

# Self-Motivation

## Factors in Self-Motivation

Self-motivation is complex. It's linked to your level of initiative in setting challenging goals for yourself; your belief that you have the skills and abilities needed to achieve those goals; and your expectation that if you put in enough hard work, you will succeed (or at least be in the running, if it's a competitive situation).

Four factors are necessary to build the strongest levels of self-motivation:

1. Self-confidence and self-efficacy.
2. Positive thinking, and positive thinking about the future.
3. Focus and strong goals.
4. A motivating environment.

By working on all of these together, you should quickly improve your self-motivation. Let's look at each of these factors individually.

## 1. Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy

(Statements 1, 2, 6, 8)

Part of being self-motivated is having good levels of self-assurance, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. More on these below!

Being highly self-assured means you will set challenging goals for yourself, and it's also a resiliency factor for when you encounter setbacks. If you don't believe in yourself you'll be much more likely to think, "I knew I couldn't do this" instead of, "This one failure isn't going to stop me!"

Albert Bandura, a psychologist from Stanford University, defined self-efficacy as a belief in our own ability to succeed, and our ability to achieve the goals we set for ourselves. This belief has a huge impact on your approach to goal setting and your behavioral choices as you work toward those goals.

According to Bandura's research, high self-efficacy results in an ability to view difficult goals as a challenge, whereas people with low self-efficacy would likely view the same goals as being beyond their abilities, and might not even attempt to achieve them.

It also contributes to how much effort a person puts into a goal in the first place, and how much he or she perseveres despite setbacks.

By developing a general level of self-confidence in yourself, you will not only believe you can succeed, but you'll also recognize and enjoy the successes you've already had. That, in turn, will inspire you to build on those successes. The momentum created by self-confidence is hard to beat.

Take these steps:

- Think about the achievements in your life.
- Examine your strengths to understand what you can build on.
- Determine what other people see as your strengths and key capabilities.
- Set achievable goals for yourself, work to achieve them, and enjoy that achievement.
- Seek out mentors and other people who model the competencies, skills, and attributes you desire.

As you begin to recognize how much you've already achieved – and understand how much potential you have – you will have the confidence to set goals and achieve the things you desire. The more you look for reasons to believe in yourself, the easier it will be to find ways to motivate yourself.

Our article on [Building Self-Confidence](#) teaches you how to develop this self-confidence, and gives you steps you can use to start feeling great about yourself. It will also put you firmly on the path to self-assurance and self-efficacy.

## 2. Positive Thinking, and Positive Thinking About the Future

(Statements 4, 9, 11, 12)

*Your life today is the result of your attitudes and choices in the past. Your life tomorrow will be the result of your attitudes and the choices you make today.* – Author Unknown

Positive thinking is closely related to self-confidence as a factor in self-motivation. It's important to look at things positively, especially when things aren't going as planned and you're ready to give up.

If you think that things are going to go wrong or that you won't succeed, this may influence things in such a way that your predictions will come true. This is particularly the case if you need to work hard to achieve success, or if you need to persuade others to support you in order to succeed. Your thoughts can have a major influence on whether you succeed or fail, so make sure those thoughts are "on your side."

Positive thinking also helps you think about an attractive future that you want to realize. When you expect positive results, your choices will be more positive, and you'll be less likely to leave outcomes to fate or chance. Having a vivid picture of success, combined with positive thinking, helps you bridge the gap between wanting something and going out to get it.

To apply "the power of positive thinking", do the following:

- Become aware of your thoughts. Write down these down throughout the day.
- Challenge your negative thoughts, and replace them with positive ones.
- Create a strong and vivid picture of what it will be like to achieve your goals.
- Develop affirmations or statements that you can repeat to yourself throughout the day. These statements should remind you of what you want to achieve, and why you will achieve it.
- Practice positive thinking until you automatically think about yourself and the world in a positive way, every day.

For even more tips, see our article on [Rational Positive Thinking](#) . You can also take our short quiz, [Are You a Positive or Negative Thinker?](#) .

### 3. Focus and Strong Goals

(Statements 3, 7)

As we've said above, a key part of building self-motivation is to start setting strong goals. These give you focus, a clear sense of direction, and the self-confidence that comes from recognizing your own achievement.

First, determine your direction through effective goal setting.

When you set a goal, you make a promise to yourself. Part of the strength of this is that it gives you a clear direction. Part is that you've made this promise to yourself, and you'll want to keep this promise. And part is that it's a challenge, and it's fun to try to meet that challenge!

But don't set just any goal. According to [Locke's goal-setting theory](#) , your goal should have the following characteristics:

- **Clarity** – Effective goals are clear, measurable, specific, and based on behavior, not outcomes.
- **Challenge** – Goals should be difficult enough to be interesting, but not so difficult that you can't reach them.
- **Commitment** – Goals should be attainable, and should be relevant – that is, they should contribute in a significant way to the major objectives you're trying to achieve.
- **Regularity of Feedback** – Monitor your progress towards your goals regularly to maintain your sense of momentum and enthusiasm, and enjoy your progress towards those goals.
- **Sufficient Respect For Complexity** – If the goal involves complex work, make sure that you don't over-commit yourself. Complex work can take an unpredictably long time to complete (particularly if you have to learn how to do the task "on the job").

When you have a variety of goals, be sure to schedule your time and resources effectively. You can achieve the "focus" part of self-motivation by prioritizing and establishing a schedule that will help you succeed. It doesn't make sense to work until you're exhausted or give up one goal to achieve another.

Using tools like the [Action Priority Matrix](#) , you can quickly and easily see how each goal activity fits into the bigger picture of your overall objectives. If you fully understand your priorities, you probably won't feel as pressured to do everything at once. This can reduce stress and help you to concentrate on the most important strategies.

See our article on [Prioritization](#) for a summary, and for links to our top time management and prioritization tools.

### 4. Motivating Environment

(Statements 5, 10)

The final thing to focus on is surrounding yourself with people and resources that will remind you of your goals, and help you with your internal motivation. These are external factors – they'll help you get motivated from the outside, which is different from the internal motivation we've discussed so far. However, the more factors you have working for you, the better.

You can't just rely on these "environmental" or outside elements alone to motivate you, but you can use them for extra support. Try the following:

- Look for team work opportunities. Working in a team makes you accountable to others.

- Ask your boss for specific targets and objectives to help you measure your success.
- Ask for interesting assignments. See our article on [Maximizing Job Satisfaction](#) for tips on getting the most from your job.
- Set up some goals that you can easily achieve. Quick wins are great for getting you motivated.
- Buddy up with people who you trust to be supportive, and ask them to help keep you accountable.
- Try not to work by yourself too much. Balance the amount of time you work from home with time spent working with others.

When you start your self-motivation program, you may tend to rely heavily on these external factors. As you get more comfortable and confident with your self-motivation, you'll probably use them only as needed, and for a little extra help.

## Key Points

Self-motivation doesn't come naturally to everyone. And even those who are highly self-motivated need some extra help every now and then.

Build your self-motivation by practicing goal-setting skills, and combining those with positive thinking, the creation of powerful visions of success, and the building of high levels of self-efficacy and self-confidence.

Your attitude and beliefs about your likelihood of success can predict whether or not you actually succeed. Set goals, and work hard to achieve them. Examine ways to improve your self-motivation, and regularly reassess your motivation levels. If you actively keep your internal motivation high, you can significantly increase the likelihood of achieving your hopes, dreams, and visions of the future.