

Staying Motivated During COVID-19

Most of us are feeling extra-challenged in engaging with our work at the moment. As a Northwestern undergrad, you're operating with less structure in your life than usual, the anxiety of the pandemic, and less contact with others than you normally have. You may also be facing additional stress due to personal or family concerns, concern over social or political events, or both. All of this can make it hard to stay motivated.

While it's a challenge, there are steps you can take to feel more motivated to engage in your work. Consider the questions below. How would you answer? What plan can you make for yourself to boost your motivation this quarter?

1. What do I find engaging or interesting about the courses I am taking this quarter?

2. How can what I am learning this quarter benefit me down the road, in terms of...

- preparing me for future courses or schooling?
- developing my professional skills?
- helping me become a better learner, thinker, researcher?
- enriching me personally?
- giving me skills/knowledge that allow me to benefit others/my community?
- *Or in other ways?*

3. How do I get myself to do things even when I'm not in the mood?

For example:

- Starting the day with a schedule
- Talking with a friend or journaling before getting started for the day
- Breaking project down into small, manageable tasks
- Giving myself small rewards for tasks completed (e.g., 30 minutes of notes and then 10 minutes of cat videos!)
- Including fun activities in my schedule so that I don't have to feel like I should always be working (e.g., 7pm: Netflix and ice cream!)

4. What do I already know about the things that hinder my motivation, and what can help?

For example, consider the following motivation-sappers and helpful responses. Not all may ring true for you, and there may be additional items you'd add – so make the list your own.

Hinders	Helps
Feeling lethargic	Exercise, pay attention to my sleep , recharge with something I love to do

Feeling overwhelmed by what I am supposed to do	Create a plan (daily and longer-term), make to-do lists and cross things off, write about my concerns, talk it through with a friend
Feeling down, anxious, or depressed	Connect with CAPS or a health-care provider, exercise, meditate , talk with a friend
Not having a sense of the larger purpose of a task	Ask the instructor to put it into a larger context, find out how ideas are used in practice, think through how the knowledge I gain can be applied later
Feeling like I don't have choice in what I'm doing	Look for places where I have autonomy, make choices about what I work on when, find an aspect of the topic that really interests me and talk with the instructor about ways I can explore it

5. What am I doing to keep myself energized and take care of my well-being?

Think about

- Taking breaks
- Exercising
- Eating right
- Staying on a regular [sleep](#) schedule
- Staying connected with friends and other students
- Reaching out for help when I need it

6. How am I managing my academic routine?

Think about

- Creating a productive (and ergonomically sound) work space
- Making a schedule for myself
- Using [effective study strategies](#)
- Studying with others, or joining a [formal](#) or [informal](#) study group
- [Reaching out to my instructors](#) when I have questions or concerns

7. And finally... What new practices do I want to start using to help myself feel engaged and motivated?

See our website for more suggestions on [Learning During COVID-19](#).

For information on study groups, drop-in tutoring, and 1:1 and group coaching, see the [ASLA website](#) or [contact us](#). To make an appointment for a consultation, see our [appointments page](#).