

DO Therapy

Do the Next Small Thing

When motivation is low, even ordinary tasks can feel unusually difficult. We may wait to feel more energized, confident, interested, or ready before doing something. Sometimes that works. Other times, **action needs to come before motivation**. This exercise helps you practice identifying one small action that is possible from where you are right now.

NOTICE

Choose something you've been having difficulty starting or engaging with.

Maybe:

- Getting out of the house
- Exercise
- Household tasks
- Connecting with someone
- Returning a message
- Starting work
- Doing something enjoyable
- Making an appointment
- Working on a larger goal

Ask:

- What have I been waiting to feel before I begin?
- Does the task feel too large?
- Am I thinking about the entire task instead of the next step?
- What happens while I wait for motivation to arrive?

Then ask: **“What is the smallest thing I could do next?”**

REVIEW THE GAME TAPE

Think about times when you have successfully gotten started despite not initially feeling motivated.

Ask:

- What helped me begin?
- Did motivation come before I started—or after I was already moving?
- Which part of the task was actually hardest?
- Am I requiring myself to finish something when I only need to begin?
- Have I made the first step larger than it needs to be?

Notice the difference between: **“I need to do this.”**

and: **“I need to do the next part of this.”** You don't need enough energy for the entire task.

You need enough capacity for **one next action**.

PRACTICE

Shrink the task.

Instead of:

- **Exercise** → Put on your shoes and walk for five minutes.
- **Clean the house** → Clear one surface.
- **Reconnect with people** → Send one message.
- **Work on the project** → Open the document and work for ten minutes.
- **Get outside** → Step outside for five minutes.
- **Deal with finances** → Open the account and look at one thing.
- **Start the day** → Shower and get dressed.

Then practice: “**I don't have to finish. I'm going to do _____.**”

Afterward, you can decide whether to continue or stop. The practice is **starting**, not completing.

BUILD REPS

Practice taking small actions even when motivation isn't fully present.

Notice:

- Was starting harder than continuing?
- Did my energy or motivation change after I began?
- Did the small action create useful momentum?
- Was the step still too large?
- Did I learn something by doing rather than continuing to think about doing?
- What is the next small thing?

Don't judge the action only by how much you accomplished.

Sometimes the important learning is: “**I can act before I feel completely ready.**”

Over time: **SMALL ACTION → EXPERIENCE → INFORMATION → MOTIVATION → NEXT ACTION**

You don't always have to find motivation before moving.

Sometimes movement helps you **find the motivation**.

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NOTICE → REVIEW THE GAME TAPE → PRACTICE → BUILD REPS → TEST & LEARN

Notice what's happening. **Review the game tape** with curiosity rather than judgment. Choose something to **practice**. **Build reps** by trying it more than once and noticing what happens. Then **test & learn**—keep what helps, adjust what doesn't, and try again.

The goal isn't to get it right. The goal is to learn from what happens.