

How to keep on keepin' on – some thoughts on staying motivated

Inspiration is what we need to initially get us started with an idea, but we all need motivation if we actually want to make some to happen. Here we sometimes in this way: **that inspiration is the initial 'spark', but motivation the 'gas' that we need to actually keep the flame alive.**

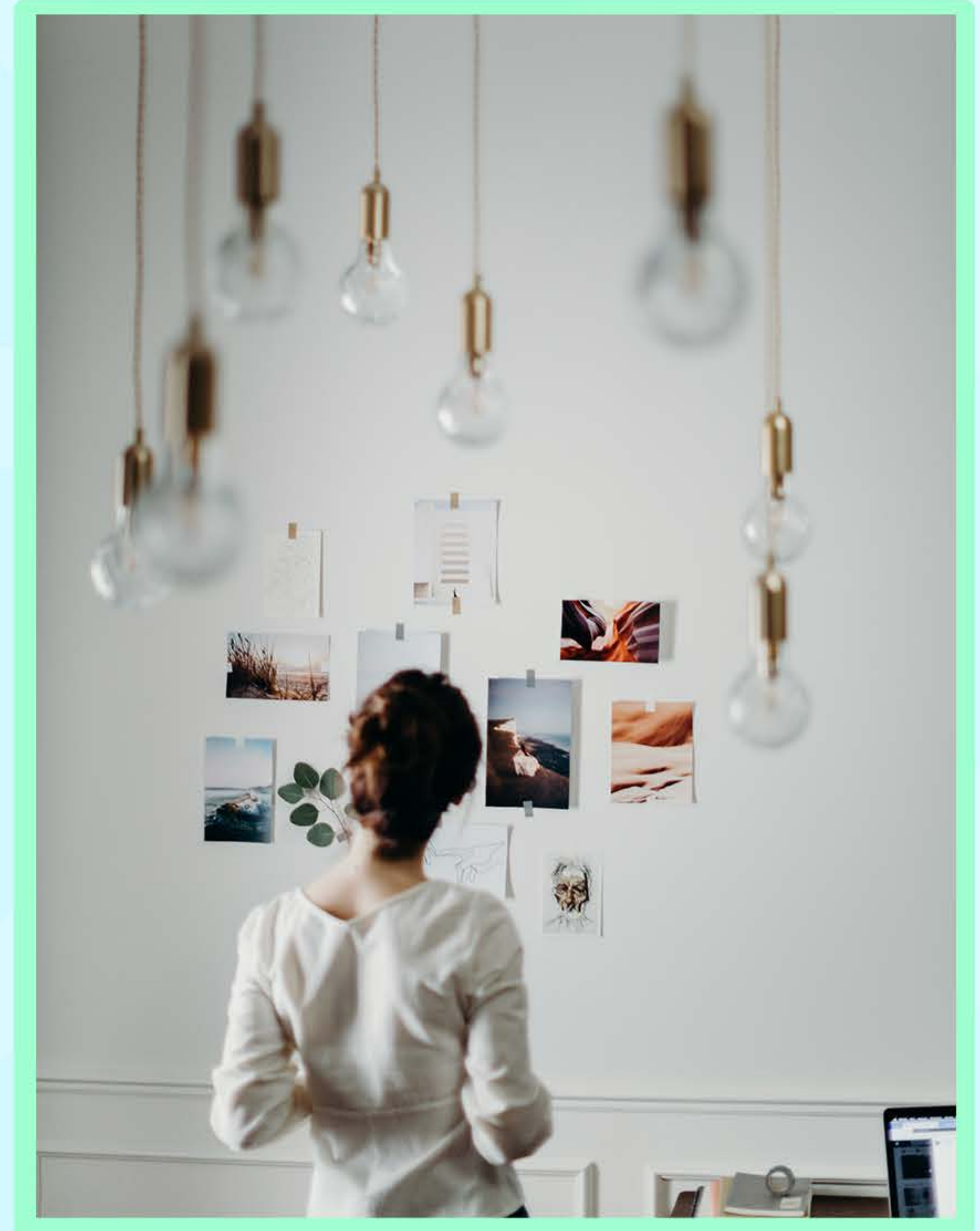
But getting and staying motivated isn't always easy. Maybe you're really tired (too many 'I'll just finish this one thing' ends to the day?). Maybe the task feels really huge (OMG...We are building a Balance toolkit!). Maybe the thing you need to do is something you really hate doing (tax return anyone?!). Maybe you – whisper it quietly – just don't really care about the job in hand (reconciling the bank statements does it for us!).

Fear not fellow creatives, help is at hand, in the form of this crowd-sourced list of our everyone in our community of curious and generous creative who helped build it into the fine specimen that it is! Let's get some stuff done...

Before we get started, a word on positive and negative motivation

Like we said, motivation is the gas that keeps the flame alive. It's what drives us as creatives to carry on even when times are tough. It's what gets us up in the morning and helps us keep going well into the evening when we need to. But did you know that motivation can be both positive and negative? No? Well, here's how...

- **Positive motivations** focus on positive things that will happen when you take some action. So this might be finishing a funding application to get one step closer to making your tour happen, or paying for all your stock to be professionally photographed because it will increase your online sales.
- **Negative motivations** focus on the negative things that could happen if you don't take some action. So, if I don't finish this funding application I won't get to tour next year, or if I don't find the money for these professional photos then I'm never going to increase my sales.



Each of these work in different circumstances. Your best bet though is to do something because you actually want to, rather than because you want to avoid a particular outcome if you don't do it. That's because using negative motivation runs the risk of making you feel helpless, which might (oh oh) even reduce your motivation. Hopefully these lovely tips we've crowdsourced will help you find the positive motivation you need!

Here they are – our favourite tips and insights about motivation!

Set the right goals – aims for goals that are achievable, of interest and give you pleasure

You don't need us to tell you this, but setting the right goals is really important. Having a goal gives you something to focus on; it defines success, and gives you something to measure your progress towards. As someone wise once said, "There's no point in running, if you don't know where you're headed." The trick is to find something that's a bit of a s-t-r-e-t-c-h but not so much that it's unattainable.

Better still, see if you can ensure that the goals you're setting are ones that interest you. Like we said already, you're much more likely to stay motivated if you're working towards something that you genuinely want to do or achieve, rather than what other people want for you. And here's the thing. It really helps if you can make working towards your goals pleasurable, even if they're hard work (As an example, we try to kick our business planning off by taking ourselves off to somewhere nice by the sea. It's never anywhere fancy, but staring at the sea really helps us think, and is a nice thing to do!). If you make the hard stuff feel more like a treat, or build an element of treat into it, it can make all the

If you can't do that, try to find something of interest in any

OK. So that's not always possible. We know that. Even though we're independent creatives, in charge of our own practice or businesses, sometimes we have to set goals that we don't like, or have these kinds of goals set by other people, like customers or funders. The trick here is to try and find something within that task that does motivate you (eg. 'I really find financial planning challenging, but I know if I do it my business will grow and that's super important to me').



Have inspiration close at hand

We are super keen on sticking things on the wall to keep us motivated... pictures of what success will look like, reminders of why we are doing what we're doing and the difference that will make, charts that show the progress we're making. These visual reminders really help keep us motivated. That might not work for you; maybe it's better to make an image of your success your desktop photo or have it pop up on your phone from time to time. Maybe you need to stick it on the fridge, or on the back of your front door so you see it every time you leave home. And topping up your own supply of images by searching out other people's stories – in person or digitally – can also really help. For us, sometimes the motivation even comes from some song lyrics we hear for the first time! Just find what works for you...

Go public

Another one that works for us and a lot of folk we know, going public on your goal can be a real motivator, for all sorts of reasons. Maybe you're the year?

kind of person who never breaks a promise, hates to be seen to fail. Whatever the reason, going public often can really up the commitment you make to achieving a goal. Why else would you be pounding the pavements in the pouring rain, if you hadn't announced you are doing a half marathon later this year?



Go you steady

OK, so this is a phrase one of us learnt from our dad – or that we're trying to learn and live by anyway! Go you steady means 'don't get ahead of yourself', 'don't run before you can walk', 'don't believe you're suddenly superhuman or have changed your entire personality'. When you start on something new, it's important to temper the excitement you have with a sense of realism. If you don't hold back a little bit, you'll try to do much, have to accept you can't do some of it, and – BAM! – there's your enthusiasm and motivation disappearing fast. Far better to exceed a goal than set one that is so ridiculous you are essentially setting yourself up only to fail. Thanks dad.

But do get started

If you're anything like us, there will definitely be days when you just don't feel like it –

whether the it is doing some meditation or working on your marketing plan. On days like this, the key thing is just to make a start, no matter how small. It's like when you were little, and the first day of a new school term maybe felt really hard or like something you didn't want to do. The chances are that once you were there everything was fine, and the same is true here. Get started, and you're over the biggest hurdle!



Give yourself a round of applause! Plot your progress

This comes up a lot when we talk to people about how they keep going, and it's something that we are really big advocates of. When you're working towards something, there's sometimes nothing more motivating than evidence that you are getting there, making progress, getting closer to your goal. Here are some ways that work for us and others in our community:

- Get the crayons out and draw the progress you're making
- Get collaging or come up with another visual representation
- Make a chart you can fill in – use gold stars, symbols... whatever rocks your boat
- Create a training log that details what you've achieved or learnt
- Get journalling...Keep a reminder of not just what you did, but how it went and how doing that made you feel; you might also want to capture learning you've done. Doing this daily really helps.

And don't worry or beat yourself up about the bad days. There will definitely be days when you didn't hit the mark. And that's fine. The key thing is to not let a few of those knock you off your course. Work out what happened and why, and focus on making the changes you need for next time to go differently.

A daily visualisation can really put you in the picture

A big favourite amongst our community of creatives, doing some kind of daily visualisation can really help. It's not for everyone, but it's definitely worth a try because if it works for you, it can be really powerful. Here's how to do it...

- Close your eyes, and try to picture exactly what achieving your goal would look like. Make the picture as vivid and detailed as you can.
- Next try to summon what it will sound like, along with any tastes or smells that might be present too.
- Now make it personal....Think about where you are in the picture, what your role is. How do you look? Who is with you?

The trick is to form as vivid and clear a mental picture as possible, and – here's the real trick – do this for a few minutes every day. Having a daily exploration like this, really immersing yourself in what success will feel like, can make a real difference to your motivation levels. Why not give it a try?!

Bigger isn't better – break up your goals

How does that saying go? “There is only one way to eat an elephant: a bite at a time”. It's the same with goals, as you probably already know. So, yes, breaking things down into smaller chunks, and starting with some easy wins before moving onto the much trickier stuff, is often the key to staying motivated. Getting some small steps, some quick wins under your belt gives you a sense of progress and also does wonders to build your confidence. Taking this approach can be the difference between make or break, especially when what you're trying to do is something really big or that's going to take a while. So, remember, bigger isn't necessarily better.

Rewards can work a treat

Here's a nice one! Reward yourself. And do that regularly. Celebrate the small wins, and then really celebrate the big wins! So divvy up your goals, make a list and allocate a treat for achieving each one. When we're in the middle of a really big and difficult project where progress can be painfully slow, we'll often build in lunchtime and end of the day treats and rewards. What's great with this one is that it's not just the rewards that keep you motivated, but also dreaming them up in the first place.



Know why it's important, and keep reminding yourself

Knowing why you are doing something is sooooo important, especially when you're an artist, creative freelancer or run your own creative business. Running your own business, being solely responsible for your career and income is hard work. That's why having a really strong sense of your values, vision and what motivates you to turn up every day is vital. (For more on this head to our It's All About You module.) It's the same with motivation more generally,



Knowing your reasons for doing something, understanding why it's important, will help you going. Maybe your reasons are to do with helping others, maybe they're to have a better work life balance, or to do with earning more money. Returning to why you're doing something when it feels tough or never ending is often just the boost you need. So yes, spend some time thinking about what your whys are.

Don't go it alone – find a cheerleader or partner in crime

Going it alone can make it so much tougher to stay motivated, so, along with going public, our advice is to involve other people. Maybe what you're trying to do is something, like improving your painting, you could get some help with by joining a course. Maybe it's something more suited to roping a friend or colleague into; something like doing your business plans together maybe. Maybe a coach could help. Perhaps it's not about having someone doing the thing with you, but making sure you have someone to encourage you when the going gets tough. So our advice? Find yourself a cheerleader or partner in crime!

Winner takes all - make it a friendly competition

Not for everyone, but perfect for those of us who tend towards being competitive, there's sometimes nothing like a bit of friendly competition to keep you going. So, if this sounds like you, why not find a few of those partners in motivation crime we were just talking about, and turn what you're doing into a (friendly, we stress, friendly!) competition? Check in with your progress regularly, be gentle with each other, be each other's cheerleaders. The competitive amongst us in the team swear by this one!



OH OH! Be aware of the gremlins that might trip you up and be

So, we're all going to have moments when we just can't do it, or feel like we can't anyway. We're all going to have things that are going to trip us up, or set us back a bit. We might ace it in the creative stakes, but we're still only human! Like all good scouts know, it pays to be prepared. So one of the best things you can do is anticipate what your gremlins are likely to be, and work out what your strategy for slaying them are. Maybe you're trying to get better at balancing work and life, and your gremlin is finding it hard to leave the studio at the end of a working day. Your strategy might be to book in after work dates with friends, or a course that will force you to leave on time. If your gremlin is more to do with thoughts or urges that have the potential to knock you off course then what can help is to go through the day with a little piece of paper and record when they happen. Doing that can help you figure out what maybe triggers them, and what you need to do to beat them next time.



We really hope these have helped you think about how you can get and stay motivated! For more insights, do check out all the other resources in the **Keep On Keepin' On** module of our Balance toolkit.