Motivation

We can take a lesson from athletes and successful musicians when we talk about motivation. They know that the key to success is motivation. Central to the question of motivation is setting goals. If you have not set goals that you hope to accomplish in the immediate future and five or ten years down the road, you may want to take a look at the section on goal setting before you work through the discussion of motivation and procrastination. Having goals is also important before progress can be made on personal time management programs.

Experts have determined that often students who have problems with motivation, procrastination, and time management are students who aren't sure why they are in college. These same students often haven't focused on what their short term and long-term goals are. Just as athletes must have goals they are striving toward, so students must have direction in order to develop the positive attitude that is necessary for college success. Nearly every student will face frustration and become discouraged during his college career, so motivation becomes very important in helping the student over these difficult periods.

Important Strategies for Improving Motivation

Focus on a positive attitude. No matter how talented you may be, if you do not have a positive attitude, you are not likely to be successful. Looking on the bright side of situations helps one build a positive self-image and helps build self-esteem. People who are successful believe in themselves. Building high self-esteem does not happen without effort; however, as one's skills improve, successes follow.

Use positive self-talk and imagine yourself being successful. The high jumper pictures himself clearing the bar before each jump. Students should picture themselves completing projects on time and the professor handing them "A" papers and exams.

Use your goals to help you stay focused. Remind yourself how the tasks you have to complete are moving you toward achieving one of your goals.

Work on improving your skills. Perhaps if your reading rate and comprehension were improved, you would be more successful in your courses. Improving study skills allows for more effective and efficient study, which leads to greater success. If any of your study skills (note taking, reading textbooks, memory, listening, test taking, etc.) could be improved, check out the documents in this PDF or go to Academic Support Services in the Armory for assistance.

Develop a supportive, healthy relationship with friends and faculty. Remember the people you associate with have a lot to do with shaping your attitudes and personality. Surround yourself with people who have positive attitudes, good habits, happy dispositions, communicate well, and are fun to be with. These associations can go a long way in motivating you in positive directions.

Create balance in your life. It is very difficult to be motivated if you don't feel well, so take care of yourself. Eat well, get enough sleep and exercise, and take some time off to have fun. Too much work can lead to burnout. Remember to reward yourself when you accomplish a task or goal.

Solve personal problems. It is very difficult to concentrate if you are worrying about personal problems. Often we "overthink" our problems and become immobilized by them. Confront problems in a direct and honest manner. Avoiding the issue usually amplifies the problem. Remember that motivated people realize that worrying about the future or regretting the past are time-wasting behaviors.

Develop persistence. Being motivated will get you started on the path to success, but only persistence will keep you on track.

Almost all college students have occasional motivational problems; they become frustrated and discouraged. However, problems with motivation can be indicative of a serious condition, so if the suggestions mentioned above do not seem to help, consult with counseling services.