



Achieving the Impossible Dream (by Getting Motivated)

"The trick is in what one emphasizes. We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same."
~ Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan*

At its core, motivation is the desire to expend effort toward something—learning a new skill, changing a behavior, accomplishing a task. Activation, persistence, and intensity all drive your motivation, so consider how each element contributes to your success! What gets you motivated? Here are some ways to motivate yourself:

- 1 Research.** Do some research before starting. Reading about others' success and any obstacles they encountered immerses you in possibilities while increasing your awareness of problems before they occur.
- 2 Plan.** Make a plan and stick to it. Use your research to help you develop a realistic timeline that you can commit to working on every day. Knowing the tasks that you need to accomplish and seeing how they lead toward your goal will help you navigate challenges and avoid becoming discouraged.
- 3 Rock out.** Play music that revs you up or do something strenuous and enjoyable. Use that seeming distraction to get moving on to your goal-oriented task. Like a magician who uses misdirection to accomplish a trick, unrelated stimulation can create momentum you can harness toward other activities.
- 4 Just start!** Start a task—any task that can lead to your goal—and let the momentum of action rev up your motivation. Like pushing a car to help get the engine to catch, simply starting somewhere can help your motivation catch fire.
- 5 Break it up.** Do one item for a very short time. For example, if cleaning your desk seems overwhelming, start small by spending no more than two or three minutes on one specific area. Breaking the task into tiny steps can help you overcome inertia.
- 6 Schedule breaks.** While it may feel counterintuitive to stop working, taking a few moments to rest or do something else before returning to a task can increase your focus and energy for it.
- 7 Get inspired.** Look for inspiring stories or encouraging quotations that underscore the value of persistence to help you stay inspired. Drawing on other people's experiences reduces your sense of isolation as you strive toward a goal.
- 8 Be kind and grow.** If you have a setback, be kind to yourself first, and then look for constructive feedback. Recognizing that failures offer you valuable information can help you move past feeling discouraged to become excited about trying another approach.
- 9 Remember your goals.** Remind yourself what you hope to accomplish. Whether you're overwhelmed or just uninspired, taking a few moments to write down three reasons why you're working toward your goal can refocus your energy—especially if you keep your list where you can see it often.