

Goal Setting, Motivation, and Character

3

Moving from Dreams to Plans to Action

ACTIVATE YOUR THINKING

How would you define the word “successful”?

Reflection

3.1

LEARNING GOAL

To help you set and strive for meaningful goals and maintain your motivation to reach those goals.

What Does Being “Successful” Mean to You?

“Achieving a desired outcome” is how *success* is commonly defined. The word *success* derives from the Latin root *successus*, meaning “to follow or come after” (as in the word *succession*). Thus, by definition, success involves an order or sequence of actions that lead to a desired outcome. The process starts with identifying an end (goal) and then finding a means (sequence of steps) to reach that goal (achieving success). Goal setting is the first step in the process of becoming successful because it gives you something specific to strive for and ensures that you start off in the right direction. Studies consistently show that setting goals is a more effective self-motivational strategy than simply telling yourself that you should try hard and do your best (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Locke & Latham, 1990).

By setting goals, you show initiative—you initiate the process of gaining control of your future and taking charge of your life. When you take initiative, you demonstrate what psychologists call an *internal* locus of control: you believe that the locus (location or source) of control for events in your life is inside of you, rather than being *external*, or outside of you and beyond your control—for instance, determined by such factors as innate ability, luck, chance, or fate (Rotter, 1966; Carlson, Buskist, Heth, & Schmaltz, 2007). They believe that success is influenced more by attitude, effort, commitment, and preparation than by natural ability or inborn intelligence (Jernigan, 2004).

Research has revealed that individuals with a strong internal locus of control display the following characteristics:

1. Greater independence and self-direction (Van Overwalle, Mervielde, & De Schuyter, 1995);
2. More accurate self-assessment (Hashaw, Hammond, & Rogers, 1990);
3. Higher levels of learning and achievement (Wilhite, 1990); and
4. Better physical health (Maddi, 2002; Seligman, 1991).

Student Perspective

“Stopping a long pattern of bad decision-making and setting positive, productive priorities and goals.”

—College sophomore’s answer to the question “What does being successful mean to you?”

“I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.”

—Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States

"The future is literally in our hands to mold as we like. But we cannot wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow is now."

—Eleanor Roosevelt, UN diplomat and humanitarian

"What lies behind us and what lies in front of us are small matters compared to what lies within us."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th-century American essayist and lecturer

"Nothing ever comes to one that is worth having, except as a result of hard work."

—Booker T. Washington, born-in-slavery Black educator, author, and advisor to Republican presidents

Student Perspective

"Accomplishing something hard to do. Not something that has just been handed to me."

—First-year student's response to the question: "What does being successful mean to you?"

"Control your own destiny or someone else will."

—Jack Welch, chemical engineer, author, and successful CEO of the General Electric Company

"The price of greatness is responsibility."

—Winston Churchill, British prime minister during World War II and Nobel Prize winner in literature

"Man who stand on hill with mouth open will wait long time for roast duck to drop in."

—Confucius, Chinese philosopher who emphasized sincerity and social justice

"You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take."

—Wayne Gretzky, Hall of Fame hockey player, nicknamed "The Great One" and considered by many to be the greatest hockey player of all time.

An internal locus of control also contributes to the development of another positive trait that psychologists call *self-efficacy*—the belief that you have power to produce a positive effect on the outcomes of your life (Bandura, 1994). People with low self-efficacy tend to feel helpless, powerless, and passive; they allow things to happen to them rather than taking charge and making things happen for them. College students with a strong sense of self-efficacy believe they're in control of their educational success and can take control of their future, regardless of their past or current circumstances.

People with a strong sense of self-efficacy initiate action, exert effort, and sustain that effort until they reach their goals. If they encounter setbacks or bad breaks along the way, they don't give up or give in; they persevere or push on (Bandura, 1986; 1997). They don't have a false sense of entitlement—that they're entitled to or owed anything; they believe success is something that's earned and the harder they work at it, the more likely they'll get it.

Students with a strong sense of *academic* self-efficacy have been found to:

1. Put considerable effort into their studies;
2. Use active-learning strategies;
3. Capitalize on campus resources; and
4. Persist in the face of obstacles (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Zimmerman, 1995; 2000).

Reflection 3.2

You are not required by law or by others to attend college; you've made the decision to continue your education. Do you believe you are in charge of your educational destiny?

Why or why not?

Students with a stronger sense of self-efficacy also possess a strong sense of personal responsibility. As the breakdown of the word *responsible* implies, they are "response" "able"—that is, they believe they are able to respond effectively to personal challenges, including academic challenges.

For example, studies show that students who convert their college degrees into successful careers have two common characteristics: personal initiative and a positive attitude (Pope, 1990). They don't take a passive approach and assume good positions will fall into their laps; nor do they believe they are owed a position simply because they have a college degree or credential. Instead, they become actively involved in the job-hunting process and use various job-search strategies (Brown & Krane, 2000).

Strategies for Effective Goal Setting

Motivation begins with goal setting. Studies show that people who neglect to set and pursue life goals are prone to feelings of "life boredom" and a belief that their lives are meaningless (Bargdill, 2000). Goals may be classified into three general categories: long-range, mid-range, and short-range, depending on the length of time it takes to reach them and the order in which they are to be achieved. Short-range goals

need to be completed before a mid-range goal can be reached, and mid-range goals must be reached before a long-range goal can be achieved. For example, if your long-range goal is a successful career, you must complete the courses required for a degree (mid-range goal) that will allow you entry into a career; to reach your mid-range goal of a college degree, you need to successfully complete the courses you're taking this term (short-range goal).

This process is called means-end analysis, which involves working backward from your long-range goal (the end) and identifying the order and timing of the mid-range and short-range subgoals (the means) that need to be taken to reach your long-range goal (Brooks, 2009; Newell & Simon, 1959).

Setting Long-Range Goals

Setting effective long-range goals involves a process that has two components: (1) self-awareness, or self-insight into who you are now, and (2) self-projection, or a vision of what you want to become. When you engage in both of these processes, you're able to see a connection between your short-range and long-range goals.

Long-range goal setting enables you to take an approach to your future that is proactive—acting beforehand to anticipate and control your future life rather than putting it off and being forced to react to it without a plan. Research shows that people who neglect to set goals for themselves are more likely to experience boredom with life (Bargdill, 2000). Setting long-range goals and planning ahead also helps reduce feelings of anxiety about the future because when you give forethought to your future, you gain greater power to control it—i.e., you develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy. As the old saying goes, “To be forewarned is to be forearmed.”

Reflection 3.3

In what area or areas of your life do you feel that you've been able to exert the most control and achieve the most positive results?

In what area or areas do you wish you had more control and were achieving better results?

What strategies have you used in those areas of your life where you've taken charge and gained control? Could you apply the same strategies to those areas in which you need to gain more control?

Remember that setting long-range goals and developing long-range plans doesn't mean you can't adjust or modify them. Your goals can undergo change as you change, develop skills, acquire knowledge, and discover new interests or talents. Finding yourself and discovering your path in life are among the primary purposes of a college education. Don't think that the process of setting long-range goals means you are locking yourself into a premature plan and reducing your options. Instead, long-range goal setting just gives you a map that provides you with some sense of direction about where you're going, which can also provide you with the ignition and motivation to get going.

“What keeps me going is goals.”

—Muhammad Ali, philanthropist, social activist, and Hall of Fame boxer crowned “Sportsman of the 20th Century” by *Sports Illustrated*

“To fail to plan is to plan to fail.”

—Robert Wubbolding, internationally known author, psychologist, and teacher

“You've got to be careful if you don't know where you're going because you might not get there.”

—Yogi Berra, Hall of Fame baseball player

“There is perhaps nothing worse than reaching the top of the ladder and discovering that you're on the wrong wall.”

—Joseph Campbell, American professor and writer

Steps in the Goal-Setting Process

Effective goal setting involves a four-step sequence:

1. **Awareness of yourself.** Your personal interests, abilities and talents, and values;
- ↓
2. **Awareness of your options.** The range of choices available to you;
- ↓
3. **Awareness of the options that best fit you.** The goals that are most compatible with your personal abilities, interests, values, and needs;
- ↓
4. **Awareness of the process.** The steps you need to take to reach your chosen goal.

"You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any
direction you choose."

—Theodore Seuss Giesel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss, author of children's books including *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*

"Know thyself, and to thine
own self be true."

—Plato, ancient Greek philosopher

Discussed in the next sections are strategies for taking each of these steps in the goal-setting process.

Step 1. Self-Awareness

The goals you choose to pursue say a lot about who you are and what you want from life. Thus, self-awareness is a critical first step in the process of goal setting. You must know yourself before you can choose the goals you want to achieve. While this may seem obvious, self-awareness and self-discovery are often overlooked aspects of the goal-setting process. Deepening your self-awareness puts you in a better position to select and choose goals and to pursue a personal path that's true to who you are and what you want to become.

Remember

Self-awareness is the first and most important step in the process of making any important life choice or decision. Good decisions are built on a deep understanding of one's self.

"In order to succeed, you
must know what you are
doing, like what you are
doing, and believe in what
you are doing."

—Will Rogers, Native American
humorist and actor

No one is in a better position to know who you are, and what you want to be, than *you*. One effective way to get to know yourself more deeply is through self-questioning. You can increase self-awareness by asking yourself questions that can stimulate your thinking about your inner qualities and priorities. Effective self-questioning launches you on an inward quest or journey to self-insight and self-discovery, which is the essential first step to effective goal setting. For example, if your long-range goal is career success, you can launch your voyage toward achieving this goal by asking yourself thought-provoking questions related to your personal:

- **Interests.** What you like to do;
- **Abilities and talents.** What you're good at doing; and
- **Values.** What you believe is worth doing.

The following questions are designed to sharpen your self-awareness with respect to your interests, abilities, and values. As you read each question, briefly note what thought or thoughts come to mind about yourself.

Your Personal Interests

1. What tends to grab your attention and hold it for long periods of time?
2. What sorts of things are you naturally curious about and tend to intrigue you?
3. What do you enjoy and do as often as you possibly can?
4. What do you look forward to or get excited about?
5. What are your favorite hobbies or pastimes?
6. When you're with friends, what do you tend to talk most about or spend most of your time doing?
7. What has been your most stimulating or enjoyable learning experience?
8. If you've had previous work or volunteer experience, what jobs or tasks did you find most enjoyable or stimulating?
9. When time seems to fly by for you, what are you usually doing?
10. When you choose to read, what topics do you read about?
11. When you open a newspaper or log on to the Internet, where do you tend to go first?
12. When you find yourself daydreaming or fantasizing about your future life, what's going on or what are you doing?

Reflection 3.4

From your responses to the preceding questions, identify one long-range goal you could pursue that's compatible with your personal interests. In the space that follows, write down the goal and your interests that are compatible with it.

Your Personal Abilities and Talents

1. What seems to come easily or naturally to you?
2. What would you say is your greatest personal strength or talent?
3. What do you excel at when you apply yourself and put forth your best effort?
4. What are your most advanced or well-developed skills?
5. What would you say has been the greatest accomplishment or achievement in your life thus far?
6. What about yourself are you most proud of, or what do you take the most pride in doing?
7. When others come to you for advice or assistance, what is it usually for?
8. What would your best friend or friends say is your best quality, trait, or characteristic?
9. When you had a strong feeling of being successful after you had done something, what was it that you did?
10. If you've received awards or other forms of recognition, what did you do to earn them?
11. In what types of learning tasks or activities have you experienced the most success?
12. In what types of courses do you tend to earn the highest grades?

"Never desert your line of talent. Be what nature intended you for and you will succeed."

—Sydney Smith, 18th-century English writer and defender of the oppressed

Reflection 3.5

From your responses to the preceding questions, identify a long-range goal you could pursue that's compatible with your personal abilities and talents. In the space that follows, write down the goal and your abilities and talents that are compatible with it.

"Do what you value; value what you do."

—Sidney Simon, author of *Values Clarification* and *In Search of Values*

"Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get."

—Dale Carnegie, author of the bestselling book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) and founder of the Dale Carnegie Course, a worldwide program for business based on his teachings

Your Personal Values

1. What matters most to you?
2. If you were to single out one thing you stand for or believe in, what would it be?
3. What would you say are your highest priorities in life?
4. What makes you feel good about what you're doing when you're doing it?
5. If there were one thing in the world you could change, improve, or make a difference in, what would it be?
6. When you have extra spending money, what do you usually spend it on?
7. When you have free time, what do you usually spend it on?
8. What does "making it big in life" mean to you?
9. How would you define success? (What would it take for you to feel that you were successful?)
10. How would you define happiness? (What would it take for you to feel happy?)
11. Do you have any heroes or anyone you admire, look up to, or believe has set an example worth following? If yes, who and why?
12. Which of the following four personal qualities would you want to be known for? Rank them in order of priority to you (1 = highest, 4 = lowest).

_____ Smart

_____ Wealthy

_____ Creative

_____ Caring

Reflection

3.6

From your responses to the preceding questions, identify a long-range goal you could pursue that's compatible with your personal values. In the space that follows, write down the goal and your values that are compatible with it.

"Students [may be] pushed into careers by their families, while others have picked one just to relieve their anxiety about not having a career choice. Still others may have picked popular or lucrative careers, knowing nothing of what they're really like or what it takes to prepare for them."

—Lee Upcraft, Joni Finney, and Peter Garland, student development specialists

Step 2. Awareness of Your Options

The second critical step in the goal-setting process is to become aware of your options for long-range goals. For example, to effectively choose a career goal, you need to be aware of the career options available to you and have a realistic understanding of the types of work performance required by these careers. To gain this knowledge, you'll need to capitalize on available resources by doing the following:

1. Reading books about different careers
2. Taking career development courses
3. Interviewing people in different career fields
4. Observing (shadowing) people working in different careers

Step 3. Awareness of Options That Best "Fit" You

A third key step in the goal-setting process is becoming aware of the full range of options available to you as potential goals. For instance, in college you have multiple courses and majors from which to choose. To deepen your awareness of whether a field may be a good fit for you, take a course in that field to test out how well it

matches your interests, values, talents, and learning style. Ideally, you want to select a field that closely taps into, or builds on, your strongest skills and talents. Choosing a field that's compatible with your strongest abilities will enable you to master the skills required by that field more deeply and efficiently. You are also more likely to succeed or excel in a field that draws on your talents, and the success you experience will, in turn, strengthen your self-esteem, self-confidence, and drive to continue with it. You've probably heard of the proverb "If there's a will, there's a way"—when you're motivated, you're more likely to succeed. It's also true that "If there's a way, there's a will"—when you know how to do something well, you're more motivated to do it.

Step 4. Awareness of the Key Steps Needed to Reach Your Goal

This is the fourth and final step in an effective goal-setting process. For example, if you've set the goal of achieving a college degree in a particular major, you need to be aware of the courses you need to complete to reach that major. Similarly, with a career goal, you need to know what major or majors lead to that career; some careers may require a specific major, but many careers may be reached through a variety of different majors. (See Chapter 11 for more details.)

Reflection 3.7

Think about a major you've chosen or are considering and answer the following questions:

1. Why are you considering this major? What led or caused you to become interested in this choice? Why or why not?
2. Would you say that your interest in this major is motivated primarily by intrinsic factors—i.e., factors "inside" of you, such as your personal abilities, interests, needs, and values? Or is your interest in the career motivated more heavily by extrinsic factors—i.e., factors "outside" of you, such as starting salary or meeting the expectations of parents?

The word motivation derives from the Latin *movere*, meaning "to move." Success comes to those who overcome inertia—they first initiate momentum to start moving them toward their goal; then they maintain motivation until their goal is reached. Goal setting only creates the potential for success; it takes motivation to turn this potential into reality by converting intention into action. You can have the best-planned goals and all the knowledge, strategies, and skills to be successful, but if you don't have the will to succeed, there's no way you will succeed. Studies show that without a strong personal commitment to achieve a goal, that goal will be not be achieved, no matter how well designed the plan is to reach it (Locke, 2000; Locke & Latham, 1990).

"Mere knowledge is not power; it is only possibility. Action is power; and its highest manifestation is when it is directed by knowledge."

—Francis Bacon, English philosopher, lawyer, and champion of modern science

"You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

—Author unknown

Remember

- The process of effective goal setting applies to more than just educational goals. It's a strategic process that can and should be applied to any goal you set for yourself in life, at any stage of your life.

3.1

Snapshot Summary

The SMART Method of Goal Setting

A popular mnemonic device for remembering the key components of a well-designed goal is the acronym “SMART” (Doran, 1981; Meyer, 2003).

A **SMART** goal is one that is:

Specific: States exactly what the goal is and what will be done to achieve it.

Example: I’ll achieve at least a “B” average this term by spending 25 hours per week on my course work outside of class and by using the effective learning strategies described in this book. (As opposed to the non-specific goal, “I’m really going to work hard.”)

Meaningful (and Measurable): A goal that really matters to the individual, for which progress can be steadily measured or tracked.

Example: I will achieve at least a “B” average this term because it will enable me to get into a field that I really want to pursue as a career, and I will measure my progress toward this goal by keeping track of the grades I’m earning in all my courses throughout the term.

Actionable: Identifies the concrete actions or behaviors that will be engaged in to reach the goal.

Example: I will achieve at least a “B” average this term by (1) attending all classes, (2) taking detailed notes in all my classes, (3) completing all reading assignments before their due dates, and (4) avoiding cramming by studying in advance of all my major exams.

Realistic: A goal capable of being achieved or attained.

Example: Achieving a “B” average this term will be a realistic goal for me because my course load is manageable and I will not be working at my part-time job for more than 15 hours per week.

Timed: A goal that is broken down into a timeline that includes short-range, mid-range, and long-range steps.

Example: To achieve at least a “B” average this term, first I’ll acquire the information I need to learn by taking complete notes in class and on my assigned readings (short-range step). Second, I’ll study the information I’ve acquired from my notes and readings in short study sessions held in advance of major exams (mid-range step). Third, I’ll hold a final review session for all information previously studied on the day before my exams, and after exams I’ll review my test results as feedback to determine what I did well and what I need to do better in order to maintain at least a “B” average (long-range step).

Note: The strategy for setting **SMART** goals is a transferable process that can be applied to reaching goals in any aspect or dimension of your life, including health-related goals such as losing weight, social goals such as meeting new people, and fiscal goals such as saving money. The **SMART** goal-setting strategy can help you achieve goals for any and all elements of holistic (whole-person) development described in Chapter 2 (p. 49).

Strategies for Maintaining Motivation and Progress toward Your Goals

Reaching your goals requires will and energy; it also requires skill and strategy. Listed here are strategies for maintaining your motivation and commitment to reaching your goals.

Visualize reaching your long-range goal. Create mental images of being successful. For example, if your goal is to achieve a college degree, imagine a crowd of cheering family, friends, and faculty at your graduation. Visualize how you’ll be able to cherish and carry this proud memory with you for the rest of your life, and how the benefits of a college degree will last your entire lifetime. Imagine yourself in the career that your college degree enabled you to enter. Visualize your typical workday going something like this: You wake up in the morning and hop out of bed enthusiastically, looking forward to your day at work. When you’re at work, time flies by,

and before you know it, the day's over. When you return to bed that night and look back on your day, you feel good about what you did and how well you did it.

Put your goals in writing. When you put your goals in writing, you remain aware of them and remember them. This can stimulate your motivation to pursue your plan into action by serving almost like a written contract that holds you accountable to following through on your commitment. Place your written goals where you see them regularly. Consider writing them on sticky notes and posting them in multiple places that you encounter on a daily basis (e.g., your laptop, refrigerator, and bathroom mirror). If you keep them constantly in sight, you'll keep them constantly in mind.

Map out your goals. Lay out your goals in the form of a flowchart to show the steps you'll be taking to move from your short-range to mid-range to long-range goals. Visual diagrams can help you "see" where you want to go, enabling you to connect where you are now and where you want to be. Diagramming can also be energizing because it gives you a sneak preview of the finish line and a map-like overview of how to get there.

Keep a record of your progress. Research indicates that the act of monitoring and recording progress toward goals can increase motivation to continue pursuing them (Locke & Latham, 2005; Matsui, Okada, & Inoshita, 1983). The act of keeping records of your progress probably increases your motivation by giving you frequent feedback on your progress and positive reinforcement for staying on track and moving toward your target (long-range goal) (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Schunk, 1995). For example, mark your accomplishments in red on your calendar, or keep a journal of the goals you've reached; your entries will keep you motivated by supplying you with concrete evidence of your progress and commitment. You can also chart or graph your progress, which provides a powerful visual display of your upward trends and patterns. Keep the chart where you can see it on a daily basis so you can use it as an ongoing source of inspiration and motivation. You can add musical inspiration by playing a motivational song in your head to keep you going (e.g., "We Are the Champions" by Queen).

Develop a skeletal resume of your career goals. Include your goals as separate sections or categories that will be fleshed out as you complete them. Your to-be-completed resume can provide a framework or blueprint for organizing, building, and tracking progress toward your goals. It can also serve as a visual reminder of the things you plan to accomplish and eventually showcase to potential employers. Furthermore, every time you look at your growing resume, you'll be reminded of your past accomplishments, which can energize and motivate you to reach your goals. As you fill in and build up your resume, you will see (literally) how much you have achieved, which boosts your self-confidence and motivation to continue achieving. (For a sample skeletal resume, see Chapter 12, p. 324.)

Reward yourself for making steady progress toward your long-range goal. Reward is already built into reaching your long-range goal because it represents the end of your trip: it lands you at your desired destination. However, short- and mid-range goals may not be desirable ends in themselves; often, they are merely the means to a desirable end (your long-range goal). Consequently, you need to intentionally reward yourself for landing on these smaller stepping stones up the path to your long-range goal. When you complete these short- and mid-range goals, record and reward your accomplishments (e.g., celebrate your successful completion of midterms or finals by treating yourself to something you enjoy).

Like any other habit, the habit of perseverance and persistence through all intermediate steps needed to reach a long-range goal is more likely to continue if it's followed by a reward (positive reinforcement). The process of setting small goals, mov-

Remember

The next best thing to accomplishing something immediately is immediately writing down your intention to do it!

"Life isn't a matter of milestones but of moments."

—Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, philanthropist and mother of John F. and Robert F. Kennedy

"Willpower is the personal strength and discipline, rooted in strong motivation, to carry out your plans. 'Waypower' is the exertion of willpower that helps you find resources and support."

—Jerry Pattengale, history professor and author of *The Purpose-Guided Student: Dream to Succeed*

"Develop an inner circle of close associations in which the mutual attraction is not sharing problems or needs. The mutual attraction should be values and goals."

—Denis Waitley, former mental trainer for U.S. Olympic athletes and author of *Seeds of Greatness*

ing steadily toward them, and rewarding yourself for reaching them is a simple but powerful strategy. It helps you maintain motivation over the extended period needed to reach your long-range goal.

Capitalize on available campus resources that can help you stay on track and moving toward your goal. Research indicates that college success results from a combination of what students do for themselves (personal responsibility) and what students do to capitalize on resources available to them—i.e., their resourcefulness (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Successful college students are resourceful students; they seek out and take advantage of college resources to help them reach their goals.

For example, a resourceful student who is having trouble deciding what field of study to pursue for a degree will seek assistance from an academic advisor on campus. A resourceful student who is interested in a particular career but is unclear about the best educational path to take toward that career will use the Career Development Center as a resource.

Use your social resources. Ask yourself, "Who can help me stick to my plan and complete the steps needed to reach my goal?" The power of social support groups for helping people achieve personal goals is well documented by research in various fields (Brissette, Cohen, & Seeman, 2000; Ewell, 1997). You can use the power of people by surrounding yourself with peers who are committed to successfully achieving their educational goals and by avoiding "toxic" people who are likely to poison your plans or dampen your dreams.

Find supportive, motivated friends and make a mutual pact to help each other reach your respective goals. This step could be taken to a more formal level by drawing up a "social contract" whereby you and your partner are "co-witnesses" or designated social-support agents whose role is to help each other stay on track and moving toward long-range goals. Studies show that making a public commitment to a goal increases your commitment to it, probably because it becomes a matter of personal pride and integrity that's seen not only through your own eyes but also through the eyes of others (Hollenbeck, Williams, & Klein, 1989; Locke, 2000).

Convert setbacks into comebacks. The type of thoughts you have after experiencing a setback can affect your emotional reaction to the setback and the action you take in response to it. What you think about a poor performance (e.g., a poor test grade) can affect your emotional reaction to that grade and what action, or lack of action, you take to improve it. You can react to the poor grade by knocking yourself down with a putdown ("I'm a loser") or by building yourself back up with a positive pep talk ("I'm going to learn from my mistakes on this test and rebound with a stronger performance on the next one").

It's noteworthy that the root of the word *failure* is *fallere*, which means to "trip or fall," while the root word for *success* is *successus*, which means "to follow or come after." Thus, when we fail at something, it doesn't mean we've been defeated: it just means we've stumbled and fallen. Success can still be achieved after the fall by getting up, not giving up, and continuing to take the succession of steps need to successfully reach our goal.

Reflection 3.8

What would you say is the biggest setback or obstacle you've overcome in your life thus far?

How did you overcome it? (What enabled you to get past it or prevented you from being blocked by it?)

If a poor past performance is seen not as a personal failure but as a learning opportunity, the setback may be turned into a comeback. Here are some notable people who turned early setbacks into successful comebacks:

- Louis Pasteur, famous bacteriologist, who failed his admission test to the University of Paris;
- Albert Einstein, Nobel Prize-winning physicist, who failed math in elementary school;
- Thomas Edison, prolific inventor, who was once expelled from school as “uneducable”;
- Johnny Unitas, Hall of Fame football player, who was cut twice from professional football teams early in his career.

In response to their early setbacks, these successful professionals didn’t get discouraged. Getting mad or sad about a setback is likely to make you stressed or depressed and leave you focused on a past event that you can no longer control. By reacting optimistically to a poor performance and using the results as feedback to improve your future performance, you gain control of it. You put yourself in the position to bounce back from the setback and turn a liability into an opportunity.

“What happens is not as important as how you react to what happens.”

—Thaddeus Golas, *Lazy Man’s Guide to Enlightenment*

“When written in Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters. One represents danger, and the other represents opportunity.”

—John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States

Remember

Don’t let past mistakes bring you down emotionally or motivationally, but don’t ignore or neglect them. Instead, inspect them, reflect on them, and correct them so that they don’t happen again.

Maintain positive expectations. Just as your thoughts in reaction to something that’s already taken place can affect your motivation, thoughts about what you expect to happen next can affect what will occur. Your expectations of things to come can be either positive or negative. For example, before a test you could think, “I’m poised, confident, and ready to do it.” Or you could think, “I know I’m going to fail this test; I just know it.”

Expectations can lead to what sociologists and psychologists have called a self-fulfilling prophecy—a positive or negative expectation leads you to act in a way that is consistent with your expectation, which, in turn, makes your expectation come true. For instance, if you expect you’re going to fail an exam (“What’s the use? I’m going to fail anyway.”), you’re less likely to put as much effort into studying for the test. During the test, your negative expectation is likely to reduce your test confidence and elevate your test anxiety; for example, if you experience difficulty with the first item on a test, you may get anxious and begin to think you’re going to have difficulty with all remaining items and flunk the entire exam. All of this negative thinking is likely to increase the probability that your expectation of doing poorly on the exam will become a reality.

“Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right.”

—Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company

Reflection 3.9

Would you consider yourself to be an optimist or a pessimist?

In what situations are you more likely to think optimistically and pessimistically?

Why?

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

—Winston Churchill

In contrast, positive expectations can lead to a positive self-fulfilling prophecy: If you expect to do well on an exam, you're more likely to demonstrate higher levels of effort, confidence, and concentration, all of which combine to increase the likelihood that you'll earn a higher test grade. Research shows that learning and practicing positive self-talk serves to promote hope—belief in one's ability to reach goals and the ability to actually reach them (Snyder, 1994).

Keep your eye on the prize. Don't lose sight of the long-term consequences of your short-term choices and decisions. Long-range thinking is the key to reaching long-range goals. Unfortunately, however, humans are often more motivated by short-range thinking because it produces quicker results and more immediate gratification. It's more convenient and tempting to think in the short term ("I like it. I want it. I want it now."). Many years of research reveal that the later consequences follow a decision, the less likely people are to consider those consequences of their decisions (Ainslie, 1975; Elster & Lowenstein, 1992; Goldstein & Hogarth, 1997). For example, choosing to do what you feel like doing instead of doing work that needs to be done is why so many people procrastinate, and choosing to use a credit card to get something now instead of saving money to buy it later is why so many people pile up credit-card debt.

"You've got to think about 'big things' while you're doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction."

—Alvin Toffler, American futurologist and author who predicted the future effects of technology on our society

To be successful in the long run, you need to keep your focus on the big picture—your dream. At the same time, you need to focus on the details—the due dates, to-do lists, and day-to-day duties that require perspiration but keep you on track and going in the right direction.

Setting meaningful life goals and steadily progressing toward them require two focus points. One involves a narrow-focus lens that allows you to focus in on the details immediately in front of you. The other is a wide-angle lens that gives you a big-picture view of what's further ahead of you (your long-range goal). Success involves your ability to see and make connections between small, short-term chores and challenges (e.g., completing an assignment that's due next week) and the large, long-range picture (e.g., college graduation and a successful future). Thus, you need to switch back and forth from the wide-angle lens that gives you a vision of the bigger, more distant picture (your dream) to a narrow-focus lens that shifts your attention to completing the smaller tasks immediately ahead of you and keeping on the path to your dream.

"Whoever wants to reach a distant goal must take many small steps."

—Helmut Schmidt, former chancellor of West Germany

Author's Experience

When I was coaching a youth soccer team, I noticed that many of the less successful players tended to make one of two mistakes when they were trying to move with the ball. Some spent too much time looking down, focusing on the ball at their feet, and trying to be sure that they did not lose control of it. By not lifting their heads and looking ahead periodically, they often missed open territory, open teammates, or an open goal. Other unsuccessful players made the opposite mistake: They spent too much time with their heads up, trying to see where they were headed. By not looking down at the ball immediately in front of them, they often lost control of the ball, moved ahead without it, or sometimes stumbled over it and fell flat on their faces. The successful soccer players on the team developed the habit of shifting their focus between looking down to maintain control of the ball immediately in front of them and lifting their eyes to see where they were headed.

The more I thought about how the successful players alternated between handling the ball in front of them and viewing the goal farther ahead, it struck me that this was a metaphor for success in life. Successful people alternate between both of these perspectives so that they don't lose sight of how the short-range tasks immediately in front of them connect with the long-range goal that's far ahead of them.

Remember

Keep your future dreams and current tasks in clear focus. Integrating these two perspectives will produce an image that provides you with the inspiration to complete your college education and the determination to complete your day-to-day tasks.

The Importance of Personal Character

Reaching your goals depends on acquiring and using effective strategies, but it takes something more. Ultimately, success emerges from the inside out; it flows from positive qualities or attributes found within you, which, collectively, form your personal character.

We become effective and successful human beings when our actions and deeds become a natural extension of who we are and how we live. At first, developing the habits associated with achieving success and leading a productive life may require substantial effort and intense concentration because these behaviors may be new to us. However, if these actions occur consistently enough, they're transformed into natural habits.

When you engage in effective habits regularly, they become virtues. A virtue may be defined as a characteristic or trait that is valued as good or admirable, and someone who possesses a collection of important virtues is said to be a person of character (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). There are three key character traits or virtues that typify highly motivated people:

1. Drive
2. Discipline
3. Determination

Drive

Drive is the force within you that supplies you with the energy needed to initiate action. Much like shifting into the drive gear is necessary to move your car forward, it takes personal drive to move forward and toward your goals. People with drive are not just dreamers: they are also doers. They take the action needed to convert their dreams into reality; they hustle—they go all out and give it their all, all of the time, to achieve their goals. College students with drive approach college with passion and enthusiasm. They don't hold back and work halfheartedly; they give 100 percent by putting their whole heart and soul into it. Studies show that individuals with dedication—who are deeply committed to what they do—are more likely to report that they are healthy and happy (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Maddi, 2002; Myers, 1993).

Discipline

Discipline includes such positive qualities as commitment, devotion, and dedication. These personal qualities enable us to keep going and moving toward our long-range goals over an extended period of time. Successful people think big but start small; they take all the small steps and diligently do all the little things that need to be done, which, in the long run, add up to a big accomplishment—achievement of their long-range goal.

People who are self-disciplined accept the day-to-day sweat, toil, and perspiration needed to attain their long-term aspirations. They're willing to tolerate short-term strain or pain for long-term gain. They have the self-control and self-restraint

"If you do not find it within yourself, where will you go to get it?"

—Zen saying (Zen is a branch of Buddhism that emphasizes seeing deeply into the nature of things and ongoing self-awareness)

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

—Aristotle, ancient Greek philosopher

"Sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny."

—Frances E. Willard, 19th-century American educator and women's rights activist

Student Perspective

"Why is it so hard when I have to do something and so easy when I want to do something?"

—First-year college student

"Self-discipline is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought be done, whether you like it or not."

—Thomas Henry Huxley, 19th-century English biologist

Remember

Sometimes you've got to do what you have to do in order to get to do what you want to do.

needed to resist the impulse for instant gratification or the temptation to do what they feel like doing instead of what they need to do. They're willing to sacrifice their immediate needs and desires in the short run to do what is necessary to put them where they want to be in the long run.

Reflection 3.10

Think about something that you do with drive, effort, and intensity. What thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors do you display when you do it?

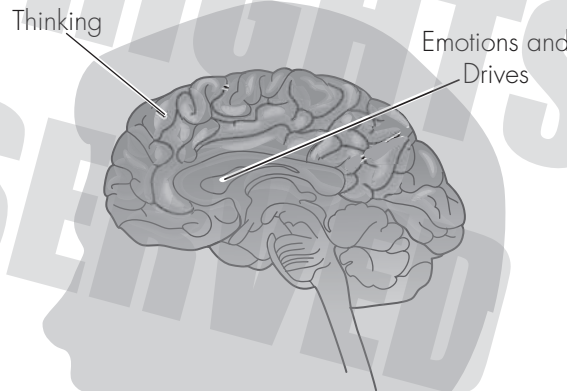
Do you see ways in which you could apply the same approach to achieving your goals in college?

"I long to accomplish some great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble."

—Helen Keller, seeing- and hearing-impaired author and activist for the rights of women and the handicapped

The ability to delay short-term (and shortsighted) gratification is a distinctively human characteristic that differentiates people from other animals. As you can see in **Figure 3.1**, the upper frontal part of the brain that's responsible for long-range planning and controlling emotions and impulses is much larger in humans than it is in one of the most intelligent and humanlike animals, the chimpanzee.

FIGURE 3.1



© Kendall Hunt

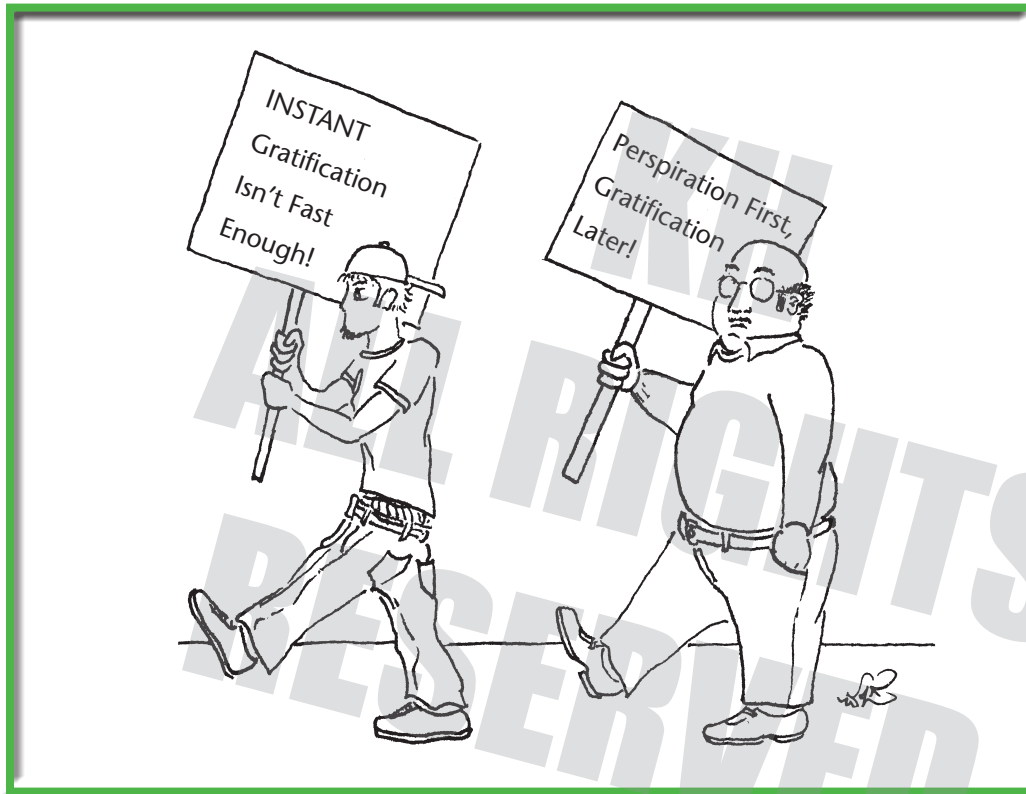
The part of the brain responsible for long-range planning and controlling emotions and impulses is much larger in humans than in other animals, including the highly intelligent chimpanzee.

Where Thoughts, Emotions, and Drives Are Experienced in the Brain

Author's Experience

When I entered college in the mid-1970s, I was a first-generation student from an extremely impoverished background. Not only did I have to work to pay for part of my education, but I also needed to assist my family financially. I stocked grocery store shelves at night during the week and waited tables at a local country club on the weekends. Managing my life, time, school, and work required full-time effort. However, I always understood that my purpose was to graduate from college and all of my other efforts supported that goal. Thus, I went to class and arrived on time even when I did not feel like going to class. One of my greatest successes in life was to keep my mind and body focused on the ultimate prize of getting a college education. That success has paid off many times over.

Aaron Thompson



Remember

Sacrifices made for a short time can bring benefits that last a lifetime.

The ability to postpone immediate wants or needs is a key characteristic of self-discipline.

Determination

People who are determined pursue their goals with a relentless tenacity. They have the fortitude to persist in the face of frustration and the resiliency to bounce back after setbacks. If they encounter something on the road to their goal that's hard to do, they work harder and longer to do it. When they encounter a major bump or barrier, they don't let it stand in their way by giving up or giving in; instead, they dig deeper and keep going.

People with determination are also more likely to seek out challenges. Research indicates that people who continue to pursue opportunities for personal growth and self-development throughout life are more likely to report feeling happy and healthy (Maddi, 2002; Myers, 1993). Rather than remaining stagnant and simply doing what's safe, secure, or easy, they stay hungry and display an ongoing commitment to personal growth and development; they keep striving and driving to be the best they can possibly be in all aspects of life.

"SUCCESS is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming."

—John Wooden, college basketball coach and creator of the "Pyramid of Success"

Studies of highly successful people, whether they are scientists, musicians, writers, chess masters, or basketball stars, consistently show that achieving high levels of skill and success requires dedicated practice (Levitin, 2006). This is true even of people whose success is thought to be due to natural gifts or talents. For example, during the Beatles' first four years as a band and before they burst into musical stardom, they performed live an estimated 1,200 times, and many of these performances lasted five or more hours a night. They performed (practiced) for more hours during those first four years than most bands perform during their entire careers. Similarly, before Bill Gates became a computer software giant and creator of Microsoft, he logged almost 1,600 hours of computer time during one seven-month period alone, averaging eight hours a day, seven days a week (Gladwell, 2008). What these extraordinary success stories show is that success takes dedication to putting in the time and practice to be successful. Reaching long-range goals means making small steps; they aren't achieved in one quick, quantum leap; it requires patience, persistence, and practice.

In addition to drive, discipline, and determination, three other character traits or virtues typify successful people:

1. Wisdom
2. Integrity
3. Civility

Wisdom

You demonstrate wisdom when you use the knowledge you acquire to guide you toward becoming an effective and successful human being (Staudinger & Baltes, 1994). For instance, if you apply the knowledge you've acquired in this chapter about goal setting and motivation to guide your behavior in college and beyond, you are exhibiting wisdom.

Reflection 3.11

Thus far in your college experience, which of the following four principles of success have you put into practice most effectively? (Circle one.)

active involvement resourcefulness collaboration reflection

Which of the four principles do you think will be the most difficult for you to put into practice? (Circle one.)

active involvement resourcefulness collaboration reflection

Why?

Integrity

The word *integrity* comes from the same root as the word *integrate*, which captures a key characteristic of people with integrity: their outer selves are integrated or in harmony with their inner selves. "Outer-directed" people decide on their personal standards of conduct by looking outward to see what others are doing (Riesman, Glazer,

"As gold which he cannot spend will make no man rich, so knowledge which he cannot apply will make no man wise."

—Dr. Samuel Johnson, famous English literary figure and original author of the *Dictionary of the English Language* (1747)

"Be as smart as you can, but remember that it is always better to be wise than smart."

—Alan Alda, visiting professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and six-time Emmy Award and Golden Globe Award winner, best known for his role as Hawkeye Pierce in the TV series *M*A*S*H*

& Denney, 2001). In contrast, individuals with integrity are “inner-directed”—their actions reflect their inner qualities and are guided by their consciences.

People of character are not only wise, they’re ethical. They don’t pursue success at any ethical cost. They have a strong set of personal values that steer them in the right moral direction. Besides doing things effectively and successfully, they do what’s good and right. For instance, college students with integrity don’t cheat and then rationalize that their cheating is acceptable because “others are doing it.” They don’t look to other people to determine their goals and values, and they don’t conform to the norm if the norm is wrong; instead, they look inward, use their consciences as their guides, and self-determine their goals.

Civility

People of character are personally and socially responsible. They model what it means to live in a civilized community by demonstrating civility—they respect the rights of other members of their community, including members of their college community. In exercising their own rights and freedoms, they don’t step (or stomp) on the rights and freedoms of others. They treat other members of their community in a sensitive and courteous manner and are willing to confront others who violate the rights of their fellow citizens. They are model citizens whose actions visibly demonstrate to others that they oppose any attempt to disrespect or interfere with the rights of fellow members of their community.

Student Perspective

“To achieve success through deceitful actions is not success at all. In life, credibility is more important than credentials, and if honesty is not valued personally, others will not value you. Lack of self-respect results in lack of respect from others.”

—First-year college student’s reflection on an academic integrity violation

“There is no pillow as soft as a clear conscience.”

—French proverb

“Our character is what we do when we think no one is looking.”

—Henry David Thoreau, American philosopher and lifelong abolitionist who championed the human spirit over materialism and conformity

Snapshot Summary

3.2

Violating Civility: Insensitive Use of Personal Technology in the Classroom

Behavior that interferes with the rights of others to learn or teach in the college classroom represents a violation of civility. Listed below are behaviors illustrating classroom incivility that involve student use of personal technology. These behaviors are becoming more common in college, as is the anger of college instructors and college students who witness them. Be sure to avoid them.

Using Cell Phones

Keeping a cell phone on in class is a clear example of classroom incivility, because if it rings, it will interfere with the right of others to learn. In a study of college students who were exposed to a cell phone ringing during a class session and were later tested for their recall of information presented in class, they scored approximately 25 percent worse when attempting to recall information that was presented at the time a cell phone rang. This attention loss occurred even if the material was covered by the professor prior to the cell phone ringing and if it was projected on a slide during the call. The study also showed that classmates are further distracted when classmates

frantically search through handbags or pockets to find and silence a ringing (or vibrating) phone (Shelton, Elliot, Eaves, & Exner, 2009). These findings clearly suggest that the civil thing to do is turn your cell phone off before entering the classroom, or keep it out of the classroom altogether.

“The right to do something does not mean that doing it is right.”

—William Safire, American author, journalist, and presidential speechwriter

Text Messaging

Answering a cell phone during class represents a violation of civility because it interferes with the learning of other members of the classroom community, and so does text messaging. It can distract or disturb classmates who see you messaging instead of listening and learning. It’s also discourteous or disrespectful to instructors when you put your head down and turn your attention away from them while they’re trying to speak to the class.

Reflection 3.12

Have you observed an example of incivility that you thought was exceptionally admirable or particularly despicable? What was the situation and what uncivil behavior was displayed?

Summary and Conclusion

Goal setting is the key to igniting motivation; maintaining motivation after it has been ignited requires use of effective self-motivational strategies, such as:

- Visualizing reaching your long-range goals;
- Putting goals in writing;
- Creating a visual map of your goals;
- Keeping a record of your progress;
- Rewarding yourself for progress toward long-range goals;
- Converting setbacks into comebacks by using positive self-talk and maintaining positive expectations; and
- Keeping your eye on the long-term consequences of your short-term choices and decisions.

Remember

Success isn't a short-range goal: it's not a sprint but a long-distance run that takes patience and perseverance to complete. What matters most is not how fast you start but where you finish. Goal setting will get you going and motivation will keep you going until you cross the finish line.

Successfully setting and reaching goals also depends on personal character. The following character traits or virtues typify highly motivated and successful people:

- **Drive.** The internal force that provides energy to overcome inertia and initiate action.
- **Discipline.** Commitment, devotion, and dedication that enable you to sustain your effort over time.
- **Determination.** The capacity to relentlessly pursue your goals, persist in the face of frustration, and bounce back after any setback.
- **Wisdom.** Using knowledge to guide effective behavior and action.
- **Integrity.** Doing what's right, good, or ethical.
- **Civility.** Respecting the rights of other members of the community.

Learning More through the World Wide Web

Internet-Based Resources for Further Information on Liberal Arts Education

For additional information related to the ideas discussed in this chapter, we recommend the following Web sites:

Goal Setting:

www.siue.edu/SPIN/activity.html

Self-Motivational Strategies:

www.selfmotivationstrategies.com

Developing Personal Character: Who's Watching? Character and Integrity in the 21st Century:

www.calea.org/calea-update-magazine/issue-100who-s-watching-character-and-integrity-21st-century

Chapter 3 Exercises

3.1 Prioritizing Important Life Goals

Consider the following life goals. Rank them in the order of their priority for you (1 = highest, 5 = lowest).

- ___ Emotional well-being
- ___ Spiritual growth
- ___ Physical health
- ___ Social relationships
- ___ Rewarding career

Self-Assessment Questions

1. What were the primary reasons behind your first- and last-ranked choices?
2. Have you established any short- or mid-range goals for reaching your highest-ranked choice? If yes, what are they? If no, what could they be?

3.2 Setting Goals for Reducing the Gap between Your Ideal Future and Your Current Reality

Think of an aspect of your life where there is a gap between what you hoped it would be (the ideal) and what it is (the reality). On the lines that follow, identify goals you could pursue to reduce this gap.

Long-range goal: _____

Mid-range goal: _____

Short-range goal: _____

Use the form that follows to identify strategies for reaching each of these three goals. Consider the following areas for each goal:

- Actions to be taken:
- Available resources:
- Possible roadblocks:
- Potential solutions to roadblocks:

Long-range goal: _____

- Actions to be taken:
- Available resources:
- Possible roadblocks:
- Potential solutions to roadblocks:

Mid-range goal: _____

- Actions to be taken:
- Available resources:
- Possible roadblocks:
- Potential solutions to roadblocks:

Short-range goal: _____

- Actions to be taken:
- Available resources:
- Possible roadblocks:
- Potential solutions to roadblocks:

3.3 Converting Setbacks into Comebacks: Transforming Pessimism into Optimism through Positive Self-Talk

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare wrote, "There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so." His point was that experiences have the potential to be positive or negative, depending on how people interpret them and react to them.

Listed here is a series of statements representing negative, motivation-destroying interpretations and reactions to a situation or experience:

1. "I'm just not good at this."
2. "There's nothing I can do about it."
3. "Nothing is going to change."
4. "This always happens to me."
5. "Everybody is going to think I'm a loser."

For each of the preceding statements, replace the negative statement with a statement that represents a more positive, self-motivating interpretation or reaction.

No Goals, No Direction

Amy Aimless decided to go to college because it seemed like that was what she was expected to do. All of her closest friends were going and her parents had talked to her about going to college as long as she could remember.

Now that she's in her first term, Amy isn't sure she made the right decision. She has no educational or career goals, nor does she have any idea about what her major might be. None of the subjects she took in high school and none of the courses she's taking in her first term of college have really sparked her interest. Since she has no goals or sense of purpose, she's beginning to think that being in college is a waste of time and money, so she's considering withdrawing at the end of her first term.

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. What advice would you give Amy about whether she should remain in college or withdraw?
2. What suggestion would you have for Amy that might help her find some sense of educational purpose or direction?
3. How could you counter Amy's claim that no subjects interest her as possible college majors?
4. Would you agree that Amy is currently wasting her time and her parents' money? Why?
5. Would you agree that Amy shouldn't have begun college in the first place? Why?

KH
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