**Maintaining Motivation throughout the Student Life Cycle**

You have started your new degree program. Now the task of staying the course and continuing until graduation is ahead of you. A degree program can often be a daunting and seemingly insurmountable goal. There are many ways you can actively stay engaged in your program in order to stay the course and complete your degree.

Dan Pink discusses motivation in his Ted Talk [The Puzzle of Motivation](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_get_through_the_work_week). This is a great place to start thinking about what motivates us and how we can look beyond incentives as a way to stimulate productivity.

* Find your intrinsic motivation: the desire to do things because they matter, are interesting to you and are part of something important.
* There are three important elements to distinguish intrinsic motivation:
  + Autonomy: Urge to direct our own lives.
  + Mastery: The desire to get better at something that matters.
  + Purpose: The yearning to do what we are doing in the service of something bigger than we are.
* Think seriously about why you are completing your academic program. What goals do you hope to accomplish because of earning your degree? How can you infuse intrinsic motivation when thinking about your career and academic goals?

**Incorporating Motivation into your Academic Life**:

* **Get Connected:** Join a student club or organization. Start a study group. Connect with faculty, staff and your peers. The more connected and engaged a student is with the university as a whole, the more likely they are to complete their program of study.
* **Do not be afraid to jump in feet first**: Start with the hardest assignment first! Tackle the longest reading before you do anything else. Procrastination can be the biggest killer of motivation. When creating a “To Do” list, assess which tasks are the hardest and most difficult and make a plan to complete them first. It is much easier to squeeze in easier, less-complicated assignments in the smaller chunks of time left in your schedule. This same theory applies to registration and course choice. Do not leave the most difficult course in your program until the end (unless required).
* **Keep your “why” at the forefront**: It is important to recognize why you are completing your degree and why you have chosen this particular career pathway. Remind yourself of your “why” every single term. It can be helpful to write down your “why” and pull it out as a motivator when times are difficult.
* **Set small, achievable goals**: Sometimes the larger overarching goal of completing a degree program can be overwhelming. Try to set smaller, attainable goals that can be completed and celebrated along the way. For example, if you have a 36-credit program, try to celebrate the completion of every 9-credits.
* **Set realistic expectations:** Students tend to be excited at the beginning of their programs. That excitement naturally decreases over time and it can become harder to stay motivated. Being prepared for lulls in motivation is a great place to start.
* **Create Strong Support System:** Sharing your “why” with those closest to you will ensure they understand your commitment and motivation. Leverage your support system when motivation is lacking. Contact a fellow student for moral. Connect with your Student Success Coach to discuss available resources. Work with your partner to ensure you work out issues like childcare, study space and routine ahead of time.
* **Maintain Self-Care Routine:** Making sure you are taking time for yourself is critical for busy students. Ensure you schedule self-care every single day, even if it is just for 20-minutes. Getting enough sleep, eating well and getting regular exercise all fall under this category.
* **Avoid letting past experiences impact you negatively**: It is easy to let self-doubt creep in and affect motivation and sense of self-worth. Previous academic weaknesses or even length of time since last educational experience can influence a student's confidence level. Try to remember this is a new enrollment, fresh start and an opportunity to overcome any obstacles. Be honest with yourself about these feelings but try to highlight your successes and strengths at the same time. Putting things into perspective is important.
* **Be your own best advocate**: Ask questions when you have them. Make connections with faculty and staff so they can support you when needed. Do not be afraid to ask for help when you need it. There are so many resources available to CU-Denver students. Proactively reaching out for assistance ensures you are accessing critical resources as soon as possible.
* **Create a Routine**: Establishing a weekly study schedule and committing to sticking to it is one of the most important habits you can establish. Try to adhere to this schedule with little exception and manage other time commitments around it. The following link has some great scheduling templates: <https://www.scheduletemplate.org/study.html>.

Resources:

[Ted Talk: The Puzzle of Motivation](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation?referrer=playlist-talks_to_help_you_get_through_the_work_week)

[LinkedIn Learning: Motivating Yourself](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/search?keywords=motivation&u=42275329)