Student Wellness Services

Motivation & Time Management

Wellness Workshops

2023
We gratefully acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes:

the **Blackfoot Confederacy** (the **Siksika**, **Piikani**, and **Kainai First Nations**), the **Tsuut’ina First Nation**, the **Stoney Nakoda** (the **Chiniki**, **Bearspaw**, and **Goodstoney First Nations**), and **Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III**.

The University of Calgary is situated on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is “**Moh’kins’tsis**.”
Objectives

• Learn more about the nature of motivation and avoidance.

• Develop a better understanding of your motivation and task initiation habits.

• Learn strategies and tools to increase motivation and improve time management.
Motivation and Learning

• Motivation is not a resource or an emotion – it is a response to stimuli

• Motivation helps us to do one of two things:
  • Maximize a predicted reward (ie. Earn a scholarship)
  • Minimize a predicted threat (ie. Pass a key exam)

• Mastery vs. Performance
  • Research shows that we are motivated to learn either to achieve mastery (to master materials & develop personal competence) or performance (to perform well in comparison to others)
  • Performance-related motivation is more effective in the short term, mastery-related motivation more effective in the long term
Rinse and Repeat

I'll do it later.

...but I'm in the wrong mood to do it well.

Ugh, I'm being so unproductive.

Maybe I should try starting this task...

SU Wellness Centre
Intrinsic vs Extrinsic Motivation

• **Intrinsic**
  - “Spontaneous tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one’s capacity, to explore, and to learn, even in the absence of operationally separable rewards” (Domenico & Ryan)
  - Motivated by personal interest, enjoyment

• **Extrinsic**
  - Prompted to act by external stimuli
  - Examples: a deadline, expectations from others (real or perceived), financial reward
Motivation leads to Action But in fact Action leads to Motivation leads to Action (Kearns & Gardiner, 2009)
What factors contribute to low motivation and avoidance?
Factors that contribute to low motivation/avoidance

- Stress/burn-out
- Overwhelm – too many tasks to do at once
- Fear of failure
- Distractions & difficulty with focus
- Not knowing where or how to start
- Finding the task boring
- Not seeing the value of the task
Procrastination or Overwhelm?

- Procrastination is not about laziness or lack of competency – it is an **avoidance** technique – avoiding an unpleasant, boring, or overwhelming task helps us feel like we are avoiding the negative emotions that come with these tasks.
  - People who have difficulty starting a task tend to **underestimate** time required to complete a task (McCown, 1986).
Procrastination or Overwhelm?

- **Overwhelm** is not the same as procrastination. Overwhelm can feel like we are frozen and make it feel almost impossible to start doing something.
- It can be difficult to start a project or assignment if you don't have a clear understanding of:
  - what **ALL** the individual tasks are to accomplish it
  - what order each task needs to be done in
  - how much time you need AND have available to do each task

- People who have difficulty starting a task tend to **underestimate** time required to complete a task (McCown, 1986)
Strategies and Tools
Strategies and Tools

1. Avoidance Log
2. Challenging Perfectionism
3. Urgent-Important Matrix
4. 5-Minute Rule
5. The Pomodoro Method

Build Awareness

Take Action
Build Awareness: Avoidance Log

• What am I delaying?
• What feelings contribute to delaying on this?
• What thoughts contribute to delaying on this?
• How did I rationalize continuing to delay?
• What was the outcome?
• What can I do to not delay in this area?

(Knaus, 2006)
• **Perfectionism IS:**
  • “the compulsive need to achieve and accomplish one’s goals, with no allowance for falling short of one’s ideals” (Neff, 2011).
  • aimed at minimizing or avoiding feeling of **blame, judgment, and shame**
  • protective; **shields self-esteem** from any vulnerability
  • other-focused – seeking approval and acceptance

• **Perfectionism is NOT:**
  • the same as striving to be your best
  • self-improvement
The 5-Minute Rule

• Tell yourself you only need to work on the task for **five minutes**. Set a timer.

• If, after 5 minutes, the task is so horrible that you must stop, allow yourself to stop.

• Most people will find that after five minutes of doing a task, it is easy to continue – **starting is the most difficult part**. Only committing to five minutes makes starting easier, and starting makes finishing easier!

Alternate option:

• If it is still difficult to continue after 5 minutes, you can instead do repeated sets of 5 minutes working, followed by 5 minutes of a break. Repeat as needed.
Motivation vs Discipline
The Pomodoro Method

**WHAT IS THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE?**

A method for staying focused and mentally fresh

**STEP 1**  
Pick a task

**STEP 2**  
Set a 25-minute timer

**STEP 3**  
Work on your task until the time is up

**STEP 4**  
Take a 5 minute break

**STEP 5**  
Every 4 pomodoros, take a longer 15-30 minute break

https://todoist.com/productivity-methods/pomodoro-technique
Strategic delay entails deliberately putting off a task to generate time pressure as a source of motivation.

But what happens when you run out of time?

“Procrastination may be the enemy of productivity, but it can be a resource for creativity.” - Adam Grant
Modifying the Pomodoro Technique

• **Experiment with the length of your pomodoros.**
  • For tasks you are particularly dreading, 25 minutes may seem too long
  • For longer, more complicated tasks, consider 45 or 60 minute pomodoros (and longer breaks!)

• **Use your breaks wisely.**
  • If you’re working on screens, try stepping away from screens for your 5-minute interval
  • Fresh air, movement, and hydration help to improve focus

• **Break down complex projects**
  • If a task will take more than 4 pomodoros it should be broken into smaller, actionable steps (ie. **Write entire paper** -> **Complete citations for paper**)
Other Time Management Tips

• Work around your natural energy cycles (when you are most alert)

• Poke holes in a project by using small bits of time rather than waiting for a large available chunk of time (Alan Lakein’s Swiss Cheese method)

• Delegate where possible

• No Zero Days
Technology can be your friend

StayFocud
Offered by: Transfusion Media
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/stayfocud-block-distract/laankejkbhbdhmipmgcngdelahlfoji

Productivity Owl
Offered by: mrieck
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/productivity-owl/eoagmboiealbimpaahjihajggndaahi

Forest:
stay focused, be present
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/forest-stay-focused-be-pr/kjacjdnoddnpbcjilcajfhbbdhkpgk

Marinara:
Pomodoro® Assistant
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/marinara-pomodoro%20assist/lojgmehidjdhhbmfamhpdpodcdef

Strict Workflow
Offered by: Matchu
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/strict-workflow/cgmnfnmlficgeijcalkggnkigkefkbd
Getting Help from Others

On-Campus Resources

Student Wellness Services
www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services

Student Success Centre (3rd floor TFDL)
www.ucalgary.ca/ssc

Program Advising
www.ucalgary.ca/registration/resources/program-advising
Getting Help from Others

On-Campus Resources
Student Wellness Services (403) 210-9355
www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services

You may book an appointment for:

• Counselling
• Student Support Advising
• Neurodiversity Support Advising
• Harm Reduction
Thank you! Any questions?
References


