Skills for Success: MOTIVATION

Objectives:
- Connect with peers
- Learn about Counseling Center services
- Identify ways in which you struggle with motivation
- Discover how your peers' struggles with motivation are similar to and different from your own
- Learn about different types of motivation
- Learn general strategies and techniques that can improve motivation

Home messages...
Motivation

Think of a time when you felt very motivated:

- What were you working on?
  (Which topics easier to stay motivated to do? What other topics much more difficult to feel energized about?)

- What were you working toward?
  (Just completing the project? Or something else?)

- Did you keep a goal in mind?
  (And did focusing on the goal help you stay motivated or not?)

- What kept you going?

- When you felt you were slowing down, what inspired you to continue?

Think of a non-academic behavior:
(for example, learning to ride a bicycle for the first time, or training for a marathon)

- Did you keep a goal in mind? (And did focusing on the goal help you stay motivated or not?)

- What kept you going?

- When you felt you were slowing down, what inspired you to continue?

Motivation Styles

Researchers believe there are two different styles of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic

**Intrinsic (Internal):**
Someone who enjoys a task for the sake of interest or enjoyment from performing the task
Someone who studied because they like learning or enjoy the process of learning

**Extrinsic (External):**
Someone who completes homework and studies to get the good grades
Someone who feels motivated by external rewards (e.g., parental approval, increased allowance)

**Individuals who are motivated by intrinsic factors:**
- tend to perform better academically
- continue performing a task willingly
- are able to focus more on the process of learning, rather than just the end goals
- are more likely to feel they have control over the outcome

You can translate extrinsic rewards into intrinsic motivation!
Factors that Contribute to Decreased Motivation:

- **LACK OF RELEVANCE** – If something is neither relevant nor meaningful to you personally, it may be difficult to get motivated to begin.

- **AMBIGUITY** – If you are uncertain of what is expected of you, it may be difficult to get started.

- **LACK OF CHALLENGE** – If you are bored with your work and find it unstimulating. This frequently happens with highly intelligent students, who are not challenged by the pace or level of difficulty of class material.

- **ACCEPTANCE OF ANOTHER'S GOALS** – If a project has been imposed or assigned to you and it is not consistent with your own interests, you may be reluctant to spend the necessary time to see it to conclusion.

- **INABILITY TO HANDLE THE TASK** – If through lack of training, skill, or ability you feel that you lack the personal resources or knowledge to do the assignment, you may avoid it completely.

Factors that Contribute to Decreased Motivation:

- **FEAR OF FAILURE / PERFECTIONISM** – Having unreachable standards will discourage you from pursuing a task. Remember, perfection is unattainable.

- **EVALUATION ANXIETY** – Since others' responses to your work are not under your direct control, over-valuing these responses can create the kind of anxiety that will interfere with work getting accomplished.

- **PERSONAL PROBLEMS** – For example, financial difficulties, problems with your boyfriend/girlfriend, etc. interfere with your ability to focus.

- **FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN** – If you are venturing into a new realm or field, you don’t have any way of knowing how well you’ll do. Such an uncertain outcome may inhibit your desire to begin.

- **OTHER FACTORS** – 
  
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Decreased Motivation Can Lead to PROCRASTINATION

Consider the following examples:

1. **You act as though if you ignore a task, it will go away.** The mid-term exam in your chemistry class is not likely to vaporize, no matter how much you ignore it.

2. **You underestimate the work involved in the task, or overestimate your abilities and resources in relationship to the task.** You tell yourself that you grasp concepts so easily that you need only spend one hour on the physics problems, which would normally take you six.

3. **You deceive yourself into believing that a mediocre performance or lesser standards are acceptable.** For example, if you deceive yourself that a 2.3 GPA will still get you into the medical school of your choice, you may be avoiding the decision to work harder to improve your grade point average and may have to alter your career plans. This form of avoidance can prevent you from consciously making choices about important goals in your life.

4. **You deceive yourself by substituting one worthy activity for another, like cleaning the apartment instead of writing your term paper.** Valuing a clean apartment is fine but it only becomes important when there is a paper due, you are procrastinating.

5. **You believe that repeated “minor” delays are harmless.** An example is putting off writing your paper so you can watch 5 minutes of your favorite television program. If you don’t return to writing after 5 minutes, you may stay tuned to the television for the entire evening, and do no work.
HOW TO STAY MOTIVATED:

- Lack of Relevance?
  —> **Find a way to make it fun!** Incorporate your interests into your work! If you love singing and music, make it relevant to your writing assignment (for example, by writing about the history of jazz). If you need to take notes on several chapters in a textbook, write notes with colored pens!

- Lack of Challenge?
  —> **Set your own personal goals.** Try writing a poem instead of an essay. Try writing a report by hand instead of typing on the computer. Try using a new computer program, instead of one you’ve already mastered. Make it new and make it interesting!

- Acceptance of another’s goals?
  —> **Remember your own reasons for coming to college.** Remind yourself of your academic goals, your purpose and your intentions for pursuing higher education.

HOW TO STAY MOTIVATED:

- Perfectionism? Evaluation anxiety? Personal Problems?
  —> **Seek out a support network.** Talk to your friends and ask how they overcame test anxiety. Go to a workshop and learn tips on coping with anxiety. Meet with a professional to discuss your emotions and learn ways to cope. You don’t have to deal with it alone.

- And remember,
  —> **Acknowledge what you have accomplished along the way.** Look back and see how far you’ve come. After writing 10 pages, review your work and be proud! (even if you still have 5 more pages to write!)

What other tips can you learn from your peers?
After You Plan
Start with a written plan of action to avoid getting distracted
Keep your plan simple and straightforward
Start with the one thing you must get done today to feel productive
Should be a manageable item you can complete in 10-15 minutes
Break the day up into a number of “action sessions” for other tasks
Balance the time spent planning with time spent creating or doing
Avoid over-planning because this is another method of procrastination
Before ending your day spend 10 minutes reviewing your progress
Take time to plan your actions for the next day

Action Directed
Your tasks should match your values or purpose
If not, you will find it difficult to muster the energy to tackle your tasks
Bring each task into congruence with your basic mission
If you can’t, take it off of your list

Sized Pieces
Don’t put any “To-do” on your list that takes more than 30 minutes
If it takes longer, it’s actually a series of smaller “to-do’s”.
Break each task out and list it separately
You don’t have to tackle all the steps of a project in one sitting
Spread a large task out over several work sessions
You will see greater progress as you check more items off your list
You will avoid getting bogged down in one large task or project

Decide to Schedule It
Determine how much you can do or tolerate at a time, which may take some experimentation
Don’t push yourself too far or you’ll get bored or frustrated
Plan these project “pieces” into your daily activities
Set a “completion point” for accomplishing each small task
Completion points give you an end in sight to look forward to

Good Enough is Good Enough
- Perfectionism often causes procrastination
- Perfectionists would rather put it off than do an incomplete job
- Rather than perfection, aim for progress
- Any small step toward completion is an accomplishment

Just Do It
- Do the hardest job (or part of the job) first and get it out of the way
- Once you tackle the part you are dreading, the rest is a breeze
- Stop spending time over-planning and just jump into doing it
- Set a time limit - “I’ll file papers for 5 minutes,” and stick to it
- Alternate unpleasant jobs with tasks you enjoy
- Delegate out items you can’t make yourself do

Plan Around Interruptions
- Interruptions tend to occur in identifiable patterns
- Notice when interruptions occur, by whom, and why
- Take steps to prevent those interruptions before they occur
- If they can’t be prevented, learn how to delegate to someone else
- If they can’t be delegated, learn how to delay until you are finished

Make It Fun
- Make the project and environment as pleasant as possible
- Play music, open a window, have a cold drink, etc.
- Give yourself the best tools and work space for the project
- Take a few minutes to organize your work space because it will make your brain feel more organized too
- A clean desk allows you to focus without visual distraction
- It’s only a chore if you think of it as a chore

Staying Motivated
- Find an “accountability partner” to track your progress
- Schedule a regular time to check in with a friend or colleague
- Rewarding your accomplishments encourages productivity
- Give yourself a break, a treat, a nap – whatever is a reward for you
- Reward every step along the way, not just the end result
- The bigger the accomplishment, the bigger the reward
HOME MESSAGES:

The hardest part is getting started! Just start working for 10 minutes (you can do ANYTHING for 10 minutes!) Then, as you get into the work, try to do it another 10 minutes. Before you know it, you've been working for a while!

Can translate external rewards into intrinsic motivation!

Ever take home messages?)