

Strategies to Motivate Yourself

Center for Academic Success and Achievement

It is so tempting to blame your motivation on others, a boring professor, your roommate who parties too much, or your lack of sleep, but the truth is you are responsible for your own motivation. Believe it or not you are always motivated to do something, that something might be laying on the couch bingeing Netflix or excessive social media scrolling, the point is you are motivated to do it. The key to college is being motivated to do that right things at the right time.

Think About Your Goals

“I want to get an A in calculus” is a lot like saying “I want to be a better person” Of course you do, but how are you going to get there. Try to think of smaller steps and turn those into goals, these are called process goals and can be very helpful. For example, “I will attend tutoring every Wednesday at 4pm” or “When my sister calls I will answer, rather than waiting for her to leave a message so I can see what she wants first”. Your goals should always be specific, measurable, realistic, and flexible.

Use the 10-Minute Rule

Often the hardest part of schoolwork is getting started. Tell yourself to study for 10 minutes (you can do anything for 10 minutes right?).

After the 10 minutes if you are still not motivated you can stop, talk a walk get a snack, but most often you will find you can just keep working the hardest part is over.

Break Big Assignment into Smaller Pieces

Thinking about big projects can be overwhelming and stressful. Try and break the bigger thing into smaller pieces. With a paper for example: picking a topic, conducting research if necessary, drafting an outline, etc.

Set Goals Each Study Session

Your goal should never be “study math” that would be like going to work and making a to-do list that just says “work”. Instead you should have goals like “Read pages 16-27 in my biology book”, “be able to explain motivational leadership”, or “complete calculus problems 1-4”

Reward Yourself

The reward can be small like checking Instagram, just give yourself something to look forward to.

Ask for Help

If you have tried some of these techniques and nothing is working, it could be something bigger. Maybe you don't understand the course material or what's being asked of you. Reach out to your professor, a peer in your class, or make an appointment with a CASA staff member.

