

Yes Practice? No Practice? Why You Must Decide

Description

*Make a decision
to practice or not. Commit,
and then just do it.
(Why the [haiku](#)? [TMQ](#))*

It's reasonably easy to stick with a consistent practice routine during the parts of the year where a regular class or work schedule is there to keep us honest. The routine becomes a habit, and for the most part, we just go along with it.

But holidays and breaks throw a monkey wrench into our established routine and our practice habits can suffer.

I remember those days where I'd wake up, tell myself that I really ought to practice, but put it off until later. "I just woke up" I'd say. "After breakfast" I'd promise myself. Pretty soon it'd be lunchtime, and I'd tell myself that it made more sense to practice after lunch instead of practicing hungry. Of course I'd feel too sluggish to practice after lunch, and since I wasn't practicing anyway, decide I might as well watch some TV. One show would lead to another, and I'd keep rationalizing until pretty soon it was time for bed and all I could do was kick myself for being so unproductive.

Sound familiar?

I once worked with a mixed martial arts fighter, who as intensely motivated as he was, would occasionally feel like he needed a day off too. But he could not give himself permission to take the day off. He'd fritter the day away doing this and that until it was too late to get in a good workout. Of course, that would just make him feel guilty about how unproductive his day was.

When we fail to take a stand and make a decision, we're wasting the day in more ways than one. Not only are we not practicing, but we're not getting the full mental, emotional, and physical benefit of a true day off either. And the guilt certainly isn't doing us any good.

Take action

With the holidays now upon us, there will probably be a few days here and there where you won't feel like putting in your hours. Rather than going back and forth about it all day, set aside a few minutes in the morning to think about what you want or need and what's realistic. Take a stand, and make a *definitive* decision one way or the other. If you're going to practice, set a time, a place, an agenda, and just do it

(setting a specific time, place, and agenda will increase the likelihood that you'll actually follow through).

On the other hand, if you're *not* going to practice, *give yourself permission* to take the day off and avoid second guessing yourself or dwelling on it any longer. Stick with your guns, and lock yourself into your decision so you have no choice but to really make the most of your day off. Do something fun, relaxing, whatever it is that you feel you need.

Bonus application

This also applies to folks who are trying to make it a habit to wake up early and work out.

Most of us wake up to the alarm, and then get sucked into a dialogue with that voice in our head, which at 5am, has some awfully convincing reasons why we ought to hit the snooze button and go back to bed. Thing is, 5am is a crappy time to make a decision.

Why?

Because you're not even awake yet, sleepyhead! You can barely figure out how to turn the alarm off, let alone win a debate with the other voice in your head.

Make all your decisions about working out before you go to sleep the night before. If it's already 2am, and you know you need at least 6 hours to be functional, don't kid yourself. You're not going to the gym. You've already made the decision to stay up late instead of working out.

But if you went to bed plenty early and *did* decide to go to the gym, ignore the voice when the alarm goes off. The voice almost always wins if you engage it in a debate, so if you want to have any hope of getting to the gym, keep your mouth shut, turn off the alarm, and do whatever you have to do to get out the front door. Make it that far and you're probably not going to turn back until you've finished your workout.

The one-sentence summary

"Decisiveness is a characteristic of high-performing men and women. Almost any decision is better than no decision at all." ~Brian Tracy

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