

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Building Motivation When You Feel Stuck

Why Motivation Fades

Everyone experiences dips in motivation. It doesn't mean you're lazy or incapable. These dips often come from exhaustion, perfectionism, or uncertainty about your goals. Recognizing these obstacles is the first step to moving forward.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation comes from doing something because it's personally meaningful or enjoyable.

- Example: *Studying social work because you care about helping others.*

Extrinsic motivation comes from external rewards or pressures.

- Example: *Studying for a grade or to maintain a scholarship.*

Both types of motivation can be useful, but long-term success often comes from connecting tasks to your **values and purpose**.

- Tip: *Use external motivators (like deadlines) to get started, then reconnect with your intrinsic "why" to keep your progress.*

Find Your "Why" When you feel stuck, pause and ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why did I choose this program?• What interests me about this topic?• How does this connect to the kind of person or professional I want to be?• What impact do I hope to make through my studies? Writing these answers down can help reignite motivation and focus.	Small Daily Actions to Rebuild Momentum <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start small: Tell yourself to work for just 10 minutes.• Use the 5-minute rule: If something takes less than five minutes, do it right away.• Break down tasks: Focus on one section, not the whole assignment.• Reward yourself: Celebrate small wins – with a walk, snack, or short break.• Change your space: Study in a new location to refresh focus.• Connect with others: Study groups or co-working sessions can help.
Reframing Setbacks Mistakes and low-energy days are part of learning. Try shifting your mindset: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I failed → I learned what didn't work• I'm behind → I can take one small step today• I'm not motivated → I'll start and motivation will follow	Quick Motivation Boosts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to a song that energizes you• Do 10 jumping jacks or stretch• Write down one thing you did well today• Change your study location• Watch or read something inspiring for 5 minutes
Reflection Prompts Before ending your day, ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What's one thing I accomplished today?• What's one small step I can take tomorrow?• What's something I'm grateful for right now?	

References

- Cherry, K. (2023, December 13). *Extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation: What's the difference?* Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/differences-between-extrinsic-and-intrinsic-motivation-2795384>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 61, Article 101860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>