

Learning Online: Goal Setting (Slide 1)

Hello, my name is Jessica Cohen and I'm an Academic Development Specialist in the Student Success Centre here at UCalgary. Today I wanted to talk to you about setting goals and maintaining accountability which is part of a larger 4 part series on establishing and maintaining motivation. In these next series of slides, we're going to be focus on strategies that support goal setting and accountability.

Strategies for enhancing and maintaining motivation (Slide 2)

The strategies to establish and maintain motivation are numerous. Right now I will be focusing on setting goals, the first bullet point on our slide. I encourage you to listen to the presentations of my colleagues Roxanne Ross and Jennifer Parsons who will be diving into three additional strategies that will support the goal setting that we talk about today. I invite you to listen to their videos on habit – building, managing procrastination and developing motivational mindset. The reality is establishing and maintaining motivation is not a 'one-stop' shop, I'm afraid. However, by reviewing these topics as a whole, our goals is to help you develop strategies life long strategies. By reviewing these, *step by step*, we will hopefully get you to where you want to go, or do the things you need to get done.

Consider your current status (Slide 3)

I would like to ask you to take a moment to consider the two questions on your screen: What motivates you? And what strategies have you used to overcome barriers to motivation? I ask these questions because it's important for you to recognize your baseline. In the context of academics:-- have you considered what drives you to open that textbook to study in the morning or what pushes you send that email to your instructor if you are unsure of a direction to take? Likewise, what are your current coping mechanisms? What do you do when you find yourself unable to finish that assignment that's looming ahead or what steps do you take when you're struggling to start that essay that is due next week? We've all been there. But how we motivate ourselves and the strategies we have in place to help us when we feel our motivation lacking, are elements that we need to work at. It's not something that's going to come out of thin air, rather it's an exercise that I am inviting you to think about to what I hope will be useful methods to help you to build and maintain that motivation you're striving for.

Consider your goals (Slide 4)

Setting goals is a critical part in establishing and maintaining motivation. Setting specific goals improves task performance. What I mean by that is when you break down goals into smaller components, you can monitor your progress, and research shows that progress monitoring is motivating in changing behaviour. It's helpful to reflect on longterm and short term goals, and to notice milestones on the pathway from the first small steps to the final destination. So let's try and put this into practice. So your big picture goal may be graduation, admission to a professional program, or a career aspiration. This is the goal you may want to reach in a year, or in five years. Perhaps you need a particular GPA to get into that program, so a milestone goal will be that achievement. That accomplishment will require you to meet a series of short term goals – for example, grades in your semester or in a particular class or on an exam. And to reach those shorter term goals, breaking them into small manageable tasks is effective. When a longterm goal doesn't seem motivating, setting a time limited, achievable goal allows

you to move forward. When you feel disinclined to do a smaller task, it may be helpful to remind yourself of your longer term goals.

Worksheet: Learning Online: Establishing and maintaining motivation (Slide 5)

This worksheet can help you breakdown your goals. As mentioned, setting specific goals improves task performance. When you break down goals, you can track monitor your progress. Research shows that progress monitoring (Sharot, 2013) is motivating in changing behaviour.

Let's look at another example. Perhaps a long term goal is to finish your degree. A milestone goal would be to get a mark that you're proud of, let's say a 3.4 CPA. A short term goal may be to get that B+ in one of your courses. To help you achieve this, a step towards this goal would be to devote 15 hours to exam prep. Today's goal will be to review notes for Lecture 3. See? When you break your goals down into tangible, actionable items, they become things that we can accomplish. When we accomplish the goal, let's celebrate. If you don't achieve what you set out, instead of bullying yourself, simply revisit the steps you need to take to make them more manageable for yourself at this time

Accountability (Slide 6)

To help us with our goal setting, there are additional topics that we know will help you succeed. For example,

- 1) Social incentives: Opinions of others can lead to change. Try an accountability buddy or arrange a study group. Here at the SSC, we offer virtual study halls where you can study with your colleagues over zoom with the support of an academic strategist.
- 2) You're welcome to book to meet with members of the SSC, whether it is writing support or academic strategy support. External motivation or support can be equally helpful in achieving those goals.
- 3) Keeping your goals visible is also a useful way to ensure that they don't become forgotten. Post them on your wall, program them in your phone to pop up every few days, or better yet, send yourself an email to your future self, asking you whether you remain on track. If your goals aren't visible, it's easy to forget them.

Tracking your progress is an equally useful way to motivate change behavior. When you accomplish what you set out, don't forget to reward yourself for those actions. And similarly, if you didn't achieve what you set out, try keeping a growth myself. My colleague Jennifer will be talking more about that in her presentation.

The reality is that what works for one person may not work for the other. But by having all these different ideas (or tools in your toolbox), you will know which one to call up when you're lacking motivation or not achieving the goals you set out for yourself. And gaining this self-awareness will ultimately help you be accountable to the things you have set out for yourself.

Thinking about your study environment (Slide 7)

In a period of physical distancing, we may not be able to control everything. Our favourite café where we study may not be open or we may not have the luxury of having a quiet house when you have a house full of family members.

However, think about what you can control in your study environment which will help you achieve your goals. Is there a consistent space you can study? Try tracking your choices for one day and perhaps you will see a pattern when you are most likely (or not) to give in.

What is your ideal study environment? Are you a morning/ afternoon/ night person? Do you like quiet, quiet or a little background noise? Do you like to study for short or long periods of time? I once timed myself, and my maximum study limit is 42 minutes before I need a break. Be creative in your study environment and be kind to yourself when you cannot control everything, especially with dealing with other responsibilities. Are there elements of your study environment that you could potentially change or control? Like opening a window, adding a lamp, brainstorming ways to break up your day. Sometimes the smallest factors in our study environment can have a tremendously positive effect on achieving our goals.

Summary (Slide 8)

To summarize what we've covered, start off by reflecting on what motivates you. Why are you studying? And then, consider how it links to your long term (or big audacious) goal. Then, work back and create milestone goals, short term goals and even daily goals to help you stay on track. Don't forget to reward yourself! Finally, don't bully yourself if you haven't accomplished that initial homework you set up for yourself. This is part of the process of continuously reviewing and making changes.

References (Slide 9)

The following are a list of references that I invite you to investigate further.

What's next (Slide 10)

For more information, we encourage you to review the next series of videos, the next one on building effective study habits. We also invite you to visit the Student Success Centre or Wellness Services for additional support. Thank you again for joining me. My name is Jessica and I wish you all the best on your journey in online learning.