

Motivating Yourself to Change

Some of the most debilitating symptoms of depression are lethargy, hopelessness, and a sense that things will never get better.

So how are you going to motivate yourself to do the assignments in this workbook? Let's face it, change is not easy. But research on motivation tells us that there are many techniques that can help. Read through the ten motivation tips below and then go back and rate each as to whether you think it would be helpful for you to use to make changes to overcome your depression. Rate each technique on a seven-point scale, where 1 = I don't think this would be helpful and 7 = I think this would be very helpful. Choose at least three motivational techniques to help you focus on overcoming your depression, and remind yourself of these techniques at the start of each day.

_____ 1. Schedule your assignments.

Pick a time each day to work on a therapy assignment. Write it down, just like you would any important appointment and do your best to do this work at the appointed time. Try and work on overcoming your depression every day!

_____ 2. Reward yourself when you are done with an assignment.

You already know that people (or animals) will be more likely to do something when they experience a reward immediately after doing something new or difficult. Think of some ways you can reward yourself after you do something that helps you overcome your depression.

_____ 3. Sign a contract and commit to it.

Contracts are surprisingly helpful when it comes to making changes in your life.

_____ 4. Share what you are doing with people you know.

One of the most effective motivators for change is to tell a select group of friends and family about what you are trying to do. You don't have to confide everything about your problem if you don't want to, but just let these people know that you are working on a specific aspect of your life and ask for their support. It goes without saying that you should only ask for support from people who can give it to you.

_____5. Set a goal.

Set a tangible behavior goal for yourself. You might also wish to identify the sub-goals or steps you need to take to achieve your main goal.

_____6. Track your progress.

Most of the exercises in this book include a chart to help you keep track of your efforts in overcoming your depression. Recording your progress every day is essential to keeping you motivated, even when change seems difficult to achieve.

_____7. Set your intention.

Many coaches and therapists encourage people to “set their intention” at the beginning of each day, preferably before meditating. Deepak Chopra, best-selling spiritual writer, notes: “The sages of India observed thousands of years ago that our destiny is ultimately shaped by our deepest intentions and desires. An intention is a directed impulse of consciousness that contains the seed form of that which you aim to create.”

_____8. Adopt a compassionate attitude toward your efforts.

Being self-critical and perfectionistic will likely get in the way of your efforts to change. You will have setbacks and even reversals, for that is only human. You can learn to be a good “parent” to yourself as you change. A good parent guides and encourages a child toward a goal, always believing that the goal can be achieved, but also being compassionate and loving.

_____9. Act like your heroes.

Inspiration is an important aspect of motivation. Think about someone who has inspired you because he/she has overcome an almost insurmountable problem. Take a moment during the day to imagine what that person would say to you to encourage your efforts to conquer your problem.

_____10. Look for progress each day.

Focus on the small positive changes that you make in your life each day, rather than on the things that are causing you problems. Even when times are difficult, you can do things each day that will help you lead a happier and fulfilling life.