

Recharging Motivation

Ellen

Ellen was a single mother of two girls, ages seven and nine. She attended night classes in accounting and worked full-time as an accounting clerk. Ellen had recently divorced, and her goal was to complete her associate degree as fast as possible so she could earn a higher salary and rent a nicer apartment with more room for her daughters. In her first semester, Ellen signed up for the maximum number of units because the courses didn't look that difficult. Since Ellen was away from home five nights a week, her daughters felt neglected and started acting out at school. Ellen was going to school for the sake of her daughters, but now they were angry at her. Ellen was intensely motivated at the beginning of the semester, but as soon as she realized how much work she would have to put in, she grew exhausted. After a few weeks she could barely force herself to crack open a textbook.

Luis

Luis had moved from Bolivia to California at the age of fourteen. In just a few short years, he had learned English and become one of his high school's top science students. With the encouragement of his career counselor, Luis decided to attend college and study computer science. The counselor helped him fill out applications and apply for loans and scholarships. But as the application deadline approached, Luis became more and more apprehensive. He still sometimes struggled with English, especially in social settings, and he wasn't fully comfortable with American culture. He pictured himself becoming socially isolated and falling behind the other students. Luis felt like giving up altogether.

Marcus

Marcus had been slightly overweight since childhood. He was accustomed to a high-fat diet and a sedentary lifestyle. Looking at himself in the mirror one day, he suddenly resolved to lose thirty pounds. Marcus pictured himself feeling fit and enjoying outdoor sports. He told himself that losing weight was just a matter of will power. Unfortunately, Marcus's kitchen was stocked with junk food, which made it practically impossible to avoid snacking. The cafeteria at work sold greasy food in enormous portions, which didn't help either. Since Marcus could barely boil water, he had no idea how to prepare healthy meals. He really wanted to reach his goal, but it seemed like food was out to get him at every turn.