
Editors' Choice Article

Motivating Yourself

Practical Tools and Strategies

Do you get excited about everything you need to do? Or do you sometimes need a bit of help to get started, never mind getting the task done?

Maybe you're continuing to ignore those overflowing filing cabinets, instead of taking some time out to reorganize them. Or, you're avoiding that difficult conversation with a person who is always late, choosing instead to tolerate the tardiness. Perhaps you keep rearranging your priorities, so that the



tasks you hate stay at the bottom of the list.

*Many of us need help getting motivated sometimes.
iStockphoto/Martinan*

The longer you delay doing something, the more stress and pressure you're likely to feel. After a while, you may even start to lose confidence in your ability to complete the task at all.

Many of us sometimes need help getting motivated. And it can be very frustrating when we know we have to do something, but we just can't get around to making a start. So how can we motivate ourselves to do these things?

Motivation Basics

There are essentially two types of motivation:

- **Intrinsic motivation** - This is when you are motivated by internal factors to meet your own personal needs. Most hobbies and leisure activities are based on intrinsic motivation. We do them because we enjoy them, not because we have to.
- **Extrinsic motivation** - This is when you are motivated by external factors that are given or controlled by others, for example, by salary or by praise. Our jobs are usually based on extrinsic motivation, although there will be some intrinsic motivation involved if you enjoy aspects of what you do.

Most situations at work involve both types of motivation. If we do a job we enjoy, some of the work we do will be intrinsically motivating. Realistically though, we probably wouldn't go to work if we weren't being paid! Enjoying your job is intrinsically motivating, while being paid a good salary to do it is extrinsically motivating.

Even if we do a job we enjoy, problems can crop up where we need to do something that we don't inherently like - such as filing, speaking with staff about performance issues, completing reports, and so on. We have to do undesirable tasks as part of our job, so we have to find a way to motivate ourselves to complete them. That's where self-motivation is necessary.

To motivate yourself, you must examine and understand your needs, so that you know what you find valuable and rewarding. Then, by changing your environment and perspective, you can find the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to complete those undesirable tasks. So, rather than relying on other factors to make a task more rewarding, you make it more rewarding yourself.
