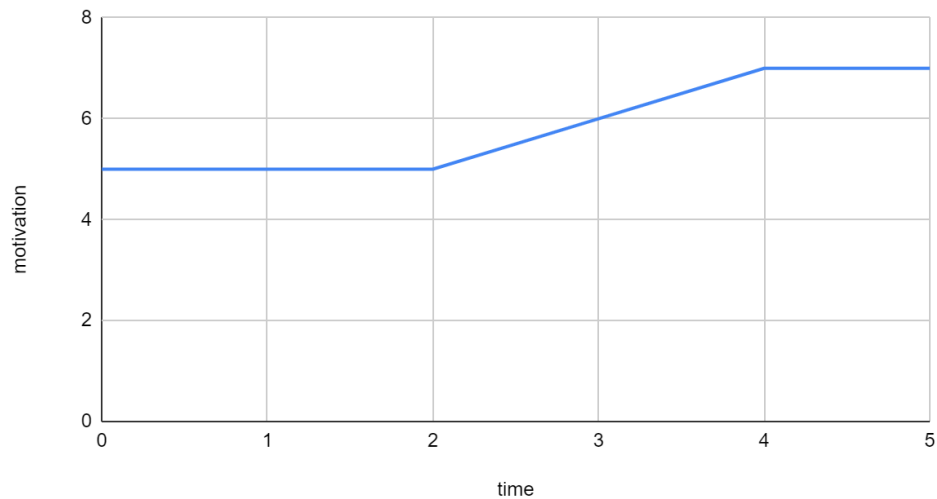


As college students, our motivation fluctuates throughout the semester. Let's examine the typical pattern of a college semester. Ideally, we'd maintain or even increase our motivation consistently, starting strong, overcoming midterms with high grades, and heading into finals with even more enthusiasm.

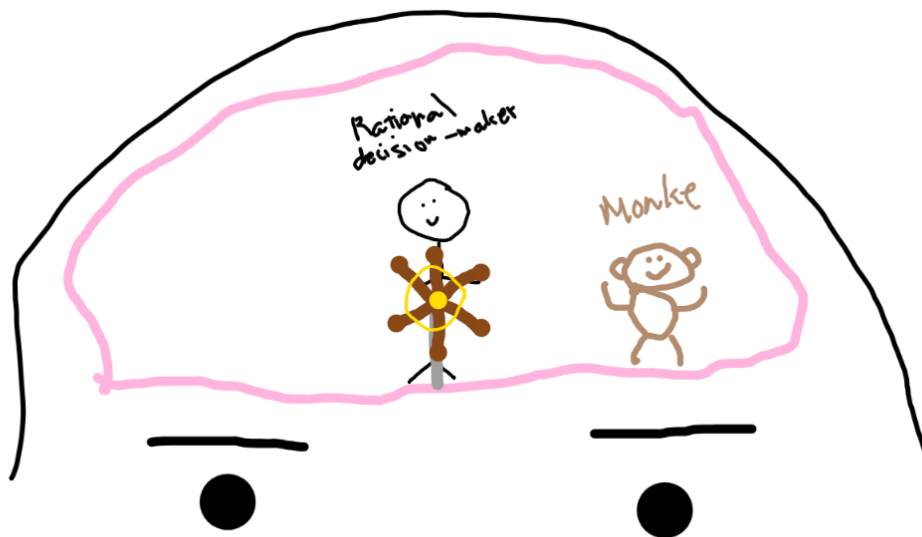
motivation throughout the semester



However, the reality for many is a rollercoaster of highs and lows. We begin the semester with excitement, but the challenges of midterms can lead to significant lows, sometimes resulting in procrastination and lack of drive. Yet, there are moments of resurgence only to be met with the daunting pressures of finals.



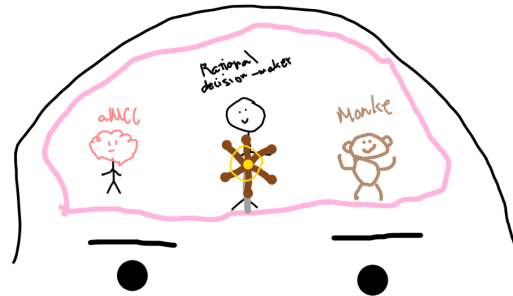
This pattern was a personal experience for me, prompting me to ponder how one might sustain consistent motivation akin to the ideal scenario. It's crucial to understand the impact of motivation on our actions. Our response to fluctuations in motivation can vary widely. We often find ourselves waiting for those days filled with unstoppable drive, which can be fleeting, leading to subsequent drops in motivation. The challenge lies in the days when motivation is absent, and the question becomes how to maintain a steady level of motivation.



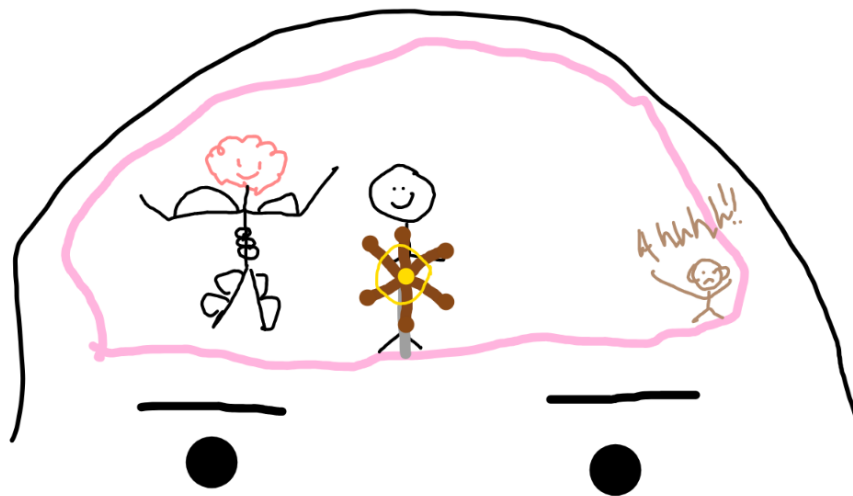
To delve into this, we must explore the workings of our brain. We have two main players in our brain: our rational decision-maker, guiding us with logic, and an instant gratification monkey, who just wants to do what's most fun right now. While fun is great, we can't always indulge in it. On motivated days, we can resist the temptations of instant gratification monkey, focusing on our goals. However, on less motivated days, the pull of immediate pleasure can overshadow our rational intentions, leading to procrastination and distraction.



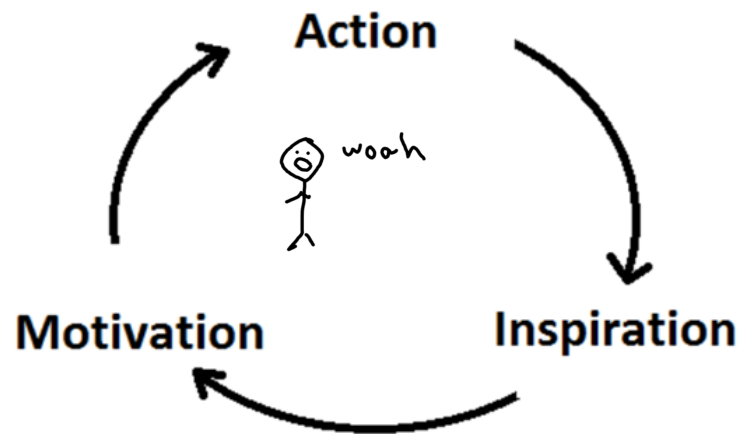
The key to overcoming this is understanding the role of the anterior midcingulate cortex (aMCC), which is associated with willpower. Your aMCC can overpower and scare away your instant gratification monkey. But right now, it might look like it's doing nothing. And it isn't doing anything. That is because it's too small to scare the monkey away. So how do I make my aMCC bigger? To strengthen your aMCC, you need to use action to tackle hard tasks.



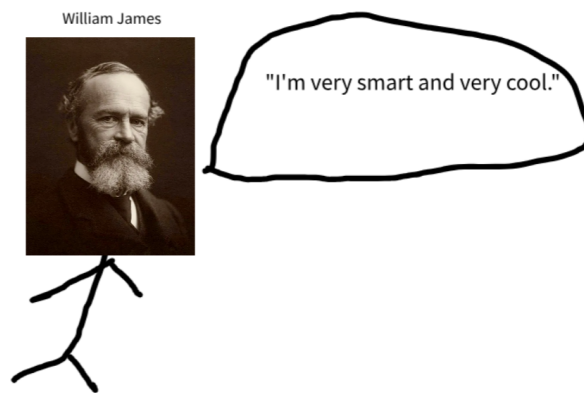
When you take on challenging tasks – the kind that requires real discipline – your aMCC grows stronger. But know that this action doesn't mean go run a marathon; it can be something small like just putting your phone down. This is the hard action that cultivates willpower. And just like anyone wanting to get big, if you don't exercise, your aMCC won't just stay the same; it will shrink and become small, losing its ability to scare your monkey again.



As you engage in these actions not only will you make it easier in the future for you to commit to hard things, it leads to this cycle of action leading to inspiration and motivation. It's a loop, a continuous process. Every action you take reinforces your aMCC and sets off a chain reaction. Your brain starts recognizing your achievements, no matter how small, and rewards you with a sense of progress. This progress is addictive. It's your brain saying, 'Hey, I like this! I'm improving. Let's keep going!' Now, when you circle back to action not only are you feeling more motivated, but your aMCC has now gained more willpower making the action even easier.



And this isn't something new. Over a century ago, William James, a renowned Harvard psychologist, and philosopher, said, "Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not." Modern neuroscience agrees, showing us that our brains respond to our actions by building stronger pathways for discipline.



In the end, the essence of motivation is a series of choices. Each time you choose action over inaction, you're not just moving closer to your goals; you're shaping the very structure of your brain, and creating motivation. It's not about waiting for inspiration; it's about being the architect of your own motivation. Remember that motivation is not an external force it is inside each of us.



No matter what comes to you during your day or how hard something may be. Let's embrace action and ride the cycle of motivation that comes.

