CHAPTER 1 LEARNING LAW: HOW CAN I DEVELOP A LEGAL MIND?

Finding motivation—activity sheet 1.2

All students sometimes lose motivation, so don’t panic if it happens to you. You may feel lacking in energy and drive, have difficulty focusing on your assignments, doing the readings, or even getting out of bed to attend a lecture! This doesn’t mean you are not a motivated student—you don’t have to *always* be excited and highly driven in your studies, but you do need to keep going and complete your assignments and exams even when you don’t feel like it. This is good practice for your career, where for example if you’re a lawyer you may need that drive to persevere with a difficult or protracted case. Here are some steps you can take to find motivation.

Step 1

Understand what caused you to lose motivation. Factors that may contribute towards you feeling a lack of motivation include:

• Getting behind in your reading.

• Getting a lower mark in your assignment than expected.

• Feeling pressured by responsibilities outside of your studies.

• Feeling isolated.

• Finding the subject material difficult to understand.

• Studying a subject you are not interested in but have to do because it is core/mandatory.

• Not being able to see how you would ever apply the knowledge in practice.

• Any significant change or stress – relationship break up, money worries.

Mark any of the above factors which may have caused your loss of motivation, and add any other causal factors that apply to you below:

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Step 2

Calm down. You will not be able to regain focus and motivation for action if you are stressing. Ask yourself whether you need to do anything more to deal with the causal factor, such as seeing a student counsellor or your lecturer.

Step 3

Establish your life priorities at present. Where do your studies sit in order of priority for you now? List your top five goals (these may be anything from studies or work to travel or socialising):

1 .................................................................................... (most important)

2 ....................................................................................

3 ....................................................................................

4 ....................................................................................

5 .................................................................................... (least important)

If your studies are low in the list (or not listed at all), you need to give some serious thought to what you should be doing now. It may just be a matter of taking a semester’s leave of absence so you can return being ready to focus, or it may be that the course is not right for you. You can see a careers counsellor or a personal counsellor, or you may prefer to discuss things with a lecturer, friend or family member. It’s probably best to get a variety of views and to ultimately make your own decision.

Step 4

Establish your study priorities. What are the five most urgent and important things you need to attend to with your studies?

1 .................................................................................... (most important)

2 ....................................................................................

3 ....................................................................................

4 ....................................................................................

5 .................................................................................... (least important)

Step 5

Make a time plan for the next week (see activity sheet 1.3 on time management).

Make sure you include not only your top study priorities but also some time towards your top life priorities. For example, let’s say your top three study priorities were: 1. Do contracts assignment; 2. Catch up on missed constitutional law lectures; 3. start research for constitutional law assignment, and say your top three life priorities were: 1. studies; 2. travel; 3. socializing. Then your plan might include times for attending class, periods blocked out for working on your assignments and listening to lecture tapes, as well as time blocked out to do some internet research on your travel destination, and an evening out with friends (not too late at night – you need your sleep to keep your motivation up!)

Step 6

Pick three very small steps you can take in the next 48 hours, and a reward for yourself once you have accomplished them.

1 ....................................................................................

2 ....................................................................................

3 ....................................................................................

4 Reward: .....................................................................

Now it’s time to complete your small steps, and enjoy your reward!