org

Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L. (2017). *Self-Determination Theory*. Guilford Press

ACTUALISATION & SDT

Although the theories differ in details, specific foci, and the methods through which the theories were formulated, there is much convergence in the views of person-centered approaches and SDT (p. 48).

Internalization, described within Organismic Integration Theory, describes integrative processes entailed in people's inclinations to assimilate and transform social regulations into personal values and autonomously motivated self-regulations (p. 293).



FULL DISCLOSURE



A CONTINUUM OF MOTIVATION

Why are you [learning a language]?

It's what I'm
supposed to do
I might get in
trouble if I don't

Because I
enjoy it
It's fun

I don't know, I
don't see the point
It's a waste of time

I'll feel proud of
myself if I do well
I want my teacher
to think I'm a good
student

It's important to me
I want to
understand it



I try to avoid it, it's a waste of time

I don't know, I don't see the point

I can't see why I have to do languages and I couldn't care less

Because I'll get in trouble if I don't

Because that's what I'm supposed to do

Because I might get a reward if I do well

Because I want my teacher to think I'm a good student

Because I'll feel bad about myself if I don't

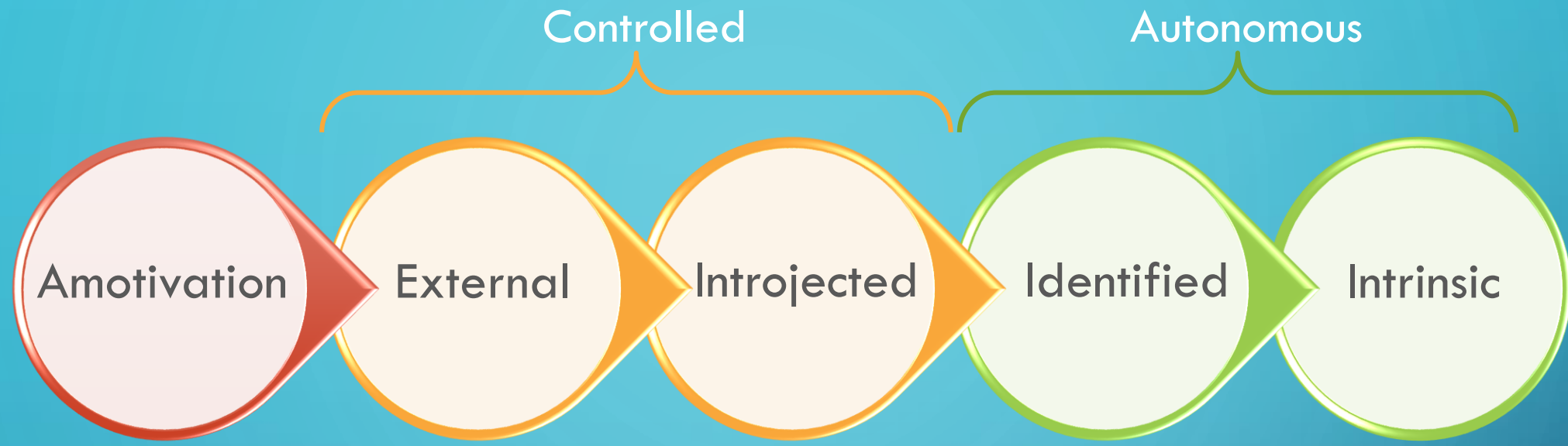
Because I'll feel proud of myself if I do well

Because I want to understand the subject

Because it's important to me

Because it's fun

Because I enjoy it



I try to avoid it, it's a waste of time

I don't know, I don't see the point

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'SDT' IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS (POSTER EDITION)

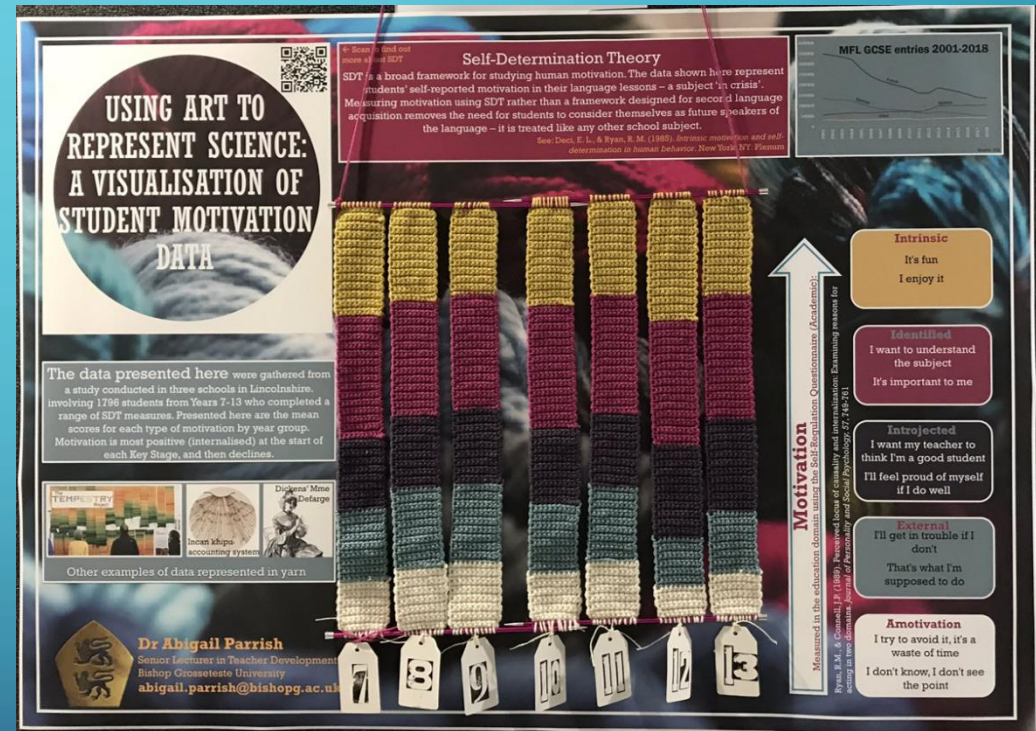


<https://astreaacademytrust.org/>



<https://www.outwood.com/>

STORY TIME: BERA



Why did I even think of this, what's the point???

Now I'm committed, this is what I'm supposed to do

I'll feel bad about myself if I don't get this finished

This is important to me

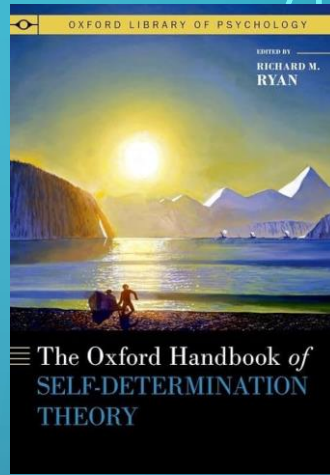
This is fun!

ACTUALISATION & SDT: INTEGRATION

Within SDT, the organizational or integrative processes that theoretical biologists ascribe to living organisms are presumed to be reflected in psychological processes as well.

...

When behavior is regulated by the self, it is described as being autonomous. It is in this sense that self-determination is said to ultimately be a problem of integration.



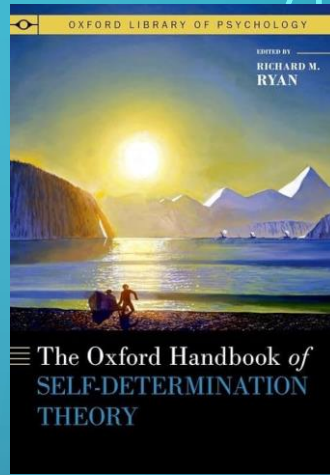
ACTUALISATION & SDT: INTEGRATION

Internalization, described within Organismic Integration Theory, describes integrative processes entailed in people's inclinations to assimilate and transform social regulations into personal values and autonomously motivated self-regulations.

Basic Psychological Needs Theory specifies the supportive conditions under which integrative processes operate most robustly and thereby enhance wellness.

...

When SDT scholars stipulate that the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness is essential for people's growth, integrity, and wellness, the phrase "growth, integrity, and wellness" thus refers to these multiple propensities toward integrated functioning and psychological health that follow from them.



NEED SATISFACTION & FRUSTRATION

AUTONOMY

I choose to do the things I do because I want to do them

Most of the things I do, I do because I have to

COMPETENCE

I feel confident that I can do things well

I sometimes feel like a failure when I make mistakes

RELATEDNESS

I feel that the people I like also like me

I feel that the people who are important to me are unkind to me

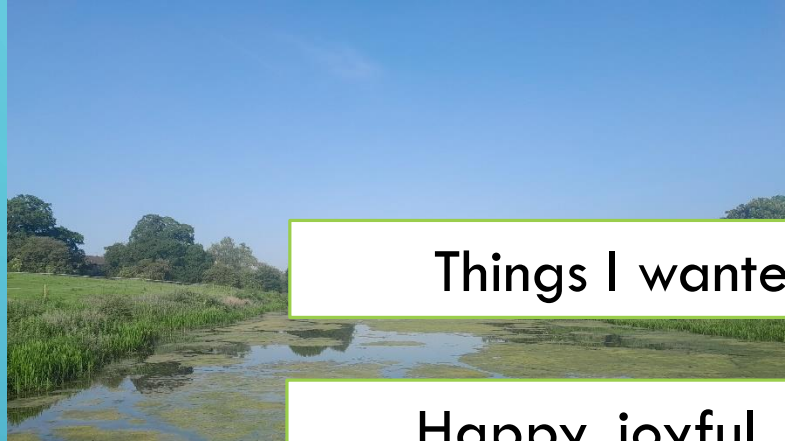
Motivation, thriving

STORY TIME: HEATWAVE



Something I had to do

Grumpy, annoyed, frustrated



Things I wanted to do

Happy, joyful, relaxed

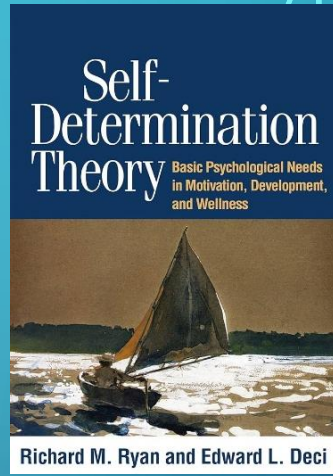


UK records hottest May day ever as temperatures reach 34.8C

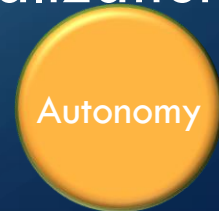
<p>BBC</p> <p>UK records hottest ever May day as temperature climbs to 34.8C in west London</p> <p>20 hours ago</p>	<p>The Guardian</p> <p>Parts of England expected to hit 35C in 'unprecedented' May heatwave</p> <p>20 hours ago</p>
<p>The Times</p> <p>UK heatwave: Britons swelter through 'tropical night'</p> <p>6 hours ago</p>	<p>The i Paper</p> <p>How long heatwave is set to last as UK breaks bank holiday record</p> <p>1 day ago</p>



ACTUALISATION & SDT: BPN



- According to Rogers, feeling strongly connected to and loved by others is a necessary condition for individuals to maintain and enhance their sense of self.
- ...
- In Rogers' theorizing ... a sense of relatedness serves the maintenance and enhancement of the self. Further, Rogers also explicitly theorized that authenticity and autonomy are also necessary for actualization.

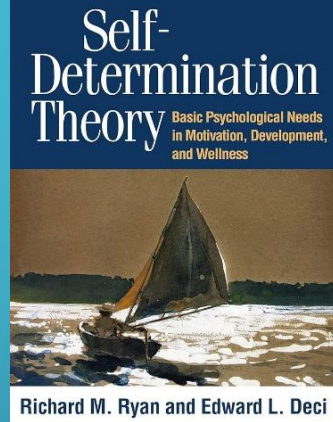


ACTUALISATION & SDT: INTROJECTION

According to Rogers, feeling strongly connected to and loved by others is a necessary condition for individuals to maintain and enhance their sense of self. Yet, if the love or positive regard of significant others is made contingent upon individuals' feeling or behaving in certain ways, they may internalize the requisite prescriptions, values, and opinions and then act "as if" those prescriptions were a part of themselves. ... In fact, like SDT ..., Rogers sometimes used the concept of introjection to refer to the process of internalizing prescriptions that are incongruent with people's organismic and psychological needs and then using them as a basis for pressured regulation. Rogers argued, and SDT research has further shown, that introjection is most likely to occur in social circumstances that are controlling, including those characterized by conditional regard.

...

SDT has similarly viewed contingent regard as a basis for introjected regulation and as undermining wellness ... and has similarly specified the importance of autonomy- supportive conditions ... for renewing thriving and integrity (Ryan & Deci, 2008b).

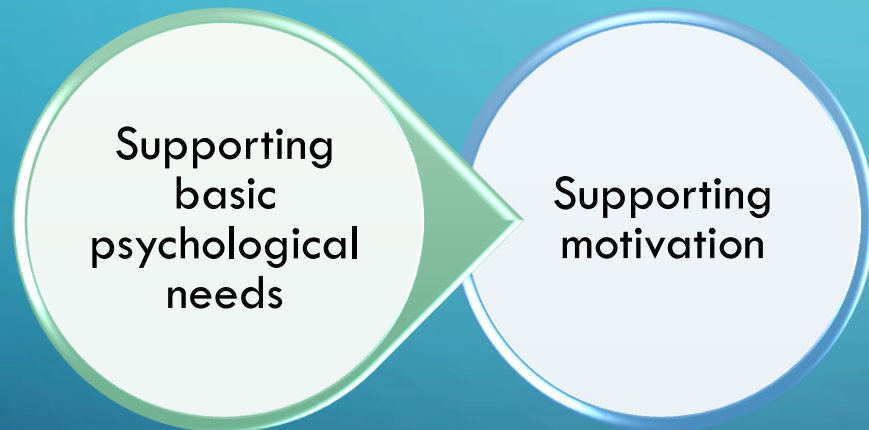


A black pug dog is resting its head on a light-colored wooden stool. The dog is looking directly at the camera with a calm expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a living room or office. The overall tone is warm and professional.

ONE OF THE AIMS OF THIS SYMPOSIUM

Explore implications for pedagogy, including how educational environments can nurture (rather than constrain) intrinsic motivation

THE IMPACT OF THE CLASSROOM



- When basic needs are supported, motivation is more autonomous
- Higher motivation → higher engagement, better outcomes

HOW DO WE KNOW?

Assor, A., Kaplan, H., & Roth, G. (2002). Choice is good, but relevance is excellent: Autonomy-enhancing and suppressing teacher behaviours predicting students' engagement in schoolwork. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72(2), 261-278

Noels, K., Vargas Lascano, D. & Saumure, K. (2019) The development of self-determination across the language course: Trajectories of motivational change and the dynamic interplay of psychological needs, orientations, and engagement. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 1-31

Noels, K.A. (2015) Supporting students' self-determined motivation to learn languages. *Contact: English Language Learning Magazine*, 41 ,21-32

Oga-Baldwin, W. L. Q., & Fryer, L. K. (2018). Teaching to engage: Deriving practical conclusions from longitudinal data. In P. Clements, A. Krause, & P. Bennett (Eds.), *Language teaching in a global age: Shaping the classroom, shaping the world*. JALT.

Oga-Baldwin, W. L. Q., Nakata, Y., Parker, P., & Ryan, R. (2017). Motivating young language learners: A longitudinal model of self-determined motivation in elementary school foreign language classes. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 49, 140-150.

Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 149-172). Springer US.

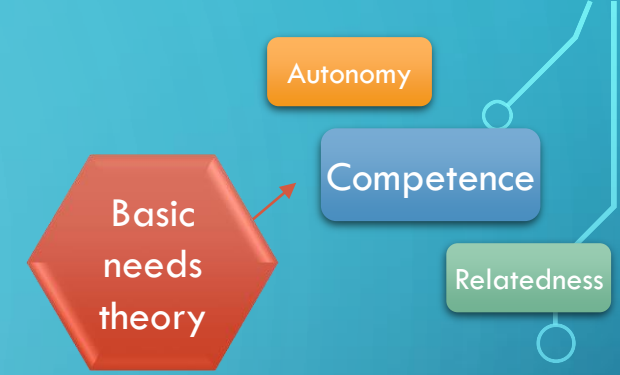
etc.

WHAT ELSE DO WE KNOW?

- The more students' basic psychological needs are satisfied, the more motivated they are
- The more motivated they are...
 - The more engaged they are
 - The more likely they are to continue learning the subject (e.g. at A-Level)
 - The better they do
 - The better their wellbeing

And that people around us can affect this. For example...

COMPETENCE SUPPORT



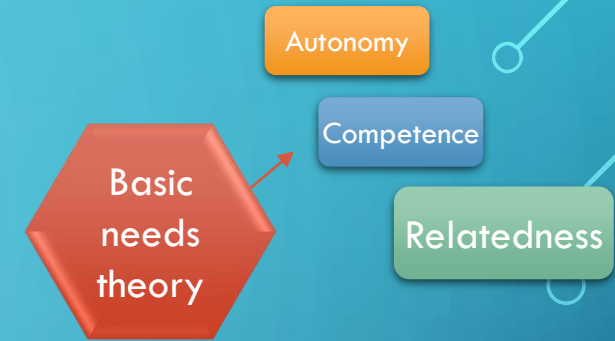
WHAT WORKS

- Visible successes: short & long term
- Praise & recognition
- Clear instructions & rationales
- Framing negative feedback as an opportunity for students to think about their own skills and how to improve

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- Rewards
- Focusing on the negative
- High stakes testing/activities

RELATEDNESS SUPPORT



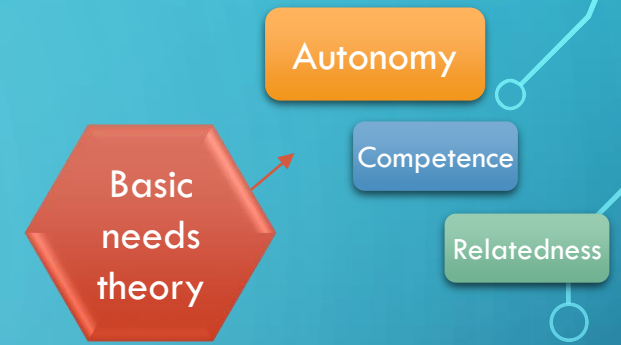
WHAT WORKS

- Relationships are key: Effective working relationships
- Letting the students see you are human!
- Being enthusiastic and putting effort into planning & delivering the session have been shown to support relatedness

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- Trying to seem 'perfect' or keeping the students at arm's length
- Behaving in a way which means students perceive teachers as not caring about the students or their learning

AUTONOMY SUPPORT



WHAT WORKS

- By supporting autonomy, other needs tend to be supported
- This is not (just) about choices
- Being responsive to student views
- Acknowledging effort; offering hints – not giving the answers
- Giving students ‘space’ to work

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- Trying to dominate the classroom
- Talking too much
- Removing all choice from the system



In SDT, autonomy is the opposite of control

HOW DO WE KNOW?

Haerens, L., Aelterman, N., Van den Berghe, L., De Meyer, J., Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2013). Observing physical education teachers' need-supportive interactions in classroom settings. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 35*(1), 3-17.

Patall, E. A., Dent, A. L., Oyer, M., & Wynn, S. R. (2013). Student autonomy and course value: The unique and cumulative roles of various teacher practices. *Motivation and Emotion, 37*(1), 14-32.

Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006). What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy during a learning activity. *Journal of educational psychology, 98*(1), 209.

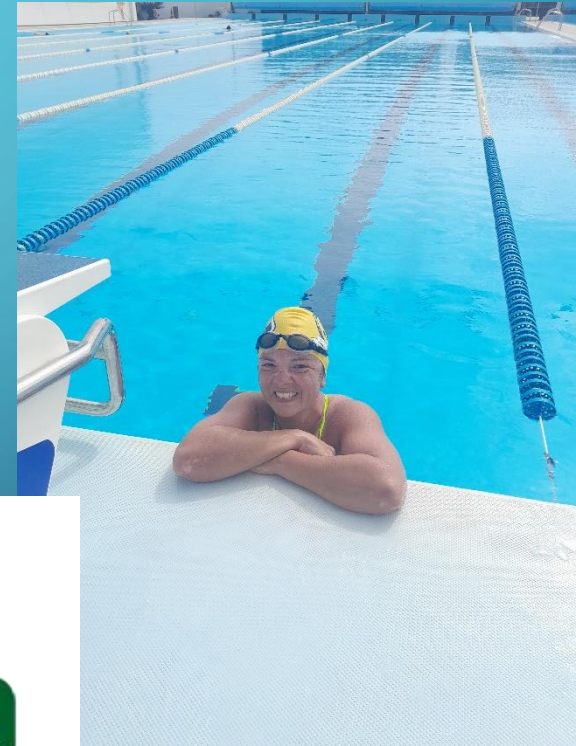
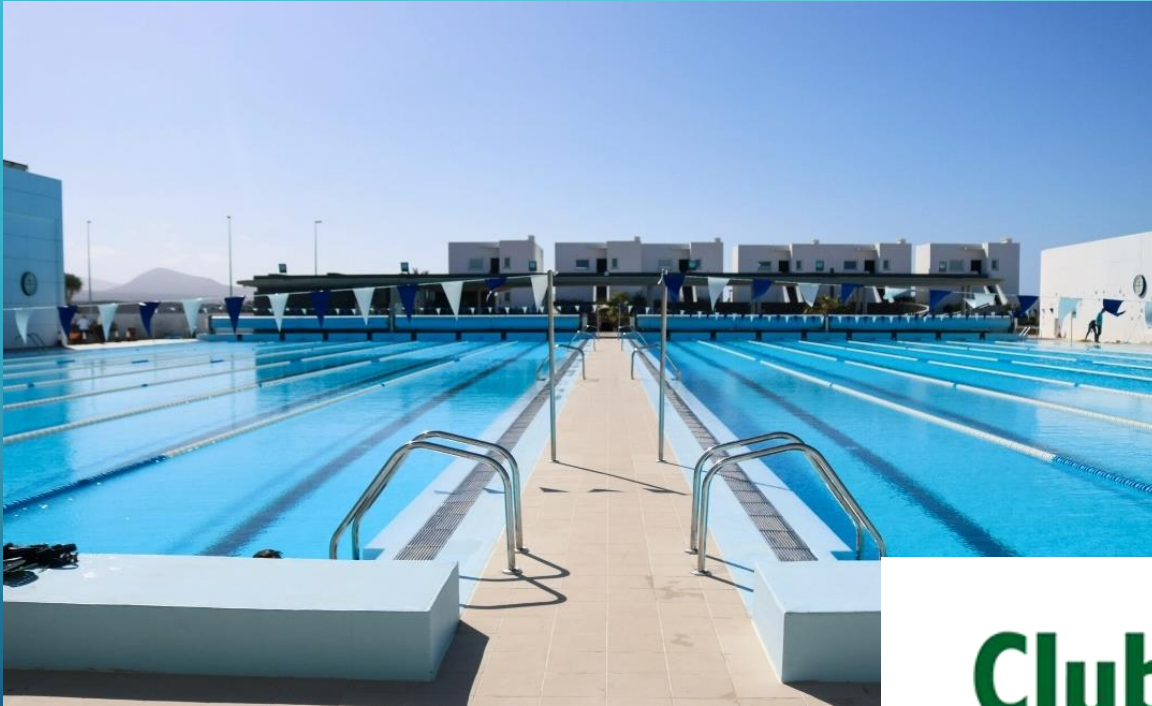
Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L. (2017). *Self-Determination Theory*. Guilford Press.

<https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/research/education>

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

- If teachers support students to feel autonomous (e.g. that they have some control over their learning and it is focused on what they need), then students thrive
- If teachers support students to feel competent, then they thrive
- If students feel that their teachers care about them and what is important to them, then they thrive

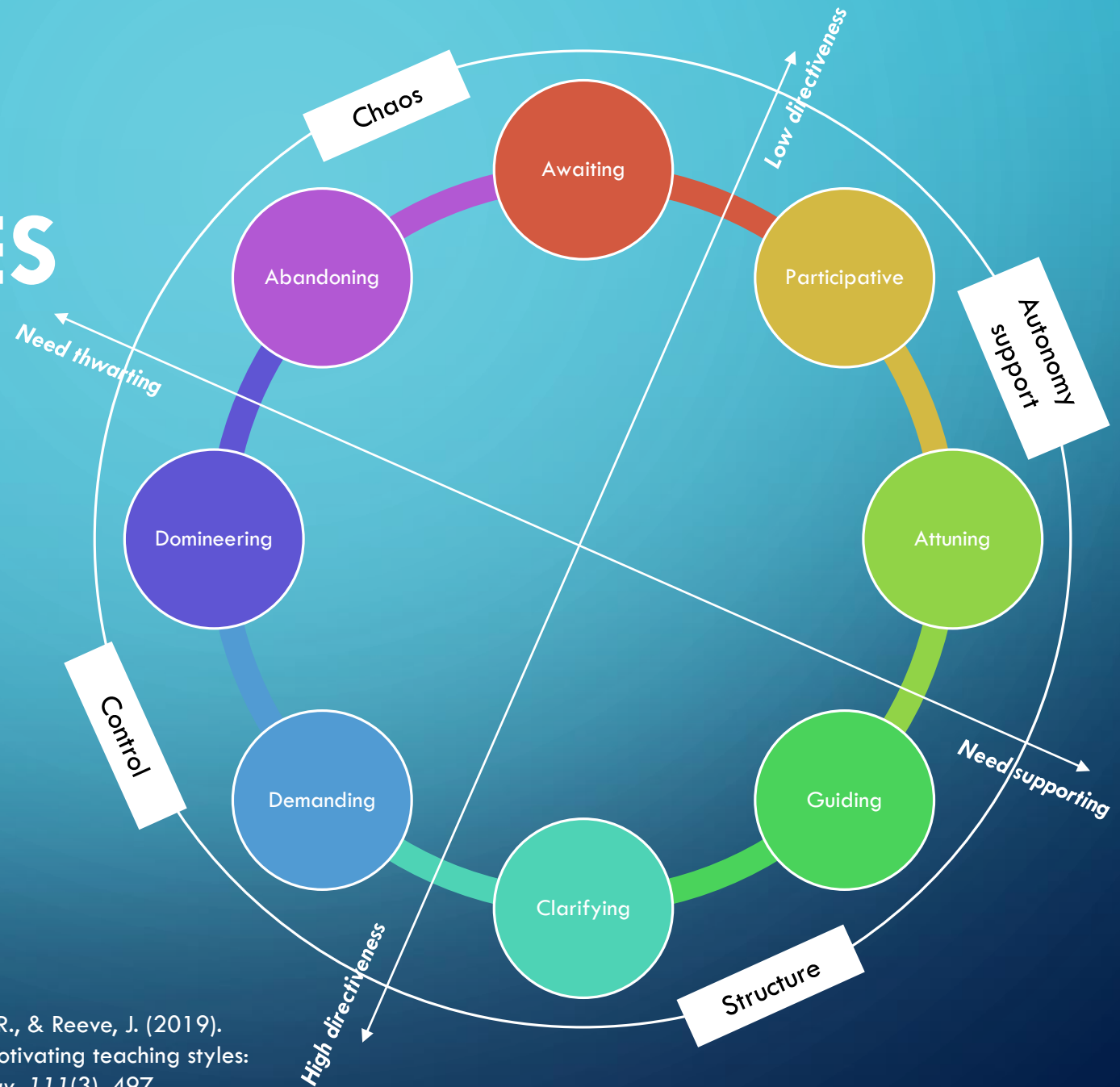
STORY TIME: TUMBLE TURNS



Club
La Santa®

TEACHING APPROACHES

Aelterman et al have developed a circumplex model of teaching styles based on SDT



Aelterman, N., Vansteenkiste, M., Haerens, L., Soenens, B., Fontaine, J. R., & Reeve, J. (2019). Toward an integrative and fine-grained insight in motivating and demotivating teaching styles: The merits of a circumplex approach. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(3), 497.

TEACHERS' BELIEFS

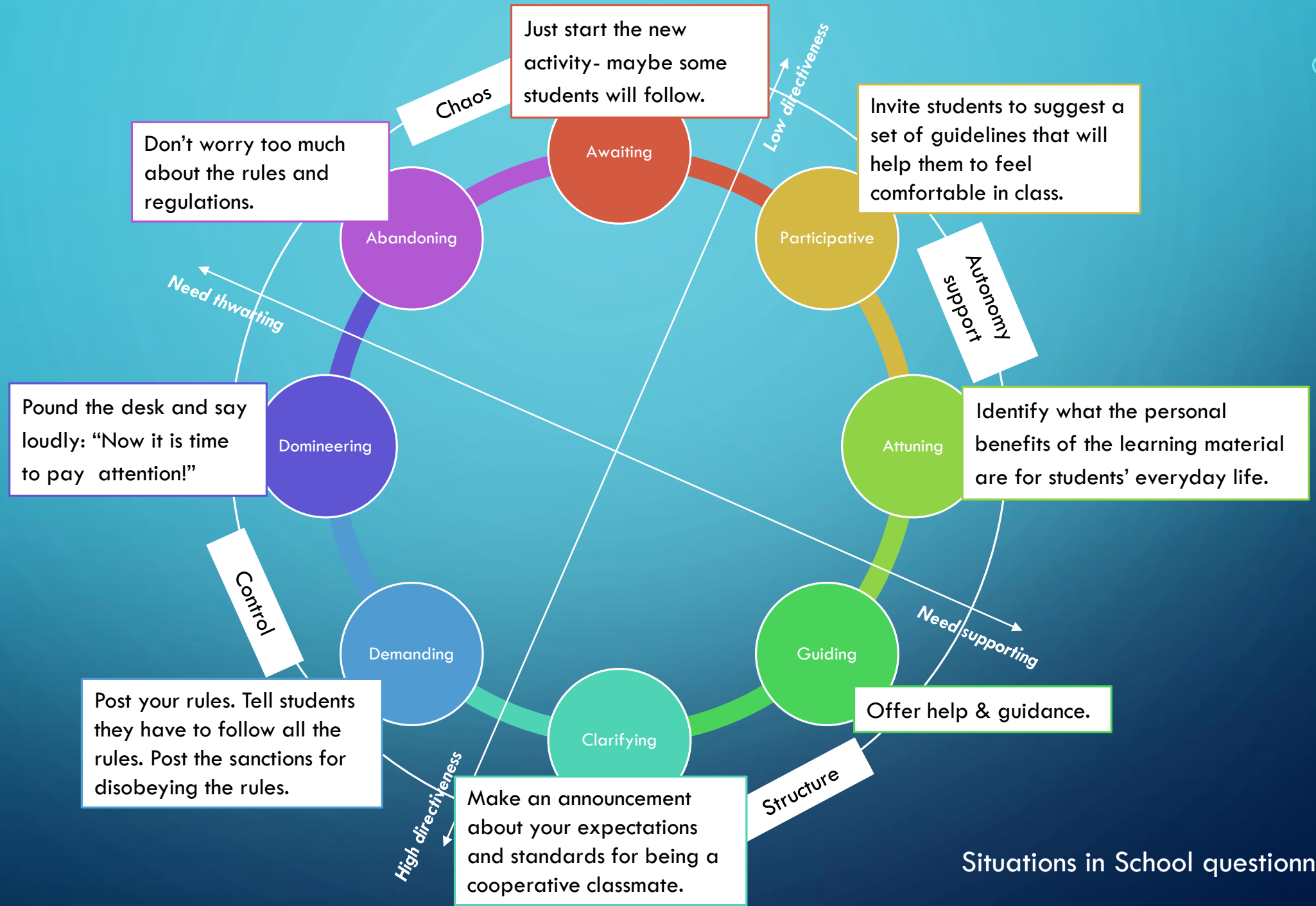
Although teachers generally hold the belief that an autonomy supportive teaching style is beneficial for students' sustainable motivation, engagement, and learning, they also fear that too much autonomy support might undermine structure and lead to demotivating chaos. At the same time, teachers sometimes express anxiety about providing too much structure, fearing that it might lead to demotivating control (p. 498).

TEACHING STYLES

We adopt a Self-Determination Theory framework to examine how the various dimensions of a teacher's classroom (de)motivating style are related to each other from a more integrative perspective ... Specifically, we suggest that within each of these four broader teaching styles there is room for differentiation into more specific subareas, which can be ordered along a circular structure. To illustrate, some aspects of autonomy support are likely to be closely related and complementary to structure (e.g., attuning to students' preferences), whereas other aspects of autonomy support lean closer to chaos (e.g., encouraging participation such that students take the lead in their learning).

Similarly, we suggest that some aspects of structure are likely to be closely related and complementary to autonomy support (e.g., guiding students' progress), whereas other aspects of structure are closely related to control (e.g., clarifying expectations).

(pp. 498-9)





A FEW THOUGHTS ON SCHOOLING & HIGH STAKES-TESTING

AUTONOMY VS. SCHOOLING: SUMMERHILL





I would rather Summerhill produced a happy street sweeper than a neurotic prime minister

A.S. Neill, 1960

AUTONOMY VS. SCHOOLING: MICHAELA



MICHAELA
KNOWLEDGE IS POWER



We aim high at Michaela Community School and expect high standards of behaviour & academic effort and achievement from all our pupils.

JOIN US...

it's
a
cult

SDT 2026: Geneva

The 9th International SDT conference will take place June 30–July 3, 2026 in Geneva, Switzerland, with Pre-Conference events on June 29. Explore updates, venue details, and key dates as we count down!

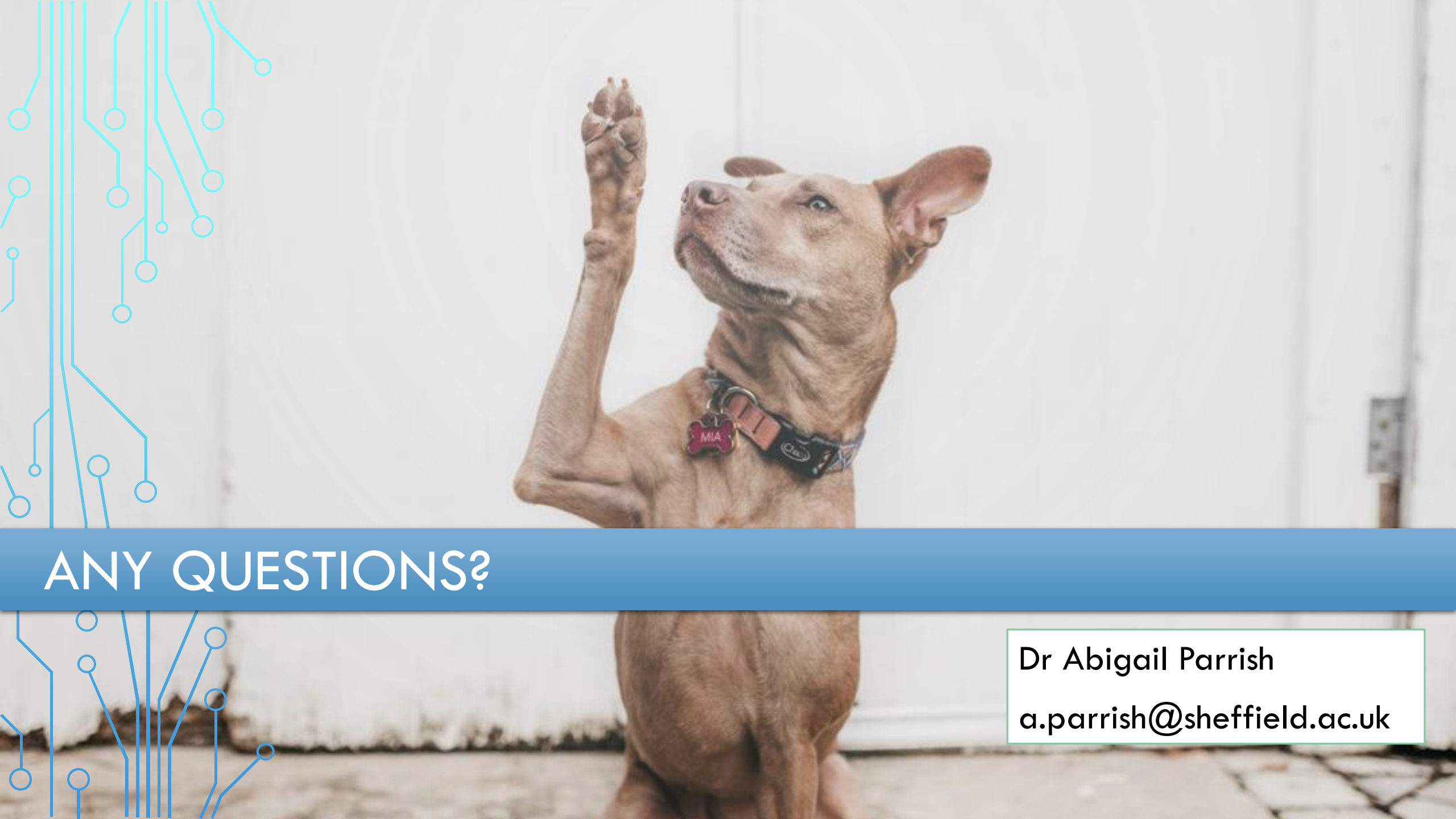
<https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/>

<https://sdt2026.org/>



9th International
SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY CONFERENCE
30 June – 3 July 2026 | Geneva, Switzerland





ANY QUESTIONS?

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