

8 Things That Cause Your Lack of Motivation (And How to Fix Them)

HOW TO
FIX YOUR
MOTIVATION
PROBLEM

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Lack of motivation can crush you, literally cripple you from taking action. If you're sick of suffering from a lack of motivation, you're in luck, because you're about to learn the 8 major reasons why you're short on the motivational energy you need to successfully accomplish your goals... And exactly how to fix each of them. By the time you're done reading this, you'll have the knowledge you need to unleash the motivational powerhouse within you. Let's dive in. Scroll down to keep reading.

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1.

You don't know what you want.

Of all the reasons responsible for why you might be lacking in the motivation department, this first one is by far the most common: Either you don't know what you want, or there's a lack of clarity about what you want.

Whenever I do goal-setting workshops with people or with organizations, one of the first questions I ask is, "What do you want?"

You'd be surprised by how many people are unable to give me a compelling response to that question.

In other words: What's the outcome you're after?

What would it look like if everything were to go exactly as planned or better?

It's tough to get motivated to do anything at all if we're unsure about what we're after in the first place.

Conversely, once we take those fuzzy dreams we have and bring them into focus by writing them out as goals, the motivation flows naturally.

If you ask a typical sports fanatic about their favorite team, they can give you so many statistics it'll make your head spin. They can give you all the details you need to know about a team and its players—from speed to points per game and on and on...

But when someone asks them about the details of their own life, they can barely remember what they had for dinner last night.

And it's not a matter of intelligence, either.

Here's the thing: most people are about as intelligent as they make up their minds to be.

If it were a matter of intelligence, they wouldn't have such an in-depth understanding of their favorite team's stats.

It's not about intelligence.

It's about focus.

If you lack motivation in any area of your life, it's likely because you haven't decided in detail *what* you want in that area. And we can't focus on something if we don't know *what* we're aiming for.

SOLUTION(S):

- The solution to the first reason why most people have a lack of motivation is simple. Keep in mind that you can't hit a target that you cannot see. That said, identify some compelling, exciting goals for yourself in each of the major areas of your life – physical, financial, emotional, spiritual, etc. – and write them down.

2.

You're not in control of your physiology.

Take a moment to picture in your mind what a person who has a lack of motivation actually *looks* like, physically.

If a person is unmotivated, how do they stand?

How do they sit? Do they have good posture or bad posture?

Are their shoulders pulled back or slumped over forward? Is their back upright or rounded?

Now imagine what a person who's *totally motivated looks like...*

How does a person with motivation stand? Close and narrow, or open and upright?

How does a motivated person walk? Head held low, or head held high? Are their shoulders slumped forward, or pulled back nicely as they walk?

How do they sit? How's their posture? Is their back bent forward, or are they sitting upright? How do they speak? How do they stand?

Hey—what if I told you that you could instantly motivate yourself by mimicking the images of a motivated person that you just pictured in your mind's eye?

SOLUTION(S):

Motion leads to motivation. If you want to get motivated, learn to control your physiological state. Here's how:

- first, figure out what kinds of movements you naturally make when you're feeling motivated...
- Then, *do* those things and your mind will follow your body.

You'll begin to feel more motivated when you put yourself in a position to actually *feel* more motivation. You do that with your body. Move like you move when you're motivated. Stand like you stand when you're motivated.

Here's my silly—yet incredibly effective—process for using my body to elevate my motivation: Jump in the air. Clap your hands. And yell out, "WHOOOOO!" at the top of my lungs.

Just try it and see if it doesn't change your state.

See this article + podcast for more on this topic: Action Leads to Motivation »

3.

You've made "lack of motivation" part of your identity.

Have you ever seen someone make a mistake of some kind, and then follow it up by saying something like, "I'm so stupid"?

That's an example of someone who's just identified with their mistake...

But what if, instead of saying, "I'm so stupid" they said, "I just *did* something stupid"?

Yah see, there's a big difference those two statements.

The first statement identifies *you with your mistake*.

This means you and your mistake are one.

The second statement makes a clear separation between you and your mistake.

This means that YOU are not stupid, but that you simply did something stupid.

Do you constantly reaffirm to yourself that you're demotivated? Do you tell people that you "need to get motivated," or that you just "don't have the motivation to do it" right now?

If you repeat something often enough, it sticks.

One reason you may have a lack of motivation might be because you're constantly identifying as someone who's "unmotivated."

So what's the solution?

SOLUTION(S):

- Reverse the pattern. Make it clear to yourself that you do not identify as an unmotivated person, but are instead the type of person who feels incredibly motivated on a regular basis. YOU = Motivated.
- Keep in mind: identity-based mental patterns can get messy. It can take serious work to get yourself to stop thinking of yourself as an unmotivated person, and to replace it with the mindset of someone who's motivated, but you can do it. And it all starts with deciding that you'll no longer think of yourself as an unmotivated person, and to then reinforce that decision on a daily basis until it becomes a habit-until you become a motivated person.

4.

You're not aiming high enough.

Whatever we seek to accomplish – writing a book, losing weight, achieving the perfect relationship with our significant others – it's the *degree of desire* we have to accomplish those goals that ends up becoming the crucial element to achieving them. But too many people try to set limits on their desire. They tell themselves and others that they don't need wild success. But this kind of thinking is dangerous because when we limit the scope of our desire, we limit the scope of what we're willing to do to reach our goals. And when we limit the scope of what we're willing to do, we limit the scope of our motivation.

A lack of exciting and desirable goals easily takes far too many people down the road of lackluster levels of motivation.

If you limit your *potential* success, you will limit what you are willing to do to create it—which limits your motivation, not to mention your general sense of fulfillment about the life you lead.

The solution to this problem is what's known as The 10X Rule, which states that: *You must set targets that are 10 times what you think you want and then do 10 times what you think it will take to accomplish those targets.*

While some folks will tell you that setting impossible goals kills motivation, and that it's better to "underpromise and overdeliver," this line of thinking is actually foolish. 10X-targets—commonly called stretch goals—will only spur you on harder, to do more and try more than you ever have before. Besides, even if we fall short of achieving our 10X-level aims and ambitions, better to fall short of achieving a massive target than merely achieving a tiny one... Because if you aim high enough, you'll demand more from yourself and become better in pursuit of a massive goal.

But setting a high target is only the first step. The second step is to take 10 times the amount of action you think is necessary to reach that target.

SOLUTION(S):

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When we've got puny, uninspiring goals, we tend to feel lethargic and unmotivated to achieve them. On the flip side, when we've got huge and

ambitious goals, we feel empowered and invigorated to take action towards achieving them. Bottom line? Set massive goals. Take massive action.

- Push yourself to your outermost limits. You'll find that the more action you take, the more motivated you become to continue doing even more.

5.

You're overwhelmed.

Have you ever been so stressed, so overwhelmed, under so much pressure - that you'd rather say, "Screw it, I don't even care" than to continue marching forward with whatever you're trying to do?

Whatever the cause, one thing we know about being overwhelmed (or stressed to the gills) is that it can drain motivation, *big* time.

It's hard to get motivated when you're overwhelmed.

Now, obviously, if you're overwhelmed, one solution might simply be that you need to take a break and get some rest... But in all honesty, I don't think that's the problem for most people. Most people don't need more rest, they need more action.

That said, here are a couple of practical solutions to get yourself back on track if you're suffering from a stress-related lack of motivation...

SOLUTION(S):

- Maybe you took that point I made earlier — about aiming higher and 10X-ing your goals to get you motivated — to heart. But maybe you *also* aimed a little higher than your current capabilities. If that's the case, lower the bar - bit-by-bit - until you hit your sweet spot (which is somewhere between your current capabilities and a goal that's just hard enough to achieve that you've gotta stretch to achieve it).
Or, maybe you've just got way too many things on your plate. If that's the case, it's time to pair down and focus on crushing one big goal at a time, rather than trying to do too many things simultaneously. It's like that old saying, "If you chase two rabbits, you won't even catch one."
And finally, perhaps the most important thing you can do when you're overwhelmed is to think about WHY you're doing what you're doing. If the

why-the reason(s) you do what you do-is compelling enough, then you'll be able to gather the motivation you need to succeed.

- For example, whenever I'm drained or feeling stuck on something I'm working on, I remind myself about all the reasons why I do what I do in the first place: to inspire people like you to improve their lives and achieve their goals; to provide for my family; to be a model of excellence that my daughter can be proud of; to make a meaningful contribution to society. Find your why.

6.

You're prone to procrastination.

Another thing that can cause overwhelm-which leads to a massive depletion of motivation-is when we don't have enough clarity about what to do next.

This ambiguity leads to procrastination.

And procrastination leads to a lack of motivation.

Here's how to fix this one: Chunk things down to an immediate, doable action.

SOLUTION(S):

Take whatever it is that you lack the motivation to do, and chunk it down to an immediate, doable next action you can take immediately.

For example, I'm working on putting together a major course right now that's designed to help people transform their lives in virtually every way possible so that they can improve their lives and achieve their goals. It's a 30-day life mastery program that shares everything I've learned about the subject of Personal Development.

This involves a ton of work on my part: from structuring the curriculum, to putting together worksheets, to recording the audio sessions, to a million things in between.

I was thinking about this workload recently, and I felt incredibly overwhelmed and demotivated because of the sheer volume involved with a project like this. And just as I was about to curl up in the fetal position in the corner of my office, I realized I needed to take my own damn advice and chunk this thing down.

Instead of thinking about *everything* that needed to get done, I decided to ask myself, what's "one thing I can do right now to make progress on this goal?" The answer to that, for me, was to write out the outline. Which I did. And the sense of motivation that began to bubble up as I started doing it was remarkable.

So, here's the key: if you're low on motivation, think about whether you need to chunk things down into something doable to move the ball forward. And if that's the problem, chunk your project (or whatever you're not motivated about) into something doable—and then do it!

7.

You're not being specific enough to spur motivation.

Motivation is like a fickle, fleeting, emotional creature with ADHD. It's difficult to get it to focus on a single thing for an extended period of time... *Unless* you provide it with very specific directions.

One reason you might have a lack of motivation is that you're leaving things too open.

When things are vague, the motivation will fade.

When you're unable to tap into the motivation you need to succeed, it might be because whatever thing you want to get motivated for is too vague. Here are a few examples of common goals that are way too vague:

- Wake up earlier.
- Exercise more.

Eat healthily.

If you were to choose any of the above examples, here's how things would most likely play out:

You'll start off with tons of motivation at the very beginning...

But after a little while, you'll notice that the motivation fades away and loses its potency.

So, what's the fix?

SOLUTION(S):

- Give your brain specific and actionable directions. Doing this will provide it with the controlled focus it needs in order to unleash the motivational energy you're looking for.
- An excellent way to drill down and get specific is to ask yourself questions. Here's a great one that can narrow things down and, as a result, spark some motivation: "How will I know that I'm successful?"
- Answer that question with something *specific* and *measurable*.

Let's say, for example, that you want to run a marathon six months from today. You know you need to train hard in order to prepare and condition yourself for the big day, but you lack the motivation to do so...

Here's how you might put a specific plan together in order to spark motivation when you need it most; and even more important—sustain that motivation until marathon-day:

- ***How will I know that I'm successful?***
 - I'll run my first marathon. (This is your ultimate goal, or "stretch goal.")
 - **Specific:** (This is a specific sub-goal to help you achieve your stretch goal.)
 - Run 7 miles without stopping or walking.
 - **Measurable:** (This is the method(s) you'll use to measure success/progress)
 - I'll be able to run twice around the park without walking.

The more specific you make the actions and habits you need to take up, the smaller they become. And the smaller the action, the easier it is to motivate yourself to do it. Eventually, those small, specific steps you take on a daily basis will stack on top of one another—which leads to a sustained sense of motivation and accomplishment.

For more on how to make specific plans to crush your goals, read or listen to this: [How to Use Stretch Goals and S.M.A.R.T. Goals](#) »

8.

You're seeking motivation where you should be seeking habits.

The final reason most people suffer from an ongoing lack of motivation is simply because, at the end of the day, none of us can be motivated all the time. Often times, people say to me, “wow, you’re so motivated.” But here’s the truth: I just *look* like I’m motivated all the time, when in reality I’ve just been diligent about installing several keystone habits in the areas of my life that matter to me most.

You see, I don’t have to muster up the motivation to get up at 5 AM every morning, because it’s a habit.

I don’t have to motivate myself to focus on writing every day, because it’s a habit.

I don’t have to get motivated to go to the gym every day, because it’s a habit.

I don’t have to motivate myself to do anything that I’ve become habituated to in my life, because habits are things we do regularly and automatically with little or no conscious thought or effort.

So, here’s the real question:

How do you develop habits?

SOLUTION(S):

In general, any habit can be broken down into a three-part loop that goes like this:

1. Cue—something in your environment that sets off a habit. (You smell fresh cookies.)
2. Routine—the set of actions you take in response to the cue. (You eat the cookies.)
3. Reward—the results or feelings you get/experience from executing the actual habit. (You enjoy the reward of delicious-ness... And, if you knew you shouldn’t have eaten that cookie, that feeling will be followed by the negative “reward” of guilt from eating the cookie.)

Here’s a 5-step plan on how to develop a habit that you might typically think requires tons of motivation to stick with. You can use it as a guide for creating a

habit of your own:

Let's say you lack the motivation to exercise, and you'd like to change that by developing the habit of going to the gym five days a week.

- **Step 1. Identify the habit:**

- Develop a gym habit, whereby I'll workout five days a week.

- **Step 2. Identify your CUE:**

- Every habit has a trigger, identify one that regularly works for you.
- *I'll set my alarm to wake me up at 6 am every morning so that I can exercise before work.*

- **Step 3. Identify the REWARD:**

- What reward will you give yourself at the end of the behavior/habit. The reward can be anything, the key is the *craving*.
- *Delicious protein shake, sense of accomplishment, endorphin rush.*

- **Step 4. Execute the ROUTINE:**

- The routine is the actual activity/behavior you want to become a habit.
- *Drive to the gym and exercise.*

- **Step 5. Write it down, make it happen:**

- The simplest and most effective way to form a new habit is to write a plan. Use the following formula to write yours:

- When _____, ^{cue} I will _____ ^{routine} because it provides me with _____ ^{reward}.

- *When my alarm clock goes off at 6 am, ^{cue} I will jump out of bed and drive straight to the gym to exercise for 60 minutes ^{routine} because it provides me with a healthy lifestyle, a fit physique, and an energetic start to my day ^{reward}.*

Quick recap: 8 things that cause your lack of motivation (and what to do about them)

1. You don't know what you want. Gain clarity by setting some goals.
2. **You're not in control of your physiology.** Create some "power moves" to jolt body into an actionable, motivated state.
3. **You've made "lack of motivation" part of your identity.** Reframe your beliefs as those of someone who's highly motivated.
4. **You're not aiming high enough.** 10x your goals. 10x your actions.
5. **You're overwhelmed.** Find your WHY. Simplify. Do one thing really well rather than a million things poorly.
6. **You're prone to procrastination.** Break big things into smaller, actionable steps. Chunk. it. down!
7. **You're not being specific enough to spur motivation.** Be as specific as possible about what you want and what you need to do.
8. **You're seeking motivation where you should be seeking habits.** Sustain your motivation by tapping into the power of habit.

About the Author:

Dean Bokhari

@deanbokhari

Hey, I'm Dean Bokhari. I write, speak + build businesses to inspire people to improve their lives + achieve their goals. I host a personal development podcast and I'm CEO of FlashBooks - where we produce self-help + business book summaries for busy people. Learn more dorky details here.