

Bonus Section: Mind & Body

Mind & Body Health for the 30 Days ahead

Studying is taxing. It can be incredibly draining especially if you are stressed out or dreading the impending exam. The best advice I can give you is to allow yourself to feel enough stress so that you are motivated to stick to your 30 day schedule and focus. If, however, your stress levels are elevated so much that studying is futile and unproductive, you need to be able to recognize this and have an action plan in order to release the stress and get back to your desk in a better frame of mind. This may require a bit of awareness on your part, don't neglect your mental and physical health this month. It is key to your success.

If you are fitting in your 30 day schedule around a full time job, make sure that you are completely switched off from your job before you hit the books. You are working under time constraints, but don't forget we are working on a quality over quantity principle. Make sure that every minute counts.

Staying Productive

Keep track of your productivity. If you find yourself sat at a desk for 30 minutes without having achieved anything, stop. Be aware of your mood and if nothing is happening, don't force it -

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2-3 hours of focused, concentrated study is much more productive than 5-6 hours of diluted “work”. Don’t fall into the trap of staying at your desk just to appease your conscience.

Losing focus but remaining at your desk is a downward spiral. Take 30 minutes off, try one of the ideas below, and then start again refreshed and excited.

Have an action plan when study is not happening.

Give yourself 20-30 minutes and take a break or do something different. Refresh your mind and then make a promise with yourself to start a new after your break is over. Try some of these ideas;

- Write down how you are feeling and work out if something is subconsciously zapping your productivity levels.
- Bake/ cook something.
- Go for a walk around your neighborhood with your iPod, or go grab a drink from a local store.
- Write an email to someone you haven’t spoken to in a while.
- Do something you are good at - play piano, practice a second language, take photos, give a friend some advice.

Just be sure to stay on top of the time this ‘time-out’ activity takes. Time flies when you are having fun!

Staying Positive

- This principle 1 is taken from Oprah's '5 things a day'. Every night, she recommends writing down five good things that happened to you that day. It sounds cheesy but it's a great way to see the glass as half full everyday and remind yourself of the small things that make you happy. (This is especially useful when you find yourself frustrated that your friends are not stuck to the books but are instead enjoying themselves out in the real world.)
- Avoid listening to the news, or logging online before midday. Admittedly this is not very worldly advice, but the truth is news these days is depressing. Bad news makes the headlines far more than good news, and if you find yourself feeling negative, avoid it - it is added noise to your day. If something major is worth knowing about, trust me someone will tell you about it.
- Remember that the people you interact with either fuel your energy or zap it. Avoid spending time with "Debbie Downer" during this time, and contact those people you know whom always look on the bright side of life. Enthusiasm is contagious - these upbeat people are those that you should call in your breaks, or meet for a coffee break.
- Avoid reading your email or checking social networks first thing in the morning. Save it for a break later on. This, as well as all of the above, allow you to control your day. Don't let the day control you, simply because you are bombarded by outside noise from the TV, newspaper, social networks and less than desirable company.

Staying Motivated

How to stay motivated for the month?

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As I talked about in Success Principle 5, keeping the end goal in mind and visualizing why you are taking this test in the first place should be enough to keep you pumped for the test. Most people see the end goal as improving the future in some respect; to raise your quality of life, increase that number on your paycheck, look after your family, receive a promotion at work, get out of your current living situation or move cities... etc.. Have a picture of your dream house, travel destination or ideal job above your desk or as your computer desktop and remind yourself regularly that this is the real goal.

Mentors

Know someone who has been to business school? Someone who aced the GMAT or other standardized test? Stay in touch with them in person, on the phone or over email and ask if they wouldn't mind answering any questions you may have. Be careful not to let them distract you from your study plan though - everybody works differently and take their advice with a pinch of salt.

Factor breaks and rewards into your schedule

Take breaks throughout the day regularly - every hour, for 5-15 minutes.

Stay connected with like-minded people and a community

Find people to study with in the library or colleges nearby. Even if they are not studying for the GMAT, it's always good to study with others so you don't feel so isolated. Another place to find like minded people is online. There are many test preparation forums and some are GMAT specific. Find one or two that you like with active members and not too many advertisers and stick to them. Just remember not to spend too much

time “hanging out” in the forums and getting distracted to study. Like minded people and community will keep you motivated and they are also good sources of information. If you don’t know where to find these forums, go to <http://www.30dayGMATsuccess.com/> for an updated list of GMAT forums.

Environment

Find a change of scenery from time to time. Sometimes this is all it takes to refresh your energy levels. Try studying at the library, in a coffee shop or somewhere that offers public study rooms.

Make sure the lighting in your work area is good, the temperature is right, and a window is slightly open to allow fresh air to circulate.

Work at a desk where possible. Making yourself comfortable on the sofa when you are tired is a recipe for disaster!

Listen to your body - are you hungry, thirsty, uncomfortable? Do something about it.

Staying healthy

Avoid carb-heavy meals, or moderate your portions to avoid the dreaded “food coma”.

No matter how tempting it is, avoid greasy junk foods. Choose fruits, cereal bars and nuts over chips and soda, you will feel much more alert and enjoy improved mental clarity as a result.

Enjoy caffeine in moderation.

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Remember the importance of exercise - even just 20 minutes a day incorporated into your existing routine can make a huge difference.

Sleep! Avoid late night Internet surfing and drinking alcohol - these will impair the quality of your sleep as your brain is more alert than it should naturally be.

Relaxation Tools

10 ideas for those regular breaks (5-15 minutes)

- Music - if it helps to listen whilst you study, if not save a pumping song or two for your breaks. (5 minutes)
- Walk around your garden or block for 10-15 minutes and get some fresh air.
- Take a shower - enjoy every second of it (15 minutes.)
- Make some tea or coffee. Drink it outside or away from your desk. (10-15 minutes)
- Stretch (10 minutes)
- Do some push-ups / sit-ups - (5-10 minutes)
- Call a friend (5-15 minutes)
- Read a chapter of fiction or magazine article (15 minutes)
- Tidy up your desk or other space (10 minutes)
- Play a quick game on your phone or computer (10-15 minutes)