



5 Easy Ways to Revive Your Motivation and Keep it Going

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Part I — The Motivation Challenge

Motivation affects everything! From staying on your diet to cleaning your house, it provides the *power* behind your actions and helps you follow through with your good intentions.

When your motivation is high, you feel energized, driven, focused, and determined. Nothing gets in your way and you sail through your day, pleased with yourself and your actions.

In fact, once you're motivated, you can do anything, even if you hate it. You jump into action and clean the house, exercise or write an email to a friend. None of this seems like a problem, you just *do* it.

Where Does it Go?

But then one day, something sneaks in and zaps your motivation away. Perhaps you get a bad cold or have a family crisis. Or you get sidetracked because of moving to a different home, changing jobs, or dating a new person.

Before long, your enthusiasm slips away and you're right back where you started. The house gets dirty again, your weight creeps back up, and your exercise bike becomes a clothes rack.

Staying motivated doesn't mean you have to be excited and energized all the time. Instead, you just have to know how to crank yourself back up when you need a boost.

Motivation Takes Energy

Eric has been trying for months to stay consistent with his exercise plan. When his motivation is strong, he gets up early every morning and heads out for a long run. He does this through bad weather, fatigue, and work pressures. Nothing stops him from following his daily routine.

But occasionally, he goes through periods where something happens and he loses his motivation. When this happens, he fights what he calls the “major gap between Sunday night resolve and Monday morning reality.” Here’s how he describes his struggle:

I feel so determined the night before. But then the alarm rings while it’s still dark outside and my body feels like it has a truck parked on top of it.

I recite affirmations, I use positive self-talk, and I promise myself rewards. But nothing gets me out from under those covers. Pretty soon, I shut off the stupid alarm and turn over for another hour of sleep.

As you know, motivation takes energy. Any time you feel exhausted, overwhelmed, or highly stressed, you’ll probably struggle to get yourself going.

Even though you know exercise would make you feel better, you can’t bring yourself to do it. Faced with the choice between sinking into the recliner or going for a walk, the chair always wins.

Motivation is a Choice

Unfortunately, motivation doesn’t drop out of the sky or suddenly reappear after an absence. You can’t open the junk drawer and shout, “Look! I just found my motivation!” Instead, the drive and energy that keeps you on track originates inside of you.

Although it may seem like it simply pops up unexpectedly, motivation is actually a *choice*. You create it yourself—through your thoughts, your self-talk, and your attitudes.

Because your drive and energy originate inside your head, you have the ability to motivate yourself anytime you want. Even when you don’t have a shred of energy, you can still access your motivation if you want to.

Instead of waiting for inspiration to hit, you can learn how to build it yourself. To do this, you have to invent new tricks and create fresh ideas that will inspire you toward action.

Then, at some point, you have to get up out of your chair and *make* it happen.

Part II — How to Revive Motivation

In this special report, you'll discover five easy ways to revive motivation when it slips away. You may want to focus on one idea at a time, working on it until you have conquered that area.

Or, you may choose to tackle all five concepts at once, and use them to jumpstart your actions and get yourself back on track.

Either way, you'll be amazed at how powerful these steps are once you put them in place. Besides helping you revive motivation for the moment, they will also give you a wonderful blueprint for long-term success.

Step 1. Divide and Conquer

At Judy's weight-loss program, the participants always set an exercise goal for the following week. But Judy refused to participate in this part. She said, "I hate exercise and I just don't want to do it."

The other members supported her decision and encouraged her to keep attending the group anyway. So week after week, Judy came to the meetings, but skipped writing any exercise goals.

One day, she quietly spoke up, "I have an exercise bike at home in my bedroom. Maybe I could start using it a little."

Immediately everyone encouraged her, "Great plan, Judy. Give it a try. Just do a small amount so you don't get sick of it." So Judy wrote on her goal sheet, "I will ride my exercise bike every day for *one minute*."

The next week, the group members couldn't wait to hear her report. "I did it!" she said. "Every day I rode the bike for one minute. In fact, I know I was accurate because I used my stopwatch."

The following week Judy again reported success. This time, she cautiously agreed to increase her goal to two minutes a day. Once again she was successful.

As the weeks went by, Judy gradually progressed from two minutes to five, then ten, then even 20 minutes a day. A year later, this person who said she hated exercise had lost 40 pounds and was running four miles a day.

Judy said, "I was so overwhelmed by the idea of exercising that I couldn't ever start. Making a very small goal was critical to helping me succeed."

Break it Up

When you work on major changes, divide your overall goal into smaller mini-goals, rather than tackle it all at once.

Sherry was totally discouraged with the prospect of losing 150 pounds. So she decided to stay on her diet program until she had lost 25 pounds, and then re-evaluate her plan.

When she reached that initial goal, she thought carefully about her efforts, and then decided to lose another 25 pounds. Sherry did this six times during her program, always evaluating her plans at the end of each 25-pound loss.

In the beginning, she couldn't imagine reaching her weight-loss goal, but by the end of the year, she'd lost the entire 150 pounds.

Ten-Pound Goals

You can also manage your weight-loss goals by setting small markers such as losing ten pounds. Here's how Peter overcame his discouragement with the amount of weight he needed to lose.

When his weight was still at 280 pounds, Peter came up with a phrase that helped him stay committed to his goals. He simply told himself, "You can't reach 220 until you get to 270."

Then he focused entirely on losing the next ten pounds. Each time he achieved his ten-pound goal, he would adjust the numbers in his phrase. This made a huge difference in his thoughts and attitude, and it also helped him he reached his goal weight of 220 pounds.

Step 2. Set Your Intentions

Last summer, Kate bought a new diet book. The plan looked great, and Kate knew that if she followed it carefully, she would lose her extra thirty pounds quite easily.

But it turned out that the book was a little complicated so she had some trouble figuring out exactly what she was supposed to eat. Whenever she got ready to follow the meal plan, she didn't have the right foods on hand or time to prepare the recipes.

Kate really wanted to make this diet work, so she held onto her thought that "one of these days" she would take time to study the book and use the plan.

Now it's a year later, and Kate still hasn't started her diet. Unfortunately, she still weighs the same amount as last year; she's just more frustrated and disgusted with herself.

Motivation Needs an Outcome

Like Kate, maybe you've planned to start a diet or set up an exercise plan, but never quite got started. First there were the graduations, weddings and vacations. Then it got too hot to think about cooking and planning. Soon it will be fall and that means your hope of getting into a summer bathing suit is quickly slipping away.

Abstract thoughts such as "I want to lose weight," don't generate lasting resolve. Instead, when you set weight-loss and exercise goals, be sure they have measurable outcomes.

For example, you might set a goal such as "I want to weigh 140 pounds by September" or "I want to run a three-mile race without having to slow down to a walking pace." Having specific goals will give you stronger motivation than if you take the approach "I'll try this and see how it goes."

Lose Weight or Maintain?

Do you keep saying "I really want to lose weight" but never do anything about it? Unless you plan on gaining weight, you actually have only two choices—lose weight or maintain your current weight. Just be careful not to say one thing and do another.

If you are determined to lose weight, then tackle it head on. Get clear about your diet and exercise plan, then figure out how make them happen.

Count your calories or your points. Ride your bike, take long walks or go to the gym and do your workouts. In other words, follow through on your intentions.

If things keep getting in the way, you might need to re-think your intentions. In spite of your desire to lose weight, that goal may not be realistic right now.

There's nothing wrong with maintaining your weight—just be clear that it's your goal and live accordingly. Otherwise, you'll stay frustrated because your head keeps saying one thing but your actions indicate something else.

Not Deciding is Deciding.

If you can't decide whether or not you are ready to follow a diet or exercise program, you're already in trouble. You see, not making a decision is actually a decision of its own. Without a clearly defined plan, you'll end up doing nothing.

You can waste a lot of time and energy with “one of these days” intentions. So unless you’re ready to take action, don’t even utter the words.

Be honest with yourself. If you aren’t completely ready to lose weight right now, drop the guilt trip and wait until the time is right. Then put your efforts into maintaining your weight instead.

Step 3. Get Unstuck

Joan was stuck! For the past ten years, she had been the office manager for a large corporation. She had a great income and solid job security, but the politics and stress in her department were getting to her.

In our coaching visits, she complained a lot about how unhappy she was at work, yet she couldn’t bring herself to change jobs.

One day, as she described how trapped she felt, I gave her a piece of paper with the following words on it:

How long do I want to live like this?

I asked her to respond to the question by the end of the next week. Her answer had to be specific, such as deciding to keep things the same for another six months or perhaps a year.

Joan took the paper home and taped it to her refrigerator. That evening, she kept reading it and thinking about different time frames she could report to me.

Suddenly it hit her! She didn’t want to stay in her current situation *at all*, not even one more day. The next morning, Joan resigned from her job.

Once she took the first step, Joan found other changes came more easily. Over the next six months, she started a consulting business, lost fifty pounds, and applied for the Peace Corps.

She also became an avid exerciser, riding her bike ten miles each way to her office and back. At age 51, two years after leaving her “awful” job, she received her first assignment with the Peace Corps and began traveling the world.

Joan is absolutely *not* stuck!

She told me, “When I realized I didn’t want to live that way any more, it became the catalyst to changing other areas in my life. I’m so glad you gave me that question.”

Stuck Feels Awful

Just like Joan, when you don't feel motivated, you can get *stuck* and lose hope of things ever being different. Maybe you keep promising you'll change, but you never follow through. You set goals, but because things aren't quite in place, you never get started on them.

When you're stuck, everything comes to a standstill. You may even wish for a crisis of some kind, because you're convinced it's the only thing that will get you going.

Being stuck takes on an identity of its own. Instead of working on your roadblocks, you blame others for why you don't take action. Yet, if someone offers you advice, you get defensive and respond, "You don't understand my situation."

When Stuck Goes Deeper

Everyone gets stuck now and then, especially in areas such as weight loss or regular exercise. But you can also get into a rut with your job, with a relationship, or even with keeping up your home. As you become discouraged or depressed because nothing changes, the rut just gets deeper.

Eventually you can't see any alternatives to your miserable life. You start believing you have *no options* and that nothing can overcome your current situation. Instead of taking risks or trying new things, you just stay the way you are.

People who become stuck tend to stay that way for a long time. By holding on to their negative attitudes and beliefs, they continue to reinforce their lack of motivation. Before you can get out of the trap of being stuck, you may have to address the excuses that are keeping you there.

See the Possibilities

Being stuck is like wearing blinders when you look at the world. In life, it's easy to get hung up on small obstacles and lose sight of other ways of doing things. Because you can't *see* any options, you eventually assume there aren't any.

I encourage you to let go of your limiting beliefs and instead, look at new possibilities and explore other ways you could approach things. Here's an example how this works:

Donna had set a goal of consistently exercising at least five days a week. But day after day, she ended up skipping her exercise and doing other things during that time.

When she realized her motivation had slipped away, she decided to make a list of possibilities that would help her be successful. Notice how she became more creative as her list grew.

Things that will help me exercise every day:

- *Set alarm one hour earlier*
- *Lay out exercise clothes the night before*
- *Put water bottle in refrigerator so it's ready to grab*
- *Use self-talk from the minute I wake up*
- *Check tires on bike before going to bed*
- *Ride bike only six blocks the first time*
- *Join the health club that's nearby*
- *Hire a personal trainer*
- *Set up a reward system with a buddy*
- *Download new music to listen to while exercising*

Now it's your turn. Take out a piece of paper or open a new document on your computer. Then select an area you'd like to change and make a list of every possible action, no matter how small, that would help you make progress.

Do this with several goals such as staying on your meal plan or fitting exercise into your busy schedule. Let your imagination go and fill an entire page with fresh ideas. You may be amazed at all the options you can invent.

When you open the door to new possibilities, you discover lots of ways to achieve your goals. Rather than getting hung up by the small barriers in your life, focus on the big picture that represents unlimited opportunities.

Step 4. Make it MORE Important

It's interesting how we act a lot differently when we label things as being *important*. For example, if you consider a final exam to be important, you stay up late, turn down a party invitation, and make yourself study.

When you really want something, creating motivation becomes easy. You simply raise that goal's level of importance by moving it higher in your priorities.

Make it Matter

Darlene had wanted to lose weight for a long time. Lately, she'd been feeling more desperate, but she was still having trouble staying on her diet plan.

When she thought about all the ways her weight was impacting her life, she came up with a long list.

Ways my weight is affecting me:

- *I feel miserable all of the time*
- *I worry about my health*
- *My feet and legs ache a lot*
- *I'm embarrassed around my friends*
- *It's hard to exercise*
- *I can't wear nice clothes*
- *I avoid going out in public*
- *Theater seats are uncomfortable*
- *I'm self-conscious about my looks*
- *Self-esteem is non-existent*

When Darlene evaluated her situation, she said, “When I look at this list, I can see that my weight impacts me a LOT. Most days I feel miserable, I hate myself, and I wish life was different.”

As she looked closely at how being overweight was hurting her life, Darlene decided it was time to get busy. The next day, she used her new-found motivation to begin a healthy diet and exercise program.

Does it Impact Your Life?

Now it's your turn. Choose a specific area in your life where motivation is a struggle. Besides losing weight, you might also choose areas like exercising, stopping emotional eating, or quitting smoking.

Think of all the ways this problem area impacts your life. Does it affect your health or your energy? Is it harming your self-esteem? Does it make it difficult to cope with your emotions or to manage stress?

Using Darlene's work as an example, write a list of all the ways this area affects your life. Don't hold back. Put down everything that comes to mind, such as the way your kids act embarrassed or the amount of clothes in your closet that “don't quite fit” any more.

Use this list to push your motivation higher, as well as set goals around eliminating all the things you've written down.

Invent New Reasons

When something doesn't impact your life much, it's hard to get motivated to change it. Another way to crank up your motivation is to raise the importance of the goal so it matters to you more.

Look again at how your weight or other issues are affecting you, and if necessary, invent a few more concerns.

Although she kept wanting to lose 20 pounds, Kathy never stayed on her diet long enough to make any progress. But other than not being able to fit into her nice business suits, she couldn't think of any big reasons to change her pattern.

Kathy was successful at her job, her health wasn't an issue, and many days she completely forgot about her weight. Because it didn't affect her life very much, she had a hard time staying motivated to work on her extra weight.

But when she looked at her situation more closely though, Kathy discovered a few more things that bothered her besides her closet full of suits.

Kathy's revised list of reasons to lose weight

- *Have more self-confidence in public*
- *Feel comfortable wearing a bathing suit*
- *Like myself more when I look in a mirror*
- *Want to be a singer in a nightclub*
- *Want to start a running program again*
- *Want to be at a healthy weight before I get pregnant*

By identifying more reasons to lose weight, Kathy was able to push her motivation level much higher. That simple change got her started on losing weight again.

What are you Willing to Do?

Once you determine how much a goal impacts your life, think about your level of motivation for achieving it. If you "don't care much," you will probably have lots of days when you won't feel like pushing yourself and you'll just let things go.

But if you decide to do "whatever it takes," you will significantly increase your motivation. So first, search for ways your weight or other issue might be affecting you, and deepen your desire to change it.

Draw on self-talk, support systems, or any other means you can find to increase your resolve. Anytime your motivation slides downward, go back to your list and remind yourself that you are willing to do the work involved to get yourself back on track.

Step 5. Light Your Own Fire

You've set goals and written action plans. Every day, you feel certain you'll get started on your diet or exercise plan. But nothing happens. More days go by and you still haven't done anything.

So how do you light a fire that will revive your energy and get yourself going again? The steps in this final concept are almost guaranteed to jumpstart your motivation and eventually sustain it.

Just Do Something...

Do you remember the first time you dived off the high board at the swimming pool? You probably stood uneasily on the board with your toes curled around the edge and waited. The swimmers behind you started yelling for you to hurry up, but for some reason, you couldn't move.

Finally, you pulled out every ounce of determination you could find and you jumped. What a feeling!

After you climbed back out of the pool, you headed right back up the ladder to do it again. It seemed a lot easier now. But to get yourself started initially, you had to break the barrier of that first jump.

Sometimes you just have to take *one step* and mentally leap into the water. For example, if you take one walk or eat one healthy meal, you can tell yourself you're over the hump of no motivation.

Once you're started, you find it gets a lot easier to continue your program and keep making progress. Anytime you lose motivation and struggle with getting back on track, tell yourself this phrase:

Just do something, then you're started!

Let this concept work for you over and over. Even doing something small makes you feel motivated again because it breaks your inertia and reminds you of your power. So take one step, get past the rut, and you'll find you're back in action.

The "Ten-Minute Solution"

When you can't get motivated to exercise, use this creative idea to jumpstart your efforts. Tell yourself you only have to do an activity for *ten minutes*, then you can quit.

Then push yourself out the door and take a walk, ride your bike, or use the exercise equipment at the gym. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to get yourself going.

Knowing you only have to stick with it for ten minutes gives you the push to get started. If you choose to stop at the end of that time, you'll feel good because you did *something*.

On the other hand, you may decide that since you're already out, you might as well continue a while longer and do another half-hour. Either way, you're a success!

Never minimize the benefits of a small amount of exercise. Even a ten-minute bike ride or a short walk can boost your energy and brighten your spirits.

Although it certainly doesn't give the same benefits as a longer workout, the *ten-minute solution* may be the secret to getting you back to a consistent exercise plan.

Sustain it for Three Days

Scientists know that a body at rest tends to stay at rest, but once it starts moving, it picks up momentum and keeps going. Whenever you start an exercise plan or a new diet program, you first have to get past your *inertia* and then build your momentum.

Generally, if you do an activity at least three days in a row, you'll be back on track and able to stay consistent again. So do whatever it takes to get yourself started, then stay with it for three days. By then you'll have built a rhythm that will keep you going.

Part III—Motivation for the Long Run

Motivation is never permanent. You don't get it back, then never have to worry about it again. That's why being able to build your own motivation is so important. So instead of depending on an external crisis to get you started, learn how to create your own wake-up call.

Ignore the Past

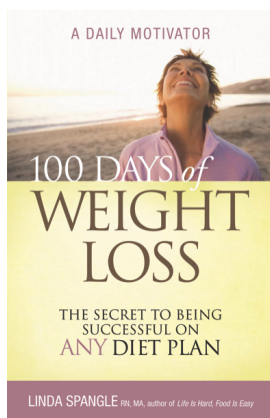
Don't worry about how things have gone when you've worked on this before. If you've read my book, [*100 Days of Weight Loss*](#), you know that the lesson for Day One reminds you that your past does not determine your future.

Instead, this lesson shows you how to re-train your thinking by using the phrase:

I used to be that way, but now I'm different!

Then you are encouraged to make up a new ending for your actions. For example, you might say, "I used to give up on a new diet after a few weeks, but now I'm different. Now I pull out my journal every day and use writing to keep myself on track."

In the same way, your history with low motivation doesn't have anything to do with your ability to be successful now. How and when you reach your goals depends entirely on the choices and actions you follow *today*.



Be Patient with Results

When you faithfully stay on a diet for two weeks but only lose one pound, it's easy to lose your resolve and quit. But that's like planting flower seeds, then digging them out after two weeks because they haven't bloomed yet.

Don't let slow progress keep you from staying with your efforts. And if you're working on losing weight, be careful not to let your scale determine how you eat.

Anita weighed herself every morning. Whenever the scale didn't change for several days, she would get upset and discouraged. One day she confessed, "I got so frustrated because the scale wasn't moving that I *made* it move. I went on an eating binge!" Of course, the scale moved, but not in the direction she wanted.

Peek Around the Corner

If staying on your diet depends on seeing results on the scale, you will stumble every time your body retains fluids or gets stiff after exercising.

In my book, [*Friends with the Scale*](#), you'll find a list of fourteen factors that can all affect your scale numbers. Even humidity or extra hard exercise can cause your scale reading to bounce around. But remember, these are temporary numbers and they don't accurately show your true weight.

Also, don't get discouraged if your weight doesn't show changes every week. Most of the time, a drop on the scale is just around the corner. If you get impatient, you may give up on your diet and start eating more food right when you're the scale number dropped.

Never Give Up!

Motivation provides the ticket to your journey. If you can create it and keep it going, you'll get there. Constantly invent new tricks, create new methods and push yourself when you don't feel like it.

You don't have to wait until you have more time or money or energy to make your efforts pay off. Look at motivation as an opportunity, not a burden or a nuisance, and you'll discover you have the resources you need to sustain it. Soon, all of your efforts will pay off and you'll see the results in your lifestyle as well as your mirror.

This E-Booklet was excerpted from Chapter 12, "Unstuck and Motivated" in the book [*Life is Hard, Food is Easy*](#) by Linda Spangle.

