

Ep #154: Forget Motivation: Why Chasing It Is Holding You Back



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With Your Host

Kristi Angevine

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Welcome to episode 154. I'm Kristi Angevine, your host, and this podcast is here to help you understand the root causes for why you think, feel, and do what you do so that you can be thoughtful, intentional, and deliberate about this precious life of yours.

Motivation to get going and keep going toward desired behaviors and results is often elusive. If I could just get motivated, I've lost my motivation. I can't seem to get motivated. Can you relate? This episode, I break down the myths surrounding motivation so you can stop chasing it and put your energy into something more productive. Ready? Let's do it.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now, here's your host, Physician and Master Certified Life Coach, Kristi Angevine.

Hello and happy new year. I was just thinking that sometimes as I'm recording the intro to an episode, I will get really passionate and want to say so many more things than is appropriate in this small little blurb. And I'm just going to share that now.

I'm really passionate about this work, this work of helping you understand yourself better so that you can be intentional, because when you are able to get out of your own way, your unique gifts to the world are more available. And this matters to me because number one, you matter. Your experience matters. And number two, when you are operating at your best with access to your best strengths to your wisdom to your intuition. I benefit from that.

This is very selfish in a way and when you have access to operating at your best you are able to contribute in a way that all of us benefit. This world has so many problems and we need all hands on deck, you know? So this podcast is truly part of my mission to leave this world better than I found it and to do that in the broad sense and also in the really concrete, ordinary, everyday sense, where my hope is that in every single episode, there is something that helps you get a little bit more understanding and feel some

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more agency, because to me, this is my way of leaving things better than I found them.

Okay, so let's dive right in. First off, if you are new to the podcast, I'm so glad that you're here. I have in my mind's eye pictures of people, and you probably know who you are, that I have interacted with recently.

Either I've coached you, or we are friends and we've texted back and forth, or we've emailed, or you've sent me messages, or you've written in reviews. And I have this sort of image of the people I'm talking to, and sometimes it's just one person and sometimes it's many people. But I also know that people come to the podcast, I have no clue that they're a new listener, and yet in my mind's eye, I almost have this like, not a blank spot, but this space where new faces I have yet to meet are there and they're listening.

And if that's you, this is perfect for you. This is such a great episode as an intro into the sort of the philosophy that is baked into the podcast as a whole. And I hope that it's really useful to you. My main goal with each episode is for it to give you information that is helpful cognitively, but that is also practical, so that you can actually apply it in your life today without having to do a bunch of prep work.

So if you are new, welcome. I hope this is useful for you. If you listen and you really like it, please tell a friend about it. If you listen and you are inclined to spend an extra 60 seconds scrolling down and rating and reviewing it, I would be ever so grateful.

So let's dive into this topic of motivation, shall we? So motivation is tricky, it's complicated, and everybody talks about it. This time of year, there are lots of goals, there are lots of resolutions, and right about now there are lots of faltering resolutions. Did you know that by mid-February, 85 to 90% of New Year's resolutions are completely abandoned? And this is a large reason that I do not make New Year's resolutions anymore. There's nothing against them. I just know that it's not the most effective way for me to generate change.

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So one thing that I start hearing a lot about this time of year, but throughout the year it comes up, is the idea of motivation. And this is what it sounds like. I just can't get motivated. I don't know what it is. I'm just not motivated to do the things that I used to do. I need to get motivated.

I used to be motivated when I was on track, before I fell off the wagon, before everything got derailed. I was really motivated. Do you do this? Do you have these thoughts sort of bouncing around like a pinball and a pinball machine in your head? I 100% have done this in the past. And every now and then I still do this. I will yearn to just feel that lovely feeling of motivation that makes things so easy. And for me it sounds like, you know what, once I feel ready, then I'll get going. Ah, man, I used to be so motivated, but now I'm not. And I'm usually doing this in bed, on the couch, or driving home before my plan to go exercise or to get started on a project.

And it makes sense that we like feeling motivated, right? When you feel motivated, it is true that not only is it pleasant, but you do get up and get going. Motivation helps you overcome the inertia of starting. You start and then you oftentimes continue, whatever it is that you're wanting to do. It is a very useful emotional state, but here's the truth. Motivation is unreliable.

So one of the biggest myths surrounding habit change and accomplishing goals is that you have to feel motivated to take action. And this idea can come out sort of implicitly in a lot of the recommendations and a lot of the really good and sometimes maybe not so good advice that surrounds habit change.

So sometimes we will find it's really powerful to suggest that you come up with a compelling reason why so that you can be really committed, so that you can take action when things get difficult. And that's fantastic. But sometimes that idea can be distorted and you can think that, well, if I come up with the, like the right reason why, the most strongest, most compelling reason why, it will generate the feeling of motivation. And then I will know I've found the right reason to do what I wanna do. And until I find that correct reason that invokes a feeling of motivation, probably I just haven't found the most compelling reason why, and therefore I'm going to keep

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looking for it. You know where that goes, right? That has us all in our head, analyzing, thinking, figuring, planning, speculating, and not doing anything. So there's nothing wrong with coming up with a compelling reason why I recommend it, it's great. But if you use that as a way to try to wait for motivation to help you get going, you're gonna be waiting a long ass time.

So I think of motivation as like a bad romantic partner. It's a bad boyfriend, it's a bad girlfriend. They are fickle. They are great when they're around, but then for no reason that you can figure out, they ghost you. There's no text, there's no call, there's nothing.

So when starting and continuing something that requires effort, requires the added ingredient of motivation, this is a recipe that is not going to be predictable. And this is where we see people get really frustrated when it comes to their goals, and especially really frustrated when it comes to their New Year's resolution, or frustrated when they think about their word of the year. My word of the year, things just aren't going well. I am just not as motivated as I was when I came up with it.

So what do people do? When people can't get as motivated as they would like, they will give up. They basically stop taking steps toward the desired behavior or the result, and they end up sitting there waiting and longing for motivation.

So let me just emphasize this. Here's the truth. You do not need motivation if you want to make a change. If you want to start something that you're not motivated to start, let go of needing motivation before you start. Waiting to feel motivated is like waiting to feel inspired. You will potentially forever be waiting. Your book won't get written, your exercise plan will wither, the goal of understanding yourself better, poof, gone. Your muscles will atrophy as you wait for a surprise visit from motivation to invoke you to get going.

So just stop, stop waiting to feel motivated. Now, if you happen to feel motivated, ride that wave for all you can. This is like if you get the perfect wave when you're on a boogie board or a surfboard. I don't do ocean sports, so you can chuckle at me if I'm getting this all wrong. But the times that I have been on some sort of device in the ocean and the perfect wave

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comes and you can just go and go and go and it sort of brings you all the way to where you wanna go, amazing.

If you happen to catch the wave of motivation, just go with it. But then, after you've been able to enjoy that, let go of the need and hope for it. And let go of the misconception that it is required in order to meet your goals.

So many people will create a torturous experience for themselves because sort of subconsciously they are believing that if I'm not motivated something has gone wrong. Motivation is required to get going and if I don't have it I can't be committed and there must be something wrong with me that I'm not as motivated as I was.

So what do you really need if you want to do something? That some of the time you don't want to do. Instead of motivation you need commitment. You need willingness. You need courage. You need focus. You need clarity around your values. You need things like determination, patience. Heck, you need curiosity, playfulness, humor.

So think about this if you have a goal. When motivation is not there, if you are committed, you are going to be willing to get going and willing to feel uncomfortable emotions and willing to just get going even though you don't feel like it.

If you don't have motivation, but you have courage, you are going to say the things that are hard to say, and that might be telling yourself the truth. Today, even though I wish I wanted to do this, I don't. And sometimes when I don't feel like doing this, the best thing is to go to plan B, or the best thing is to just take the first step, and that might require some guts.

It requires focus. When you are focused on what you need to do, then you can basically sidestep and not get lost in procrastination because you're like, oh, I know exactly what I need to do. All this superfluous fluff off my radar, or at least I know how to hone in and laser in on exactly what I need to do. And therefore, even though I'm completely unmotivated, I'm focused and I'm gonna take my next step towards my goal.

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Think about having clarity around your values when you know what actually matters to you, like the real top two or three things that really matter. When you're clear on that, then you don't need motivation to move towards it.

And when you're clear on your values, you also have a tendency to realize that there's not just one particular way to move towards your goal. Say you're trying to get in shape and your thought is, well I'm gonna run you know three days a week. So when you have clarity around your values and your value is health, you don't have to just go running three days a week. You could say, well, I'm not motivated today and I'm exhausted and I've got another three shifts to go to work, so you know what I'm gonna do? I'm just gonna walk further from my car and I'm going to do things that help me have health, even if they're not going towards my fitness goal. Because I know my ultimate value is health globally, not necessarily improving my time and my 5K.

Think about how determination or patience or curiosity or humor or playfulness could really help you take action towards something when you're not motivated. You do not need motivation. It is truly one of the biggest myths surrounding habit change that to accomplish your goals, you have to feel motivated, and motivation is the required ingredient to take action. It is not.

The truth is you have to be willing to take action when you're not motivated, because it is easy to exercise when you're motivated, right? When you are well-rested and you're gonna meet friends that you don't wanna let down. But it is not so easy when you are tired, it's rainy, and no one but you would be the wiser if you just sat your ass back down and scrolled. When you are not motivated, it's trickier.

So here's your homework. I want you to think about this question for yourself. What do you need to tap into to take action when motivation isn't there? When motivation is on vacation, visiting some other lucky bastard, what do you need to tap into emotionally and energetically? What parts of you do you need to employ? What qualities of self-energy, if you like talking

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in IFS language, what do you need to tap into to take action when you don't have motivation?

Now there is not one answer, there's not one correct thing, and there's not like certain things that will only work for you on certain habits. It doesn't really matter what you pick.

The key is that you look in and you find what you need. For me, feeling focused and determined is really useful. But for other people, feeling focused and determined does not do the trick, or it works on Monday, but it doesn't work on Tuesday. So I want you to be really extensive and think about what are all the things that I need to tap into in order to take action when I'm not motivated, when things are difficult.

So think for a moment about the times that it's tricky or difficult to do what you wanna do. This is a silly example, but I think a lot of people can relate. Say you have the best intentions to floss, brush your teeth, set out your clothes, and take the garbage out before they come in the morning. And it has started raining, it's gotten a little bit late, maybe you've fallen asleep with one of your kids and you've woken up and you're like, oh, I haven't done the things, and you really think, gosh, maybe I can just wake up really early and take the garbage out, or maybe it's not that full and the recycling won't overflow if I wait till next week, and you are completely unmotivated, you don't want to go. You don't want to do any of the things.

In those moments, what will get you going? So your work is to look at whatever goal you have for yourself. Look at whatever it is you're trying to do that you're struggling with doing and figure out what are some effective emotions? What are some effective energies that will drive the actions that you want? What parts in your system are really good at maybe jumping in and doing things even when you don't want to? Not at your own expense, but like when you just need to get going. What parts block you from being patient and determined or willing to do work when it's a struggle.

This week, watch yourself yearning for motivation and remind yourself that it is hooey. Motivation is beautiful when it's there. It's like whipped cream on top of hot chocolate. It's great, but you can still enjoy the hot chocolate

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without the whipped cream. And as you notice yourself yearning for it, see what you need to do to get going without that fickle feeling, without relying on it. How can you perhaps invoke commitment? What do you need to believe?

What emotions will be useful team members for yourself? So I can't wait to hear how it goes. And I hope that if you are a new listener, that this was really useful for you and I will see you on the next episodes. Take care guys, bye bye.

Are you on the *Habits on Purpose* email list yet? I send community emails with practical information, habit change tips, and announcements about workshops, lectures, and in-person events that I'm going to be attending. I share things that I don't share here on the podcast, and I let you in on what I'm studying, what I'm learning, and what I'm going through in my life.

When you're on the list, you can always press "Reply" and ask me a question. And you'll hear back from me; not from my team, not from AI. You'll hear back from me.

So to connect in your inbox. Go to HabitsOnPurpose.com and join the email list. You can also find me on Instagram and Facebook. And get ready for it, eventually ... gasp ... you will find me on TikTok once I actually open an account.

Take care, and I look forward to connecting.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit www.habitsonpurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.