

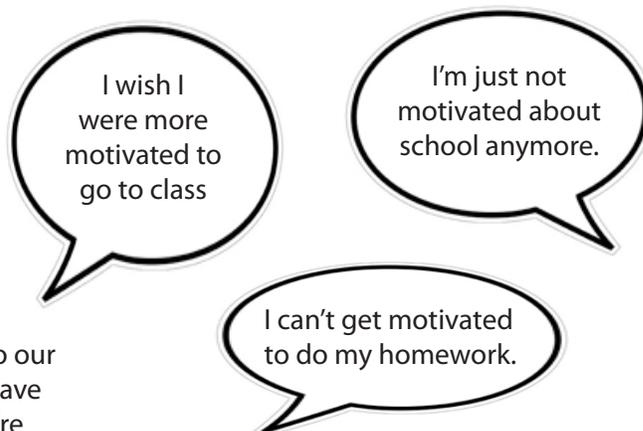


Find Your Motivation & Translate it into Action

What does it mean to be motivated, and how can you positively impact your own motivation?

It may seem elusive, but being motivated really just means to want something. Academic motivation is the “wanting to” of learning.

We want things for many reasons. Food is necessary to life, so our motivation to eat lunch is usually very strong. Other things have **perceived value** (such as what kind of car we drive), and we're generally willing to work harder for the things we value more.



WHAT do you want

First, think about what it is that you want. Learn more about the subject? Get a good grade? You may even want both. And, face it – you may just want to get through the class. What you want is also influenced by your specific expectations for success. If you believe that you're just not very good at math, for example, you may focus on just getting through the class rather than excelling in it.

For more information about how beliefs impact goals and motivation, see “**Motivation & Beliefs.**”

WHY do you want it

Next, think about why you want that something. If the course is part of your major, you might want to learn about it because you know it will enhance your future career plans. If you want to get a good grade – even if the material is not particularly interesting to you – it may be because you have your eye on going to graduate school. If the course is just a requirement that seems meaningless or purposeless right now, then focus on just getting through it because you have to! A clear purpose is important because it gives you a motivational anchor point that you can refer to again and again.

If you're having trouble finding a clear purpose, see “**Setting SMART Goals.**”

HOW will you motivate yourself

Think about how you can motivate yourself to get the things you want. More specifically, think about what you'll do when you find your motivation diminished. Motivation is situational and changeable, so make specific plans now for maintaining motivation. These plans are sometimes referred to as **reinforcers** – in simple terms, rewards that you can use as carrots.

The worksheet on the back of this page has some ideas you may be able to use.

Motivation + Action = RESULTS

Think of it as a two-step process: motivation is the “wanting to,” and “self-regulation” is the “doing.” All the motivation in the world won't do you any good unless it translates into behavior.

If you have any doubt that motivation is meaningless without self-regulation, think about everybody you know (maybe even you?) who has made a New Year's resolution.



Getting (and staying) motivated

Use this for any of your classes, for your academic or career goals in general, or even for a personal goal.

Some tasks or goals will require more reinforcers than others. So, for example, you might want to reward yourself after doing 10 calculus problems rather than after finishing the entire homework set.

What do I want? What outcome do I hope for? Other than getting a good grade, are there other ways to measure my success?

Why do I want this? What value can I find in the task?

What reasons are there for thinking I'll succeed?

What can I use to motivate myself – to reinforce my behavior? Think about things you enjoy – taking a nap, going to a movie, hanging out with friends, watching TV, surfing the web, listening to music, reading a novel. You may want to save these activities for a job well-done so they'll have real meaning for you.

What's under my control? How could I make the task more enjoyable?

Get in the habit of thinking about motivation as a cyclical process: determine what it is you want and why you want it; plan your rewards and pay attention to which ones are the most motivating for you.