

## Motivating Yourself: 8 Simple Strategies

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All of us struggle to get going at times. There's nothing wrong with this and it can even be helpful to take a break from your regular routines. If, however, you find you are consistently lacking motivation to engage in activities that would be meaningful to you or if you feel stuck in a rut, here are some simple strategies that are often effective to help you to make changes.

- 1) **Identify and list what is important to you in your life** (e.g., *personal health, relationships, work, education, recreation, spirituality, community involvement*).
- 2) **Choose one of these areas that you would like to improve. Set specific, measurable and achievable goals** to move forward in that area (e.g., *if having better health is your value, you might choose to walk for 20 minutes, three times per week; or you might choose to drink one fewer pop per day*). It is helpful to write down your goals and plans to achieve them.
- 3) **Identify barriers to achieving the goals and problem-solve how to over-come them!** (e.g., *I am tired in the mornings and don't have time in the evenings, so lunch time is the best time to walk; Whenever there's junk food lying around I eat it. Maybe it's best to throw some out and buy less of it in the future*).
- 4) **Measure and recognize your success** (e.g., *cross each completed goal off your calendar/check-list for that day*). Be forgiving of yourself if you don't completely meet your goal, and make plans to improve or adjust your goal (e.g., *I went for two walks this week. My goal was for 3, and I got two-thirds of the way there!*).
- 5) **Reward yourself appropriately** (e.g., *I'll let myself watch that tv show after I finish [name task].*)
- 6) **Get social support** (e.g., *ask a co-worker to walk with you; talk to someone who will listen about what you want to change*).
- 7) **Make a habit** out of the behaviour change (e.g., *choose to walk at the same time each day*). Like brushing your teeth in the morning and evening, when you have a habit you don't have to think about it, you often just do it .
- 8) **Try to see difficulties as normal occurrences and as challenges to be addressed, rather than a terrible problem.** It is normal to have difficulties (e.g., *time constraints, illness, stressful life events*) at times when trying to follow-through on your goals . Use steps 1-7 to get back on track when you can.

Finally, keep in mind that you don't have to **feel** "motivated" or "good" to do something. Take a moment to take a look at the proof of that in your own life: You have probably felt nervous before when doing something new (e.g., the first day of a new job), yet chose to do it anyway. Similarly, we've all chosen to go to school or work on a day when it was the last thing that we felt like doing. Just because you are feeling down, or your head says "I can't", does not mean you have to listen and obey. Make *choices* consistent with who you want to be and what is important to you.

If you are still struggling with motivation and behaviour change despite having tried these recommendations, or have been feeling down or depressed for more than two weeks, consider seeking help. gmPsychologists are specialists in helping you to make the changes you want.