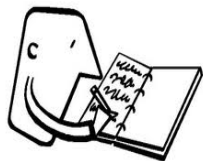


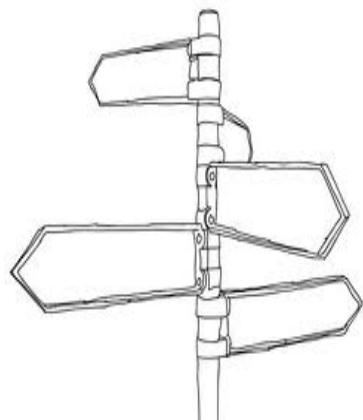
Structure the day and get into a regular routine



With structure and routine in our days, the less we need to rely on finding drive and motivation spontaneously – we can have momentum propelling us into what's happening next, with a pre-structured plan of action.

Write down your goals and wishes and keep this bit of paper with you!

Sometimes it can be hard to keep in mind exactly why you're spending the effort setting goals and doing tasks. It's good to write down why you're getting motivated and what goals you're hoping to reach. Having that note, and re-reading it sometimes, can give a surprising boost and reinforce your motivation!



... It's good to think of more ways to signpost yourself to what you want to achieve.

SMART is a good fine framework, but think of more specific tips and tricks which work for you.

For many of us, task-starting is the most challenging part. After beginning, keeping going can get easier ... and getting motivated and reaching goals do get better with practice and with success!

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Get motivated!

After brain injury many of us can become aware of being under-motivated. That amounts to being less active, having less initiative and being less concerned about progress towards goals. Apathy.

Do you recognise these in yourself?

Less goal-directed thinking – not really being sharply aware of what goals to aim for

Not much planning or problem-solving directed at goals

Less bother in your mind about achieving a goal, or not caring much when a goal is not reached

It turns out that it can be hard to work out what the true problem might be here, because of the brain injury. Lacking motivation is different from reacting to emotional upset and from cognitive complications of brain injury. For example, those of us who suffer from depression (which is another brain injury problem in itself) can seem like we have no motivation, like we're apathetic. But while depression and apathy can seem similar, you can usefully tell them apart.

In depression the brain injured person is often concerned, worried and deliberately avoids or withdraws and does not enjoy activities.

With apathy, however, we can just plain indifferent, having a complete lack of concern.

So how can we get set? ... Set goals and get motivated.

One way to overcome apathy is to think about *setting* goals. We need to think about the best way to set our goals for the best chances of achieving them. One structured way is to use what's called the SMART method.

The SMART method means making sure all your goals are:

Specific – think of exactly what it is you want. Instead of “improving my memory”, say something like “I want to be better at remembering to complete my tasks each day”.

Measurable – there needs to be some way in which you can tell if you are making progress, and some way to tell when your goal has been reached. If your goal is to remember to complete your tasks each day, make a way of counting what the tasks are and if how many of them you're getting done.

Attainable – you have to choose goals that really are possible to reach. This needs developing good awareness of challenges and good awareness of relevant abilities.

Relevant – the goals you aim for must be relevant to what you want to achieve overall. For example, if your ambition is to get a part-time job, then improving your memory could be exactly relevant to helping you in that ambition, and that would be a good place to start.

Time-bound – your goal should be have a deadline, far enough ahead that you're not rushed into it, but close enough that it's a real incentive for working hard towards that goal.

So, with SMART, you can make a big vague wish into multiple, incremental, reachable goals, which are time-anchored.

+ Keep in mind these tips too –

Break down activities into small steps

It can be hard to motivate yourself when a task seems large and overwhelming. So take time to break tasks into small steps and work through them systematically. For example, if you have to leave the house to go to the supermarket, start off thinking of what you need to do now (like finding the shopping bag, writing a shopping list) – that's better than just trying to find the motivation to launch into the whole task.

Ask others to be firm with you if you're unmotivated!

Sometimes it can be hard to motivate yourself ... but it can be good to have somebody else be gently firm with you, saying “we're going to do” such and such, instead of asking you “do you want to...?” If you've already asked somebody to be gently firm with you, it's maybe not so much like a nag because you yourself asked them to take that approach!

Reward yourself when you take on tasks or reach goals

Reward and reinforcement are a big part of motivation, so make sure you reward yourself when you reach your goals or when you take the initiative on tasks. Rewards can be anything from your favourite food to allowing yourself an indulgence like a long relaxing bath or a shopping trip.