

TWU Counseling Center

Motivating Yourself to Study

One of the most frustrating things a student can experience is finding him or herself in college, wanting to do well, and at the same time finding that he or she can't get motivated! Motivation plays an important part in how much time and energy you spend studying and going to class, and ultimately it plays a major part in determining the grades you earn. The following are some suggestions which can help you be honest with yourself about your motivation. Now, frankly, motivation is often a complicated matter. These suggestions may be enough to help you be aware of what is affecting your motivation (or lack of it), but if you would like to explore yourself further, give us a call at the Counseling Center, and we will be glad to give you a hand.

1. First of all, determine why you are in college. There may be several reasons, of course, but your main purpose should be to get an education, i.e., to expand your mind by learning. You might also want to learn enough to compete at a higher level in the job market, but learning is the number one priority. Some reasons which people often place at the top of the list, but which are usually poor reasons are:
 1. Your parents wanted you to come. (Whose education is it anyway?)
 2. All your friends came to college.
 3. College is better than getting a job.
 4. College is one big social partying bash, so you came for fun.
 5. It's the only way to get a start as an athlete.
 6. You're here to find a spouse.
 7. You didn't know what else to do.
2. Begin the process of making a career decision as soon as possible. There is not need to make a specific decision right away, but you will be more motivated in college when you have a career direction. Remember too, that your career must be your career, not your parent's or teacher's or anyone else's.
3. When exploring career options, be realistic. Not everyone can be in business, law or medicine, nor should they be. Explore your abilities, interests, values and career options before you decide which direction to take.
4. When you have decided on a career direction, you can then more appropriately choose a major. Your school work then becomes relevant, and you will be more motivated to study.
5. Motivation is directly related to your attitudes about college and yourself. Try to have a positive attitude toward yourself, your professors, books and everything else. Even if you choose to be negative and angry, don't you owe it to yourself to determine what effect that has on your performance?
6. Risk! Become involved in your classes. Try doing things you wouldn't normally do. Participate, be active and seek out knowledge.

7. College is not High School. If you think they are the same, you are seriously mistaken. In college you are responsible for nearly everything, including courses, time management, social behaviors, setting limits, managing money and mental and physical health. Are you mature enough to handle all of this? If you run into problems or have questions, seek help! There are plenty of people on campus who can help if you will look for them.
8. All work and no play makes you a dull person. Take advantage of the intellectual, social and physical opportunities on campus, keeping in mind, of course, your main reason for being in college.
9. Set some goals. If you clearly state what you want to accomplish and how you can accomplish it, you are much more likely to succeed. It is sometimes best to sit down occasionally and write your goals out on paper. Be sure to specify how to reach them. Goals are great, but if you have no idea how to reach them, you are not likely to get anywhere. Also, occasionally review your goals and see how you are doing.
10. Dwell on your success not your failures. Pump yourself up! Let yourself feel good about what you do well. Try to understand why you do not do other things well. You can be more motivated by feeling good about yourself, than by continually punishing yourself for screwing up.
11. Anger can get in your way. Many students expect too much from their professors, books, college facilities, secretaries. When people or things do not meet your expectations do you become angry and then belligerent? You might ask yourself, "Who am I to expect all of this from so and so?" or "Can I really expect people to be as perfect as me?" As a rule of thumb, unrealistic expectations lead to anger and false hope leads to disappointment. Anger gets in the way of being receptive and open to experiences.
12. Another problem arises when you feel like a slave. Remember, it should be your choice to be doing what you are doing. Ultimately you are in control even when others ask or seemingly demand something of you. College is not going to jail; you can leave any time you wish.
13. Do you fear failure or success? How might one or the other of these fears be manifested and what effect do they have on your motivation?
14. Be flexible and adaptable.
15. Keep a calendar so you will know when you should be more motivated.
16. Remember that no one is always highly motivated. We all have our ups and downs. However, if you find yourself more down than up, you should make an effort to find out why. Then do something about it.

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