



# M

## M is Motivation

**Motivation is not something that just happens to you. Nor is it something that “sometimes you have, and sometimes you haven’t”. Should you rely on some kind of carrot to create it? If someone offers us a lot of money to do the ironing, sure, we might be more motivated to do the ironing, but how often is that reward system going to happen? No, we need to find a better answer to the ironing challenge: motivation works a lot better when it is inside us and under our control. Every time we are dependent upon an external source for our motivation we weaken, we desensitize our own personal motivation.**

Think carefully when you ask, “Why should I?” Every time we need someone to encourage or threaten us, every time we set up a carrot, we devolve our personal responsibility to external forces. And being organic we weaken a sensitive system. We all have a natural curiosity, a natural wish to deliver the goods. Notice the enthusiasm and curiosity of any healthy child. But if you observe children as they grow, these wonderful states tend to disappear in many cases. How and why? There are many reasons, of course, but unfortunately using and being in these states is not always rewarded. When they are in them, adult cynicism can knock children back. And children are increasingly expected to get used to the tough adult world.

Rediscover your curiosity and natural enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is a marvellous state: jobs are easier and more fun. People enjoy working with you. And you are a natural choice at any job interview.

Of course this is not saying you do not qualify suggestions or instructions, nor does it mean you don’t seriously speak out when things need to be changed. But practice doing something, and doing something well, from your own resources. This is the transition to maturity, the fundamental evolutionary shift from child to adult, when we move from being dependent to being independent.

And, as I am sure you will have noticed, some never make that transition, that shift from dependence to independence. Instead they shift from the dependence upon a parent to undue dependence on the state or simply “them”. “Them” being the unknown “they” who need to sort things out. Catch yourself saying “they”. Who do you mean? The government? The board of directors where you work? Ask yourself what you are going to do, and if you feel “they” need to do something, how will you pursue that? Or drop it.

Remember always to ask: “What is in my control? What can I work on?” Address that rather than complaining about areas which are out of your control.

Here are the principles.

1. Of course it's great to be externally motivated, but incorrectly used it can desensitize our own personal motivation.
2. We strengthen our personal motivation by giving it attention, by using it.
3. We can choose to motivate ourselves by looking for the intrinsic worth of doing a job well. By firstly doing a job well for the pleasure of a happy customer and secondly for long-term skill development.

And one of the simplest ways of getting motivated is to start.

Craig really wanted to sort out the family finances. They were in a bad state. They had two incomes, the mortgage wasn't so bad and yet they were regularly overdrawn.

But he couldn't bear to start. He hated “finance stuff.”. Detail. Cross-checking. Lists. Arithmetic. Budgets. Even the thought of these made him feel ill.

And yet it had to be done. He decided to wait until the weekend when he would be a little more relaxed. He sat down and started with a sigh, but an hour later the initial pain was over and he was making progress. Could he even dare admit that he was actually enjoying it?

Make a start: it's the best bet for getting motivated.

Here are the factors which will help you attain high levels of personal motivation.

1. **Whatever the task, look for its intrinsic worth.** In whatever the job or task, get used to finding the best. So you've regularly got to deal with the meanest boss in the world? OK, so let's see how quickly you can learn to manage them. You've been landed with this year's dreaded strategy report? How about if, thanks to your input, it was a useful document for once? Yes, sadly it's true that you may not get recognized for your efforts in your current role – but how about if you became so good at it that it became absolutely natural for you to make “excellence” your minimum standard? How many excellent people do you know around the place? Quite. Not many. Good news for you.

- 2. Realise that willpower consists of will (a decision) and appropriate power (an excellent state).** Both of which you know how to achieve. Will is decision. State is MEDS. Practice taking decisions. Start with simple ones such as getting up at a certain time. Go on, try it. Or write down five issues which have been on your mind, for example:
- I think I want to change my bank.
  - Should I start an Open University course?
  - I need to go and see my sister in the USA.
  - I need to sort my filing.
  - Could I afford a holiday?

Now take a decision on each. And check out your state. It's very difficult to take balanced, energetic decisions when your state is poor.

- 3. Be absolutely clear on your vision (see V for Vision).** This is your primary driving force. Is it on the wall, in your face? Is it up-to-date? Does it truly inspire you? Make sure.
- 4. Link to O for Organized.** In particular:
- Break and date large tasks: they are often demotivating in their largest form.
  - Always start a task. To wait until you are motivated is a poor strategy; you may never start.
  - Be aware of continuing to "almost start" a task. It is possible to set up a condition, as with one of Pavlov's dogs. As you think about the task you simply don't want to do it. Break the pattern; do it in a different way.

- 5. Use your H for Hero mindset:** be bigger than the pathetic task, be bigger than the pathetic in-tray.

- 6. Remind yourself of what will happen if you don't achieve what you set out to do.** What will it cost you? Go on, write it down: The cost to me of not being sufficiently motivated to take a walk each lunch-time is:
- I feel pathetic
  - I'm tired and never at my best
  - I'm going to continue to be overweight
  - If I can't even do this, how will I ever...

- 7. Change your focus, your posture, your language.** Your focus is what you are thinking about. Are you worrying about what might go wrong or are you focused on possibilities? How are you sitting? Are you sitting at your desk as you would if you were to get some serious work done? Excellent. Are you talking problems or opportunities? Are you talking "they" or "I"? Are you talking "sometime" or "today"?

- 8. Be grateful: write down your grateful list.** Start with something like this:
- To be able to think about personal development.
  - To have health and to be able to improve it.
  - To have a brother even though he is a pain.
  - To be able to travel.
  - To be able to earn money.
  - To be able to help others.
  - To be able to get fresh fruit.

Brainstorm fifty. Add to the list. Regularly review it.

**9. Return to simplicity.** Write a simplicity list like this one and get rid of the “bugs” in your life.

- The Sunday papers: expensive, and trash anyway.
- My gym membership I don't use.
- Sugar-rich spreads from the cupboard.
- All the clothes I no longer wear.
- The piles of paper I intend to sort one day.
- Nine of my twelve credit cards.
- Three of the five televisions in the house.
- The old patio furniture.
- That pasta-making machine we never use.

Write your simplicity list, add to it every day and, of course, act upon it.

*The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.*

MICHELANGELO

“Motivation works  
a lot better when  
it is inside us and  
under our  
control.”