
MENTAL NOTE

The clinical link between apathy & depression



Watch out for patients experiencing a prolonged slump in motivation. Writes Kathryn Smith, Clinical Psychologist

Feeling unmotivated at the start of the year is a pretty normal feeling, especially when you had settled nicely into the relaxing pace of holiday season. Reality can bite even more than your sunburn when you walk back through the office door for the start of another working year. This is normal and to be expected, but if you notice motivation levels don't return after a week or so and you are feeling persistently down and out, take some time to assess the cause for the way you are feeling. There are a number of reasons for lack of motivation, one of them is depression. If you are finding that your level of motivation is directly related to how low your mood is, you might be experiencing depression. And as much as you might feel like sitting around doing nothing, this will only feed the beast. The best thing to do, as challenging as it may seem, is to get out of bed, get

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dressed and start the day. Set some small but reasonable goals and be kind to yourself in the process of achieving them. Over time, your motivation will grow and the small tasks that seem overwhelming will become easier, leaving room to tackle more significant tasks. Some other suggestions for improving motivation levels when experiencing depression include:

1. Feed the positive and let go of the negative

Changing the way, you think about yourself, others and the world, to embrace a more positive outlook, will help you become a more self-confident and motivated person. Recognising when negative thoughts are entering your mind and knowing how to deflect them is an art worth learning. If you struggle with negative thoughts, psychologists and mental health professionals can teach the practice, known as managing negative self-talk.

2. Get regular exercise

Research the world over preaches the benefits of daily exercising for improving both physical and mental health. It will also help improve self-confidence and provides the opportunity to socialise with others. Most smart phones have a health app (a little red heart) that counts your daily steps, this is a great way to motivate you to achieve your daily activity goals whilst holding you accountable for serial couch surfing.

3. Enlist the support of friends

Isolating yourself is definitely NOT the best medicine, despite how you might be feeling. Socialising with friends and letting them know how you are feeling will mean you are giving yourself the best support network to get over this slump and back on a more positive trajectory.

4. Reward yourself for defeating each small goal

It's important to cut yourself some slack when overcoming a personal challenge like depression and rewarding yourself, even for the small feats, is a good place to start. Treat yourself like you would treat your best friend, you will end up liking yourself more than you thought you ever would.

5. Plan something to look forward to

Whether it's a mini-break, a shopping spree or an overseas adventure, having something to look forward to, will go a long way in improving your motivation. Long term goals help you reach your short-term goals and get through the 9-5, in whatever form that may be.

6. Work on your sleep health

Getting adequate sleep can be difficult if you are feeling depressed but changing the way you think about sleep will help to change your behaviour towards sleep. For more advice on sleep, visit www.towardsbettersleep.com.au

7. Get professional help

Getting professional help, should not be your last resort, your doctor and psychologist can form part of a helpful support network. If you feel your lack of motivation is affecting your daily life and you have seen no improvement in your mood, speak to your GP about a mental health plan.

The difference between anxiety attack & panic attack

Feelings of anxiety are normal and a natural human response to high risk or intense situations. However, some people experience higher levels of anxiety that is unmanageable and interferes with daily life. If this is the case, professional help may be required to manage symptoms. You may have heard people who suffer from anxiety, talk about having anxiety attacks? So, what exactly is an anxiety attack and how does it differ from a panic attack?

Many people who suffer from anxiety experience physical symptoms like nausea and a racing heart, with thoughts that are distracting, interfering with the task at hand. However, what differentiates physical symptoms of anxiety, commonly referred to as 'anxiety attack' and a full-blown panic attack, is the duration and intensity of the symptoms. Panic attacks are intensely unpleasant with sufferers often submitting themselves to hospital in fear of a heart attack or other life-threatening emergencies. A person having a panic attack may report periods of intense fear in which 4 or more of the following anxiety symptoms develop abruptly and reach a peak within 10 minutes.

- Palpitations, pounding heart
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Shortness of breath or smothering
- Feeling of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady, lightheaded or faint
- Feelings of unreality or detachment
- Fear of losing control or going crazy
- Fear of dying
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Chills or hot flushes

Shining a light on Anxiety



Anxiety is the most common form of psychological distress for both adults and children.

For all of us, a certain level of anxiety is normal. But once it starts to interfere with family life, work and social functioning, psychological intervention may prevent a great deal of suffering for the people affected and their families.

Inherited traits or individual life experiences can contribute to anxiety with a strong relationship between depression and anxiety. And untreated anxiety in childhood may lead to the development of depression in adolescence and adulthood.

Using a cognitive behavioural framework, our clinical psychologists help adults and children with anxiety problems.

You can learn more about anxiety on our website.



People who present with panic attacks may appear as composed, competent individuals with fulfilling lives, however, beneath the surface they are enduring extreme discomfort and are often struggling to uphold daily life. Fear of a repeat occurrence is common with people avoiding trigger situations in fear or another panic attack.

Unfortunately, avoidance behaviour, exacerbates the problem and inhibits the person's lifestyle choices and social freedom. Tackling the problem front on and accepting the need for professional help really is the best way forward. Psychologists work with the cognitive and behavioural features of the condition in an attempt to deal with the triggers of physiological reactions. By addressing the

underlying cognitive features, the cycle of anxiety is frequently broken, and the person is able to learn skills to better manage high anxiety and enjoy a free and fulfilling life.



You're Invited to a Free Event Convergence: The Science, Art & Spirit of Compassion

Convergence: The Science, Art & Spirit of Compassion is an immersive meditation performance that will see local Koto master Takako Haggarty Nishiburi working in collaboration with Queensland Symphony Orchestra bassist Justin Bullock, guitarist/composer Dr Anthony Garcia and clinical psychologist and co-director of the The University of Queensland - UQ Compassion Mind Research Group Dr Stan Steindl. Awaken the compassion within through guided meditations and improvised music.

When: Sunday, February 25 at 2:30 PM - 4 PM

Where: Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art

Invited by: Dr Stan Steindl

Find out more about this free event here: <https://goo.gl/nB7atQ>.

www.psychologyconsultants.com.au