

# MAKE FITNESS A PRIORITY

— 30 TIPS —  
TO ELEVATE YOUR LIFE  
THROUGH FITNESS



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The information in this book is meant to supplement, not replace, proper fitness training. Like any sport involving speed, equipment, balance and environmental factors, fitness training poses some inherent risk. The author and publisher advise readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the skills or methods described in this book, be sure that your equipment is well maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training, and comfort level.

*To the Make Fitness A Priority Community – You inspired these tips with your commitment to Making Fitness a Priority. We love to laugh with you, encourage you, and learn from you. Saturday workouts are among our favorites, because of the richness you bring to our lives. Thank you for helping us fight the battle against quick fixes with your consistent attendance. And even more so for always getting back up when you fall. We find so much joy in all of your victories and you are the reason we do what we do!*



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Thanks to our friend, Dr. Tim Cummings, for writing us a fantastic foreword for this book. Last but not least, thanks to the Make Fitness A Priority community. You are why we do what we do!

— Chad Austin

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— Jesse Kepka

## FOREWORD

You are holding in your hands the roadmap to the next version, the better version of yourself. Chad Austin and Jesse Kepka have created this guide to help you along the way.

It's no easy thing to hold the line in terms of your health and fitness. When my wife and I met we were fresh-faced graduate students, so sure that we'd take over the world when we graduated PT school that we didn't give it a second thought. Then real life intruded. 9–5 jobs, a mortgage, then 1, 2, 3 kids to raise, and a little social life (maybe?) on the side.

Pretty quickly we realized that our health was fading. We weren't the spouses, parents, friends, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters that we wanted to be. 7 years ago we reached a low point and faced the facts: we needed help. And so we started asking. Doctors, trainers, dietitians, and other physical therapists. We reached out to our network and started to realize that everything was a lot easier in life when we connected to the team of friends and family that surrounded us.

Which brings me back to the point of this book. We all need help. Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual help. We are designed to be part of a community. And healthy communities support the individual members of that community. You are now a part of our community.

Full disclosure, I've worked closely with Chad and Jesse over the past two years. And I can tell you that you're in for a real treat. Chad and Jesse both embody the best parts of the health and fitness profession: pursuing

professional and personal excellence, expressing genuine care for the people they train, and showing a relentless drive to spread the message that strength and fitness of mind, body, and soul is never a weakness.

What will you find in the pages of this book? Coaches. Friends. Mentors. If you're new to exercise or chronically hit and miss with your workout routine, Chad and Jesse will offer you a solution to your problems. As you read through their reflections, you'll get to the root of why having a physical practice is so important. And you'll find the drive to keep showing up, the resilience to pick yourself when you fall (like we all do), and a vision that will carry you through so you can grow strong and age gracefully.

So as you begin your journey through this book, remember, this is more than just another book to check off your reading list. Sit in the lessons, write notes in the margins, and maybe try applying just one tip per week. We're all on the same journey to be the people we want to be. Welcome to our team!

In Health,

Dr. Tim Cummings, PT, DPT

## MAKE FITNESS A PRIORITY: 30 TIPS TO ELEVATE YOUR LIFE THROUGH FITNESS

As fitness professionals, we want to help you reach your goals, but most importantly, we want to teach you how to keep them for a lifetime. We are not looking for temporary success here. We want fitness to be embedded as a permanent priority no matter what is going on in the world around you. You are so capable of harnessing the power of self-sufficiency and reaping the overflow of rewards.

In the fitness industry today, we are fighting a wicked battle between these two ideas; a quick fix to hit a goal (like giving a man a basket of fish) and long-term success based on knowledge and behavior change, consistently (like teaching a man to fish for himself). We know which man will go hungry. Everyday there are more and more predators popping up who are making millions of dollars, preying upon a person's deep desire to look and feel better. They are selling weight loss products and performance enhancing products that will, ultimately, only lead to temporary success. Likely, none at all. Promises of fast results with little or no effort can cloud the judgment of even the smartest and most cautious of consumers.

In April of 2014, the Make Fitness a Priority community was established in Overland Park, Kansas with this very goal in mind. We want you to get off the roller coaster ride of temporary success and crashing failure, and we want you to do it among friends with the same goals. There is no prerequisite in your physical abilities, everyone is welcomed. We know all our lives are incredibly unique. Your plan should match your uniqueness. From there, consistency is born and your quality of life skyrockets.

These 30 tips and tricks were created from our Saturday morning Priority Fit Camp, one of our community gatherings. In 2019, we implemented a Trainer Tip to be briefly discussed between circuits, in an effort to make a bigger impact on our community. You may be thinking, “how can one 2–3 minute tip make a big impact?” In the following pages, you will see very clearly that small changes, consistently, is what fuels this long-term success we want so badly for you. If you are a beginner, the amount of information available to you is overwhelming. Doing too much, too fast, will lead to burn out and failure to change.

Take your time to wander slowly through these pages, as it fits in your life. Read one tip per week or per day, as it suits you. Take the time to focus, meditate upon and implement them because, as we said before, small consistent changes will build your path to feeling your best. Find your strength, you were built to not only succeed, but never settle. You were built to Elevate.

## CHAPTER 1

### WHAT WILL YOU GAIN?

The weight loss industry is the shadiest industry there is, and passionate fitness professionals like Jesse and me are in the middle of a tough fight. The fight is between our desire for you to get long term success in fitness, and your desire for instant gratification. Everyday there is a new weight loss company or program that is promoting half-truths and promising amazing results with little or no work on your part. These marketing predators are making millions of dollars selling us their miraculous weight loss products. They're getting us with buzz words and phrases like: Scientific Breakthrough, Extremely Fast Weight Loss, Personal Trainers Hate This Product, Magic Weight Loss Pill, and Clinically Proven to Burn Fat Without Exercise. Honestly they are getting us because they are preying on our deep desire to look and feel better. We understand. We want you to feel unstoppable!

As a trainer, I love seeing success stories about someone's transformation, and all the results they achieved by making fitness a priority in their lives. Reading these kinds of stories is always so inspiring to me. Hearing the up's and down's of someone's fitness journey is powerful. Not only did their hard work pay off, and quality of life sky rocket, but their courage to share their story will no doubt empower many others to go after their goals, too.

As a trainer, I also absolutely hate weight loss ads. The first big problem with these ads is that they don't tell the whole truth. They don't show any struggle, and they mislead readers into believing their path is easy and effortless. Making Fitness A Priority in your life is the best gift you can give yourself, but there unfortunately is no shortcut. The second problem with these ads is

that the focus is entirely on the number on the scale. How much weight did you lose and how fast?

I understand the desire to see that number drop. When we see that number on the scale go down it instantly makes us feel good about ourselves and gives us confidence. Sometimes our body responds well when we are getting started with a fitness program, and we may lose a little more weight early on. Weight loss should not be your only measure for results though, especially over short periods of time. Weight can fluctuate a lot throughout the course of a week, so it's not always a valid measure of results. Example: in college I once lost 9 lbs after just a 2 hour wrestling practice. Fluctuation, indeed.

If you want to get results that will stick long term, then weight loss needs to be only one of many ways to gauge your results. Weight loss will come, but don't be convinced that it has to come overnight for you to be successful. There are many more reasons to improve your health than just lowering the number on the scale. Honestly, weight loss is a part of many of our fitness goals, but if your focus is not on truly making lifestyle changes, all of your results will just be temporary.

Do you want long term success? I challenge you to take a little break from focusing on what you have LOST on the scale, and make a list of all of the things you have GAINED.

Here are a few things that the scale won't tell you:

- It doesn't tell you how much body fat you have lost or how much muscle you have gained.
- It doesn't tell you how much better your clothes fit.
- It doesn't tell you how much better you are sleeping or how much more energy you have.
- It doesn't tell you how much less back pain or neck pain you are having to deal with.
- It doesn't tell you how much easier it is for you to go up and down stairs.
- It doesn't tell you how much eating healthier is reducing your anxiety and depression and elevating your mood.
- It doesn't tell you how empowered you are due to your workouts



getting easier.

Your turn! Take some time today to make your own list of what you have GAINED. If you haven't started yet, what WILL you gain? What do you want? Need help with this? Here are a few feel good story examples for you. I recently asked a few of my clients to tell me what they have gained by making fitness a priority in their lives, and here is what they said:

“On my 40th birthday, I decided to give myself the gift of good health and began training with Priority Fitness. My first private training session with Chad was actually on my 40th birthday and I've been training with him ever since. This was the best gift I've ever given myself. I'm stronger and have more endurance than I had in my 30s and 20s.”

— JON FOULK

“Fitness has made me feel stronger, more independent and more confident, which then increases the happiness in my life.”

— SARAH BLICK

“At 49, I began a consistent strength training program that I've maintained for over 8 years. While I had exercised throughout my life, it was typically on and off, with cyclical spurts of dedication followed by nothing for weeks at a time. The key difference since adding regular strength training is that exercise became an integral part of my life, not an activity squeezed in occasionally, or, when I needed to shed a few pounds.

Some people will tell you that it's too late to start an exercise routine later in life; your body changes with age and you'll never be as fit or look as good as in your youth. To that I say, I don't exercise to look like I did when I was 20. With weight training and other physical activities I enjoy, I'm a healthier, more fit and toned version of myself at 57. Weight bearing exercise reduces muscle atrophy, counters osteoporosis and helps maintain good posture. I've seen all of these

benefits and I feel healthy and strong as a result. Also, you don't have to live in the gym to see results! I have a weekly training session with Chad, and supplement the weight training with other exercises I enjoy such as yoga, pickleball, walking and hiking. My weekly personal training time is the fitness cornerstone that keeps me accountable, and it's made *all the difference* in sustaining my commitment to making fitness a priority."

— TINA FRYMYER

"I look better, I feel better, It's made a big difference in my muscle to fat ratio, even though I could still make several improvements in my diet. Also, one day my wife said quietly but with pride, "I have a husband that works out."

— TOM DAVIS

"Making fitness a priority means jumping on the trampoline, hiking the tough hike, biking kids to camp, and sometimes running through the airport carrying my toddler, a backpack, and a suitcase. Making fitness a priority means having the reserves to keep up with my kids and whatever the day throws at me and having enough of myself left over. It's about having the strength, stamina, energy, and courage to live my best life. That's what happens when I make Fitness a Priority."

— ALI FOULK

"Health is better. Lower blood pressure. I've hit milestones that before I wouldn't have thought I would be able to do, and my back and knee hadn't felt better in 15 years."

— JOHN THORNTON

"Other than strength, flexibility, and endurance, I've gained new friendships and new relationships all over the place. I gained discipline and consistency all around."

— DEREK LONG

“I’ve gained confidence in myself to push beyond boundaries that I set up for myself and to push myself to things I never thought I would be able to accomplish.”

— JESSI CHADD

What have you (or will you) gain from making fitness a priority in your life?

— CA

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT IS YOUR SECOND WHY?

Consistency is key in fitness, and as it is important, the follow-through that it demands can be difficult. So many people come and go from the gym, and they all have different reasons for which they show up each day. Most revolve around losing weight, gaining lean mass and training for a specific athletic endeavor. But why? Why do you want to lose weight? Why are you training for that goal? If you dig deeper and connect with your reason, it is easier to drag yourself to your workout on the days that you find yourself lacking in motivation. Also, in asking others their whys, inspiration can come from hearing alternate perspectives and being vulnerable enough to be honest about it. We all need a perspective adjustment to our lenses on the daily.

Not surprisingly, a lot of the second “whys” we hear for fitness come from a mental space, and not a physical one. The physiological benefits and body composition changes are positive secondaries, but not primary reasons. Daily anxiety can be debilitating and is a resounding reason our friends find themselves able to be consistent in exercising. Workouts can act as an invisible, protective cloak against the wear and tear from it. Mental clarity and stability are common as well. Others keep at it because, with age, aches and pains seem to worsen and being strong as the years pass is a very effective way to combat that battlefield. I remember an interesting observation from a nurse in stating that, in her many years of service, of the people that pass through her care, the ones that make fitness a priority in their lives seem to be more successful in general. This included non-fitness related endeavors.

I agree with and love all those reasons, and I love everyone more for sharing

a piece of themselves with me. It is hard to be vulnerable and honest when it comes to weaknesses. No one loves to shine a spotlight in that darkness.

In solidarity, my own reasons are similar and threefold:

1. My workouts are my medication for a conundrum of anxieties for which I would otherwise probably be taking pills. I like the side effects of fitness so much more than those of meds. A solid bod as opposed to nausea, funky eye-twitching, and the need for more meds to “fix” all those side-effects like blood pressure spikes . . . sign me up, stat!
2. My boys are solid, and I need to be able to take them, quite simply. They love to wrestle and pound into me from out of the blue and around the corner. I also want to always be able to hold them, as long as they will let me.
3. It is a holy act, to care for the vessel that mobilizes me to be able to care for others and seek out a state of awe from adventures. We owe it to each other, to be consistently healthy enough to help. And we owe it to our soul to seek to be awed.

What is your second why? Take the time to see it clearly and put it in a safe place to use when your motivation is lacking, or to fuel your first step. Share it with your trainer, significant other or best friend to bring to light as you need it as well. All it takes is a little bit of focus to redirect and propel you towards your goals.

— JK

## CHAPTER 3

“TODAY YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE YOUR STORY.”

The above quote is painted on the Priority Fitness Studio wall, and it is powerful when implemented. There are many different ways to interpret this message. What does this message mean to you when you read it? Do you have a story that you would like to change?

When I decided that this quote was the message I wanted on the wall, it narrowly beat out my second choice which was Albert Einstein's definition of insanity. “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result.”

The story that I was referring to - the one I want to help people change - is the bad habit we have of allowing short term motivation to lead us to temporary success. When I first became a personal trainer, I worked at 24 Hour Fitness for 4 years. I learned a lot in the time that I was there. One of my biggest lessons was that, when someone begins a new training program, they are fueled by short term motivation. There is something coming up in the near future for which they want fast results. Events like vacations, weddings, reunions, swimsuit season etc. Motivation is awesome, and there is nothing wrong with using something quickly approaching to ignite the fire for first steps. The problem is, that if you don't eventually look past the event and take some time to dig deeper into WHY you want the results you're chasing, your success will be temporary. Why? Because all the motivation will be gone once the event is over.

I helped so many clients use that short-term motivation to get fast results. Of course it felt great to see them empowered by reaching their goals, but

unfortunately, many of them ended up losing all of their results shortly after the event ended.

Have you been through this pattern before? Most of us have. If you are tired of always starting over, you need to realize that you can change your story. Instead of always using short term goals as a way of motivating yourself to work extremely hard for short term success, start getting results that you can keep. By digging a little deeper and changing your mindset, you can make fitness a long term part of your life.

I would love to help you reach your short term goals, but my primary job is to help channel that early motivation, help you dig deeper, and keep you from starting over. You have the power to change your story and make fitness a priority in your life.

— CA

## CHAPTER 4

### YEP, YOU SURE CAN!

One morning during a Saturday bootcamp, I asked some questions to the newer attendees: “On a scale of 1–5, 5 being near impossible and 1 being no problem at all, how hard was it for you to make the decision to walk through the studio door for the first time? Secondly, after making that decision, how hard was it to put into action? Thirdly, how much time passed between the decision and the action?” I was curious as to what the instigating moment to the action was, because I know that gyms and training studios can be debilitatingly intimidating. Not even just for beginners, but for veterans in a new place. For some reason, there tends to be a ridiculous and unnecessary amount of judgment in the field of fitness in general. Self-doubt and fear are also strong deterrents.

The answers to my questions varied between 1’s and 5’s. Some decided to join the meetup group or try personal training online, but waited weeks before finding the courage to act on it. Some people were lucky enough to have brutally honest friends to tell them it was time to get active. Some just couldn’t commit until they hit the lowest point possible and the only way to survive was to start fighting.

All of this propelled me into reflection upon self doubt and its strong instigator - fear. In my sessions, I’ve been hearing a lot of the phrase, “I can’t do that,” after demonstrating an exercise that seems like it might be beyond a person’s capability (only through their lenses, not mine). But I have discovered that the only thing people need to hear from me is, “yes, yes you can.” And do you know what happens? They find they can, their lenses change, and the joy that follows on their faces is indescribable. I love when



the simple things are the most powerful.

My group challenge that day was to go find someone who needs to be told, “You can.” You can open that studio or gym door. It will be the heaviest weight you lift on your fitness journey (most first steps to change seem anchored miles under the sea), but you can do it. We all need to hear it from time to time, something as simple and honest as that little gem. Sometimes the response isn’t immediate, but I promise you they tuck it away somewhere still holding tight to it. The result is that it surfaces right when they need it most - when they need that anchor lifted.

Wouldn’t you love to be the person who instigates change for them? To put a life-saving tool in their pocket for that very moment? We have an obligation to inspire one another. Can you imagine the ripple effect of goodness and encouragement? Help them to open that door so the person they become 20 years from now is happy, healthy, strong and independent. Not to mention, free of medications with a mile long list of side effects and money spent.

I find repeatedly that each person walking through our doors is far stronger and more capable than they think, myself included. If you can find that someone, and they come in to realize, “hey, check me out, look what I can do,” you’ll change a life. The hope is they figure out they can make even bigger and better goals. And never settle.

So if you’re wanting to make a change in your lifestyle with fitness, but haven’t yet, I’ve got your back. You can do it - open the door. I can’t do that part for you, as it has to be your mental commitment. But, I or any other trainer will take your hand upon that first step inside and every moment thereafter. If you’ve already made a change, and are currently working hard, I want two things from you. First, make a bigger goal for yourself. Second, show someone how to take the first step by taking their hand, giving them a specific action (open the door!), or putting that “you can” whisper in their pocket for later. Keep the ripples going strong and the anchors out of the sea.

— JK

## CHAPTER 5

# ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

I took the following acronym from another trainer and have been living by it for years: BEDWAS. It is important enough to pass along to you so you can implement the action, especially on hard days. And guys, there will be hard days. Sometimes you feel like Hulk, sometimes you feel like, well, you can't do jack. It happens. There is a cliché that goes something like, "I got up on the wrong side of the bed." Hopefully, with this 30 second implementation before your feet hit the floor, the chances of that happening will shrink to the size of a chickpea. Side note: yes, chickpeas are definitely a healthy snack.

Are you ready for it? It is simple and sweet: Begin Each Day with a Smile.

Smiling causes positive changes in your brain. This is not just about attitude and psychology. The muscles used for smiling can create new neural pathways in your brain that can help maintain basic brain function, memory and learning. Each time you smile, you break the brain's natural tendency to think negatively. And overall, it just makes a person more attractive. Agreed?

So when we get discouraged in our progress or hit a wall in seeing results (again, it will happen as is the way of the body), it's important to remember how far we've come and be thankful for another day to try again. We want progress, not perfection. Take a second to start each day with a smile and choose 3 things for which you are grateful. This single action will ensure the path of your day is a positive and productive one. And again, you will naturally just be more alluring and contagious in spirit.

I will go first. Today, I am thankful for dumbbells, football, and the chance to

make you stronger. Now it is your turn. Make it a habit. \*smiles\*

— CA

## CHAPTER 6

# NUTRITION: A TOUGH LOVE PEP TALK

I'm going to drop a truth bomb here that you won't like. Listen up: You will not outrun, out HIIT (high intensity interval training), or out strength train a bad diet. That would be a good statement of fact to put on the front of your refrigerator or cabinet that holds all the salty and sweet bad-for-you snacks.

It doesn't matter if you are a marathon runner, an athlete that works out 7 days per week or a marine. If you feed yourself bad things, you will not only stall your progress, but will feel terrible during your workouts and find yourself in a hamster wheel; gaining zero traction with motivation and consistency.

Any health and fitness effort to improve must start in your kitchen. That's where you will find your 6-pack abdominals. As nutritional change is such a massive undertaking, plant the following seeds, and let them germinate. First, own the ideas. Then, put them into action.

1. Realize what an incredibly intricate and powerful machine your body is and that you are worth it. You have so much power and strength, find out how far you can get by being conscious about everything that passes from your hands to your mouth. You will not be disappointed with the outcome. When you constantly fuel your body with foods it does not need, you are forcing it to expend energy on processing those things and that energy could be used elsewhere. (Like, say, propelling you through a workout as a superhuman.) It accumulates unnecessary wear and tear on the internal machine. Imagine your

efficiency if every item that you ate and drank was exactly what all your human functions needed! The potential is astounding. Don't waste it or wish for it. Get it. YOU ARE WORTH IT.

2. Begin by taking stock of your current diet. Download a food tracking application that you feel comfortable with and be willing to be honest. Most will break down your diet into macros and other vitamins/nutrients to see where you are falling short or overkilling. This breakdown is formulated by questions about your goal, your current weight and lifestyle. The plan includes calorie intake and then further breaks it down into how many of those calories should be protein, carbs and fat. Again, these calculations are based on some basic physiological questions and how active you are on a daily basis. Once you get a rhythm and teach yourself how to eat well, you don't have to track all the time. At this point, check in once a month. If you are already a healthy eater, track for one week each month to stay on course, especially if you have been busier than normal or under more stress, etc. Holidays will necessitate a check-in.
3. “. . . be willing to be honest.” This is an important nugget. We all have a certain talent at rationalizing, especially with food. For most of us, we honestly do not even know it's happening. Firstly, be honest with your tracking. If you eat it, input it. If you input it, don't lie about the serving size. Do it right. Secondly, trash the theory that I hear so often regarding “treating yourself.” If you feel like you had a terrible day and decide you need a treat, then actually treat yourself. Not with ice cream. With healthy things. The healthy things are the real “treat” for your body. A donut is a harm with absolutely zero nutritional value - maybe even negative - and a crap load of calories. This is the hard part. Your brain says treat, but your body says harm. Find a way to get them both on the same page, where treat = healthy.
4. Please, I beg of you, do not throw away all your hard work at the gym with junk. What are you even doing at the gym in the first place? You are spending hard-earned money for it, you are sweating for it, struggling for it . . . don't make all that effort disappear for 30 seconds of sugary or salty pleasure. Not worth it. Keep a handle on what you want most. Not what you want now.

You can not outrun a bad diet, so don't spin your wheels trying. Realize your

potential because, once you do, your possibilities will be endless. What do you want most? Because the “now” is fleeting.

— JK

## CHAPTER 7

# SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS BY OVERCOMING YOUR FAVORITE EXCUSE

The easiest and most popular excuse for us to use to skip our workouts is, “I don’t have time.” In my first book, “Make Fitness A Priority: How to win the fight against your excuses,” I talked about how we use all of the other top priorities in our lives (family, career, and our faith), to justify the “I don’t have time” excuse. We convince ourselves that we will just have to get to it later when we will have more time. But does later ever come? The truth is, that even though you are busy and have other priorities, you still have plenty of time left to Make Fitness A Priority in your life. In this chapter, I am going to give you two tips that have helped many clients in overcoming this excuse.

The first tip you have probably heard before, but may not have actually taken action on it. You are going to do the exact same thing you do to make sure you don’t miss an appointment at work, to make sure you don’t miss any of your kids activities, and to make sure you don’t miss a date with your significant other. It is very simple. You are going to schedule it in your calendar.

Have you done this before? Have you made a habit of it? You need to start thinking of your workouts as important meetings with your most important client. If you think this way, it will be much harder to skip it. Along with scheduling it, you also need to get in the habit of checking for any potential conflicts. At the beginning of each week, compare your workout calendar with your family and work calendars. If there are any conflicts that could get in the way of meeting with your top client, reschedule them to set yourself up for success ahead of time.

The second tip to help you overcome this obstacle is to ask yourself a simple question. The question is, “How long should my workouts be right now?” When people say they don’t have time to workout, what they really mean is, I don’t have time to workout like I used to. Years ago you may have had a lot more time for your workouts than you do now. There may have been a period of your life when you actually spent 1 ½ to 2 hours at the gym, 3–5 times a week. Just because that is what worked for you in the past doesn’t mean that is the only option you have now. The time that we have available for all of our priorities in life will constantly fluctuate. That doesn’t mean we have to lose balance with our priorities. Having less time doesn’t mean it’s less of a priority, it just means we need to make the time we have count. Ask yourself (and be honest), what fits best in your schedule right now. A hard, fast-paced 30 minute workout 3 days a week, is not inferior to a 1 ½ hour workout 5 days per week . . . it is just different.

Your schedule will change as your life continues. Time is fluid moving forward. So stay ahead of the upcoming week. If something is changing, move that scheduled workout wherever it will fit. The time is already in there, just edit its placement; day and time. Whatever you do, do not delete it. Adapt, or die, right?

I know it is always daunting to add yet another item to your calendar, but if it is fitness, that addition will force positive stress-reaction adaptations in your body. Working out makes stress, even at a cellular level, less powerfully wearing. You will be able to handle your busy schedule with less stress and with more joy. Taking care of yourself is one of the best gifts you can give your family, especially amidst the busiest and most stressful times of the year.



## CHAPTER 8

### WARMING UP TO LEVEL-UP

The consensus on warmups seems to be that they are a small enough part of the workout to be forgotten and therefore deemed unnecessary. Let's face it, they are less than exciting. Hitting a personal record on a back squat is so much more enticing. But know that this 10 minute segment of your sweat-fest is a stealthy way to level-up in your performances.

There are two types of warmups: general and specific. Both should last at least 10 minutes, and both will involve low-intensity, cardiovascular and/or muscular movements. A general warmup does not necessarily relate to the workout that follows and can include time on a stationary bike, rowing machine, elliptical or treadmill. This is applicable before any type of workout.

A specific warmup involves low-intensity movements that will mimic the exercises to follow and includes dynamic stretching. An example of a specific workout before weight training can be air squats, pushups, lateral lunge pulses, shoulder gators, light band rows etc.

It is important to note that both types of warmups should include self-myofascial release and static stretching if you have musculoskeletal imbalances. This will decrease movement compensations and help you avoid injury. For beginners, self-myofascial release can be done with a foam roller. While being conscious of your posture, apply pressure to overactive and shortened (tight) muscles for at least 30 seconds once you find a tender spot. Staying free of knots will enhance your neuromuscular communication and help keep those joints pain-free. Again, static stretching involving longer

holds is only for imbalances. Otherwise, keep the stretching to active, short holds for more repetitions.

Among the benefits of warming up, there are three main points to focus on. The first is increased heart and respiratory rate. It will essentially increase your capacity to perform work in those areas. Blood and oxygen will pump to the newly activated muscle tissue, making it ready to rock.

With this increased flow of goodness, tissue temperatures will rise (hence “warmup”), and you will find yourself more flexible, which again, is so good for joint mechanics and clean, safe movements. The elevated temperature will also raise your metabolic rate. We do love that! Burn, calories, burn!

Lastly, and my favorite part, is it just plain pumps you up. Being psychologically prepared – having your head right – can have huge effects on your willingness to work hard to the very last repetition. And nobody has time to waste even a single rep these days. Make them all count. Mental readiness is an exceptional tool for progression.

In client and personal experience, it seems like the older we get, the longer it takes to warm up. Depending on your level of soreness from a previous workout, it could take a little longer as well. A benchmark for readiness is a little sweat. I’m talking about tangible beads, here. That will indicate a rise in temperature. I allow myself at least 20 minutes of time for a short jog and specific stretching to my body imbalances before my own trainer runs me through a second warmup specific to his plan for me that day. So I’m at about 30 minutes for warming up each time. (Just for reference, I’m 38 years old and usually a bit sore.) And as far as mental capacities, we are all extremely unique. So, I would recommend doing what is best for your body and what readies you to go beast-mode!

Do you want to level up? Nail your warm-up. Show me some sweat.

— JK

## CHAPTER 9

# FITNESS IS ABOUT BEING BETTER THAN YOU USED TO BE

I have a favorite hoodie that I love to wear to and from my workouts. My girlfriend hates this hoodie, and has tried to replace it many times with other hoodies, but I still wear it. It says, “Fitness is not about being better than someone else, it’s about being better than you used to be.” I just love the message. (Also that is not a typo you read . . . the second “better” is misspelled on my hoodie also).

I actually bought the hoodie in person, and didn’t even realize it was misspelled until after I had worn it a few times. That particular error actually makes me like it even more, as it helps drive the point home. Fitness is not about being perfect, but simply about being the best “YOU” you can be. Imperfections and all.

As I was writing this book, I realized that the tips that are the easiest to write are the ones that I struggle with the most. This tip is no exception. My goal as a fitness professional has always been to help as many people as I can make fitness a priority in their lives. In order to be my best at that, there are two things of which I have to remind myself, often.

The first reminder is that **I am not a taco** . Poetic, right? What I mean to say, is that I can’t please everyone. A taco can, but I can’t. There will always be people who don’t like you. This is a hard thing for me to accept and I have to remind myself almost everyday. No matter what you do and no matter how good you are at what you do, there will always be people who don’t like you. Even Oprah has her haters. To make the most impact, you have to keep your eyes on your goals and off the haters. And certainly don’t be one.

Secondly, do not fall into the trap of comparison. When was the last time you compared yourself to someone else and felt happy about it? Our energy is a result of our strongest thoughts. We are always happy with what we have until we compare it to what others have, and then we decide we are not good enough. The fastest way to kill something special is to compare it to something else.

This is a big challenge when it comes to our fitness goals. We see other people's fitness posts and results, and then we forget about how far we have come on our own journey. While it can be positive to have external motivation, we can easily let it demotivate us if we are not mindful. When we see other people's fitness posts we are usually seeing them at their best, and we really don't know the full story. More than likely, we are getting their movie trailer online: their best traits. We are comparing our behind-the-scenes to their highlight reel, and that is an insult to who we are and our own transformation.

When it comes to your fitness goals, you win the race by staying in your own lane and keeping your focus on your own finish line. Be the hero of your own movie by focusing on how far you have come, and where you are going. Remind yourself that you are not a taco, and the only person you need to compare yourself to is the person you used to be.

Screw the haters. Beat yesterday.

## CHAPTER 10

# BLUEBERRIES: OH, THE MAGIC!

Implementing changes in your daily nutrition, whether big or small, is a challenging task. In my experience with clients, food is the most difficult topic to even discuss, let alone change. It gets personal, and it gets a little ugly. We know that food can be tied deeply to emotions and memories, comfort in stressful times, and gatherings for celebrations. But let us not forget its functional value. We eat to fuel our nervous system to call on our muscular system to move our skeletal system, and everything in between. There is an intense amount of internal mechanisms happening every single second, so imagine your daily living capacity if you give your body exactly what it needs! I can't even begin to tell you what an unstoppable powerhouse you would be, not to mention how great you would feel. This isn't even about looking great on the exterior, because, of course that will be an amazing side benefit.

A simple start to behavior changes in this area is to choose exceedingly small things, like the addition of blueberries for example, into your daily meals. Consistency is also key, not only in nutrition, but most goals regarding fitness. I'm willing to bet I don't have a single entry in this book that doesn't contain that word . . . consistency.

So, let me persuade you into befriending the magical blueberry. It really does hold powers, as do most fruits and vegetables of potent color. If you integrate them into your daily nutrition plan, you will reap big rewards for something so delightfully small and tangy. Here's the rundown on the massive benefits of these golden-blue nuggets:

They can:

- decrease blood pressure (high-end numbers are rampant these days)
- decrease inflammation (huge if you add to a post-workout smoothie)
- increase lung function (yes, please, cardio enthusiasts)
- decrease heart attack risk (always nice to have an easy way to combat genetics)
- aid in recovery and muscle repair (bring it – that’s the point)
- increase brain function (we all want to be smarter than a 5th grader)

Amazing! If you don’t love the taste, blend them into a smoothie or add them to a salad so they go (mostly) unnoticed. And don’t come away from this thinking a blueberry donut is a health benefit. I’m not talking blueberry muffins, either. Choose only the fruit, fresh or frozen.

I used blueberries as an example here, but I urge you to continue to learn about the health benefits of the foods you are choosing to eat. Knowledge is power. Try to fill your grocery cart with mostly fruits, vegetables and whole proteins, which are generally housed in the perimeter of the grocery store. All the aisles in the middle won’t hold items with much nutritional value, so be more cautious in your choices here. You are the one who fills your shelves, the power is in your hands. And in the blueberry.

— JK

## CHAPTER 11

# STAY HYDRATED TO MAXIMIZE YOUR PERFORMANCE

Hydration is another one of those easy and cheap things we can do for ourselves with little effort but an insane amount of gains. Most of us (thankfully) have easy access and it is easy to change up the flavor with lemons, cucumbers or even a little bit of fizz. When you are well-hydrated, not only does it show in the efficiency and power of your workouts, but also inside that amazing body of yours in all kinds of systems, muscles, and organs.

### FIRST THINGS, FIRST: WATER BY THE NUMBERS:

- The human body is about 60% water.
- Daily water loss from basic bodily functions, metabolism, excretion etc. is about 2.5L. This is not including exercise, summertime heat or anything causing extra sweat sessions. All your systems operate on a need for water, including basic brain function.
- Daily recommendations hover around 125oz for men and 95oz for women, with fluctuations based on level of activity. Being and staying hydrated is a constant process and your needs, as far as amounts, will vary daily.

### MOTIVATION TO DRINK MORE:

So, let's talk about dehydration. Even the slightest dip in your total body

water, or TBW, can cause mental and physical fog. When it comes to performance during your workouts, you will experience fatigue sooner and a general poorer performance as far as focus and execution. Your maximum strength and maximum repetitions will decrease, it will take longer for you to get to that preferred recovery heart rate, and even post workout, dehydration can alter the efficiency at which your body metabolizes carbohydrates and fats. Let us not forget that cortisol word – a stress hormone. If you are in a prolonged state of dehydration, your body will be stressed, and cortisol will be flying. No, thank you! Other annoying side effects of dehydration include dizziness and headaches.

#### TIPS TO START DRINKING MORE:

- Starting to drink more water is one of the first homework assignments I usually give a new client. It's a little change that gives you a big return on investment. Create a habit of starting your day with one big glass. Every night before bed, I put a big glass of water on my nightstand so it is there, ready for me to drink as soon as I turn off my alarm.
- An easy way to keep tabs each day is to monitor your urine color. For the general population and those without any underlying medical problems, urine should be pale yellow in color. Anything darker, add a few more glasses to your daily regime and pay attention to activities you do on the regular that require more. This will allow you to prepare accordingly.
- Add excitement to your water routine by drinking sparkling water from time to time. Drinking nothing but water can get boring, admittedly. This spices things up a bit and makes the water more enjoyable. Buying flavored water or flavoring your water with fruit and vegetables can also add some needed hype to keep you away from the sugary stuff.

What I'm saying is - drink water. There's really no excuse.





## CHAPTER 12

# HABIT- STACKING

I know. When we hear the word “habit,” it tends to bring about an automatic feeling of all-around disgust. If habits were beings, they would be like those villains that always seem to win. They can be, in fact, villains. But hear me out on this, it will be worth your while. Remember when we talked about something as simple as adding blueberries into your daily regime? It can be applied here in a unique and non-intrusive way.

The National Academy of Sports Medicine released an article by Josh Elsesser explaining a new approach to behavior change when it comes to Health and Fitness.

See his post [here](#).

Let me give you a summary of the article. The more frequently we do something – habits – the stronger connection that specific action has to our brain. The action is connected to our brain through neurons. He uses the example of needing coffee immediately upon waking. That connection is as strong as your coffee, since, for most of us, we’ve spent years upon years in strengthening that connection. I should know, I take mine black as night. If we were to try to disconnect the brain and the corresponding action, we would likely get frustrated, feel deprived and give up, especially with a habit as solid as coffee.

About these neurons . . . our brain keeps things tidy up there with something called synaptic pruning. If we have unused neural connections, or habits that are no longer done frequently enough to be considered habits, our brain will

take those connections and apply them elsewhere, where they are needed most. Again, the unused connections will reinforce the coffee. It works similarly to building life skills. The more you practice, the stronger the neural connections, the better you become.

Here is where the stacking part comes in, for bad habits in particular. Stay with me . . . if we use the already established connections of a bad habit, like daily soda (really awful), for example, and we stack an 8oz glass of water on top of it (good habit) instead of taking the soda away cold turkey, we can connect that good habit with the bad habit. It already holds a strong connection. This is your brain hack. If you want to have your soda, you know you also must drink water after the soda. Drinking the water will be easier to add than taking away the soda. This is an excellent start. Make sense?

Another example outside of nutrition would be adding an action to a sedentary guilty pleasure, like TV. If you are one to come home from work, especially if yours is intensely stressful, relaxing with your favorite show is an easy way to unwind. Your brain's connection to TV is strongly established. Here, we can add in a specific amount of movement to be done, per show that you watch. For every 60 minutes of screen time you allow yourself, stack a 30-minute walk (or some sort of exercise or movement) on top of it. The good habit of movement will use the connections of the bad habit, being sedentary. Again, much easier to add movement than to take away an already strongly ingrained bad habit.

Remember to be very specific on your goals with distance, time or amounts (such as the aforementioned 8oz of water as opposed to “some water”). You will be more likely to succeed as the numbers give you a tangible goal, so to speak.

Nobody likes to be told they can't or shouldn't be doing something, when it comes to bad habits. Josh's approach combines a sort of brain hack with positivity that will leave you feeling empowered and able to succeed, long-term. I think it could also be useful in other areas of our lives as well, that need a little sprucing. Be creative, be strong and be intentional.

## CHAPTER 13

### FIND OUT HOW FITNESS FITS IN YOUR LIFE

When someone wants some assistance in getting in shape, they have a lot of options to choose from. Personal training, online training, virtual training, bootcamps, and fitness classes are offered everywhere, and many gyms and fitness studios put together group challenges for their members on a regular basis, too. All of these options can provide great accountability and help you reach your goals if they are the right fit for you. I know if you are reading this book, your ultimate goal is not just to reach your short term goals, but also to get long term success by Making Fitness A Priority in your life.

To ensure that long term success is the end result, and you don't end up on the roller coaster ride of temporary success, there are 2 potential flaws you need to be on the lookout for.

#### FIRST POTENTIAL PROGRAM FLAW:

The program begins with the end in mind. What I mean by that, is you know on day one when the last day will be. It doesn't matter if you are signing up for a 30 day program, 6 week program, or a 12 week program, the focus is all about the time in between day 1 and the last day. Nothing past that. The object of the program is for you to work very hard during the program so you can get as many results as possible. This is setting yourself up for only temporary success, because you have no plans for what comes next. If you don't answer that question (What's Next?) at some point, then the answer will be: you will resort back to what you did before the program started. End result=Temporary success. If it is the right program, it won't have an end date

in mind, because it will be the beginning of fitness being a priority in your life.

## SECOND POTENTIAL PROGRAM FLAW:

The program design is the same for everyone. Everyone who participates in the program or challenge, does the exact same thing.

Factors not considered that should be considered:

- *Your current fitness level*
- *Your fitness goals*
- *Your current schedule*
- *Your workout experience*
- *Your eating habits & knowledge of nutrition*

Those are just a few of the things that should be considered when you are finding a workout program. One thing I have learned since becoming a personal trainer, is that fitness is not one size fits all. What worked for someone else is not necessarily going to work for you, and what worked for you in the past is not necessarily going to work for you now. Your life may be much different now than it was when you did past programs that worked well for you.

If you would like help finding a program that doesn't have these 2 flaws, then I would recommend trying my 6 week Make Fitness A Priority course. Find it [here](#).

When finding a new fitness program, make sure it doesn't begin with the end in mind, and make sure it fits you. What's next?

## CHAPTER 14

# POSTURAL DOMINOES

Your static posture is a blueprint for how your body will function during transitional and dynamic movements. How do you stand when you're waiting in a line? In front of the stove? Or even sitting in a chair? It is important to have postural control and be aware of the position of your major joint complexes and core musculature when starting a strength training program. Think about it . . . If you are walking through the grocery store or sitting for a long period of time and find yourself uncomfortable or with nagging pain afterwards, you certainly don't want to load yourself with heavy weights at the gym or go run 3 miles. Master your static posture, before you start moving. With consistent practice, the idea is to train your neuromuscular system to automatically default to a neutral postural position without having to consciously put forth effort. Here are some basic cues to follow. It helps to stand in front of a mirror to notice what happens with each engagement, starting with the feet and moving upward to the cervical spine. Each step creates the next engagement, like dominoes.

1. Feet should be underneath your hips, parallel to one another and toes facing forward. (This seems like something that should be automatic, but depending on muscle imbalances happening at your knee and hip complexes, it could take some focus.)
2. Create a gentle external, rotational torque with your hips, without your feet moving. This sounds complex but it's a simple contraction. (Pretend you are digging into the ground with your feet while slightly turning them away from each other, this will create the external torque at your hips. As you dig into the ground, your feet will not

actually change position. It is a very small movement at your knees and hips.)

3. With this torque, you should feel your glute contract. Hold onto that gentle activation.
4. As your glute contracts, it will put your pelvis in a neutral position, as its job is to support and stabilize the pelvis and spine. (See the dominoes? Each step automatically creates the next.)
5. Moving up to the core musculature, begin a gentle bracing maneuver, a tightening of the abdominals. This will also set your rib cage.
6. Your shoulders should be externally rotated, also creating a gentle torque and protecting the shoulder joint complex. You will feel a retraction of your scapula (shoulder blades).
7. Align your ears over your shoulders by tucking your chin slightly. When you tuck your chin, your head will position itself over your shoulders and not be protruding forward.

Practice makes perfect, and practice makes habit with little effort. Each time you run through these steps, you will be able to set yourself up more quickly without having to put forth a ton of mental energy. A few seconds is all it will take before it becomes second nature. By starting lifts in this engaged stance, you will be able to create more force and power as well as protect your joints from altered mechanics that can lead to injuries. Try to be in this neutral position when you are standing in lines, chatting with a friend, doing the dishes at the sink or cooking at the stove. It will initially feel like you are standing at the ready for a fight, but it doesn't look as strangely to others as it feels to you. You will be surprised at what this stance practice brings to your body awareness. And remember, a personal trainer can help address any of these imbalances for optimal mechanics.

Now, go polish those dominoes. Spit-shined, top to bottom.

## CHAPTER 15

### DON'T FORGET TO TURN ON YOUR SWITCH

Have you ever heard of the movie “Over The Top”? It is an older movie from the 80’s (1987) starring Sylvester Stallone. It was one of my favorite movies when I was a kid. It probably isn’t the kind of movie that will get much praise from movie critics on rotten tomatoes or from Roger Ebert, but it has many great life lessons that had a substantial impact on me. Also, with Kenny Loggins included on the soundtrack, it definitely qualifies as an awesomely bad 80’s movie you should watch.

In the movie, Lincoln Hawk (Sylvester Stallone), is a truck driver by day, and a professional arm wrestler by night. The movie is about this tough trucker’s journey to win his son back and triumph at the world arm wrestling championship.

Lincoln Hawk had this routine he did every time he was preparing for an arm-wrestling match. As he was walking to the table, he would take his trucker hat and he would turn it around backward. In his mind, this act was like turning on a switch that turned him into a truck. His game face transformed, and his mind was right for his match.

I watched this movie many times growing up. My biggest takeaway from it was that before you take on a challenge, you need to get your mind right. I was a wrestler in high school and college, and before big matches, the phrase, “Turn on your switch” was a regular admonition between me and my dad. In sports and life, if you don’t have your mind right, you will lose before the match even starts. As Lincoln Hawk would say, “The world meets nobody halfway, if you want something you have to take it!”



In my 6 week workbook, each chapter has a section on Mindset, Nutrition, and Training. Nutrition is probably the most important piece, but it is no accident that Mindset is first every week. On your fitness journey, there will be plenty of challenging times. There will be days you don't feel like working out, and there will be workouts that you don't feel like finishing. Some weeks, you won't want to take the time to plan out your meals or cook.

Having the right mindset to push through those days will pay you back, ten-fold. A strong mind produces a strong body and your reward will be a happy life.

What's your switch? When you flip it, who do you become?

— CA

## CHAPTER 16

### WORKOUT, BREAKDOWN, RECOVER, REBUILD

Week after week, we meet at the gym to get our workout in among encouraging friends or we do a circuit at home (hopefully totaling 3–5 sessions). We push, pull, HIIT, run, jumping jack and squat to break down our muscles, in hopes that, with proper rest (7–8 hours per night), recovery (walking outside for some vitamin D) and nutrition (high protein, fruits and vegetables), we build them back up to be bigger, faster and stronger. So, the rhythm is to workout, breakdown, recover, rebuild.

One of our most amazing muscles, aside from that powerhouse glute and core combination, is our heart. We condition it with intervals, intensity variations for endurance and sprints of all shapes and sizes. Our cardiorespiratory system plays an intricate role in its friendship with our musculoskeletal system.

That heart is also responsible for how we handle suffering and struggles. (For example, as I write, we are in the throes of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. It is starting to get hard, for me, for friends and co-workers, our heroes on the frontlines getting sick, job loss and investments teetering.) The unknown can be terrifying. So just as we condition our muscles (again, workout, breakdown, recover, rebuild), we must be sure to pay attention to how we are conditioning that aspect of our heart so we can build it to be stronger and more resilient. It's good to feel and acknowledge sadness and frustrations but be sure to consciously morph them into kindness and mercy. I know that's an ability easier to say than acquire, but with some work and practice, it is possible. Compassion, too will come out bigger, better, faster and stronger. Eliciting kindness and mercy from the depths of our hearts

amidst suffering and struggles will become a habit upon which we can rely, and any future phases of stress will be easier to maneuver and withstand. This will pass, and another challenge will come. Such is the fluidity of joy and pain of the heart.

I say this because the state of your heart and mind can have a profound effect on the power of your workouts, so get them right before you dig into another one. All systems work together. Be patient. Muscle protein synthesis occurs up to 48 hours after a workout. There is not an immediate and massive victory in this arena, but small ones that build into greatness. Keep on making small, consistent efforts to condition your whole human – to be your best self.

In my own personal experience, there are times I have not been able to get my mind right before a workout. Usually it has to do with fears and frustrations of motherhood. In these cases, I bring all that funk right into my workout with me and use it to fuel the fire, instead of skipping it altogether. I'm pretty sure my form suffers from lack of focus, but the intensity is positively therapeutic. My trainer is right there with me so I feel very safe and I'm not worried about hurting myself. He knows exactly when to throw in a set of ball slams to calm me down. You'd better believe the seams of those balls are struggling to hold together.

Workout, breakdown, recover, rebuild. Over and over. Your whole human. Inside, outside, and sometimes even upside down.

— JK

## CHAPTER 17

# WE GOT YOUR BACK

One of the top reasons that people go to the doctor is because of low back pain. This may seem a bit surprising, but it is true. I have experienced my own issues from time to time with low back pain, and chances are, so have you. Having to deal with low back pain can be very annoying, but the good news is that for most of us, there are easy steps we can do on our own to help eliminate it.

In some cases, back pain could be due to a significant back injury that requires medical attention. But generally, low back pain is a result of having an anterior pelvic tilt. This basically means that your pelvis is tilted forward putting an arch in your lower back, resulting in constant pressure.

Who is the culprit? Pattern overload. Most of us have sedentary jobs, and spend a lot of our time at the computer. We spend hours and hours not just sitting, but leaning forward in a chair with our hands on a keyboard and our head staring at a screen. The longer we are in this position, the more our body adapts to this position, which results in some muscles getting tighter and some getting weaker. Leaning forward at the waist for long periods of time results in our hip flexors and quads getting tighter and tighter because they are never stretched out. Our abs and hamstrings also begin to get weaker the longer we are in this position.

There are things you can do to counter this pattern overload that comes from sitting for long periods of time. You can get up from your chair and stretch out regularly. You can get a standing desk to use for part of the day. Lastly, you can add some corrective exercise to your life to help fix the imbalances.

Fight back your low back with these three steps:

1. **Foam Roll** (Self-Myofascial Release) the tight muscles.
2. **Stretch** the tight muscles
3. **Strengthen** the weak muscles

### **Step 1: Foam Rolling (self myofascial release)**

If you have spent much time at a gym, you have probably seen these foam rollers and wondered about their purpose. We basically use these foam noodles as a way of giving yourself a massage. Rolling it over your tight muscles will help get rid of knots, and help loosen up stiffness that is hindering you.

The areas you need to foam roll to help correct an anterior pelvic tilt are your quads, hip flexors and lats.

### **Step 2: Stretch the tight muscles**

Now that you have worked the knots out, the second step is to stretch out the tight muscles. I teach my clients 1–2 static stretches for each muscle group we are focusing on. Static stretches are held for 7–10 seconds for 3 rounds with 5–10 seconds rest between rounds. Each time you stretch, you try to reach a little further to your end range of motion. The areas you want to focus on to correct an anterior pelvic tilt, are hip flexors, quads, and IT bands. The stretches I teach my clients to start with are: the runner's stretch for hip flexors, pigeon stretch or spinal twist stretch for IT bands, and single leg quad stretch-standing up.

### **Step 3: Strengthen the weak muscles**

Three muscles you want to strengthen to help correct an anterior pelvic tilt are your glutes, hamstrings and intrinsic core stabilizers. Keep in mind that every exercise can get harder with progression or easier with regression, but ideally if you are a beginner I would start with a floor crunch and a floor bridge. I start my clients with these 2 basic exercises, focusing on technique and a slow tempo.

Everyone is different and many of us start our journey from different places,

so keep in mind that this is not a one size fits all program, it is more like a guide to help you start fighting back.

— CA

## CHAPTER 18

# CHECK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK YOURSELF: UPPER CROSSED SYNDROME

Technological devices of all shapes and sizes surround us and have become a necessary pathway for communication. Hours upon hours of it, day after day. Your shoulders are internally rotated (hunched forward), your neck protrudes forward (instead of sitting square above your shoulders) and your cervical and upper thoracic spine are disasters. This creates **Upper Crossed Syndrome**, and it is nearly impossible to stave off without a diligent and consistent plan of attack. There's that word again – consistent.

So, what is the plan of attack? As a general overview, you can start by being aware of your posture. The internal rotation of your shoulders and protruding head are effects of tight muscles like your upper trapezius, anterior (front) neck muscles, latissimus dorsi (your pulling muscles on your back also internally rotate your shoulders) and your pectorals (chest muscles), to name a few. All of these can be shortened, drawing you into a forward bending position. Stretching, foam rolling and massaging them back to normal length is a great start.

The opposing underactive muscles are your deep neck flexors (towards the back of your neck), rhomboids, middle trapezius and lower trapezius (or mid-back). These are in a constant state of stretch, since the overactive muscles are pulling you forward. Isolated strengthening of these (simply connecting your brain to their isolated function) will help restore your body to an upright position.

Big picture here is to keep in mind that the position of your ankles can affect every joint complex, clear up to your shoulders. It's a dangerous game of

dominoes that can result in daily pain and injury, especially under load. If there is an inflexibility (or lack of range of motion), your entire movement system is compromised. Simply learning how to perform daily tasks correctly can have a positive effect on your body, for years to come. My physical therapist reminds his trainees that joints are built to outlast us by a long shot, 110 years! Without pain! It's just a matter of understanding basic mechanical principles and putting them into consistent practice, of which you are absolutely capable. Picking up a laundry basket, reaching overhead for items on shelves and pushing and pulling a vacuum are a few examples of movements we do often, over a lifetime. Are you calling on the right muscles to perform these tasks? Check yourself before you wreck yourself!

Personal Trainers can write an exercise plan for you to help restore your body to a functional and pain-free position. We want to teach you how to move well so you can integrate fitness into your life, long-term, and on your own. Efficiency in movement is equally important on either end of the goals spectrum: daily tasks to athletic performance. We want you to be knowledgeable, and therefore, powerful!

— JK



## CHAPTER 19

### THE BIGGER THE CHALLENGE, THE BIGGER THE REWARD

A man is doing some yard work outside, and he notices a butterfly starting to come out of a cocoon. He decides to take a break and watch the transformation happen. The butterfly struggles to force its body through a little hole in the cocoon. After what seems like quite a bit of time, it suddenly stops. The man waits and waits, assuming that, eventually, the butterfly will resume its struggle. But that never happens.

The man, desperate to help, goes and gets a pair of scissors to cut open the cocoon. The butterfly frees itself from the cocoon, but something wasn't right. Its chest was swollen and its wings were shriveled. The man expected to see the butterfly eventually expand its wings and fly, but that never happened, either.

What the man thought was an act of kindness actually crippled the butterfly. He didn't realize that the endurance of the struggle to get out of the cocoon is what forces the fluid from its body to its wings, so it can fly. Without having to fight, the butterfly never became strong enough to fly. It was forced to stay on the ground for the remainder of its life.

I love this story and have heard it told many times by motivational speakers and coaches. What is the lesson to be learned? Struggles breed growth. Endurance of them makes us stronger.

I am an avid obstacle racer, and have been for years. I have competed in many different types of obstacle races including the World's Toughest Mudder (24 straight hours of fun), 3 different times. Obstacle races challenge

us in many different ways. Physically, challenges include running, climbing, crawling, jumping, carrying, and lifting. Mentally, they include overcoming physical exhaustion and fears (heights, small spaces, dark spaces, deep water, fire, cold, electric shocks). They also ignite teamwork skills, because some obstacles are hard to overcome alone.

Why would a sane person voluntarily put themselves through something so grueling? I take on these challenges because I believe that doing so makes me stronger as a person. These obstacle races prepare me for tough times in life. Whatever forthcoming stressors come my way, I can handle them. The bigger the challenge, the stronger we are upon completion. Challenges test us daily, leaving two choices each time. Either we overcome the obstacle, or we allow the obstacle to overcome us. Don't let them win! Don't even give them any sort of leverage. Attack from the onset.

With this in mind, try challenging yourself with hard workouts, from time to time. They will help you increase your mental strength just as much as your physical strength. Benefits will translate to your job and your family, not only your fitness. Digging a little deeper will become part of who you are. Every now and then I like to put on a challenging boot camp for the make fitness a priority community called, "What Are You Made Of?" Wouldn't you like to find out? <sup>1</sup> The most important part of these particular workouts is the finish. Make it strong.

Why finish strong? When we get to the end, we are usually pretty spent, both physically and mentally. Being able to dig deep and find enough energy to finish as strong as you started is a very good habit to create in yourself. In no time, you will start to see that "finish strong" habits carry over into all other areas of your life. I use this idea with my clients in giving them something called "finishers" or "overtime circuits" at the very end of their workouts. <sup>2</sup>

Do you want a big reward? Go dig into a bigger challenge - and finish strong.

— CA

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<sup>1</sup> You can find a list and description of our past "What Are You Made Of?" workouts here:

<https://overlandparkfitness.com/finish-strong>

2 You can find a list of some of my overtime circuits here:

<https://overlandparkfitness.com/finish-strong/>

## CHAPTER 20

# PROTEIN: ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS TO FUEL SUCCESS

I have so many reasons to love protein! Check it:

1. It is harder to store as fat, as compared to other macros.
2. If you are trying to lose weight and therefore ending the day in a caloric deficit, it is especially important that you are getting enough to protect that lean mass for which you're working so hard. In a negative energy balance, your body will go to amino acids for energy production, so your need for protein increases.
3. You are burning calories by eating it! Of all the macros, your body uses the most calories to process and use protein. Easy, right?
4. It will satiate you longer (vs fat and carbohydrates), which is again important if your goal is weight-loss.
5. If you have a bad habit of eating before bed, change it to a good habit and make sure it's protein. We do most of our protein synthesis for muscle repair and recovery while we are sleeping. If you give your body direct access to what it needs right before bed with a high bioavailability protein shake, for example, you will feel more recovered in the morning as well as boost your lean mass production. I love to sip on my strawberry shake while I power down for the night. A bit of caution here, though: Make sure your shake is low in sugar and doesn't have caffeine from cocoa (chocolate flavors), so it doesn't interfere with sleep.

There is so much information regarding the daily intake of protein out there,

ranging from .4g/lb bodyweight (for the mostly sedentary individual) to .8g/lb bodyweight (for strength athletes). That's about 10%-35% of total caloric intake. Finding where you lie in between can be overwhelming. In my reading and in client progress as well as for myself, I always recommend aiming for the high end, so around 1 g protein per pound of bodyweight for goals of both weight loss and adding lean mass. Certainly on the higher end for adding mass. I weigh 130lbs, so I shoot for 130 g per day. By working towards the high end, you give yourself some wiggle room.

As far as protein food sources, some examples include eggs, dairy products, meat, poultry, fish, rice and beans (combined), yogurt and granola, lentils or nut butters on whole wheat bread. Try to be aware of using both plant-based and animal-based protein sources. It's always best to stay in balance. If you decide to strive for an increase in protein, and all you are eating is more nut butters and dairy proteins, your result might be weight gain - as those sources are higher in fat. Nutrition is a delicate balance of nutrients, so be patient and make adjustments as needed, keeping an eye on caloric intake.

As far as protein shakes and supplements, do your very best to nourish your body with only real food. A supplement is used when you run out of food prep time to meet your daily requirement or as stated above - if you can't rid yourself of the bedtime munchies habit, a protein shake is an excellent alternative. I drink 1 per day in addition to plenty of whole food sources.

If you have questions about protein shakes, I recommend visiting any Supplement Superstore. Those guys/girls are fantastic and want you to succeed! They will also write out a nutrition plan for you for free, based on your lifestyle and goals. I have one for myself, and I love it. I get a lot of questions about what foods are good vs. bad in each macro category, and the nutrition plan you get here will give you a list of specifics. We know by now that being as specific as possible when you make goals maximizes your percentage of success.

And of course, pair that protein with plenty of water to help your body process all that goodness!

**Note:** These recommendations are for generally healthy individuals with no underlying medical conditions. If present, look to a dietician and/or nutritionist for further direction.



## CHAPTER 21

# VARIETY: A WEAPON AGAINST BOREDOM

One of the things that can side-swipe a successful run on consistency with workouts is boredom. Getting bored with workouts is often a reason someone falls off track with their fitness routine. This happens to us because we are creatures of habit. We fall in love with a certain workout routine, and then never change it. Especially the ones in which we are really, really good.

### ***Case in Point:***

When I first became a personal trainer, I worked at a big gym for 4 years. When you get the opportunity to work at the same gym for that long, you really get to know the members. Not only did I know the members well, but I also knew their routines. I knew them so well that before even coming into the gym on any day, I could look at my watch and be able to tell you who would be working out, and what exercises they would be doing.

This kind of repetition has the potential to go downhill fast, for two reasons. One, there are 365 days per year that are available for workouts. That is so many of the same exercises! Boredom will inevitably ensue. It will become harder and harder to find your motivation or edge to get up and get going. Suddenly your 5 days per week rock star schedule shrinks to 4. Then 3. Then couch potato. Eek! Your gains are now dead.

Along with boredom, so much repetition can cause muscle imbalances and injury. If you don't have movement in all planes of motion or you don't know how to hit certain muscles, you're writing a recipe for disaster as far as pain and discomfort down the road, especially in joints. Injury and pain will kill

your motivation as well. Now we are at another dead end.

I actually learned the best solution for this “getting bored” problem years ago during my teaching days, before I became a personal trainer. (If you didn’t know this about me already from reading my first book, I was previously a PE teacher.) I learned a game-changing lesson when I was student teaching. In making a lesson plan for my second graders, I found myself stumped in coming up with new ideas for tag. My co-operating teacher told me that if I just changed one little thing, those kids would think that it was a completely different game. This was the best advice, and I not only used it a lot as a teacher but even more so as a personal trainer. When we change exercises, our bodies and minds respond in the same way as those second graders.

Making changes to your exercises and your routine is not only important to keep you from getting bored, but also to prevent your body from getting used to it. If you keep your workout the same for too long, you lose the force of adaptation, and the exercises won't be as effective. You can do only so many forward or reverse lunges before your body learns that one motion so well; you can do them in your sleep. At this point, you are no longer progressing because it isn't challenging enough for you. Just by making little changes to the exercises, like adding more weight or changing your plane of motion altogether, you will not only avoid boredom but further challenge your proprioception and adaptation. Forcing adaptations means creating progression. So, in the case of lunges, add in some curtsy lunges, lateral lunges, transverse plane lunges, and step-ups at all kinds of heights and on all kinds of surfaces to further challenge balance and stability. The possibilities really are endless, not to mention so much fun!

Speaking of endless possibilities, variety can be amped up through modalities. By using kettlebells or bands instead of dumbbells, you are avoiding both boredom and forcing new adaptations. Need more ideas? Barbells, body bars, easy bars, medicine balls, slam balls, stability balls, a bosu, foam pads, TRX suspension trainers, battle ropes . . . the list goes on, and so will your progression in strength and fitness!

Lastly, most gyms offer a variety of classes that can help if you are one that finds motivation through others. Group sessions are a great way to push yourself and find friendly encouragement. Yoga, bodyweight circuits, core and cardio, Pilates, resistance training, running groups, extracurricular sports



like basketball, softball, soccer, flag football are just a few ways to spice up your routine.

Remember, boredom is a sign that you have been doing the same thing for too long. Keep a close eye on your motivations, adaptations, and progressions. That's a winning combination in battling boredom and avoiding plateaus in gains.

— CA

## CHAPTER 22

### NOW TRENDING: THE ROWER

I am not usually one to send clients onto machines for workouts aside from a select group of particulars. But the rower is not just any machine and it needs some love. Here's why:

1. It is cardio and strength training all in one. People have insane schedules, so if you don't have a big block of time and find yourself out of brain power to come up with a circuit, the rower will hit your legs, back and core as well as get that heart pumping. And as a result, it is a high calorie burner. Big wins over simply walking/running/biking when it comes to time and efficiency. Building muscle AND burning fat. Say wha?! Tell me you are not interested in that winning combination.
2. Unless you are one of those special and elite ultra-marathoners, the treadmill can get boring quickly. You can log only so many miles before you start to feel burnt out. That will likely create issues with consistency and frequency of workouts which will lead to a dismantling of your whole fitness plan. Your couch will become your new best friend.
3. The rowing machine allows for versatility. If you are training for endurance, lower the resistance and settle in for a longer time period. If you are working on speed or power, hit it hard for short bursts as part of a HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training) circuit. Again, I cannot stress its efficiency enough here.
4. The rower is great for people who have nagging injuries or unhappy joints. You will not be pounding the pavement or scurrying around

the rotating mats of a treadmill, having your joints absorb the shock of repetitive landings, which can make those issues worse. I had to nurse a lateral ankle sprain for a few months, and the rower helped me keep my sanity and my fitness level intact. With it, you are instilling some basic, archetype movements as well, like the hip hinge and the pull, both necessary for daily activities. Which leads me to number 5 . . .

5. If anything, use it as a warmup for a strength training day. It will ignite the posterior (it is similar to a deadlift <sup>1</sup> as far as form, only you are seated) and warm up your body so you are ready to rock. Activating the posterior muscles will aid in proper technique, having your brain call on the right muscles for the right activities, which will in turn protect your knees and your back. Never have I gotten up off the rower without my glute standing at the ready for a fight.

If you need help integrating the rowing machine, give a trainer a shout or ask for help at your gym. I would recommend it for a home gym purchase over ellipticals and treadmills, as its functional capacity is near impossible to beat. If you have a smaller space for workouts, it is a great option. Priority Fitness has two that will fold up against the wall, so it will take up much less space than other cardio machines. Give it a try! You will cultivate a love/hate relationship with it (in a good way), I promise.

Ready? Set? Row!

— JK

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<sup>1</sup> A deadlift is one of three main power exercises in which a loaded barbell is lifted off the floor (with a hip hinge and slight bend at the knees) to hip level and then placed back down.

## CHAPTER 23

# YOUR JOURNEY DOESN'T END WHEN YOU FAIL

6 weeks into every new year, we get to hear a lot of street chatter regarding failed New Year's resolutions.

As a fitness professional, I am going to speak candidly about these resolutions. I hate them. Don't get me wrong, I love setting goals, and I think everyone should be a goal setter. What I don't like about New Year's resolutions is all of the negativity that comes with them. Most people don't even set a resolution anymore because they think they are just failed promises to themselves. There is a looming doom, so why bother?

Here is a question on which I would like you to ponder. Who determines our failure regarding our fitness goals, anyway? Maybe we miss one workout because we had a tough week or a busier week. Another time we succumb to temptation and eat something we knew had little nutritional value. We found ourselves headed to the drive-through for food one day because we didn't plan ahead. If we mess up even just once, does that mean we are failures?

Now, I have two follow-up questions. Is your expectation for yourself to be perfect? If so, does perfection sound like a realistic goal?

I admire and appreciate the belief you have in yourself to set the bar that high. I attack most things in my life with a "losing is not an option" mentality. But give yourself a break. You are human and you are going to fail from time to time. Failure is not the end of the story.

Reaching your fitness goals (especially your long-term ones) does not come without making mistakes. Remember that you are human, and imperfection is

part of what makes us beautiful. Failure can be a great tool for success if you accept it and also let it fuel your fire.

***“It ain’t about how hard you hit, It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done!”***

— ROCKY BALBOA

Success doesn’t come by never failing. Success comes from learning how to get back on track every time you make a mistake. Failure does not define you, nor does it stop you from reaching your goals. What defines you is how you respond after you fail.

The next time you slip up on your fitness plan, remember that the journey is not over, and it’s what you do next that counts. Did you get hit? Are you bleeding and bruised? That’s okay. Pick yourself up and try harder.

— CA

## CHAPTER 24

# ENDORPHINS AND BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES

“Exercise makes endorphins. Endorphins make you happy! Happy people just don’t shoot their husbands.”

— ELLE WOODS, LEGALLY BLONDE

Uncertainty abounds. Unexpected job loss, illness, having to move. I get high anxiety whenever I have to start anything over, in general. Fighting with friends, coworkers, or hell, toddlers. Car trouble, financial trouble, having to put down your best furry friend. Stress much? Yes! Enter here, the need for endorphins. I’ll take buckets upon buckets, please. And a few more for back-up. I mean, I have all boys.

The truth is, your body that houses that sweet soul of yours will always need exercise, regardless of circumstances. That is a constant. I’ve been holding tight to things that I know will always be true, as a coping mechanism for my own current troubles, and that is one of them. Exercise creates endorphins, endorphins allow your brain to elevate your mood and feel all sorts of good things like hope, and pride in your gains/accomplishments. And you will be much more adept at handling any sort of stressor that side-swipes you in the future. Most importantly, it keeps you strong, enabling you to help those you love.

Body-weight exercises are among my favorite things. They seem to be mistakenly underrated but fear not, you can build muscle without your plethora of classic modalities like kettlebells and dumbbells, and they can definitely create endorphins. If you don’t have time to hit the gym, try this

circuit to get your heart pumping and those endorphins rolling. No need for fancy equipment, you can find some happiness in your own home.

Before you get started, do a warm-up jog for some vitamin D (sunshine) and pump up your jams. Lithium on SiriusXM is my current favorite. Is it cold? Bundle up and get moving. Is it hot? Get out in the morning while the temperatures are cooler. Don't bring your excuses here.

- Jumping Jacks
- Squats
- Push ups
- Reverse Lunges on Left Leg
- Reverse Lunges on Right Leg
- Sit ups (variation of your choice)
- Squats again (because they are functional beyond measure, only this time find something heavy to hold, like your dog or your kid)
- Burpees
- Sprint your stairs or find a hill (no skipping steps, keep your feet light and fast)

Complete 30 seconds of each exercise, repeat as many times as needed for the oxygen to pump, the lactic acid to build and the carnal survival mechanism to initiate . . . and then, . . . BOOM! Endorphins=Happy!

Feeling especially pumped? Cool down with another Vitamin D jog to bring your tissues back to normal temperature and allow any left-over and free flowing lactic acid to dissipate. Your metabolic effect remains high after a workout so a cool down will allow you to take advantage and see that ever-so-satisfying increase in number of calories burned on your fitness tracking device. Not to mention your step count.

The take-away here is that you can lean on your physical body to create some happiness, if your mental capacity is under attack. They work together brilliantly. Best of friends, these two. When you feel a stressor coming, create movement to match it. It's easy, it's free, and so very good for you. Remember, "happy people just don't shoot their husbands."





## CHAPTER 25

### NO SHOES? NO PROBLEM

Have you heard the story of Olympian Jim Thorpe? Just hours before he was set to compete in the 1912 Olympics, he realized that someone had stolen his shoes in an effort to sabotage his performance. I'm pretty sure this would send any normal person into a downward spiral of self-pity that ends in surrender. But, you know where I'm going with this. He came across a serious problem. Then he found a solution. Mind over matter.

Jim found two mismatched shoes in a trash can. One was too big, so he improvised with an extra pair of socks to fill the space. Then what? He won two gold medals, one silver. This is one of several times he had to overcome adversity and did so with victories. It's not about the shoes. It's never been about the shoes.

This is a common obstacle, not having equipment at home, on the road traveling, or actually forgetting to put your shoes in your gym bag. Don't find an excuse. Instead, follow Jim Thorpe's example, and find a way. Make it happen.

HERE ARE SOME OUTSIDE THE BOX SUBSTITUTES FOR HOME WORKOUTS:

- No light dumbbells? Substitute soup cans, jars of coins, gallon jugs, paint cans.
- No heavy dumbbells? Substitute a suitcase, bag of dog food or kitty

- litter, sack of potatoes, pillowcase full of books, case of beer or soda.
- No bench or step? Substitute a chair, stool, couch, bed, or stairs.

Another time this excuse likes to pop up is when we are traveling. More often than not, the hotel fitness center in which we plan to workout ends up being a big disappointment and has nothing in it. You can find many substitutes for equipment in your hotel room. One of my favorite hotel workouts (that is often overlooked) is simply to run up and down the stairs. Add in a few stair sprints to your circuit. Even if you have no fitness center, but you have stairs, you can get a great workout.

#### EXAMPLE OF HOTEL STAIRS WORKOUT:

- Run to the top of the stairs (however many flights you want to use)
- Do 10 pushups at top
- Run back down stairs
- Do 10 sit ups and 5 burpees at bottom
- Repeat 10 times

Some of my best workouts happen when I'm forced to throw the game plan out the window, and adapt to my environment. Whenever you are lacking the equipment, take a minute or two to summon your creativity.

If you find yourself making lame excuses about why you can't or don't want to get your workout in or go out of your way to choose a healthy snack, look down at your shoes and remember, you have matching ones that fit well, so carry on, sweet soldier. One moment or one decision may seem too small to make a difference. But if you string them together in a series, you have a lifetime. And you can bet, in that lifetime, you won't find many moments of surrender.

## CHAPTER 26

# PERSONAL TRAINING: YOUR FIRST SESSION AND BEYOND

Have you wondered what your first session would be like, when hiring a personal trainer? I think it would help lessen the anxiety if we discussed some expectations. Since much of this content has been for beginners, we will stick with that same level here.

Upon your first meeting, we will discuss specific goals you have in mind. Is it weight loss, lean mass, or athletic performance? Why that goal? What is your current fitness level? What has worked for you in the past as far as types of workouts? Where do you stand on nutritional knowledge and do you follow-through? What are past and present injuries? These questions will help us implement a plan that will fit into your unique lifestyle. Knowing what they are in advance will help you as well, in nailing down specific goals and reflecting on your level of commitment to change through fitness.

Next, measurements can be taken such as; maximum heart rate (with a step test) for current cardiovascular fitness level and target heart rate zones, circumference measurements for girth, skinfold measurements for body fat and scale weight. These act as a benchmark for progression and for predictions as it pertains to risk-factors. Measurements can bring about quite a bit of anxiety at first, but they are great for motivation when you see all those numbers fall after some training. For others, the numbers start to lessen in importance when you begin to simply feel strong and capable in daily endeavors. It's also just you and the trainer. And we hold zero judgment and only love and encouragement. Pinky promise. You know how everyone has a "thing"? No judgement is our "thing."

Basic movement and mobility assessments will be performed to address any muscle imbalances and can include squats, pulls, presses and balance exercises. These are especially important in implementing a custom warm-up and cool-down for your workouts. We want the right muscles to be firing for the right exercises, as any imbalances can lead to your brain calling on the wrong ones, which can lead to injury. Imbalances are also a danger to joint health. So, with these assessments, we can reinforce correct biomechanics that will make your workouts more efficient and improve overall strength, power and posture.

Phase one of your training plan can last anywhere from 4–6 weeks targeting stability and muscular endurance. Balance exercises will be included for mastery of your internal stabilization mechanism (a fancy way to say coordination), so you have full control and awareness of your limbs before we load you down with weight. If you are not stable with static posture, we will certainly not put weights in your hands and expect you to move dynamically. We are implementing this in a systematic and progressive way to keep you safe. Your muscles are full of sensory receptors that communicate with your brain and we can teach your body to adjust and adapt to changes in the environment without consciously thinking about it. A solid foundation is vital.

Another aspect of phase one is flexibility. We want to see that your joints can be taken through a full range of motion and that depends on the extensibility of the tissues surrounding that joint. This is useful in performing daily tasks such as reaching down to tie your shoes, reaching up to grab a high dish or lifting a laundry basket with proper form to protect your knees and your back.

Cardiorespiratory training will be included to ensure an efficient and strong heart. Simply put, we want your circulatory and respiratory systems to work together to deliver blood to your muscles. Other benefits include a lower resting heart rate; reduced risks of heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety; improved oxygen transport as well as ability to sleep; tolerance to stress, a boosted metabolic rate and increased lean body mass. The list is truly endless, here. Personally, my favorite benefit to cardiorespiratory training: it acts as anxiety medication and extends my patience with loved ones. Tenfold!

Core training is one of my favorite aspects in programming. Being able to

control and stabilize your hip complex, spine, and pelvis is vital for the efficiency of your entire human movement system. It is something we engage from the moment our feet hit the floor in the morning and helps protect the spine during daily activities. Additionally, 80% of Americans suffer from low back pain and a properly functioning core can ameliorate this issue and prevent future injuries.

Resistance training will grow to be a larger segment of your session once all the foundations are in place. By manipulating resistance (of any kind, bodyweight, dumbbells etc) your body will learn to adapt and respond to higher levels of (good) stress with less effort. Here, we can build lean mass and burn body fat with circuits of all shapes and sizes, depending on your specific goal.

Every aspect of your programming is geared towards a better, faster and stronger you – progressing safely and without injury. I cannot stress enough your capacity to reach whatever goal you wish. Make the commitment, and a trainer will guide you through every step.

— JK

## CHAPTER 27

# GET OFF THE ROLLER COASTER AND RIDE THE TRAIN

There is a lot of debate on this topic, but I feel very strongly that absolutely nothing good comes from riding roller coasters. After many bad experiences I believe I have finally realized this, and I no longer have any desire to get on one of those evil inventions ever again. From now on, my thrill ride is the train. The train is reliable, it stays on course, and gets you where you want to go. Roller coasters, on the other hand, are nothing but extreme elevations followed by extreme stomach-dropping falls.

This is a lesson I definitely should have learned as a kid, because I had one of the most embarrassing and traumatic experiences a 12 year old could ever have. As much as I've tried to forget about this story, I unfortunately still remember it like it happened yesterday. It was the summer of 1992. I was at the county fair with a few classmates. In my small town of Burlington, KS, the fair was always the highlight of our summer. We would get there early to ride all the rides before there were any lines. There was a new ride this year that got our attention right away. The new ride, that I will never forget, was The Zipper. At first, The Zipper looks like a harmless little ferris wheel. Then you realize that it is much faster than a ferris wheel, and the 2-person cages you sit in flip over backwards, continuously, as the big wheel itself circles the other direction. Not a kiddie ride.

I was there with my friend Josh and we met up with two girls from our class, Kim and Casey. Josh rode with Casey and I rode with Kim. The ride was a lot of fun! At least the first time. It was pretty manageable the second time too, but after round three, I was done. You see, my friend Josh had a big crush on Casey, and wanted to ride the ride over and over again, because he

was sitting next to her. I was happy to be riding the ride with Kim too, but after 10 minutes of backflips I was really over it. I was ready to go find the more stationary rides so we could all just sit down somewhere, catch up on our summers, and I could take a few deep breaths. All three of them wanted to ride one more time though. I knew I was playing with fire, but my ego would not let me back down. As we were getting strapped in for ride number four, I wiped the sweat off my forehead, and had a conversation with myself. “You got this. Just one more 2 minute torture ride, and you’re home free. This aint no thang.” Unfortunately my stomach had other plans for me. About half way through ride number four, I felt the tides turn, and before I knew it, my lunch was erupting out of my mouth like a fire hose.

I will never forget the terrified look on Kim's face as she banged on the door of the cage to get the carnival worker to stop the ride. I will also never forget that the carnival worker correctly guessed that I had macaroni and cheese for lunch. Needless to say, it was a very embarrassing and traumatic experience, and years later it still haunts me whenever I see a carnival or macaroni and cheese.

You would think that after an experience like that I would be very hesitant to ever get on a roller coaster again. I am ashamed to admit however, that even as a grown up, sometimes it takes me several failures before I learn from my mistakes. Even though I’m old enough to know better, I’ve had many bad roller coaster rides since that fateful day in 1992.

The roller coaster rides I’m referring to now are a little different. When I use the term “roller coaster” now, I am referring to the ups and downs that we face when we fall in and out of our fitness routine. In my experience, I have learned that many people tend to lose weight and put it back on 2–3 times during the course of a year. Sometimes this happens as a result of a big change occurring in another part of our life that just throws off our balance. A big change like a promotion at work, moving, getting married, getting divorced, having a child . . . etc. Each of these changes are big and can throw a wrench in your fitness plan until you adjust to it. Once you adjust to it, it feels like you are starting all over again.

It happens to most of us from time to time, so there is no need to beat yourself up if this resonates with you. I’ll admit it has happened to me a lot. We commit ourselves to a 30 day program, a 6 week program, or 12 week

program, and we do a good job throughout its duration. We may even do an awesome job. We work really hard and find ourselves in the zone. We stick to our routine and the hard work pays off like it's supposed to. Then when day 31, week 7, or week 13 comes, we start to get lost. We set ourselves up to fail by never taking the time to answer one simple question . . . “what’s next?”

We don't always know what to do or what our routine should look like after we finish a program. We achieved great results during the program, but should we have to keep working that hard to maintain it? Of course not. It is unrealistic to expect that you could keep working that hard 24–7, 365. Even the very best athletic specimens on the planet can not train at their most challenging level all year round. Trying to do so would result in burnout or injury. They have their volume and intensity level broken into pre-season, in-season, and off-season. Not only for their best interest physically, but mentally. So how do these athletes manage to keep fitness a priority and stay in a consistent routine, even in the off-season?

They manage to do it by doing two things very well.

First they have a good plan in place for their next phase of training. They know what their new fitness routine will look like and what their new objectives will be, before it even starts. This sets them up for success and makes it easier to hold themselves accountable.

In the past, after making it to the finish line of a program that I had worked very hard at, my only plan for what was next was that I had earned a break. You can probably guess how this ended for me. I became very inconsistent with my workouts, began to skip workouts all together, and wasn't honest with myself on how I was eating. My original thinking would be that I wouldn't have any restrictions and that I would practice moderation. I like to practice the 80/20 plan (80% of what I eat is very healthy & only 20% unhealthy to very unhealthy). This is a great maintenance plan when you are honest with yourself about what you are eating. I tend to pretend I'm at 80/20 when I'm realistically at around 60/40. This is how you end up back on the roller coaster ride.

The second thing athletes do very well to maintain their fitness, is they go back to their WHY. Just like the rest of us, they have goals and strong



reasons WHY they want to accomplish them. Reminding yourself about these goals, can help you stay consistent even when your desire to workout isn't at its highest.

Take a stand with me now. Let's boycott roller coasters and start riding the train. Instead of losing the results we work so hard for, let's do a better job of maintaining our fitness year round. The next time you finish a hard workout program. Have a plan for what's next. Have a plan for what your next season of training will look like. How many days a week will you workout? How big will your workouts be and how hard? How will your meal plans look, and how will you set yourself up for success? You deserve a reward and a little rest, but before you do that make sure you answer the question . . . "What's next?"

Evaluate yourself after every week, and be honest with yourself about how you are doing. If you do get off track, evaluating yourself will help you realize it, so you can get back on course. If all else fails, remind yourself about your WHY.

## CHAPTER 28

### FORGET SKINNY, I'M TRAINING TO BE A BADASS!

One of my sweet clients gave me my favorite tank top as a gift. It says, “Forget skinny, I’m training to be a badass.” I got to thinking about why I love it so much, and it brought me back to the first few weeks of hiring a personal trainer for myself, maybe 5 years ago. I was hooked after the very first session. Even though I collapsed on my floor when I got home, I felt empowered, strong, confident (something I never had before), independent (again, not a descriptor that applied to me), and was immediately addicted to the adrenaline and endorphins. I also remember being able to tap into more patience to handle my two then toddler boys. But mostly, I cannot remember a time where I walked out the studio door and could not wait to come right back. In my head, I would count the days until my next session. And all of this had nothing to do with skinny.

As personal trainers, numbers are kind of pounded into our brains as far as the importance of keeping track of body fat percentages, scale weight, circumference measurements, hip-to-waist ratios etc. . . . but I’m finding that what makes me the most excited is when a client just feels better all around. There are so many people who deal with daily nagging pain or find they cannot do simple tasks without having to feel terrible after the minor exertion. Even if the scale is staying the same, other benefits/progressions are exponentially weighted. They are more comfortable in clothes. Anxiety is lessened. They feel mentally stronger in combating any sort of adversarial happenings, daily small ones, or big sucky ones. Yard work is easy. Tossing a bag of mulch on their shoulder is no problem. Digging up and carrying boulders, having enough balance and leg strength to put on pants without

having to sit down, and scrubbing the shower without fatigued arms are all massive victories. And I deem every one of the owners of these victories a badass. I'm not sure I can effectively communicate the joy it brings me to hear these exclamations from my clients.

Now, don't get me wrong, I do think the numbers are important for benchmarks and your overall health. They can tell us a lot about your risks and what we need to do to help you get healthy. Your heart rate, for example, helps us to progress you in your cardiovascular health, safely. Your hip-to-waist ratio can pin you at risk for specific diseases. The numbers are usually what bring you to our doors in the first place, for these reasons. But once you have a few sessions under your belt, the numbers seem to fall by the wayside, as you realize how wonderful it is just to feel strong and capable. For anything.

Goals don't have to be in the realm of weight loss, lean mass or athletic endeavors. Maybe you just want to get out of your chair without help. Or work on balance and flexibility for your safety against curveballs you don't see coming. My sons think it's so funny to come unexpectedly from around the corner and jump right up on my back. That situation could end pretty terribly and painfully, were it not for core strength, leg strength, and a solid and fast neuromuscular response.

I want you to feel good so you can live well. It is very much within your grasp. So, forget skinny. Train to be confident. Train to be strong. Train to live well. Get your badass.

— JK

## CHAPTER 29

### WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH . . . GO BACK TO YOUR WHY

***Change is not only inevitable, it is essential to survival. Why fear it or fight it when you can simply embrace it.***

This quote is on a motivational picture that is framed and hung on the wall in my home gym. It is one of my favorite pictures, and that is saying a lot because it is competing with Dan Gable and Rocky. I like it because it is a reminder to me that change should be looked at as a good thing. Change is uncomfortable, so it's easy to respond negatively to it. However, when we embrace the challenge of change it can be energizing. I always get more energy when I start a new workout program, get a new piece of exercise equipment, or whenever I am forced to change where I workout. By embracing it, we reap the rewards of something exciting and new.

Eventually, though, the newness will wear off. When that happens, the energy boost will start to fade away too. A newness crash. All of a sudden that crazy energy, hulk-like strength, and excitement to get moving will start to disappear. For several weeks it may have been easy to workout, but now you feel tired, weak, and lack motivation.

All this is normal, and it happens to everyone. If we are honest with ourselves, most of us don't love to workout. We can get excited about it for the most part, but for the majority of the time, we don't workout because we love it, we workout because of what we gain as a result. Energy, strength, reduced anxiety and stress, confidence, weight loss, flexibility, better sleep, power . . . and so much more. That motivation we get from focusing on what

we get back from our workout is our WHY fuel. WHY fuel is powerful and does not fade away.

When we lack motivation and it is harder to get our workouts in, we simply have to go back to our WHY. Remind yourself why you started and what your goals are. Dig deep and be honest with yourself. Remind yourself how good you will feel when you reach your goals!

Always embrace change and you will reap the benefits of new energy and motivation. When the newness crash comes and the going gets tough, go back to your WHY.

— CA

## CHAPTER 30

# REST AND RECOVERY

After a particularly and wonderfully heinous workout – you know the ones where you push your body’s adaptation to the limit and you feel like a superhero – there are some things that you can do to help yourself recover. Two words will describe most of the process: replenish and rebuild. (Remember the rhythm? Workout, breakdown, recover, rebuild.)

Blood flow is important post-workout, up to two days following. It will aid in the transport of all the good things you put back into your body (ideally within an hour of wrapping it up, as well as 48 hours later) and promote the transport of waste products from microscopic muscle tears out of your system. And if you do it right, you can keep blood from pooling to prevent inflammation and lactic acid build up. How? Active recovery.

Active recovery involves movement. You don’t want to hit the couch and not move for 8 hours. You will be a hot mess upon standing. Keep that blood pumping. Take a walk, do some active stretching (I’m talking short holds of reps, not deep stretch holds for 30 seconds), go for an easy bike ride, do some arm circles during your favorite shows if it was a shoulder/bicep/tricep day . . . to name a few.

Another important part of recovery is self myofascial release with a foam roller, tennis ball, barbell or other modality. With each contraction, you shorten and tighten a muscle, so be sure to roll it back to resting length by smashing out any knots that may have surfaced. If you begin your next workout with knots, it will impair your neuromuscular efficiency and could lead to improper movement patterns, faulty joint mechanics and, ultimately,

injury.

Replenish your fluids and glycogen. Replenishing leads to repairing of the muscle fibers you just finished beating down. Sleep soundly and for at least 8 hours. Sleep influences hormones, namely cortisol (your stress hormone) and you do not want that running rampant during recovery. I repeat: your muscles are working to repair themselves up to 48 hours after the end of your last workout. So this is not just a post-workout smoothie and you're done. Work towards constant care and general daily body awareness check-ins.

Want to do a little something extra? Check out voodoo floss band compression. It's another form of self-myofascial release, and one of my current favorite tools. You wrap (towards the heart) a tight, sore or affected area, tightly with the floss (band). Then, for around 2 minutes or until the area gets a little tingly, you move the joint through all its ranges of motion. What's happening here is an unsticking of all the yuck between the muscle and the fascia. After you unwrap the floss, the area will be flooded with new blood full of all sorts of magic nutrients to aid in recovery, healing and inflammation. This is especially important for connective tissues that take longer to heal, since they don't get a ton of blood flow. Flossing is safe to do several times per day until the area feels restored. I know I've said this before, but how incredibly built are our bodies?!

By staying on top of the recovery part of the fitness cycle, you will most assuredly up your gains and head into each session better prepared. Better preparation=better outcome, less injuries. Undeniable.

— JK

## CONCLUSION

We know how hard it is to respond with ferocity to unexpected change. Even more so to seek it out for yourself with purpose, to take the first step in changing your story. But that first step is exactly that – one foot in front of the other. One time. That’s it. Then, use each chapter as road signs that will lead you the rest of the way. Steer clear of the quick fixes and choose long-term success. You know your WHY. You have the tools and knowledge to make it happen.

### LET’S DO A QUICK REVIEW:

Focus on yourself because you’re worth it. Screw the haters. Always ask what’s next to make sure you never settle. Pick up someone else to join you on your journey. Be grateful. Own your nutrition. Make time, not excuses. Warm up to level up. Hydrate. Focus on small changes with consistency. Polish your dominos. Endure the struggle after you flip your switch. Find a rower. Condition your whole human to keep your mind right. Don’t shoot your husband. Get back up every damn time you fall. And – for the love of all magical things, eat your blueberries.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### CHAD AUSTIN



Chad Austin is a personal trainer and the owner of Priority Fitness in Overland Park, KS. He named Priority Fitness after his best selling book, [“Make Fitness A Priority: How to Win the Fight Against Your Excuses”](#) . On the road to becoming a personal trainer, Chad spent time as an athlete, a coach, and a teacher. All these positions taught him skills that he uses everyday at Priority Fitness.

Chad is a huge sports fan, and enjoys staying active. He believes the best things in life are done outside of your comfort zone, and is always looking for his next challenge. For every obstacle he takes on, he always has the best pit crew in his corner: his beautiful

girlfriend, Jess, and their dog, Walter (Priority Fitness's Mascot).

#### ***Where else can you find Chad?***

This is Chad’s 3rd book. You can find his other books, [“Make Fitness A Priority: How to Win the Fight Against Your Excuses”](#) and [“Make Fitness A Priority: A 6-week Course to Get Out of Your Own Way”](#) on amazon.com.

***You can also find more tips, workouts, and training options here:***

[www.makefitnesspriority.com](http://www.makefitnesspriority.com)

<https://www.instagram.com/make.fitness.a.priority/>

<https://www.facebook.com/kindlebooky/>



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## JESSE KEPKA



Jesse Kepka is a NASM certified Personal Trainer, Corrective Exercise Specialist and owner of Elevate Fitness KC. As most passions are bred from personal experiences and struggles, her fire for fitness was similarly ignited. Deciding to find a personal trainer saved her mental and emotional wellbeing. When you believe in something so strongly, you run with it, full force, all or nothing. As she continues to learn, she finds herself constantly in awe of the potential of the human body, its mechanics, and the way it was put together so intricately and brilliantly. The communication between our mind and our muscles is extraordinary. She can't help but seek an understanding of such a creation.

Jesse lives in Lenexa, Kansas with her husband, Thomas, two sons, Hudson and Isaiah, and her Australian Shepherd, Vander. Paddle-boarding, climbing trees and washing her truck are a few favorite hobbies.

***Where else can you find Jesse?***

<https://elevatefitnesskc.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/elevatefitnesskc/>

<https://www.facebook.com/elevatefitnesskc/>



## JOIN OUR MAKE FITNESS A PRIORITY COMMUNITY!

Surround yourself with people on the same mission as you. On April 6th, 2014 we created the meetup group *Be Fit . . . For Life~Johnson County . Be Fit . . . For Life* was basically a running club at the time, but it quickly became so much more than that. Now, over 5 years and a name change later, we have over 500 members. *Make Fitness A Priority* has become something of which we are all very proud. I hear people say all the time that coming to one of our meetups can be an empowering experience. Not only is it a very welcoming group for all fitness levels, it is also a safe place where there is no judgement, no negativity, and there is no prerequisite of fitness knowledge. All you need is to have a desire to improve your quality of life by making fitness a priority. Join us in person or at one of our virtual events. Come laugh with us!

**[Join Make Fitness A Priority for free.](#)**

THANK  
YOU!

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