inputs compare with the inputs of others. Listen to what people say in this regard. Do they believe that they are being treated unfairly? Compared with what? Be open about the variety of factors that can influence pay, working conditions, and other rewards or factors that people might view as inequitable. It might not be possible to avoid all complaints of inequity, both because people value outcomes differently and because of the variety of factors that influence compensation and other rewards. But with these limitations, it is important to treat people as fairly and equitably as possible.

8. Motivation is not just about the characteristics of people; it also is about the work that you ask them to do. To maintain motivation, the work itself needs to be satisfying and meaningful. Jobs that are repetitive, lack variety, allow little autonomy, or have little effect on others are inherently unsatisfying, not to mention boring. It makes sense, then, to work with employees to make their work as interesting and satisfying as possible. But we should mention a cautionary note: Make sure that people want to enrich their jobs. Ask them what they would like to see changed. Cherrington and England (1980) found that people who were asked and expressed an interest in enriching their jobs were more likely to respond positively to such approaches. If people are interested, then work with them to create “whole” jobs so that they can use a variety of skills and abilities to accomplish something important and tangible. Where practical, create connections between workers and their clients (be they citizens or other people in the organization) and open feedback channels so that people can see the results of their efforts and the impact of their work on others.

9. It can be helpful to think about the life stages of the people you work with as a means of understanding the challenges they face and offering appropriate support. But as critics note, life-stage theories cannot be applied unthinkingly or used as the only means of understanding what motivates behavior. It is important to recognize the roles of other factors such as lifestyle, gender, cultural differences, and changes in family structure as well as the influence of factors related to the organizational context such as perceptions of climate and the positions and levels of employees. If used as one of several approaches to understanding employee motivation and behavior with the intent of providing support and help with those psychological issues faced by employees that may influence their performance in the organization, life-stage theories can provide a relevant and useful perspective on needs and motivations.

Thinking in Action

SOS in DHS: A Problem of Motivation

About 18 months ago, Jess Johnson was appointed to direct a newly authorized and funded unit in the state's Department of Human Services (DHS). Shortly thereafter, she interviewed and hired six new employees to staff the unit. The name of the unit is Service Outreach for Seniors (SOS). Its purpose is to coordinate services for the vulnerable elderly. This is Jess's first supervisory position.
Susan Jones and Bob Martin were two of the new employees hired by Jess. Initially, both were very productive, enthusiastic, and industrious. Bob had taken the initiative to work closely with several prominent private service providers to ensure their cooperation and involvement in the new program. Susan had done a terrific job of producing publications and other materials describing the goals of the unit and explaining SOS services to the elderly. But since this initial spurt of activity and enthusiasm, both Susan and Bob have become less-than-ideal employees in Jess’s estimation.

Within 6 months of his hiring, Bob developed what Jess considers to be poor work habits (e.g., very long lunches and coffee breaks, tardiness, absenteeism). Bob demonstrates little interest in or enthusiasm for his work. Although he generally accomplishes, at least in a minimal manner, those tasks that are directly assigned to him, he rarely volunteers ideas or takes the initiative. From Jess’s perspective, employees who take initiative and demonstrate creativity are critical in helping the unit to establish itself politically and to create a service where none had existed before.

Susan, on the other hand, has become quite “creative” in the sense that she has ceased to check with Jess (or anyone) on important policy matters before speaking to external groups and individuals. On several occasions, she has promised things to representatives of organizations and to elected officials that the SOS program simply could not deliver. On other occasions, she has misrepresented her role as a staff member, instead leaving the impression that she was directing the unit. This has embarrassed Jess and her supervisors more than once. Despite Susan’s apparent desire to be “in the limelight” in the political and community arena, she has developed an open disdain for the regular workload in her area. She routinely misses deadlines and fails to complete important paperwork.

Jess has met with Bob and Susan separately to discuss her dissatisfaction with their performance. Being a matter-of-fact person, Jess simply told them that their work was not up to par and that she expected them to improve. For a week or so, things seemed to get better. But the same problems quickly resurfaced.

The other four employees hired by Jess are doing well. They have what she considers good work habits: They usually are on time and are willing to work hard to help the new unit succeed. They seem to be eager to do well. She can count on them to complete assigned tasks and meet deadlines. Each of them, in his or her own way, also has demonstrated a willingness to go “above and beyond” and to make positive suggestions for improving the operations and services of the unit.

But the problems with Susan and Bob are beginning to drag down the morale of the other employees and certainly are causing Jess’s attitude toward work to suffer. Jess has not talked to either of them about these problems for several weeks because she has not been able to figure out what to do or say. But at different times this morning, both Susan and Bob came to Jess’s office asking her to recommend them for promotion to a position that opened up recently in the Child Welfare unit similar to SOS. Jess does not know how to handle these requests. More troubling, she does not know how to address the longer term problems of motivating all of her employees to do well.
1. Define the problem(s) in this case, using as many theories of motivation from this chapter as you think might apply.

2. Discuss the practical implications for each of the models you use. In other words, what do these models suggest the supervisor should do or say as a consequence of defining the problem from that perspective?

3. What are some of the perspectives on organizational behavior that could explain the apparently high levels of motivation among the four employees? What models might explain Jess's motivation?

4. Which of the theories or models do you think fit best with which employees and why?

5. What conclusions can you draw, or what observations can you make, about motivation theory and research?

**Staying Motivated**

For this exercise, focus on some aspect of your job where you do not feel motivated. Then go over the following steps.

1. Identify the barriers to motivation. Is the work challenging? Do you feel competent to perform the work? Are you getting needed feedback? Do you understand the expectations? Do you have the time and resources needed to perform well? What other problems, obstacles, and unmet needs do you confront?

2. Formulate a plan, including action steps, for overcoming the barriers to motivation. Discuss the plan with affected parties and get commitments from them (if appropriate).

3. Implement the action steps. After a reasonable time period, assess the results. Has your motivation increased? Has your interest, satisfaction, or performance improved? What else might you do to stay motivated?

**Being an Energizer**

Recall that in this chapter we talked about how Cross and colleagues (2003) see positive energy as a very important source for motivation. Over the next week, observe people in your organization that act as “energizers” and “de-energizers.” How do you respond to these people? Then carefully observe how often you are an energizer or a de-energizer at work and how people react to you. Over time, consciously and authentically adopt a more positive attitude and engage in energizing behaviors such as seeing opportunities for positive action, taking into account others’ opinions and ideas, and openly showing appreciation for others’ efforts. As you continue to practice this behavior, can you observe any changes in the behavior and attitude of the people around you? How do those changes, if any, influence you?