

Wellness Lifestyle / Health & Wellness

The best ways to stay motivated, from setting daily goals to talking yourself into a positive frame of mind – Hong Kong experts' tips

Whatever you want to achieve, motivation plays a critical role in determining your success or failure. Find out what's been keeping you stuck and pick up a few tips from experts to increase your drive

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Many of us have experienced a lack of motivation at some point or another. We might set out to perform a task, but midway through or before we even start, we lose our enthusiasm to see it through, and so the task doesn't get done or gets shelved for another day.

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Amanda Chia knows this feeling all too well. The 42-year-old graphic designer, who is self-employed, says that it's hard staying motivated during office hours, especially on days when she has a lot on her plate.

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"Running a solo business out of a small office at home, I tend to get distracted, and often during the busiest periods," she says. "I'll look at all the work I have to do and feel overwhelmed, or I'll start doing it but then get distracted by emails or social media. I'm not sure why I feel unmotivated at times; I don't know how much of it has to do with the fact that I work at home. But it does affect my productivity."

Imagine how much more we would accomplish if only we felt more driven. But knowing how to drum up motivation is just one piece of the puzzle.

According to experts, motivation is the desire to do things coupled with the feeling that you have a reason to achieve your goals. If you know your purpose for performing a task, the motivation tends to come more easily.

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“‘Motivation’ stems from ‘motive’, which is our ‘reason to move,’” says Angela Spaxman, a Hong Kong-based career and executive coach. “Our motivation is the sum of our reasons, conscious or unconscious, for doing anything.”



Feeling unmotivated at your workplace is a common issue for many people. Photo: Shutterstock

Quratulain Zaidi, a clinical psychologist at Mind N Life in Hong Kong's Central business district, notes there are two main types of motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to actions or behaviour driven by internal gratification – in other words, tasks that are naturally satisfying to us. Extrinsic motivation refers to actions that are done for the sake of some external reward or outcome, such as for money, fame, recognition, or praise.



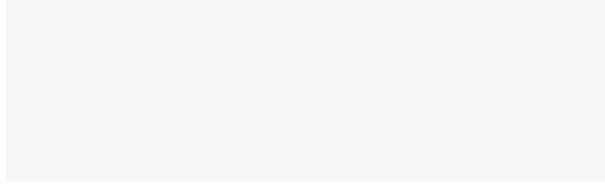
Many of us fool ourselves about what we want
and why we want it

— Angela Spaxman

“Both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are big factors in driving behaviour in different situations,” says Zaidi.

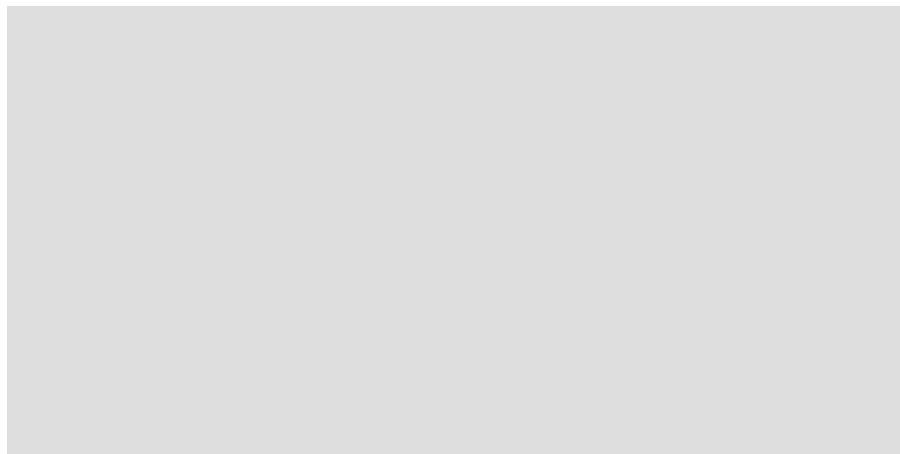
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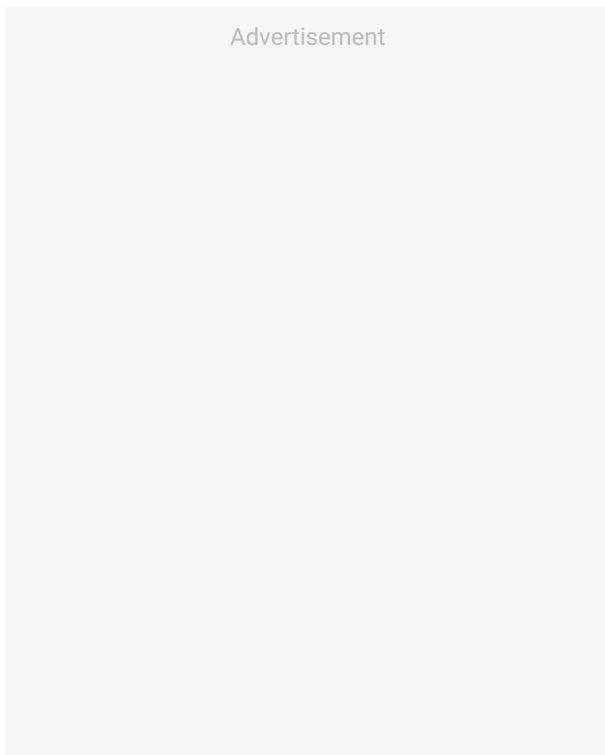


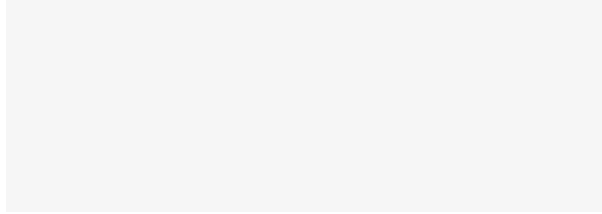
Motivation is important when it comes to achieving our goals. When we are motivated to get things done, we are more productive. (According to Zaidi, studies have shown that motivated employees are inclined to be more productive than non-motivated employees.)

But what sets motivated folks apart from people who struggle to feel motivated? How is it that some people can just do what they need to do, while others stall or procrastinate?



Amanda Chia, a 42-year-old graphic designer.





People who are motivated are able to identify and set goals for themselves, Zaidi says. They also know how to prioritise their tasks and are persistent when it comes to working towards their goal. In addition, they are resilient and capable of overcoming setbacks. For them, the journey is just as important as the outcome.

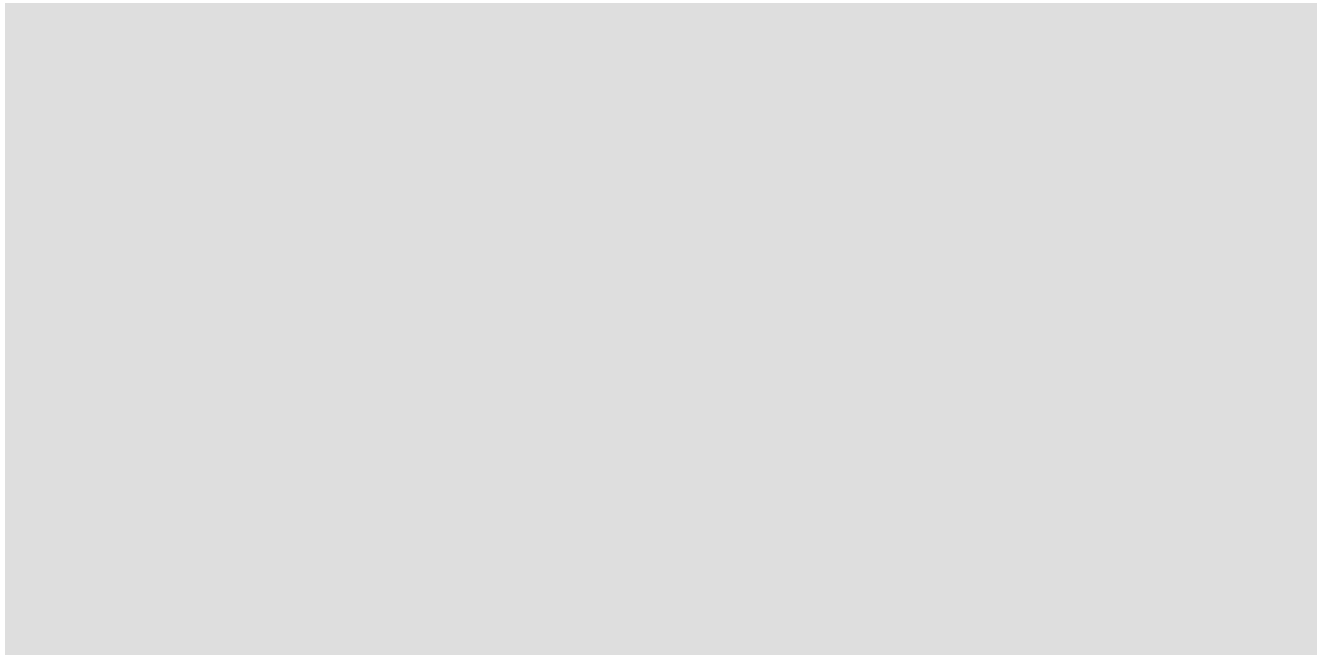
“Their actions are not externally motivated, so for example, they don’t do something just to please others. Instead, they do it because it’s important to them and they want to achieve that goal for themselves. They’re intrinsically motivated.”

Sometimes, we may not feel motivated to do something because there is a sense of fear or dread attached to the process or outcome. For instance, you might hesitate to start a project because you are afraid of making a mistake. In this case, Spaxman says, fear is the motivating factor for avoiding the task. You may also wonder about the point in performing a task that is unpleasant or that will not fulfil your needs.

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People who are motivated are happier and able to set goals for themselves. Photo: Shutterstock

“People who are motivated to do things are aligned with whatever makes them want to do those tasks or activities and achieve their goals,” Spaxman continues. “They also know how to meet their own needs efficiently so that they don’t distract from their motivations.”

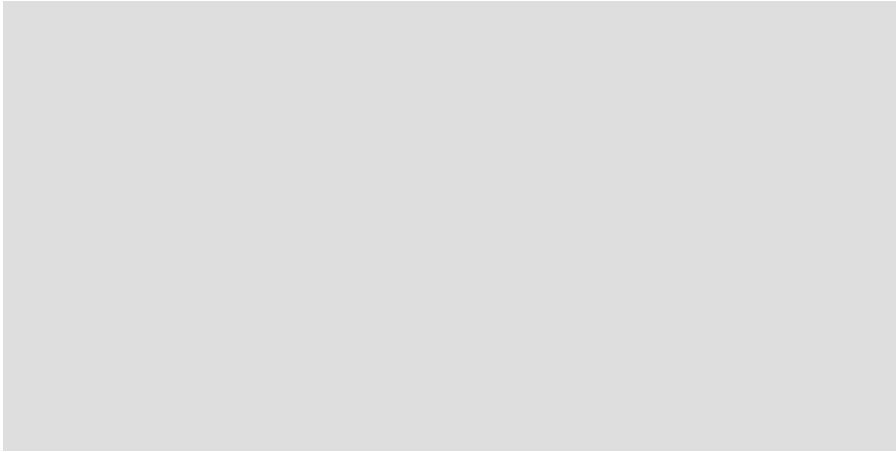
Whether you are trying to lose weight, run a marathon, earn a degree, or accomplish some other type of goal, motivation is crucial in your overall success or failure.

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When we lose our motivation, we tend to procrastinate and lose our desire to achieve. In turn, this can result in a lack of achievement and the feeling that we’re living

unfulfilled lives. If you struggle to feel motivated, it is important to address the problem and come up with solutions for it.



Quratulain Zaidi is a clinical psychologist at Mind N Life in Central.

Spaxman suggests going over all the things you need to do. Look at each item and ask what your intrinsic motivation is for completing each one, and then structure your life accordingly. For example, if you know you must work out daily to stay fit, but never feel motivated enough to step into the gym, ask yourself why it is important for you to be fit in the first place. Do you want to look and feel a certain way? Do you want to have more energy or stave off disease?

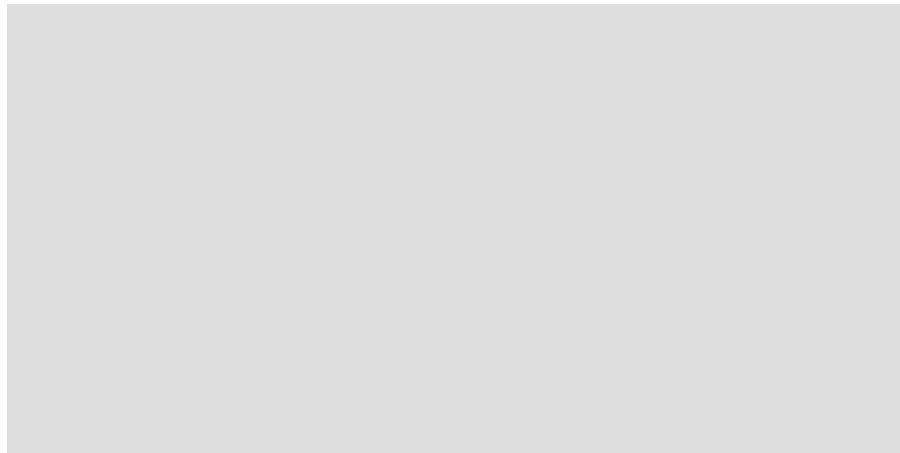
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Next, Spaxman says to think about what would motivate you intrinsically to help you achieve your fitness goals. For instance, some people are naturally competitive and motivated by winning. What might get them to the gym every day is declaring that they want to lose a certain number of kilograms. On the other hand, people who are socially motivated could try exercising with their friends.

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This would give them a sense of satisfaction and make them more likely to stick to their exercise routine.

“Many of us fool ourselves about what we want and why we want it,” says Spaxman. “That’s why it’s so important to be honest with yourself about the motivations behind your goals. At the same time, it’s wise to remember that our motivations exist on many levels and are changing all the time throughout the day.”



Angela Spaxman is a Hong Kong-based career and executive coach.

If you struggle to feel motivated because you work from home, how about taking the job somewhere else? Jens Nielsen, co-founder of a tech company, says the nature of his work is such that he could easily work from home. Instead, he opted for a co-working space at Naked Hub, an Asian network of co-working spaces, which has Hong Kong branches on Bonham Strand in Sheung Wan and New Street in Sai Ying Pun.