



# Today's Collegian



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

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FREE!

# Motivation: A Powerful Tool

One of the most powerful learning tools we have is motivation – when we really want something and are willing to go to any length to get it, it will probably happen. Students choose to attend college, have to be accepted (it's actually a "privilege"), and pay for the experience. In terms of motivation, for starters, people should try to remember why they enrolled in the first place.

This might be just enough to get us to "buckle down" and read a text, notes, attend study sessions, or seek help. There are other ways to stay or build motivation. While many see worry and fear as negative feelings, some can use these types of anxieties to motivate themselves to achieve the things that need to be done for success.

There are two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within and is based on needs, wants, attitudes, values, or beliefs. External motivation comes from things we get after we achieve success, such as better paying jobs or a more economically stable lifestyle for ourselves or our families.

Intrinsic motivations are powerful, because the internal factors that guide our lives tend to be fairly stable over time. Extrinsic motivations depend on looking at the world around us, determining if

we are satisfied with the situation, and then working towards desired change. In many ways, external motivation is more dependent on factors outside of our control – will things really unfold the way we want when we achieve change?

Many believe that intrinsic motivations, while more abstract, are the more effective in the long-run than extrinsic motivation. In most cases, we are powerless over other people, places, and things. We

can, however, learn to control our attitudes, values, and beliefs. Most of the ideas and concepts that will be covered in *Today's Collegian* will be based on intrinsic motivations.

## Motivation Strategies

**Stress as a Motivator.** Perhaps the best place to start is to realize that fear, worries, and other anxieties can be used to motivate us. Sure, no one wants these types of

## Motivation Checklist

The following checklist may prove helpful in getting at the sources of poor motivation. If you want to improve your motivation you may want to choose a self-directed improvement program or use the information as a focus for counseling.

### 1. Really preferring something other than attending this university:

- Would prefer not to go to college
- Would rather attend another college
- Would prefer a different kind of training

### 2. College as means to ends other than learning:

- To avoid getting a job
- To find a mate
- To have a good time
- To get away from home
- To prove self-worth

Check It Out!



## Motivated to Learn More?

LASSI has a series of online modules about *Becoming a Strategic Learner*. There is an excellent section about motivation as it applies to college students at:

[http://www.hhpublishing.com/onlinecourses/study\\_strategies/BSL/motivation/B1.html](http://www.hhpublishing.com/onlinecourses/study_strategies/BSL/motivation/B1.html)

stresses in their lives; but we get them anyhow. Often, we can eliminate stress in our lives by turning that energy into something positive – in this case, motivation. This is a powerful tool, because it actually tackles 2 problems: stress and motivation.

**Spirituality.** Perhaps related to stress management, believing in a positive force in our lives, a “power greater than ourselves,” can help us accept stress and use it for positive change. Spirituality is distinctly different than religion – developing

faith in a “higher power” does not have to be done in a church or specific religious context, though many choose to do so.

Finding inner peace and using it to motivate us towards positive change can be done through meditation, prayer, and faith that if we do the next best thing, everything else will take care of itself. Religious people can find spirituality within their religious faith.

Agnostics and atheists can also find spirituality without religion.

All that is required is a belief that someone or something can do things for us that we cannot do for ourselves.

**Self-talk.** While we all have attitudes, values, and beliefs; we rarely think about them in detail. When we say things to ourselves, we bring ideas from our unconscious mind into our conscious mind. What we say to ourselves reflects how we think about ourselves. Self-talk can be positive or negative, or neutral. Learning to express ourselves in a positive manner builds motivation.

**Desire to Learn.** As discussed earlier, wanting to learn is a powerful motivator towards success. College students should try to remember why they have chosen to attend school. We can build on our desire to learn by creating interest in new ideas, looking for novelty and variety, personalizing what we are learning and applying it to our lives or future, and working with others. If we are in college for the “right” reasons, there is a desire to learn – build on that!

**Support Systems.** Building a network of support from others can be a motivator. When groups of people share their experience, strength, and hope, everyone benefits. There are many different types of clubs, organizations, and outside activities that can provide this type of support, especially on a typical college campus. Healthy relationships with friends and family also help.

**Goal Setting.** Yes, this is an entire topic in itself. It is also a powerful motivation tool. If we can see where we are, determine where we want to go, and set up a realistic plan to get there, we are also building motivation. Today's Collegian will discuss goal setting in detail in another issue.

**Time Management.** Another topic in itself that functions as a powerful motivation tool -- we all have 24 hours each day, getting the most out of that time can be the difference between getting things done and having to always “catching-up.” *Today's Collegian* will discuss “time management” in detail in another issue.

### 3. Distracting personal problems. Issues with self that decrease motivation:

- Conflict with same sex
- Conflict with opposite sex
- Conflict with parents
- Lack of confidence
- Undefined resistance to college
- Angry at the world
- Overuse of drugs or alcohol
- Fear of evaluation
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Lack of financial resources
- Marriage problems
- Phobias and other anxieties
- Insecurity
- Loneliness

### 4. Lack of interest. Deciding college is important can be the key.

- Undefined vocational goals
- Undefined educational goals
- Course material is not what I think is important
- Interest in school is not the "in" thing among my friends

### 5. Continuing self-defeating behavior patterns:

- Excessive dependence on parents or others
- Fear as a motivator
- Parents as motivators
- Grades or academic achievement as motivator
- High school habits