



HOW TO GET MOTIVATED WHEN YOU'RE STUCK IN A RUT

- Dr. David Turpen

You're talented, smart, mildly attractive, and super cool. But you feel like you're stuck in a job or situation that's going nowhere, that time is passing you by; you feel lost in your life and you're embarrassed about it.

Know this: you are not alone! Every person, at some point in their life, including me, has experienced being in a rut and it can be very painful. But fear not! There are some things you can do to help yourself get back on track and moving in a positive direction.

#1: Be Honest

Most of us have the tendency to hide our true feelings and pretend that everything is okay, when the truth is, it's not. When Jesus said, "The truth will set you free," He wasn't just talking about Himself (John 8:31-32; 14:6). It really is true. Whenever you're not honest with yourself or others, you're just going to stay stuck.

So, first step, be honest with yourself and those closest to you. This does not mean that you're a negative person or a burden, especially if you stick to the facts and avoid playing yourself off as the victim. Stay out of victim mode! Don't fall to feeling sorry for yourself or throwing a pity party.

"Pity parties don't get anything done, and what would it be like if you had a pity-party and no one showed up but you!" – Chuck Swindoll.

If someone asks you how things are going, tell the truth. We all struggle at times. Don't hide, it will only keep you stuck.

Also, be honest enough with yourself to accept responsibility if you are personally responsible for being in a rut. Own it and don't make excuses. Learn from it and move on. Likewise, keep in mind that this time in your life may be providentially intended to get your attention. Feeling stagnated can sometimes be an opportunity divinely inspired to slow you down, to open your heart and mind to hearing from God. Don't ignore this possibility – and you know deep in your spirit if this is what this is – don't fight it. Take the time to ask Him questions *and* to hear what He has to say. He did, after all, give you *basic instructions before*

leaving earth. It's helpful to know what they are and to stop and listen instead of always insisting on being heard. But don't just listen, hear as well.

#2: Be Social

Get out and be around other people. Don't isolate yourself. This is often the first response we have to feeling bad about our situation; we want to hide. We're embarrassed about where we find ourselves and it's natural to want to camouflage that from others. We can try to hide through deceiving ourselves or by physically making ourselves scarce. Neither approach will move you forward, only deeper into frustration.

Contrary to popular belief, being a hermit when things are going poorly doesn't provide you the time to "figure it all out" before reappearing on the scene. Make plans, go out, be around friends and family. It will help lift your spirits, give you fuel for imagination and new perspectives, and help lift you out of the rut.

#3: Take Action

Most people want to whine or wallow in their misery so others will feel sorry for them. Not you! You're going to do something about your situation. Investigate your options, read a book to inspire yourself, pray and ask God for guidance and direction (He will answer), hire a coach, take a personal development workshop, whatever it is...do something. Maybe you need a physical to make sure everything is working properly; go work out and really break a sweat, go for a hike to clear your head and get away alone with yourself and God. Action is *a/ways* forward movement.

Several years ago, just after my divorce, I was forced to move back in with my parents with no job, no prospects, no family, and few friends. I felt like an absolute failure and a joke. I had no real sense of direction and was working in grounds maintenance for my old high school. Then I got an opportunity to go back to school and earn an MBA. Not only did I earn the degree, but this step put me on the path to meeting and marrying my wife, moving across the country, earning my doctorate, and starting my own business. **You never know where a path might lead but you will never know until you take the first step onto it.**

You also can get busy on all those things you've been putting off for months...or years. Return the calls you never got around to, clean out your closets, garage, or basement. Rearrange your living room. Clean out and wash your car. Don't

worry that whatever you do doesn't seem to have anything to do with the "big life problem" you're trying to overcome. Get busy out in the yard, paint a room, help a neighbor, do something but do not remain stagnant. Stagnant water only breeds algae, disease, bugs, and stench. Don't be stagnant.

#4: Forget About Being Motivated

Say what?! Yep, forget about being motivated. Take your mind off of the fact that you're not currently motivated. Truth is, you're focusing on it too much and it is in fact, helping to keep you down. Remember all those times that you said, "I'll never be like my mother – I'll never be like my father?" Well, it turns out that research shows that the more you say that to yourself the greater the likelihood that you will turn out to be just like them. Why? Because that is where your mindset is; that's the tape that keeps playing in your head, over and over and over. Change the tape! Stop focusing on what is not going well or on what you don't want to be and start focusing on what you do want and who you do want to be.

Don't wait to feel motivated to get something done. Happy, productive people don't wait for motivation, they just get on with it. Flunkeys wait for motivation – winners just get stuff done! Why are we beating around the bush? Maybe you need a swift kick in the pants to understand that your future doesn't depend on others or getting "breaks" as much as it depends on your own state of mind.

God gave you a brain to use to figure some things out. Use it. Too often too few of us don't use what we've been blessed with and instead rely on everyone else and our circumstances to "make things just right." It's never "just right" and waiting – while there are times when you definitely should wait, as mentioned above – waiting can often lead to self-fulfilling prophecy and continued stagnation and frustration. Don't wait for some outside force, circumstance, or person to motivate and move you. God has granted all you need to succeed (Romans 8:32; 1 Timothy 6:17; 2 Peter 1:3) and has not given you a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7). Be inspired (i.e. motivation that comes from the inside out) because you know who are, whose you are, and that you have a purpose. Focus on the first two and the third will come.

"Everybody thinks of changing humanity and nobody thinks of changing himself."
– Leo Tolstoy