

Practicing Small steps to Motivation

A common side effect of dealing with life challenges and a barrier to making healthy changes is a LACK OF MOTIVATION. Yet we need motivation to 'get up' and try out new and helpful habits.

We know from research and clinical practice, that once people actually start using the new habit or coping pattern they get better or deal with the problem quite well. The key is to simply start, to move from thought **to** action, to move from no motivation **to** the first step, from knowing what **to** do to doing it.

Here are some things to remember:

- Motivation won't just arrive if you wait for it – but you can build it
- Motivation comes from practicing the new or helpful habit you are aiming for
- Motivation can be achieved by taking small steps
- Motivation comes from doing first- the feeling comes shortly afterwards
- Motivation comes from small successes
- Motivation increases after just 1 or 2 successful practices
- Motivation through practicing skills in your personal environment leads to significant change. Research shows that if you practice, you are up to 3 times more likely to succeed and change.
- Motivation to change a habit is best achieved by using simple strategies; using them every day; keeping visual reminders; & seeking support
- Motivation is maintained when you remind yourself of the reasons and rewards for developing a new/useful habit

Strategy: When you work with a Psychologist, counsellor or therapist, you will often be asked to complete practice tasks (sometimes called homework). For example, recording your thoughts and feelings, doing breathing practice, going for a brief walk, sitting in a shopping centre to 10 minutes, being assertive with your sister etc. This is done for the following reasons:

1. Real change comes from practicing the new and helpful habits or skills in your own environment
2. Practice leads to increased motivation and empowerment
3. Take home tasks often involve collecting important information about yourself and the problems which can be used in planning to beat the problems.
4. Practice tasks lead to increased self awareness, self control and self esteem

These tasks are most effective when you understand the reason behind them, the rewards you'll get from doing them, and when they are personal and targeted toward what you want. Sometimes the take home or practice tasks seem daunting or too hard. In this case, talk to your therapist about them and replan an easier task. If the task doesn't work out the way you expect, then once again you and your therapist will replan the task to make it successful and powerful. There are good reasons for why your therapist asks you to complete a practice or home task, if you are unsure about the reasons, it's perfectly okay to ask for more information.

Tips for Keeping Motivated

- List the reasons for why you want to change (a habit, or feeling, or belief, or behaviour)
- Remind yourself regularly of the REWARDS for changing
- Take things in small, planned steps
- Use reminder notes
- Seek support from family and friends and work-mates to encourage and remind you of the new habit you want to develop
- Use positive thinking strategies, and positive affirmations
- Talk to others about getting motivated
- Rearrange your timetable to support you, and the energy and time involved in changing
- Record your successes, and reward yourself for success (eg movies, a self-gift)
- Helping others to change can help to motivate ourselves
- Read motivational books, watch motivational programs
- Create a positive daily routine which reminds and supports you in changing to new habits
- Allow yourself; the luxury of time, forgiveness for slow progress, and understanding for mistakes along the way.
- Remind yourself that 'change is surely possible, but it takes time to change a pattern. So with practice, everyday, you can achieve a new habit'.
- 'It won't happen overnight – but it will happen'

Using Reminders for Maintaining Momentum

Place positive words or messages or reminder notes in the following locations

- On fridge, on door, the wall,
- In your bag/wallet/purse
- Screen Saver on your computer
- Wallpaper/background on your computer
- Welcome note on your mobile phone
- On your bookmark for reading
- In your car
- Beside the bed
- In a frame

Other ideas

- Develop a personal Motto, Quote or Saying and use it
- Use a song or a CD that reminds you of your goals and the steps on your plan
- Use a picture, symbol or object in your home or office that reminds you of the things you are trying to achieve