Effort Activity 4: Activating and Sustaining

We hear a lot of talk about motivation – but have you ever looked at a definition? We hadn't properly thought about the concept until we did this some years ago. We thought we knew what it meant but we only had a simplistic understanding of the word. Maybe you're the same.

Motivation is **the ability to initiate and sustain goal-oriented effort.**

Initiate means to begin. Sometimes we need motivational tactics *just to get us started*.

Sustain means to continue once we've started. Sometimes we need motivational tactics *to keep us at it.*

So what techniques might we use to motivate ourselves? And should we be using the same techniques to initiate as we do to sustain?

Have a look at the following twenty techniques and choose which ones you might use to initiate effort (just get you started on something) and sustain effort (keep you going even when things are tough.)

Select the techniques which you are most likely to use below:

1. Scaring yourself by imagining failing everything.
2. Begging for a £20 cash payment for every good grade you get.
3. Devising a punishment for not doing work.
4. Telling yourself, "I'll just do twenty minutes then I'll stop."
5. Developing a clear sense of why grades are important and the freedom they can give you.
6. Listing the grades you want then telling other people that's what you're aiming for.
7. Looking in the mirror and shouting, "Come on! You can do this! Let's go!"
8. Scheduling a small reward after every hour of work.
9. Comparing yourself to others who are working harder and imagining that they're revising right now and you aren't.
10. Removing all your favourite apps from your phone and choosing a date when you're going to reinstall them.
11. Looking at your worst grade and feedback to make yourself feel so bad you do some work.
12. Making a list of topics and ticking them off one by one as you revise them.
13. Visualising the consequences of success.
14. Making a list of all the family and friends who would be really proud of you if you worked hard and did your best.
15. Offering to revise something so you can teach it to someone else.
16. Putting an inspirational quote over your desk or using it as your phone wallpaper.
17. Keeping a scoreboard with every day crossed off if you've done some work that day.
18. Having a start-time that you stick to every single day, and alarm that goes off on your phone at that time.

19. Speaking out loud to yourself, going through a prepared speech that starts, "I'm doing this because…" or "I'm working hard *now* because in the future…"

20. Arranging to meet someone else so you can test each other once you've covered a topic.

We're not making any judgements about any of these possible techniques – they might all work for you in certain situations. Consider these questions:

Are techniques for initiating effort the same as techniques for sustaining effort? What happens to the person who only has motivational techniques for initiating effort? What happens if the only techniques you have are for sustaining effort?

Make a list of your best tactics for initiation, and your best for sustaining effort. Ask other people what their tactics are, and steal the best to add to your list. Now print your list off prominently and keep it close by.

Next time you're in a rut, look back at your list and pick a technique that you think will most likely work!