

Finding Motivation to Write and How the Writing Center Can Help

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C. Connor Syrewicz's article, "The Motivations That Improve the Creative Writing Process: What They Might Be and Why We Should Study Them," goes in depth about different strategies writers can use to motivate themselves. One way I classified the differing strategies of motivation is by whether or not an individual's motivation is coming from an internal or external source. Internal motivation comes from individuals' personal motivation to write. While external motivation is motivation found from other people such as teachers, writing center tutors, or friends encouragement. Each person is different and finds motivation in different ways, you may find that you don't respond to all of the motivation tactics in this review, or Syrewicz's article, and that is okay, even coming from an external source, how people find motivation is unique to each individual. I urge readers to find what works for you, but use his article as a guide, or stop by the writing center for extra aid.

Internal Motivation

I consider internal motivation to be the individual drive someone carries to complete a task. Naturally, finding interest in the subject you're writing about helps your creative process move along much easier, but of course if you trudged along through 200+ pages of *The Great Gatsby*, a book you didn't want to read in the first place, and now you have to write a 200+ word essay about the overarching theme, it's hard to feign interest. In Syrewicz's article, he encourages writers to look for interest in other aspects of your topic, for example if you're a history nerd, you may not be interested in the complexities of Daisy and Gatsby's relationship, but you may be interested in how the time period of prohibition impacted the storyline.

One difficulty I find with writing, that I think other students also struggle with, is that while I write, I get stuck trying to perfect grammar or sentence structure while writing. I think many people misconstrue what the purpose of writing actually is: a way to express ideas and thinking, and instead writers get stuck when their papers aren't great on the first draft. In order to combat this Syrewicz recommends a healthy mix of "alternating between playing and revising." This means that writers should first write a free flow of ideas to express their thinking, but then go back and proof-read their work. This creates a healthy space for the writer to "play" around with their writing, which makes the task of writing much more interesting and boosts writers' motivation.

While playing around with your writing can take the pressure off writers and boost their confidence, writers can still face anxiety towards their piece. I suggest the good old method of 'Fake-it-til-you-make-it.' Syrewicz outright states that "[P]eople who *believe* that they can write effectively tend to write more effectively than those who don't," sometimes false confidence is motivation enough to begin your assignment. Even if you know your confidence is fake, the effects are not, writers who *believe* they are good at their craft, inspires them to write more and a high self-esteem better prepares writers to endure obstacles they come across throughout the writing process. While strategies for internal motivation are a great way for writers to overcome their anxiety and apprehension towards writing, not every method will work for everyone. Speaking from personal experience, being supported by other people can be just as effective to jump start the writing process.

External Motivation

Good grades and due dates are the most common form of external motivation students will use. As stated before, most students are not interested in writing a 200+ word essay about a book they barely tolerated, yet they do it. If you were to ask students why, most of their answers would be something along the lines of, "I want a good grade," which is completely understandable, but that also means that teachers receive superficial papers with no substance, and students are not benefited from mindlessly completing assignments. Luckily the writing center is a good external source of motivation for students that simultaneously benefits them as a writer.

It's human nature to respond well to positive feedback. As a writer, hearing good things about your writing encourages you to continue writing. The Writing Center is a perfect place to receive positive feedback as tutors aren't here to only provide criticism, tutors provide honest feedback, which means we will point out the faulty parts of a piece of writing, but we choose to focus on the good in people's writing. Working with a writing center tutor makes it a lot easier to receive criticism, since tutors are an objective third party, you have no stakes in coming to talk to us, we're not giving you a grade, but we also won't write your paper for you. The writing center introduces you, the writer, to new writing skills that will benefit you throughout your life, not just in your English class.

Conclusion

Not everyone will benefit from every motivation strategy mentioned in Syrewicz's article and this review but I do encourage people to try something outside of their comfort zone. For example, if you're more reserved and you don't feel comfortable having other people read your work, I still strongly recommend stopping by the writing center. On the other hand if you have a

hard time initiating tasks and beginning your assignments, I recommend trying out the self-motivation tactics mentioned above. Either way, understand that you are not alone as a writer lacking motivation, whether you are a routine procrastinator, or a someone who is always on top of assignments but suddenly lacks inspiration, every writer has been there. I hope you realize it is not as desolate as it seems. By implementing new strategies, you can complete your assignments and write something beautiful as well.

References

Syrewicz, C. Connor. “The Motivations That Improve the Creative Writing Process: What They Might Be and Why We Should Study Them.” *New Writing*, vol. 20, no. 2, Taylor and Francis, Mar. 2022, pp. 178–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2022.2051563>.

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