

# What Gardening Can Teach You About Finding Unexpected Motivation

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To my surprise and delight, I found motivation in unexpected ways this spring. I'm someone who has always really enjoyed looking at other people's gardens. I literally stop to smell the roses, lilacs, peonies and any other blooming vegetation — but I've always told myself that gardening was not for me. The idea of digging around in the dirt isn't intrinsically appealing to me, so I assumed gardening was something other people liked to do, but it just wasn't where I wanted to invest my time.



When the warm weather hit this spring, I started to think about who I could hire to do some planting. I reached out to a few people but none worked out. This frustrated me at first, but then I thought, well, I'll give it a try on my own.

I ended up loving the process! I had always thought of gardening as something incredibly technical, where you needed to know how to do everything right. And while it's true that there is a technical aspect to it, I found that it was possible — and a lot of fun — to attempt to think differently about the process.

Here are some strategies that helped me enjoy gardening, and that could help you break through anywhere you may be lacking motivation — in business and in life.

## **Recognize When You're Suffering From An "Expert Complex"**

I had boxed myself into thinking that there were gardening people and non-gardening people, and that gardening people knew much more than I did. By feeling like I needed to be an expert before I could do anything, I held myself back. Once I gave myself permission to be imperfect and do what I knew how to do the best I could, I was able to move forward. Sure, a few of my little plants haven't quite made it, and my garden isn't ready for a magazine, but I enjoy it and actually made some progress.

So, ask yourself: "Where am I not doing anything because I don't know the exact right way?" For example, maybe you don't sort papers because you're unsure of the perfect filing system. Instead of waiting, decide just to start *somewhere*, and start putting papers away in a method

that is logical for you.

### **Reframe Activities**

When I thought about gardening as "digging in the dirt," I was unenthused. When I looked at it as painting with flowers, I became excited. I've taken art and design classes so when I had this perspective, my creative juices started flowing. I chose a color palette and had fun wandering through the flower aisles looking for blooms that fit my intended look.

What activity are you avoiding because the standard perspective just doesn't seem to work for you? Think of an alternative perspective. For example, maybe you keep telling yourself that you should file papers because it would make your desk less messy. But if you don't care about a messy desk, that's not motivating. Instead, think of it as bringing projects to completion, so they're off of your mind or saving you time because fewer items get lost in the shuffle.

### **Discover A Motivating "Why"**

Gardening for the sake of gardening was not compelling for me. On the other hand, gardening for the sake of creating beauty and joy for myself and others was thrilling! Now, I decorate the interior of my home for my own pleasure and the pleasure of my guests, and I love it.

Identify where you're feeling unmotivated. How can you connect this activity with one of your values? For example, maybe one of your values is getting things done efficiently, so filing papers could help you speed up your workflow.

### **Make The Process Pleasurable**

For me, taking time in the morning to go out and see what's bloomed is really enjoyable. I then use that as a trigger to do things like watering. It's also gratifying to see that when I am responsive to the needs of the plants — like seeing they're a bit droopy and watering them, how quickly sad-looking little leaves can spring back up.

So, ask yourself, "How could I make keeping up with an activity pleasurable?" For many, it can involve listening to music or a favorite podcast. Or maybe it involves getting yourself a cup of coffee or tea while doing the work, or relocating your work space.

You may not need motivation with gardening or with filing papers, but I'm sure that there is some area of your life where you're struggling to move forward. If so, use these tips to get some much-needed motivation to get ahead this summer.