Think of it as a two-step process: motivation is the “wanting to,” and “self-regulation” is the “doing.” All the motivation in the world won’t do you any good unless it translates into behavior.

If you have any doubt that motivation is meaningless without self-regulation, think about everybody you know (maybe even you?) who has made a New Year’s resolution.
Getting (and staying) motivated

Use this for any of your classes, for your academic or career goals in general, or even for a personal goal.

Some tasks or goals will require more reinforcers than others. So, for example, you might want to reward yourself after doing 10 calculus problems rather than after finishing the entire homework set.

What do I want? What outcome do I hope for? Other than getting a good grade, are there other ways to measure my success?

Why do I want this? What value can I find in the task?

What reasons are there for thinking I’ll succeed?

What can I use to motivate myself – to reinforce my behavior? Think about things you enjoy – taking a nap, going to a movie, hanging out with friends, watching TV, sufing the web, listening to music, reading a novel. You may want to save these activities for a job well-done so they’ll have real meaning for you.

What’s under my control? How could I make the task more enjoyable?

Get in the habit of thinking about motivation as a cyclical process: determine what it is you want and why you want it; plan your rewards and pay attention to which ones are the most motivating for you.

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