Training on that Non-Perfect Day

By Robert Pierson

If you ever have done the following: procrastinated to practice, had practice interrupted by life, practiced chaos, or missed the practice expectations, then this article is for you … read on.

You are not the only one who faces obstacles on days we have set aside for training. We are in a state of bliss on the “Perfect Days” where we meet all of our training and practice goals. Sometimes though life gets in the way and the things you were hoping to accomplish are now a work of fiction. So, let us look at some techniques to handle the frustration that erupts on those non-perfect days.

Scheduling

In the world of martial arts, there is a plethora of techniques we strive to master. Mastery not only involves commitment, perseverance and repetition, it requires the time to accomplish those required tasks. Anyone who is striving to master anything is generally in a battle with time. The old adage: there is not enough time in a day, often becomes the mantra, which can cause frustration and anxiety if not addressed.

Everyone has faced the same 24 hours, from sports giants, great musicians, Pulitzer Prize winners, to the committed enthusiast, so the question becomes how to accomplish goals within specific time frames. The remedy, create a realistic schedule. Creating a realistic schedule sounds so simple, but for some controlling their time is a convoluted labyrinth.

So, what is needed to create a schedule? Make it simple. A schedule is just an outline of the “what” and “when” to your daily training … no more than 5-10 minutes should be spent on it. The best time to write it, and the consensus is: writing is the best way to follow through with objectives. People who usually say it forget it, write it to do it.

The “when” should concentrate, if possible, on a setting a specific time each day. If a time is set aside each day, the more than likely there will be little or no interruptions. In other words, you will be able to accomplish more in less time. Remember, the battle is time management (being more productive in the time allotted). There is also another reason for setting a specific time aside, maybe even more important, it is subconsciously creating a habit (more on habits later).

Once the “when” has been addressed, then deal with the “what.” What will you do tomorrow? Here the focus is on prioritizing. One of the best ways to prioritize is to list your tasks, then numbering them in order of priority. For example: list tasks 1-10, 1 being the highest priority, 10 being the lowest. So, first you would perform number 1, then number 2 and so on, working your way down the list. This way, if you cannot complete everything on the list, the ones missed can be added to the next day’s schedule and now they are the highest priority, thus never/or seldom skipping a listed item.

Journaling

A quick note, about keeping a journal. The first thought that comes to mind, isn’t journaling the same as scheduling? No! You can have a schedule in a journal, but not a journal in a schedule … what!!! A schedule merely gives what and when tasks should be done and can be torn up once the tasks are accomplished. A journal, on the other hand, is a running record of whatever you desire. In this article I am only focusing on training, but your journal could include other ventures in your life.

The barebones of a journal is: you must have some form of blank page book. It could be a bought journal, or binder paper in a binder (that way you can add pages as needed), or journal apps, for those techies. I tend to side with the pen and paper, because for me, it is easier to reference and to store. Usually the journal is yearly.

Pros of keeping a journal:

Record: it is a record of what you have been working on, and something you can review, weekly, monthly or yearly.

Discipline: it will build discipline. Not only do you have to write in it daily, but if done correctly, it keeps an honest accounting, allowing you to evaluate what you did and did not do.

Self-discovery: a window into you. Over time it will reveal what you enjoy doing (because you manage not to miss doing a task) and vise versa, it will show you what you avoid doing.

Schedule: as I alluded to, a schedule can be in the journal, thus over time you can review your different schedules and notice what worked and what did not.

Cons of keeping a journal:

Commitment: you have to do it. The entries will not write themselves, which means a time set aside daily to write or input that day’s events into your journal.

Habits

There have been volumes written about habits or the lack of them. Encompassing everything from forming good and ending bad habits. Here is the cliff note version of constructing positive habits.

Habit building, in a four step nutshell version: set a specific time; where it is to be done; tools needed (if any); and most important performing the task.

This scenario of brushing your teeth will show the application of the four steps.

Upon getting up in the morning (the time), you then go to where your toothbrush is located, generally the bathroom (where), apply toothpaste to the toothbrush (tools needed), and proceed to brush your teeth (performance)

By doing the teeth brushing scenario, repeatedly, each morning, soon it will practically be done by rote … thereby forming a habit. The objective now, is to form habits for your training, so that training also will be by rote.

This was just to introduce the idea of the benefits of habits, and as I have mention, much more in-depth information has been written on the subject. One of the best books I have read on the subject and one that I would recommend is called *Atomic Habits* by James Clear.

 Conclusion

Most traditional conclusions, rehash what you already have read … not this one. This non-traditional conclusion, is to stimulate your brain by asking the following questions:

* Do you measure you repetitions? How? (possibly moving objects from one side to another (like beads or pebbles), or I use an app. I use a free app called *Counter).*
* If you do something on the right side, can you do it on the left?
* Can you perform the technique or form/kata facing North, then South, then East then West? Isn’t that 4 repetitions?
* Can you dissect (break apart) all your techniques and forms and apply them in other ways?
* Is it possible to take one move (e.g. an elbow), and strike a heavy bag for 1 minute, 2 minutes, or more?
* How many ways can you use the above elbow (vertical, horizontal, back of the elbow, spinning elbow). Now, do it with all the other dissected techniques.
* Visualization. Can you sit and perform the entire technique or form just by visualizing it? If not, why not?

Use your creativity. Find other methods to enhance your training.