

# The Courage To Be Fit

a special report by Jeremy Likness

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## Open Letter to Those at the Edge

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You are standing on the edge of the abyss.

**WHY?!**

You have lived a certain way your entire life.

You have tried and failed many times.

You have blamed yourself, your family, your genetics, the world, circumstance, even God.

Deep down inside, you **KNOW** the truth.

**YOU** are responsible.

**YOU** sabotage yourself.

**YOU** fail to believe in yourself. **YOU** fail to make the decision, to choose to change and not stop at anything to make that change. It is **YOUR** responsibility.

You are at the edge of the abyss.

It is a place that is deep, dark, and wide. Right now, the other side is nothing more than an ideal to you ... an aspiration. You are not certain if it is or can be real. When you see other people make the leap, you convince yourself that their situation was somehow different. Their genetics gave them more spring in their leap. Their parents raised them with more confidence to jump into the inky blackness. They had friends you do not who encouraged them to make the transition. They found a narrower section of the gaping chasm and had a shorter distance to travel.

Time, however, does not wait. The hands of the clock methodically lurch to the next tickmark and the turning of gears cycles the seasons. The days come, they go. The phases of the moon wax and wane. We have good days, we have bad days, yet there you remain.

**You know what this side is like.** You have explored every nook and cranny. You are familiar with the firmness of the ground beneath your feet, you have memorized each shrub and each rock and know what hides beneath them - you have left no pebble unturned. You are distinctly aware of the pattern you take each day; you have a firm and set path. You flail about miserably and feel the control slipping from your grasp but succumb to the rote comfort of staying here, where it is familiar.

You have even slipped to the bottom of your pit and lay curled in the bottom, wrapped around yourself, massaging the scrapes and wounds and whimpering in discomfort, wishing it would end.

## **HOW MANY PEOPLE MUST CROSS BEFORE YOU? HOW LONG UNTIL YOUR SIDE IS EMPTY?**

It really does not matter, does it. *No!* There could be one or there could be a million people on the other side, but this is not about them. It is about you. This is *your* world. These are *your* choices. It is your decision to make.

You know, deep down inside, what is right and wrong.

When you do the wrong thing, you let the guilt grow inside. It becomes thick and clings to everything you do. When you skip a workout because it is more convenient, when you eat a food because at that moment your senses are tuned to the quick, fast, immediate, and superficial pleasure of the taste - something deeper tells you there is something more and you should be able to control a simple thing like the movement of a fork from the plate to your mouth.

It really does seem simple, doesn't it, so why is it so hard?

## **HERE YOU ARE.**

You have the power inside you to make a decision that is **PERMANENT**. LASTING. Not an attempt, not a try. You can have faith. The irony is this: while you do not have faith that you can make the leap, make the change, jump into the transformation, you know what? You have faith that you *COULD* have that faith.

WHAT?! Yes. It is a seed of doubt within you, but something tells you that the nagging DOUBTS you bring up, the hesitation, the failure to fully commit - something informs you, inside, that if you could just set those aside and focus on faith and core belief, that you CAN and WILL manage the change. You will make it. You can do it. You have faith in having faith but hesitate at the brink.

That's what it means, really. You are NOT guaranteed to make it to the other side. It is called A **LEAP OF FAITH**. This means that FAITH will carry you through to the other side. But if you leap without that faith, the chasm is dark, it is foreboding, and it can and will consume you.

Look, it's time to stop wasting your time. **TIME DOESN'T CARE**. It moves. It flows. **YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE AT**. You are insanely familiar with it. You are comfortable. But you also KNOW how you feel. You KNOW the guilt, the pain. And it is not because you don't have the body you want. No - you would love to be happy with the skin you wear each day, but the underlying guilt comes not from the physical sense you manifest, but the emotion drive that lurks beneath the surface. The PAIN comes from the fact that it is about CONTROL and it is the LACK OF CONTROL that you are wearing on the outside. It is painful to look at yourself and realize that there are certain things that have taken advantage of you. Every one of us has our own reasons - emotional, physical, spiritual - and we are wrapped in those reasons. Whether it was an injury that incapacitated you for some time or an emotional emptiness that you tried to fill with food or simply the fact that you partied and enjoyed the concept of "live fast, sleep late, die young" until dying young was no longer an option but the scars of that unhealthy lifestyle planted themselves across your body like a badge of shame ... **WHAT-EVER THE REASON**, it is the INDECISION that is the source of your unhappiness.

So, we know you have faith in having faith. And we know you understand what it will take to be happy. So let's deal with one more reality: **the comfort**.

Think back. Take a long, deep look at your life. When did good things, the truly, heartfelt, life changing good things, come from staying in your comfort zone? Wasn't it the extra effort you put forth, the hard work, the sacrifice, the CHANGE, the movement, the dynamic aspect of your life that reaped those benefits? Have you ever worked REALLY HARD on something, and while the PROCESS was miserable and taxing, the REWARD of having accomplished it was euphoric and uplifting and you said, that was **WORTH IT**? Maybe you did this in your job, or with a hands-on project, or maybe it was boot camp or an exam you had to study for.

**Isn't your LIFE the ULTIMATE REWARD?! Isn't that worth the ULTIMATE sacrifice?**

If I told you I could **PROMISE YOU** that you would be in control of your life - total control - in the body you want, working at a job you love, satisfied with every aspect of what you do - If I could **MAKE THAT GUARANTEE**, only I said you would have to work at it - maybe three months, maybe two years, but it would be waiting at the end. Would you take it? Is it worth it? A happy, balanced life, satisfied, content?



**Why don't you TAKE IT then?** I don't need to offer it to you ... you have it. **JUST BELIEVE IN IT. JUST DO IT. FORGET THE EXCUSES YOU ARE MAKING FOR YOURSELF. STOP BEING AFRAID OF SUCCESS.** You

### Did You Know?

Jeremy is an International Health Coach. He is a Certified Fitness Trainer and a Specialist in Performance Nutrition through the International Sports Sciences Association. You can hire Jeremy as your own coach by visiting:

[www.naturalphysiques.com/hire/](http://www.naturalphysiques.com/hire/)

can and will do it. It has happened time and time again. And it is not a nutrition plan or workout program or supplement, it is a DECISION that starts with YOU to BELIEVE you can do and THEN DO IT.

If you are at the edge, **STOP WAITING. TAKE ACTION.** You have loitered long enough. See the other side? **IT IS A LEAP OF FAITH AWAY.** You know what? It might be uncomfortable. But you KNOW UNCOMFORTABLE don't you? Isn't it worth it to trade a few months of a new kind of discomfort for the rest of your life lived IN COMFORT?!

I am asking, pleading that you do not remain on the edge. You have tried to find the bridge, taken tentative steps off the ledge and asked for someone to reach out and pull you across. Right now, those aren't options. But your legs - **YOUR LEGS** - can carry you to the other side.

Think. FEEL. LIVE. LOVE LIFE. ACT. JUMP. LEAP. HAVE FAITH. BELIEVE.

***DO IT.***

You deserve it. The people who love you deserve it. You are human just like anyone else who has transformed their life, and stop selling yourself short by trying to come up with a convincing reason of why they are different. They are not. They have simply made a decision you are tinkering with. Stop tinkering. MAKE IT. DO IT.

No, my life isn't all ups, there are downs, I make mistakes, I learn, I will have my fallbacks, my times where I slip, make mistakes, feel pain, but that is part of living. I love those opportunities. But in order to learn to embrace them and squeeze every ounce of passion from those moments, I had to stand and stare into a camera four years ago and decide, once and for all, things would be different. I spent a quarter century cynical, depressed, angry and mad at the cards I'd been dealt before I realized I had the whole deck sitting in my lap. I wish I could figure out exactly what pushed me through, what gave me that inner "click" to have the faith it took to take control and change my life, but I do not know exactly. I spend every day trying to capture that and share it - if I could give it to you, I would. It is so amazing to see lives changed, people unfold, become their full potential, their true selves. **LIFE SHATTERING.** It only makes the world a better place.

But I cannot **GIVE** it to you, you are the one who has to give it to yourself. Won't you do that? Do you realize in helping **YOU**, you will help many others just through the example you set?

This is an open letter to those of you reading this who are standing at the edge of the abyss.

**CROSS IT.**

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## **Don't Fail to Decide**

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*Don't fail to make the decision up front.*

Are you kidding me? Of course you've made the decision. You know you want to get rid of that extra tire, exchange the six-pack of beer for the type of six-pack you can show, rather than share, at the beach. It was a simple choice, wasn't it? You're sick and tired of being overweight, so it's time to go. Right? Wrong again. Wrong!

The biggest mistake many people make is starting a fat loss program without truly making a decision. Sure, we know you want to get rid of the extra weight, but have you stopped to truly think about why? It may seem trivial, but having a deep, meaningful reason is critical to success.

It is one thing to throw the scale into the corner and bust down the gym door with a barbaric yell and start smashing iron around or throw in the latest step-aerobics tape and jump up and down until you can't feel your feet. Eventually, you will lose that initial high, and reality will come crashing down in its entire splendor.

You spent years filling those sacks of adipose tissue with extra fat calories, so why would you expect them to empty their precious load overnight? You'll prepare a healthy meal and suddenly it will look too bland, or even revolting, and the only thought on your mind will be something taboo -- something unhealthy.

Or you will hear the alarm blaring and decide you are just too tired. You might be staring at the treadmill and suddenly get the uneasy notion that it is mocking you, and decide you don't feel like struggling with the sweat and pain today.

It is during these moments of weakness that the decision comes into play. If you just jumped into the endeavor chances are, it will be just as easy to jump out.

Sure, you are overweight, but oh, meal makes you happy, so you're just gonna sit down and have it anyway, right?

Oh, yeah, you wanted to drop weight, but these workouts are tough, and don't you just want to rest? Sure, you can rest. There is always tomorrow to train.

You know what? It has been a rough week. Let's just start over again next week.

You lull and coddle yourself into a pipe dream that isn't real, but hey, you let it seem real -- you let it pull you in. You haven't truly committed to anything, so it gives you a nice, comfortable back door -- push the eject button and stay awhile.

Let's get real. You've spent many years living a certain way. You do not know what it feels like to be lean, strong, and healthy. Sure, you can try to imagine it or read articles about it, but how does it really feel?

Don't you owe it to yourself to make a choice -- an informed decision? Can't you handle living a few months differently than you have before, even if you hate every moment of it, if it means emerging from the other side with a new physique, a new you? It might be a battle, but then you will know what it feels like to come out victorious. If it isn't what you had it chalked up to be, feel free to lapse and fall back into old habits. But you will never really know for certain if you don't give it a try.

Make a goal. But don't just make it. Make it real. Make it tangible. It should not be "I will lose weight."

Instead, "I will lose 40 pounds," is better.

"I will lose 40 pounds by July of next year" is probably best.

Did you know that the only difference between a dream and a goal is a deadline? You need a specific deadline. You want something realistic?

If you are overweight, you can transform yourself. You just have to be willing to do it. And unlike the infomercials' promise, it is not instant and it is not easy.

Consider this:

Men can typically lose between 0.5 - 1.5 percent of their body weight per week in fat if they are aggressively performing cardio, resistance training, and eating in a healthy way. Women are more in the 0.5 - 1 percent range.

If you are male and sitting at 300 pounds, then look to lose between 6 - 18 percent of your weight (18 - 54 pounds) in 12 weeks. If you are a woman and sitting at 200 pounds, then look to lose between 6 - 12 percent of your weight (12 - 24 pounds) in 12 weeks.

Wow, a big range, I know, but let's get real -- you know where you are starting and how well you will stick to it. Slow and steady? 18 pounds is comfortable. You think you're ready to go all out, and hit it like no tomorrow? Then set those sights high and take the 54 pounds.

It is not enough just to want to lose the weight. You need compelling reasons. If you don't have them, your mind will play tricks with you every step of the way. It is very easy to talk yourself into "I will be happy if I just eat this piece of food so I am going to do it" -- if you don't have a solid reason not to.

Just want to drop the weight? Who cares? Take an eternity! Doing it for health? Then realize this isn't something to stop and start at will -- it is a full-time commitment. If you are doing it for your children, then know that you need to set a consistent example around the clock, not just when it is convenient.

Set those goals, know your reasons, and explain how you will achieve the goals. Write your goals down. Put them on paper. Share the word with everyone you are comfortable with. Print multiple copies and carry them with you. Read them every day. Most importantly, make a solid decision. Don't lie to yourself and sell yourself short -- this is a major undertaking. And once you form your decision, be willing to see it through to the end.

It's great to take action, but actions are easier when they spring from our beliefs. You brush your teeth because you believe it is beneficial - it's no longer work. If you truly commit, deep down inside, to living healthy, then that action can come from your belief as well - it does not have to be a struggle. When you don't fail to decide, something spectacular happens - instead of MAKING yourself lose weight, you LET yourself lose weight.



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## Fear

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As you prepare to take your first steps, could there possibly be something holding you back?

Maybe you have heard the phrase, “false evidence appearing real.” It is a common acronym made from the one word that can and will stand in your path to success. We all suffer from fear in one form or another. Sometimes, overcoming fear is as simple as programming the body to perform the motions that the mind is resisting. Other times, the fear can be so crippling that it takes a tremendous breakthrough – even revisiting old events or memories that have been buried for years – in order to overcome its grasp. Unfortunately, many people never overcome their fears, and remain a victim of them all of their lives. Are you a victim, or a victor?

When I began working with others to help them achieve physique transformations in the year 2000, I discovered an amazing thing. Some people literally sabotaged their own progress out of fear. What was more incredible to me is exactly what their fear was: a fear of their own success! Even when the science works – when the changes in nutrition and training help a person begin to lose fat – if they are not prepared to change on the inside, they can become crippled by the change. These people would watch the pounds melt away, and suddenly the fear would paralyze them. They had spent so long hiding behind the extra weight and using their obesity as a shield to the world, that when that wall began to crumble they had nowhere to run.

I vividly recall a night when I pressed my body against my wife's and she began to softly cry. When I asked her what was wrong, she replied that I felt like a different person. She wasn't used to feeling my bones or contours, only the softness of my fat. Suddenly, her world was changing and she had not completely adjusted to it. I realized that I, too, had not kept pace with the physical changes. I did not know how to take compliments, and would often simply stammer or make small talk when someone would comment on my progress. I was not so much afraid of my success as I was afraid of the change in my life and not knowing how to live with it.

Even though I successfully overcame those fears early on, another type of fear limited my ability to grow my own career: a fear of my ability to become a successful entrepreneur. Despite having run a thriving part-time training business, and being able from the start to charge nearly double the average, local rate due to the quality of service that I provided, I did not think I had what it took to do well. After writing countless articles and receiving feedback from numerous readers, I still believed I was not ready to submit my articles to publications or attempt to write a book. Fear was sucking the life out of me!

It was only recently that I began to look at fear a new way.

An interesting thought occurred to me: simply changing my perception could empower me to overcome my fears and break through to new levels. The concept is quite simple. I realized that fear and faith are mutually exclusive. They occupy the same space in our lives. And we cannot have both in the same space at the same time – it is either one or the other.

Fear is an emotion related to failure. It is the belief that something is not worth trying because of the negative outcomes that are possible. Fear is a learned emotion. It takes the “space” ordinarily occupied by faith, and perverts it into something that holds us back. If you are not convinced, just take a look at a child learning to walk. Often, as they take those first tentative steps, they may do something that we, in all our wisdom, would consider failure. They fall. Or they bump into something. Or they are forced to grab hold of something to steady themselves. All of these actions are not pleasant, and they are not the intended result. For the child, however, what we would call “failure” is an integral component of their success.

The child does not give up. It does not occur to them that if they are going to fall, they should simply not try to walk. They might bump their head, but after the tears are dried and the bump has gone away, they will stand on their two wobbly legs once again and attempt the feat. In fact, children are the incredible pioneers of our world. They consistently drive confidently into the unknown and face failure after failure without becoming daunted. When they attempt their first words, the sounds will tumble out over and over until they are voiced correctly. When they begin to wave with their hands, they persistently move their arms and fingers until they follow the appropriate, nearly universal pattern for saying “Hello” or “Goodbye” through body language.

The children have faith in their ability to succeed through failure. Faith is not learned. We are born with it. Our survival depends upon it. If we did not entrust our lives to our parents, guardians, family, peers, and others who influence and “raise” us from birth, we would be lost. In all our learning, however, we seem to pick up one lesson that could have an incredible impact on the rest of our lives, depending upon how we learn it. That lesson is fear. Fear is a learned response. Fear is the absence of faith. With faith, you can try over and over again because you know your success is guaranteed. With fear, you decide without trying that your failure is predetermined, and you no longer give yourself the opportunity to succeed.

Do you have faith? Or fear? Or a mixture of both? It is time to make a conscious decision about what you are willing to do to turn your fear into faith. This is an incredible balance that can have a tremendous influence on your ability to transform. Think about it – your capacity is limitless to hold both fear and faith. If you have a lot of faith and a little fear, then you are only a short distance from overcoming those fears and breaking through to great things in your life. On the other hand, if the depth of your fear is enormous – take hope! Because fear and faith occupy the same space, but you can focus on only one at a time. Therefore, your depth of fear implies incredible potential for deep, enduring faith. You need only need to take action to overcome those fears and replace them with faith.

So how do you overcome your fears? By reinforcing your faith! As faith grows, fear dwindles. When you accomplish something on your own, you gain faith in that accomplishment. Even when you fail a second or third time, you continue to try because you know “I have done this before, and I can do it again.” For things you have not accomplished, you learn faith from those around you. When a close friend has successfully achieved some amazing success in their lives, you say, “Wow. If they can do it, certainly I can do it.” Sometimes, you simply draw on the depths of your own soul, and decide that you are either living or dying. You want to live, so in order to live, you must have faith. You simply create the faith and move past the fear.

While some people have made amazing changes in a simple instant by changing their mindset, I have found that certain breakthroughs in my own life took much more time. For example, I still have a small amount of fear when I stand to speak in front of a large group of people. In the past, this fear was nearly debilitating – I could barely talk for all of my stuttering and shaking. I forced myself to get in front of people to share my story, however, because my heart told me it could help others. In this case, I believed the need to help others was more important than the fear that was holding me back, so I pushed through. And I talked. And I talked again. And again. Each time I stood in front of a group of people, I realized that I could do this. Every time I sat back down and was still living and breathing (and no one had thrown tomatoes at me or pointed and laughed) I realized there really was nothing to fear. Eventually, I began to replace my fear with faith, until now I have only a little fear and a lot of faith in my ability to stand before a crowd and share my story.

To successfully transform, you will need a lot of faith. You may be afraid of many things – of how your life may change, of how hard the effort may be, or even of your own success. The key to overcoming this fear, however, is to keep doing. As you succeed, little by little, you will grow in faith. As you practice over and over, and commit to each new day, you will not only grow in faith, but you will increase your capacity for faith. When you increase your faith, you will stifle your fear, and it will dwindle until it eventually disappears with a whimper instead of a bang.

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## **Vision**

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You've made the decision - that is fantastic. It's time to start the journey! First, you must understand the destination. It is incredible how many people set off in life without knowing where they wish to end up. Everything in life has a driving purpose behind it, and vision is what helps to define that purpose.

Without vision, you have no path - how can you, when there is no destination to reach? Fortunately, visualization is a technique that has been around for some time, and has been practiced and employed by successful people around the world.

### ***Setting A Plan***

Let's imagine that you are going to prepare a meal for your family. This is the destination - the final, desired result: a savory meal, prepared and ready to serve. In order to reach that destination, several things must happen. There are many ingredients that will go into the recipe.

You will need to take an inventory of what you already have in your kitchen, and then build a shopping list of items that are missing. You will have to make a trip to the store in order to obtain those ingredients. Once you have all of the necessary items, you must follow the steps in your recipe.

Certain items must be prepared - diced, chopped up, and cooked. Other items must be mixed together. Once this combination of events finally concludes, the end result is a meal.

Have you ever considered going into your kitchen to simply "do whatever" and see what would turn up? You put a pot on the stove and pour water into it, and set the burner to low. You preheat the oven to a random temperature - 300 degrees. You grab the first box of whatever out of the cabinet, and throw it into a microwave-proof bowl.

The next thing that you see, you dump into the pot on the stove then you stick something else in the oven. Would this be a successful way to prepare a meal? What if you were baking bread, then halfway through decided that you wanted muffins instead? Or how about making biscuits with a special mix that can serve for pancakes as well, but deciding you really want pancakes only after the biscuits are done cooking?

Many people embark on physique transformation with no end goal in mind. This is like trying to prepare a meal without having a clue what it is supposed to look or taste like. Someone may decide, for example, that they want to lose twenty pounds - but then they do not have any idea how they will look. Will those pounds come from their stomach? Their legs? Their arms? Their face? Is there any way to truly predict how the fat will come off?



The answer is no. What can be predicted, with absolute certainty, is how one wishes to appear. Without a fixed, clear vision, you are bound to change the recipe in the middle - and the end result could be disastrous.

### ***How To Start***

The first thing to detach you from is a fixation on numbers. Many people become over-concerned with the concept of ideal weight. My own ideal weight, according to certain insurance charts, is about 160 pounds. I have not weighed that much since high school! Make no mistake, however. This does not mean I am at risk for health conditions or even carrying too much fat.

The weight I have accumulated is muscle, and at 180 pounds I am so lean that you can see the striations and veins all over my body. Imagine if I was not satisfied with being that lean, simply because a chart told me I needed to weigh 10 pounds less!

The reason that I was successful was because I created an image. I imagined what I wanted to look like. I fixed that image in my mind. I even took pictures of athletes and bodybuilders who had a similar build to my own, and visualized my face on those bodies. A friend of mine took a picture of a former EAS champion that I admire - Brad Wadlow - and used software to superimpose my face on his body. If you compare our pictures today, you will see a striking similarity (with the exception that Brad has hair and a few more pounds of muscle on his frame).

This is no coincidence! It is the power of visualization at work. You have heard the analogies before - that in order to build a house, you must have a detailed blueprint. In order to make a trip, you must have a final destination and then plot a route to make it there. If you don't fix that destination in your mind, you are bound to wander aimlessly on the way.

It would be like Ulysses attempting to return home - delays and detours plaguing you every step of the way. You don't want to face the whirlpool or deadly hydra, do you? I certainly hope not! So let's get to work.

First, construct a vision of how you wish to look. You might take pictures from your past and use those as a reference. You may find someone you admire and feel has a body similar to your own, only in much better shape. Whatever method you use, try to make certain your vision is as clear as possible. The clearer your vision, and the greater your chances of success.

Go ahead and fix that vision in your mind. Don't imagine it as something you will become. This is the tricky part. If you have read personal development books or other self-help material, then you will have been introduced to this concept. Success comes from being, so you want to be that healthy, lean person - right now! If you continuously imagine becoming that person sometime in the future, you may never reach that point - the ideal will elude you.

By placing that vision in the present, you send your brain - your subconscious - a clear, precise message. You are memorizing the blueprint so that your mind can gather the right materials to construct the "home" you wish to build.

Any method to reinforce your vision will only help you achieve your goals more quickly. This can include putting together a collage not only of the ideal body you are striving for, but of the things you will do with it. Maybe there is a sport you have never played because you just couldn't keep up with the other players.

In my past, I feared visiting the pool or the beach. I was too embarrassed to take my shirt off - I felt that everyone was silently laughing at me. It was an incredible experience to finally walk on the warm sand of South Beach with confidence and poise. That was no chance circumstance, either - my wife and I had booked the motel three months prior, when I weighed 30 pounds heavier. We created an image for our success and knowing where that motel was - right on the beach - set my course.

If you find you have trouble committing to your vision, try a little technique that worked for me. It may not be the ultimate solution, but I have found it to be effective with many people. Often, as we are focused on our future, we think about those around us. There is nothing wrong with that.

We tend to be able to imagine someone else growing older or becoming fit or simply changing into a better person. When we try to apply those same processes to ourselves, however, we simply teleport ourselves to the future - we retain all of our current qualities, and just the scenery changes.

This is a case where it may be effective to let go of your ego. Instead of being connected to who you will be, say, six months from now, imagine your "future self" as an entirely different person. When I was overweight, I could only visualize myself in terms of "overweight". I had a limited vocabulary to describe myself.

So I created an image of Future Jeremy. Future Jeremy was not overweight - he was lean and muscular. Future Jeremy did not lose his temper over trivial things and frequently become depressed. Future Jeremy smile much more often than I did.

To bridge the gap between now and then, I would visualize a conversation with Future Jeremy. As long as I was sticking to my goals, everything was fine. It was when I began to falter that this visualization technique really became effective. When I would skip a workout, Future Jeremy would become distraught - I was threatening his very existence. By choosing not to eat the right foods or to skip important workouts, I was literally destroying the notion of who I could become. I was making someone I respected extinct!

## ***Conclusion***

This may sound strange or even silly to some, but using this imagery helped me stay the course. I knew that my future self depended on this. You may have heard of the term, "The Butterfly Effect." The simple premise is that a butterfly flapping its wings on one side of the world could create such a complex interaction of breezes that it would ultimately result in a massive storm on the other side of the world.

This effect is present in our own lives, but in a very different way. The ripples we make in our own sea of life today can turn into tidal waves that carry us to prosperity or dash us against the rocks of our future. Imagine your future self, and do everything you possibly can to ensure their survival!

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## **The Pursuit of Greatness**

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On June 3rd, 1948, a blast rocked the Black Hills of South Dakota. Ten tons of stone were dislodged from the mountainside and tumbled to the earth below. Earlier that day, a man named Korczak had ascended the mountain and single-jacked four holes at 6,740 feet above sea level.

Single-jacking is the practice of placing a drill-bit against hard rock, slamming it with a four-pound sledge hammer, then rotating the drill and banging it again until the hole is finished. It is a labor-intensive effort and a single man might only drill six to eight feet over the course of a day.

Over the following years more than eight million tons of rock would be blasted away. What was once a silent silhouette in stone began to take on a new shape. It would not be until over a decade after Korczak's death – a full fifty years after he single-jacked the first holes – that the face of his muse, the proud Lakota warrior named “Crazy Horse,” would emerge. What Korczak had begun in obscurity by constructing his own 714-step stairway to the summit (one he ascended and descended multiple times in a single day) is now known throughout the world. Over 10,000 hikers converge for the annual hike to the top of the mountain to view the face that alone is taller than Mount Rushmore.

One billion postage stamps with the likeness of Crazy Horse have been issued

### Crazy Horse and More!

The Natural Physiques website contains extensive picture galleries with photos ranging from incredible transformations to the beautiful landscape of the Black Hills. Access these photos, including pictures of Jeremy's visit to Crazy Horse, by visiting:

[www.naturalphysiques.com/gallery/](http://www.naturalphysiques.com/gallery/)

over the last few decades. It all started with a single hike up the mountain by man who was humble enough to begin the project by himself but had a vision large enough to believe he could transform a mountain into the noble image of a native war hero declaring the extent of his lands. It was a vision of greatness.

How did something so monumental begin with such humble roots? Perhaps the greatest clue left behind is the quotation found on the various knick-knacks in the gift shop next the mountain. I was moved when I heard the phenomenal story of the Crazy Horse project and bought a souvenir not to remind me of where I had been, but to encourage me to keep forging ahead to where I want to be. The beautiful swirl of agate was not what commanded the most of my attention – it was the words that spoke to my own dreams. It reads:

*When the Legends Die*

*The Dreams End*

*When the Dreams End*

*There is No More Greatness*

Korczak insisted that it was not important to know when the monument will be finished. What was most important was to continue the dream. And continue the dream he did, through three separate operations to remove six discs. After quadruple bypass surgery, he was back on the mountain supervising his children as they painted the outline of the massive horse's head. Crazy Horse, when completed, will be the world's largest sculpture, taller than the great pyramids and overshadowing the Washington Monument by eight feet.

Seven of Korczak's ten children continue the dream to this day along with his wife. Korczak himself rests peacefully in a mausoleum he built with his children before his death at the base of the mountain.

It is said the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first footstep. Just as the act of carving Crazy Horse's face from living rock took fifty years, the quest to sculpt your own physique will not be fulfilled overnight. Why is so difficult to hold onto the dream of living a healthy, fit life? Have we lost our Legends, and let the Dreams End? You may be amazed to learn that every ordinary person in this world is destined to something extraordinary – if they are willing to stop trying to make it happen and instead able to search deep within to let it happen.

Are you ready to let success happen?



A pound of fat contains approximately 3,500 calories. I must admit, it was daunting to me when I began my journey and realized I had 65 pounds of fat to lose. Sixty-five pounds of fat boasts more than a quarter million calories. In our fast-paced world of instant gratification, I wanted the fat to disappear immediately. I did not want to single-jack those four holes and blast away the first ten tons out of eight million ... instead, I wanted the entire sculpture to reveal itself overnight. Where was my magic bullet?

Crazy Horse is in the Dakota Territory, which was first made famous to other Americas through the journals of Lewis and Clark. Many of us today dread stepping onto the treadmill or out into the cold morning air to run a few miles. The Lewis and Clark expedition crossed the entire country from St. Louis to the west coast and back again. The majority of this was on foot, dragging boats laden with supplies upstream against the aggressive current of the Missouri River.

One journal entry shared an extraordinary fact: each man consumed nearly twenty pounds of meat every day in order to supply the calories they needed to survive. In stark contrast, when they were struggling through a hard winter in the Rockies, they managed to drag equipment, supplies, guns, and tools over treacherous mountain passes while subsiding on nothing more than roots. The entire journey traversed over 8,000 miles and lasted several years, but the men and woman set forth knowing only what they wished to accomplish and focused on achieving it one day at a time.

They took their first steps without any knowledge of the land they were about to enter – it was *terra incognita*. Is a healthy physique “unknown territory” to you? It is easier to overcome fear of the unknown when you are in pursuit of greatness.

What does it take to step onto the treadmill to run a few miles? What courage is necessary to enter the weight room and force several pounds of iron to move against the will of gravity? The small excuses that keep you away from your goals are the dangerous ones. They are the little dream-stealers, attacking greatness. Living healthy is about more than simply losing weight or looking great on the beach. It is about excellence.

Wouldn't weight-loss be easy if it were just a “thing?” We do “things” every day. We brush our teeth, go shopping, and prepare dinner. These “things” are part of our daily existence, and are as easy as watching the rain. So why is living healthy such a struggle to many? Perhaps it is because you are chasing something more than a number on the scale. Maybe you feel that if you burn that fat, you will find your true self underneath. During the chase, you are not really losing weight – whether you like it or not, you are pursuing greatness. It is who we are.

According to Jim Rohn, “the ultimate expression of life is not a million dollars or a bank account or a home.” It is living a good life. Jim Rohn once lied to a Girl Scout because he did not have a single dollar in his wallet to buy cookies from her. He vowed he would never be in that position again, and is now America's foremost business philosopher – a millionaire who has spoken to hundreds of thousands. Jim shares that a good life includes productivity, good friends, culture, and religion. He tells us not to miss anything – not the game, not the opera, not the movie. What are you missing?

How hard is it to live the good life? We Americans are numb to our present condition. We are programmed to sit in front of the television set to absorb a constant stream of negative news, then punch the clock at a job that is high-stress and low-pay with little time remaining to live the good life. We are exhausted, so we slump in front of the latest sitcom to find pleasure in someone else's life because we don't have the energy to live our own. Dr. Myron Wentz, who was born on a small farm only a few hundred miles north of Crazy Horse in North Dakota and is now pursuing greatness as a leader in the fight against degenerative disease, described the situation eloquently by stating “Most people die too long.”

It took me nearly a year to lose sixty-five pounds of fat. I was not an overnight success story – I had to work at it. It was a struggle and sometimes I would backslide. When I'd stand on the scale to see that I had taken two steps in the wrong direction, I'd dust myself off, face the right direction, and keep moving forward. Many people who were attempting to lose fat with me gave up when they did not see their six-pack after a few weeks of sweating hard and eating clean.

Not content with being ordinary, I stubbornly refused to give in. Perhaps I can attribute some of my success to my birth in Sturgis, South Dakota - a small town nestled just inside the border of the Black Hills where many legends have roamed. I do not consider myself a legend, but I could relate to Korczak when I'd rouse myself early in the morning after only a few hours of sleep to step into the cold basement and onto the unrelenting treadmill. I did not want to die too long – I was ready to live.

You see, I did not know how long it would take to reach my goal. I was unhappy and dissatisfied with how I was living my life. For things to change, I had to change. I was not ready for just any change – I wanted to do something great. Korczak had his mountain, I had my treadmill. What we shared was the resolve to look beyond the next day and become part of a greater vision. I might have only burned a few hundred calories per day, but those emptied fat cells would never cause me grief again. It doesn't matter when you reach that magic weight or fit into that special pair of shorts. What matters is keeping the dream alive every day. Live the good life. Strive for excellence. Excellence is not perfection; it is the pursuit of greatness – it is perfecting the process of becoming your best. I remind myself of the dream to be my best each and every day, because I know when the dreams end, there is no more greatness.

Are you merely chasing the scale, or do you choose to pursue greatness? *Never forget your dreams.*

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## **Do you have Spirit?**

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Religion is a very important aspect of physique transformation. It addresses the “soul” aspect of the total self (mind, body, and soul).

Religion can be a difficult topic due to the existence of so many different beliefs. Some people are very open with their religion, and others consider it to be extremely personal. As a former atheist (now a Christian), I feel that a discussion of the relationship between religion and physique transformation is essential for continued success.

As a child, I was constantly inundated with religion. My grandfather is a Baptist pastor and was always willing to share his views with me. My parents took a more moderate approach, trying not to influence me but allowing me to decide for myself what my true beliefs were. We only attended church for the holidays. When I grew up and moved out on my own, I became an extremely selfish, angry, and cynical young man. As a result, I proclaimed myself an atheist and set out to fight the “evil world” that was doing so many cruel things to me (that is the view I held at the time).

After a few years of floundering in this sea of self-hate and cynicism, drawn into a blurry lifestyle of drinking, smoking, and utter laziness, I began to realize that there must be more to life than the next drag on a cigarette or shot of whiskey. I realized that my “friends” were living in the same rut that I was, and were not the right environment to evolve and move on with my life. I decided that it was time to change, but I did not know how to make the change.

I started by addressing the one aspect of my life that I hated the most: my job. I was miserable where I was, and wanted out. I gave my resume to a local recruiter and made it very, very clear that I did not want to leave the state. In all honesty, I had lived most of my life in Florida and the prospect of truly striking out on my own was terrifying to me. So I was adamant about not packing up my bags and moving somewhere new.

An opportunity arose in Miami, which was a bit far away for my taste, but also a tropical paradise in my eyes. I was flown down for the interview and shown the “fast life” of Miami, and was instantly drawn in. Unfortunately, my desire to relocate stemmed from the decadence that was pervasive on the beaches of Miami, rather than any other desire to change. At the time, I thought it was simply random fate, but now I know otherwise - when I tried to accept the job offer I was given, my lifestyle caught up with me. My wake-up call was the message from human resources that they could not accept me due to factors in my life at that time.

Another recruiter in the same office caught wind of my attempt to relocate to Miami. She aggressively promoted a job opportunity in Atlanta, Georgia. I told myself that there was no way I would ever move that far. I was, however, excited about the prospect of flying to new cities that I hadn't visited before just for a job interview, so I accepted the invitation for the experience and to visit Atlanta. Nothing more, nothing less. It was a decision that would change my life forever.

The cab drive to the office was uneventful. I remember being startled at how many trees there were in Atlanta - it was like a city nestled in a forest. I also remember how long the cab drive was. I had brought \$50 expecting this to suffice; the cab ride alone was about \$75. The interview started with me asking for extra cash to pay the cab driver, and I assumed right then and there that there was no way I would be receiving an offer.

After the interview, I stepped back into a cab to ride back to the airport. My stomach was full of butterflies at the prospect of moving - the area was absolutely beautiful, and the job opportunity was amazing. I was excited, but had already made the decision not to return to Atlanta - it was too far, and I was afraid of having to live completely on my own, without my friends and family that I was so familiar with there to comfort me.



The cab driver began to speak, and that is when I found Christ. He was not pushy - as an outspoken atheist, I was always ready to criticize people who tried to “preach” to me and was quick point out their “flaws”. This man asked politely if he could share his views with me - I figured, what the heck? I knew it was going to be a long cab ride.

“You are ready to change, but your mind is muddled. Your heart is here, but your mind is holding you back. Remember, your heart is the antenna of your spirit. When we make mistakes, it is because we get caught up in our mind - in the five senses, in what our body asks of us - rather than listening to our hearts. Your heart is right - it is an inner sense connected to your spirit - it is telling you that the time to change is now.”

Those words had so much meaning. This was exactly what I felt - in my heart, I longed to “escape” from Florida to Atlanta, but my mind was full of reasons not to.

Enthralled, I listened further. Remember, I did not know this cab driver at all - yet he continued ...

“You are unhappy with your current life. You are living too fast, standing at the edge of the abyss. You are afraid of falling. Your friends are not your true friends - they are only negative influences right now. It is time to forget about friends and family and look at what is in your heart. You can always make new friends, and you will only become closer to your family if you rise above this life of decadence that you have chosen.”

### Connect With Others!

Napoleon Hill calls a group of like-minded persons a “mastermind group” where the group achieves more than the sum of each individual contribution (*synergy*). You are welcome to join our health and wellness mastermind group online at:

[www.naturalphysiques.com/forums/](http://www.naturalphysiques.com/forums/)

Normally, I would have been deeply offended. But this time I was not. He knew too much about my emotions, my feelings, and the turmoil that was happening inside of me. I listened and listened. When we arrived at the airport, he thanked me, and wished me luck, and told me that he hoped I would consider his advice to return to Atlanta.

A change came over me. I had an hour on the flight to reflect upon what had just transpired, and suddenly I realized that this was not a cab driver - he was more like a guiding angel, helping me through a critical junction in my life. The decision was mine, but the options were laid before me. By the time I stepped off of the plane, my mind was set. I would return to Atlanta.

Against all odds - a job that required a college degree that I did not have, my bumbling entrance (hey, um, do you have some cash to pay this cab driver, and, uh, I need more money for my ride back?) and lack of experience - I was accepted. My friends were disappointed and my parents were upset, but it meant little to me. I was excited. I was ready. And I knew that suddenly, I would not be alone - when I went to Atlanta, my faith would be coming with me.

Everything I owned fit in the back of a 2-door Honda Civic EX, and that is exactly what I drove to Atlanta with - clothes, a cat, and a computer. I slept on the floor for the first month until I could afford a bed, and spent the next year slowly adding furniture to my apartment. The first week that I was in Atlanta, I met my future wife. Our eyes locked and it was true love at first sight - we were engaged 6 months later, and married a year after that.

In the spring after I found Body-for-LIFE™ (by Bill Phillips) and began the journey to change my physique, I was again brought closer to religion. Ironically, Body-for-LIFE™ begins with a discussion about crossing the “abyss,” a metaphor that my cab driver had alluded to earlier. My abyss was great and the desire and faith to transform was slow to unfold - I lacked the necessary belief in myself. This would all change when two very poignant events shook my life.

That same spring, a very close friend of mine passed away swiftly due to the ravages of cancer. That same time, my wife and I found out that she was pregnant with our daughter. I was blessed with the opportunity to learn from life lost and life created at once. I was forced to deal with my emotions and beliefs concerning death. I had not visited my friend in months due to his struggle to recover from surgery. When I heard he was possibly getting better and finally decided that it was time to visit him, he had already fallen unconscious. I cannot forget the rasp of his breath as he clung to his last few seconds of life - we waited outside of his hospital room for him to wake up, but the loud wail of his children was the sound we heard next, and I felt his spirit pass through me.

His passing impacted me deeply but it also helped me grow. The knowledge of my daughter also made me realize something critical: we are blessed with life, and we should celebrate it. I was taking the health that I was gifted with and abusing it. My friend had no such luxury, and I realized how selfish I was. I also wanted to be a great role model for my daughter, and my son who was quickly becoming a teenager. I suddenly realized how selfish I was, and began to focus on living by giving.

It was with this revelation that I was able to progress to new heights that I had never known possible. When cardio was tough, I thought of my friend and how he no longer had this opportunity - suddenly an exercise I dreaded became a gift, the chance to bless my body with good health and give as much as I could. When I was jogging through the neighborhood and felt like my legs were lead and I could not possibly make it over the next hill, I searched inside and found faith and decided that I would not listen to my mind or my body - I would soar with my spirit. This hardened my resolve and pushed me through those boundaries. Have you heard the expression, "Give it all that you've got?" When you are giving it all, you are giving - the expression is not, "Take all that you can."

*Why do you think we excel when we give?*

There are many religions in the world and most teach the same lesson: life is more than just "me" or "you" - it is bigger than all of us. What we take from this life will depend more on what we give during this life. It is time to find your soul because until you can look outside and above "you", it will be impossible to shape who you are.

Plato once spoke of a cave. The people in this cave were tied to posts with great blazing fires behind them. They were forced to look straight ahead at the shadows on the walls. This was their reality - they believed life was shadow. If only they could rise beyond their perception and understand who they really were - people in a cave - they could control those shadows and ascend to a higher reality, a three dimensional reality rich and full of life and color - not the dull shadows on the wall.

Physique transformation is a similar experience. Your physique is like the shadow on the wall. All of the science, training, and nutrition in the world won't help you shape your physique if you only see the shadow. It is up to you to find the path into your inner spirit and unlock all three aspects of who you are - mind, body, and soul - in order to pull away from the shadows and view life in its full, rich, multidimensional reality. I am not here to judge your faith, that is not my right. Whatever your chosen faith is, or what faith you choose to "discover," I encourage you to explore that spirit and soar within it to take your life to new and unfathomable

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## **Make your Goals Stick**

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The amazing thing about the future is that if you wait, it will always come to you. No doubt you sat down and created your share of New Year's resolutions to conquer this year. The unfortunate truth, however, is that most people's resolutions fizzle and die before the first quarter is even over. It doesn't have to be this way – with a few key steps, you can be well on your way to goal-getting instead of just goal-setting and turn your resolutions into real solutions.

### **Goals aren't enough – know your reasons**

It's great to have goals, but by itself, a goal is not much. Have you ever shared with someone else that you would “try” to accomplish a goal? Try is a very weak word. When do you think you'll be ready to commit to actually *doing* it, instead of just talking about it?

The main reason most goals don't stick is because there is not a big enough reason to follow through with them. For example, losing weight is a great goal. However, *why* do you want to lose weight? See, if the goal is just “lose weight” then when that surprise birthday party happens, it's easy to talk yourself into letting loose and stuffing your face because that goal can be pushed aside, delayed, or even forgotten.

On the other hand, if your reason for losing fat is to avoid health problems or gain confidence, now you have a reason. That reason is your passion, your fire, your spark and your fuel to keep going. When you identify the true reason behind wanting to change, write it down. Keep it with you. Read it when you wake up, and before you go to sleep. Let your mind know what the *reward* will be, because most people focus on the process when it is the reward that keeps you going.

A real goal is about a vision. You must have a vision bigger than the obstacles you may face. Goals are stepping stones towards turning the vision from a dream into reality. Remember, goals are simply dreams with deadlines. So commit to your goal, know the reason, visualize the change, and it will stick with you despite the challenges you may face.

### **Hold Yourself Accountable**

A goal is not much if you don't share it with others or create accountability. Without accountability, it's easy to make the goal simply disappear when things turn sour. Then you are simply a great goal-setter, but have nothing to show for the goal-getting department.



Accountability can take many different forms. If you're not ready to share it with the world, then simply write it down in a journal. Each day, spend five or ten minutes to reflect upon the steps you took that day that are taking you closer to your goal, and what choices you may have made that have you headed in the wrong direction. This will allow you to decide what changes you must make to keep moving closer to your goal.

For example, if your goal is to run your first triathlon, one of the daily actions you can take towards that goal is to eat healthy. This will fuel your body, improve recovery, and provide the nutrients necessary to have the energy to succeed. If you decided to blow your nutrition program, then this is a habit that is taking you further from your goal. Identify it and decide what is more important – the short-term satisfaction of eating a treat, or the reward of finishing your first triathlon event. Stay in focus, and you'll go far.

### **Join the Right Team**

Have you ever heard the phrase that your success is determined by the company you keep? Can you imagine how your life would be different if your circle of influence included those people who have already accomplished many of the goals you are setting for yourself?

Sometimes it can be difficult to lose your friends, but if your friends are not supporting your growth, they are holding you back. Trade them in for someone more positive who will keep you headed in the right direction. Author Napoleon Hill describes a group of like-minded people as a “mastermind group” where a true synergy is created – the results of the mastermind group become greater than the sum of the individual contributions. [BeginnerTriathlete.com](http://BeginnerTriathlete.com) is a great place to connect with others who have similar goals to your own. Plug into your mastermind group!

### **Follow the Right Coach**

Last but not least, it is important to have a good coach.

Have you ever stopped to really think about successful people? People who are top athletes, or business executives, or great piano players, for example. What most of these people have in common is that they did not learn everything on their own – they had teachers and coaches. In fact, I don't know any successful business people, athletes, or simply those who are in great shape who don't have coaches. I have coaches for fitness, coaches for business, and coaches for my personal life (“life coaches”).

A good coach will empower you to achieve your goals. They do this by helping you avoid the mistakes they've already made, or already witnessed their other clients make. You also benefit from their knowledge and experience without having to go through the entire process yourself. A quality coach will have a background in the area you are trying to improve, solid references, and will offer time to connect with you before you make a coaching commitment. This will allow you to decide if there is a fit to move forward and conquer your dreams together in the coming year.

### **Conclusion**

It's great to make New Year's resolutions, but do yourself a favor. Self-esteem is related to self-promises. When you break a promise to yourself, you lose a bit of your confidence and self-esteem. When you keep a promise, you gain confidence. Don't commit to a resolution you are not ready to achieve. Don't let your goals simply remain words on paper. Create a plan for success, tackle the areas we discussed and your New Year's resolutions will truly *stick* in the coming year.

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## **The Ten Pillars of Ultimate Fitness**

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What is the most important element of fitness? Is it your resting heart rate? How fast you can run a mile? How much weight you can bench press? Whether or not you can touch your toes?

Living healthy is an approach that involves all aspects of the human experience. This includes the mind, body, and spirit. Too often, athletes and fitness enthusiasts focus on one part of the whole. Many bodybuilders shun cardiovascular exercise while it is not uncommon for endurance athletes to avoid the weight room. The word enthusiasm comes from Greek *enthousiasmos* or “inspiration by the presence of a god.”

If you are enthusiastic about your sport, I encourage you to honor that inspiration by finding balance in all of these pillars. I believe these are all key components of fitness. Asking if one is better is like asking which you would rather do without – your heart, or your brain.

### ***Mindset***

*I succeed on my own personal motivation, dedication, and commitment.... My mindset is: If I'm not out there training, someone else is.*

– Lynn Jennings

Mindset begins with a choice, and the inner decision that you make. It may seem trivial, but having a deep, meaningful reason is critical to success. Excellence in a sport, in life, or even with your health doesn't happen overnight – it is a process and takes time. Life does not come without challenges, and it is in those brief moments of weakness that we all face when mindset becomes the critical factor. It is in these moments of weakness that the decision comes into play. See, if you just jumped into the endeavor, chances are you can jump out just as easily. You haven't truly committed to anything, so it gives you a nice, comfortable back door – push the eject button and go back to the same old way.

It is interesting to note that mindset is strongly connected to faith. Often you are training for an event that happens in the future. There is no guarantee for the outcome of that event, only the reality of the process you are in. Your mindset is largely what will allow you to continue moving forward, or, to put it in a different perspective, allow you to patiently exist as the future comes rushing to you (isn't that the best part about the future – that if we wait long enough, it will always come to us?) Having faith in yourself is critical to honor the other pillars and complete the full circle of living a fit lifestyle.

### ***Motivation and Inspiration***

*If you're a champion, you have to have it in your heart.*

– **Chris Evert**

Having a mindset has often been tied to willpower. Some people claim, “I just didn’t have the will.” This is very untrue. You see, willpower pervades every waking moment of your life. As long as you are breathing, you are connected to your will. As long as you consistently wake up each morning and follow your routine – whether it is driving into an office, training, talking on the phone, or visiting with friends and family, you have a will.

It’s isn’t your will that is in question, it’s the fuel you use to fill your mindset. Use the cheap fuel, and when the going gets tough, the weak-willed check out. So what is the right fuel?

Traditionally, most people have focused on motivation. Motivation is a powerful tool. It can create powerful situations in your life and help you overcome obstacles. However, there is one flaw with motivation. Motivation is usually a part of who we are – and that’s it. If you draw a large circle, and write “me” on the inside, motivation would be a small circle inside the larger circle. Motivation can run out. The tank can go empty. Have you ever been to an event, watched a movie, or read a passage that supercharged your motivational battery, only to find that weeks later you were back to the same place you started? Why is that?

It's because the better fuel is not motivation. It is the stuff that makes motivation. It is called inspiration. Inspiration is something larger than you are. While motivation is literally defined as an inducement or incentive, something that stimulates or influences, inspiration is defined as a sudden creative act or idea, even divine guidance. It is an act of co-creative. You create energy where none existed before, and that is magic. Inspiration is the big circle, with you inside of it. When you connect to a cause or a purpose larger than your internal motivation, you are suddenly able to stop fighting through obstacles and barriers and instead tap into your inspiration to glide over them with ease. Motivation will get you out of bed and to the start line, but it is inspiration that will carry you through the finish line. What is *your* inspiration?

### ***Goals and Vision***

*Set your goals high, and don't stop till you get there.*

– **Bo Jackson**

Sometimes the struggle comes from not knowing what your true purpose is. How can you be inspired when you're not even certain why you are here?

One powerful method for discovering that driving force – your own why – is to use goals in order to craft your vision. Goals are popular and there is plenty of material on setting goals. A lot of programs focus on your top three goals. But to really tap into your vision, I suggest taking it to another level. Follow this exercise instead:

1. Write down 100 goals. That's right. Not one, not three, not ten, but 100 goals. It may take you a few days to do this, and that is fine.
2. Place a date next to each goal – whether it is one year from now, five years from now, or 20 years down the road. Get specific.
3. Pick a time – let's say five years – and gather all of the goals that you intend to complete from then. Now is the fun part: crafting your vision.
4. Simply write a story about the ideal day in your life after accomplishing those goals. When do you wake up? Where do you live? What is your house like? What is your daily routine? Who do you know? What do you eat? Make it detailed. Some people write many pages of this, and that is fine.

Do this exercise, and then instead of focusing on your goals, focus on the vision instead. Read it aloud to yourself each day. Eventually, your inspiration will find you.

### ***Nutrition***

*He that takes medicine and neglects diet, wastes the skill of the physician.*

– **Chinese Proverb**

We've addressed some of the mental pillars of fitness – so what about the physical? Nutrition is definitely a key component. You are what you eat. It is incredible, really, to understand that you can be very fit without being healthy. However, the opposite is generally not true – it's tough to be healthy without being fit.



Nutrition is life and energy. Nutrition is medicine. While the FDA won't allow us to suggest that nutrition can heal sickness and cure disease, there are certainly plenty of stories about people who experienced dramatic changes in their lives when they embraced healthy nutrition. Learn how to become in tune with your body and its needs. Don't just force down protein because you read about it, and don't eliminate fats because you feel it may help you lose weight. Instead, become a student of nutrition and use your own body as a laboratory. Experiment with different styles of nutrition to learn which menu best suits your own needs. If necessary, work with a dietician or nutritionist who can create a custom program based on your uniqueness.

### ***Supplementation***

*As you learn more, you may ask yourself whether you can afford to use [health supplements] every day. Just let me say that you can't afford not to! A single case of cancer or heart disease can cause financial ruin for a family.*

**– Dr. Myron Wentz**

Dr. Wentz is speaking about the war that our bodies wage each day. The old advice that you can get everything you need by eating healthy is rapidly becoming obsolete. The Journal of the American Medical Association in 2000 published their report stating that all adults should be on some form of multivitamin. The Centers for Disease Control reported that in the year 2000, the second leading cause of death was poor diet and lack of exercise. Our cells are under attack!

The common argument is, “Well, we didn’t have pills 2,000 years ago, why now?” Good question! We also didn’t have smog, we didn’t have toxins dumped into the ocean and other parts of the environment, we didn’t have increased exposure to ultraviolet radiation and we certainly didn’t work sedentary jobs in stressful environments. All of these elements conspire to wreak havoc on our bodies, and supplementation is a way to bridge the gap between what our bodies were designed to deal with and the reality today.

You deserve to find a quality, pharmaceutical grade multivitamin and invest in it each month as a health insurance policy for your fit body.

### ***Resistance Training***

*The last three to four repetitions are what make the muscles grow. This area of pain divides the champion from someone else who is not a champion.*

– **Arnold Schwarzenegger**

Resistance training isn’t a new concept, only the general acceptance of it is. There were lean, muscular physiques since the beginning of recorded history and evidence of this can be found in the graceful definition of traditional Greek sculptures. The weight training tools of the past were the scythe and plow. They have since been replaced by the dumbbell, the barbell, the machine, and even the kettlebell.

Research shows us that individuals who train with weights in addition to performing cardiovascular exercise lose more fat than those who only engage in endurance conditioning. In other words, the runner who takes a few days to pump iron will benefit from a leaner physique than the one who spends more time on the trail. Weight training may increase metabolism, it reinforces the strength of your joints so that high impact exercises like running can be managed by the muscle tissue and not just the joint itself, and may even protect against sudden impacts like a fall.

There is a myth that you must go into the gym for hours at a time and lift the heaviest weights possible in order to successfully train with weights. The truth is that resistance training means contract your muscle against any resistance. A push-up that defies the pull of gravity, a resistance band, and a barbell all generate the needed resistance – it is up to you to find a method that works and consistently follow it.

### ***Cardiovascular Training***

*The trouble with jogging is that, by the time you realize you're not in shape for it, it's too far to walk back.*

– **Franklin P. Jones**

Of course, your heart and conditioning are equally as important as your strength and muscle mass. Cardiovascular exercise helps build structures at the cellular level that enhance the extraction of oxygen from air for use as energy. In essence, it helps your entire body “breathe” at a higher, more effective level. Not to mention, it is useful for completing events like triathlons, for hiking long distances, and even for carrying heavy bags of groceries up long flights of stairs.

### ***Flexibility***

*Prepare yourself for the world, as the athletes used to do for their exercise; oil your mind and your manners, to give them the necessary suppleness and flexibility; strength alone will not do.*

– **Earl of Chesterfield**

Perhaps the most interesting debate in the sports world today is whether or not flexibility makes sense. There are many studies that are quoted out of context and a lot of research on select groups used to support both sides of the argument.

My mentor, Ian King, has been a physical preparation coach in Australia for several decades. His specialty is training elite, professional, and even Olympic athletes. Now, it stands to reason that an athlete who is injured is not an asset to the team, so success in that area would be tied to his ability to keep the athletes injury free and assist them with recovery. He is a very strong advocate of stretching.

I began integrating stretching in my own programs and with the programs I develop for clients years ago. The feedback was universal – clients reported a reduction in pain and popping and increased recovery. It makes sense to me. If you drop a container made out of glass (lack of flexibility) or a container made out of plastic (a flexible material) which is more likely to break? If you receive unexpected impact or trauma – whether a collision or a fall – do you think the limb with the greater range of motion (flexible) or the restricted range of motion (inflexible) will handle this better?

Integrate stretching. You won't regret it. Take a four-week trial and use the stretches we have illustrated online at:

<http://www.naturalphysiques.com/cms/index.php?itemid=159>

## ***Breathing***

*Keep breathing.*

– **Sophie Tucker**

What would happen if we stopped breathing?

Perhaps our most valuable asset to health – our breath – is the least appreciated. Breathing has been a discipline in many cultures for thousands of years. It is a gateway to meditate; it is a method for reducing stress; it is a technique for handling fear. For exercise, it is highly connected to results. The rhythm of breathing for cardiovascular exercise can be critical to maintaining pace while proper breathing technique in the weight room may help prevent injury.

Learn how to breathe and become aware of it. If you find you are in a stressful situation, take a moment to breathe in deeply. Exhale without forcing your breath – remember, the exhalation comes naturally as a result of the pressure of the air in your lungs. Draw in the breath, and imagine strength and balance entering your body. Then, exhale allowing your body to naturally release weakness and chaos.

Be aware of your breathing in exercise, during long runs, and when you are faced with intense or stressful situations. Try to take a few deep breaths every hour, and note the impact it has on your body and how you feel. You may agree that your breath is just as important as all of the other components of your fitness program.

### ***Meditation***

*Meditation brings wisdom; lack of mediation leaves ignorance. Know well what leads you forward and what hold you back, and choose the path that leads to wisdom.*

– **Buddha**

Meditation has many forms and disciplines. What I am referring to is simply being still. It is stopping for a moment and not having to do a thing. Many people refer to meditation as a method for stopping your thoughts. People become frustrated when they attempt to meditate and cannot keep the thoughts from popping out of nowhere. I would suggest that, at first, meditation is less about stopping your thoughts, and more about becoming aware of them.

What you think about expands. If someone told you something that hurt, you told it to yourself a thousand more times, and made it more of your reality. To really become aware of your power to live healthy and free, you must be aware of your thoughts. Take a moment each day – whether it is 5, 10, or 30 minutes – and sit quietly. Relax. Focus on each muscle in each area of your body, and let it just rest on the bone. Your bones are rigid and can support your body against the pull of gravity, so let the muscles stop tensing. Then, breathe naturally and become aware of your thoughts. Don't get involved with them or overly attached – let them come to the surface. If you have a negative thought that won't serve you, nudge that thought away and replacing it with an empowering thought. Instead of, "I hope I will be prepared for the race," or "I don't know if I'm ready," try, "I'm as ready as I can possibly be. I look forward to enjoying the fruits of my preparation."

### ***Conclusion***

As you can see, total health and fitness are about more than eating healthy or hitting the gym. We believe in a holistic approach that includes the mind, body, and spirit. There is a definite connection between your mind and your body because your emotions create a response at the cellular level. When you are unhappy, every cell in your body literally becomes unhappy as well through the chemical exchanges that take place. Learn to live a balanced, abundant life, and when you are faced with challenges, this is where spirit – what you have flowing from your heart – can carry you through to success.

Would you like to learn more about the pillars of fitness? Jeremy Likness shares these and much more in his empowering 5-CD audio program, *Lose Fat, Not Faith*. Learn how to release fat, gain muscle, and live healthy as you listen to hours of inspiration that will change your life. Visit <http://www.naturalphysiques.com/products/losefatcd> today to claim your package!

For more inspirational writings like this, order *Lose Fat, Not Faith: A Transformation Guide* by Jeremy Likness, available online at [www.LoseFatNotFaith.com](http://www.LoseFatNotFaith.com) or through your local bookstore.