



STAYING MOTIVATED

*Motivation is what gets you started.
Habit is what keeps you going. ~ Jim Ryun*

Most people in recovery are extremely motivated to do whatever it takes to get sober, be healthier, get their life back, and feel better, at least in the beginning. As treatment professionals, we want to help clients sustain or regain that strong desire to change their lives. Sticking with something is often much harder than starting and “I’ll do whatever it takes,” can easily become “How little can I do and still get by?”

WHAT IS MOTIVATION?

Motivation is the reason a person acts a certain way. It implies there is an underlying reason for everything we do. According

to that simple definition, staying motivated to remain sober and get healthy should be as simple as remembering the reason you are doing this hard work in the first place.

What the definition does not consider are the many other subconscious, environmental, habitual, and social motivations competing with your primary reasons to stay sober.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT TO STAY IN RECOVERY

Most entering treatment are extremely motivated. This is made easier by the intense scrutiny and support received when entering treatment. Probation officers, drug and alcohol counselors, mental health counselors, family members, sober friends, an AA sponsor, and fellow clients all watch one's progress and encourage the effort being shown. The structured nature of a new environment is also helpful, along with limiting access to alcohol, drugs, money, and friends who use.

These are wonderful external sources of motivation. But it is absolutely critical the majority of motivation comes not from sources outside oneself, but from resources within.

MAINTAINING MOTIVATION

It is essential to keep your motivation to get and remain healthy at the forefront of your mind in establishing and maintaining long-term recovery. Consider the following common character and internal motivations to stay sober:

- Get my health back
- Save money
- Restore damaged relationships
- Raise my children
- Not feel out of control
- Be more focused on family relationships
- Be more emotionally present

- Have more energy
- Be more responsive to others and their needs
- Look and feel better
- Live with integrity
- Be honest
- Live according to personal values
- Become proud of who I am, how I live, and how others see me
- Restore trust with friends and family
- Feel more confident
- Manage my mental health
- Become a person filled with gratitude
- Live like I said I would
- Feel better spiritually
- Be responsible physically, sexually, and emotionally
- Be confident of my decisions and actions
- Become an inspiration to someone
- Worry less

CHOOSE AND COMMIT

As you examine the list above, perhaps you selected several internal motivators important to you. Find a way to commit them to memory and review them often. Keep your list in a prominent place so you see it frequently and can review it. Visual reminders of your primary motivators, such as a picture of the children you are committed to raise, may be helpful as well. You'll make changes in your life, not because you are forced to make them, but because you choose these changes and are committed to them.

A TIME TO REFLECT

1 As you reflect on your motivation levels, have you ever had trouble keeping your motivation, drive, and interest in recovery high?

2 What external supports could you use to help you stay in recovery?

3 Consider the list of internal motivations. Choose several motivators important to you and list them here.
