Chapter 1
Introducing Motivation

In This Chapter
- Explaining motivation
- Deciding how motivation can help you
- Getting your brain and body working for you

Getting yourself motivated to achieve a desired goal lies at the heart of your success. In this chapter, you discover what being motivated means, how motivation can help you, and the way your brain and body interact to keep you fully motivated.

Figuring Out What Motivation Is

Motivation is a feeling, an emotional force, stimulating and encouraging you to do something. You feel motivated by factors or stimuli – internal or external – rousing you into action and fulfilling a need:

- **Internal**: Feeling hungry motivates you to eat – an intrinsic need coming from inside yourself.
- **External**: Showing poor sales results motivates you to attract more clients to increase business – an extrinsic need coming from outside yourself.

Think of a time when you felt highly motivated in your job. You enjoyed going to work and having a sense of achievement at seeing your projects come to fruition. Your efforts were rewarded with a good salary; you had support from your manager, and the authority to make your own decisions. You got along well with your colleagues and delighted in the office camaraderie. You felt valued and that you contributed to the success of the business.

The key motivators at work in this instance are: achieving success, financial reward, camaraderie, and feeling valued.
Here are three real-life examples of internal and external stimuli:

- Daniel runs a small hotel business, which has been in his family for three generations. It’s hard work, involves long hours, and isn’t hugely financially rewarding. The stimuli that help Daniel maintain his motivation to keep the business going are both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsically he feels it’s important to uphold the family tradition as hoteliers. It satisfies his sense of continuity and staying faithful to his roots. The extrinsic stimulus comes from his staff. Daniel feels responsible for his staff and their livelihoods, particularly as several of them have been with his business for many years.

- A teacher friend of mine tutors children to help them improve their reading skills. She told me how positive and motivated she felt when, just after one session, the other teachers commented on how they’d noticed an improvement in the children’s reading ability. My friend travels a long way to the school for the sessions, but feels it is worth all the effort to see the improvement in the children’s reading skills and hear the positive comments from the teachers. Her initial success stimulated her motivation to keep up the good work as well as giving her the feeling that she’s really making a difference.

- I have been a member of a rowing club on the Thames for several years. Soon after joining the club I took part in a competition called a scratch regatta. On the day of the regatta the names of each crew were picked out of a hat, mixing together novice and experienced rowers. I rowed with three other people of varying abilities. On winning the first race we felt great. Then we went on to win the second and third rounds and make it into the final. When we went over the finishing line first I was elated. I can still remember how excited I felt receiving the trophy, and how motivated I felt to keep up my rowing. What motivated me was a combination of three factors: enjoying the team work, winning the competition, and receiving the trophy. That motivation has stayed with me ever since!

You can also be motivated because of the consequences of not doing something. For example, the fear of a financial penalty through missing the deadline for your tax return motivates you to complete it on time. Or, the humiliation at not being able to wear your favourite outfits because you have put on a lot of weight motivates you to join a slimming club.

Motivation is the force driving you forward to make a change, for example, toward a goal (looking fit and healthy), or away from something you want to change (being overweight and unfit).
Knowing How to Maintain Motivation

Understanding what factors keep you motivated is important to achieving your goal. The factors can differ from one person to another. Specific factors motivating you may include the following:

- Your desire for order motivates you to clear your desk and file away your old papers.
- Keeping up with your mates on the football pitch at the weekend motivates you to keep fit.

Different motivators for different people

On 31 January 2008, approximately 300,000 people in the UK were busy trying to file their self-assessment tax returns online, having known about this deadline since 5 April 2007, but choosing to leave filling in their tax returns until the last possible moment. Many people worked throughout the night to beat the deadline and avoid a financial penalty. The sheer volume of users of the system that night caused the system to fail, and 100,000 returns couldn’t be submitted! The Government had to extend the deadline by 24 hours in order to get the computer system up and running again. The moral of this story: plan well in advance!

In this instance the fear of the financial penalty was a poor motivator, as many people missed the deadline. A more positive motivator could have been the offer of a rebate of £200 for anyone completing the return early. HM Revenue & Customs now actually use this approach, offering individuals a £150 incentive for completing their self-assessment tax forms online rather than by using traditional paper copies.

In January 2008, a relatively unknown English non-league football club, Havant and Waterlooville, won their FA Cup competition game unexpectedly. This gave them the chance of a lifetime to play against Liverpool, a premier league football team, in the Liverpool stadium. Liverpool had won the European Cup more times than any other English side and had several world-class players in their team. In contrast, the Havant and Waterlooville team was made up of part-time players having day jobs such as electricians and plumbers.

The day Havant and Waterlooville went to Liverpool was no different for them than for Liverpool. Havant and Waterlooville were defeated, but had a very respectable 5:2 score and received a standing ovation at the end of the game from the Liverpool players and the 42,000 spectators. Havant and Waterlooville had played better than anyone could’ve imagined.

The support Havant and Waterlooville received that day from their own 6,000 fans at Liverpool, and their sense of achievement from playing there, will, I am sure, stay with each player for the rest of their lives and motivate them in their future careers. Havant and Waterlooville’s team success has to be a powerful motivating factor for budding football players striving to achieve their dreams.
The personal satisfaction a sports coach gets from seeing a dramatic improvement in a player’s game motivates the coach to keep up the good work.

A manager is motivated to encourage and applaud his team more often after seeing the glow on the face of a team member receiving praise from a client.

On a recent holiday to Europe, I had a relaxing time people-watching. People were strolling around apparently motivated to be out of doors by the warm sunshine and brilliant blue sky. I noticed women shopping and drinking coffee together in a calm, relaxed manner, obviously enjoying each other’s company. People sat in the parks reading and breathing in the fresh air. Children played happily, busy exploring their surroundings. The shops closed in the afternoon, allowing people to take a long lunch followed by a siesta before returning to work in the early evening. Everyone seemed relaxed, happy, and motivated while going about their daily business.

Being caught up in the rush hour in London on a cold and wet winter’s day made a startling contrast. I noticed everyone was rushing and pushing to get to the head of the line. Strain and pressure were etched on long faces. People appeared to be motivated to get home as quickly as possible, rather than slowing down and enjoying their surroundings.

Recognising How Motivation Helps You

Feeling motivated can improve your health and have a positive effect on your family and relationships. The more motivated you feel, the greater your energy and enthusiasm for getting on with your everyday activities.

Being motivated helps you to take on tasks, reach targets, meet deadlines, complete projects, and achieve your goals. Reaching a goal can motivate you to achieve even more, creating a positive cumulative effect.

Here are some benefits of motivation:

- **Being part of a group:** You can feel motivated simply by being part of a group or team. The group can be a family unit, work colleagues, a sports team, or the group of friends you socialise with. Being in a group provides support, allowing you to talk about problems, give and receive encouragement and friendship.

- **Being on your own:** You may be motivated to work alone on a task to satisfy your creativity or need time to reflect without distractions from others.
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- **Being inspired by role models:** Having a role model can be inspiring and motivating. For example, a sports star can motivate you to improve your performance. (For more on the importance of role models, see the sidebar ‘How role models can make a difference’.)

- **Being in control:** Motivation gives you the sense of being in control. When you're motivated, you quickly understand what the task involves, how to set about it, and when to start. Solving problems is easier the more motivated you are. Rather than a problem being a barrier, you have the confidence and motivation to see past the problem and discover alternatives.

  The more motivated you are, the more prepared you are to face a challenge, rather than giving up at the first hurdle.

- **Passing motivation onto others:** When you’re motivated, you pass on your positive feeling to those around you, making other people feel inspired and motivated. Conversely, if you feel unmotivated, people around you may detect your lack of motivation and apathy, affecting the way they respond to you.

While writing this book, I discussed the subject of motivation with as many different people as possible to get an insight into their experiences. After talking about motivation to one particular friend, I discovered that she now feels more motivated to work through tasks that have been piling up for several months – if not years! She analysed what motivated her at a subconscious level and the personal barriers that were keeping her unmotivated. After getting to grips with her outstanding jobs, she felt good in herself, and motivated to achieve even more.

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**How role models can make a difference**

A TV series called *Make Your Child Brilliant* showed how people can have a strong motivating effect on young children, especially when a hidden talent is identified and harnessed. The education guru Bernadette Tynan was on the show, focusing on finding the hidden talents in children.

In one particular show an 11-year-old girl called Molly was given ‘brain-training’ techniques to help her carry out the challenge of making a presentation to a large group of people. Molly worked closely with Bernadette Tynan and her parents on a variety of techniques to give her the confidence and the skills she needed. Molly had to do her own research, choose her props, and deliver a story about the complexities of marine life and evolution.

On the day of the presentation, Molly stood before her audience of over 120 people, speaking confidently into the microphone without notes and using her props effectively. Her presentation was superb and she outshone many people twice her age. She had been motivated by the support of Bernadette and her parents to tackle this daunting challenge, while acquiring a variety of ‘brain-training’ techniques that she would be able to use throughout her life.
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Identifying the Barriers

Barriers can slow down your motivation or even put a stop on your actions completely. Recognising the barriers is the first step to overcoming them.

For example, one of my friends kept on putting off tackling her backlog of tasks because she was only motivated to get down to them on days when she had no fixed appointments or commitments. But finding a clear day was creating a barrier. She had tried squeezing the various tasks on her to-do list into the odd hour between meetings and appointments but without success. Then she hit on the idea of rearranging her diary to fit her meetings into the one day, thereby freeing up the other days for other important tasks. Having the luxury of a clear day without the pressure of meetings motivated her into dealing swiftly with her backlog.

Once my friend faced up to her barrier she was able to move forward. She was now motivated to:

- Book time with a DIY expert to fix the jobs around her home that had been piling up
- Find the courage to pick up the phone to contact people she’d previously been making excuses not to call
- Plan time in her diary for regular exercise and stick firmly to it

A variety of barriers can affect your motivation:

- **Distractions:** Being inundated with emails, meetings, and interruptions from people can affect how motivated you feel, both positively and negatively.

**Coming alive when talking about your favourite subject**

A friend’s son is studying physics at university. He’s not the most communicative person I know and sometimes it’s quite difficult to know what he’s thinking or to get him to say much at all. That is until he gets talking about physics! He then comes alive and talks non-stop – motivated by the complexities of the subject that leaves many of us behind. His usual lack of confidence disappears when he’s speaking on a subject he’s passionate about.
Family commitments: Having family commitments, such as caring for an elderly relative, can be difficult and demotivating, stopping you putting time aside for yourself and your tasks.

Finances: Shortage of money can affect your motivation to do something if you feel you can’t afford it. However, a financial reward for completing a task is a big motivating factor. And the opportunity of earning more money can motivate you into changing your career path.

Home environment: Your home environment can have a demotivating effect (see Chapter 4). Living in an untidy, cluttered, disorganised working space can act as a barrier to getting yourself motivated for action.

Illness or poor health: When you’re ill, your energy is reduced and it’s harder to feel motivated to do the jobs you need to do. Being patient and giving yourself time to get over your illness may be necessary to restore you to full health and feeling fully motivated again.

Keeping to rigid rules or procedures: Some employees may lack motivation if red tape, rules, and procedures stop them being creative. Conversely, some employees need rules and procedures to create boundaries in which they feel comfortable working.

Employers beware! Find out what motivates your staff and whether too many boundaries or too few could be stifling motivation and creativity.

Lack of support: Lack of support from colleagues or friends can act as a barrier, taking away your enthusiasm to tackle certain tasks.

Timing: You can feel more motivated at certain times of the year, for example at New Year, in the spring, or when you’re going on holiday. Some people are motivated to work harder in the mornings rather than later in the day. Their body clock is programmed to give them more energy at certain times.

Weather conditions: You can easily feel a lack of motivation to go out for a walk when the weather is cold, wet, and windy. In contrast, on a hot, sunny day you may find it harder to feel motivated to work when you would prefer to be outdoors.

For example, a manager on a recent course I ran described how he regularly received 250 to 300 emails a day. This distracted him from his day-to-day responsibilities and he decided to put in place a clear procedure to stop himself feeling overwhelmed and to maintain his motivation for his job. He prioritised his emails, flagging up the urgent ones and taking action and deleting others at certain times of the day, giving himself the time to focus on the demands of his job and worldwide responsibilities. By sticking to his plan, the sheer volume of emails was managed, allowing him to work productively.
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Looking Into Your Brain or Body for Answers

Your mind holds the answers to many of life’s mysteries and secrets. The psychology of motivation looks into your inner feelings and internal state, driving you forward to feel motivated, or stopping you in your tracks.

What’s going on in your mind is often expressed through the actions of your body. If you feel motivated or demotivated inside, your body reacts accordingly on the outside. For example, you display signs of happiness and pleasure when doing something enjoyable, or blind panic when you know you have to do something you dread.

Try visualising that feeling of motivation within your body as if it is a freely flowing stream, an athlete performing at the height of his abilities, or driving a car on a road without any traffic.

What motivation feels like

You can experience the feeling of motivation in a variety of ways. Some people describe motivation as feeling good, being propelled into action, and

Giving up smoking. . . or not

Jayne was getting on really well with her no-smoking campaign. She had felt motivated to give up smoking after a friend fell seriously ill. From that point Jayne vowed to become a non-smoker. She’d managed without a cigarette for nearly three months.

Then Jayne unexpectedly lost her job. She felt very unhappy and wasn’t sure where to look for a new job. The security her job gave her, and the support from her colleagues, kept her motivated in her no-smoking campaign. After losing her job, she lost direction. Feeling low, she comforted herself with a cigarette. Within a couple of days, she was back to smoking regularly again. She had lost the motivation to continue her no-smoking campaign.

When Jayne smoked, it gave her a feeling of security and the ability to deal with anxiety. When she gave up smoking, she replaced this positive by-product with the support from her colleagues and the security from her job. On losing her job, Jayne quite naturally went back to smoking.
happy to tackle more. Other people actually sense or feel motivation within their body, almost as if they can touch the very spot that feels motivated. A friend usually feels motivation around the centre of her body. Other people experience motivation from how they behave. Your feeling of motivation can be similar to a well-balanced car: well tuned and firing on all cylinders.

Equally, a feeling of being unbalanced, disharmony, or fear can motivate you into action.

If you have difficulty experiencing what it feels like to be motivated, picture a party balloon soaring into the sky with the wind taking it higher and higher. Motivation can give you that same kind of feeling inside your body and a sense of elation.

Some people enjoy the feeling of motivation from actually doing the task, others from achieving the end result. For example, your love of gardening motivates you to go outside and get digging. Or, your motivation may come from imagining beautifully mown lawns and neat borders after the work is done.

An acquaintance told me that feeling motivated was like adrenaline pumping through his body, a bubbling sense of excitement as he progressed toward his goal. Another person described how she once experienced motivation as the sensation of tiny involuntary shaking movements throughout her body, a bit like pins and needles.

On the other side of the coin, feelings of demotivation can be explored by tuning into your body to find answers to make you feel motivated again.

The motivating effect of an extreme challenge

A TV programme called *Extreme Survival* took a number of ordinary people away from their normal lives on a trip through the Ugandan rainforest and jungle, before tackling a tough climb up Mount Baker. The climb, involving ascending over 15,000 feet, was an astonishing challenge for the participants because none of them had ever climbed before, let alone experienced climbing in very demanding conditions and coping with the effects of altitude. The elation one of the climbers felt when she reached the top of Mount Baker was written all over her face, showing how proud she was, having proved to herself that she could reach such dizzy heights. Another participant who was, in his own words, a very unhealthy, overweight, and unfit taxi driver, on reaching the summit said he felt such an adrenaline buzz and sense of elation that he was motivated to leave his old unhealthy life behind.

The expedition proved to be highly motivating for all the participants. Having conquered the summit of the mountain, they had an immense sense of achievement, giving them a new lease of life, and motivating them to approach their lives from then on in a positive way.
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Watching for signs of demotivation

Facial expressions can signal what and how a person is feeling. You may notice a lack of energy or enthusiasm, or the person who’s usually lively and communicative is suddenly withdrawn and quiet. The colour of a person’s skin can also act as a clue. If someone is feeling demotivated, the skin can look pale, as if all the colour is draining out of his face.

Feelings of demotivation can also be expressed by how your body is reacting. Energy levels appear low, the person seems lethargic and lacks get up and go.

Signs and symptoms of demotivation and feeling off-balance can include the following:

- Not sleeping well
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Illness
- Irritability
- Being uncommunicative
- Feeling under pressure
- Finding barriers or obstacles to situations

Turning demotivation into a plan

A colleague was concerned about Anna, a member of his team. He noticed that Anna wasn’t as jovial and happy around the office as usual. Her facial expression showed a lack of enthusiasm when he discussed forthcoming projects with her. After watching Anna’s behaviour for a couple of weeks, my colleague took the time to talk to her privately to find out what was behind her lack of motivation.

As he listened to Anna describing the last few weeks, he discovered that a new member of the team lay at the heart of Anna’s problem. The new team member had been spending a lot of time with Anna being trained, needing her to explain procedures and constantly interrupting Anna throughout her working day. Anna was struggling to get her own work done, but also wanted to help her new team member.

As Anna talked through her situation, she solved the problem herself by deciding to set aside certain times of each day to train the new employee. This gave Anna the time to work on her own projects without interruption. After the conversation with my colleague, Anna felt much more positive. She worked out a solution herself but, most importantly, had regained her sense of motivation and enjoyment in her job. This fact was evident from her facial expressions because she went back to looking her cheerful and happy self.
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Your inner voice frequently tells you what you need to change to get back on track and feel motivated again.

Tune into your body to discover what motivates you. When you feel motivated, look at how your body is reacting. Enjoy the sensation and allow that feeling to move you forward to your next project or task.