Motivation
Podcast

Introduction
Motivation is not something you’re born with but something you create. Some of the ways to “create motivation” are by:

- defining your goals
- keeping the bigger picture in mind
- having support and mentors that inspire you
- having some strategies to kick start you when you get stuck
- having some good techniques for overcoming one of the biggest obstacles: PROCRASTINATION.

Podcast 1: Setting Goals
Life can be full of a series of competing tasks and needs that can sometimes obscure the bigger picture, the “long-term goal” we have for ourselves. A long-term goal is an outcome or state we would like to achieve in the future — whether it be academic or career driven (to be employed by an international company or to be an excellent engineer, designer, artist), personal (to be a active community member, to be in a happy relationship, to be fit), financial (to earn a great income), creative...the list goes on. Long term goals can define us and inspire us. They remind us about what is meaningful, what makes us who we are. As we change, our goals change, but it is important to bring them to our awareness. Having some clarity about our long-term goals allows us, if you like, to make good decisions about how we live our everyday lives.

Long term goals are built upon a series of short-term goals: daily, weekly, hourly tasks that are the necessary steps required to achieve the long-term outcome. However, sometimes, these steps are less glamorous than your long-term outcome. In fact, they can be tedious, demanding, effortful and boring. When we tire of the short-term steps and lose the bigger picture, we can easily lose motivation and have difficulty making decisions. Most students lead complex lives with a range of competing commitments and must constantly make decisions about what to do, when to do it and what must be left undone as there is frequently not enough time to do everything they need and/or want to do.

Effective decisions are usually based on a clear understanding of what you want for yourself now and in the future. There will often be choices to be made between options which will give immediate satisfaction, such as phoning a friend, or watching the TV, and more difficult tasks which will take time and effort and may be frustrating, but will contribute to an important longer-term goal, for example, an assignment which will contribute towards passing the year and ultimately completing the course, being independent and so on.

Let’s take a moment to focus on your goals. Perhaps the best way to do this is to define your long-term goals and work backwards to this moment.

GOAL SETTING EXERCISE
Take a few moments to think about some answers to the following:

- What are your lifetime goals? (It’s not an easy answer but its good just to begin to start your mind working on these sorts of questions. Have you always wanted to be involved in community aid initiatives as a contractor in engineering, to be involved in environmental protection, or to own your own restaurant and eat lots of pizza?)

- What are your 10-year goals? (How old will you be in ten years? Where would you see yourself at this point in your life, where would you like to be living, where are you at in your career, what about friends and relationships, family?)

- What are your 5-year goals? (These goals are a little more tangible, perhaps you are planning to finish your degree or course within this time? Maybe you have an idea where you would like to work after your study?)

- And your 3-year goals? (three years is not that far away. What are some of the thing you would like to achieve in the next couple of years?)

As you begin to answer these questions your are probably going to address some important preferences around how, where, with whom you live; what you will be doing, how you are feeling, what you have completed, what things your are yet to master...? Now let’s work backwards from your long term goals to where you stand now. You will probably need more time than we have now to think about this, but let’s get the ball rolling.

Contd. on next page
Write down your goals for the next year and six months. From here write a "1-month To Do list", a "1-week To Do list" and a "Today's To Do list".

Remember, goals are what you want for yourself. Include study and career goals as well as personal, relationship and leisure goals. Write them down boldly and place them in a prominent place. Maybe in your bedroom or above your study desk. Consider what you will need to do to achieve your goals. Reviewing them can assist you in making decisions about the best way to use the time available to you. Your goals will change so review and rewrite them regularly.

**** Music Nyx - Undercover (ft Stef sax Tf Sleepless)

Set fifteen minutes aside regularly each week to consider priorities for the coming week. It is possible to use some of your social and leisure activities as rewards for completing a long term, difficult task?

Podcast 2: Visualization
To stay motivated and achieve our goals we need to understand ourselves and the way we think. This is something we will talk about later in our podcast. Let’s quickly have a look at one of the best ways to “kick-start our mind”, to create motivation, and that is, visualization.

While the goal setting exercise allows us to intellectually conceptualize our life goals, if we use our mind’s skill to visualize the details of our goals, we will inspire a momentum toward creating them.

Using creative visualization you can really see yourself where you want to be in the future (even if this may change over time). It is important to focus on your goal, to organize your thought toward it. It may sound a bit strange but you may talk to yourself as if something has already happened. For example: “I am a successful film producer… I am, heading to work as a chief engineer… My fashion label has just been released internationally…” The mind is a complex and fascinating thing, if you feed it information such as stories of your success, you can create the patterns of thinking and feeling, the behavioural tendencies and confidence that will most likely lead to these things coming to fruition.

Let’s use an example: Imagine where you would like to be in your future. Take a few moments to get a clear picture of your long term goal (For example, the Creative Director of a comedy TV Show). I want you to visualize each and every detail: what are you wearing?, your hair style, the people in your life, the car you drive, your workplace, what’s on your desk at work?

Break the long term goal into smaller steps and then break that goal down into smaller steps (short term goals)

Taking the example of Creative Director, well, you’d need to take a Degree in Media and Communications. You would need industry experience, building networks etc…

Then break these down again, try a flow chart with your goal at the top and then the steps to get there underneath it. Then, break each of those steps down.

For example, you will need industry experience. Break this down to: “contact Community TV initiatives and volunteer”

Or you may break “Get a Degree” down to: “Finish each semester, complete assignments”.

Stick your goal “tree” up somewhere where you see it every day and can remind yourself of the bigger picture.

It is important to organize your thought toward this, to reinforce this every day maybe when you clean your teeth every morning or when you are working out at the gym.
Mentor:

Sometimes we need to seek outside of ourselves to rejig our motivation and remind ourselves of our capacity to achieve what we want to achieve. In these situations, it is really helpful to identify your mentor and inspiration. A mentor is someone who is imbued with the qualities that you seek to develop in yourself. It may be someone you know well, a relative or friend, a teacher or boss, even a counsellor or coach. It may be someone whom you have never met in person (they may not even be living) eg Michaelangelo, Einstein, Socrates, Your Great Great Grandmother…

You may be motivated by other things, a principle, an ideal, (“to be the best I can be”), (“to tackle poverty in third world countries”), (“to have a yellow Porsche, a house in New York”), whatever; it’s up to you. If you like, create a wish board, buy a pin up board, put it in a prominent place and start to gather photos, pictures from magazines, inspirational quotes that will start to build a picture of your goals, so you can draw inspiration from it when you feel bogged down in the smaller stuff.

Support is really important. Surround yourself with people who encourage you to strive toward your goals, who are positive and engaged in life. This may be fellow students, it may be people who are already successful in the industry you are aiming for, it may be friends or family, your old school teacher. It may even be your dog.

Podcast 3: Having strategies to kick start you when motivation is lacking.

No one is motivated all the time. No one, not even those wound up people you see on TV or who run workshops on how to be and look fabulous and achieve fabulous things. And, being motivated does not mean you have to be manic. We all need, at times, some strategies to re-energize us and keep us on track. These can be simple practical techniques. Here are some of them:

RE-ENERGIZE!

Motivation requires mental energy. Make sure you have adequate "brain fuel" by paying attention to proper nutrition. This is especially important when you are studying long hours. Avoid the tendency to skip meals at busy times and keep a supply of high-energy health bars — they are light to carry and can be eaten while you are "on the go".

Loss of motivation may indicate that you need to recharge your mental batteries. Check that you are getting enough sleep; allow yourself time out to relax and unwind. Mental blocks can often be overcome after a good night’s sleep. And regular exercise keeps you alert and ‘fine-tuned’ to work out solutions to study problems.

PROBLEM SOLVE!

Identify sources of stress and deal with them. RMIT provides support services to assist with a range of concerns such as finance, accommodation and personal issues. Solving these life problems can be a great boost to motivation. Information points such as The Hub and Student Union can help you access appropriate services.

REFOCUS ON GOALS!

So you made the wrong course choices, the subjects seem irrelevant, the teaching staff boring. How to maintain motivation? Remind yourself of your goals: where do you want to get to? How can you get there from here? It helps to draw up a map of the steps you need to take to reach your study goal and to identify hurdles to be overcome.

In most instances, completing present subjects places you in a stronger position to transfer. Use positive self-talk to get you over these hurdles and remind yourself that you are heading towards your goal.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES

• Be kind to yourself
• Be realistic — don’t demand 100% performance regardless
• Recognise and listen to your individual needs rather than taking others’ performance as a standard.
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LIFE EVENTS AND MOTIVATION
While maintaining motivation is a common concern of students, it can be especially important for people who are also coping with significant emotional issues. Anxiety, depressed mood and grief can be normal reactions to current life events such as break-up of relationships, separation from family, loss of loved ones or adjustment to a different culture. In these emotional states, motivation is often decreased together with levels of energy, concentration and cognitive efficiency (e.g. memory, organisation skills).

These normal responses to difficult or unpleasant situations make it difficult to maintain focus on studies. However, when these states are short term, it helps to accept a temporary reduction in motivation. Your priorities may need to be reordered while you redirect time and emotional energy to dealing with life issues, and where possible to focus on less demanding study tasks. Reassure yourself that your interest and motivation for study will increase when life returns to normal. When emotions such as anxiety and grief persist, it becomes important to give priority to dealing with underlying significant issues. Counselling can assist in overcoming emotional blocks and getting back on track.

Students with disabilities or mental health disorders are often highly motivated to undertake higher education despite challenges in many areas of life that may limit energy or time available for study. Fluctuations of energy are associated with fluctuations of motivation. In these situations, it may be useful to have strategies to manage the way you think and feel about yourself and your study. Some of these strategies are offered in the handout associated with this podcast. Remember, assistance in this area and many others can be obtained from the RMIT Student Counselling Service, the RMIT Disability Liaison Unit and the Study and Learning Centre.

Podcast 4: Overcoming Procrastination
By far, one of the biggest obstacles to getting things done is “procrastination”. Procrastination is the behaviour of delaying or postponing. For many students delaying tasks may not be a problem as they choose to delay tasks which are of low priority for them or they consciously choose to delay in order to give themselves more time to consider a problem. For others, procrastination becomes a regular way of “coping”, which results in a cycle of stress that becomes difficult to break.

Dealing with Problem Procrastination
There are three steps in the process of overcoming procrastination:
1. Becoming aware of the reasons why you procrastinate
2. Identifying the tasks on which you commonly delay, and your particular style of procrastination.
3. Developing appropriate strategies to change the behaviour

1. WHY DO YOU PROCRASTINATE?
There are many reasons for procrastination, but one of the most important reasons is:
Holding irrational beliefs and carrying messages from the past about your performance and abilities.

Irrational beliefs and messages from the past.
Many students hold irrational beliefs about the ways things “should be”. These beliefs, initially may seem quite reasonable, but can prevent students from getting even the simplest task started or completed.
The following are examples of these beliefs:

- I must be perfect and do things perfectly.
- Everything I do should go easily and without effort.
- It is safer to do nothing than to risk and fail.
- I should have no limitations.
- If it’s not done right, it’s not worth doing.
- I must avoid being challenged.
- If I succeed then someone will get hurt.
- If I do well this time then I will always have to do well.
- Following someone else’s rules means I’m giving in and am not in control.
- I can’t afford to let go of anything or anyone.
- If I expose my real self then people won’t like me.
- There is a right answer and I’ll wait until I find it.

(Burke & Yuen, 1983, Procrastination, Addison Wesley: Massachusetts)
Most of these beliefs have formed through past experiences and messages received from others (e.g., parents, teachers, etc.). These messages often involve pressures to succeed or doubts about abilities (e.g., “you’ll never make a go of anything”). They have been internalised and are carried ready to be activated when a particular task is attempted.

Which of these beliefs do you hold?

Can you identify messages which you carry about your performance and abilities?

Being aware of these beliefs and reviewing them may assist in overcoming delaying behaviour. In some cases they are so embedded that it may be necessary to seek the assistance of a Counsellor to clarify what you want to achieve and how you can overcome the obstacles.

Maintaining an Illusion of Brilliance
Some students leave work until the last minute, then under high stress; rush it up for the deadline. They often argue that they need the added stress to get it done. They tell themselves, and perhaps others, that it wasn’t their best work as they did it at the last minute. They content themselves with the result and maintain the illusion that had they started it earlier it would have been better, perhaps even a credit or distinction, who knows, who will ever know? Procrastination allows some people to take comfort in believing that their ability is greater than their performance indicates.

2. HOW DO YOU PROCRSTINATE?
• What are the tasks which you frequently delay doing? Are they related to a particular subject area?
• Do they involve a particular skill, for example: writing, drawing, problem solving, reading, etc.
• What do you do instead of the tasks?
• Make a list of your favourite diversions eg. Making cups of coffee, phoning friends, watching TV, etc.

3. DEALING WITH DIVERSIONS
Put your list of diversions in a prominent place in your study area. When you feel an urge for a diversion coming on, delay it for 5 minutes, then decide what is most important for you to do right then. You may also use paradox to over-emphasise the situation. If you want to eat, have a cup of coffee, etc., say to yourself, “You poor thing you might faint, or something worse if you don’t have it right now!”

Procrastination, like any habit can be difficult to overcome. It is important to consider what purpose it serves for you. Delaying may cause stress but there may be other pay-offs for you. Consider how your life might change if you were to stop procrastinating. What are the risks for you?

Having considered how and why you procrastinate, select one task on which you would like to focus. Consider the blocks to completion and chart your progress over two weeks. Reward yourself for any improvement. Focus on what you have achieved rather than what you did not accomplish.

Thanks for your time in listening to this podcast, I hope you have found it helpful. And remember that there are more resources on the MAPP website, on the counselling service website and the study and learning centre website. And of course, you are always welcome to attend a workshop or come and speak to a counsellor or a learning advisor in person.