




A practical guide to

# *Motivation*

by Orthoplex

It always seems impossible until it's done  
- Nelson Mandela



Susie provides some excellent advice and suggestions on how to get motivated.

At True Medicine we support these methods and also provide high-grade quality supplements sometimes needed to help your body overcome the 'lows'.

Never self-prescribe. Always consult a qualified Naturopath for individualised assessment and quality products.



# About the Author

Susie Garden is a Brisbane-based Nutritionist and Yoga Teacher, specialising in women's health and the mind-body connection. She is passionate about inspiring people to improve their health through nourishing food, moving the body and mindfulness. Susie has over 20 years' experience in health, beginning her career as a Registered Nurse before moving into the corporate world where she held a variety of senior management roles in healthcare.

She left behind this successful career to study Nutritional Medicine after becoming burnt out from her high-stress corporate lifestyle. She is the founder of health and wellness blog "Head This Way", created to give people access to useful, well-researched information to improve their health holistically. Susie is a regular contributor to One Green Planet, and her work has been featured on numerous health blogs around the globe.



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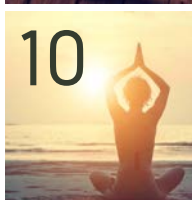
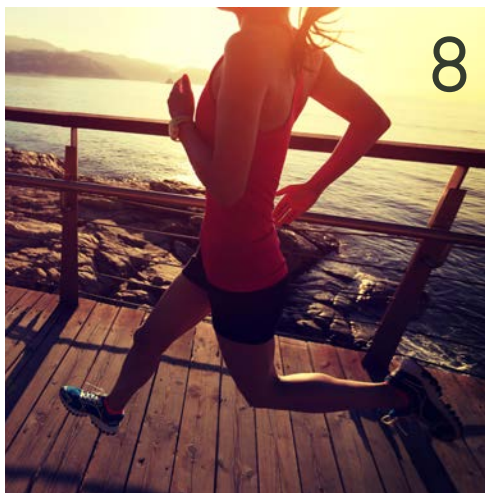
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# The Science of *Motivation:*

## Turning Challenge into a Reward

Some days, it's really hard to get motivated to do all the tasks we need to do in a day. This can be because we feel tired, overwhelmed or we just don't feel like it. Another possibility is that we've set up bad habits over a period of time, and these can be hard to break. There have been decades of scientific research into the motivation behind human and animal behaviour, and it all comes down to a very simple concept.

*We are motivated to take action when there is reward attached to it.*



This is the result of a biological process that occurs in both humans and animals. There is a naturally-produced chemical in our body called dopamine which is often referred to as the 'feel good' chemical, as it is released when we achieve or attain something and that makes us 'feel good'. This explains why we feel good when we buy something new, receive a gift or if our work is praised – it is actually a chemical reaction in our brains.

However, dopamine does much more than make us feel good. Recent studies have shown that dopamine acts in the brain before we make our move, and is responsible for motivating us to act - either to attain something we want, or to avoid pain or danger.



# *So how can we use this science to improve our own motivation and break out of bad habits?*

It is actually easier than you might think. Dopamine is made in our bodies using the amino acids from proteins, tyrosine, phenylalanine, along with vitamin B6. In a balanced diet, we receive these nutrients every day, but if the diet is not providing enough of these, then supplementation can help.

We can also help to generate dopamine in our brains by setting up small rewards when we approach a task. Any task can be broken down into small parts or goals, and each time you achieve a small goal, dopamine will be generated which will motivate you to continue. This can be as simple as deciding to spend just 10 minutes on a task, whether it's a household task or a work project. Let's face it, that is an achievable goal. You'll likely find that at the end of those 10 minutes and having achieved your goal, that you will feel more motivated to continue the task further.

It makes sense to break larger tasks or projects down into smaller goals and actually write these down so that you can cross them off when they are done. You can then see your progress and that will generate dopamine to make you feel good.



A person wearing a grey t-shirt and a grey cap is sitting on a reddish-brown cliff, looking out at a vast, greyish-blue ocean under a cloudy sky. The person is seen from behind, with their arms resting on their knees.

# *Unmotivated or Mentally Fatigued?*

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It can be difficult to work out whether you're unmotivated or mentally fatigued.

Mental fatigue occurs when you have been spending a lot of time doing mentally demanding tasks, such as studying or learning a lot of new information, taking on large workloads, or doing home-based activities such as balancing the family budget. These types of tasks can leave you feeling drained of energy. This links back to your dopamine levels, as they can be depleted during these times and, therefore, impact on the way you feel. This can lead to feeling unmotivated and can also affect memory function which is not ideal when you're trying to learn new information.

There are some actions you can take to support your motivation and energy levels, and this is particularly important when you are experiencing increased demands in your life.

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# Diet

Diet plays a huge part in generating your energy level. It can be that you're simply not consuming enough calories or not eating the right mix of nutrients every day, and therefore deficiencies may be present that need to be corrected. If you think your diet is inadequate, you should discuss this with your healthcare professional.



As you've learnt, there are certain nutrients that support dopamine production, and if motivation is an issue for you, then it may help to incorporate these foods into your diet. Foods such as almonds, eggs, fish, meats, avocado, pumpkin seeds, soy beans and bananas are great sources of tyrosine, phenylalanine and vitamin B6 which are necessary for dopamine to be made in your body.

Magnesium and Zinc are also needed to produce dopamine and you can find both of these minerals in whole grains, eggs, brewer's yeast, beef, lamb and sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Additional sources of Magnesium include leafy greens, almonds, soy beans and legumes, and you can also find Zinc in oysters, capsicum, seafood and ginger.



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# *Exercise*

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Exercise has been shown to improve energy levels and motivation.

It does not matter what type of exercise you do, whether it's aerobic exercise (such as jogging), resistance training (lifting weights) or yoga, these all release natural chemicals and hormones in your body which improve mood, motivation and energy levels.

All it takes is to actually get started, and that can be the hardest part.

You can make it easier to get motivated to exercise by using the

10-minute rule described in the Science of Motivation.

Commit to going for a walk or doing whatever exercise you have available to you for just 10 minutes. You'll most likely find that once you're doing it, you'll feel like continuing past the 10-minute mark and if not, don't worry. Just plan to do this every day and it'll become a good habit. Soon you'll begin to extend the time you want to do it.





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# *Sleep*

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Sleep plays a significant role in regaining energy in your body which in turn, impacts on your motivation. As well as the obvious benefits of sleep in relieving tiredness, sleep is also a regenerating time for your body.

Having even one night of poor sleep can impact your mood the next day, as well as the quality of your sleep the next night, and this can become a cycle if it isn't addressed.



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# *Stress*

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Stress is part of everyday life and we can learn to manage this, however it is during times of increased stress that motivation and energy levels can really be impacted.

When we are under pressure, increased stress hormones are released to help us cope, and some people find that they operate really well under pressure because of this. However, when this goes on for a prolonged period, other health issues can be triggered, such as fatigue, anxiety and mental health issues. It's best not to allow your body to get to this stage and to address what is causing the stress, or become better at managing your stress levels.

Using techniques such as exercise, meditation, yoga, breathing exercises and a whole foods diet with quality protein have all been shown to improve stress management and increase energy and motivation.





# *What are you depending on?*

to increase Energy and Motivation

Caffeine, energy drinks, energy bars, sugar and drugs are all substances that are tempting to use for a pick-me-up during the day or night. Short term, you may feel a benefit, but they don't address the longer term needs that your body may have. Some of these substances can be harmful if overused, and some can create dependency issues when used frequently, as your body adapts and relies on having these substances regularly. This can also lead to tolerance, where your body will need more of them to get the same effect.

Your healthcare practitioner can assess your needs and advise you on safe, long term solutions to improve your energy and motivation.

# *Real World Strategies*

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We cannot solve our problems with the same  
thinking we used when we created them  
- Albert Einstein





# Breaking Old Habits

Habits are built over time, and it can take time to change your behaviour and build new, more constructive habits. To change habits, be very clear on what you are wanting to achieve, and what this new habit or way of doing things is going to involve. It helps to actually write this down so that you can see it. Once you have decided on this, set yourself up for success by making sure you have everything you need to make this work and be prepared to work at it for at least 6-8 weeks for it to become a new habit.

For example, if your new habit is to be more time efficient by only working on emails at certain times of the day, say for 30 minutes when you first start work, for 30 minutes prior to lunch and then 30 minutes towards the end of the day. Set yourself up by turning off your email notifications so that this doesn't tempt you, use a timer to make sure that you only spend your allocated time doing this task and schedule it in your diary. At the end of each day, reflect on the benefits of this new habit, or tweak it slightly to better meet your needs. Set a realistic time frame for it to become a habit for you. There is no set time period as each person's brain works differently, but expect it to take at least 6-8 weeks in order for your brain to assimilate it as your new habit.

This approach will work for pretty much any task, but it does require thought and commitment to see it through.



## Planning your day *for a Win*

How good would it be if every day felt satisfying and as though you'd achieved everything you wanted to accomplish? You can take steps to make this happen by starting off your day in the right mindset, and this can be supported by following a morning routine that sets you up for success.

When you read about some of the most successful people on the planet, one of the consistent things they talk about is the importance of a morning routine that they try to stick to wherever they are in the world. Usually this includes some form of exercise to raise energy levels. This can be an early morning walk, a surf, a gym session or even some simple stretching exercises. For many of these successful people, a 20-30 minute meditation will also have priority in the morning.

A high-protein breakfast is essential for setting your day up for success as it keeps your blood glucose levels stable and provides essential nutrients for your brain. This can be very easy and quick to prepare, such as a healthy smoothie, eggs or granola. It's also important to prepare and eat this food mindfully, rather than having the distraction of emails and television, as this allows your digestive system to prepare itself for your meal and absorb your nutrients properly.

Another key point to plan your day for a win, is to be very specific about what you want to accomplish. Try setting mini-goals for the day. You'll create a feeling of satisfaction as you work through your goals and achieve them, as you'll give the brain a reason to release dopamine.

These goals can be as simple as a 'To Do' list or as complex as a Project Plan.





# *Constructive Rewards*

Research shows that the prime motivator for humans and animals is reward. Rewarding yourself for achieving your goals is a great way to keep yourself on track, particularly when the goals are difficult or not particularly interesting to you. Often people reward themselves with food, such as a sugary treat. While this is fun, it may not always be the best reward for your body. Rewards can be as simple as allowing yourself to relax in the outdoors for 10 minutes with no distraction, or going to a yoga class, having a massage or a catch up with a friend. Simple pleasures that are really about self-care and giving yourself the gift of free time which you'll have when you are motivated and achieving your goals in an efficient way.



# Food

Good nutrition is a critical part of staying motivated and avoiding fatigue. Ironically, it's sometimes really hard to get motivated to cook. You can overcome this by planning ahead. It is actually pretty easy to plan a rough guide to what you'll be eating on a weekly basis, and you can then shop for the ingredients so that they are available to you when you need them. When you do cook, always make enough for an extra meal. This can then become your lunch for the next day, or frozen for dinner at another time. Healthy, protein-filled snacks are also really important to keep your blood glucose levels stable and provide energy throughout the day. This can be as simple as hummus with carrot, cucumber or celery sticks, wholegrain toast with cottage cheese and fresh tomato or home-made granola bars. Planning and eating nutritious food will then actually keep you motivated as your energy levels will improve and, therefore, so will your motivation to continue this good habit.

# Berry Smoothie

## Ingredients (for 1 serve)

- 200 mL almond milk or coconut water
- 1 tblsp LSA (ground linseeds, sunflower seeds and almond meal)
- 1 tsp raw cacao powder
- 1 tblsp Chia Seeds (soaked overnight if time)
- 2 tblsp uncooked rolled oats
- 2 tblsp organic pea protein (optional)
- 1/4 cup frozen mixed berries
- 1/4 frozen banana

## Method

Place the ingredients in a high speed blender and blitz for 20 seconds.  
Enjoy!







# Home Made Granola Bars

## Ingredients (Makes 12 bars)

- 2 cups raw mixed nuts, roughly chopped
- ½ cup pepitas (pumpkin seeds)
- 1 cup rolled oats (not instant oats)
- ½ cup LSA (ground linseeds, sunflower seeds and almond meal)
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 free range, organic eggs, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup macadamia nut oil
- ¼ cup rice malt syrup

## Method

Preheat your oven to 160 degrees Celsius. Place all dry ingredients in a large bowl and mix them together with a wooden spoon until they're evenly distributed. Add all of the wet ingredients and stir through. Spoon the mixture into a 20cm square tin lined with baking paper. Place in your oven then bake for 25-30 minutes, until golden on top.

When cooked, remove from the oven and sit for 5 minutes. Then place onto a cooling rack. When cooled, slice into 12 bars and keep in the fridge. These are lovely slightly warmed as well.



# Green Vegetable Pasta with Fresh Rocket Pesto

## Ingredients (Serves 6)

- 1 cup tightly packed fresh basil leaves
- 50g rocket
- 4 cloves crushed garlic
- 1 tsp grated lemon rind
- 1 cup raw walnuts (pesticide free if possible)
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup grated organic parmesan
- 125mL extra virgin olive oil (for the pesto)
- 300g wholemeal spaghetti
- 1 tblsp olive oil (for sautéing)
- 350g baby spinach
- 450g broccoli, cut into florets
- 10 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 200g organic cottage cheese (optional)

## Method

Heat a medium sized frying pan on a low heat and toast the walnuts (no need to add oil) for about 5-7 minutes to give them some crunch. Then set aside. At this point, you can roughly chop  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of these walnuts for serving. Place the basil, rocket, 2 cloves of the crushed garlic, lemon rind, parmesan,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the toasted walnuts and 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a high speed blender, and blitz on medium-high to make the pesto. You'll probably need to scrape down the sides a few times. Drizzle the rest of the olive oil (for the pesto) into the blender as it's running, until you achieve a smooth consistency. Add salt and black pepper if you wish. Use a large saucepan to boil up enough water to cook the pasta and broccoli together. Initially, cook the pasta on its own for about 6-8 minutes (check the packet for cooking instructions), and add the broccoli 2 minutes before the pasta will be cooked. Once the broccoli has been boiled for the 2 minutes, drain the whole saucepan. When you add the broccoli to the pasta, heat a large frying pan with the 1 tablespoon of olive oil for sautéing over a medium heat. Add the remaining 2 cloves of crushed garlic and the spinach leaves, and stir gently for a couple of minutes, until the spinach starts to wilt. Add the drained pasta and broccoli, the cherry tomatoes and the pesto to the frying pan and stir to combine the mixture. You may need to add some extra water to this. For a creamier pasta add the organic cottage cheese. Serve in bowls and sprinkle some chopped walnuts over the top. Add cracked black pepper for some extra spice.