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**Becoming Better**

By Johnny Nguyen

More exercise and greater intensity are often said to be necessary ingredients to becoming fitter and healthier. But in exploring what it means to truly become better in this arena, it's necessary to have a bird's eye view.

When I was a fledging trainer years ago, I was just flapping my wings and tumbling along at the foot of a mountain called exercise science. Given enough time, I realized I didn't know much. So I dug my heels in and absorbed the onslaught of exercise science for years to come.

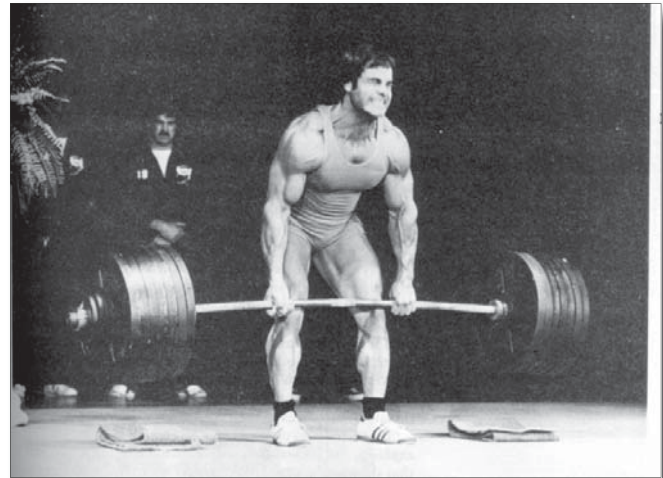
But once again, with a little more time and some humility inherited from life, I realized that I still didn't know much. The science was perpetually in motion and the learning continued but I had been focused only on the body and paid little attention to the spirit. I'd fallen into the fast-moving current in which bodies are meant to be faster, stronger, leaner. Most of us health nuts get caught up in the body and forget what drives it in the first place.

This is the problem with a society that fears fat: it beats itself up with exercise, allowing itself to be coerced by trainers and coaches and peers and media to lift more weight, run faster, be thinner and train until the spirit breaks. People quickly forget that body-fat composition is mostly a function of food intake and not a five-day gym routine; that optimized health depends on regular activity, and not on crushing weight and endless marathons; that being fit for life depends just as much on being a good son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother, husband or wife, and not always on being the fastest or the strongest or the thinnest; overall health depends a lot on being able to say screw the exercise today, I'm going out with my buddies for a hamburger.

I'm not saying that exercise is any less important in our lives, but I believe that it's



important to put exercise into perspective. Unless we're competing in a sport that requires pushing to the extremes of physical capacity, we need to remember that our body needs only exercise with sufficient intensity to keep it strong, healthy, and able—without being enslaved to the constant masochistic abuse that leaves our joints achy and inflamed and our limbs debilitated the next day. Break the body, break the spirit.



More importantly the spirit needs the compassion that comes from the acceptance of a missed workout or two. Sometimes we're better for it. Maybe for a time we need to free ourselves from the constraint of a rigid workout regimen and instead focus on eating more healthfully (we'd be surprised how far that'll take us). Give ourselves more time away from the gym to do the things we enjoy, like loafing on a beach with a good book, playing fetch with Rover, or napping in the hammock. Or even running a marathon, which might not be the best thing for our health but good for the spirit (you see, in as much as I believe in moderating exercise for a truly healthy body, I believe in its indulgence to salvage the mind).

I'm aware that life doesn't revolve around exercise, and I appreciate that there is far more life beyond the gym. I hope to not be the trainer who sends the message that exercise should take center stage; I believe it should take backstage to all other things in life that are rightfully center stage—because we know that no great show can ever go on without those supporting backstage elements, shifting and directing and navigating from the shadow behind the curtains.

These are things I learned not from textbooks, scientific journals, or exercise seminars, but from becoming less of an exercise purist and more of an exercise realist. The most important things I've learned about fitness are from living life and engaging with clients. I believe that no one can become a good trainer until they've come full circle, from the laboratory on some college campus, to the scientific literature, to getting to know clients in the real world. With a little bit of time and humility, I believe I have become more mature, more logical, and more realistic in my practice, and these things have made me a better trainer.

And if you look around at FIT, you'll see something rare in the fitness training industry: almost all of the trainers have been long-term members of the company. Many have been here since the early years. They—and FIT—have come a long way. A little bit of time and a little bit of humility... we all become better.

### **The Road to Becoming Better is Paved with Resiliency**

By Tracey Downing  
Owner, FIT

Lance Armstrong, Michael Jordan, Bret Favre, George Foreman, Dana Torres... seems between athletes and performers, we frequently hear comeback stories and more often than not, they inspire us. Whether due to age, injury or illness, these stories represent those that have overcome obstacles, who have persevered and who have succeeded.

As summer draws to a close, I have found myself ruminating on resilience and perseverance. I have experienced a personal setback from which I am gearing up to get going (yet again) and have been working through the psychological roadblocks that I throw up. This is not the first time I've had to make a comeback yet I still find myself wondering if I can muster the motivation for it and if my body will cooperate.



*A healthy balance is always a good thing*



As I began processing these thoughts, I saw the connection between my experience and those that are shared by clients every time they feel like they have not succeeded or feel as though they have failed.

“Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did.” ~Newt Gingrich

Setbacks are a part of life. Something expected or unexpected occurs and throws us off our game: kids routine changes (schools out); aches, pains, injuries; illness; work; vacation; people visiting . . .the list goes on and on. What is interesting to me about these setbacks is how much blame we place on ourselves. Somewhere deep inside I believe most of us expect ourselves to be superhuman – to do all the things we know are good for us and all the things that need to be done and quite simply, some days, there’s just not enough time in the day. To hear it told, there is almost always shame: “I was bad,” “I cheated.”

Obstacles come in all shapes and sizes, and not all comebacks will make national news but that should not diminish the sense of accomplishment and pride we feel when we overcome them. So, whenever you feel like you’re not where you thought or hoped you’d be, give yourself some credit for persevering and continuing to work toward your goals. How about trying to shift thoughts to “I’m making a comeback,” or “I’m doing something good for myself.” Not only will it make the journey shorter, but you are sure to enjoy the ride a bit more if you’re not beating yourself up all the while.



### **How I Got Better by Putting My Mind to It**

By Matt Brockhaus

In April, I posted a unique Workout-of-the-Month. The goal of the workout was to identify where one’s strong points and abilities were with respect to core strength. For myself, this meant that my objective would be to perform an overhead squat for one repetition at my bodyweight.

Many in the world of strength and conditioning consider the overhead squat to be one of the foremost demonstrations of total body strength, flexibility, and core strength. This is an exercise that challenges not only the lower body musculature, but also shoulder strength and dynamic stability, upper body flexibility, and trunk control. To attain an overhead squat at bodyweight requires leg strength for squatting, but also the shoulder flexibility and strength to hold the weight in position over one’s center of support.

My plan for reaching this goal was to follow the Russian Squat Program.

This consisted of three days per week of overhead squats for six weeks. The first three weeks consisted of increasing the number of repetitions at a set weight of 75% of my previous best attempt. The second three weeks were composed of decreasing the number of repetitions, but gradually increasing the weight.



I knew that my goal was ambitious, but still attainable. With that being said, I was definitely frustrated when I ran the numbers and realized that I

could not reach a bodyweight overhead squat within the month of the challenge. I set out, though, to achieve this goal no matter how long it would take.

Three days a week of overhead squatting definitely took a toll on my body. Besides the overhead squatting, I was also performing other workouts 4-5 days each week. This left little time or energy for other types of squatting (front, or back) due to the amount of time I was spending “under the bar”. Because of this, to maintain lower body strength I depended more on deadlifting than squatting. I knew that my pure squatting strength would decrease, but deadlifting would at least help to maintain leg strength. I also had to adjust the other workouts that I was doing due to the volume of overhead work. I decided that I needed to avoid performing snatches since they have such a similar muscular demand and motor pattern – at least ascending from the catch position. Shoulder pressing was also kept at a minimum, but all other exercises were allowed.

My additional workouts consisted of an aggressive conditioning and general workout routine similar to a CrossFit protocol. This would ensure that my other fitness markers (power, flexibility, endurance, etc.) would remain. While it was a challenge to set up the workouts so as to maximize output but avoid over-training and injury, it was not for nothing. After fourteen weeks of rigorous work I finally had achieved my goal of overhead squatting my bodyweight! (Actually I beat my bodyweight by 5 kilos!)

What I gained from this challenge, though, was much more fruitful than actually accomplishing it. First to the physical improvements: unfortunately this experiment produced no significant improvements in lower body strength. It did however help with my lower body flexibility. I have always had a hard time with maintaining a proper back angle during lower body movements as well as sitting low enough in my squats. With so many repetitions per week though, I was able to train my body to be more comfortable in a low squat, even with weight overhead. Also, my pressing strength did not necessarily improve much, but having to maintain a rigid position with weight overhead trained my shoulders and trunk to be more flexible as well as stable. What this translated to was greater confidence with weight overhead. When I finally got around to attempting to snatch, I was amazed that not only did I succeed in matching my all-time personal best, but it also felt better than ever before.

More important than the acute physical gains from this contest were the psychological and intellectual improvements that I made. My patience was surely tested with how long this challenge ended up taking. It was also frustrating knowing that three days each week I would be overhead squatting before doing anything else with my workout. This added a good amount of monotony to those fourteen weeks. I also had to work on my skills and knowledge in exercise prescription and programming – determining how to schedule my weeks so as to avoid over-training and injury.

Overhead squatting my bodyweight was an accomplishment that I am proud of, but it does not mean that I have been sitting on my laurels since then. This workout-of-the-month has helped to show me that with a concrete goal in mind, any physical challenge can be overcome. With some thoughtful considerations and a will to work hard, what may initially seem daunting and beyond one’s reach can in fact be grasped.

## Nutrition: To Become Better, Expect Obstacles

By Scott Kolasinski

A year ago I wrote an article about what people do to maintain their long-term weight loss. The National Weight Control Registry (NWCR) is tracking over 5,000 individuals who have lost significant amounts of weight and kept it off for long periods of time.

The NWCR's investigation is constantly ongoing. Thus far, the NWCR has concluded that those who have succeeded in maintaining their weight loss have these things in common:

- maintain a low calorie, low fat diet
- doing high levels of activity
- 78% eat breakfast every day
- 75% weigh themselves at least once a week
- 62% watch less than 10 hours of TV per week
- 90% exercise, on average, about 1 hour per day

There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all diet. The above points can be adapted to fit anybody's lifestyle.



However, although the above are good guidelines of what to do, there is one BIG problem: we still don't wanna!

No matter what the reason behind a person starting a weight loss program, here is a reality check: if you have TRULY changed your lifestyle for the better, then you MUST limit certain aspects of your former lifestyle continuously in order to accomplish your weight loss goals.

I routinely see clients who have had the

same 5-10 lb weight loss goal for approximately 2-5 years. It surprises me. I ask how he/she is doing with that, "Oh, still working on it"

The idea of weight loss is the same as trying to attain any other goal: pursue it with effort until it is accomplished. Sure, there will be obstacles along the way, but if you change your lifestyle, then the weight loss is almost an unintended accomplishment. If you truly want to successfully lose weight by changing your lifestyle, then you will do what is needed to make it happen. If you are just doing a temporary diet change to achieve a certain weight, then there is a greater chance for weight regain, perhaps gaining more weight than you originally started with.

Some people expect a comfortable body transformation or their wish to lose weight is like me wishing to win the lottery that will occur with all of life's troubles accommodating accordingly. Very unlikely.

The following is a list of some obstacles that one may encounter while attempting to lose weight:

- Faster weight loss will occur initially, depending on initial weight, and then 1-2 pounds per week thereafter. Although you want to see the scale go down a certain amount day after day, week after week, the pace will eventually slow down.
- Fat is our body's form of stored energy. You must give your body a reason to tap into its fat stores. Therefore, you will have to experience a feeling of withdrawal or deprivation in order for your body to have a reason to withdraw energy from your fat stores.
- Getting into an "eating bind" such that what and where you are eating is not what you had originally planned.
- There will definitely be days you will not want to exercise or your schedule will not allow you to exercise.
- Eat a lower calorie diet over an extended amount of time, not just Monday through Friday morning and then overeat from Friday's lunch until Sunday night. For many, the weekends ruin the previous five-day's effort – usually in the form of beer, wine and dessert.
- Family members and/or friends that were once supportive of your weight loss efforts become unsupportive prior to you achieving your goal. Unfortunately, it happens, and you may have to tactfully remind these individuals of what they are doing with their comments.
- Most of this country's eating culture does not conform to a healthy low-calorie diet. Do not expect social functions to have healthy low-calorie options available. HOWEVER...
- Eat one meal, not one day, of whatever you want once per week. If you miss doing this once per week, there is a greater likelihood of feeling depressed and binge eating for a number of days.
- You will always have to eat less than before you started your lifestyle change if you want to maintain a leaner body.

One may encounter some or all of the above list, but it is certainly not limited to this list. Many of us fail at how to deal with these obstacles. Failure within the moment is perfectly acceptable, but it is outright quitting that results in never accomplishing your goal. If you feel you have fallen off the wagon for the moment, then get back on and/or ask for help. You are one moment away from continuing to lead a healthy lifestyle.

### **Fight Gone Bad IV: Even Better this Year!**



If "infamous" and "endearing" can describe one event, then that event would be Fight Gone Bad. Those who have participated in FGB (and there are many of you) might know the trepidation associated with this event, but far more importantly is that you've felt the honor of making a difference, the goodwill of doing it for others, and the achievement of finishing such an altruistic yet challenging endeavor.

Join Team FIT for Fight Gone Bad IV on Saturday, September 26th, as we fight to find a cure and to prevent Prostate Cancer. This event also supports the Wounded Warrior Project.

### **What Exactly Do You Do in Fight Gone Bad?**

You exercise. There are 5 stations in this workout. You have 1 minute at each station to perform as many reps as possible. After completing all five stations (1 round), you have a one-minute break before beginning the next round. The complete workout is 3 rounds.

The stations are:

- Wall-ball: 10 ft target. (Reps)
- Sumo deadlift high-pull: (Reps)
- Box Jump: (Reps)
- Push-press: (Reps)
- Row: calories (Calories)

The clock continues between stations. On the call of “rotate!” the participant moves to the next station immediately.

Some of you might have done this workout with your trainer or in a Crossfit class, and others of you might look at this workout and think you wouldn't be able to do it. YOU CAN, and we are here to help you.

### **Free Training Classes for FGB**

This year, in preparation for the event, we are offering a FREE class to anyone and everyone who is interested in training for the event or is, at least, considering participating. In years past we have had all shapes, sizes, ages and abilities. Our kids, our developmentally challenged members, our moms, dads, grandmas and grandpas have all taken part, and YOU CAN too. The class will be designed to coincide with your current training regimen and will focus on the movements, strategies, and conditioning, which will help you to realize that you can do it, and for those that have done it, to do it even better! The coaches will be donating their time and the recommended donation is \$15/class with all proceeds going to Team FIT's fundraising effort for FGB IV. The class will be offered at 10:30 AM on the following Sundays:

**August 16, 23, and 30th**

**September 6th and 20th**

If you plan to attend any or all of these classes or intend to participate in the event, please speak with your trainer immediately so they can tailor your workout program accordingly. These classes are in themselves great workouts!

### **Doing Good Things with Fight Gone Bad**

Fight Gone Bad benefits Athletes for a Cure and the Wounded Warrior Project. For more information on either of these organizations, please check out the following links. Knowing who and what you are 'fighting' for helps keep the motivation high and the need to be involved strong.

<http://www.fgb4.org/athletes-for-a-cure/>

<http://www.fgb4.org/2009/04/24/the-wounded-warrior-project/>

### **For Better Performance: Active Recovery through Stretching**

By Karen Moreno

Although there is little evidence to support the use of flexibility exercises to reduce the effects of DOMS (delayed on set muscle soreness), stretching can promote muscular relaxation and blood flow. The “inverse stretch reflex” is a natural neuromuscular response to gradual, excessive muscular tension. This phenomenon is a protective mechanism that causes the muscle to relax against strong and sustained tension. As muscle tension is reduced, blood vessel dilation is promoted, resulting in greater blood flow, oxygen delivery, and metabolic waste removal. Additionally, deep-breathing techniques incorporated with flexibility exercise may encourage relaxation while facilitating greater oxygen consumption and availability.



For more information regarding FIT:  
Visit - [www.focusedtrainers.com](http://www.focusedtrainers.com)  
Call - 650-947-9831

Another stretching technique that promotes greater blood flow is movement of the antagonized muscle (the muscle group moving in the opposite direction to the working muscle group) to allow gentle passive motion of the agonist muscle group. For example, contracting the hamstrings (muscles in the back of the thigh) by flexing the knee requires the relaxation of the quadriceps muscle (muscle group in the front of the thigh).

There are several flexibility exercise techniques that can be used post workout or as an "active recovery day" to promote joint range of motion, reduced muscular tension, and greater blood flow, such as static stretching, active stretching, and Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation (PNF), to just name a few.

To learn more about these and other flexibility exercise techniques, check the FIT calendar for Flexibility for Fitness class sessions. Or you can get in touch with me at Karen@focusedtrainers.com for more information on this flexibility class.

(Ed note: this flexibility class is also great as an active recovery method for those training for this year's Fight Gone Bad, specifically in this year's free FGB Training Class. See previous article.)

### **FIT Quick Announcements**

• **FIT KICK:** 8/09, 8/16, 8/23 830am-930am

fit@focusedtrainers.com or ask Serena about it at the front desk

• **FIT FLEXIBILITY:** 8/09, 8/16, 8/23 930am-1030am

Contact Karen@focusedtrainers.com for details

• Save the date: Saturday, September 26, 2009 - **FIGHT GONE BAD IV**  
Better than ever!

### **Grilled Steak Salad with Pineapple-Ginger Dressing**

From: Fine Cooking, May 6, 2009

by Maryellen Driscoll - (Serves four)

#### **For the dressing:**

5 Tbs. pineapple juice  
1 Tbs. soy sauce  
1 Tbs. peanut oil  
1 Tbs. Asian sesame oil  
2 tsp. fresh lime juice  
1/2 tsp. honey  
1/2 tsp. finely grated fresh ginger  
1 small clove garlic, minced  
Large pinch crushed red pepper flakes  
1/4 cup small-diced fresh pineapple  
1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh cilantro

#### **For the steak:**

1 lb. flank steak  
1-1/2 Tbs. vegetable oil; more for the grill  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

#### **For the salad:**

6 oz. torn butter lettuce (about 6 lightly packed cups)  
1 medium cucumber, seeded and thinly sliced  
3 radishes, thinly sliced  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1/4 cup thinly sliced scallion (both white and light-green parts)

Heat a gas grill to medium high or light charcoal and let burn until grey in color and grill is at least 350-400 degrees.

#### **Make the dressing:**

In a small bowl, whisk the pineapple juice, soy sauce, peanut oil, sesame oil, lime juice, honey, ginger, garlic, and pepper flakes to blend. Stir in the pineapple and cilantro.

#### **Cook the steak:**

Rub the steak with the oil and season with 1 tsp. each salt and pepper. Clean and oil the grill grates. Grill the steak, covered, until it has nice grill marks on one side, 5 to 6 minutes. Flip and reduce the heat to medium. Cook, covered, until done to your liking, an additional 4 to 5 minutes for medium rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes.

Assemble the salad:

In a large bowl, toss the lettuce, cucumber, and radishes with about half of the dressing. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide among 4 large plates.

Thinly slice the steak across the grain and drape it over the greens. Drizzle some of the remaining dressing over the beef, sprinkle with the scallions, and serve.

Enjoy!