



Motivation

Motivation is not a personality trait. It's something that can be lost... and rebuilt!

Some people seem to bound out of bed, full of purpose and energy. Others find themselves sitting still, knowing they should do something, but not quite being able to start.

If you recognise the second description, you are not lazy. You are not failing. Your brain's motivation system may simply need some support.

The good news: motivation can be rebuilt, and understanding how it works is the first step.

How Motivation Works in the Brain

Motivation is driven primarily by dopamine, a neurochemical associated with reward, anticipation, and forward movement. Dopamine does not just fire when we achieve something. It fires most strongly in anticipation of reward, the looking forward, the planning, the imagining of what is ahead.

This is why having something to look forward to is genuinely good for your health. It is not indulgent. It is biological.

What Depletes Motivation

- Chronic stress and elevated cortisol
- Poor sleep, dopamine receptors are damaged by ongoing sleep deprivation
- Social isolation, connection is one of dopamine's most reliable triggers
- Lack of physical movement
- Persistent feelings of being unappreciated or unneeded

What Restores Motivation

What Restores Motivation (Dopamine)

- Small wins and completed tasks, even tiny ones
- Anticipation, planning something enjoyable
- Genuine appreciation and recognition from others
- Movement and physical activity
- Music, creativity, and novelty

What Gets in the Way

Before we can rebuild motivation, it helps to recognise what is quietly stealing it. Recognising your own motivation thief is not about self-blame. It is about understanding where to focus.

Motivation Thief	What It Sounds Like
All-or-nothing thinking	"If I can't do it properly, there's no point starting."
Comparison	"I used to be able to do so much more. What's the point now?"
Isolation	"Nobody needs me to do this anyway."
Overwhelm	"There's too much to do. I don't know where to begin."
Unresolved loss or grief	"I just don't have the energy I used to. Everything feels flat."
Fear of failure	"What if I try and it doesn't work out?"



Practical Ways to Reignite Motivation

These strategies work **with** your brain's chemistry rather than trying to push through it.

Start Tiny

The biggest barrier to motivation is starting. Not continuing but starting.

Commit to just two minutes. Make the call. Write one sentence. Walk to the letterbox.

The act of beginning releases a small dopamine hit, which makes the next step easier.

*small step
everyday*

Create a Reason to Look Forward

Plan something, however small. A coffee with a friend. A drive somewhere new. A project to finish.

Anticipation itself is motivating. The brain begins releasing dopamine the moment you start planning.

Connect It to Purpose

Motivation flows much more easily when we understand why something matters.

Not *'I should go to the meeting'* but *'When I go, someone always seems glad I'm there.'*

Linking action to meaning is one of the most powerful motivational shifts available to us.

I CAN DO IT

Tell Someone

Sharing an intention with another person, even casually, significantly increases the likelihood of follow-through.

Accountability does not have to be formal. It just has to be real.

Motivation in Later Life — A Different Kind

Younger people are often motivated by achievement, status, and getting ahead. Research shows that motivation in later life shifts, and this is not a decline, it is a deepening.

Older adults are more motivated by:

- **Meaning over achievement** - doing things that genuinely matter, not just ticking boxes
- **Connection over competition** - being with people they care about
- **Legacy over recognition** - contributing something that will outlast them
- **Quality over quantity** - fewer things, done with more care and intention

This is not giving up. This is wisdom.



Motivation and Your Club

Low motivation in club members is rarely about laziness or not caring.

More often, it reflects unmet needs, for recognition, for genuine connection, for feeling that their contribution matters.

Clubs that regularly acknowledge members, celebrate effort as well as outcomes, and help people find roles that genuinely suit them will find motivation looks after itself.

For Club Leaders — Three Simple Motivators

- **Say thank you** - specifically and sincerely. Generic praise lands differently to *'I noticed what you did, and it made a difference.'*
- **Ask, don't assume** - *'What would you most like to contribute?'* is more powerful than assigning roles.
- **Celebrate small wins** - progress is motivating. Make it visible.

A Moment to Reflect

What used to energise you? Does any of that still apply?

What is one motivation thief you recognise in yourself right now?

What is one small thing you could start - or plan - this week?



**Motivation rarely arrives first and then we act.
Usually, we act first, and motivation follows.**

Thriving Members. Thriving Clubs.

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