



“I’ve got those ‘why-the-heck-am-I-trying-to-study-blues....’”

So it’s summer at last – the long light evenings, the children playing, the garden flowering, the sun shining – well, let’s not get carried away. Still it can be a difficult time to keep studying and an easy time to say the hell with it and give up. But that might just be premature.

Indeed we did a small survey a couple of years ago and discovered that nearly half of the students who withdrew between July and October had already done enough on continuous assessment to have passed their course by just passing the exam. Of course many of them may well have wanted to do more than just pass or may have had other excellent reasons to withdraw. But I do suspect that some may have been the victim of mid-course blues, lost their motivation and have withdrawn unnecessarily.

Losing motivation can effect everyone of course – I remember passing a door in a Walton Hall corridor (it was the Vice Chancellor’s actually*) that had a sign on it - ‘Please do not disturb – currently suffering Loss Of Will To Go On’.

So if you’re suffering from LOWTGO what can you do?

1. **Check your progress.** If you’re not sure what you’ve still got to do to pass then do check with your tutor – you may be pleasantly surprised].
2. **Remind yourself about your motivation.** If you’re wondering why you’re still slogging away then it’s often helpful to get back in touch with your motivation. Talk it over with your family friends, tutor, other students, even your boss, and remind yourself why you took this on in the first place. You’ll find you’re not alone in feeling like this from time to time.
3. **Deal with ‘Study Stress’.** Another reason that students drop out at this time of year is the sheer stress of studying. It’s particularly hard to concentrate when the demands of the outside world are more than ever. Then loss of concentration can lead to anxiety about study which can lead to study stress which leads to even worse concentration and so on in a horrible downwards spiral. If you feel yourself getting study stress here’s a few ideas that might help:
 - *Relax.* Try the occasional physical relaxation when you’re studying – lean back in your chair, let your arms dangle by your side, breathe out and say ‘stop’ to yourself. Then carry on when the stress has dripped out of your fingertips [ugh!]. Or just go for a walk.
 - *Negative thoughts.* Everyone has ‘negative thoughts’ – “I know I’ll never understand this”, “I’ve not got enough time” and so on. What you need is a ‘coping thought’ that contradicts the negative thought – “I’ve understood tougher stuff than this”, “I’ll just make the time” and so on. I won’t tell you what my coping thought is though – it’ll only get me into trouble with The Management.
 - *Lower your sights.* I sometimes wish that I could devise a motto for distance students. I’d make it ‘Perfectionism is the Enemy of Progress’ [it would sound better in Latin]. You don’t have to learn everything and assignments don’t have to be perfect. So stop

worrying about it - skip what you have to and Get the Thing In. And don't think of that as skiving off – it's 'Strategic Study' and Very Respectable too.

But if none of this works for you and you decide to withdraw then always remember that withdrawals are never held against you, they don't appear on your final transcript of studies and that you are always warmly welcome back. As a colleague said to me, "The only way to get out of distance learning is to die. Even then we only put in a change of address...."

* alright no it wasn't

Ormond Simpson