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p 74





“I Just Can’t Get Motivated!”

Yeah, you can. Pro organizer Leslie Josel explains how.

Being a professional organizing coach—aka person hired to get people to actually deal with their jam-packed basements/attics/closets, not-yet-written term papers and stuff like that—I hear two claims over and over: “I don’t feel like it right now” and “The thing is, I’m not really in the mood to do this.” (Sound familiar?) For my clients, it’s less about disorganization or time management and more about the will to begin and then keep going, which

boils down to one word: motivation. Why is it so hard to get motivated? I’ll tell you.

For some, getting started is just too difficult and overwhelming. For others, lack of structure is killer: Without a detailed schedule and deadline, they can’t muster the energy to start a sizable task, let alone see it through. And then there’s paralysis caused by simple dislike or fear.

Helping people override these typical hang-ups is my bread and butter. I offer specific, constructive advice.

Forget about goals. Instead, face fears. As best-selling author Tim Ferriss explains in his powerful 2017 TED Talk (Google it!), we’re better off “*face setting*” versus goal setting to overcome self-paralysis and spur action, because what we fear most is exactly what we need to be doing. He encourages clearly defining our fears in terms of both costs and benefits to lessen their power. We all know that the build-up or negative anticipation is usually way worse than

the task itself. So the next time you feel unmotivated, ask yourself, "How bad will this really be?" An honest answer just might fuel a positive breakthrough.

Turn on your mental GPS. In other words, figure out where you're headed before you hit the road. I'm talking the equivalent of drawing a road map to help you navigate from point A to point B.

First, write down precisely what you want to accomplish. Get it out of your head and on paper, where you can see it. Research shows that if we write something down, we are more likely to commit to actually doing it.

Second, break it down. Way down. I can't stress this enough. Breaking tasks down into manageable chunks makes them less overwhelming and provides multiple opportunities for smaller

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One great way to keep your mental energy level high so you can tackle projects is to get a handle on healthy eating. Ninety percent of women in the U.S. spend an hour a day (61 minutes to be exact!) second-guessing their food choices. Imagine how much more productive you could be if you took back that time!

successes—and with success comes the inspiration to stay motivated. So below "renovate kitchen," you'd jot "call contractors for estimates, pick paint colors, research appliances," etc. It's much easier to wrap a brain around accomplishing each of these steps, which makes them easier to initiate and finish!

Third, assign deadlines to complete each one and schedule appointments in your calendar to work on them. This step is critical. Designate these appointments as non-negotiable. You wouldn't cancel a meeting with a teacher or your boss. Treat appointments with yourself with the same urgency and consistency.

Next, make getting started simple. Begin with something so easy and small

"I'LL DO IT LATER!" 5 WAYS TO MOTIVATE A [GRUMPY] TEEN

1 Provide clear expectations. In order to accomplish anything, teens generally require two things: a very clear idea of what needs to be done and the steps that need to be taken in order to get there. So whether the task in question is cleaning their room or working on college applications, make triple sure expectations and instructions are specific. Doing this up front (hopefully) cuts down on arguments later.

2 Organize your teen's environment. It's hard to talk motivation without mentioning organization. They go hand in hand,

especially when it comes to teenagers. Organizing their bedroom, study area or even backpack will help them initiate whatever has to get done and stay focused. If your teen is always spending time looking for supplies, they're going to run out of the energy to get motivated to do the actual work that needs tackling!

3 Get active. Add an energy component to their assignments by having your teen stand up or even pace to read. I have my student clients set up homework stations around the house: science in the

kitchen, math in the den. Movement and a change of scene can boost motivation and keeps kids on task.

4 Encourage bursts. Working intensively for short periods of time (maybe 30 to 40 minutes) and then taking a break before going at it again help teens focus and finish strong. Again: Use a timer!

5 Go with their flow. Is she a morning person or night owl? Does he prefer to work with music blasting or in silence? Tap into your teen's personal best practices to maximize motivation.



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ON DUTY

that success is guaranteed. One phone call to make. One email to send. You get the idea. Chances are that once you get started, you'll keep going.

Use a timer. Truth be told, this is probably the most powerful tool in my kit to help clients stay motivated. Setting aside a specific amount of time to work can help anyone stay on task—as in, it's significantly easier to commit to 20 minutes of attic clearing than facing the prospect of hours and hours. I train my clients to use a timer for doing anything around the house. Hate going through the giant pile of accumulated mail? Set a timer for 10 or 15 minutes. When we see "time" ticking down, most of us are more likely to get in gear and stay there. There's a timer in the Clock feature on your phone, so cue it up.

Curate your space. I believe that in order to get motivated, people need to create positive energy around their tasks. To that point, environment plays a huge role in encouraging you to complete projects, so make sure you've created your "happy place." This one is truly my favorite. Simply put, if you don't like where you do your work, you're not going to get down to business. Paint your home office walls orange if that's your favorite color. Situate your desk or workspace near a window (research shows that natural light increases productivity). Hang pictures of George Clooney (one of my clients did this!). Aim to create an environment that will keep your energy up so you finish strong every time. Think of it as a natural caffeine boost.

Pump up the volume. Some researchers say that music can help us prep and initiate. A client of mine puts on the *Hamilton* soundtrack as soon as she gets to her office, playing it softly in the background while she works. When the music ends, over 2 hours have gone by. This one move keeps her focused and motivated all morning long!

Short-circuit the Internet. In today's world, resisting the temptation to web surf or see what's happening on social media can feel like a job itself. To spare yourself that (wearying!) internal debate and free up brain cells for more important tasks, shut down the web—there are programs that temporarily disable your online connection to eliminate distractions. I recommend Freedom, which works across Windows, Mac and iOS devices, and allows you to schedule blackout sessions in advance or start them on the fly. This means you have something to look forward to when work is done. Hello, Pinterest brain break!

Reward yourself. Tap into the power of payoff: Frozen yogurt. An episode of *The Bachelor*. Browsing Nordstrom.com. (OK, that's my list.) Build in rewards! When a goal is met, that merits celebrating. You've certainly earned it.

ON LESLIE'S BOOKSHELF

I don't frequently recommend books about motivation because, frankly, more often than not they end up feeling like another chore—something else that looms too large and never gets checked off the to-do list. But when a client really, really wants a book with more best-life inspo, I suggest these.

Girl, Wash Your Face: Stop Believing the Lies About Who You Are So You Can Become Who You Were Meant to Be by Rachel Hollis

The author is like that awesome friend who's simultaneously willing to call us out on our crap and give us the pep talk we desperately need. As a working mother, a former foster parent and a woman who has dealt with major insecurities, Rachel Hollis writes with the insight and kindness of a BFF, helping women unpack the limiting mindsets that destroy our

self-confidence and keep us from moving forward effectively. I wish I had her on speed dial.

Absolutely Should-Less: The Secret to Living the Stress-Free Life You Deserve by Damon L. Jacobs

We all live under a mountain of "shoulds," which leads to self-doubt and exhaustion. When I'm feeling overburdened to be perfect, I pick up this book to remind me to kick shoulds to the curb so I can live a more purposeful and present life.

Dinner with a dash of bonding



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