



# Motivation

Motivation is defined as the “initiation, direction, intensity, persistence, and quality of behaviour, especially goal- directed behaviour.” ( Brophy, 2010) . It is that inner drive that keeps us going and moves us forward with our academic pursuits. It is the reason why we do the things we do.

Motivation can sometimes wane if one feels overwhelmed with too much material or the course content lacks meaning . It could be the weather, or perhaps a feeling that success is not possible, so why bother. How does one maintain motivation?

## Strategies to Maintain Motivation



**Self- management:** It is important to check how you are doing so that you can make change. Self monitoring and reflection can be an important strategy to stay on track. Self monitoring requires constant self evaluation and asking questions. See the Task Analysis worksheet below to consider the ease and the challenges of the task at hand.



**Motivational Checklist** (Alderman 1999): Consider the following ideas for yourself, as soon as you finish a reading, review a lecture or examine an assignment or essay topic.

- Identify key points in the reading or the key goals of the assignment
- Any lingering questions that I cannot answer or points I do not understand. What am I going to do about these questions?
- What connections am I making to other courses and life experience? Of course, not every task may have relevant connections but it is important to consider these connections continually as part of your critical thinking and increased process of learning



**Generate your “Oomph”:** Oomph, according to the freedictionary.com is defined as “enthusiasm, vigour or energy”. What is it that you need to keep on track? What is your intrinsic motivation? Follow the **K-W-L** method by D. Ogle (Brophy, 2010) . What do you **KNOW** or think you already know about the topic? What do you **WANT** to know about the topic? As a result of the current reading or lecture, what did you **LEARN** about the topic? This will make you mindful of your new learning and keep you motivated!



**Task Oriented Approach:** Stay focused on the task. Sometimes, failure in tests or assignments can lead to feelings of incompetency and inadequacy. Keeping these feelings associated with the test and do not internalize it to your competence. Don't judge yourself harshly. Seek out explanations for failure in this particular context. For example, did you spend the needed time to study? Know that it is specific to this situation and does not define you. Go see your professors or teaching assistants and ask for insights in your mistakes so that you can learn from them.



**Try Premack's Principle:** Order tasks from most challenging to least challenging and tackle them in that order. Research has shown you are more likely to complete all tasks this way. Use pleasant tasks as rewards for tasks you are putting off (gettingstronger.org).



**Make it public:** Tell family and friends about your goals and ask them to hold you accountable. For example, you could ask a friend to make sure you stay on task during a study session.

Title of Assignment:	
Course of Assignment:	Due Date:
Percentage Worth:	
1. What do you have to do to complete the assignment?	
2. What will be hard about doing this assignment?	
3. What do you have to do to complete the assignment?	
4. What do you think you will enjoy most about this assignment?	

Covington, M. V. & Teel, K. *Overcoming Student Failure, Changing Motives and Incentives for Learning* (1996)

## Resiliency is a Key Factor in Motivation

Resilience is the belief that you can overcome specific challenges. Today is difficult but tomorrow is another day. Resiliency requires the ability to overcome, steer through, bounce back and reach out. (Reivich & Shatte, 2002).



**Overcome** = ability to move on past negative experiences

**Steer Through** = not allowing the negativity of the day-to-day to interfere with your productivity and focus

**Bounce Back** = using skills to allow us to overcome major setbacks and bounce back to "normal" routines. Strategies to help could include finding a routine activity that you enjoy, such as dance, reading

**Reach Out** = reaching out to new meaning and to new experiences as a proactive way to maintain resilience. Attend a lecture or participate in something that you would not normally do, just for fun. It can also be about reaching out to friends, family, advisors or counsellors for help when help is needed.

### Some strategies to strengthen resiliency (Reivich & Shatte, 2002):

#### Calming

- Breathing & muscle relaxation: It may sound like a cliché but it really works! Breathe from your diaphragm rather than your chest. Pay close attention and take some deep full breaths. Focus on only the breathing and do not let your mind wander. Do this for 5 minutes.

#### Focusing

- Mental games or physical exercise: Games can be good distractors from negative intrusive thoughts. Mental math or word games can be simple but healthy distractors. Singing the lyrics of your favorite song, or memorize a passage or a poem and say it aloud. Physical activity such as a walk can help you to refocus and also give you a chance to catch some fresh air.

## References

- References:** Alderman, M. K. (1999). *Motivation for achievement: possibilities for teaching and learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Brophy, J. (2010).** *Motivating students to learn*. New York: Routledge.
- Covington, M.V. & Teel, K.M. (1996).** *Overcoming student failure: changing motives and incentives for learning*. American Psychological Association.
- Reivich, K. & Shatté, A. (2002).** *The resilience factor*. Broadway Books.
- Premack's Principle**, <http://gettingstronger.org/2010/12/stop-procrastinating-use-the-premack-principle/>