DISCLAIMER

You must get your physician’s approval before beginning this exercise program. These recommendations are not medical guidelines but are for educational purposes only. You must consult your physician prior to starting this program or if you have any medical condition or injury that contraindicates physical activity. This program is designed for healthy individuals 18 years and older only.

See your physician before starting any exercise or nutrition program. If you are taking any medications, you must talk to your physician before starting any exercise program, including *Strength Shortcuts*. If you experience any lightheadedness, dizziness, or shortness of breath while exercising, stop the movement and consult a physician.

It is strongly recommended that have a complete physical examination if you are sedentary, if you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, if you are overweight, or if you are over 30 years old. Please discuss all nutritional changes with your physician or a registered dietician. If your physician recommends that you not use the *Strength Shortcuts* program, please follow your Doctor’s orders.

All forms of exercise pose some inherent risks. The editors and publishers advise readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the exercises in this workout, be sure that your equipment is well maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training and fitness. The exercises and dietary programs in this program are not intended as a substitute for any exercise routine or treatment or dietary regimen that may have been prescribed by your physician.

Don’t lift heavy weights if you are alone, inexperienced, injured, or fatigued. Don’t perform any exercise without proper instruction. Always perform a warm-up prior to all forms of training.
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Acknowledgments

Many thanks to God who’s shown me this path I’ve taken over the last 3 years to be able to rebuild my broken body and spirit, from nutrition, to movement restoration, to strength training, to how and what I think.

Also, where would I be without my ever-patient wife, Courtney? Thank you, Beautiful.

Many thanks to my friends and fellow professionals who have influenced me and acted as a sounding board for my training: Tim Anderson, Pavel, and Alfonso Duran.

Finally, to my son Michael, who was and still is the inspiration for the physical feats, no matter how small, I continue to accomplish. I want to be the best Dad in the world.

Thank you all.
My son was born in April of 2011.

On the surface, not really a big deal, kids are born every day.

But His birth was a big deal to me on many different levels: I was one of those older first time dads - 38. I had spent the better part of the previous decade trying to rehab pretty severe injuries - damaged cartilage in both hips, damaged knee cartilage, and a lower back injury, all of which limited my mobility and ability to do what I wanted to do. Not only that, I had to stop being stupid and find a way to train that combated the fatigue of raising a newborn, gave me energy, helped instead of hindered my health, and allowed me from to feel like I was actually in my 30s again instead of my 60s.

To accomplish my goals - primarily to be able to play with my son anytime, anywhere, any way, and not be that “old guy,” sitting on the sidelines robbing my son of his childhood - I turned my life upside down. I emptied my cup of knowledge that held everything I knew and reexamined every aspect of my life.

I’ve written in detail in other books about other aspects of how I did this on the nutrition end (The Permanent Weight Loss Solution) and rehab (Original Strength) but I haven't until now written about how I structured the majority of my traditional strength training.
This training is what allowed me to do what you see above - a Pistol on each leg with a pair of 16kgs, held Bottom’s Up. Admittedly, this isn’t that impressive of a feat for a 200-pound man. But it was a milestone for me after having the connective tissue injuries in both hips and my right knee, along with a pretty severe lower back injury. I further went on to do a Pistol on each leg with a pair of 24kg kettlebells held in the rack. (Sorry, I don’t have pictures of that.)

Eventually I went on to do One Arm One Leg Push Ups and Muscle Ups. Original Strength gave me the foundation to train for these baseline feats of strength, and it was the structure of the OS sessions combined with my traditional strength training sessions that enabled me to actually accomplish these things.

And that’s what this book is about - **Structure**.

And the **freedom** that comes from it.

That sounds like an oxymoron – freedom as the result of structure. However, there’s something funny about structure: It provides boundaries. And those of us like myself who have a hard time with authority, naturally bristle at words, like *structure* and *boundaries*. But as the father of a toddler, I recognize that boundaries are important. Knowing them provides freedom – both of what not to do and what to do, and even what’s possible. It’s only by knowing where the edge of the cliff is that you can know for certain how to avoid making a potentially fatal mistake.

By enforcing a rigid structure, like the one you’re about to learn, you will free yourself from the environmental limitations of the current strength training paradigm and start seeing progress like you may have never have seen.

I call this “freedom in structure” *Strength Shortcuts* because when the structure is
applied, it was like taking a strength-getting shortcut: I was able to literally regain most of the strength I’d lost over the previous decade, and in addition, gain strength I’d never had before (like those pistols). And surprisingly, it took less time, and much less effort than I’d ever put into any other strength gains I’d made in my life. In fact, I found myself making gains at close to 40 that I made as an 18-22 year old in my “testosterone prime.”

However, unlike an 18-22 year old gym rat, gone was the huffing, puffing, straining and psyching up. Instead, it was a relatively systematic program that delivered easy results, with way less effort than I was accustomed to putting forth.

Speaking of “easy” - this may sound somewhat like Pavel and Dan John’s Easy Strength. I will tell you that Pavel has had a strong influence on my strength training philosophy over the past decade or so. They have helped me refine and further understand what my weightlifting coach, Alfonso Duran, taught me as a young weightlifter and strength coach. So when reading this book you may see the influence of Pavel and Dan’s “easy” work - yet it is also the culmination and synthesis of the re-examination of everything I learned from Alfonso and the great Russian coaches and scientists like Vorobyev, Medvedyev, and Zatsiorsky. It’s taking what I learned from all these people and applying it to a very rigid set of personal boundaries, put in place for my own protection, and then having something surprisingly amazing spring up from the process.

What is that “something surprisingly amazing”?

It was simply the revelation that limiting myself to performing very short, high frequency, daily or near daily multiple workouts – or training sessions as I prefer to call them – is arguably the fastest, easiest, methodology I’m aware of for seeing rapid increases in strength.

Think of Grease the Groove and Easy Strength taken one step further.

Interestingly enough, it’s not just for seeing rapid increases in strength, but any outcome you care to train for - conditioning, hypertrophy, fat loss.

Multiple training daily training sessions and high frequency training is nothing new - elite athletes have been practicing it for decades. What is “new,” is the revelation that these methods are for “average” people like you and me when we implement them in extremely short training sessions.

And this is the essence of Strength Shortcuts:

It is the “how to” for implementing short, multiple daily or near daily training
sessions without either the commitment of a professional athlete or the injuries from overtraining in order to achieve your physical goals at a faster than normal rate.

For me, the *Strength Shortcuts* were an exciting fresh new lease in my strength training life. The results they produced renewed my motivation to train, set new goals, and start getting over the fear that comes from having a broken-down body. In short, these, combined with OS, were a lifesaver.

My hope is that you'll see them and experience them in the same way I have.

###
I.

A Strong Foundation

It is strange to start a book by referencing another book, yet I cannot in good conscience tell you definitively that the information you’re about to read will work for you without Original Strength. In theory, yes, it will. Elite athletes from around the globe have proven it for decades.

However, let’s be brutally honest with ourselves, you and I are not elite athletes.

If we are competing in some sport or activity, there’s a 99% chance it’s not on an elite level. And that means most of what we do training-wise does not, cannot, combat all of the negative effects of what we’re doing when we’re not training, or, if you prefer, working out.

Therefore, the information in this book has the potential to work without what I’m about to share with you, but I cannot promise you it will definitively work without what you’re about to learn about your body in this chapter.

How do I know with certainty?

Because both my clients and I have used the background principles in this chapter as the foundation for what’s in the rest of this book. Everything I’m presenting is empirical - it’s based on observation and repeatable experimentation. So dismiss this chapter at your own peril.

What Is Your Strength Foundation?

I was recently scraping ice off my gently sloping driveway with a garden instead of snow shovel when I stepped on some melting ice. I sensed it coming, but before I could do anything about it, my left hand was off my shovel breaking my fall as I landed on my right buttcheek (yes, that’s the very scientific and technical term). Most people are injured in these types of falls, some breaking bones, or smacking their head on the pavement. As I paused for a moment after I was on the ground, I looked at my body position: My legs were off the ground, held out in front of me, and my head and chin were tucked into my body. My body had intuitively and automatically shortened and tightened itself not only to prepare for the impact, but to protect my head and my brain.

Amazing.
My position looked something like the position to the right. (Nowhere near as elegant I'm sure.)

This type of “automatic strength” is missing in most people today. It’s called reflexive strength and as demonstrated by the story of my fall, it’s your body’s ability to subconsciously and automatically anticipate movement - contracting the right muscles in the right sequences at the right time, with the right force in order to move the joints involved in whatever movement it is you’re doing.

*How do I know it’s missing?*

Because people are not doing what they were created to do, what they were preparing to do from the day they left the womb until approximately age three - move and take on the world around them.

Instead they sit. A lot.

In chairs. In seats.

And as a result they are still. They don’t move. And they “shrivel” up.

*How do you know sitting is bad you ask?*

Great question.

Two ways, actually.

One is deductive reasoning, that is, where we look at a generalities and use logic to derive specific conclusions.

The other is science.

Let me quickly explain the first, and the provide you with the evidence for the second.

Being in the fitness industry for the last 20 years, I’ve seen many fads and
One of them is the idea of corrective exercise. This has interested me for the past 15 years, primarily because my wife is a Doctor of Physical Therapy. Corrective exercise, can be thought of as generalized physical therapy. I know many will cringe at that definition, but it seems to fit. I’ve been involved with various certifications and “movement systems” over the past decade-and-a-half that seek to correct “movement dysfunctions” and muscular compensations, in order to “restore function” and optimize performance. (And by “involved” I mean I’ve spent tens of thousands of hours using these systems on myself and my clients and spent tens of thousands of dollars to learn and “master” the nuances of these systems.)

While these systems may work for some in the short-term, as they did for me, in the long term they fail because they overlook (or are unaware) of the root cause of the issues they are seeking to address or correct. There’s always one more thing to correct; one more issue that pops up, and always where you least expect it. It’s almost like playing “Whack-a-Mole.”

The unfortunate side of this corrective exercise trend is it leads to and breeds complication, complexity, and confusion.

Here’s a simple case in point:

**The Foam Roller.**

The foam roller is used to increase “tissue quality” as part of a warm up (or “movement prep” as it is now fondly called). This means that the goal is to get out tight spots (including trigger points) and restore the length-tension relationships between the muscles on the opposite side of the joints. Restoring this proper relationship, in theory, allows the joints to work properly, and also the muscles to work the way they’re designed, reducing injury potential and improving performance.

And this works for many, many people... In the
short term: Meaning you foam roller-ed your quads and your hips and increased your squat depth and alleviated your knee pain, but you had to do it the next time you squatted, and the next time, and the next time, and the next...

(I know how this feels - I spent from January 2002 through December 2005 on a foam roller. Actually, the foam roller really didn’t work, so I used a PVC pipe.)

The question no one is asking (or not asking enough) is “Why?”

Why are your muscles tight?

Why is your length-tension relationship screwed up?

And so on...

The fact of the matter is foam rolling, stretching (yes, stretching) and other forms of corrective exercise (including joint mobility work) are only addressing the symptoms of the root cause, like I mentioned earlier, and not that cause itself.

And that root cause is a lack of reflexive strength (also called reflexive stability).

Back to the whole “it’s missing” part of reflexive strength.

From about the fifth month you’re in your mother’s womb until approximately age three, your body develops through the acquisition of a series of reflexes. In fact, all your movements are built upon these reflexes. (Recall that when you go to the doctor for physicals he often checks your reflexes.) And these reflexes are what make you strong and help you move without thinking about it. Imagine how difficult life would be if you had to actually tell your arm - joint-by-joint, muscle-by-muscle - how to move in order to get the ketchup out of the fridge. You could never get anything done! Instead you just think to yourself, “Hey, I need some ketchup for my hot dog” and you open the fridge, grab the ketchup, close the fridge door and proceed to squirt just the right amount on your hot dog. Same thing happens with walking, running, raking the leaves, and even going to the bathroom. They’re all to a certain degree, reflexive - automatic. (Yes, I’m fully aware that you can and should be able to control your bladder and bowels. The point is, you don’t have to tell yourself to go or to stop - even though you have the ability to do so.)

When you sit in a chair, you are essentially reverting back to a womb-like state, where the body is supported and does not have to use any sort of muscular control to support itself. It does not have to hold itself upright, and therefore, your reflexes, upon which all your movement patterns are based, start to, for lack of a better word, become rusty.
They’re still intact, but they become virtually dormant.

And that’s why we see all sorts of movement dysfunctions and compensations. Your reflexes aren’t working correctly and so your movement patterns are off. You can attempt to address the pieces of the movement patterns and try to cobble them back together with stretching, the foam roller, and joint mobility drills, or you can address what holds your movement patterns together - what developed them in the first place - your reflexive strength.

*How do you regain your reflexive strength (reflexive stability)?*

Well at the risk of sounding like a commercial, that’s the topic of whole different book. Conveniently, my good friend Tim Anderson and I have written that book. It’s called *Original Strength* and you should get it. It’ll set you back a whole $10 on amazon and it’ll be the best investment you’ve ever made in yourself.

*How do I know?*

Because using what we present in *Original Strength* I have fully rehabbed a major lower back injury, two hips with cartilage damage, and a knee with cartilage damage, when 10 years of corrective exercise and physical therapy failed.

*I am not unique.*

We have plenty of people who are experiencing similar, near miraculous results, all from regaining their Original Strength - their reflexive strength and stability - with the five simple exercises we outline in that book.

Without your reflexive strength, you’ll continue in your frustration to fix this, stretch that, and correct the next thing.

Worse yet, there’s a pretty good chance that you’ll spend the lion’s share of your time, like I did, working on that nonsense, instead of doing what it is you really want to be doing - getting stronger in your chosen lifts and exercises.

Finally, if that doesn’t sound convincing enough for you, apart from what sitting does to your reflexive strength, it also kills you faster.

Not to sound overly dramatic, but it’s that serious.

According to an Australian study presented in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, (2012;172(6):494-500) showed that in populations 45 and up, prolonged sitting,
more than 11 hours a day were 40% more likely to die from any cause. Furthermore, they also found that odds of dying were 15% higher for those who sit between eight and eleven hours a day compared to those who sit four hours a day or less.

So as you can see, sitting is bad for you on all levels. It reduces your ability to move and reduces your immune function (What else could it be?) opening your body up to all kinds of disease.

The bottom line here is this: You need to make sure your strength foundation is intact before you move on to these shortcuts. If you don’t, one or more of these shortcuts may take you to a destination you don’t want to go to. Make sure you grab a copy of Original Strength because that will show you the fastest, easiest way to recover your reflexive strength.

###
II.

The Universal Strength Maxim

“Success leaves clues.” - Tony Robbins

As trite as that saying sounds, it really is true.

Too many people are trying to reinvent the wheel when it comes to strength training and human performance in general. Most, if not all we need to know has been done or observed and written about in obscurity.

For example: There are really only three ways to overload the body to produce adaptation -

1. Intensity (measured by a percentage of a maximum),
2. Volume (total work performed) and
3. Density (total work performed per given unit of time).

And pretty much every strength training system worth its salt is based on one or two of these, if not all three.

Where progress is seemingly made is how people interpret and implement those three methods of overload.

This, however, is not another book about how to use those methods of overload. Rather, it’s a book about a different look at how to make those methods, those constraints work for you.

Professor Vladimir Zatsiorsky, chief biomechanicist for all Soviet sports teams from 1980-1988, states in his book, *Science And Practice of Strength Training*, that the secret to gaining strength is the following:

“*Train as often as possible, as heavy as possible, as fresh as possible.*”

This then is the key to great strength.

Really, it’s the key to achieving anything physically great.
Consider the following as a form of proof to this statement:

Bulgaria, a tiny country with a population a fraction of the size of the mighty Soviet Union, came out of nowhere in the late 1970s to challenge the Soviet Sports Machine in arguably one of the ultimate displays of human strength - the sport of Olympic Weightlifting.

Their training was completely different than how traditional weightlifting literature suggested to train. Known for their hallmark near Herculean attempts during every practice session, one of the things most people neglect is the Bulgarians focused on staying fresh and training often.

Here’s what a typical training day looked like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-930am</td>
<td>Front Squat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>930-10am</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11am</td>
<td>Snatch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-1130am</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1130-1230pm</td>
<td>Clean and Jerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1230-1pm</td>
<td>Front Squat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>430-530pm</td>
<td>Clean and Jerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>530-6pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7pm</td>
<td>Snatch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-730pm</td>
<td>Front Squat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>730-8pm</td>
<td>Pulls</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Yes, there’s A LOT of work going on there, but what stood in sharp contrast to the weightlifting practices of the day, which relied on typically longer training sessions - up to two-in-a-half hours in duration, was their shorter duration session. The theory behind the Bulgarian’s training system was pretty simple: Anabolic hormones (testosterone) are depleted after approximately 45 minutes of training, depending on effort levels. Therefore, in order to manage and optimize testosterone levels, and still do lots of work, they trained with multiple times a day.

Now let me be clear: I am in no way suggesting that you start training multiple 30-60 minute sessions per day.

None of us have time for to do this, and very few of us have that desire.

But we can use their training of an example of how to structure our strength training program for maximum benefits.
Remember one of the keys of getting really strong is to remain fresh and to train frequently. One of the best ways to do this is to remember that it’s hard to “burn out” or reach high levels of fatigue when you train for short durations, unless of course you’re putting yourself into a testing situation - like a 5 or 10-minute snatch test.

Therefore, the “Shortcuts To Strength” is understanding how to implement the ideas in that quote by Prof. Zatsiorsky.

**The Three Strength Shortcuts:**

1. Train as heavy as possible.
2. Train as often as possible.
3. Train as fresh as possible.

Let’s take a closer look at each one of these.

###
III.

Shortcut 1: FORCE

“Train As Heavy As Possible…”

How heavy is “as heavy as possible?”

According to Prof. Zatsiorsky, the average percentage of a one-rep max the average Soviet weightlifter on the Olympic teams lifted between 1980-1988 was 75% +/- 2%. So a range between 73-77% of their one rep maxes.

That doesn’t seem very heavy, does it?

And yet, that average load produced multiple world champions, and world and Olympic champions.

There’s an inverse relationship between load and frequency: The higher the load, the less frequent you’re ability to train. Why? Because high frequency heavy loading over-stresses the Central Nervous System.

What’s interesting to note is the Soviet weightlifting teams only trained at or above 90% of their 1RM a whopping 7% of the time. (Yes, that’s a little bit of sarcasm.)

Furthermore, the great multi-time world and Olympic weightlifting champion and multiple world record holder, Vasily Aleexev, stated that his average workload was only 70%. Many consider him the greatest superheavyweight Olympic Weightlifter of all time.

Finally, the great Russian powerlifting coach, and producer of multiple world powerlifting champions, Boris Sheiko, also uses an average load of 70% of 1RM.

It’s important to remember that for these guys, weightlifting was their job. They were essentially professional athletes. And that meant they trained more
frequently and with higher workloads than you and I are used to.

This also means that if in the midst of all their training, they “averaged” 75% of their 1RM, there just might be something there for us to look at too.

The point is clear:

We don’t need to lift near maximum to get really, really strong.

What about others who say you need to lift heavier to get strong and make progress?

There are other coaches who espouse heavier training, in the ranges of 85-100%. Personally, I think you have to look at their records and accomplishments. In a period when just about every international strength and power athlete was on performance-enhancing drugs, the Soviets dominated the strength and power sports. To discount the Soviets’ conclusions, in my opinion, would be foolishness.

For example, almost 20 years ago, my weightlifting coach, Alfonso Duran, told me that for a season the Finnish Weightlifting Team tried using an average of 80% and failed miserably. Why? He said it was just too much load.

Can you train with an average of 80%? Sure. You can do anything you want. But I’ve spent 20+ years trying to do many things “my way,” I’m done with that. I wasted most of my 30s trying to rehab many injuries. Now, in my 40s, I’ve reclaimed much of the strength (not all - still working on that) I had in my 20s and plan on not only gaining it all back, but also exceeding it. (In many aspects, I have already exceeded it: One Arm One Leg Push Ups, Muscle Ups, Pistols, Duck Walks, to name a few exercises I can do now that I couldn’t then.)

So, from my experience, both personally and professionally “as heavy as possible” means somewhere between 50-90% of your 1RM, or any RM for that matter, regardless of the exercise, with the majority of your training time spent in the 60-80% range. What’s the best way to do that?

The “Dynamic Variable Overload” System (DVO)

Dynamic Variable Overload is a system of weight training I learned almost 20 years ago from my weightlifting coach, Alfonso Duran. He developed it for “powerbuilding” - getting strong and big. It is a form of training where your change the load (weight, or leverage if you’re using bodyweight only) you’re using by changing the sets and reps you use from workout to workout for the purpose of
producing faster gains. This produces faster gains because the body does not accommodate to the stimulus. You simply change the weight (load) by changing 1) the exercise and 2) the sets and reps. DVO is arguably one of the best systems I’ve ever used to pack on mounds of muscle and strength at the same time. It was originally written as a “split” system - three days a week, resting every other day. Before I show you how I modified it for strength and incorporated it into a total body program, let me show you an example of what it looks like:

Here’s a standard chest workout:

- A. Bench Press 6x6
- B. Incline Bench Press 4x8
- C. Flat Dumbbell Fly’s 3x10

The next chest workout may look something like this:

- A. Bench Press 4x8
- B. Incline Bench Press 4x10
- C. Flat Dumbbell Fly’s 3-4x12

So as you can see, you’re rotating rep ranges each training session, constantly changing the demand on the nervous system. By changing the reps, you’re changing the loads used, changing the demands on the nervous system (less or more), training different muscle fibers, different metabolic pathways, and building a more complete body, and more importantly, allowing your body to stay as fresh as possible. It’s similar to a “Heavy - Medium - Light” system.

I modified it when I was coaching athletes so it could be used multiple times per week, without burning the athlete out.

Here’s an example of how I trained an athlete for during an off-season strength cycle:

- Monday: Squat 3x3
- Wednesday: Lunges 4x12
- Friday: Front Squat 4x6

And yeah, I know those are different rep ranges then we talked about before - I’ll get to those in a minute.
This worked like a champ every time. You can see that there’s a “Heavy - Light - Medium” thing going on there. Squats are heavy and demanding on the nervous system. Lunges are lighter and more demanding on the muscles than the squats. And the front squats are a combination of the two. And I was also focusing on different muscle fibers and energy systems too.

And from there, I tested out different variations of the same exercise. Let’s use one of my favorites - Parallel Dips. (One of the all-time best upper body strength and muscle builders - like Squats for the upper body.)

I like to cycle through these on different days of the week, usually three times in 7 days if the volume is low, or twice in 7 days (or once every 5 days) if the volume is higher.

1. Ring Dips, hollow position - higher reps, higher volume (3-4x10+)
2. Ring Dips, weighted - low reps, low volume (3-5x3-5)
3. Ring Dips, L-Sit - medium reps, medium volume (3-6x5-6)

(It doesn’t have to be Ring Dips - I started this out on regular parallel bars and then increased the complexity - which is another great benefit about this particular system.)

This is arguably one of the best ways I’ve found to rapidly increase my strength - especially in the bodyweight exercises.

Now let’s take a look at the different loading parameters you can use with DVO based on your goals.

I like to approach this from the following total volume of work standpoint:

How many reps do I (you) need to do based upon my (your) goal per exercise, per training session?

And then break it down from there...

**Strength:** 6-20 reps. 1-5 reps per set.

• Set/rep combos: 3x3, 2x3, 3x2, 2x5, 3x5, 5x3, 10x1, 5x2, etc.

**Strength and Muscle Mass:** 20-40 reps. 3-8 reps per set.

• Set/rep combos: 7x3, 8x4, 4x6, 4x8, 5x5, 6x4, 10x4, 6x6, 4x5, 5x4
Muscle Mass: 25-60 reps. 6-15 reps per set.

- Set/rep combos: 4x6, 4x8, 5x10, 3x15, 4x12, 5x8, 2x12, 3x10, etc.

Conditioning / Endurance: 50-100 reps. 10-30 reps per set.

- Set/rep combos: 2x25, 5x10, 10x10, 5x20, 4x25, 3x30, etc.

Fat Loss: Depends. Many different factors, many different combinations, including volume/density manipulations.

Of course, these are just “general guidelines” that are subject to change, based upon exercise selection, training age, and environmental factors. They are however a darn good start.

What are some of those factors?

Four Environmental And Training Factors That Determine Work Capability / Necessity

There are four environmental factors that you need to be aware of that determine how much work you can/should do and can probably recover from:

1. Training Implements
2. Training Age
3. Chronological Age
4. Exercise Novelty

Let’s take a closer look at each one.

1. Training Implements: Barbell, kettlebell, bodyweight are the three main ones my clients and I use.

   Barbell. I’ve found that in general, and especially as our chronological and training ages increase, we are closer to the low end of each of these rep ranges. So for strength with a barbell, 20 reps is on the [very] high-end, especially in the slow grinding lifts, like the deadlift. I’ve found that the 6-12 range is about all that I need. And in many cases, it’s all that I can tolerate.

   Kettlebell. Kettlebells are some of the most forgiving tools I’ve ever used, which probably explains why I like them so much. With a single bell, you can push the higher end of each of those ranges. With a pair of bells, you end up right in the middle. (Some people can hit that high end of the ranges.)
Bodyweight. I like bodyweight training. I like to work and bodyweight training seems to be the most forgiving and easiest to recover from. (More on that in upcoming sections.) So I personally can push the high end of each of those ranges if I wanted to and would experience no negative effects. (Not so with a barbell.)

2. Training Age

There’s how old you are, and then how long you’ve been training. The longer you’ve been training, the less exposure to load you need to make gains. Why? Because your neural pathways for particular exercises are much stronger than those who haven’t been training, so they need less stimulation. Therefore, the longer you’ve been training, the more you should stay on the lower volume end of each one of those ranges. If you haven’t been training very long, then more often than not, you can handle higher volumes and so you can stay on the upper end of those volume ranges.

3. Chronological Age

A 16-year old in the throes of puberty is going to be able to handle way more volume than a 45-year old man who is 30 pounds overweight. This is for a variety of factors - environmental stress, life responsibilities, etc. But primarily it’s just a hormone thing. A 16-year old has more testosterone and gets more sleep and therefore more recovery than your average 45-year old.

4. Exercise Novelty

Let’s face it, there’s a learning curve with a new exercise. So it takes more reps to get a change out of the body. So, with new exercises, or exercises you haven’t done for years, you can use the higher end of the volume ranges. For exercises you’re used to performing, stay on the lower end. There’s only so much you need to do until the rest become not only an extraneous waste of time, but actually hinder your recuperative abilities.

Yeah, I don’t know if it’s photoshopped either. Awesome if not.
These beg the question: *How do you know how these factors will affect you?*

**Simple:** Keep a training log, record everything you do, and then analyze your progress. This is the really the Art and Science of Autoregulation, which we’ll discuss in detail in Chapter V.

First, let’s dig deeper into an area of strength training you may already have some familiarity with...
IV.

Shortcut 2: FREQUENCY

“... As Often As Possible...”

Frequency is an often overlooked method for increasing physical prowess, regardless of the activity. In fact, it’s a neurological certainty that the only way to get really good at something, regardless of what that something is, is to practice it – a lot.

Recall that strength is a skill. The more you can practice it, while respecting the other two shortcuts that make up the Universal Strength Maxim, the stronger you will get, and the faster you will get strong. Pavel really popularized training frequency, or rather, increased training frequency, as a means to hone the skill of strength in his two landmark books, *Power To The People* and *The Naked Warrior*. However, athletes around the world have been using high training frequencies, especially multiple daily training sessions, for decades.

Why?

For three reasons:

1. It allows you to practice the mechanics of your sport / activity / event more frequently.

More frequent practice increases the number, strength, and efficiency of the neural pathways in your body. In layman’s terms, it makes what you are doing easier because the mechanics become virtually subconscious and almost automatic and it takes less energy, so you can perform it longer than you could as a beginner.

2. It allows you to distribute fatigue better.

Remember when you had to write long essays in college or even high school and your hand cramped? Why’d it do that? Because it wasn’t used to writing that much. If you’ll recall, your handwriting broke down and your concentration most likely waned because of the hand cramp. So frequent, multiple practices get rid of psychological and other physical “hand cramps.” If fatigue rarely accumulates, technique remains intact. And in the context of strength training, we know that technique contributes to strength - whether it be achieving a
new 1RM, doing specialized conditioning like a 5 or 10-minute snatch test, or even being able to do more and more work necessary for a fat loss program.

3. Superior hormonal [and metabolic] effects.

In studies done with Olympic weightlifters, researchers found that multiple daily training sessions produced increased testosterone production and higher elevated testosterone level in the blood stream than traditional single daily training sessions. Therefore we can surmise that since testosterone is one of the primary mechanisms for muscle growth and strength gains, training in such a way to naturally elevate it would be a great idea if we were interested in actually gaining strength and/or muscle.

Likewise, I read years ago that about a study that measured two groups performing 60 minutes of cardiovascular exercise a day. Group 1 did it in one 60-minute bout. Group 2 split up their training into two 30-minute training sessions. It turns out Group 2 burned more calories throughout the day than Group 1. I can’t find the study right now, but it makes sense. It’s easier to maintain consistent power output over a shorter exercise duration. Power output (work) drops as fatigue (or boredom or distraction) sets in.

So multiple daily training sessions looks like it’s quite probably “the way” to go for anyone seriously interested in achieving peak levels of strength and conditioning.

The question is, how does Joe or Jane Average do this and still have a life?

After all, Joe’s not training to be a Bulgarian weightlifter and Jane is most likely not a contracted bikini model for Sports Illustrated. Both just want a little more than they currently have without either breaking the bank or enslaving themselves or neglecting their families in the process.

The answer is pretty simple really...

Micro Sessions

Micro Sessions are short - extremely short training sessions done multiple times per day. Usually these are 5 to 15 minutes in duration.

And any “traditional” general fitness outcome can be trained and more importantly, achieved, using these types of sessions: Strength, muscle gain, fat loss, and conditioning.

It’s almost effortless to do a quick 5 to 10 minute workout in the comfort of your
own home just before you get in the shower and head to work. And the same holds true for when you get home from work: A short 5 to 15 (even as long as 20 minutes really) is a perfect transition from work to home - scraping off the stress of the day before you interact with your family.

And, you could even do these at lunch without changing your clothes. Simply hang your suit jacket on the back of your chair, and knock off 10-20 pull ups in 5 minutes and you’re making progress. Toss your suit jacket back on and head out to lunch with the crew.

I know what you might be thinking right now: How in the world can you get a decent workout done in as little as 5 minutes?

Let me show you.

Let’s assume you are training for pure strength. A standard accepted loading parameter is 2-5 sets of 1-5 reps with 3-5 minutes of rest between sets, depending on that load and a range of 6-20 reps of total volume per exercise. So you simply start your timer and perform one set of 5 with around 70% of your max. Rest 3-4 minutes and do another set of 5. Done. Five minutes. Simple.

**The Biggest Advantage of Micro Sessions...**

... Is **FOCUS**.

I’ve found over the years as life becomes more complicated with more responsibilities, that I have a hard time focusing during traditional training sessions - the ones that contain three to five exercises and are 45 to 60 minutes long. I find my mind wandering to my ever-growing, never-ending “to do” list. Sure, I may need to do a better job of disciplining my mind, but let’s face it, at the end of the day, providing for your family and keeping your business steady is more important than achieving that half bodyweight press with one arm. So by the third, fourth, and definitely the fifth exercises, my attention is waning and my effort level has decreased.

Not so with Micros. It’s very easy for me to focus on one exercise for 5, 10, or 15 minutes. And on the off chance I superset a pair of exercises like chins and dips, it’s still easy to maintain my focus for such a short duration. In fact, I’ve found I don’t need to “spare” any mental energy, or reserve it for later in the session.
Therefore, I can really concentrate on each and every rep, getting more out of each of these little sessions than if all my exercises were in one session. This means I make faster progress. You will too.

**How are Micro-Sessions different from Grease the Groove?**

With GTG, you focus on one particular exercise and use multiple sessions throughout the day. With Micros, you can do an entire workout in short multiple sessions over the course of a day, multiple times per week, without the restrictive loading of GTG. With Micros we can train multiple exercises, multiple times per week, even for multiple qualities, because we are also combining Shortcut #1 with Shortcut #3. (We’ll cover the mechanics of making that happen shortly.) The training sessions just aren’t long enough to induce the larger amounts of fatigue that normal training sessions incur. Yet they’re focused enough to stimulate the body to change.

However, this begs a fairly obvious question:

> Why would you want to perform your entire workout spaced over the course of a day instead of all at once?

Because, as we discussed earlier, you end up burning more calories throughout the day, and you end up with a stronger hormonal profile and an increased metabolic rate. That’s the subject of the Third Shortcut and the next chapter.

Here’s an example of a two micro-session plan for the average Joe training for strength using kettlebells and bodyweight:

**Monday**
- AM: Turkish Get Ups, 5 minutes. 3-5 reps per side. Moderate KB.
- PM: Swings, 10 minutes. 10x10. 100 reps total. Heavy KB.

**Tuesday**
- AM: Ring Dips, 5 minutes, 2x5. 10 reps total. Loaded.
- PM: Superset: Pull Ups and Pistols. 15 minutes. Loaded. 10-15 reps each exercise total.

**Wednesday**
- OFF

**Thursday**
- AM: Single KB Clean + Press, 10 minutes. 3x5,5. Moderate KB.
- PM: 1H Swings or Snatches. 10 minutes. 100 reps. Moderate KB.
**Friday**

AM: Handstand Push Ups, 5 minutes. 2x5. 10 reps total.
PM: Pistols and Pull Ups, 15 minutes. Unloaded. 20 reps each.

**Saturday, Sunday**

OFF

As you can see, this is a very manageable schedule, even for the busiest of individuals.

What about other forms of training such as kettlebell only or barbell? We’ll get to those in depth in Chapter VI.

In the meantime, wrap your head around the fact that shorter, more frequent training sessions are the way to go. It frees up your time, gives you more energy, and produces faster results. Tens of thousands of athletes over the past three decades can’t be wrong.

**A Constant State of Readiness**

I grew up an Air Force brat on the front lines of the Cold War, in the early 80s when the threat of a nuclear war between the US and the Soviet Union was very real. My dad kept chemical warfare gear in the trunk of his car and at least once a month, there was an “exercise” - a simulated war footing – where, for all intents and purposes, we were at war or about to go to war. My dad could be called at any time during the day or night, and often worked different shifts. He, and the entire air force wing, had to be ready at any time, at a moment’s notice.

There’s something to be said for living that way - ready to go at a moment’s notice. The funny thing is we can pretty much all agree that this is the ideal, that ultimately, we should be able to just go train without warming up or doing “movement prep.” The reality is for most of us, that’s just an ideal, an elusive idea, hiding in the distance, just over the horizon - nothing close to reality.

That’s because sitting tightens and stiffens you up, and like we learned at the beginning of the book, when you do too much of it, kills you sooner.

The fact is, we were designed to move - a lot. So one of the things you’ll find when you use the Strength Shortcuts is that your need to warm up or do movement prep significantly diminishes. (Especially when you’re using Original Strength.) Eventually, you, like me, can just walk up to your pull up bar, hang a kettlebell around your waist, and knock off a set. Movement follows the “use it or lose it” rule - neuronal pruning. So the less you move, the less you can move.
Fortunately, the opposite is also true: The more you move, the more you *can* move. So, eventually, through continual Micro Sessions, you will eventually eliminate the need for many, if not all your warm up exercises, leaving you in a constant state of readiness, able to perform on command, which is especially helpful in emergencies. Like my dad and the US military, you will be ready to go at a moment’s notice.

###
V.

Shortcut 3: FRESHNESS

“...As Fresh As Possible.”

What exactly does “as fresh as possible” mean and, more importantly, how would you measure it?

Being “as fresh as possible” means that you have minimal levels of fatigue in your body and what levels you do have, don’t interfere with your training.

I’ve been saying this for so long, but it still bears repeating since so many people either have never heard it or have forgotten it:

Remember, it’s not how much work you can do - it’s how much you can recover from.

No recovery = no progress and therefore no [positive] visible results.

To that end, there are three mechanisms we use in the context of our Micro Sessions to stay as fresh as possible. They have served me incredibly well over the last two-and-a-half years. The best part is they are intuitive and easy to implement into any training program, regardless of whether you use them with Micros or not.

Three Advanced “Mechanisms” For “Fresh” Training

1. Autoregulation: Using The RPE Scale For Managing Your Self And Your Training

Autoregulation is a method of training based on the feedback your body gives you before and during training. It’s a simple way to manage your training based upon your effort levels. And the best way to manage that is through using the RPE scale.

The RPE scale is a scale where you use determine your own effort levels and give them a numerical value (RPE = Rate of Perceived Exertion). Using a scale of 1 to 10 is the easiest, where 1 is drop dead easy, lying on the couch eating
chips and watching Letterman and 10 is an all out full on max effort attempt. It also fits nicely when we are using RM percentages.

Here’s how I use it in my own training:

I simply try to match the number on the paper - the percentage - with my RPE.

I use it to try to gauge my how accurate my percentages are for that particular day. For example, if I’m lifting something that’s 70% of my max, I want my RPE to be a 7 or lower. Why? Because if it’s lower than a 7 then there’s a very good chance that it’s no longer 70% of my max - that it’s less than that, meaning I am getting stronger. And chances are pretty good that I’m going to push it that day - to try to increase the volume of work I can do, the density, or sometimes, I’ll even increase the load and see where the RPE and the load match.

If it’s 7, then I’m “flat” - fatigue or poor programming is inhibiting my strength gains or potential strength gains. And Heaven forbid that I’m an 8 - that means I’m probably tired, stressed, distracted, and I’m going to have to take it very easy and be careful. In fact, on those days I may just drop the reps, the load, or change to a similar, yet less demanding exercise. (From weighted chins to bodyweight chins for example.)

Here’s another example:

Let’s say I can press a pair of kettlebells 10 times. 70% would be 7 reps. Let’s also say that I decided that I was going to press them for 3 sets of 7 reps. Did all three sets match or the average of the three sets match a 7 out of 10, which would be an equivalent to 70% of your max?

For example, the first set was a 5. The second a 6. And the third a 7.

This would indicate that you’re adapting well and are probably “ahead of schedule” on being able to press a heavier pair of bells at your next test.

Conversely, if the first set was an 8, the second a 9, and you had to grind out the last set and called it a 10, then you’re not adapting well, and need to back off on your loading - decreasing either your frequency or your load.

And finally, if your first set was a 7, your second an 8, and the third a 8.5 or 9, you’re probably right on schedule.

We use the RPEs loosely - they’re not set in stone but they provide loose guidelines to help us from pushing too hard, too often.
Now I will admit, there’s a downside to using the RPE.

It requires that you keep a training log so you can record, measure, and monitor your progress, and more importantly, stay motivated by seeing your results. Furthermore, and more importantly, it requires that you listen to your intuition and that you must be ruthlessly honest with yourself, neither over nor underestimating your abilities, mood, or state.

When you do this right, you can make rapid and near effortless progress in your training. Get it wrong, and you’ll be banging your head on the wall for years to come either because of overtraining or injury. (Ask me how I know...)

2. The Unloaded Spine: More Work Through Faster Recovery

I got this idea from Chad Waterbury, neurophysiologist, and MMA strength coach from Santa Monica, CA.

He mentioned in one of his articles, that bodyweight training, particularly inverted and suspended bodyweight training, the kind that gymnasts do, is easier on the nervous system to recover from because they do not directly or axially load the spine like a deadlift, squat, the Olympic lifts, or even to a lesser extent, kettlebells.

This peaked my curiosity because at the time I had dropped pretty much all barbell and kettlebell training in favor of bodyweight training - particularly suspended and inverted training, like gymnasts do. And I felt great. In fact, I felt amazingly fresh, in spite of having a newborn child and not getting a lot of sleep. Not only did I feel great, but bodyweight training combined with the reflexive strength training of Original Strength, made me move better and allowed me to express my strength in ways I never had before.

So unloading the spine with chins, dips, handstand push ups, pistols, one arm [one leg] push ups is less draining on your nervous system, so you can perform them at a higher frequency than traditional barbell, kettlebell, and dumbbell exercises.

The added bonus is that there is greater neuromuscular activation with these types of bodyweight exercises because you're moving your body through space instead of something around your body, like a barbell or kettlebell. Neuromuscular activation is simply the amount of neural stimulation a given muscle or muscle group receives from its environment. The greater demand for joint stability from these exercises demands more from the nervous system. A
great example would be Parallel Dips on a set of gymnastic rings. Yet in spite of
the greater activation, the unloading of the spine reduces the amount of stress
and decreases the recovery time between workouts.

**And let’s just face it:** Gymnastic type exercises not only look super-cool, but
they can be done virtually anywhere at any time. Your body should ultimately be
your gym, because, you can’t always carry a kettlebell or barbell. So including
these exercises will serve you well both now and in the long run for overall
strength, vitality, and increasing your coolness factor when you’re on the beach,
in the woods, or wherever. (Cause it’s only “showing off” to people who can’t do
it.)

**Exercises That Unload The Spine:**

- Chin ups and variations (bar, rings, towel, grip variations, weighted, etc.)
- Pull ups and variations
- Push ups and variations (elevated, OAPU, OAOLPU, etc.)
- Parallel dips and variations (rings, weighted, etc.)
- Pistols
- Airborne lunges
- Levers: Front and Back and their variations
- Planches and their variations and regressions
- Other gymnastic and calisthenic exercises that are upper body biased or
  unilateral in performance

Here’s and interesting observation about loading, which could be chalked up to
“exercise novelty:” I’ve found that not only can I perform these with a greater
frequency, but a greater volume too. That means that not only can I get stronger
faster, but when I eat enough, I can pack on muscle faster using these types of
exercises as well.

That brings us to our final “freshness factor”...

**3. Functional Antagonistic Balance: Preventing Movement Burnout And
   Injury**

This was arguably one of the most amazing discoveries I stumbled upon. It made
my training fun again and because it had been years, if ever, since I included
some of these exercises in my programming, I made very rapid gains. And as we
know, gains are always good. (Unless of course they’re inches around your
waist.)

One of the biggest frustrations of avid strength enthusiasts is discovering that
when you’ve been training for long periods of time repeatedly using the same movements, the adaptation (results) slows down to crawl, and sometimes a standstill. Part of this is due to accommodation - the movement in question becomes part of the body’s “normal.” The other part is because structurally, the body has become unbalanced. There’s no longer a balance between muscles on opposite sides of the joints. Unfortunately, these are the prices you pay for movement specialization. And it’s also one of the reasons certain training systems, like Westside Barbell and the Chinese Weightlifters, use a battery of specialized assistance exercises. Conversely, the Bulgarian Weightlifting team had a very high burnout and injury rate most likely because they did not

Most people in the strength world are familiar with “agonist/antagonist” training. In it’s simplest and easiest to use form, it’s balancing a push with a pull. So, for every set of bench presses you do, you need to be doing a set of rows, or chins, depending on whose philosophy you subscribe to: Biceps, triceps; Quads, hamstrings. You get the idea.

However, one of the problems with traditional agonist/antagonist training is that it only focuses on the muscles involved in particular movements, not the movements themselves. In other words, we need to train opposite movements, not at the joint-by-joint level, but by reversing the movement and then doing the opposite. This is what I call Functional Antagonistic Balance.

Yeah I know, sounds fancy and may even make me sound important. The truth is I don’t really know what to call it since I didn’t invent it. Honestly, I don’t recall who I learned this from - it seems to me it was physical therapist Gary Gray or master performance coach Vern Gambetta, but I could be wrong. Strongman and Hand Strength expert, Jedd Johnson of the Diesel Crew actually refreshed my memory a couple of years ago in one of his grip training manuals about this concept.

Managing your movement patterns is critically important. Failure to do so is one of the reasons people get injured training. In fact, you can train movements too much. You end up experiencing what kinesiologist Paul Chek refers to as “pattern overload,” which is when you perform a movement so much that it essentially becomes unhealthy for your body - it literally becomes a poison.

This happened to me with my “pulling” patterns - the Hinge and the Power Position found in kettlebell training and Olympic lifting, respectively. I fell into the belief that heavy compound exercises were all I needed to train and strengthen my core musculature. While that may or may not be the case for a healthy individual who has regained all his reflexive strength, it certainly was not and still is not the case for someone like myself who has had a major back injury, nor is it the case for, example, women who have had children.
As a result, I became more prone to injury the more barbell and kettlebell lifting I included in my training. I therefore rationalized that I really needed to spend most if not all of my time training the opposite patterns - in this case the opposite of the extension pattern - flexion, while working on regaining my reflexive strength through OS.

So let’s take a closer look at what this looks like with two examples: A male gymnast and a powerlifter.

The gymnast traditionally has a very strong upper body and his shoulders are rolled forward, and slightly elevated. He has a flat stomach, spends a great deal of time in the hollow position, and is essentially stuck in flexion.

A powerlifter on the other hand, has a similar upper body appearance, has a protruding stomach, and is essentially stuck in extension, because of his arch on his bench press, and his deadlift.

If the two added in specific exercises from each other’s training programs they would be healthier, move easier, and would be stronger overall at their sport. Yeah, I know, a bold statement.

Let me just give you a little anecdotal story of how I’ve seen this work virtually instantaneously on others, so you know I’m not one of those sample sizes of one. At the Chicago 2011 RKC, I had a gentleman on my team named Ian. He was a former college gymnast, circus performer, and ice climber. He was wicked strong - could do multiple one-arm chins effortlessly, and he was stuck in flexion. So much so, he had no hip snap on his swing - it was all lower back and no hips, and he couldn’t press because his shoulders were stuck in internal rotation so pressing hurt his shoulders.

I didn’t have time to show him any specific correctives, so I applied FAB. I took him over to the pull up bar and made him do pull ups like a bodybuilder: Big arched chest, head leaned back, hips extended, and knees bent. It was exactly the opposite of the way he had done his pull ups for who knows how many years. And it was awkward for him. Yet it worked. I’d have him run over to the pull up bar and do sets of 5 between sets of presses and ballistics. His hip snap showed up, along with a nice flat (instead of round) back, and his press became pain free.
He went from having a miserable experience to a joyful one.

Hold on, hold on - I know what you’re thinking. You think you’ve got this. I can assure you that you don’t. It’s much bigger than you think it is, so let me explain it some more. (It took me a couple of tries to get it right.)

Imagine a double kettlebell front squat for a minute...

What’s going on? What muscle actions are being performed?

Well let’s consider:

- The legs are the prime movers - they’re moving from neutral into flexion they’re “accepting” gravity to a certain extent. On the concentric muscle actions, the legs are moving from flexion to extension, resisting gravity. (Hips, knees, ankles, all extending.)
- The torso is being held rigid - an isometric muscle action - maybe held in slight extension to combat the downward pull into flexion of the kettlebells on the chest
- The shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers are all in flexion as well, resisting extension.

Now, what’s the opposite, the FAB movement?

Think about it this way:

- The arms need to be the prime movers instead of the legs. They need to be loaded (shorten against gravity) in flexion.
- The torso needs to be held rigid, in slight flexion
- The shoulders, elbows, wrists, and fingers need to be in extension, resisting flexion (if at all possible)

So can you come up with an exercise that meets that criteria?

How about the Handstand Push Up?

That meets all the above criteria, especially if you perform it facing the wall, holding a hollow position, instead of the traditional back-against-the-wall position.

Of course, there are varying degrees of FAB as well. If we kept the fingers in flexion using the same double kettlebell front squat example, we could use
Parallel Bar Dips, again, holding a hollow position; or Parallel Bar Dips holding a “Tuck” or “L-sit” position for the legs.

Finally, keeping the fingers and wrists in flexion, we could even use Ring Pull Ups with a false grip. Again, hollow position, “tuck,” or “L-sit” all could be used here.

Here’s a handy little chart that will help you implement FAB exercises with common strength exercises.

**Common Strength Exercise -- FAB Exercise**

Military Press --> L-Sit Chins, Front Squat, Flexed Arm Hanging Leg Raises

Front Squat --> HSPUs, Parallel Bar/ Ring Dips, Chins

Swing --> Hanging Leg Raises, V-Ups, Walkout to Push Up

Snatch --> Muscle Ups, L-Sit Pull Ups/ Chins (with false grip)

Clean + Press --> Muscle Ups, L-Sit Pull Ups / Chins

Pull Ups --> Deadlift, Swings
Hanging Leg Raise --> Deadlift

These are just ideas for you. You can really go to town here and reverse engineer your movements and build custom movements if you wish. FABs are limited to your understanding of movement and your imagination.

Adding the principle of Functional Antagonistic Balance into your training will go a long way to helping keep you fresh by helping you keep your musculoskeletal system balanced. Combined with OS, it’s a novel approach to keep from having to ever use “corrective exercises” and keep making consistent long term gains in strength for years to come.
The Hidden Benefits of Tuck And L-Sits

After spending the better part of a decade doing corrective exercise in one form or another, I threw in the towel. I quit. Unlike my friend Tim Anderson, I couldn't fully engage in an "OS only" training program. I had to do more traditional style strength training to keep what was left of my sanity.

I mentioned earlier that I had suffered from pattern overload in the hinge and power position patterns. I deduced that since I hadn't done any auxiliary bodybuilding type work in 15 years or so, it was time to do so. Loathing isolation exercises, I decided to do the opposite of my pulling patterns. Interestingly this turned into a ton of upper body work, primarily consisting of chin up variations and parallel dip variations. I looked at gymnasts' training and decided I needed to work on holding the flexion pattern isometrically and working against that - truly the opposite of all my extension training.

I started playing with the Tuck and L-Sit variations. I found if I focused on simply bringing my legs, knees, or toes "up," I got a strong reflexive abdominal contraction. Once I discovered this, my total body strength returned in leaps and bounds.

I even tested out my pulling pattern and could easily hit 80% of my previous 1RM deadlift.

Interestingly enough, fooling around with the Olympic lifts, I found that my original technique had literally been "rebooted" and the bar moved effortlessly, enabling me to snatch more than bodyweight from the hang position, without practicing the lifts for more than 2 years.

Incorporating Tuck and L-Sit variations into the FAB exercise selection worked like a charm for me. Not satisfied with my results, I started using them with my clients, who all reported making strength gains like they had never made before.
How To Add FAB’s Into Your Training

There are three ways I like to implement FAB’s into my training. The first is pretty simple: I’ll put them in my training immediately following my main exercise and super set them. So I’ll do a set of my main exercises, then a set of the FAB, and back and forth and so on. I’ve found some weird stuff in doing this: I can often get more work sets in on my main exercise than normal by doing the FAB exercise.

Example:

A2. L-Sit Chins

The second is alternating them in your training template. So one session you do your main exercise and the next you do your FAB. Pretty simple yet very effective.

Example:

Workout 1: Deadlift
Workout 2: L-Sit Chins

The third and final way, is when you find yourself stalled out on a lift. Often this is because there’s a loss of structural balance and your body just won’t let you push any harder for fear that you may hurt yourself. When this occurs you may just need to put your main lift on a retaining load - minimal volume, intensity, and frequency - and work primarily on your FABs. A good plan of attack is your main exercise once a week and FABs two to four times per week. This strategy has worked great for me. And if you’ve been doing the same kettlebell exercises for any length of time and have failed to achieve the results you think you should have, this is probably the approach you want to take. I have even removed the standard lifts from my training and focused only on FABs and have come back after a two-three month hiatus without any strength loss in the main exercise.

Example:

Workouts 1,2,3: L-Sit Chins
Workout 4: Military Press

How do you know which strategy is your best choice?

Take a look at your training history. Again, the biggest indicator is if you’ve been working on a lift for any period of time and failing to make any noticeable progress.
“Double Your Freshness” With Active Recovery

When I was a kid, there was a commercial for “Double Mint Gum” and the jingle went like this:

“Double your fresh...
Double your fun...
Double Mint, Double Mint Gum!”

Funny the things you remember that aren’t really that important.

Except this one has some practicality for in the context of Active Recovery.

What is active recovery?

Well let’s look at what it’s not - it’s not passive recovery - which you can simply think of as your normal daily process of sleeping.

Therefore active recovery is something you go out of your way to engage and control, which, although won’t double your results, will speed them up.

Now the good news is, these are not complicated. And like the Micro Sessions, they take very little of your time. However they can have a huge payoff.

My favorite method is showers.

There are three that I use and recommend:

1. **The Contrast Shower.** Simply start with 30 seconds of cold water and contrast that with 60 seconds of hot water. Do this for about 10 minutes (5 if you’re pinched for time.) These help improve circulation, which can reduce systemic inflammation, help minimize muscle soreness, promote detoxification, and boost immune system function.

2. **The Cold Shower.** Simple enough, take a 5-minute cold shower. Benefits include strengthened immunity, improved mood (purportedly reported to relieve depression), reduces muscle soreness, and increases testosterone production and fertility in men, increases well-being, reduces stress, and improves energy. Finally, cold showers are good for fat loss.

3. **The Hot Shower.** Hot showers are a natural tension and stress reliever. They increase you body’s natural oxytocin levels, which help reduce
anxiety and fear. Plus, they just feel good. That alone should be proof enough.

How do you know which shower to use when?

Experiment.

I find that after particularly demanding metabolic training, the contrast shower works best for me. After a hard, high volume workout that focuses particularly on muscle use, like a “mass building” workout, the cold works better. And when I lift particularly heavy, or do a lot of neural only training, the hot feels great. Don’t be afraid to experiment. It’s how you learn.

*What are the best times to use a recovery shower?*

The best time to shower is post-workout / training session. Since you’re training multiple times per day, and showering after each is impractical, I suggest timing your showers for after your hardest session of the day.

Also, there is one other time to shower: Right before bed. A nice long, hot shower just before bed is one of the best ways to relax and fall asleep that I know of. The stress of the day literally just melts right off your body and flows down the drain.

**Other Simple Active Recovery Methods That Take Very Little Time And Cost You Virtually Nothing**

As a society, we overlook the simple and the mundane and gravitate toward the flashy and complicated. Which when you think about it ends up costing us more in time, effort, and in most cases, money. What we fail to realize is that it’s the little things, the things we already have at our disposal, that when added together have a cumulative effect on our lives. This is especially true with strength training. Here are several simple, free (or almost) recovery methods that when added to your other active recovery methods will exponentially increase your strength levels.

1. **Breathing**

   ... Is fundamental to life, yet very few of us take the time to practice breathing or use breathing as a recovery tool. As strength enthusiasts, we could all take a page from the book of Eastern practices like yoga, where breathing is central to their practice. Proper breathing increases circulation, which improves, well, every function in your body, from digestion, to immunity, to mental clarity. Proper
breathing will in many cases even unlock movement restrictions.

The simplest method for breathing is simply lying on your back with your hands folded across your stomach as a cue to breathe diaphragmatically. (Some people like lying on their stomachs so feel free to experiment.)

When I had my kettlebell group training facility, after each class, I made the participants lie on the ground and breathe diaphragmatically for 5 minutes. Each one to a tee had to peel themselves off the floor, leaving “sweat angels” behind, and said that was the best part of the class. The sad thing was, those two 5-minute sessions a week were the only times these people took to actively shake off the stress in their lives.

Implementing breathing is easy - do it anytime you want: After your hardest training session of the day, at night after your hot shower, while watching TV or listening to music, whenever. Mindful breathing will go a long way to keeping stress and its negative effects at bay, and will go a long way to help keep you fresh and strong.

2. Meal enjoyment

This is one area I’ve rarely heard anyone discuss. We live in a fast food society where much of our eating is done on the run. The family dinner where everyone sits down and has a meal and shares their day is no longer the norm. We are too busy “doing” instead of “being.” I’ve fallen into this trap in the past myself. It’s hard to believe and almost embarrassing to admit, but my wife and I rarely ate dinner together our first ten years of marriage, so I’m not pointing fingers here. (I was always “too busy” working or chasing my dream of weightlifting glory and training late at night.)

It wasn’t until I decided to put her and us first that all that changed. Combined with a change in meal timing and frequency, saving my largest meal for dinner (see The Permanent Weight Loss Solution), sitting down and talking about our life, while eating dinner, has gone a long way to reduce stress levels. It took some practice, discipline, and getting used to at first, but it was well worth it. Now I cannot imagine not sitting down and eating as a family. It’s one of the most, if not the most, important times of the day where we all three of us (soon to be four) connect. And that connection is one of the things that reduces friction and keeps us a cohesive family unit.

3. Quiet / Alone time, Prayer, Meditation
Have you ever noticed that people are always on their smart phones. If they're not texting they're talking and if they're not talking they're on FaceBook or some other form of social media. Many people are afraid to be alone. They live their lives from one distraction to another. Yet alone time spent in prayer and/or meditation is critical and necessary for mental health. Prayer and meditation have been shown alleviate stress, anxiety, depression, and even addiction. It's also been shown to increase energy levels, improve creative thinking (i.e. productivity), decrease blood pressure and the pain response, and decreasing stress hormone levels. The benefits are obviously quite amazing, so why is it more of us don't take time for ourselves? I'll leave you to answer that question. In the meantime, let's look at some other benefits.

For me personally, alone time is where I actually get to plan my life, to think, reflect, and just “be” instead of “do.” (I alluded to this earlier. I recently heard someone wiser than I say that we are “human beings” not “human doings.” We should not get so caught up in what we do or don’t do.) I spend time connecting with God, praying, reading, and writing in my journal. This is where I get my “inner strength” each day. This is also where I think through and plan my days out. For me, the best part of this time of day is it allows me to tackle life proactively, instead of reactively. I can live life on my own terms instead of someone else’s.

What should you do in your alone/ quiet times? I think a good place to start for all of us is personal reflection, which keeps our minds focused on the positive, is to simply write down or speak words of thanksgiving. Come up with ten to twenty specific things you are thankful for. For me, I start with my family and move on from there.

Reading inspirational material is also a good thing to do. Listening to uplifting music is another. Being still and quiet is yet another. It doesn’t really matter what you do, so long as what you do during this time gives you strength and doesn’t rob you of your strength.

4. Laughter and funny movies

We live in a very serious world - one where the media takes every opportunity to present us with the worst news possible as often as possible. (Hey, they have to make a living somehow.) It’s very easy if you stay “plugged in” to lose perspective on life. That’s why taking time to laugh, however you may do it, is critically important to the restoration and recovery process.

I don’t know if you’ve heard this story or not, but there was a famous journalist, Norman Cousins, who came down with a debilitating inflammatory disease,
ankylosing spondylitis - where your vertebrae can literally fuse together - and against doctor’s sound advice, medicated himself back to health by watching funny movies (and high doses of Vitamin C). He literally credits laughter with regaining his health.

Why? Quite simply, laughter improves immune system function and decreases stress levels. It increases circulation, decreases stress hormone levels, releases endorphins, and can leave your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes afterward.

Plus, it’s just really fun.

I love watching funny movies - real gutbusters. One of my all-time favorite funny movies was the classic Mel Brooks’ social commentary, *Blazing Saddles.* I’m smiling just thinking about the campfire scene.

Take time to laugh or smile each day. It’ll really go a long way to helping you get stronger.

5. Sleep

In today’s day and age, sleep is virtually dismissed as a nuisance that interferes with life, rather than the very thing that helps life, be... life. I wrote at length about some of the negatives of skipping sleep in *Six Pack Abs 365.* Here’s an excerpt:

“This seems to only happen in America – we brag about how little sleep we get and how well we still function.

The fact is, we don’t. We don’t function well at all.

Research shows that people who are chronically sleep deprived have more cognitive impairment then those who are drunk¹. That means you accomplish less than you think you do. And that which you are doing, you aren’t doing nearly as well as you think you are.

Not only that, but researchers have discovered that sleep deprivation predisposes you to making poor food choices, such as choosing high carb foods and increasing food consumption (overall total calories)², making it next to impossible to shed that layer of fat covering your abs.

² "Brief Communication: Sleep Curtailment in Healthy Young Men Is Associated with Decreased Leptin Levels, Elevated Ghrelin Levels, and
To add insult to injury, when you don’t sleep enough – at least 7 hours a night, your hormones get out of whack. Here’s what happens:

- **Growth Hormone**, which is released during your sleep cycle, decreases.
  - This means you have the possibility of losing lean muscle tissue and aging faster.
  - It also means you won’t burn as much fat.

- **Cortisol**, also elevated in the early morning hours, becomes more elevated.
  - Bad news for you because this will not only increase the inflammation levels in your body, but your appetite [for carbs] as well.

- **Testosterone**, also elevated in the morning, now becomes depressed.
  - Maintaining and putting on new muscle becomes next to impossible.

- **Leptin**, the hormone that’s associated with feeling full becomes depressed.
  - So you feel full less often, which means you’re generally hungrier with less sleep.
  - And you’ll find yourself eating more. Definitely no way to get your abs. In fact, it’s exactly the opposite of what we’re trying to do.

- **Ghrelin**, the hormone that tells your brain that you need food is increased.
  - This means your appetite increases. Big time.
  - Don’t be surprised to find yourself foraging late at night. Bad news for the belly fat...

- **Insulin**, also becomes chronically elevated because of the increased circulating levels of cortisol.
  - Now your body starts depositing fat around your waist.”

So actively making sure you get seven plus hours of sleep per night will go a long way to help you recover and stay as fresh as possible.

Some practices that will help you sleep more soundly are the following:

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Increased Hunger and Appetite." Karine Spiegel, PhD; Esra Tasali, MD; Plamen Penev, MD, PhD; and Eve Van Cauter, PhD. *Ann Intern Med.* 2004;141:846-850.
• Make sure you sleep in a completely dark room. Ambient light interferes with deep sleep.
• Keep your room cool. This helps for a deeper sleep.
• Turn off all electronic equipment at least an hour before turning off the light – this includes the iPad. Electrical signals these devices emit interfere with the brain being able to relax and “power down.”
• If you have animals, lock them out of the room. Research has shown that pet owners who allow their animals to sleep in their beds or in their rooms have interrupted sleep patterns and exhibit effects of sleep deprivation that non-pet owners don’t. (Nothing more awesome than being awakened in the middle of the night by your cat jumping on your chest or your dog either licking himself or throwing up.)

These steps may seem simple and are easily dismissible, but they all will contribute to you either waking up fresh and ready to tackle your day or dragging your still half asleep butt down to the coffee pot.

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When all is said and done, going out of your way to add little recovery mechanisms here and there may not double your fun like the catchy gum jingle, but you will make faster progress in whatever your physical endeavor is. And that, I can promise you, is a lot of fun.

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VI.

Putting It All Together

So far we’ve covered a lot of material, especially in the last chapter on Freshness (which I’m sure surprised you). How then do you put it all together? How do you integrate this into your daily routine?

First, you start with your goals, or rather, your #1 goal. Until you’re ultimately clear about that, none of this matters.

Once you have your #1 goal down, decide how much time you want to realistically devote to achieving it. Notice I said realistically. I personally train about a total of 4 hours a week, which leaves the other 164 hours to get on with the rest of my life. You may think that’s too much. That’s fine. It’s your life and you have to live it. I think you can realistically get by on 2 hours of training per week when you apply what you’ve learned in *Strength Shortcuts*.

Then decide on how many days a week you want to train and how many Micro Sessions are realistic for you. Again, I personally do 2 to 3 Micros a day. My first is about 5 minutes first thing in the morning. I do another on some days around lunch, usually about 10 minutes, and then in the evenings, at least 3 days a week, I do my main session.

Here’s a breakdown of my daily schedule:

- 5/5:30am: Wake up
- 5/5:30 – 6/6:30: Quiet time
- 6/6:30: Work or reading for school
- 7/7:15am: 5-minute Micro - OS
- 7:30 – 12:30: Drive to school, school, drive home
- 12:30: 10-minute Micro – usually bodyweight
- 1-5:pm: Work
- 5-5:30: Main training session
- 5:30-7:30pm: Family time, including dinner
- 8-9pm: Work or reading for school
- 10/10:30pm: Bed

Now my schedule is all over the place since I'm in school or doing school related things approximately six hours a day, and working at odd hours. Yours is most likely to be more stable and more predictable.
Next, decide when you’re going to do your Micros. I recommend either two or three a day. If two, then decide if your first is going to be in the morning before work or at lunchtime. If you decide to do anything at lunch, remember to think through the logistics: What equipment will you need? Where are you going to train? If you’re going to be overly sweaty, like a short conditioning session, will you need to shower and if so, do you have access to one? These are all points to consider in order to not only ensure your compliance, but your long-term success.

Finally, and don’t forget this part, it’s arguably the most important, where are you going to put your recovery sessions in and what are they going to be? You should plan their timing, but as to which you choose, that’s really going to be up to you based on how you feel. (Remember, autoregulation...)

**Programming Nitty-Gritty**

Since the point of this book is to show you time-efficient ways to get super strong, it would be a slap in the face if I didn’t show you how to put your own programs together, or put some “done-for-you” templates together to use at your convenience.

First, let’s look at the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) version. Then we’ll cover some DFY (Done-For-You) programs.

**DIY Templates**

I don’t know who said this originally, but it’s worth repeating here: The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.

In that spirit, here’s a simple 5-step formula to help you do just that.

1. Pick your #1 goal and train only for that goal until you actually reach that goal. (It should be measurable and quantifiable.)
2. Pick 2 or 3 exercises that you can do that will help you achieve your goal the fastest.
3. Pick the set and rep ranges that match your goal.
4. Select your frequency and duration of each training session.
5. Design your program.
You will need to train either first thing in the morning or at lunch (designated AM) and in the evening (designated PM). This may sound daunting, but remember, we’re only talking about 5 or 10 minutes here.

Now let’s take a look at the DIY templates.

Here’s an example:

1. **Goal**: Press Half Bodyweight in one hand, without gaining any weight to do so.
2. **Exercises**: KB press, TGU
3. **Set/Rep Range** (From Chapter III): 6-20 reps. 1-5 reps per set.
4. **Frequency**: 3 days a week, twice a day.
5. **Program Design**:
   - Mon/Wed/Fri - AM and PM
     - AM - TGU 2x3, moderate. 5 minutes.
     - PM - KB Press, 3x5, moderate. 10 minutes.

Simple really.

Ok, here’s another one - fat loss. That’s seems to be a tough one for people to understand.

1. **Goal**: Fat loss - lose 20lbs in 3 months.
2. **Exercises**: Swings, Snatches, Clean + Press, Front Squat
3. **Set/Rep Range**:
   - **C+P / FSQ**: 20-40 reps. 3-8 reps per set.
   - Swings / Snatches: 50-100 reps. 10-30 reps per set.
4. **Frequency**: 4 days a week
5. **Program Design**:
   - Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri - AM and PM: 10 minutes each session.
     - Mon/Thurs
       - AM - C+P
PM – Swings
  o Tues/Fri
    ▪ AM – FSQ
    ▪ PM - Snatches

Actually, on second thought, I just wrote out two different training programs for you. So they were more like DFY (Done-For-You) rather than DIY. Oh well!

“Done For You” Templates

I’m going to break this up by categories: Strength, Hypertrophy (Muscle Gain), and Fat Loss. I decided against writing any conditioning-specific programs. A very simple suggestion for someone who needs to do conditioning is to do your strength work in the AM and your conditioning in the PM.

Strength

General Strength, Barbell

A classic barbell strength program is based on the Big Four: Squat, Bench, Deadlift, Military Press. Below is a 4 week example program. Yes, you could repeat it. As you can see the loading alternates up and down each week. The goal is to use weights that allow you to move the bar at a relatively fast and constant speed. No “grinding” - which is when the weight slows down between reps within a set.

Exercises: Squat, Bench, Deadlift, Military Press
Frequency: 4 days a week
Program Design: 4 days a week - Mon/Tues/ Thurs/Fri - AM and PM
  • Mon/Thurs - 10 minutes each session
    o AM - Bench
    o PM - Squat
  • Tues/Fri - 10 minutes each session
    o AM - Press
    o PM - Deadlift
  • Sets and Reps
    o Mon/Tues - Light
      ▪ Week 1: 2x6
      ▪ Week 2: 2x4
      ▪ Week 3: 2x5
      ▪ Week 4: 2x3
    o Thurs/Fri - Heavy
      ▪ Week 1: 2x3
- Week 2: 2x2
- Week 3: 2x3
- Week 4: 2x1

**General Strength, Single Kettlebell**

There is nothing more utilitarian than training with a single kettlebell. You can accomplish so much in so little time.

**Exercises:** Clean + Press, Swing, Snatch, Get Up, Goblet Squat  
**Frequency:** 5 days a week  
**Program Design:**
- Mon-Fri: 15 minutes a day. 5 mins AM. 10 mins PM.  
  - AM - Get Up. 3-5 reps each side total.  
  - Mon PM - Clean + Press*.  
  - Tues PM - Swing (2H or 1H). 100 reps total.  
  - Thurs PM - Clean + Press.  
  - Fri PM - Snatch. 80-100 reps total.  
- *Loading for Clean + Press (always self-paced):  
  - Workout 1: Ladders. 1,2,3. As many as possible in 10’.  
  - Workout 2: Sets of 2.  
  - Workout 3: Ladders. 1,2,3,4.  
  - Workout 4: Sets of 3.  
  - Workout 5: Ladders. 1,2,3.  
  - Workout 6: Sets of 2.  
  - Workout 7: Ladders 1,2,3,4,5.  
  - Workout 8: Sets of 3.  
  - Workout 9: Ladders 1,2,3,4.  
  - Workout 10: Alternate between sets of 2 and 4.  
  - Workout 11: Ladders 2,3,5.  

**General Strength, Double Kettlebell**

When you want to get really strong using kettlebells, and after you’ve put your time in with the single kettlebell work, it’s time to move onto doubles. They are more demanding on the body, and therefore will help you produce more strength.

**Exercises:** Front Squat, Clean + Press  
**Frequency:** 3 days a week  
**Program Design:** 20 minutes a day. AM - 10 mins. PM - 10 mins.
• Mon-Wed-Fri
• **AM - Front Squat**
  • 2-3 sets of 3-5 reps.
  • Increase difficulty by adding longer pause at bottom.
• **PM - Clean + Press**
  • Use the following loading protocols using a 5 rep max (5RM):
    - Workout 1: Sets of 2.
    - Workout 2: Ladders. 1,2,3.
    - Workout 3: Sets of 1,2.
    - Workout 4: Sets of 3.
    - Workout 5: Ladders. 1,2,3,4
    - Workout 6: Ladders. 1,2,3.
    - Workout 7: Sets of 3.
    - Workout 8: Ladders. 1,2,3,4
    - Workout 9: Sets of 2,4.
    - Workout 10: Ladders. 1,2,3,4,5.
    - Workout 11: Sets of 3.
    - **Workout 12: Take old 5RM and find new RM: __________**

**Bodyweight 1**

I love bodyweight exercise, especially Parallel Dips, any sort of Pull Up or Chin Up variation, and Pistols. I *really* like Pistols. These exercises have a special place in my heart because I used them a lot to help me rehabilitate and restore a very dysfunctional and beat up body. You can build an incredibly strong, healthy, and resilient body from just bodyweight exercises alone. You can use any variation you’d like of these exercises: Regular, rings, hollow position, tuck position, L-sit, towel (Pull Ups), any grip variation, and Pistols either unweighted, weight held in both hands, or weight in the rack. I have found that these are all very nice compliments to kettlebell exercises - all FAB exercises.

**Exercises:** Parallel Dips, Chin Ups, Pistols  
**Frequency:** 3 days a week, 20 minutes per day: AM - 5 minutes. PM - 15 minutes.  
**Program Design:**  
• Mon-Wed-Fri  
  • **AM - Chin Ups**  
    - With or without weight: 2-3 sets of 2-5 reps.  
    - Use a hollow position to start.  
    - If starting with bodyweight only, add load when you reach 3 sets of 5.  
    - When adding load, start with sets of 2 reps.
Use the following loading guidelines:
- Monday: RPE=6
- Wednesday: RPE=8
- Friday: RPE=7

PM - Parallel Dips, Pistols
- Superset between Dips and Pistols.
- Perform 2-3 sets of 1-5 reps of each exercise.
- Add load to the Dips when necessary.
- You may need to start with sets of 1-2 reps on the Pistols: Work your way up to sets of 5.
- When you reach 3 sets of 5 on the Dips, add weight.
- Use the following loading guidelines:
  - Monday: RPE=6
  - Wednesday: RPE=8
  - Friday: RPE=7

Bodyweight 2

With this particular bodyweight program I wanted to show you how to vary the difficulty by changing your body position. Changing leverages is a fantastic way to increase your strength with bodyweight exercises. Gymnasts do it all the time. I personally love this method of bodyweight training and have seen phenomenal gains in strength and even muscle from practicing this.

**Exercises:** Parallel Dips, Chin Ups, Pistols  
**Frequency:** 3 days a week, 20 minutes per day: AM - 5 minutes. PM - 15 minutes.  
**Program Design:**  
- Mon-Wed-Fri
  - **AM - Chin Ups**  
    - Perform 2-3 sets of 3-5 reps.  
    - When rep ranges become easy, increase the duration of your hold at the top of the position.  
      - Monday - Hollow position  
      - Wednesday - Tuck position  
      - Friday - L-sit
  - **PM - Parallel Dips and Pistols**  
    - Perform 2-3 sets of 3-5 reps of Dips.  
      - Monday - Hollow position  
      - Wednesday - Tuck position  
      - Friday - L-sit  
    - Perform 2-3 sets of 1-5 reps of Pistols.  
      - Monday - facing downhill  
      - Wednesday - regular
Hypertrophy / Get HY-OOGEx

Hypertrophy programs play by slightly different rules than strength programs. In order to grow muscle you need more volume - more mechanical work. There's usually a trade off between work performed and frequency of work. Usually, but not always. It depends on your conditioning levels and your recovery abilities.

Barbell

Barbell work is great for building muscle. You can really get a lot of work done. However, I don’t like using the Strength Shortcuts with the barbell for hypertrophy work because in general, barbell work takes more out of you then it immediately gives back. It’s very easy to overdo it with the barbell in my experience, especially when you have a high training age, like me. And more often than not, if you’ve overdone it, you won’t know it until it’s too late - you either wake up the next morning with a “tweak” that takes days to get rid of or you end up tired and apathetic toward training a few weeks later. So hypertrophy programs using the barbell exclusively are best left, in my opinion, to traditional programs. If your not satisfied with this answer, just go back and look at how low the volume is on the barbell based strength program. Very low. That’s due to the demanding nature of the barbell on the body.

Single Kettlebell

The biggest difference between this program and a strength program is that you’re literally going to “race the clock.” That means you are going to attempt to do as much work as you can in the given time period, using proper form, and staying away from failure. And you’ll also want to compete against yourself by doing more and more work each session. You’ll also use a different set of loading parameters. For consistency’s sake, we will modify the General Strength program.

Exercises: Clean + Press, Swing, Snatch, Get Up, Goblet Squat
Frequency: 5 days a week
Program Design:
- Mon-Fri: 20 minutes a day. 5 mins AM. 15 mins PM.
  - AM - Get Up. 3-5 reps each side total.
  - Mon PM - Clean + Press*.
  - Tues PM - Swing (2H or 1H). 100 reps total.
  - Wed PM - Goblet Squat. Sets of 10-20 reps. As many total reps in 15 minute timeframe as possible.
- Thurs PM - Clean + Press.
- Fri PM - Snatch. 80-100 reps total.

**Loading for Clean + Press (Use a 10RM):**
- Workout 1: Ladders: 2,4,6.
- Workout 4: Sets of 5.
- Workout 5: Ladders: 4,6,8.
- Workout 7: Ladders: 2,4,6.
- Workout 8: Sets of 4.
- Workout 10: Sets of 5.
- Workout 11: Ladders: 4,6,8.
- *You’ll notice that the loading repeats itself. That’s for two very important reasons: 1) To “unload” the body to allow it to recuperate and adapt, and 2) to allow you to compete with yourself and see an increase in your work capacity.

**Double Kettlebell**

When you really want to pack on muscle with kettlebells, doubles work is the way to go. Between the grinds and ballistics you can really perform a lot of work.

In this particular program we’re going to use a combination of the two: Front Squats and Clean and Push Press.

**Exercises:** Front Squat, Clean + Push Press
**Frequency:** 3 days a week, 20 minutes a day
**Program Design:** AM - 10 minutes. PM - 10 minutes.
- **AM - Front Squat:** Use a 10RM and follow the loading below:
  - Workout 1: 4x5
  - Workout 2: 3x6
  - Workout 3: 3x7
  - Workout 4: 4x6
  - Workout 5: 3x7
  - Workout 6: 3x8
  - Workout 7: 4x7
  - Workout 8: 3x8
  - Workout 9: 3x9
  - Workout 10: 4x8
  - Workout 11: 3x9
• PM - Clean + Push Press: Use a 10RM and follow the loading below:
  o Workout 1: 4x5
  o Workout 2: 3x6
  o Workout 3: 3x7
  o Workout 4: 4x6
  o Workout 5: 3x7
  o Workout 6: 3x8
  o Workout 7: 4x7
  o Workout 8: 3x8
  o Workout 9: 3x9
  o Workout 10: 4x8
  o Workout 11: 3x9
  o Workout 12: 2x10

**Bodyweight**

Many people think you cannot grow muscle from doing bodyweight exercises. Maybe that's because they haven't used the correct loading parameters. Many old time bodybuilders used exercises like Parallel Dips and Pull Ups and their variations to help build their impressive physiques.

Let's rework our Bodyweight General Strength program to put some more muscle on you. These are hard to spell out because everyone starts at a different level. That's why the concept of autoregulation is so important here, especially when training for muscle mass. You have to train within a set of relatively strict guidelines in order to not burn out, and experience the true freedom of the Strength Shortcuts.

**Exercises:** Parallel Dips, Chin Ups, Pistols  
**Frequency:** 3 days a week, 20 minutes per day: AM - 5 minutes. PM - 15 minutes.  
**Program Design:**
  o Mon-Wed-Fri  
    ▪ **AM - Chin Ups**  
      ▪ 2-3 sets of 6-15 reps. Add weight if necessary.  
        o Example progression:
          ▪ 2x6, 2x7, 2x8, 3x6, 2x10, 3x7, 2x12, 3x8, 2x13, 3x9, etc  
          ▪ **Example weekly loading:**
            ▪ Mon - 2x6  
            ▪ Wed - 2x7  
            ▪ Fri - 2x8, etc
• Use a hollow position to start.
• When adding load, start with sets of 6 reps.

- **PM- Parallel Dips, Pistols**
  - Superset between Dips and Pistols.
    - Dips: Perform 2-3 sets of 6-15 reps.
      - Example progression:
        - 3x6, 2x8, 3x7, 2x9, 3x8, 2x10, 3x9, 2x12, etc
        - The point here is to get a pump on each set, yet leave 2 reps “in the bank” - that is, knowing that you could do 2 more reps.
      - Example weekly loading:
        - Mon - 3x6
        - Wed - 2x8
        - Fri - 3x7, etc
        - Pistols are a bear to perform for higher reps.
        - So leave the reps between 6-10, tops.
  - Add load to the Dips when necessary.
  - When you reach 3 sets of 15 on the Dips with just your bodyweight, add weight.

**Fat Loss - “Get Ripped”**

There are several really good training templates for fat loss. The main idea is to break up the different regimes of work and do them at different times of the day. As you probably are aware of by now, I’m a big believer in using two different contrasting styles of training for fat loss - tension work and explosive work. Both stimulate the body differently, and both when done properly, burn tremendous amounts of calories. So we’ll break down our sessions into those two components.

I’m just going to use kettlebell training for these DFY programs.

**Basic: Single Kettlebell**

This is as you can get. Three “entry level” kettlebell exercises - the Swing, Get Up, and the Goblet Squat: Very little technical prowess needed and a lot of work can get done.

**Exercises:** Get Up, Swings, Goblet Squat
Frequency: 3 days a week, 20 minutes per day: AM - 10 minutes. PM - 10 minutes.

Program Design:
- Mon-Wed-Fri
  - The goal in each session is to be able to get more and more work done in either the same amount of time (the Get Up and Goblet Squat combo) or the same amount of work in less time (Swings).
    - AM - Swings: Goal of 100 reps in any set rep combination in as little time as possible
    - PM - Get Up and Goblet Squat
      - Alternate back and forth between sets of 1-2 each side on the Get Up with 5-10 reps of the Goblet Squat. Rest between sets as necessary.
      - Ultimately, you want to be able to work the whole 10 minute period, with the only rest being the transition from one exercise to the other.

Advanced: Double Kettlebell

More tension creates more work. And more work burns more calories. And nothing creates more tension than a pair of kettlebells.

Exercises: Swings, Front Squat, Press
Frequency: 3 days a week, 20 minutes per day: AM - 5 minutes. PM - 15 minutes.

Program Design:
- Mon-Wed-Fri
  - The goal in each session is to be able to get more and more work done in either the same amount of time (the Press and Squat combo) or the same amount of work in less time (Swings).
  - AM - Swings: However many sets of 5-10 reps you can get in 5 minutes with a moderate sized pair of kettlebells. “Great” way to start the day.
  - PM - Press and Front Squat
    - Use a 6RM for your Press and use the same pair of KBs for your FSQ
    - Alternate between a set of Presses and a set of Front Squats
      - Perform as many sets of 3 as possible of each exercise in 15 minutes.

More Program Design Ideas
Obviously, using the concepts presented in this book leaves you with one conclusion - that your ability to design your own programs are endless when you understand the concepts in it.

You can mix and match modalities: Barbell and kettlebell, kettlebell and bodyweight, barbell and bodyweight. And you can actually mix up your training sessions to focus on different outcomes, for example, strength in the morning, muscle mass in the evening. The possibilities are limitless, exciting, and fun.

The key is to take your time, be patient, and enjoy training as a process.

Get Outside The Box And Live

As a society, we love the idea of “thinking outside of the box” yet many of us are conformists, from the cars we drive, to our haircuts, clothes, shoes, and phones. We get stuck in the same old strength training programs too, because we think we should. We end up working ourselves into a rut. Maybe you know the old saying: The only difference between a rut and a grave is a rut is a grave with the ends kicked out. *Strength Shortcuts* will get you out of your rut, your box, your cage. And because your training sessions are so short, they will actually rejuvenate you, like a form of play – shoot, like play. The *Strength Shortcuts* are so easy to implement, and so enjoyable once you get them going, it’s almost like your getting away with something. The truth is, you are. You are getting away from fatigue, boredom, and the mundane that quite often results from traditional strength training programs. You end up with more energy, more spring in your step, a whistle while you work, and more time to live. What more could you ask?

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VII.

FAQs

The #1 Most Anticipated Question:

“Geoff, I have your other programs, like Kettlebell STRONG! Are you saying I should stop doing that and start doing one of these programs? If not, how would I modify the program I already have from you to fit this template?”

Great question!

It's very simple. Let's use the STRONG! program (this can be done for any of my other programs that you are currently using).

I'm a big believer in finishing what you’ve started before moving on to something else. So with that philosophy in mind, simply cut the total number of sets in half, and do half the sets either first thing in the morning or at lunch, and the other half in the evening.

You'll feel fresher and recover faster between training sessions.

**How frequently can I train / work out using Strength Shortcuts?**

Pretty simple really – as often as you think you can recover from. The goal here is not to really train more, but to optimize the training you are doing by 1) fitting it into a busy lifestyle, 2) keeping your sessions purposefully short to maintain mental focus and keep fatigue at bay, which in turn, 3) allows you to recover faster and make faster progress.

An average is three to five days a week, depending on your goals. If that answer still doesn’t satisfy you, experiment. I find I can increase the volume and frequency of loading for about 14 days before I have to unload – back off the total amount of work I’m doing. This may work for you too.

**Will this training structure allow me to train all my goals at the same time?**

To a certain degree, yes. It is possible to structure your training in the following way:
Session 1 – AM: Strength
Session 2 – Noon: Muscle Mass
Session 3 – PM: Conditioning

However, remember the DVO, you’ll have to rotate set and rep ranges and exercises to make them fit your goals. And, you’ll most likely have to train about 30 minutes a day – three 10-minute sessions.

I think you’d be better served simply by alternating phases of training. Use what is called “block training.” You block your training into different goals and alternate between them.

Here’s an example of how you may do this:

Block 1: Strength
Block 2: Muscle Mass / Conditioning
Block 3: Strength
Block 4: Muscle Mass / Conditioning
Block 5: Strength
Block 6: Muscle Mass / Conditioning

I’m lumping training for muscle mass and conditioning into the same block, depending on your priorities, and, they use a lot of similar mechanisms for adaptation. In other words, you can improve your conditioning by training for muscle mass, depending on the rep ranges you use.

That’s weird, why did you include traditional bodybuilding rep ranges in Strength Shortcuts?

Great question. Because you can’t, nor should you try, to train in the same rep ranges all the time. Why not? We already covered this somewhat earlier – the answer is accommodation. Your body becomes acclimated to the stimulus and therefore your gains slow down, maybe even stop. Changing the rep ranges every once in awhile, even for short periods of time can inject new growth into your training program.

I’m confused. I’m training for the SFG/RKC. How would I structure my programs and still train for the Snatch Test?

The same way I trained for mine in February of 2013: I trained strength work in the mornings or at lunch, and conditioning in the evenings. My conditioning sessions ranged from 5 to 15 minutes, based on what I was doing, which was mostly snatches.

I like my regular training programs and working out for 30 to 45 minutes at
How can I add Strength Shortcuts into what I’m currently doing?

Well it depends on two things: 1) What your goal is, and 2) whether or not you’re making progress toward it. If your goal is strength, my suggestion is to test adding in one FAB exercise for your primary lift 2 to 3 times a week in 5 to 10 minute sessions and see what the result is. If you’re goal is conditioning, I’d take a look at what your weakness is, and add in 5 to 10 minute strength sessions 1 to 2 times a week focused on fixing that weakness. That will help bring up your conditioning. (You can of course do this with strength goals too.) If your primary goal is fat loss, forget about it! Take the extra time you want to spend on working out and focus on getting your eating in order. Fat loss starts in the kitchen. And if your goal is to put on a little muscle, pick a rep range you haven’t trained with in awhile and start with some exercises you haven’t done in awhile 1 to 2 times a week for 5 to 10 minutes.

How long can I use the Strength Shortcuts? How long should I use the Strength Shortcuts?

That is entirely up to you. You can use them for a “season” - a period in life where time seems to be at a premium and you don’t feel like you can devote time to longer, traditional training programs. Or you can use them indefinitely. Remember, the “big idea” about these strength shortcuts is that by using them, you’ll achieve your goals faster than by using standard methods. So one could wonder why would you ever stop and go back to doing what you were doing before - what caused you to look for something different in the first place. For me personally, I love the fluidity and flexibility these shortcuts provide in my training. I can take a 5-10 minute break and get some serious strength work done, without having to “prep” or change clothes.

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