

# Motivation for academic success

A self-help guide from the Welfare & Counselling Team



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***Welfare & Counselling Team***

**Motivation for academic success**

**Your motivation as a student**

During the course of your studies, sometimes you find that your motivation to do anything is so low. It could be that you had a different expectation and that has changed. Or events in your life have taken a different turn. This can leave you feeling demoralized as well as knock down your confidence. Maybe you have reached that point where you can see how your lack of motivation is having an adverse effect and you are perhaps struggling to understand why.

**Why have I lost motivation?**

Think back to when you first came on the course –what was it like then? How did you feel then and what did you think of your chosen course?

There are a number of reasons why students lose motivation in the middle of their studies. These include things such as:

- not being sure whether this is the right course for you.
- not feeling that you are as good as everybody else.
- financial difficulties, making it impossible to meet certain demands.
- relationship problems, leaving you feeling there is no adequate support.
- feeling under-pressure from things outside which then impacts on your academic work.
- poor health conditions and feeling exhausted before you have even started.
- negative comments by people around you leaving you with a negative self-perception.
- lack of clear focus – suddenly you realise you have too many priorities and don't know where to start.
- lack of direction – not so sure where you want to go with this and find yourself asking 'what if...'
- failure to accept constructive criticism - criticism seen as an attack rather than something to help you improve.

**Why do I feel stuck?**

Sometimes when people have too many priorities they can become overwhelmed and begin to view themselves negatively because of their failure to cope.

**Self-labelling**



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It is very easy for negative thoughts to lead to unpleasant feelings and unhelpful behaviours.

What you think and how you see yourself can greatly influence how you feel and how much you put towards achievement something, such as 'I am stupid and a failure' or 'I have got what it takes...I know I can do it'.

Negative self-labelling, such as 'I'm a loser, I'm lazy' do not require much effort to send you on the downward sparrow. The longer you carry on with that thought, the worse it gets. Likewise, when you start believing in yourself that you can do it 'I am hard working...always have been' you can begin to feel energetic and keen to succeed.

**Identify your thoughts**

It is how long you dwell on your negative thoughts that do the damage.

*Example:* You have not done as well as you would have liked on your first assignment. Here you could either lose or take control by how you perceive the situation. You could allow yourself to think the following:

*I am no good on this course...I will never do it right....no one's helping me... I'll never finish this course, maybe I should leave and stay with the thoughts for a while until find yourself feeling de-motivated which then results in dodging doing the work*

On the other hand you could tell yourself:

*I'm disappointed...I'm sure I can improve...I'll seek some support from....* You may well feel disappointed but motivated, which can encourage you to look for ways to improve

**Identify troublesome areas**

You need to know what it is you feel unable to do – therefore make a list of tasks you have avoided doing. See if you can catch the negative thoughts behind it and then come out with a more positive thought. It is no good thinking about something and never doing it. You have the power to turn this around through this very simple equation:-

Positive thinking + Action plan + Action = better outcome and increased confidence

Positive thinking + Action plan + No Action = negative outcome and self-doubt

Negative thinking + No Action plan = low confidence and poor self-image



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**What support have I got?**

Every little support or positive thing will make a difference; these may include your social circles. It means utilising support from those around you. If you feel pressured by loved ones, let them know so they can give you some space. Remember also if you hang around people who are not motivated, they may be helping to keep you in this limbo. Therefore, consider spending less time with them when you have work to do. Getting breaks and rests are all part of your wellbeing.

Identify what your strengths are –what makes you feel good about yourself? Avoid focusing on what you are not good at as they are not helping you, instead concentrate on what you did that made you feel happier. I suggest you move on gradually as your energy level increases and the desire to carry on returns.

**How to boost your motivation**

Label the obstructions if you can, for example, money problems, relationship, course context, health problem etc so that you can start to explore alternative solution to each of the problems separately.

**Setting goals:**

- Your goals need to be positively phrased i.e 'I want to spend at least...hours on my assignment each day/week'. 'I want to reduce the amount of time I go out with friends to ....
- Set small daily or weekly goals and ensure that they are manageable and achievable.
- Ensure that your effort to succeed is measurable, i.e I will attend all my lectures and read notes every day, go to the library every week etc.

**Action plan**

Your plan for completing an assignment may include:

- What assignment you need to work on
- Where it is comfortable to work
- How long you need
- The environment you work in needs to be conducive – is it tidy enough to cause less distraction?

You also need to include looking after your wellbeing. Ensure that you are taking enough rest and eating a well balanced diet. Make time for friends and family, Have time for your favourite movies or sports or any other hobby...**have fun and laugh more!!!**



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**Tips for motivating yourself**

1. Don't allow other people's attitude or behaviours to interfere with your academic achievements. Take responsibility for your wellbeing and not wait for others to do for you what you can do for yourself.
2. Don't waste time and energy blaming other people for what you cannot do for yourself. Instead focus your attention on what alternatives are there to help you succeed.
3. Believe in yourself – you have come this far, it shows you have the potential and just need to double your effort.
4. Stop the negative self-labelling. If you can't be kind to yourself – why should other people? It's difficult for others to support you if you are not prepared to work with them.
5. Take negative criticism and turn it into an opportunity to do better and excel.

For further help please access the student portal for information on:

- study skills
- counselling services
- careers workshops
- and more...