

Staying Motivated While “Sheltering-In Place”

You Should Know

Staying home during the COVID-19 pandemic you might have low energy and feel less than productive. You might be grieving the loss of your normal routine and experiencing a lack of direction and motivation. This can make it challenging to maintain healthy habits or adhere to a daily schedule. You might be working remotely, helping your children with schoolwork, or creating a long to-do list of household projects – yet you might find it particularly difficult to stay productive and proactive.

As you struggle to accomplish tasks and address responsibilities, you might be frustrated that you are not doing things as efficiently or effectively as you think you “should.” It is normal to experience ebbs and flows in energy and productivity during such an unpredictable time.

Here are some suggestions to increase your motivation during this pandemic:

1. **Stick to a routine.** Establishing a routine during this time is one of the most important things you can do to stay motivated. Too much ‘downtime’ can be detrimental when times are uncertain, and sticking to a routine will help you maintain a sense of control. Wake up and go to sleep at consistent times, eat healthy meals, manage your work hours, and find time to relax.
2. **Avoid electronics when first you wake up.** You might normally check your phone, review email, or look at social media first thing in the morning. Instead, take a few moments to meditate or engage in physical activity upon waking. Focusing on your physical and mental health when you wake up positively impacts your mindset and enhances well-being.
3. **Get dressed.** It might be tempting to stay in pajamas all day but getting dressed allows you to create structure and stick to your schedule.
4. **Take breaks.** Make time for breaks. Throughout the day you will inevitably get bored or distracted, and it is a good idea to take breaks every 90 minutes to two hours if you are working from home. If you need to remind yourself to take breaks, set a timer.
5. **Dedicated workspace.** If you do not have a separate office space in your home, let your family members know when you are working on your computer or sitting at your desk and that you should not be disturbed. Even if you are not working from home, you will still need to set aside time to pay expenses, plan meals, and other household tasks. You might want to wear headphones to send a clear message that you do not want to be disturbed. Avoid lounging around on the couch or lying in bed with your laptop. The goal is to create a routine, and part of maintaining your motivation is to have a dedicated place and time for work. This also helps you mentally separate yourself from work at the end of the day.
6. **Take turns.** If you have kids, keeping the kids entertained and following a routine can be like a second job. Balance is important. If you have a partner or other adult in your home, share

household, child-, and pet-related responsibilities. While one adult works, the other does childcare, walks the dog, or mops the kitchen, for example.

7. **Plan your day.** Take just 5-10 minutes each morning (or the night before) to plan your day, and you will get significantly more out of each day.

What to Do

Referring to the list above, list five of the suggestions or activities you can add to your day to stay motivated.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now, plan a “typical day.” Remember to schedule breaks and include items from your to-do list, meals, and pleasurable activities. It might be helpful to use a planner app (Google Calendar, ZenDay, AwesomeCalendar, or Any.do), whiteboard calendar, or other personal planner.

Time	Task	Amount of Time	Notes
6:00			
7:00			
8:00			
9:00			
10:00			
11:00			
Noon			
1:00			
2:00			
3:00			
4:00			
5:00			
6:00			
7:00			
8:00			
9:00			
10:00			
11:00			

Next, use the following chart as a to-do list. Write down your goals, priorities, intentions, and targets. Track your progress, including how you feel after completing each item on your list. If you are unable to complete a task on your list, carry it over to the next day's agenda. Remember to include each task in your daily planner.

Day	What I'd Like to Complete	Why is This Important?	COMPLETED? Yes/No	Carryover to Tomorrow? Yes/No	How I Felt Once the Task was Completed
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Now, on the chart below, make a list of projects and tasks you have been putting off, including completing household repairs, decluttering a closet, shredding old credit card statements, or reorganizing your pantry. Be sure to add each task or project to your planner.

Project I've Been Putting Off	What Do I Need to Get Started?	Who Can Support or Motivate Me?	Completion Date	Check Off When Added to Planner	How Did I Feel Once Completed?

Reflections on This Exercise

Was it easier to complete the tasks/projects when you scheduled them and came up with a plan for completion? Explain.

Which strategies were most effective in increasing your motivation?

What changes did you notice in your energy and productivity? Describe.

Which activities would you like to continue after the pandemic ends?
