



Motivation and goal-setting

Staying motivated is important when it comes to setting and completing goals. When we combine our desires, values and beliefs, we create motivation. Since we have influence over each of these three elements, we can therefore control our level of motivation. When you value something and choose to set realistic goals for attaining it, it's likely that there will be a good outcome.

Steps to get motivated

Motivation begins with a choice. The following steps will help you generate the energy needed to take action:

- Identify your values, beliefs and desires about life.
- Think specifically about your work, health and relationships. How do they relate to your values, beliefs and life's desires? Write down these connections.
- Prioritise your goals. Are they long-term or short-term? Do you see any themes emerging with your list?
- Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses to assess what goals are realistic.
- Adjust your goals accordingly, because not every circumstance is under your control.
- Understand that success is the result of your motivation, goals, circumstances and hard work.

Motivation tips

When it comes to goals, it can be easy to get sidetracked or stalled. Consider these tips to gain and maintain your motivation:

- **Accountability** – Surround yourself with supportive people who are working towards similar goals. Encouragement from others is important, especially those who have previously completed a goal like yours.

If you are constantly competing with others, you'll feel alone and begin to lose momentum.

- **Inspiration** – Look for daily ways to uplift your mind and motivation. This might mean posting an inspiring quote or picture to your mirror, or reading about influential people you admire.
- **Consider the alternative** – If you don't make this change, what will your life be like? Your reaction to this question is a clue to how much you value this goal.
- **Practise self-care** – When you take care of yourself, you're more likely to reach your goals. This could be as simple as drinking more water, getting good sleep or exercising a few times a week. Small changes like these can make a big difference in your energy level and mood.
- **Forgive yourself** – It is all too easy to be your own worst enemy. Understand that you will have days when you fail, make mistakes and get rejected. However, if you stay positive and refuse to beat yourself up, you have already won the battle.

Goal-setting steps

When it comes to setting goals, it can be hard to know where to start. Consider the following guidelines when determining your new goal:

- **Plan** – Set aside some time to think about your goals. Sometimes you might have a few false starts when you begin. Don't be discouraged; this is a normal part of the goal-setting process.
- **Think big** – Put logic aside for a moment. We can be afraid to think and dream big when we set goals. Remember: just because you cannot reach a goal today does not mean that it's never a possibility.
- **Stay positive** – Use uplifting language when you are constructing your goal. Focus on what you want for yourself rather than what you don't want.
- **Break it down** – Goals should be broken down into attainable and measurable tasks. Setting a daily or weekly goal will continue to keep you motivated. This also allows you to monitor your progress.
- **Envision your future** – Who and where are you in five or 10 years? What are you doing? Who is around you? What is making you happy? Imagining yourself in the future can be highly motivating.
- **Write a vision statement** – When you feel overwhelmed with daily tasks, having a clear and concise vision statement can help you stay on track. This is sometimes known as a 'why' statement. The more passionate you feel about your purpose, the more determined you will be to stay the course.
- **Be flexible** – There is no rule that says you cannot revise your goals or daily tasks. As we move through life, our circumstances and passions change. It's important to stay flexible and open.

Learning to set and meet goals is a life-long process. When you achieve one goal, be sure to set time aside to celebrate the victory. Then, set your sights on a new objective, and see where it takes you.

Spend less, save more

Are you frequently short on cash? Do you have to borrow money to pay your bills? If you were unable to work for a month, would you be in a financial crisis? Try spending less and saving more to get better control of your finances. Here are some strategies:

- **Reduce your expenses** — Do everything you can to lower your expenses and put the savings in the bank. Make less-costly lifestyle choices, such as homemade food and drinks instead of lattes and take-out; thrift vs. department stores; going to the library for books and movies. Drive a fuel-efficient car instead of a fully loaded gas-guzzler. Use public transportation, bike and walk instead of driving and paying for parking. Get rid of extras like unused streaming accounts, high-speed internet, multiple cell phones or the second car unless they are helping you make or save money.
- **Increase your income** — If your income isn't enough to cover expenses and build your savings, find ways to earn more. Increase your skills to move up the corporate ladder. When possible, work overtime or take a second job. Provide services like childcare, dog walking, housesitting, gardening, etc. Sell items you don't use or need. Bank your coins — eventually, they will add up to enough cash to pay a bill or treat yourself.
- **Change your spending habits** — Make a weekly or monthly budget and stick to it. Spend less time browsing the store aisles to avoid impulse buys. Make a shopping list in advance and stick to it. Choose generic or off-brand items. Use coupons and wait for sales.
- **Save some money every month** — Put aside some amount of money every week, even if it's only \$5. Eventually your savings will add up to enough to help you with emergencies (like job loss or disability), unexpected expenses (like a broken appliance or vehicle) or life events (like starting a family, going on vacation or retiring). Savings also help you avoid costly and unnecessary credit card debt.

Resolve to prioritize mental wellness

When thinking about resolutions and goals, a lot of people focus on their health in the physical sense, particularly weight-related goals. But mental health is just as important as physical health. Here are eight tips to help prioritize your mental wellness in the new year and beyond.

1. **Choose serotonin-boosting foods.** Since most serotonin is produced in the gut, eating non-inflammatory foods will help produce more serotonin. This helps support a healthy mood, among other health-related benefits. If you eat more processed foods, try swapping them for fruits and vegetables.
2. **Add in more movement/exercise.** An *American Journal of Psychiatry* article found that just an hour of exercise per week can help reduce the risk of depression. Exercise is also a quick way to increase energy and minimize stress hormones. If you struggle to find the motivation to exercise, ask a friend or family member to join you.
3. **Get enough sleep.** Lack of sleep and insomnia can link to depression and anxiety, as people's minds are typically overrun in those scenarios. The brain needs proper rest in order to feel restored. The standard recommendation is to get 7–9 hours of sleep every night.
4. **Express gratitude.** It can be hard to feel grateful when our mental wellness is suffering. But expressing gratitude can help start and end your days on a positive note, helping you to feel more mentally relaxed. Try focusing on what and who matters to you, and write down a couple things you're grateful for every day.
5. **Minimize media use.** There's a lot going on in the world, and a lot of it can trigger past trauma or set your mind down a negative path. There's also the dreaded comparison game on social media. Take breaks from all forms of media when you need a mental wellness recharge.
6. **Focus on what matters.** Trying to be there for everyone and every moment puts a lot of stress on our minds. Learning to prioritize what and who matters most, including yourself, will help lessen the strain. Make a list of priorities to focus on and a list of ways to say no when your plate is full.
7. **Make self-care a priority.** A lot of people feel overworked and overwhelmed by the state of the world. Because of this, it's more important than ever to find time to focus on ourselves. Whether it's taking a bath, journaling or planning a relaxing vacation, find ways to focus on you when you need a break.
8. **Seek professional support.** When stress, anxiety or depression get to be too much, know that it's OK to get help. A mental health expert can help you work through your concerns and get back on track.