

MOTIVATION

COUNSELING MAP & SKILLS CHECKLIST

Counseling Map - Motivation

Session #1 Intro Session	Session #2 Psychoeducation	Session #3 Goal Setting	Session #4 My Strengths	Session #5 Problem Solving	Session #6 Connection
Focus Build rapport and introduce goal setting	Focus Explain the drivers of internal motivation.	Objective Goal setting	Objective Competence building and celebrating strengths.	Skill Autonomy Building through decision-making and self-advocacy.	Skill Recognizing belonging and building connections.
Checklist Skills none	Checklist Skills B1, B2, D3	Checklist Skills A1, A2, A5, E1	Checklist Skills B1, B3, B4, A6	Checklist Skills C1, C2, E2, E4	Checklist Skills D3, D8, B1
Check-In Welcome and Share	Check-In Rose-Thorn-Bud	Check-In Plus and Change	Check-In Goal Check-In	Check-In Positive Interaction	Check-In Yay, Nay, Hip Hip Hooray
Warm Up Two Truths and a Wish	Warm Up Motivation Thermometer	Warm Up Goal Gallery Walk	Warm Up Character Strengths	Warm Up Passive vs Active Choice	Warm Up Connection Circle
Session Activities Group Norms Quick Calls Activity Read statements about school and student move to labeled corners of the room with how they feel about it. Motivation Detective Worksheet: When do they feel excited and not excited at school. Setting Intentions (optional): Choose a small thing they want to accomplish this week.	Session Activities I Do: Explain internal vs external motivation. We Do: Sorting want-to and have to activities. I Do: ABCs of Motivation. Share drivers of motivation (autonomy, belonging, competence). You Do: What Fills Your Motivation Tank? When do they feel they have choices, connected, and capable?	Session Activities I Do: Introduce SMART goals. We Do: Rewrite goals so they are SMART. You Do: Write your own SMART Goals and then break them into steps.	Session Activities I Do: Intro to personal strengths. We Do: I can help someone survey where they identify what activities they could help someone else with. You Do: My Strengths Worksheets. Connect strengths to work they are doing on their goals.	Session Activities I Do: Intro to three-step problem-solving process. We Do: Dear Problem Solver scenarios where students can apply 3 steps to help peer solve a common problem. You Do: Build your Support Toolbox	Session Activities I Do: Introduce belonging and connection. We Do: Where Do We Belong? Brainstorm. Brainstorm with students the places where they feel connected and valued. Then value how they contribute or could contribute to strengthen those connections. You Do: Connection Web or Slice of Life Pizza. Students map their connections and contributions.
Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show	Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show	Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show	Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show	Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show	Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show
Cool Down Gratitude Circle	Cool Down Positive Self Talk	Cool Down Goal Visualization	Cool Down Positive Self Talk	Cool Down Five Finger Breathing	Cool Down Positive Self Talk

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Flexible, skill-based planning for school counselors

What's Included?

12 Session Counseling Map
for Student Motivation

Skills Checklists
Covering 8 Areas

Counselor Guide to
Student Motivation

A Counselor's Guide to Student Motivation

Skills that Build Internal Motivation

C. Decision Making		N	P	A
C1	Generates multiple solutions to a problem or challenge.			
C2	Weights options and predicts possible outcomes.			
C3	Makes choices based on goals, values, or needs.			
C4	Tries new solutions when the first plan doesn't work.			

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Use skills checklists
to determine where
students are missing skills.

**Build a personalized
counseling map**
to guide your counseling
intervention and address
the missing skills.

Session #8 Growth Mindset	Session #9 Strategy Use	Session #10 Purpose
Focus Growth Mindset	Objective Strategy Use and Metacognition	Objective Connection to Purpose and Personal Values
Checklist Skills G2, G5, F2, F3, B6, B8	Checklist Skills F1, F5, F6, F7, B4, B8	Checklist Skills H1, H2, H3, H5, A1, B7
Check-In Time Machine	Check-In Gratitude	Check-In Share Positive Activity
Warm Up Growth Hall of Fame	Warm Up Strategy Stories	Warm Up What Drives Them?
Session Activities <p>I Do: Growth and Fixed Mindset. Each way of thinking yields different outcomes.</p> <p>We Do: Reframing Self Talk. Take a fix mindset statement and rewrite it as a growth mindset statement.</p> <p>You Do: My Future, A Growth Story. Go step by step to take a current challenge and apply a growth mindset to write a different future.</p>	Session Activities <p>I Do: Introduce various learning strategies and finding the ones that work for you.</p> <p>We Do: Strategy Sorting or Strategy Brainstorm. Talk about different strategies and when they would be helpful.</p> <p>You Do: Strategy Pro Game. Students come up with different strategies that would help.</p> <p>My Strategy Kit - Identifying your preferred strategies.</p>	Session Activities <p>I Do: Explain how our values and purpose impact our motivation.</p> <p>We Do: Keep-Toss-Star Activity. Students sort and identify their personal values.</p> <p>You Do: My Why for Learning. Guide students through exploring their personal reasons for learning by having them reflect on their values, strengths, and goals.</p>
Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show	Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show	Exit Ticket Think - Know - Show
Cool Down Mindset Bookmarks	Cool Down Goal Visualization	Cool Down Breathing & Reflection

Skills that Build Internal Motivation				
E. Self Advocacy		N	P	A
E1	Expresses preferences for how to complete a task or assignment.			
E2	Seeks out help or clarification when stuck.			
E3	Seeks feedback and uses it to improve.			
E4	Seeks out resources or people for support.			
E5	Identifies a learning strategy or approach that works for them.			
E6	Explains how feedback can help them improve their learning.			
F. Strategy Use		N	P	A
F1	Initiates tasks without being prompted.			
F2	Expresses the belief that effort leads to improvement.			
F3	Shares a time when effort led to improvement.			
F4	Sets a "next time, I'll try ..." goal after not succeeding.			
F5	Adjusts goals or strategies when needed.			
F6	Chooses effective strategies for a given task.			
F7	Tries new strategies after setbacks or mistakes.			

Motivation Skills Checklist

Editable checklists covering 8 teachable skill areas that influence student motivation.

goal setting, self-reflection, self-advocacy, communication, decision-making, strategy use, resilience, connecting to purpose

Motivation Counseling Map

A sequence of 12 sessions based on skills important to student motivation.

Use the corresponding skills checklists to build a personalized counseling map that addresses key skills.

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A Counselor's Guide to Student Motivation

A Practical Framework for

Understanding and Supporting Students

Our Approach

Meet Needs
Build Skills
Shift Mindset
Adjust Environment

Skills to Develop

Goal Setting
Self-Reflection
Decision-Making
Resilience
Self-Advocacy
Communication
Strategic Planning
Connection

A Counselor's Guide to Student Motivation

A Practical Framework for Understanding and Supporting Students

As school counselors, we frequently encounter students struggling with motivation. The referrals we receive say: "He's smart, but won't put in the effort." "She just doesn't seem to care." It's easy to feel stuck or to rely on interventions that only provide temporary fixes. This guide presents a new perspective, a clear and practical framework, to understand student motivation—going beyond willpower or incentive charts to explore the root causes.

Understanding Motivation: It's About Unmet Needs

At its core, motivation isn't about apathy or character flaws; it's about unmet basic psychological needs. Students who appear unmotivated are often silently communicating:

- I can't: This feels too hard, I don't know how, I'll fail anyway. (Relates to Competence)
- No one cares: I don't belong here, I'm overlooked, I'm not included. (Relates to Belonging)
- I have no say: Nothing I want matters, I have to do what I'm told. (Relates to Autonomy)

When these three needs, competence, belonging, and autonomy, are met, students are naturally driven to engage, learn, and grow. When they're unmet, we see the withdrawal, avoidance, and "I don't care" attitudes.

What Influences Unmet Needs?

Several factors can contribute to low motivation, and recognizing them helps us target our support:

Lagging Skills: Students may lack concrete skills like goal-setting, self-advocacy, learning strategies, or decision-making.

Previous Experiences: Past failures or negative experiences shape our self-perception and our expectations about what will happen.

Current Environment: Lack of choice, connection, or appropriate challenge in the classroom or at home can stifle motivation.

Intractable Barriers: Underlying issues like learning disabilities, executive function challenges, trauma, or anxiety can profoundly impact a student's capacity to engage and connect. While these require specialized attention, they often manifest as unmet basic needs that we can still address through our framework.

Counselor's Guide to Motivation

Quick guide giving you a practice framework for approaching counseling interventions targeting student motivation.

Counseling Maps™ are where a curriculum map meets a treatment plan.

A counseling map gives you a guide of the skills that need to be taught, just like a curriculum map, but with the flexibility to build sessions like a treatment plan.

They are perfect for planning individual counseling sessions and can be extended for group counseling.

This all saves you time while still being responsive.

Hi! I'm Laura

I create research-driven, uncomplicated tools and resources designed to build students' social and emotional skills in counseling or the classroom.

During ten years as a school psychologist, I wore all the hats - but the one I never took off was supporting my colleagues.

Whether you're a first-year counselor or a seasoned teacher, I want you to have the tools you need to support each student.

Visit [my blog](#) for more ideas and [subscribe](#) for exclusive resources!

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