For the last few weeks I have been in the throws of the dog days of summer. July and August are known to be the most hot and humid months of the year, and I’m feeling it. Lately, my energy is stifled and I’m feeling downright lazy. Every year around this time, I tend to have a dampened spirit and even less motivation. I know I’m not alone in this struggle of pushing though to continue productivity, so I wanted to share some of my personal motivation tips to keep you progressing too when ambition is at a lull!

Do SOMETHING!
Taking action toward accomplishing a task or making strides toward completing a project can be very rewarding. Either you are experiencing success by finishing a job, which improves motivation; and/or you are relieving some stress by tackling a chore you weren’t excited to do. When you have zero enthusiasm, taking a first step is daunting, but you must take that step. Action — even minimal action — is always a good thing!

No excuses!
My big excuse lately is that it’s too hot to run errands or begin an endeavor. I said that for a couple of days and then I remembered that in February my excuse is that it’s too cold to run errands or start an endeavor. I finally realized that I’ve lived in the northeast for at least a decade and it’s time to adjust my attitude to withstand the weather. So, my best advice for beating the dog days is to pay attention to your excuses and shoot ‘em down if they’re bullsh*t, or make a plan to work with and/or around them if they are legit reasons. Make “no excuses” one of your go-to mantras!

Maximize your energy!
Heat makes you tired so you may have to adjust how you take care of yourself during the hot summer days. Some suggestions are to get at least 8 hours of sleep per night, 3 liters of water per day, some fresh air, breathe deep, eat clean and exercise at least 25 minutes per day!

Beware of the downward spiral!
We all need breaks once in a while; however, don’t stand still for too long because dormant energy is a huge obstruction to progress. Neuroscientists have found that when someone experiences periods of low motivation, their ambition can significantly spiral downward when faced with difficult tasks. So, vacations and breaks: YES! Inactivity: NO! If you’re faced with an overwhelming or unpleasant responsibility this August, break it down into simple steps if you need to just to keep the energy moving.

Get off the social networks!
A University of Michigan study shows that greater usage of Facebook resulted in a larger drop in mood. If you’re already feeling a bit duller than usual, then perusing the Jones’ fabulous vacation photos might not be the best mood-lifter. In addition, the U of M study warns of damaging self-esteem. In case you need an additional reason, social networks can be addictive and you may find yourself wasting valuable time when you could be doing something more beneficial for yourself.

Rock that playlist!
Science has shown that music and mood are naturally linked and you can access a mood or mindset simply by the music you choose. “Eye of the Tiger,” “I Will Survive,” “Don’t Stop Believin…” I know you have at least one of those in a playlist already. Put together some tunes that work for you and rock out. Bonus points if you dance (endorphin releaser)!

Source: Diane Passage, Huffington Post
Educational Corner: The Importance of Stretching

You may think of stretching as something performed only by runners or gymnasts. But we all need to stretch in order to protect our mobility and independence.

Stretching keeps the muscles flexible, strong, and healthy. Without it, the muscles shorten and become tight. Then, when you call on the muscles for activity, they are weak and unable to extend all the way. That puts you at risk for joint pain, strains, and muscle damage.

Regular stretching keeps muscles long, lean, and flexible, and this means that exertion "won't put too much force on the muscle itself," says Nolan. Healthy muscles also help a person with balance problems to avoid falls.

With a body full of muscles, the idea of daily stretching may seem overwhelming. But physical therapist David Nolan says you don't have to stretch every muscle you have. "The areas critical for mobility are in your lower extremities: your calves, your hamstrings, your hip flexors in the pelvis and quadriceps in the front of the thigh." Stretching your shoulders, neck, and lower back is also beneficial. Aim for a program of daily stretches or at least three or four times per week.

Find a physical therapist (your local Y is a good place to start) who can assess your muscle strength and tailor a stretching program to fit your needs. If you have chronic conditions such as Parkinson’s disease or arthritis, you’ll want to clear a new stretching regimen with your doctor before you start.

Stretching once today won’t magically give you perfect flexibility. You’ll need to do it over time and remain committed to the process. "It may have taken you many months to get tight muscles, so you’re not going to be perfectly flexible after one or two sessions," says physical therapist David Nolan of Massachusetts General Hospital. "It takes weeks to months to get flexible, and you’ll have to continue working on it to maintain it."

Hold a stretch for 30 seconds. Don’t bounce, which can cause injury. You’ll feel tension during a stretch, but you should not feel pain. If you do, there may be an injury or damage in the tissue. Stop stretching that muscle, and talk to your doctor.

Source: Harvard Health

Healthy Cooking: Summer Panzanella

Ingredients:
- 1 small (7 oz.) ciabatta or sourdough loaf, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 tbsp. butter, melted
- 1 (15 oz.) can of chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 English cucumber, thinly sliced
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- Half of a red onion, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup shaved or grated Parmesan
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced basil leaves
- 1 batch Italian vinaigrette (see below)

Italian Vinaigrette:
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 clove minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp. dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt

Directions:
1. For the Italian vinaigrette: Whisk all ingredients together until combined.
2. Heat the oven to 350°F.
3. Spread the bread on a large baking sheet. Then drizzle on the melted butter, and toss until the bread is fully coated. Bake for 15-20 minutes, turning once, until the bread is crispy and golden. Remove and set aside.
4. Once the bread is done, transfer to a large bowl, along with the chickpeas, cucumber, cherry tomatoes, red onion, Parmesan, and basil. Drizzle with the Italian vinaigrette and toss to combine.
5. Serve immediately, and garnish with extra cheese if desired. Or refrigerate for 4 hours to let the flavors further develop.
6 Reasons to Support Farmers Markets

From savoring produce at the peak of freshness to meeting the people who grow your food, there are countless reasons to support farmers markets. Here are just a few!

1. Taste Real Flavors
The fruits and vegetables you buy at the farmers market are the freshest and tastiest available. Fruits are allowed to ripen fully in the field and are brought directly to you—no long-distance shipping, no gassing to simulate the ripening process, no sitting for weeks in storage. This food is as real as it gets—fresh from the farm.

2. Enjoy the Season
The food you buy at the farmers market is seasonal. It is fresh and delicious and reflects the truest flavors. Shopping and cooking from the farmers market helps you to reconnect with the cycles of nature in our region. As you look forward to asparagus in spring, savor sweet corn in summer, or bake pumpkins in autumn, you reconnect with the earth, the weather, and the turning of the year.

3. Protect the Environment
Food in the U.S. travels an average of 1,500 miles to get to your plate. All this shipping uses large amounts of natural resources (especially fossil fuels), contributes to pollution, and creates trash with extra packaging. Conventional agriculture also uses many more resources than sustainable agriculture and pollutes water, land, and air with toxic agricultural by-products. Food at the farmers market is transported shorter distances and is generally grown using methods that minimize the impact on the earth.

4. Nourish Yourself
Much food found in grocery stores is highly processed and grown using pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and genetic modification. Some of it has been irradiated, waxed, or gassed in transit. These practices may have negative effects on human health. In contrast, most food found at the farmers market is minimally processed, and many of our farmers go to great lengths to grow the most nutritious produce possible by using sustainable techniques, picking produce right before the market, and growing heirloom varieties.

5. Know Where Your Food Comes From
A regular trip to a farmers market is one of the best ways to connect with where your food comes from. Meeting and talking to farmers and food artisans is a great opportunity to learn more about how and where food is produced. CUESA’s seller profiles that hang at the booths give you even more opportunities to learn about the people who work hard to bring you the most delicious and nutritious food around. Profiles, articles about sellers, and a map of farms are also available on this website.

6. Connect with Your Community
Wouldn’t you rather stroll amidst outdoor stalls of fresh produce on a sunny day than roll your cart around a grocery store with artificial lights and piped in music? Coming to the farmers market makes shopping a pleasure rather than a chore. The farmers market is a community hub—a place to meet up with your friends, bring your children, or just get a taste of small-town life in the midst of our wonderful big city.

Source: CUESA, Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture

Check out some Richmond farmers markets like Lakeside Farmers Market (Sat.), St. Stephen’s Farmers Market (Sat.), South of the James Farmers Market (Sat.), West End Farmers Market (Sat.), Carytown Market (Sun.), Birdhouse Farmers Market (Tues.), and Huguenot-Robious Farmers Market (Thurs.)!

Can’t make it to a market? Check out home delivery options like Seasonal Roots.
FREE HEART SCREENING
Sponsored by ABC8, CKG Foundation, The Collegiate School and Department of Recreation and Wellness at the University of Richmond

To Register or Volunteer go to HeartScreenings.org
WE SCREEN TEENS THROUGH AGE 26

What: Free EKG Screenings
When: September 22, 2018
9am to 1pm
Where: The University of Richmond
The Weinstein Center for Recreation and Wellness
28 Westhampton Way - Building 23b
University of Richmond, VA 23173

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the leading cause of death in our youth in the U.S., killing more than 325,000 people each year. That's more than the total death rate for breast cancer, lung cancer, and HIV/AIDS combined.