



Wellbeing

Motivation

Action breeds motivation

The change in the weather and welcoming of the summer months can often give us a little boost towards getting out and doing more day-to-day. This year, we find ourselves waking up to warmer mornings and enjoying longer, lighter evenings just as the lockdown measures begin to lift across the UK. However, it's important to recognise that for many of us the stress of the year could continue to impact our energy levels, happiness and motivation. The Japanese actually have a word for this experience: Natsubate. It literally breaks down to mean 'summer-fatigue.'

There are a number of things we can do to help overcome this, including eating well, sleeping and staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water. However in this resource, we want to focus on the role that actions have to play in boosting motivation levels.

Have you ever been caught in that loop of thinking 'I really need to do XYZ, but I just can't be bothered' or 'I've got no motivation today', and then because you don't feel like it, you don't do it this time, or the next time, or the next time you think about it? We often attribute our motivation levels to why we do or do not do something. We internalise that if we don't have the motivation, we won't be able to, or do not want to; and therefore we don't. We basically get stuck on repeat.

This is a common experience for lots of people but it is also one we can turn on its head. Interestingly, psychological research suggests it is in fact **action that creates motivation in the first instance**, not motivation that creates the action.

When we are feeling down, tired or fed up we may not have the motivation to do everything on our to-do list for the day (work or personal). If we push ourselves we may get one or two things done on that list somewhat begrudgingly. However, by pushing ourselves we allow ourselves that sense of satisfaction to consider the next item on our list. Our motivation pot gets slightly bigger. With every action we do, our motivation increases and we feel happier and more ready to take on the next thing.

So how do we take that first step?

We need to get SMART. By setting SMART goals we are able to define really clearly what our expectations are of ourselves so that we can meet them and get that all important sense of achievement.

Specific – be really specific about what it is you want to achieve, even down to the nitty gritty. If you're working on a bigger goal, break it down into smaller ones!

Measurable – make it something you can measure – ask yourself, will I definitely know when I have done it?

Achievable – only you know how you are feeling, so make it something within your reach.

Relevant – make your goal relevant to something you want to achieve or need to do.

Time bound – set yourself a deadline of when you'd like to achieve this by.

Write it down! Writing it down somewhere obvious makes us so much more likely to act on our goals. And the goals themselves don't need to be life changing, they can be as simple as reaching a certain number of steps per day or drinking a chosen amount of water (Natsubate!).

Here are some strong examples of SMART goals to help you get started:

- By the end of today I will have had 6 half pints of water.
- I will finish two chapters of my book by Sunday evening.
- I will go for a walk through the town on Saturday straight after breakfast.
- This week I will ensure I tick off at least 4 items from my to-do list at work.

It's with every action that our motivation increases and our sense of general wellbeing is enhanced and deepened.