

"I'M DOWN IN THE DUMPS ABOUT MY SWIMMING: HOW CAN I PICK MYSELF UP AND GET BACK INTO IT?"

Sport psychology consultant **Helen Davis** looks at how to get back your swimming mojo

We all have times when we just don't feel it. Staying at home, rather than going out for your usual swim is much more appealing. You can feel stuck in a rut and find yourself saying 'I'll do it tomorrow' and then tomorrow never comes and time passes by. Whatever your reasons for feeling down in the dumps about swimming, picking yourself up and getting back into it can be difficult. What can you do to help yourself overcome these feelings?

Firstly, it is worth looking at why swimming just isn't happening for you at the moment. Spend some time checking in with your motivation. Generally speaking, motivation comes down to three important ingredients that all need to be working together to maintain your levels of motivation. Ask yourself, are you down in the dumps because of one of the following reasons:

INGREDIENT 1 IS MISSING: A LACK OF A FEEL-GOOD FACTOR?

Perhaps a lack of positive feedback is getting you down; no one has praised or noticed your swimming recently. Maybe your times, speed or technique are not what you want them to be, or perhaps you are just struggling to feel good at swimming as you aren't making the distances you want. Generally, you are not feeling good about your ability and you feel your progress is limited.

INGREDIENT 2 IS MISSING: A LACK OF CONNECTION WITH OTHERS?

Perhaps you are not feeling connected to other people and a sense of belonging to a group or others when you swim is just not there at the moment? Usually, you enjoy meeting and going swimming with others and this helps you. Currently, support networks are not present and you are missing the motivation others give you.

INGREDIENT 3 IS MISSING: A LACK OF CONTROL OVER WHAT YOU ARE DOING?

Perhaps your sense of freedom and choice is missing at the moment? You are feeling pressure that you 'should' go swimming, rather than swimming because you want to. When you do swim, you are not really enjoying it. Maybe you like choosing how and what you do when swimming, but that isn't the case at the moment and you are missing that feeling of independence.

Often, one of these three ingredients is missing when we feel down in the dumps. If all three of the ingredients above are supported and satisfied, generally you will feel more vitality, self-motivated and have a higher sense of well being. So, what can you do to help you pick yourself up again and get back into it?



PICKING YOURSELF UP AND GETTING BACK TO SWIMMING

Firstly, remember everyone has times where motivation is all over the place; it is normal. It is hard to be motivated every single day. Be kind to yourself and trust that this is just a phase which will pass.

Ask yourself questions about your life at the moment. Remember you can take responsibility for your own motivation by working on all three ingredients. For example, are you creating an environment where you feel in control and supported by checking in with people who can help you? This might just mean, chatting to a friend and explaining your lack of motivation at the moment and asking for their help. Help comes in many forms, and that text to say 'are you coming?' might just be the 'push' you need.

Confidence can take a knock when we don't feel good at something. Remember times when you have felt successful in swimming; you swam fast, your technique was good, or you swam a really long way. Remind yourself or ask others about your track record and successes. Remember why you love to swim.

Actively put your energy and focus into things you can control, rather than focusing on things you can't. Ask yourself: am I placing my focus and thinking on all the things that are not right with my swimming at the moment? If you are, aim to place your focus on what you can and are doing. Celebrate your successes, however small they may feel.

Find a motivation buddy who you can regularly check in with to help keep you both motivated. Arrange to swim together, or review sessions with each other afterwards. Share your concerns and feelings about being down in the dumps but wanting to get back into the swing of things.

Take time to learn about your own individual motivation. Think back to times when you have been really motivated and times when you haven't. What was going on at the time? Learn which one of the three ingredients might affect you first; find out which is the most important one to you.

Helen Davis is a swimmer and sport psychology consultant who works with individuals, teams and coaches on their sporting performance. Each month, Helen will suggest psychological techniques to help overcome difficult open water swimming scenarios. www.thinkbelieveperform.co.uk @helenDav2245

