

Motivation and Goal-Setting



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Motivation

Motivation is defined as that which gives purpose and direction to behavior. Unfortunately, there is no magic potion available that makes a person motivated. Motivation comes from one source and one source only: **You** going after something **you** want. Rick Lam, CEO of Ground Zero Communications, believes that highly-motivated people possess six main character traits that allow them to stay focused and reach their goals.

Desire

Before you can succeed in college, you must have a genuine desire to do so. If you are not truly committed to obtaining a college degree, you probably will not put forth the necessary effort to be successful.

Preparation

The secret to being successful is completing those small tasks that lead to accomplishing the big goals. Therefore you must create a plan for reaching your goals.

Execution

It's important to give yourself a kick-start after you've created your plan. Most goals can be accomplished if you execute your plans. You have to take your goals and dreams from the planning stage to the implementation stage.

Discipline

Without the discipline to stick to the goals you have set, you will never be able to reach them. You must learn to exercise self-control over your behavior in order to see a task through to the end.

Persistence

Vince Lombardi said, "It's not whether you get knocked down. It's whether you get up again." Remember that pure, unadulterated motivation is rare. Most of the time, you just have to keep plugging away before you can enjoy success.

Excellence

"Anything worth doing is worth doing well." If you expect only the best from yourself, chances are you'll live up to that expectation.



When Motivation is a Problem



Don't despair if you're lacking any of these traits. There are things you can do to increase your motivation.

- **Be willing to take a risk for something you really care about.** Nothing is ever accomplished without a risk. You must be willing to risk failure as well as success.
- **Develop personal and academic goals for yourself.** Jot down your goals and read them whenever you don't feel motivated. (See the section on goal-setting strategies.)
- **Start a task as early as possible.** The sooner you start, the sooner you'll finish, which means less time worrying about the task. And, best of all, the freedom to do a more enjoyable activity.
- **Imagine the consequences of your actions.** What will happen if you don't get started on or complete an activity? How will this impact your performance in your classes? How will this impact your semester? Your future?
- **Give yourself time to change.** Forgive yourself for backsliding and making mistakes. Mistakes are a normal part of the learning process. Tell yourself you'll do better next time.
- **Talk to someone who cares about you when you're in a slump.** Ask him/her to give you a "pep talk." Remind yourself of your good qualities, talents and abilities.
- **Concentrate on your successes, no matter how small.** Don't worry about or dwell on things that have gone wrong.
- **Reward yourself for your successes.** Give yourself a treat or a pat on the back. Remember that your self-worth is not based on your intelligence or good grades. It's enough just to be you.



Setting Goals

You, and you alone, are responsible for acquiring the education you seek. The first step in acquiring that education is setting goals. Students who do not set goals are more likely to experience low motivation, lack of direction, and poor academic performance, which oftentimes leads to discouragement, frustration, and dropping out of school. On the other hand, if you set goals, write them down, and refer back to them periodically, you're more likely to actually reach the goals you have set.

Benefits of Goal-Setting

- Goal-setting provides a direction that clearly specifies what is to be accomplished.
- It defines a plan of action that shows how to achieve what you desire.
- A plan of action allows you to keep track of your progress toward your goals.
- If you have goals, you can determine how you define success.
- Maintain motivation by resetting goals after one or more have been achieved.

The Goal-Setting Process

Goals fall into three categories: short-range, mid-range, and long-range. In general, the length of time it will take to achieve a goal determines which category it belongs. A short-range goal should be achievable in one semester (e.g. making the Dean's List). A mid-range goal should be achievable in 1-2 years (e.g. getting an Associate's Degree). A long-range goal could take several years to achieve (e.g. becoming the head nurse in a neo-natal unit).

Follow this four-step process for setting goals:

1. *Set a goal by identifying something you want.*
2. *Devise a plan of action for reaching your goal.* Identify the steps or tasks you need to complete to achieve your goal. In many cases, these steps or tasks may be classified as mid- or short-range goals.
3. *Follow your plan to your goal.* There may be times when you have to modify your plan in order to reach your goals.
4. *Reset goals after you've reached them or they no longer suit you.* Goal-setting is a lifelong process that will help you stay motivated to succeed.



It's important to write down your goals. Using the form provided, set some goals for yourself. Remember, goals should be specific and measurable.

One long-range goal I would like to achieve is:

Steps I need to take to achieve this goal are:

One mid-range goal I would like to achieve is:

Steps I need to take to achieve this goal are:

One short-range goal I would like to achieve is:

Steps I need to take to achieve this goal are: