

# Finding Your Motivation

Understanding what motivates you can be challenging and requires intentional self-reflection about your beliefs. We all behave in ways that conform to our beliefs about ourselves – if you believe you are a good student, you will act in ways that confirm that belief (studying for exams, taking notes in class, etc.). Thus, our motivation is the result of our beliefs about ourselves.

## Defining Your “Why”

Your “why” is your purpose, or the reason for your actions. When thinking about your own “why,” it may be helpful to consider the following:

- What are my big-picture goals?
- How do I define success?
- What are some things I value?
- What brings me joy?
- What kind of person do I want to be?

Reflect on these questions, then draft your “why”:

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*Consider writing your final statement somewhere you will see it daily (a sticky note on your mirror, background on your phone, etc.)*

**Identity-Based Habits:** “Many people begin the process of changing their habits by focusing on what they *want* to achieve. This leads us to outcome-based habits. The alternative is to build identity-based habits. With this approach, we start by focusing on who we wish to become.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clear, James. *Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results : An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. New York, New York: Avery, 2018.

## Remembering Your Wins

Visualization can be a helpful tool for finding motivation. Take a moment to close your eyes and really picture living out your “why.” *What does this look and feel like?*

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Additionally, reflecting on your strengths and past successes can help you understand what motivates you.

*When have you been successful in the past? What motivated you in this experience?*

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## Identifying Your Obstacles

Despite our best intentions, we often find it difficult to live our “why” due to two types of obstacles – external and internal. Consider the examples, then identify your own in the space below.

<i>External Obstacles</i>	<i>Internal Obstacles</i>
“I don’t have the resources I need.”	“I don’t think my effort will make a difference.”
“I can’t find enough time to do everything!”	“This class isn’t relevant to what I want to do.”
“I would rather spend time playing video games.”	“I am afraid to fail, so I just won’t try.”

## Creating Your Plan

Once you have identified your external and internal obstacles, it’s time to plan to overcome them!

Consider the following strategies for overcoming both types of obstacles:

- Reframe the obstacle as a challenge to overcome or puzzle to solve.
- Identify what is in your control and what is not.
- Be realistic about your own capacity.
- Consider if this external obstacle is an internal obstacle.
- Create better narratives about your past successes and failures.
- Find connections back to your “why.”
- Name your fears to reduce their power.
- Pay attention to how you talk to yourself and choose to speak kindlier.

What strategy could you use to overcome your external and internal obstacles?

Creating a contingency plan is a helpful way to overcome obstacles. This simple “if, then” statement asks you to identify what specific action you will take when an obstacle occurs. For example, “If I want to hang with my friends when I need to study, then I will read over and reflect on my ‘why’ statement.”

“If \_\_\_\_\_,  
then \_\_\_\_\_.”

Finally, your plan should go beyond just overcoming obstacles to taking positive steps towards your why. Start small by identifying three steps you could take this week to bring you closer to your “why.” Consider using the [Setting SMART Goals Success Strategy](#) to write your goals.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Sustained Success:** “Changing your beliefs isn’t nearly as hard as you might think. There are two steps: 1. Decide the type of person you want to be. 2. Prove it to yourself with small wins.”<sup>1</sup>