

Tips for Sparking Self-Motivation

As you work towards professional and personal goals, you might find your motivation levels wavering. So what can you do when your get-up-and-go has got up and gone? Here are five simple tips to help you stay on track.



1. Tap into the power of groups

Tell other people what you are doing. Being **accountable** to others makes you more likely to stick with working towards your goals. There are many ways you can do this, from joining online forums and support groups, to simply telling your friends and family what you hope to achieve. Or consider pairing up with a '**goal buddy**' - staying motivated on your own can be tough, but partnering up with someone else means you can encourage and push each other on towards success.

2. Look for inspiration

From **motivational quotes** to stirring stories, inspiration can be found pretty much anywhere you look. Books (particularly biographies and autobiographies) are a great source, as are blogs, forums and online communities. You could also consider creating a **mood board** of inspirational photos and quotes on [Pinterest](#), or building playlists of **music** that uplifts your spirits.

3. Change your mindset

According to psychologists, the tasks that most naturally motivate us are the ones for which we have '**intrinsic motivation**'. In essence, this means when you are motivated to complete tasks because you enjoy them, or because you believe that they are the right things to do.

However, we often put off doing tasks that will help us achieve our goals because we perceive them as hard work. But you can change this view by making them more enjoyable. For example, you could turn tasks into **games** or **challenges**, and **reward** yourself with little treats every time you complete them. Doing this means you will start looking forward to your goal tasks - no bad thing!

4. Eat (and drink) smart



Dopamine is an important brain chemical that helps with mental energy and motivation. Keep your dopamine levels high by eating fish, whole grains, nuts and seeds. And - hurrah! - scientists have discovered that **chocolate** is another foodstuff that helps generate dopamine, so it's great for stimulating your brain too.

Drinking **coffee** can also help to enhance your cognitive focus - again, it releases dopamine, which triggers the brain's motivation/reward circuit. Sipping coffee as you work through a task can help you stay motivated. But be careful not to overdo it - too much caffeine can make you feel 'wired' - causing agitation, anxiety and energy slumps later in the day.

5. Strike a pose

Professor Amy Cuddy of Harvard Business School espouses the value of holding a **'high power pose'** for a quick way to boost your motivation. A high power pose is expansive, standing with your hands spread and your chest out (think Superman or Wonder Woman), while a low power pose is restrictive, for example, sitting with your hands folded and your legs crossed tightly. [1]

Holding a high power pose for around two minutes increases your testosterone levels and decreases your cortisol (in both men and women). Testosterone is associated with confidence, while cortisol is associated with stress. So, in theory, striking a high power pose will help give yourself a mental kick, generating energy and a sense of potency

when you need it most.

[1] Julia Hanna, 'Power Posing: Fake It Until You Make It', *Harvard Business School* (20 September 2010). Available at: <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/power-posing-fake-it-until-you-make-it> (accessed 1 February 2017).