DEVELOPING MOTIVATION

Many students use ‘I don’t have any motivation’ as an excuse for not doing work. You have to accept that these are just EXCUSES you are using to justify doing what you want to do - ie doing no work! It is a cop-out and it is really due to fear - even though you probably don't want to admit it. What is going on in your mind, even though you probably don't realise it, is that you are secretly afraid of doing badly at school. The fear of failure or not meeting expectations has led you to look for excuses to not do any work so that if you do go badly - then it is not because you tried and failed it is because you didn't do any work! It is a safety mechanism your brain is putting in place. To make a change you have to take responsibility for your performance and realise that you are the only person who can change the situation.

There are no quick or easy fixes for developing motivation. You have to take baby steps and keep trying these techniques over a period of time.

USE STUDY TECHNIQUES THAT WORK

- Find study techniques that work for you. One of the most motivating things is actually having successes. If you are using ineffective study techniques then no wonder you can’t be bothered actually doing anything.

REWARD YOURSELF

- Set yourself small achievable tasks (or break large tasks into smaller pieces), set a date for when you would like to complete the tasks and plan a reward for yourself when you achieve these tasks. The pattern of working then experiencing a reward sets up a pattern in the brain and over time it becomes easier to make yourself do a task as you know there is a reward at the end of it.

HAVE STRATEGIES FOR WHEN YOU LOSE FOCUS

- When you are feeling unfocused, try the following:
  - Go for a brisk walk or some exercise.
  - Stand up and do some stretches at your desk and flex your fingers.
  - Feeling eye strain? Rub your palms together until they are warm and place them over your closed eyes for a few minutes.
  - Take short breaks every half hour.
  - Change tasks or do a different task when you are losing focus with a task.
  - Review the strategies in the Overcoming Procrastination unit.

CREATE POSITIVE WORKING CONDITIONS

- Make the conditions for working as favourable as possible. Work when you are most alert, remove all distractions and make it as easy as possible for yourself to do work.

FIND MOTIVATING WORDS AND IMAGES

- Find slogans or pictures you find enjoyable, amusing and motivating and put them above your desk. Write positive statements on a card and read them regularly or on a sign and put them up where you will see them. You could try things like ‘I have the motivation to do my work when I need to do it.’
FIND A REASON TO WORK

- A really effective way to get yourself motivated is to find a career path or direction as a motivating force. Knowing what you want to do helps you find motivation as study then becomes a path to achieving your goals. Try and find yourself a career or lifestyle goal that could motivate you to work towards it through success at school. Talk to your careers advisor and think about future jobs you may be interested in. What do you like doing? What things do you enjoy most? Ideally you would like to try and find a way to be paid for doing the things that you really love. Whatever you are interested in, you will need to do some further study to achieve your goals whether it is at uni, tafe, college or a job specific course. The better you do at school, the easier it can be to reach your career goals.

AVOID PAIN / GAIN PLEASURE

- Another technique that many people find effective to get them moving is to list all the reasons why you would want to do well in your studies. Put this list somewhere visible and look at it every day. Another version of this is the pleasure/pain technique. This is where you take a page and rule it in half. On one side write all the good things that will happen if you study and on the other side write all the bad things that will happen if you don’t. Some people will work to gain pleasure while other people find the idea of working to avoid pain more motivating. Which side do you find more motivating?

Avoiding Pain. You are motivated to:
- avoid getting in trouble from teachers or parents
- avoid the penalties at school like detention for incomplete work
- avoid really poor marks or failing subjects
- avoid disappointing people’s expectations of you
- avoid feeling bad about yourself or disappointed with yourself
- avoid a bad school report

Gaining Pleasure. You are motivated to:
- earn praise or recognition from teachers or parents
- win prizes or merit achievements at school
- gain good marks in your subjects
- meet people’s expectations of you
- do well for your own sake and your own sense of satisfaction
- ensure more career choices later on

So what could you do to improve your motivation to do work for school?