

Helping a Young Person with Low Motivation due to Psychosis

Your child is **not lazy**. This is a **symptom**. She needs **more frequent and powerful rewards**. Reward **small steps in the right direction**.

Consider:

- Amotivation is linked to decreased activity in the areas of the brain responsible for initiative, anticipation of reward, and experience of pleasure.
- What does your child enjoy doing? Is there anything he does without prompting?
- Are there items your child wants to buy? Places she wants to go?
- Is your child feeling sad or depressed? Anxious? These can also reduce motivation.
- How much time does she spend alone, playing online games, watching movies?
- Substance use/abuse can make the lack of motivation worse.
- Stress may decrease motivation. Is your child overwhelmed?
- Is your child getting enough sleep?
- Is your child's medication dose too high?
- Each person's experience is unique. Find what is helpful to your child.

Strategies:

- Work with your child, school personnel, and others to **consider how different types and levels of stimulation impact her motivation**. Experiment. Ask your child what helps.
- Establish and maintain **predictable, low stress, but highly structured routines**. Your child may do things that are routine, even if they do not feel motivated.
- **Help them get started**. Sometimes that's all they need.
- **Break big tasks into small ones**. If this doesn't work, break them down further.
- Make a list of very small tasks every day. **Have your child cross off items when done**.
- Can your child do, e.g., homework, with friends or family? **Social support can motivate**.
- Provide more **interactive support** at school, social skill practice, and frequent cues re: the child's setting, task at hand, time of day, or interpersonal context.
- Teach him to **self-talk**: "I only need to do step 1"
- **Work with your child to identify small rewards** (food, privileges, fun activity, points toward a big reward, money) that she can earn for completing small or difficult tasks (rewards should be used to build momentum and overcome challenges). Set up a clear plan for earning rewards and stick to it.

RESOURCES: See website for suggestions of books and other resources.