

SAPS Newsletter - January 2023

We hope you all had a fantastic holiday and a much-deserved break from your studies and that you managed to recharge your batteries ready for the next term. Winter is here and although Gozo is fortunate to have plenty of sunshine, it is still a time where many can feel a bit down and find it hard to motivate themselves, sometimes called the **winter blues**.

Fortunately, there are ways to help you stay on top of your studies, maintain a healthy stable mood and improve your motivation.

According to research by Rory Lazowski of James Madison University and Chris Hulleman of the University of Virginia the ability to stay motivated to study is influenced by several different factors and fortunately many of these are in our control. "Motivation Interventions in Education: A Meta-Analytic Review", in the journal *Review of Educational Research*.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0034654315617832>

According to their analyses of 70 different studies they have found seven main elements that can improve motivation.

- **Set clear short term academic goals** – try and set daily or weekly goals to do with your studies. This could be that you would like to finish reading and learning about a certain topic or aim to complete your write up for an essay. Whatever your goal, make it realistic and try to stick with it.
- **Go for mastery not just performance** – when students were more likely to learn their subjects in depth rather than solely focusing on passing a test, they had better results.
- **Take responsibility for your learning** – it is easy to blame other people or events for our short comings. Make it your responsibility that studying and learning the material is what you need to do to succeed.
- **Adopt a growth mindset** – believing that you can increase your intelligence and talent through dedication and hard work creates a love for learning as well as resilience.
- **Find the relevance** – the researchers found that when people discovered how their studied related to their own lives, motivation increased. This is easily done with the study of anatomy and medicine.
- **Imagine your future self** – having an image of your future self (10 years from now) gives you a long-term goal that you can identify with making the direction in which you go clearer.
- **Reaffirm your personal values** – what are 3 areas that you value most? Honesty, kindness, hard work, persistence? Reaffirm your values from time to time. These may help you in staying focused and help you understand which direction you should be going in.



Other ways which can help you stay focused and motivated:

- Create a study group with your friends
- Eliminate distractions
- Establish a routine with adequate breaks when needed
- Create a workspace that is dedicated to studying – tidy and organised. Avoid clutter.

Adopting a healthy Lifestyle

Eating healthy clean food, staying hydrated, absorbing enough Vitamin D and getting good quality sleep has been shown to have beneficial effects on mood and energy. With more energy comes improved motivation.

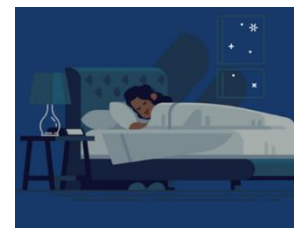
What to eat?

- Including protein and good fats with your meals will make your energy last longer. Vegetables are packed with vitamins, enzymes and slow releasing carbohydrates as well as water which are all useful in maintaining good health and energy.
- Avoid too much sugar and caffeine as they will lead to elevated blood sugar levels that end with a blood sugar crash leading to more sugar cravings.
- Drink plenty of water – remember approximately 60% of our body is made of water so we need to make sure to stay hydrated.



Sleep (number of hours and quality of sleep)

- On average an adult needs approximately 7-9 hours of sleep a night.
- You can improve the quality of your sleep by making sure your bedroom is dark and quiet, removing electronic devices, avoiding blue light a few hours before bedtime, avoiding meals 2 hours before sleeping and making sure to get some exercise during the day.



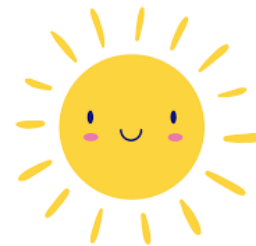
Exercise

- Any form of exercise is beneficial so find something you enjoy and make it a part of your daily routine.
- Exercise increases endorphins making us feel happier and more motivated. It will improve energy, sleep and confidence.



Vitamin D

- Has been linked to improved mood and energy along with many other health benefits.
- Vitamin D is found in oily fish, red meat, liver and egg yolks. Our bodies can produce Vit D when being exposed to sunlight as well! Try getting some sun for approx. 20 minutes a day before 11am or after 3pm.



We Are Here to Help

Ask for help when you need it! Don't let situations get worse by dwelling on them. The SAPS team are here to support you. If you ever need a chat, please book a time to see us by using this link <https://bit.ly/SAPSMaltabooking> or use our QR code (around the building).

Alternatively send an email to student-support-malta@qmul.ac.uk

Emergency Numbers

For medical or mental health emergency: 112

Gozo General Hospital – A&E Walk-in 24/7

Victoria Health Care Centre – 22156820

Government Helpline – 1579

Support line - 179