

Personal Development Resources

Quick Guide to Motivating Yourself

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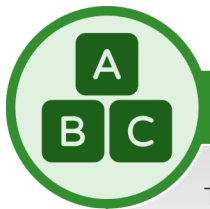
Quick Guide to Motivating Yourself

Are you able to get excited about every task you need to do? Or do you sometimes need a bit more help to make a start, never mind getting the task done? Maybe you're continuing to ignore those overflowing filing cabinets, instead of taking some time out to reorganize them.

Perhaps you keep rearranging your priorities, so that the tasks you hate always end up at the bottom of the list.

The longer you delay doing something, the more stress and pressure you're likely to feel. After a while, you may even start to lose confidence in your ability to complete the task at all.

Many of us sometimes need help getting motivated. And it can be very frustrating when we know we must do something, but we just can't get around to making a start.



Motivation Basics

There are essentially two types of motivation:

- **Intrinsic motivation** – This is when you are motivated by “internal” factors to meet your own personal needs. Most hobbies and leisure activities are based on intrinsic motivation. We do them because we enjoy them, not because we must.
- **Extrinsic motivation** – This is when you are motivated by “external” factors that are given or controlled by others, for example, by salary or by praise. Our jobs are usually based on extrinsic motivation, although there will be some intrinsic motivation involved if you enjoy aspects of what you do.

Most situations at work involve both types of motivation. If we do a job we enjoy, some of the work we do will be intrinsically motivating. Realistically though, we probably wouldn't go to work if we weren't being paid! Enjoying your job is intrinsically motivating, while being paid a salary to do it is extrinsically motivating.

Even if we do a job we enjoy, problems can crop up when we need to do something that we don't inherently like – such as filing, completing reports, and so on. We must do undesirable tasks as part of our job, so we must find a way to motivate ourselves to complete them. That's where self-motivation is necessary.

To motivate yourself, you must examine and understand your needs, so that you know what you find valuable and rewarding. Then, by changing your environment and perspective, you can find the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to complete those undesirable tasks. So, rather than relying on other factors to make a task more rewarding, you make it more rewarding yourself.



Self-Motivation Strategies

Just as there are two types of motivation, there are two main strategies for motivating yourself:

1. You make the task more intrinsically interesting and satisfying
2. You provide your own extrinsic rewards

Using a combination of both is often the most effective way to motivate yourself. So, you must find further intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to get those undesirable tasks done.

Here are some tactics that you can use motivate yourself:

- **Change your attitude and approach to undesirable tasks** – For example, the task of reorganizing your filing cabinet may not be motivating. But being seen as a competent and organized person might provide intrinsic motivation for you. By thinking of filing in this way, for example, you can connect completing the task with meeting your needs.
- **Think about why you do what you do** – Sometimes you may start to think that your job is pointless, so why bother to do things? A great way to increase self-motivation is to list all the positive outcomes of your job. If you're on the cleaning staff in a hospital, ultimately your job keeps patients safe from germs and disease. If you sell office equipment internationally, you contribute to the efficient functioning of workplaces all over the world.
- **Set goals** – By setting goals you'll know exactly what you need to do to achieve what you want in life. Then, by looking at this “bigger picture”, you'll be able to see how those undesirable tasks can help you reach your goals, and you'll be able to see “what's in it for you” to complete these tasks.
- **Break your tasks down into smaller pieces** – Organizing the entire filing cabinet may be too large a task to do all at once. Start alphabetically, or with the first section of files. Then, when you complete the first group, you can use your success with the smaller tasks to motivate you to finish.



Self-Motivation Strategies continued

- **Build in accountability** – Tell your colleagues or manager about your task. Knowing that someone else is expecting you to complete the task can help motivate you.
- **Master time management** – Learn to take control of your time and create a schedule that helps you to do things more efficiently.
- **Don't procrastinate** – When low motivation and procrastination occur together, it can be doubly hard to get things done.
- **Reward yourself** – Make an agreement with yourself to give yourself a reward when you complete a task. For example, buy yourself a specialty coffee for completing smaller tasks, or send yourself to the spa for a massage when you finish a major one.
- **Scare yourself with the negative consequences of not doing it** – If not doing the task is going to get you in trouble with your boss, focus on this, and scare yourself into doing it!
- **Swap tasks with a colleague** – Maybe you can trade your undesirable task with someone else who doesn't mind doing it, and you can do something for that person in return. Use each other's needs, interests, and talents to work more efficiently.
- **Surround yourself with positive thoughts and people** – positive thinking is very powerful. Just telling yourself that you can do something is often all you need to get started. And when you're around other positive people, they'll support and encourage you to keep trying.
- **Create an accomplishment log** – Use this to record all the times when you were able to motivate yourself to complete a task or keep moving forward. The log can inspire you the next time you need some extra motivation.

Key Points

Motivation is a complex subject and motivating yourself can be difficult. By examining your needs, you can often change the way you view a task, and you can link completing it with something that's intrinsically satisfying. You can also provide your own rewards and change how you approach undesirable tasks to provide more extrinsic motivation.

By using a combination of self-motivation tactics, you'll motivate yourself to get those undesirable tasks done. Then you can get on with the parts of your job you really enjoy!