

Is Your Motivation a Slouch Potato?

Is Your Motivation a Slouch Potato? 3 Key Strategies for Getting On With It.

Imagine if your motivation had a personality. It may be a happy, useful friend of sunny disposition, which bounces along with you in life's adventures.

Or is it a slouch potato, lacking in energy, the only stretching it does for the TV remote.

For most of us, it's usually a bit of both, and with busy lives, you may want a bit more of the bouncy one, but not know how to make this happen.

In this article, I'll be explaining about motivation, and giving you three key strategies to be motivated and get more out of life.

So before we begin, spend some time now considering all the things you believe you have to do, and all the things you want to do. Write them down somewhere, and we'll come back to it later.

Motivated or Procrastinated?

Motivation, simply defined is the inner energy, thought or vision that makes humans act. You do things for a purpose. And, when you are clear on that purpose, and like it, you act with such effort that gets a good result. This usually makes you happy, and so more motivated to do more things. Upward the motivation spiral goes.

But sometimes it's not like that. Sometimes humans sometimes just don't do. When this happens, you might find yourself thinking too much, or feel bad about not doing stuff, or just can't see yourself succeeding.

Motivation can turn into procrastination, and then feelings of stuck-ness or guilt emerge.
Kick Start Your Motivation!

At some time or another, I am imagining that everyone reading this has a list of things to do. Have a look at the list I have asked you to write. For some of you, this will be a detailed, and numbered, list. For others, it's a vague feeling of knowing there is stuff that need doing, with short notes.

And the stuff can be mundane chores like the recycling, or more complex items like getting a decent pension sorted.

Then there are the good stuff lists, which have items like phoning good friends, seeing that film before it leaves the cinema, or visiting ten brilliant places to see before you die.

There are many theories about motivation and what gives us that special thing inside us that makes us do what's on the list.

Maslow's theory says that needs drive motivation. When we have a basic survival need, we eat, and take steps to protect ourselves. Most people in the western world don't need to do that much though, so Maslow also says that there are 'higher needs' like education and self-fulfilment, that drive us.

And when we have these needs met, there is no motivation to do more. So, if you already have a good life, are very fulfilled, you may lack motivation to achieve.

But hang on, most motivated people I know are fulfilled and do loads, so there may be other reasons why we lack motivation.

Victor Vroom's theory says that to be motivated, we need a balance of wanting to do the task, with enough belief that it is achievable.

And going back to those lists, some things may not be achievable right now, and putting them all together on one list, usually with timescales that are a bit challenging, may actually be de-motivating and cause you to give up. All those things in one place might just be adding to the problem

So this leads us to the first key strategy for being more motivated:

1. Ruthless List Management (RLM)

However you do your life lists, be ruthless about what is on them. Take a long hard look at the things that need doing. Ask yourself if every point is absolutely necessary and within your control. Categorise your list into must do, might do, and maybe if I have time.

Then look at your list. In the must do category, consider how balanced it is with mundane items and good stuff.

If your list is over-balanced with mundane stuff, and just by looking at it, it makes you miserable, no wonder you are having problems.

This is because humans are programmed towards good feelings, and if you have stuff on your list that you believe should be, or ought to be done, then this could be creating negative feelings, so you back away from it.

Hence the list becomes a burden that makes you feel bad because it's there, and because you can't get enough positive motivation to do it.

So, the second strategy is to:

2. Take Control

We all know that there are things we need to do that are mundane. However when your life list is full of these items, reconsider if they are really necessary.

With each item, ask yourself if you want to do it, or if you believe you should or ought, to do it. If the latter words, or something similar crops up, then ask yourself who says that you need to do these things.

An easy example of the type of things that can crop up are tidying a messy cupboard, or calling a long forgotten friend.

These type of things can be on your list because you believe you'd be a better person in some way, if you did them, but, by loading yourself with things you believe you ought to do, you can forget the things, and the people, that really matter.

Some things on your list might be things you imagine others would encourage you to do, like being tidy. Sometimes we can forget that as adults, it's up to you to decide how tidy you want your place.

So if you have things on your list that you believe you should do, give them the should or ought test, and if inside yourself you have a sense you don't really want to do them, let them go. Take control of what you believe is important to you.

With a bit of practice, this can be very liberating. Then you end up with a list of key things that you really believe need doing, because they are important to the maintenance of your life, or you really want to do them.

The next step is getting there:

3. Bring the future to now

Make some quiet time. Close your eyes, and have a sense of you doing the stuff you have decided is important.

Imagine you being motivated. Notice in the future one thing about yourself that is making you motivated: a feeling, a thought, whatever it is for you. Really focus on this. Everyone is different, so it could be a way of doing things, setting realistic timescales, or just a feeling of being in control.

See it, think it or feel it.

Once you have a sense of what it is that makes you motivated, bring it back with you, come all the way back to now with the thing that can make all the difference.

Open your eyes, and keep that difference within you as you do the things you want to do. And do them well!

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