



max

your motivation

Want to become a new and improved you this year? Our quiz will help you pinpoint what inspires you to action and provide you with the tools to finally achieve your goals.



by **Leslie Goldman**
photography by
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hen 35-year-old Farah Balaghi of Spring Valley, Calif., looked in the mirror six years ago, she hardly recognized the person she had become. “I had hit an all-time high of 350 pounds,” she recalls. “I knew something had to change.” Her life, quite literally, depended on it. Thanks to a sensible diet and exercise plan, Balaghi gradually shed an impressive 80 pounds. Then she hit the dreaded plateau and nearly lost her motivation ... until, that is, she called in the reinforcements: She hired a personal trainer, sought out encouragement on

Facebook and signed up for group fitness classes. Eventually, she lost an additional 80 pounds.

In motivational parlance, Balaghi is a people person, aka “The Lover.” Others may thrive on setting specific goals (“The Doer”), learning new things (“The Thinker”) or taking risks (“The Adventurer”), but her type flourishes when working closely with others. “Knowing your motivational style is the key to making the changes you desire,” says Christy D. Hofsess, Ph.D., an assistant professor of counseling and health psychology at Bastyr University in Seattle. “If you’re a square peg, you can’t squeeze yourself into a round hole.” Indeed, if you’ve been struggling to accomplish your goals and maintain your motivation long term, you’re probably not honoring your own inspiration I.D. By answering the questions that follow, you’ll be able to pinpoint that personality type. Then, we’ll show you how to use your results to make the changes you want and ensure they stick. Here’s to the new and improved you!

[Quiz]

CHECK YOUR HEAD

What’s your motivational M.O.? Find out by answering the following questions.

1. Friends would describe me as:

- a) An overachiever and real go-getter
- b) A social butterfly
- c) Inquisitive and intellectual
- d) Energized and always on the go

2. The statement your Facebook status updates most resemble is:

- a) “Kicking butt and taking names!”
- b) “I love you guys.”
- c) “OK, people, what book should I read next?”
- d) “Just went hang-gliding! What a rush!”

3. When you get to work in the morning, the first thing you do is:

- a) Check your to-do list and start at the top.
- b) Chat with your colleagues about what they did last night.
- c) Scan the headlines of all the blogs in your RSS feed, then dive into what looks most intriguing.
- d) Call an impromptu meeting to discuss a dozen new ideas that kept you up all night.

4. At a farmers market, you:

- a) Methodically purchase everything on your shopping list.
- b) Stop to pet strangers’ dogs and catch up with neighbors.
- c) Quiz the vendors about all the details of the who, what, where, when and why of their products.
- d) Make a beeline for the chili pepper stand, sampling something called a “Trinidad Scorpion.”

5. You just took a serious spill on your bike and think you may have broken your ankle. You:

- a) Call the doctor and demand to be seen immediately.
- b) Tell your closest friend what happened and ask what she thinks you should do.
- c) Go online and start researching “broken ankle.”
- d) Tape up your injury and keep on riding.

6. You feel most confident about your career when:

- a) You’re moving forward and making things happen.
- b) You feel a sense of camaraderie with your colleagues.
- c) You’re being challenged and stimulated in ever-changing ways.
- d) You’re juggling 10 different tasks at once.

YOUR RESULTS} Ready for your motivation makeover? Simply look at which letter you circled most and flip to the page that addresses those answers.



Mostly A's: “The Doer”

As someone who's goal-oriented, you're most motivated to change when you have a concrete set of steps you can follow. “This type of person always makes New Year's resolutions and thrives on to-do lists,” says Art Markman, Ph.D., professor of psychology at The University of Texas at Austin. While this sounds incredibly efficient, danger lies in the tendency to do too much. “Once goal-oriented people have accomplished an objective, they're on to the next one,” Markman explains. “They stop paying attention to the original goal and old habits begin to creep back in.”

Transform yourself: Get motivated in a more sustainable manner by taking indirect steps toward your target. For example, instead of saying, “I'm going to lose 20 pounds,” try “I'm going to run 12 miles a week,” or “No more snacking after dinner.” Rather than ordering yourself to “stress less,” aim to meditate for 10 minutes every morning. Instead of saying, “I need to find the perfect relationship,” do things that put you in contact with the sorts of people who might best fit the bill. “You'll end up with the same desired outcome but by working *toward* new behaviors rather than just pushing away from what you don't want,” says Markman. Just ask Maree Jones, 27, of Birmingham, Ala.: “I'm really driven and organized, but when it comes to romance, planning doesn't always work,” she says. “After graduating from college, I wanted to meet new people, but the bar scene wasn't working—so I joined a community theater group.” That's where Jones met her husband as well as some of her closest friends. “Doing these performances was a great way to connect with people,” she says. “My mother always told me when I stopped looking for love, I would find it. I guess she was right!”

Max your motivation: Doers often get an extra boost from monitoring their progress, so check out goal-related apps like Wunderlist (wunderlist.com), keep a running tally of completed tasks in a journal or use a vision board (see makeavisionboard.com). Marcia Conner, a Virginia-based corporate strategist, also suggests taking breaks to recharge: “You may think ‘downtime’ is another name for ‘unproductive time,’ but a short stretch break or a five-minute walk will boost your efficiency and, hence, get you to your goal faster than you might think.”

“The Doer” should set specific goals, like running 12 miles a week.



"The Lover" uses the buddy system to max her motivation.

Get SMART

No matter what your motivational mindset, you can benefit from setting SMART goals, as follows:

S = Specific Instead of vaguely vowing to "exercise more," be precise: "I'm going to walk three times per week for 40 minutes."

M = Measurable Rather than saying, "I will watch less reality TV," try something you can quantify, such as "I will watch no more than one show per week."

A = Attainable If you're trying to slim down to a size 0 but have never been smaller than a 6, you might want to revise your target to a slightly higher number.

R = Realistic Instead of attempting to morph from carnivore to raw vegan in a month, start with Meatless Mondays, then Tuesdays ...

T = Timely Setting a timeline helps you achieve your goals, often because of the sense of urgency you create. Dedicate yourself to a less stressed-out existence by pledging to take yoga once a week for 12 weeks.

Mostly B's: "The Lover"

Since you're such a people person, chances are you have at least one workout buddy, live for parties and can't imagine life without Facebook. One of the many perks of being a social butterfly: Research shows that making a behavioral change with a friend boosts your odds of success. Just be aware that this can backfire if your friend has not-so-healthy habits. Obesity actually spreads through social networks, according to research conducted at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., and The University of California, San Diego, in La Jolla. More specifically, the study found that when a person becomes obese, the chances that a friend of theirs will become obese increase by 57 percent. "I once had a patient who told me she had 20 friends using her brand of cigarettes," adds Dean Ornish, M.D., founder and president of the Preventive Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, Calif., and author of *The Spectrum: A Scientifically Proven Program to Feel Better, Live Longer, Lose Weight, and Gain Health* (Ballantine). "It gave her a sense of connection."

Transform yourself: If you aren't already doing so, make a point of gathering healthy and supportive people around you to help you reach your goals. If weight loss is your mission, become a regular at your gym's jam-packed indoor rowing class or tap into the accountability-enhancing qualities of a personal trainer. Having problems in your relationship? Consider group therapy or talk with friends who've gone through similar struggles. If you're in a rut at work, "Talk to others who have made a career leap similar to what you're dreaming of, or shadow someone in your desired job for a day," suggests Hofsess. Besides the opportunity to network, watching other people succeed builds self-efficacy, or the belief in your ability to change. Balaghi, who embraces all friends—virtual or otherwise—agrees: "On days I don't want to go to the gym, I check out my Facebook support group page and read how great everyone else is doing and that motivates me—I know I can do it, too."

Max your motivation: Of course it's important to make positive changes for yourself, but because "The Lover" tends to put herself last, you may be more motivated by dedicating health-focused goals to someone dear to you. "Instead of trying to kick your cigarette habit because you know smoking is wildly unhealthy, pledge to quit smoking for your daughter so she can have her mother around for years to come," Conner suggests. Rather than training solo for a marathon in an effort to slim down, sign up for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Team In Training, where you run in honor of a patient battling cancer, or grab a friend and walk 50 miles to raise money for multiple sclerosis. This way, even if you wind up forgetting about your own goals, you'll still wind up achieving them (if only by accident!).

Knowledge is a powerful motivator for “The Thinker.”

Mostly C’s: “The Thinker”

A lifelong student, avid reader and questioner of everything, you take “knowledge is power” to a whole new level. You’re probably a big fan of documentary films, you heavily research vacation venues before traveling and never stop asking, “Why?” and “How?” Realizing such things about herself has helped Brooklyn, N.Y.-based journalist Stephanie Schroeder, 48, to gain control over her mental health: “I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder 11 years ago,” Schroeder explains. “The second I was diagnosed, I researched it, I met with a psychiatrist and psychotherapist and read books about the condition. There was no goal to ‘get better’—I just wanted to learn what I could do to be healthy, and that required a lot of investigating.” On her list of mental health management goals: getting eight or more hours of sleep; cutting back on coffee, grains and dairy; exercising consistently; and having a solid support system in place. “Before I understood my condition, I did a lot of damage to myself and others, but learning as much as I can has made all the difference in becoming healthy, inside and out,” Schroeder says.

Transform yourself: Whether you’re trying to lose weight, clear out the clutter in your home or office or be a better listener, satisfy your need for information by boning up on the issues behind your unhealthy behavior. For instance, binge eaters can explore their issues by visiting websites like Binge Eating Disorder (binge-eating.com) or books like *The Binge Eating & Compulsive Overeating Workbook* by Carolyn Ross (New Harbinger); clutter sufferers can check out books on feng shui and the psychology of clutter, such as *Conscious Order* by Annie Rohrbach (Printed Voice) or *Your Spacious Self* by Stephanie Bennett Vogt (iUniverse, Inc.); and we can all become better listeners by reading *The Sacred Art of Listening* by Kay Lindahl (Skylight Paths).

Max your motivation: Because you’re well informed, you may feel like you already know what you should or could be doing and therefore, you resist seeking help. Instead, acknowledge that there are times when someone else might know a bit (just a teeny, tiny bit!) more than you and enlist their expertise—just like Schroeder did. Even if you’re simply trying to improve upon something you’re already good at—like, say, taking your creative writing, snowboarding or watercolor painting to the next level—hiring somebody more experienced to give you a one-on-one lesson or two could open up a whole new world of transformational possibilities.

*"The Adventurer"
needs to feel a
rush in order to
reach her goals.*



Mostly D's: "The Adventurer"

➤ **Ever the thrill-seeker,** you have yet to meet a challenge or risk you didn't relish—and attack with unbridled abandon. The bonus is that you're already motivated to change, because change is exciting. If you want to lose weight, you'll probably do an extreme, weeklong lemonade cleanse or no-carb diet. If you're trying to quit smoking or cut back on alcohol, your plan might be to smoke an entire carton of cigarettes or drink till you pass out—never to touch that stuff again. Your impulsivity can occasionally get you into trouble, too: "This is the sort of person who's likely to wake up next to someone whose name she can barely remember," says Markman. Of course, because you're turned off by anything predictable or passé, you may grow restless while embarking on rote behavior change and simply move on to something more exciting.

Transform yourself: To keep the thrill of victory alive, break down your goal into stimulating little chunks. Each milestone should be monumental—or at least new and surprising. In many cases, this is already required in order to make significant transformations. For instance, the body quickly adapts to changes in diet and exercise, so if you're trying to re-shape your physique, the more you switch it up, the better. When the task at hand isn't exciting enough, you can still keep yourself motivated by creating thrilling rewards, says Anne Nedrow, M.D., director of integrative medicine for Oregon Health and Science University's Center for Women's Health in Portland. It has certainly worked well for Heather Hansen O'Neill, 41, of Danbury, Conn.: "I run my own business and some aspects of the job, like bookkeeping, bore me immensely. So I'll tell myself that if I get my books in order, I can go skydiving, motorcycling, rock climbing or flying on the trapeze—all of which I've done!"

Max your motivation: Counterintuitive (and potentially cringe-worthy) as this may sound, you must occasionally acknowledge that achieving your goals is the ultimate thrill—and that getting there might require you to slow down and enjoy the ride. Thwart impulsivity by counting to 10 before making decisions that might threaten your success (or health in general), suggests Markman. "Usually it's best to be in relationships with people who are going to join you on your thrilling adventures, but occasionally it might be even better to have a person nearby who errs on the side of caution and can give you a reality check," he adds. And get some sleep now and then—if for no other reason than it will triple the extreme amounts of energy you already have.

**Do you see yourself in more than one category?
Great! You have all the more resources to achieve the
transformation at hand.*


Leslie Goldman is a writer in Chicago.

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is laughing joyfully in a city alleyway. She is wearing a dark olive green jacket over a white and navy blue striped t-shirt and mustard yellow pants. Her right hand is raised, and a white hat is captured mid-air above her head. The background shows a brick building on the left, a concrete wall with red flowers on the right, and a city skyline in the distance under a clear blue sky.

Whether you're action-oriented, a people person, a thinker or a thrill-seeker, knowing your motivational style is the key to making the changes you desire.

Deprivation doesn't work

When it comes to sticking with your goals, it's always best to accentuate the positives rather than the punishments. "The first dietary intervention was God saying, 'Don't eat the apple,'" notes Dean Ornish, M.D. "That didn't work." Fact is, we're still willful little children at heart: We want what we want, and we're upset if we don't get it. "People don't like being controlled," Ornish says. "And when they fail to stick to the prescribed protocol, they feel shame and humiliation, which are toxic emotions for their health." His advice: Shift your mindset from one of fear ("If you don't relax, you'll develop heart disease and die") to joy ("Slashing your stress levels will help you look younger, enhance your sex life and make you feel free!"). The more you focus on what you're gaining rather than losing as you work toward your goals, the more motivated you'll be. ✕

A decorative black flourish consisting of several curved, teardrop-like shapes pointing downwards and to the right.