



Get motivated and stay motivated!!

By, Jane Arthur-McGuire

How long did your commitment to your New Year's resolutions last? Do you even remember what they were? If not, you're not alone- research has suggested that 33% of people who make a New Year's resolution won't even make it until the end of January without throwing in the towel. National Motivation Day

(<http://www.nationalmotivationday.co.uk>) is deliberately set slap bang in the middle of the year, not to remind us all to set mid-year resolutions, but rather to encourage us to take action to remain motivated to achieve our goals every-single day of the year.

Even when we feel 100% committed that we want to lose weight, quit smoking, find a new job etc..., we find ourselves slipping back into old patterns within a few weeks and often just days. How can the psychology of motivation help us to achieve our goals?

Motivation is the force that energises us and causes us to act, it directs our behaviour towards a specific goal and sustains our behaviour until our goals are achieved. So we can see here that getting motivated is a separate issue to staying motivated. Most of us tend to have most difficulty with the second of these, but the two are linked- if we specify the right goal then we are far more likely to be able to sustain our motivation to achieve it.

1. The first step is therefore to specify the goal- make sure it is a goal that *you* want, not what someone else wants for you. Intrinsic motivation, is motivation that comes from within you and is a much longer-lasting motivator than extrinsic motivators such as money or prizes for example. Think about why you want to achieve the goal.
2. When specifying the goal you need to really pin down exactly what you want to achieve and how you're going to get there. You may have heard of making sure your goals are SMART- this is a helpful acronym that ensures that your goal is Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. This step is really important as you need to know where you are going in order to direct your energy to get there.
3. Set some milestones and reward yourself when you get there. This is really key to maintaining motivation- short (daily or weekly), medium (weekly or monthly) and long term (6- 12 months) milestones will provide you with the mental boost you need to keep going.
4. Often it's our own thoughts that are what defeat us when we're trying to make a change- we get stuck in rut in terms of our patterns of thinking- change your attitude to change your behaviour. Replace your negative thoughts with positive ones. If you're bored writing a dull report at work, think about how good it's going to feel when you get it finished. If you're thinking that you 'need' a cigarette to get through the morning meeting with the boss, think "it will be tough, but I can do it, I've done it before and I'll feel so proud afterwards".
5. Imagery can be really powerful in helping us to stay motivated- try this exercise, take a few minutes to really focus on the images, find a quiet spot, close your eyes and relax. Think of the goal that you want to achieve, imagine yourself a year from now and you've not achieved your goal- how do you feel, what are you doing, who is with you, what are you saying? Focus on building this picture until you can see it clearly. Now imagine yourself, a year from now, and you've achieved your goal- take a few minutes to conjure up the image, make it as vivid as possible, who is there, how do you feel, what are you doing, what do you hear, what do you see? Feel invigorated? Now go and do it!
6. Motivation comes from doing. Don't try and put the cart before the horse by waiting until you feel motivated before starting. When you feel really unmotivated to do something, try the 5 minute "dive-in technique" commit to yourself that you will do just 5 minutes of said task and if you're still not feeling in the zone at the end of the 5 minutes then you'll go and do something else. Getting started is the worst bit, once you dive-in, actually completing the task will create the motivation you need to succeed.