

# Sidenote – On Executing the Training Plan

When running training plans such as Olympiad prep or lifting weights, the hardest part is often the execution of the training plan, not the planning itself. It's easy to research how to study for the USAPhO. But sitting down for two hours a day and committing to your plan? I find it much harder. Here are some tips inspired by medicine and psychology to help get this done:

## **1. Prioritization.**

It's nearly always best to do your most important or most difficult activity first in the day. If studying for the Physics Olympiad, for example, go to bed early and wake up long before the school day starts so that you can get your daily studying in *before* school. If you wait until after school, your study sessions will be significantly worse and less enjoyable because you're so tired from seven hours of school plus whatever extracurriculars you do. This tip is first because it requires the least effort and helps a bunch, so do it!

## **2. Health.**

Poor health is the biggest debuff I can think of. So stay healthy! Get 7-9 hours of sleep, eat 80% healthy food (basically anything that isn't ultra-processed or "junk"), and find time for at least three hours of exercise per week. It's better to sleep an extra hour than study an extra hour. Also, keep in mind your mental health. Hang out with friends every week (or take up an extracurricular with friends). If you have a treatable condition like ADHD, take your meds. This tip is probably the most powerful.

## **3. Psychology.**

There are ways to maximize motivation and progress toward goals. For example, when the training gets tough, tell yourself that that is a great thing because this difficulty is what causes adaptation. I'm no expert on this, though. See Huberman Lab for more details. Also, if your training involves studying, there's a whole science behind optimizing learning. See Justin Sung for more details. This tip should be helpful, and it doesn't appear too hard to apply.

## **4. Environment.**

Adapt your environment to what you're pursuing. For example, find a specific room where you will only study and do nothing else (if possible). Leave your phone in a different room when you go study and remove easy access to social media on the computer you use to study. Get a membership at a gym with a short commute time. This tip is easy to implement, but not incredibly powerful.

## **5. Psychology, pt. 2.**

There are changes you can make to your life *outside* of training that will help your motivation down the line. Giving up highly pleasurable behaviors, such as sexual behaviors (especially porn and masturbation), sugary foods, social media, video games, and listening to music, will inevitably improve your motivation. Extreme pleasure makes the rest of your life relatively boring, so purging it will help make your training more interesting. This tip is powerful but rather difficult to execute.

## **Optional Note – Pharmacology**

Substances may be used to enhance most of these tips. For example, if you have a hard time adjusting your sleep schedule to wake up early to train before school, then you may find melatonin supplements helpful. You can use dopaminergic substances specifically before training sessions to help associate the training with good feelings. There's certainly a way to purge addictions to pleasurable behaviors with the assistance of pharmacology. All that said, this tip is very tough to implement since you need to do a lot of research before using any kind of powerful pharmacological enhancement—or pay someone a lot of money to do it for you. Additionally, substances cost money, and if you use them, you may have to rely on them for a long time. Avoid anything that can damage you permanently.