

INTRODUCTION TO ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION

Attitude reflects the general attitude toward school and general motivation for succeeding in school. The clearer the connection between school and future career, the easier it is to maintain a positive attitude for performing the tasks related to success in college.

- Write out specific and global goals and make sure they meet the criteria of good goals: (specific, measurable, challenging, realistic, and with a completion date).
- Reassess how school fits into your future. Reflect on why you are in college.
- Work with the Academic Planning & Support Services Office in Moody Hall 155

Motivation to perform SPECIFIC tasks is related to academic achievement. It measures the degree to which the student accepts responsibility for studying, reading assignments, and completing homework and papers, etc.

- Practice attributing what happens to you to your own efforts instead of to luck or poor teachers or lack of ability.
- Reflect on your past successes and the strategies you used.
- Set motivational goals (rewards for timelines and goals accomplished).
- Stay up to date on class assignments; (go to class prepared).

GET MOTIVATED!

So, getting out of bed in the morning has become a serious challenge. Faced with a blank page that is supposed to become your research paper your mind numbs and you get about as far as the title page before you give up. You've lost all enthusiasm for school work.

Pure, divine motivation is rare. Most of the time it requires constant reinforcement.

- Take a moment to remind yourself why you're doing what you're doing. What are you going to get out of it?
- Reward your accomplishments--no matter how small.
- Get your best friends to give you pep talks when they see you're down. You might keep a handy list of your best qualities, talents, and abilities.
- A healthy diet and regular exercise go a long way towards maintaining energy levels and feeling good in general.
- Be willing to risk failure--remember that you risk success too.

Feel overwhelmed by a difficult task?

- Start early, and have a plan. Break up your task into small parts; allow time for mistakes and wrong directions. Completing a small part each day helps maintain interest and forestalls discouragement.
- Working in a comfortable setting helps (comfortable clothes, a few friends around, familiar surroundings.) Take a break when you get tired.

Easily discouraged?

- Don't be a perfectionist. Make approaching your goals the source of your satisfaction, rather than reaching them.
- Don't worry about or dwell on things that go wrong. Concentrate on your successes. Remember that little successes build up just as quickly as little failures.

Are you too hard on yourself?

- Who you are is more valuable than what you do. Your worth as a person is not based on your intelligence, your grades, or how hard you work. It is enough to be you.
- Realize and value the opinions of others--but realize that ultimately you must respect and satisfy yourself.

SETTING GOALS: GOOD EXAMPLES/POOR EXAMPLES

Adapted from Claire E. Weinstein. Executive Control Process in Learning: Why Knowing About How to Learn Is Not Enough. NADE Newsletter. Volume 12 No. 2, Fall 1988.

A useful goal contains five key elements. A useful goal is:

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- 1) **Specific** – It describes what you want to accomplish with as much detail as possible.
Poor example – “I want to read better.”
Better example – “I want to increase my reading comprehension score 10% by the end of this semester.”

- 2) **Measurable** – A useful goal is described in terms that can be clearly evaluated.
Poor example – “I want to lose weight this year.”
Better example – “I want to lose 10 pounds by my cousin’s wedding two months from now.”
- 3) **Challenging** – It takes energy, effort, and discipline to accomplish.
Poor example – “I want to get to all of my classes on Thursday.”
Better example – “I want to complete the assignment and be prepared for my classes on Thursday.”
- 4) **Realistic** – A realistic goal is one you are capable of attaining.
Poor example – “I want to become the editor of the student newspaper in my first semester.”
Better example – “I want to become the editor of the student paper by my last year in school.”
- 5) **Timely one with a completion date** – For long term goals, it may be important to identify shorter-term goals that lead to the desired endpoint.
Poor example – “I want to do a lot of professional writing in my lifetime.”
Better example – “I want to complete a short story by the end of the semester.”

GOAL SETTING AND DECISION MAKING THE CASE OF SAM

Sam, a sophomore from Houston, is a pre-med major. He plans to specialize in neurosurgery.

This semester, Sam was placed on academic probation because he made a D in biology, an F in zoology, and a D in calculus. When Sam went to talk to his friendly academic counselor, he said, "I know exactly why I'm on probation. I just don't like those science classes. They're so technical and narrow that they don't seem relevant to anything. I usually make C's in my science classes, but last semester I just didn't feel motivated."

Sam really respects his father, who is a corporate attorney. His dad expects a lot from Sam and is disappointed in his probationary status. Ever since Sam was in junior high, his dad has told him how important it is to "make something of yourself and to be successful." Sam knows that being a surgeon would bring him respect, status, and a high salary. Sam wants to be a success but he sometimes worries that he will not like the stress and long hours involved in the medical profession. Sam volunteered at Brackenridge Hospital last summer in the emergency room and really enjoyed it. He like talking to the patients and asking them questions, and he liked the fast-paced atmosphere.

Sam's favorite class at SEU so far has been English (expository writing). He has always been a good writer and in high school he was editor of the yearbook, an activity that he really misses now that he's in college. Sam also enjoyed a history class he took on current affairs. He reads Time magazine every week and watches as many new programs and specials as he can.

This semester, Sam is really feeling burned out. He looks forward to the day when he can be through with school and be out in the work world. He just doesn't know what to do...

- 1) What decision does Sam need to make?
- 2) What are the possible consequences of his decision?
- 3) What goals should he set for himself?

REACHING OUR GOALS

Theme: The ability to live our lives in such a way that we reach our goals.

Quotes are from *The Road Less Traveled* by M. Scott Peck, M.D., New York, Simon and Schuster, 1978.

1. Realize the opportunity

“The more clearly we see the reality of the world, the better equipped we are to deal with the world. The less clearly we see the reality of the world—the more our minds are befuddled by falsehood, misperceptions and illusions—the less able we will be to determine correct courses of action and make wise decisions. Our view of reality is like a map with which to negotiate the terrain of life. If the map is true and accurate, we will generally know where we are, and if we have decided where we want to go, we will generally know how to get there. If the map is false and inaccurate, we generally will be lost.”(p. 44)

“...if our maps are to be accurate we have to continually revise them.”(p.45)

“What does a life of total dedication to the truth mean? It means, first of all, a life of continuous and never ending stringent self examination.”(p. 51)

“Problems do not go away. They must be worked through or else they remain, forever a barrier to the growth and development of the spirit.”(p. 30)

2. Accept responsibility for the opportunity

“...we must accept responsibility for a problem before we can solve it.”(p. 32)

“To willingly confront a problem early, before we are forced to confront it by circumstances, means to put aside something pleasant or less painful for something more painful.”(p. 31)

“Sooner or later,...they must learn that the entirety of one’s adult life is a series of personal choices, decisions. If they can accept this totally, then they become free people. To the extent that they do not accept this they will forever feel themselves victims.”(p. 44)

3. Change the behavior

“Delaying gratification is a process of scheduling the pain and pleasure of life in such a way as to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with. It is the only decent way to live.”(p. 19)

“This feeling of being valuable is a cornerstone of self-discipline because when one considers oneself valuable one will take care of oneself in all ways that are necessary. Self-discipline is self-caring...If we feel ourselves valuable, then we will feel our time to be valuable, and if we feel our time to be valuable, then we will want to use it well.”(p. 24)

Shift from external controls over behaviors to internal controls. There are some easy gratifications to delay; some difficult.

About Yourself

Who you are is more valuable than what you do. Your worth as a person is not based on your intelligence, your grades, or how hard you work. It is enough to be you.

Respect and value the opinions of others—but realize that ultimately you must respect and satisfy yourself.

Practice impulse control by imagining the consequences of your actions. How will you feel afterwards? Then, act so that you will be satisfied with yourself.

Write out a plan for yourself. Jot down personal and academic goals and priorities, and reread them when you're in a slump.

Don't worry about or dwell on things that go wrong. Concentrate on your successes. Remember that little successes build up just as quickly as little failures.

Give yourself time to change. Forgive yourself for backsliding and making mistakes.

Don't be a perfectionist. Make approaching your goals the basis of your self-respect rather than reaching your goals.

Don't allow feelings of inadequacy get you down. Think about all the things you do have going for you.

If you're feeling down or hopeless, imagine the worst that could happen—exaggerate your fantasies—and then laugh at them. Do this to put yourself and your current situation in perspective.

When you're down, go to someone whom you know cares for you and ask him or her to give you a "pep talk," reminding you of your good qualities, talents and abilities and/or make a list of your good qualities and read them when you need to.

Be willing to risk failure for something you really care about. Be willing to risk success too!

If you're irrationally afraid of something, do it a lot; the fear will wear off.

Learn to recognize, sooner, events which are not turning out as they should—and act to redirect them to your satisfaction.

About Your Work:

No one else is forcing you to do your work. You've decided to take it on. Don't waste your energy in hostility toward others. Accept and live with your own decisions.

Start early. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll be free to do other activities, the less worry you'll experience, the more time you'll have to recover from mistakes and wrong decisions.

Expect a certain amount of tension. Use that tension as energy to get yourself moving.

Different people have different styles of working. For example, some people need competition to do their best, while others work better at their own pace. Respect your work style and arrange conditions you need to do well.

If you have a long, hard task, make it as comfortable for yourself as possible. Do it in short bits (but stay with it), do it wearing comfortable clothes, among friends, in familiar surroundings, with whatever you need to keep your spirits up while you work at it.

Pure, unadulterated motivation is rare (most of the time); you just have to keep plugging away.

If necessary, pause every now and then to remind yourself of why you have chosen to take on certain work, and what you expect to get out of it. Give yourself a pep talk.

When you've done something you feel good about, reward yourself with a treat: You deserve it!

Completed tasks keep interest and motivation at a higher level. Try to complete a task, or accomplish a sub-goal before you quit for the day.

PERSONAL GOAL SHEET

Instructions: Help motivate yourself to study by setting goals that can be measured: these goals should be realistic, measurable, of value to your plans, and have built-in rewards for attainment.

GOAL	MOTIVATION	ACHIEVABLE		MEASUREABLE		REWARD	AFFIRMATION
		Yes	No	Yes	No		

OVERCOMING PROCRASTINATION

Overcoming procrastination is the procrastinator's greatest challenge because the behavior you are trying to change is the very thing that can get in the way of changing your behavior. Sounds like a no win situation, but take heart. Summon all your determination and will-power and follow these guidelines to a procrastination-free life.

CLARIFY YOUR PERSONAL GOALS

- Make a list of your personal goals and post it where you'll see it frequently—your mirror, notebook, door, etc.
- Outline (on paper) the tasks that will lead to your goal, and be sure a task you think you “should” do is one that is really important to meeting your goal. If you aren't sure what tasks will lead to your goal, talk with your parents, professors, or an APSS counselor.
- Prioritize! Put the most unpleasant tasks at the top of your list, and work your way down to the easier ones.

MANAGE YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY

- Time management is a learned skill, and it takes practice to master. If your idea of time management is remembering to flip the calendar at the end of each month, it's a good idea to consult an APSS counselor for help or attend a time management workshop.
- Plan out a schedule for working on the tasks that will lead to your goal. Set deadlines for completing each step. Blank calendars and weekly schedules are available at Academic Planning & Support Services in Moody Hall 155.
- Start early. Allow for “blow off” time, and give yourself time to clarify assignments or get help if necessary.
- Get into a routine. Set aside a particular block of time each day to work on your tasks; if possible, work during the same time each day.

CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE

- Do you think you're unable to meet life's challenges?
- Do you expect perfection from yourself and others?
- Are you convinced that disaster hinges on your actions?

Lighten up! These are the kinds of irrational, self-defeating attitudes and beliefs that hold you back. Replace these ideas with more rational, self-enhancing attitudes and beliefs. (Your APSS counselor can help with this, too.)

- Whenever you feel the whispering temptation to procrastinate, remember the emotional and physical consequences it will have. Also remember the rewards of not procrastinating.
- Don't approach projects with an “all or nothing” attitude. Concentrate on little bits and pieces at a time.

- Visualize yourself as a well-organized non-procrastinator. Imagine how you might think and behave. Then behave and think that way, even if only for a few minutes at a time.
- Value your mistakes; don't judge them. Find something funny, curious, or interesting about them. Learn from them.
- Be aware of those tricks you use to avoid or escape tasks—socializing, day-dreaming, running away, television—Catch yourself indulging in those tactics and get back on track.

CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR

- Use your friends. Make appointments to study with a friend, to get help with a task, or just to talk. “Let’s do lunch sometime,” is not an appointment. Set specific times and dates, such as “Lunch, Tuesday at noon.”
- Reward yourself for accomplishing something, and/or penalize yourself for not accomplishing something.
- Make something you normally do and enjoy contingent upon doing the avoided task: “I’ll work on my library research half an hour before going to play racquetball.”
- Use impulsiveness to your advantage. Do something (productive) when you think of it, instead of putting it off. Do instant, tiny things.
- Make your working environment conducive to working. Eliminate distractions (TV, phone, radio, other people) and have at hand all the tools you’ll need.

ACCEPT YOURSELF

- Give yourself time to change.
- Expect and forgive backsliding.
- Give yourself credit for the things you do.
- Forgive yourself a lot.

CAUSES OF PROCRASTINATION

Self Deception—“I can always do it later.” “I work best under pressure anyway.” “Getting started early doesn’t help me.” Some folks tend to rationalize their unwillingness to start unpleasant tasks.

Perfectionism—It may seem strange at first that a procrastinator is a perfectionist, but this is often the case. Procrastinators often put unrealistic demands on themselves to be perfect—an all or nothing attitude. Another perfectionist expectation is that excellence should come with little or no effort. For example, when it becomes obvious that not every class in college is fun and interesting, some get discouraged and just quit attending class or completing assignments.

Perfectionists are frequently competitive, although it may seem strange that a student who hands in late papers would be competitive. In a sense, these folk “choose to lose” so that they never have to truly test themselves and/or risk failure.

Inappropriate Commitments—This is the person who is active in all parts of campus and community life and stretches him/herself too thin. When all the energy goes into Greek life or athletics, academics can sometimes slide. This is a failure to establish priorities.

Tasks That Seem Too Big—Rather than take a major research paper step by step, the procrastinator “awfulizes” about how terrible it is that students are required to do so much work. Instead of using little bits of time to get started the procrastinator becomes paralyzed by the thought of how much effort/time the paper will take.

Non-Productive Behaviors—Some students spend too much time “getting ready” to study. They sharpen pencils, put on background music, feed the cats, clean off the bed (so they will not be distracted)—then notice that an hour has passed and it “must be about time to take a break from studying.”

Lack of organization contributes to wasting time. Procrastinators often have no idea how to get started, or what procedures to follow.

Not knowing how to prioritize is another example. Some people spend 3 hours on a project that is fun, but may be an elective course. Then, they may spend almost no time studying for a comprehensive final—in a course they do not like—which is worth 1/3 of the course grade.

Finally, an unwillingness to say “NO” to friends contributes to procrastination. If you just can’t turn down some invitations to socialize, you will be at the mercy to anyone/everyone who interrupts your studying

Procrastination Quotient

Directions: Mark an "X" in the column for your response to each of the twelve items. Total the "X"'s in each column, multiply by the weight at the bottom of the column, and add you products.

	Almost Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
1. I find reasons for not acting immediately on a difficult assignment.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I know what I have to do but find that I have done something else.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I carry my books/work assignments with me to various places but do not open them.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I work best at the "last minute" when the pressure is really on.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. There are too many interruptions that interfere with my most important study goals.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. I avoid setting priorities for the day and doing the most important tasks first.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. I avoid or delay unpleasant decisions.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. I have been too tired, nervous, or upset to get started on my assignment	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I like to get my room in excellent order before starting a difficult study task.	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I wait for inspirations before becoming involved in important study/work tasks.	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. I fear failing at my most important study tasks.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. I demand perfection in my work/study performance.	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Responses in each column	_____	_____	_____	_____
	x4	x3	x2	x1
Procrastination is	_____	+	_____	+
	_____	+	_____	+
	_____	+	_____	_____

P.Q. below 22 - minor concern
 P.Q. 23 to 32 - moderate concern
 P.Q. above 32 - major concern

Total Score _____ = P.Q.