Motivation and Demotivation

*People learn best when the care about the topic and believe they can master it.*

**Motivation – what to do**

***Establish value – why is this useful?***

* Connect the material to students’ interests.
* Provide authentic, real-world tasks.
* Show relevance to students’ current academic lives.
* Demonstrate the relevance of higher-level skills to students’ future professional lives.
* Identify and reward what you value.
* Show your own passion and enthusiasm for the discipline.

***Build positive expectations & experiences***

* Ensure alignment of objectives, assessments, and instructional strategies. Meet learners where they are.
* Create examples and assignments that provide an appropriate level of challenge.
* Provide early success opportunities.
* Provide targeted feedback.
* Be fair.
* Reward effort and not outcomes. Educate students about the ways we explain success and failure. Success involves trying things & necessarily ‘failing’ & trying something else.
* Describe effective strategies for continued learning - how to troubleshoot and how to ask for help. Learning these skills is lifelong learning.
* Articulate the expectations for the workshop. Don’t expect people will get every example & exercise ‘right’, but will actively participate and try new things.

***Build self-efficacy – build learner’s confidence that this is something they can do***

* Provide students with options and the ability to make choices.
* Give students an opportunity to practice on their own and reflect.
* Use positive language. e.g. “This syntax isn’t necessarily intuitive, but it gets easier and starts to make more sense with practice.”

**Demotivation – what not to do**

* Tell learners they are rubbish because they use Excel and/or Word, don’t modularize their code, etc.
* Repeatedly make digs about Windows and praise other operating systems.
* Criticize GUI applications (and by implication their users) and describe command-line tools as the One True Way.
* Dive into complex or detailed technical discussion with the one or two people in the audience who clearly don’t actually need to be there.
* Pretend to know more than you do. People will actually trust you more if you are frank about the limitations of your knowledge & will be more likely to ask questions & seek help
* Use the J word (“just”). This signals to learners that the instructor thinks their problem is trivial & by extension that they therefore must be stupid for not being able to figure it out.
* Feign surprise. Saying things like “I can’t believe you don’t know X” or “you’ve never heard of Y?” signals to the learner that they do not have some required pre-knowledge of the material you are teaching, that they are in the wrong place, and it may prevent them from asking questions in the future.

For more on **Motivation** see the great information in ***How Learning Works***