

DESIRE . . .

AND HOW TO GET SOME!

IT'S A LUKEWARM WORLD AS SOMEONE ONCE SAID. FEW PEOPLE, SAYS DARREN WARD, ARE DETERMINED ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS

Desire, determination or motivation – call it what you will – is the only thing that can make you shoot better than your skill level says you should. It is the force behind those rare superhuman performances we are occasionally privileged to see. Yet, as well as enhancing performances, desire is

needed to make you practice productively and to persevere despite mistakes and defeat. In short, a large dose of motivation is a basic requirement if you want any success in this game. Luckily, people are not born to be great at motivating themselves, so anyone can gain this skill if pointed in the right direction.

Every sportsperson is motivated to some degree. Naturally, the driving-forces of a world-class performer will be stronger and rather different to those of a once-a-month shooter, but there are certain motivating factors common to everyone. In general, as well as for just plain fun, people shoot to 'belong', to gain respect from others and for fulfillment and achievement. Money and other material rewards usually make up part of the motivation pie, but are never the sole ingredient. Unless you are already a top gun, it is possible to

significantly improve your motivation by following these ten simple, practical tips:

1 CHOOSE YOUR PRIZE

To be of any inspiration at all, the prize you are shooting for has to be within reach. Rather than entering tournaments in which you are way out of your depth, it is more beneficial to concentrate on those where you have a fighting chance. In certain events the 'minnows' really need a good imagination to believe they can cause an upset. Beware of the other extreme though – motivation also takes a nose-dive if you only enter shoots in which you are a league above the other competitors (for example, you might have grown out of your club's fun competitions). We all need to be stretched. Going to shoots where you can achieve 85 in C class is fooling only yourself. Once you've

found the right competition, consider what the benefits of winning it will be. If you imagine beforehand what it would be like to have these benefits, it will increase your determination to shoot better to achieve them.

2 REMEMBER, IT'S NOT THE WINNING

Although the benefits of winning a particular shoot will be a big motivator, this should never be relied on completely. Say to yourself, "I'll concentrate on shooting the best I can, making sure to do this, this and this", rather than "I must win". This forces you to follow the principle that your motivation should come from giving a good show of your skills and not whether you win or lose. Why should your motivation go downhill, affecting your next performance, just because another competitor had a day where he



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could have powdered minis at 80 yards? That's not your problem nor your fault. Gain your determination from things you can control, ignoring those you can't.

3 MAKE A LIST

If you are 99% certain of finishing in no-man's-land on the scoreboard, whatever standard of event you enter, before each shoot make a short mental list of things you're going to aim for – a certain score normally being one. This provides an immediate target. Those who know they are in with a good chance of a top placing have an obvious goal and don't need this added inspiration, but for many a list could prove a distinct advantage. Identifying and reaching 'milestones' (like running a station) is a powerful motivator.

4 KNOW WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

An 'achievement list' only provides a short-term target. Take a few minutes to work out what you want from your shooting in the long-term. If you don't really know, how can you expect to ever get there? Whereas, if you are eager to eventually reach Master class (however improbable that seems at the moment) or an average of 75%, it will make every time you practice and compete that little bit more important and therefore your drive will be stronger.

5 COMPETE

No competition, no motivation. Always be competing against something, whether that is your best friend in practice, your worst enemy in a tournament, or just your own personal best score. Practice must have a purpose to be

any use and an excellent exercise is to promise yourself a treat whenever you reach a certain goal.

6 BE AFRAID

Fear creates adrenaline, which creates aggression, which creates motivation. People do their best to avoid pressure situations, yet nothing makes you more motivated than shooting in front of a big crowd or waiting ahead of your hero to shoot a station. Fear is only a problem if it becomes too intense and hinders your technique or concentration – but for most of us, a little fear is crucial for inspiring a good performance.

7 JUDGE YOUR PERFORMANCE

It's only natural, both during and after a shoot, to be judging your performance. There are ways and means of doing this.

Many people consistently judge

their performance negatively:

- That was stupid
- Why do I always mess up on rabbits?

Sometimes this negative attitude is caused by others judging you. There can be nothing more confidence-shattering than some know-all behind you whispering to his pal about how bad your technique is. Even your own friends can do unintentional damage with their 'witty' comments when you step out of the hot seat like 'Try it with your eyes open next time' or 'At least you're good at golf'.

Positive self-talk and analysis is imperative throughout these situations. Keep going, there is plenty of time to make up lost ground. Remembering to shoot to a rhythm is positive – have forward looking thoughts. This is also the only way to deal with defeat, the 'poor old me' attitude will only serve to spoil your next shoot.

8 CHANGE THE SCENERY

Everyone has spells when they can't seem to make any improvement or just feel stale. A new challenge is needed. A simple answer here is to change disciplines, if only for one or two sessions (Sporting shooters can often improve their timing and swing from a couple of rounds of Trap or Skeet). This need to focus on a new technical challenge often provides just the spark needed.

9 HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN

The following is an example of a quick emergency plan to use if motivation seems to have deserted you and is needed back in a hurry:

- Remind yourself of your main shooting ambitions. When up to your armpits in crocodiles it can be easy to forget you are trying to drain the swamp!

- Concentrate on giving the best technical performance you can at that moment regardless of the match situation.
- Forget about where you should be on the scoreboard, just try to claw your way up the field target by target, place by place, seeing each one as a step towards your shooting ambitions.

10 CLUB SELECTION

Finally comes a question which you've probably hardly considered but which has a big influence on all areas of your motivation. Is your club a motivating place to shoot? What are the facilities like, for instance? Does it have a good mix of targets or not? Is there a good camaraderie between members?

It's obvious really. Your overall motivation is going to be sky-high if you can eagerly look forward to

practicing and competing somewhere with an excellent variation and quality of targets, where there's always someone on hand to give encouragement and where you can retire to a comfortable clubhouse after a good day's shooting.

Given this sort of environment, it won't be long before you're putting in the odd superhuman performance yourself. ■

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TRY FITASC – IT WILL SHARPEN UP YOUR SHOOTING REACTIONS!