

Heading: Getting Into the Swing of Things

Subheading: Tips and tricks on how to keep up motivation in school, exercise, and creativity when life gets too busy.

Emily Schauer

Blot

As we approach finals week, the days are getting colder and darker; the workloads are growing heavier, and to-do lists seem like they never end. Some days it feels like sitting on the couch curled up in a blanket clutching a warm drink is way more appealing than tackling all those lingering expectations you've been ignoring for as long as you can. Lack of motivation can be a real roadblock the more stressed you are, so here are some tips and tricks on how to stay motivated in your schoolwork, staying on top of an exercise routine, and in any project you may have outside of school.

First, beginning with homework, my go-to motivator is finding the perfect playlist to get me started. Personally, I find it difficult to work in complete silence, or in excess noise like the lower two floors of the library or a coffee shop. To assist with this, I put on my headphones and try my best to block out the noise and focus on my work. The best music to listen to for focusing is instrumental pieces, like classical or lo-fi, or even some video game soundtracks, as they are designed to maintain focus during gameplay. You can have fun with it and look for playlists on whatever streaming service you use that fits whatever vibe you want. I have my own classical music and lo-fi playlists, and I like to listen to the soundtrack from the video game *Night in the Woods*. But I also have a plethora of other playlists and albums saved if those don't suit my fancy on a given day.

Another tip for keeping motivation when doing homework is to do your work in a separate environment from where you relax. The most ideal place is at a desk facing a window, or simply away from your bed. Having a set place to relax and a set place to do homework will create boundaries in your mind, thus keeping motivation up. If you've done homework on your bed before, you may have found it difficult to maintain focus, wanting instead to put the work down and pull out your phone. By doing your work in a separate space away from any distractions, you will limit temptations and before you know it, time will have flown and you will have been productive!

One of the more difficult habits to keep while in college is maintaining a proper exercise routine. Sometimes it seems like there isn't enough time in your day to do the things you used to be able to do with ease: For example, doing a whole day of schoolwork, then exercising for an hour, then coming home and working on homework gets exhausting after a while. I know I'm guilty of this for sure. One thing I've found that helps with maintaining motivation to exercise is to bring a friend with you. This way, if one of you forgets or doesn't feel like exercising, the other can chime in with a reminder. My roommate and I are each other's accountability buddies. We both get so busy with school and work that we sometimes forget to exercise. To solve this, we've agreed to go at a certain time in the morning before classes. It may not be fun waking up that early to swim for an hour, but it's definitely worth it.

A simpler tip for staying motivated to exercise is to find something you like doing. If you actually enjoy doing the activity you decide to set yourself on, you're more likely to continue with it, even when it gets difficult. The university has many options: from the Rec Center to the Swim Center, even to the IFIT classes you can take as a student! Moscow itself has opportunities to stay active as well, with the new fitness studio in the mall or the club downtown. Many of those options require a membership, however, so if you're looking for somewhere closer to home, you might as well use the resources UI has for you! Personally, I'm an advocate for the pool, but I may be a bit biased.

If you're like me and enjoy doing crafts and making things in your free time, you may have noticed that with motivation going down in other aspects of your life, you are feeling a lack of creative motivation as well. My first suggestion is a repeat of an earlier suggestion: Dedicate a small amount of time in your day to get creative with it. Sometimes you need a break to work on something that isn't schoolwork, and that could look like a crochet project, writing, embroidery, or anything else. Taking an hour out of your day, or however long you can reasonably get away with, can help keep your mind balanced and may reduce stress from other aspects of your life.

Another suggestion is to switch projects if you're feeling burnt out. Sometimes you need to take a brain break from what you had been working on previously. This can also be applied to schoolwork; if you have been working on an essay for several hours and the words just aren't coming, try switching to something else. If you're in need of new things to work on, sources like Pinterest, Tumblr, or YouTube are great places to start. Maybe you could learn a new skill or refresh your memory on something you used to love. Humans weren't meant to spend so much

time working, so if possible, I recommend taking a little break every now and then to do something creative.

My final tip for staying motivated creatively is to have a get-together! Gather some friends and some crafts to do, maybe go all-out and have dinner too. Finding time may be difficult, especially with finals week rapidly approaching, but I can guarantee that everyone will be needing a night to unwind and get creative with friends around this time. Sometimes a lack of motivation can happen when your expectations are too high. You expect perfection in what you make, and if it doesn't meet those standards, it isn't worth doing. But with the right people, there is no expectation of perfection. As long as everyone has fun making something with their hands, it will be worth it.

Sometimes life will be too much for even these tips to help with, and that's okay. Making an effort to stay balanced in every aspect of your life will become overwhelming. Try your best, forgive yourself if you fail, and remember that it will be enough.