

# Motivation in Micro-Steps: The 10-Minute Change Plan

## Objective

To increase motivation and follow-through by breaking change into small, doable steps that reduce overwhelm and build momentum.

## What to Know

Motivation is often misunderstood. Most people believe motivation must come *before* action, but research shows the opposite is usually true. Motivation frequently *follows* action. When a task feels too big, the brain's threat system activates, leading to procrastination, avoidance, or shutdown. Smaller, time-limited actions reduce threat, increase a sense of control, and help the brain release dopamine, the neurotransmitter associated with motivation and reward.

Change does not begin with feeling motivated; it begins with taking action. Behavioral science shows that when you start small, resistance decreases, momentum increases, and confidence grows naturally. Consistency matters far more than intensity; repeated, manageable actions build real change over time. Each small success strengthens self-trust and reinforces the belief that you can follow through. Ten-minute micro-steps work because they are short enough to feel doable and long enough to make meaningful progress, helping motivation emerge from action rather than requiring it.

This worksheet helps you see that progress does not require feeling ready; it requires starting small. When you take even one brief action, movement begins, motivation follows, and confidence grows. Small steps are enough to create meaningful change.

## What to Do

**Step 1: Choose One Focus.** Pick one small area of change (not everything all at once!).

One thing that would make life a little easier right now is...

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**Step 2: Shrink the Task.** Complete this sentence: *"In 10 minutes or less, I could..."*

Here are some examples:

- Read 2 pages

- Send one email
- Set out materials
- Write one paragraph
- Take a short walk
- Schedule an appointment
- Tidy one small area

**My 10-minute task:**

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**Step 3: Set the Conditions.** Decide when and where this will happen.

**When:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where:** \_\_\_\_\_

What might get in the way?

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What will help you follow through?

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**Step 4: Start Without Negotiating.** When it's time:

- Set a 10-minute timer
- Begin the task
- Stop when the timer ends

You may continue only if you want to—not because you “should.”

After the timer:

I stopped

I continued

I adjusted the task

All outcomes count as success! Explain what happened.

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**Step 5: Notice the Impact.** Answer the following questions.

How did you feel before starting?

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How did you feel after the 10 minutes were over?

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What did you learn about yourself?

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If your motivation still felt low, that does not mean you failed. Ask instead:

- Was the step still too big?
- Was my nervous system overwhelmed?
- Do I need support, rest, or regulation first?

Adjust your plan. What will you do?

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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