



## *Coping with College Series*

# Starting Over: Hoping this Semester goes Better?

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One of the benefits of having two semesters every year is the chance to start over second semester. Unsatisfied with how things turned out last fall? Now is your chance to start over, to get a grip, to do things differently instead of repeating old, unproductive patterns. But what should you change? And how can you make your changes stick? The reasons for poor performance can be complex, and changing old patterns can be hard. If you want this semester to be better than last, you really need to think about how you can make that happen.

The first step is to seriously ask yourself “what went wrong last semester?” and then explore what changes you might make to address the problems.

Sometimes poor semesters involve a lack of motivation. Flagging motivation could signal a lack of rewards in your life. Are you burned out because you don’t make enough time for fun? Is your life one long “to do” list? No wonder you’re not motivated. You might need to make time for relaxation, friends and exercise on a regular basis. The support you feel from friends going through a tough semester can make a huge difference in your outlook. And regular exercise will keep the endorphins flowing to lift your mood and increase your overall energy and alertness levels.

Motivation can also be affected by how committed you feel to your goal. Do you have a clear career goal? Are you doing what you want to do? Finishing a paper isn’t very motivating if you’re only trying to please others. You need to know how your own personal goals relate to all this work. Not being excited about your major or your career can really destroy your motivation. If this is a problem, visit the Student Counseling Services for some career counseling to help develop your direction and goals.

Was time a problem last semester? If so, time management strategies can help. Using time wisely doesn’t have to involve keeping a rigid schedule. Experiment with how you use time. People vary in terms of their bio-rhythms. Discover when you concentrate best, and arrange to spend those times studying.

Remember the puzzle of how to get a big pile of rocks and sand into a small glass jar? If you put the sand in first, the rocks won’t fit. The trick is to put the big rocks in first and then let the smaller pebbles and sand ooze their way around the extra space between the big rocks. Your schedule is like the glass jar. If you want to fit everything in, you need to know what the “big rocks” are ---and then put them in your schedule first!

There are many issues you may want to address to get a fresh start on this semester. To learn more about staying motivated speak with a counselor at Student Counseling Services by phoning 438-3655 to schedule an appointment or visit our web site at [www.counseling.ilstu.edu](http://www.counseling.ilstu.edu) and best wishes for a very successful semester!