

How to be a Successful Teacher

Strategies for Personal and Professional Development

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Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

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First published 2009

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SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP

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2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

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B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road
New Delhi 110 044

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
33 Pekin Street #02-01
Far East Square
Singapore 048763

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009924024

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 978-1-84920-016-5
ISBN 0 978-1-84920-017-2 (pbk)

Typeset by C&M Digitals (P) Ltd, Chennai, India
Printed in India at Replika Press Pvt Ltd
Printed on paper from sustainable resources

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What Am I Doing Here? Motivation

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Introduction

Motivation is an extremely complex psychological process that can enable teachers to excel and thrive in the classroom, in turn ensuring their students similarly achieve such high standards. However, a lack of motivation may be blamed when a teacher's performance drops below 'acceptable' levels. A teacher may benefit from direct words by their line manager or the headteacher so that they return to performing their duties appropriately. Yet for some teachers, this type of action may do more harm than good and can lead to even worse performance in the classroom. Consider the variety of students you work with: some may be motivated by a few words, yet others may require a complex mix of strategies. So, how do you know what works for you? In this chapter, we will explore some of the issues around the complex nature of motivation and provide some guidance on what to consider when motivating yourself or others.

Chapter objectives

- Define the concept of motivation and how it applies to teachers.
- Understand different motivational influences.
- Appreciate the role of appropriate feedback.
- Apply motivational strategies in order to develop your motivation.

What exactly is 'motivation'?

As noted in the introduction, motivation is complex. There are numerous theories and perspectives on the subject and the chapter here will do little justice to the area! If motivation is such a complex concept, it is little surprise to discover that defining it is not easy. However, for operational purposes, there are several ways of considering motivation. At a very general level, motivation is a state that drives us to act in a certain way. As authors, we are motivated to finish writing this chapter in a clear, explicit manner to engage the reader while covering a number of strategies. But if you put any 'excuse' to do something less work related in front of us, we won't even reach the end of this ...

Our motivation will have changed. Some people see motivation as little more than a physiological state of arousal. The more aroused or 'psyched up' you are, the greater your motivation to achieve or perform your teaching role. Yet, as we pointed out in Chapter 2, if you are too aroused, your level of concentration will drop and your performance will dip. If this happens, we guarantee your dip in motivation won't be far behind!

Similarly, if you are feeling extremely tired, lethargic and lacking in energy (a low state of physiological arousal), the last thing you may

want to do is stand in front of a class of students and facilitate a wondrous learning experience. If on the other hand, you feel full of energy, you would probably relish the thought of engaging with such a session. Similarly, if everything is going well psychologically speaking, you are more likely to want to continue providing this same high-quality learning experience, where you find you are being paid for a job you love doing.

Nevertheless, motivation is far more than either of these. It is based on several extra psychological factors such as how highly you value your goals; your expectations; and possible conflicting motives. Psychologists differentiate between external and internal motivation, and these are important to the way teachers think about their teaching.

External or 'extrinsic' motivation

Extrinsic motivation is the term given to those people who teach for external reasons. *Your motivation comes from rewards or from other people.* Ask yourself the question, 'Why do I teach?' The question is trying to discover whether you teach for rewards such as the financial gain, long holidays, and so on. We are, however, guessing that it may be for other reasons than these!

If you teach for extrinsic reasons, you will be spurred on by reward and, as long as you continue in a rich vein of good form, the rewards will continue. However, when things go less successfully, you will experience the flip side of reward, punishment, such as being harsh on yourself or others commenting on your poor performance. The consequences of such performances are usually negative and, although punishment may give you the 'kick up the backside' to get back on track, it is arguably among the best demotivating practice you can experience. Moreover, *rewards also begin to lose their reinforcing nature after a while and you will need greater rewards to satisfy the drive to succeed.* Viewed in this way, rewards are rather like addictions, whereby the 'hit' needs to be more intense to gain the same amount of pleasure previously experienced.

Internal or 'intrinsic' motivation

In contrast, *intrinsic motivation comes from within.* It is about fulfilment and satisfaction or the desire to 'get it right'. In working with a teacher, we would ask the question, 'If all the holidays and high pay were taken away, would you still teach?' If the answer is, 'Yes', we would be pleased that you are teaching for the best reasons. *Among the hardest things we have to do, is ask teachers NOT to teach for such extrinsic rewards.* They usually look at us with total bewilderment: 'Are they asking me to teach for free?' Instead, we are asking you to place emphasis on

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mastering your own teaching so that it is this that provides satisfaction and fulfilment. ***Be a teacher to teach: focus on the process of teaching.***

If you consider the process of how to put in a satisfying teaching experience, rather than considering the outcome, you will have a far better chance of enjoying your teaching. So if you teach for intrinsic reasons, the holidays and financial remuneration are likely to come as a 'side effect' or consequence of your intrinsic reasons for teaching, which is to be the best teacher you can be.

Having understood the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, there is one additional comment to make at this point. It is not wholly 'wrong' to be extrinsically motivated. The key is to have an element of extrinsic motivation alongside an element of intrinsic motivation. In this way, you will gain pleasure from both. Let's face it, being given a bottle of wine by the headteacher for arranging the school sports day is always a nice feeling!



Activity 3.1

- In your journal list what motivated you to enter the teaching profession. Were these intrinsic or extrinsic motivators?
- Consider your motivation for teaching now. Are these intrinsic or extrinsic motivators?
- Compare your prior and present reasons for teaching. Have these changed? If so, why?

Some theories of motivation

One way to look at motivation is rather like a ***drive or urge, pushing us to achieve our best.*** When the drive diminishes, motivation is lost. Motivation may therefore be related to physiological arousal. If the body is sufficiently aroused (physiologically speaking, not explicitly speaking!), levels of motivation remain high. However, motivation may also be viewed in terms of part of our personality, a ***personality trait.*** We might describe you as a highly motivated person, suggesting that you are motivated in many aspects of your life, not just in teaching.

You may have previously come across the following theory in your teacher training: Maslow's (1970) 'Hierarchy of Needs' is widely covered in education as conceptually it makes sense, despite the model being dated and criticized.

In Diagram 3.1, motivation drives us to move through each stage of the pyramid until we reach the top. At the bottom of the pyramid, our priority is to satisfy basic survival needs and desires, such as obtaining

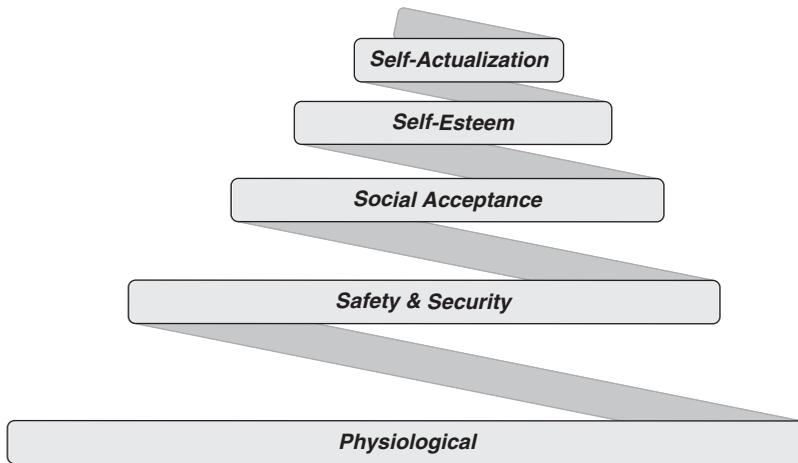


Diagram 3.1 Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Motivation' (adapted from Daniels, 2005)

food. We are then motivated to find shelter, before seeking approval from others and approval from ourselves until we reach the pinnacle of mastery that he termed 'self-actualization'. Self-actualization is synonymous with the best you can be: it is the place where a teacher finds everything almost effortless. An hour-long lesson seems like it is over in minutes, the day passes effortlessly.

Taking this idea further, people are motivated towards achieving competence and mastery in all areas of their lives. Attempts to master different circumstances help us to feel good about our ability as teachers: this may manifest as tackling a concept you find difficult explaining in a new way, refreshing your knowledge about an area, considering a new teaching approach you have not previously considered, and so on. ***You will seek out challenges to 'prove' your capability and personal competence.***

In contrast, if your attempts at mastery result in failure, your motivation will decrease and the negative, downward spiral of despair will emerge. The message for teachers is clear: ***do not underestimate your personal competence. If you do, you are likely to prefer activities that fail to 'stretch' you and you will ultimately lose the motivation to continue teaching.*** It is also important to pay attention to your feelings about your attempts at mastery. Regardless of whether you are successful in your attempt, does it make you feel positive or negative? If your performance is poor, it is not necessarily a good sign to be overly critical as this will combine with your negative feelings and help to demotivate you. Rather, you should reflect on why your performance was unsatisfactory and what the solution is to the challenge.

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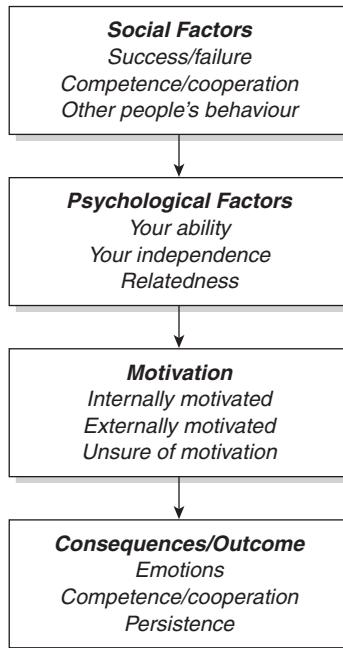


Diagram 3.2 Components that impact on motivation (adapted from Vallerand, 2001)

What factors influence motivation?

According to the schematic diagram (Diagram 3.2), there are four components that make up our motivation in teaching: social factors, psychological mediators, underlying motivation and perceived outcomes. We will cover each of these in turn to build a usable picture for teachers.

Social factors

Social factors play such an important role in motivating teachers. The need to achieve success is motivating in itself. However, you may adopt the opposite position, being motivated instead to avoid failure. We would always ask you to think differently about success and failure. Negativity should be pounced on and discarded. *The behaviour of other people in the staffroom will undoubtedly influence your own behaviour and, ultimately, your motivation.*

You might consider observing and evaluating how other staff members function around you, what issues emerge and how you deal with them. For example, because you may be relatively new to the profession, do other members of staff listen to and respect your ideas equally alongside the views of longer-serving teachers? We have known this to be the case

and this has affected teacher's motivation because of the apparent lack of fairness.



Reflection

- Consider your working situation at the moment.
- Are there any people you work with who 'ooze' positive energy?
- Are there any people you work with who always seem to be negative?
- Consider what you could do when someone starts talking negatively. Can you counter with a positive comment? Can you change the situation or remove yourself from the situation? Can you consider a positive affirmation mentally? (See Chapter 10.)

Psychological mediators

Social factors inevitably influence a teacher's psychological state. It is not necessarily the reality of those social factors that is significant, but rather, your perception of the situation. The perception of your competence comes partly from social factors. We discuss issues relating to self-confidence further in the next chapter. Suffice to say, ***if you have a poor perception of your competence, this will undoubtedly influence your motivational states in a negative way.*** Ideally, you should strive for autonomy or independence.

By controlling how you improve the way that you teach, you will be teaching for intrinsic or internal reasons rather than external rewards. The danger in teaching for external rewards is that if they were taken away, perhaps due to poor performance, then levels of motivation would also inevitably diminish. Our advice would perhaps focus on helping you to enhance your perceptions of competence and autonomy by offering guidance on identifying the positives that show that you are capable and could 'do this with your eyes shut' (metaphorically speaking, of course).

Underlying motivation

We discussed intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at the beginning of this chapter. In terms of the flow diagram, however, social and psychological factors influence a teacher's motivation to varying degrees and this is linked to the type of motivation they hold. Of course, if you consider that you are an extrinsically motivated person, then our role would perhaps involve trying to assist you in moving towards a more intrinsic focus, so that the potential pitfalls are fewer and possibly

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easier to overcome. If a teacher is amotivated, this means that they show no real preference. It does not mean that you have no motivation. Instead it means that you have lost sight of why you teach. Amotivation might indicate a slide towards a teacher quitting the profession. Ask yourself the question again, 'Why do I teach?' ***If you don't know what motivates you, how can you set goals, achieve those goals and progress beyond them?*** If you are unable to answer this question, don't panic. The simple solution is to start setting goals for yourself so that you can get back on track to successful teaching. Indeed, Chapter 8 discusses goal setting in detail.

Consequences/outcomes

Now we arrive at perhaps the most important aspect of motivation, the outcome or consequence of your behaviour. ***If social factors and perceptions are positive and intrinsic motivation is high, there is a good likelihood that outcomes will also be positive.*** Emotions are likely to be positive. If you have had a good lesson, you might feel elated. This feeling plugs directly back into your feedback mechanism, telling your brain that you are competent, you are in control and you can pull out all the stops when you need to. ***Positive emotion is a way of telling the rational, cognitive part of your brain that things feel good.***

This is vital for us because we believe that the key to successful performance lies in the process and how it feels, rather than the outcome. If you feel 'good' about your performance, issues of poor performance, anxiety, self-confidence, comments from others, negativity from other teachers, and so on will not detract, or indeed distract you from achieving your goals in the classroom. You will be more inclined to brush these things aside, in the knowledge that, 'Despite these minor irritations, I can still do the business'. Those teachers who can be heard vociferously berating others for their actions are already beginning to direct their motivation in the wrong place. Look around at the staff meeting and you will be able to identify this type of behaviour.

Highly motivated teachers are more likely to be persistent. Nothing will stop them from achieving their goals.



Activity 3.2

What makes you feel 'good' about your teaching? What indicators demonstrate to you that you have facilitated a good lesson? Make a note of these in your journal.

The brain's 'chemical high'

It is important to point out that you may receive a physiological 'high' rather like an addictive reward for successful performances in the classroom. Having received this reward (or elevation of dopamine levels in the brain) you are more likely to strive to seek out the pleasurable sensation again and again. This is perhaps why sexual desires are so strong in humankind. ***This physiological change in brain chemistry is in itself a highly motivating experience and is one that helps to maintain motivational levels, only*** for as long as it continues to be experienced. As discussed earlier, we would not suggest that your only reason for teaching should be to satisfy potentially addictive cravings, but it does offer a satisfying feeling when you can get it! There is little else as satisfying as the feeling associated with a successful lesson.

Psychologically, the 'chemical high' can be compared to Csikszentmihalyi's (pronounced chick-sent-me-hal-yi) (2000, 2008) notion of 'flow', whereby it seems that you act spontaneously and effortlessly, being fully absorbed in the moment, in full control and where time seems to transform (either time can stand still or speed up). Such a flow state can similarly be addictive, where you may try to achieve that moment time and again within your teaching. (We will discuss the state of 'flow' in greater detail in the final chapter.)

Developing motivation

Based on the motivation literature, a useful set of guidelines for teachers emerges to assist in building motivation. We will interpret these guidelines (adapted from Weinberg and Gould, 2007) and deal with each below.

Situational and personal factors in motivation

Personal factors interact with the situation teachers find themselves in. For example, you may have been observed by a mentor and the lesson didn't go particularly well so you don't relish the thought of your next observation. On the other hand, you may have had a very successful observation and are therefore highly motivated to do well again. Alternatively, the class hamster may have died and this has left you upset and traumatized (tongue firmly pressed in cheek).

Consequently, ***it is important to establish how much these factors are influencing your motivation levels.*** Your progress is only possible if you have a strong foundation. In exploring situational and personal factors, it is possible to create this foundation.

 Reflection

Are there any factors currently that are constraining your performance in the classroom? Can any of these be resolved? Consider other strategies in this book for example, Chapter 4: Confidence and self-esteem, Chapter 5: Emotion, mood and stress, Chapter 8: Goal setting.

Appropriate feedback in motivation

It is important for teachers to be provided with appropriate feedback, when reflecting on their performances. Whether this comes from a tutor, a mentor or even your own perspective, the feedback needs to be appropriate. This links directly with the way in which people assess their performance. If a teacher is not performing optimally, perhaps as a result of illness, they should not expect to perform as well as when they are in peak condition. Yet, time and time again we hear the despair in their voices because they are attributing their 'less than successful' performance to lack of ability when physical condition is the culprit. The next time you have a cold, for example, assess your journey on the way to school. You will not feel as 'alive' as when you are 100 per cent fit. So why should it be any different when you are teaching after an illness or injury? It is important therefore, to monitor whether you are assessing your performance appropriately in light of these judgements and correct any misperceptions.

Perceived competence or ability and motivation

Appropriate feedback is an important way of influencing your perceived competence. If a teacher monitors and reflects on his or her performances, searching for and picking out positive information, they will feel a heightened sense of competence: 'I can do this, because I am a successful teacher.' This becomes self-perpetuating, feeding back into itself rather like a loop. ***Competence leads to positive thoughts about your performance, which leads to a feeling of competence***, which leads to positive thoughts about your performance, which leads to competence, and so on. If you are competent, you are more likely to be in control of the situation and your motivation will remain high.

Process goals in motivation

As we have pointed out elsewhere in this and other chapters, focusing on the outcome is not necessarily the best approach to adopt. Process

or mastery of the task is, in our opinion more important. If a teacher can master their profession and set out to achieve the best they can in the classroom, they should have an enjoyable and successful teaching career. In a way, this is more productive than trying to ensure students pass exams and make the grade as it is not possible to exert control over all aspects of learning: *we can only influence learning*. If the teacher focuses on mastery of performance instead of outcome, then, the teacher is teaching to the best of their ability and students will naturally engage with the learning process and as such, become driven to succeed.

Professor Joan Duda, an expert in motivation, from the University of Birmingham, UK, suggests that people can enhance their level of involvement in a task in a number of ways. These can be adopted in teaching and we have adapted some of them in Table 3.1. You may use these strategies when thinking about ways to increase your level of motivation in teaching.

Table 3.1 Strategies to increase motivation

What is the situation? (Situational structure)	What should I do about it? (Strategies)
I am finding it difficult to achieve (Task attainment)	Use SMART(ER) goal setting Make the demands of the task individualized and specific Discuss with mentor your progress and your goals
I am unsure about how much control I have in what happens (Authority)	Teacher to take responsibility for own professional development Teacher to be actively involved in decision-making process Discuss with mentor the issue of autonomy: what needs to be covered, what would be good to cover, what can be left
I am not being given accurate and honest recognition for my achievement (Recognition)	Recognize individual progression and effort Ask mentor for an appraisal
I don't know whether I am making progress or whether my standard of teaching is acceptable (Evaluation and standards)	Develop evaluation criteria related to goals set Set own self-evaluation schedule Ensure consistency and meaningfulness Ask mentor for an observation and to review planning/markings, etc.
I am expected to deliver when preparation has been limited (Appropriateness of timing)	Provide adequate time for future preparation Consider reviewing the working week to capitalize on time available Discuss with mentor any schemes/resources available to aid planning

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Activity 3.3

- Consider the situational factors listed above.
- For each of these elements, give yourself a score of 1 to 5 (where 1 equates to 'awful' and 5 'excellent').
- Place these in rank order depending on the score. Put your lowest score(s) first.
- Keep in mind the situational factor you want to improve.
- Periodically come back to this task over the coming weeks to reassess your development.

Self-determination theory

Many of the aspects discussed above are encompassed in what is known as 'self-determination theory' (SDT). Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985) have been fundamental in evolving this theory, which asserts that individuals are motivated if they:

- Feel **competent** in controlling their environment and are able to predict outcomes of their actions.
- Feel **autonomous** in that they can determine their own course of action without interference from others.
- Feel **relatedness** which refers to satisfactory engagement with others in the social world.

If all three are in order, the individual can 'grow' through taking control of personal challenges. An example of SDT in action is considering a teacher who is able to discuss their planning with others and feels that they have been able to discuss honestly and openly about the subject content for a particular theme in the year group's planning (relatedness). From this, they have the freedom to decide how best to put the planning into action (autonomy). Finally, they have the skills and ability to ensure that the lessons capitalize on their personal strengths while engaging the students in a stimulating manner (competence).



Activity 3.4

A number of psychological measures have been developed in relation to SDT. They may be found at: www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/index.html.

The following statements have been derived from one such scale:

		Yes/No
1	I often feel free to make decisions about my students.	
2	I often feel a valued member of the staff.	
3	I often understand how my emotions affect me in the classroom.	
4	I often feel that my professional accomplishments are due to my own doing.	
5	I often feel that I can be myself in the classroom.	
6	I am often aware of how my body feels and how this affects my teaching.	
7	I often have a choice in decisions that influence my classroom practice.	
8	I often have the freedom to make my own decisions about my classroom practice.	
9	I often feel that I have the ability to teach to the best of my abilities.	
10	I often feel in control of my classroom.	

No doubt, if you have answered the above statements positively, you are likely to have a higher self-determined nature in relation to your practice.

If, however, your responses have been rather more negative, you may want to discuss this with your mentor in order to identify how you can feel more in control.

One-minute summary

We have introduced the concept of motivation as being vital to all areas of one's life, especially teaching. Without motivation, you would fail miserably. Without motivation, there would be little reason to get out of bed in the morning for work. However, at some point, many if not all of us experience dips in motivation, which, if left unattended grow increasingly larger and more distinct. **When motivation is high, nothing stops us.** We set out to do something and we strive towards achieving that goal. The goal itself should be carefully devised and should, we would argue, to be related to mastery of a task rather than its outcome. Strategies can

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be put in place to ensure that motivation levels are established or retained and control over situational and personal factors will help to do this. Motivation is linked nicely with self-confidence and self-esteem, the focus of Chapter 4.

Short-term strategies for the here and now

- Consider your level of motivation in general for teaching.
- Note down the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that drive you. Ensure you make your list of intrinsic motivators longer than the extrinsic.
- Consider factors that may be influencing your motivation negatively. Develop strategies to avoid such factors (for example, keeping away from colleagues who seem to drain you).
- Reward yourself with an activity or treat for your teaching periodically. This could be taking part in a hobby, sport, and so on, something that indicates a definite 'cut off' point from your teaching.

Mentoring issues

Activity 3.3 would be worth considering with your mentor in terms of the situational factors that may be impacting on your motivation. It would be worth sharing your results from the exercise with them. You may also want to discuss issues about self-determination and how your feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness can be encompassed.

It would also be worth exploring your mentor's motivational resources – what drives them when they feel below par? What strategies do they use?



Further reading

There are literally hundreds of resources relating to motivation: finding one which helps develop your motivation can be like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack ... be warned!

In terms of academic content, the following would be worth looking at:

Reeve, J.M. (2008) *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*. 5th edn. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

This book is what we deem as one of the ultimate, encompassing works on motivation, discussing the wide range of theoretical perspectives that influence motivation.

The Self-Determination Theory website (www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/) has a number of resources and publications available for download.

Some of the self-help books are listed here:

Burn, G. (2008) *Motivation for Dummies*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
Yet another 'for Dummies' book. We wish we were on commission for the number of books that we recommend. Put simply, however, these books are well-written, clearly structured, with some very useful suggestions and value for money.

Chandler, S. (2004) *100 Ways to Motivate Yourself: Change Your Life Forever*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press.
A very positive book with numerous suggestions that are practical and relevant.

Vendera, J.J., Burnside, M. and Guerville, B. (2008) *Mindset: Programming Your Mind For Success*. USA: The Voice Connection/Vendera Publishing.
This book takes a practical approach as it guides you through the chapters and activities, encouraging you to keep a journal for your reflections.