

Building Motivation

Begin by understanding yourself. Think about things like:

The time of day I feel most energetic and motivated is... _____

Create a schedule and block out time during this time of day to work on class assignments and studying.

Some distractions I have that prevent me from being motivated are... _____

Create an environment that does not include those distractions. For many people, phones are distracting. Putting your phone on Do Not Disturb and having it out of sight is key. Working in a space that is not meant for relaxing (like your bed) helps eliminate distractions. If issues in your personal life or work life are distracting, try focusing just on the academic task at hand for a period of time, then let yourself take a short break to think about or take action on other issues, then move back to working.

Reasons why I get tired of working are... _____

Create a reward system for yourself using goals. For example, you might set a goal to read 15 pages of your textbook and reward yourself with a snack before beginning your next goal. Divide your tasks into smaller sections, and allow yourself to take breaks only during the designated times. For example, if you get tired because you want to be on your phone, you can set a timer to work for 20 minutes, and take a phone break for 5 minutes, then repeat.

To help find your work motivating, you can:

1. Recognize the meaningfulness of your work.

Different types of assignments I have include... _____

Work on different types of assignments each day. For example, instead of saving all your papers for the same day and all your quizzes for the same day, work on one paper and one quiz per day to help add variety.

The results of me completing a part of my assignment are... _____

All your work contributes to a whole, completed process. Working on an assignment contributes to a bigger picture: the completed project and the completed course. You are not working for no reason.

The work I am doing in school impacts other people by... _____

By completing your assignments, you are learning transferrable skills (like work ethic) that help contribute to society. Even in classes that may not seem relevant, gaining those skills helps you become a well-rounded individual that will cause a positive effect in the world. The work you do also affects your instructors' lives.

2. Recognize your responsibility.

Thinking about my classes or assignments, I have control over... _____

While you may not be able to change what your instructors do, you are still responsible for learning and doing your work; you're accountable for your grade. If an instructor does not post notes, you can search for notes on the topic before class. If an instructor has a strict rubric, think about ways you can still express yourself within it.

I like being responsible for my grade because... _____

It's good that you are responsible for your work because you are capable of doing it well! You have the opportunity to show your abilities, and I know you are competent.

3. Recognize the results of your work.

It's important to check my grades frequently because... _____

You should check your grades regularly so you know how you're doing. You can't know what's working and what's not if you don't see the results of your efforts. Make sure to look at what you get right/wrong when possible.

It's important to communicate with instructors about my progress because... _____

Meeting with your instructors can provide you with detailed information about your performance. It's helpful to know what to keep doing and what to change, so you know how to best do your work.

4. Find value in success.

Being successful in my classes, no matter their content, aligns with who I am because... _____

Motivate yourself by believing success is valuable to you. Doing your schoolwork aligns with your values. For example, if you believe you are a hard worker, working hard in your classes should be important because it reflects who you are.

5. Change your thoughts about efforts.

My instructors are putting in a lot of work by... _____

Sometimes you might feel like you're putting in more work than your instructors, which can make you want to reduce your effort. However, instructors often put in a lot of effort behind the scenes that you don't see. It's important that you also put in effort.

6. Decide to be motivated.

Results that will come from me completing my coursework are... _____

You can actually make a rational decision to be motivated! Think about the outcomes of being motivated. Completing assignments and attending classes will likely lead to passing, which will likely lead to graduating, which will likely lead to a good job. Think about why you're here.

Now that you've built your motivation, be sure to follow your schedule and create prioritized goals to help you complete your work.

Worksheet developed by Katie Jones, Graduate Assistant, Center for Academic Success and Transition, Missouri State University.

Source: Jex, S. M., & Britt, T. W. (2015). Organizational psychology: a scientist-practitioner approach. John Wiley & Sons.