

THIS GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN TAUGHT

What you're about to read is likely to contradict some or all of what you've been taught about training (hence the snazzy title). Its point isn't to be contrarian, however, nor is it to stir up controversy in the name of marketing.

It's simply because much of what you've been taught is wrong.

We've been making things far more complicated and more difficult than they need to be, and there is a better way. Making more progress in the gym (and out) is more about getting out of your own way than it is about adding endless techniques, secrets, or tricks. Improvement is your biological destiny — the only question is, in which direction will you improve?

1. The harder you work, the worse your results will be.

There is a simple idea that I can share with you that will improve your movement instantly and in everything you do.

It's not anything about range-of-motion testing, although I think you should do that, too.

It's not a trick to increase tension in your lifting.

It's not a complex screening tool that gives you a score and rules on how to proceed with your training.

No, it's far more simple than that, and the results can be astonishing. To use it, I usually just say:

“Relax, make it look easy.”

As soon as the slightly bewildered look goes away, the person tries it and the look on his or her face afterward is even more confused than before. Inevitably, the movement was more athletic, more graceful, less taxing and often visibly quicker than before.

I'll circle back to making your lifting look easy, but I want to back up and build a foundation.

Your Limits

There is only so much you can do right now, both literally and figuratively. If you have once in your life deadlifted 315 pounds, then at any point you can lift somewhere between 1 and 315 pounds, and maybe a few more, if you're lucky. If you're a runner, finishing a 5K in under 30 minutes is probably doable. Taken a bit more abstractly, if you're a decent cook you can probably make an omelet or some burgers, but you're not going to be able to plate a dish of sautéed foie gras with roasted veal sweetbreads that would satisfy Gordon Ramsey.

Represented visually, picture all of the things you can do inside of a box. If you step outside of the box, you will break or die. There are things you could probably manage to do, but they'd kill or certainly break you.



Talk of "pushing through" or "testing limits" is referred to as stepping outside of this box of what you're actually capable of into the danger zone of what you're not yet capable of. If you're lucky you get away with it, but as I look around I don't see very many people getting away with it. In fact, despite more corrective exercise than ever, I see more complaints about nagging pain and injury. Something isn't working.

There is actually a more precise and useful way to describe limits is by defining them based on the body's response to the action, or stress. Stress is an often misused and misunderstood word, but all you really need to understand is that everything is stress to

Biofeedback Testing

We believe that using biofeedback testing is the quickest, easiest, and most accurate way to determine if what you are doing is within your limits (eustress) or outside of them (distress). A procedure for doing this is described in detail in my [free Gym Movement eCourse](#).

the body. Some stress provides wanted and desirable adaptations, and other stress results in unwanted adaptations. Lifting weights is stress, eating food is stress, and fighting with your boss is stress, just as having fun with your significant other is.

Whether the resolution of the stress is “good” or “bad” depends on if it is eustress or distress. Eustress is a term for “good stress” coined by endocrinologist and stress researcher Hans Selye. I learned a more simple and useful definition, however, from Gym Movement founder Frankie Faires.

eustress – stress that is easily resolved

distress – stress that is not easily resolved

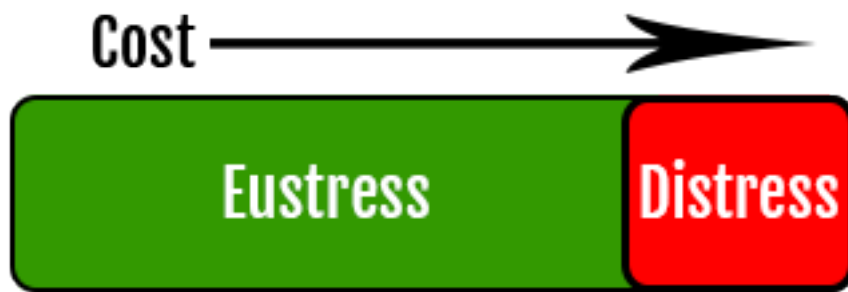
Stress being resolved means the body has recovered and adapted to the stress and the system has returned to a new balance, or normal. In training, we colloquially (and imprecisely) refer to this as recovery. (Recovery implies returning to the same as before, whereas our goal is adaptation and thus becoming better than before.) Using these definitions, it becomes easy to understand how the reaction could differ between stressors. If you are a 300-pound deadlifter, it may take you two days to feel fresh after working above 250 pounds, whereas a deadlift session at 135 pounds may have such an insignificant effect that you’ll go back for more the next day.



Understanding that how your limits are defined is actually dependent on your response to them is one of the biggest pieces of the puzzle of faster progress. Once you understand this, much of what we do in training makes more sense.

This brings us to why making your training look easy enables you to make faster progress and get better results. Your capacity for improvement in eustress is much greater: There is always going to be much more that you can do easily than you can do with great effort. The goal is to expand that which you can do easily, not try to expand the tiny fraction of things you can do with great difficulty and at high cost.

The price you pay to resolve the stress is what we refer to as cost. We’re not talking about financial cost, of course, although it certainly can become financial when you’re getting an MRI for a torn ligament. The cost you pay is the sum total of all that is required for your body to resolve the stress. It could be sleep, nutrition, additional movement, or psychological machinations we can’t even begin to understand.



The cost of training in distress is significantly higher in every respect. As with anything in life, you should seek to maximize the benefit and minimize the cost. If you got the same results in two training sessions per week as you did in four, would you still train twice as often? You may enjoy your training very much, but everything has a cost. The question is, are you willing to pay it?

It's worth noting that your eustress limits span a wider range than your distress limits. If you stray outside your eustress zone into distress, you do increase the cost but your risk of harm is relative to how far into distress you go. When purposely training in the distress zone the target you have to hit to stay within distress and not step into the true danger zone is much smaller. In other words, the risk is much higher that you will go too far.

You might be thinking, "I'm prepared to pay whatever the cost, so I'm fine with training in distress." I am not here to tell you that you're wrong to do what you want, but I want to share something I believe is important and have observed to be absolutely true.

"Results happen faster under distress, both intended and unintended." –Frankie Faïres

You may be able to think of some examples of this in your own life, or people you know. I think almost everyone knows someone who got great "results" doing P90X right up until the point where they couldn't put a shirt on by themselves because their shoulders hurt so badly. The results happened very quickly – under 90 days. Both the visible abs and the acute shoulder injury.

Conversely, when you avoid distress and you do as much of your training as possible under eustress (a minimal effective amount of distress is necessary) you will make better progress in the long term. The trainee who can train 52 weeks out of a year will make more progress than the trainee who is injured for one fifth of the year (conservatively, I'd estimate most people training seriously are too injured to train for at least two six-week windows per year.)

You do not need to push your limits to expand your limits. You are always changing, and always adapting to the stresses imposed upon you by the world around you. In college I remember being impressed by this unimposing kid at the liquor store we frequented. He was maybe 5'9" and 150 pounds. Certainly not an impressive physical specimen. Yet he had no trouble moving 160-pound kegs around. At the time, I remember asking him if he worked out or something, to which he replied "No dude, these were heavy when I started, but they just get easier." Touché, stoner dude. He didn't have to work hard – and I can assure you he didn't – for adaptation to occur and for things to get easier. All he had to do was show up to work and lift heavy things daily.

Full Circle

All of this brings us back to making that lift look easy. Making things look easy does two things. One, it means that more than likely what you're doing is still well within your limits. Two, it means you are doing both the **what** and the **how** the way you eventually want to be able to do it – easily.

I placed this first in this ebook because it is the most important. If you will do nothing else – nothing other than making your training as easy as possible and avoiding excessive effort – you will make more progress and get better results. To learn more about the specific markers of excessive effort in training, check out my completely [free Gym Movement eCourse](#).

2. There is no such thing as perfect form.

Potentially the most absurd and pervasive belief in the fitness culture is that perfect form prevents and eliminates injury. A Google search for “perfect form injury” reveals some 26 million results, and every single one on the first page is related to the belief that perfect form will prevent injury, and imperfect form will result in injury.

If this is true, I only have one question:

Why are the best and brightest in the fitness culture and industry still getting hurt? I only need to take one look at my Facebook feed to see many of my friends who are leaders in this industry complaining of neck, back, shoulder, and knee injuries. These are very rarely acute injuries, either – typically they are pain issues with no obvious origin or moment of injury.

This is no criticism of these excellent people and trainers, although there are a few guru types who are well-deserving of criticism. Rather, it is a criticism of this broken belief system that textbook perfect form is an antidote to injury. This belief is so pervasive, so insidious that just about everyone accepts it unquestioningly.

To be perfectly clear on terminology, when I refer to perfect form I am referring to the form for an exercise or movement that makes it into a textbook or how-to video. Things like vertical shins, symmetrical feet, elbows tucked in, and so on.

The idea of perfect form presupposes a lot of things, but first and foremost that everyone is identical. You cannot discuss angles of bones and joints without first agreeing that you are talking about the same structure. It would be like a group of engineers discussing the acceptable tolerances and design decisions for a bridge, but basing all their assumptions on the design of a different bridge.

Even if people did have relatively similar bone lengths, connective tissue insertion points, and joint configurations, it would still be impossible to account for the tiny but pervasive differences in individual anatomy. One of your legs is longer than the other, the only question is by how much. Given the prevalence of desk jobs, I can predict with nearly perfect accuracy that one of your shoulders is more protracted and internally rotated than the other. One of your hands is probably stronger than the other, maybe even the whole side of your body. How can it be, then, that there is a universal form that doesn't account for these differences? Further, how can it be that perfect form is based on symmetrical positioning? If you're not symmetrical, is symmetrical movement appropriate?

Worse, there is no feedback. It's a uni-directional conversation. You tell the body what to do without the body being given a chance to respond and react. When you shove someone into form that isn't suitable for them, you'll most likely get some feedback in the form of pain or sensation. This is an action signal that says "Move, this isn't working." Ignoring that and forcing a position results in greater and greater sensation until the body gives you a sensation you can't ignore and something snaps. Contrary to the idiocy you'll see on Internet message boards, people snap far more often from trying to force perfect form than they do from pursuing what is best for their own bodies.



If you get past the textbook and start looking at the form great lifters employ, you will come to a troubling conclusion. Every great lifter has distinctive form that is completely unique to them. You can look at two of the greatest deadlifters of all time and see massive differences in form. Who is right?

You might say, "But I'm not a world class lifter, I have to stick to perfect form so I don't get hurt." No, you need to move the weight from point A to point B in the shortest distance possible for your body. This may start out looking nothing like

typical form. It may end up looking picture perfect, or it might not end up looking textbook at all and you still become a great lifter. Pursuing what is best for your individual body will take you further than trying to ram a square peg into a round hole ever will.

Even if you were going to pursue the form someone else says is correct, where would you find the rule book? Would you look at your favorite strength athlete to mimic their form? What if your favorite athlete happens to not be a very good squatter — would you still want to mimic his or her squat form? Would you examine the form of lifters with similar body types as you? That may be a good starting point, but they will not have the same movement history as you. Since there is no official rule book for exercise form, which source would you trust if you're going to trust a textbook? There are literally more questions than answers. Alternatively, you could just follow your own body and discover **your** perfect form.

If you're not going to continue to force someone else's idea of perfect form, what are you going to do to pursue your best form? Here are some questions for you to ask.

Questions to Ask

1. Does it test well? See my videos on ROM [testing with biofeedback](#).
2. What is the shortest distance between point A and point B, and how can I get there?
3. Does it hurt? Stop immediately, and make a change.
4. Does making a change make it feel better? Use it.
5. Does making a change make it stronger? Use it.
6. Does making a change make it weaker? Ditch it.
7. Is there extraneous movement that doesn't directly contribute to the lift and that can be eliminated?
8. Could it be done with less effort?

3. Your diet needs to be different, no matter what it is.

I don't hope to convince you that the Paleo diet, the Atkins diet, a Precision Nutrition style model of eating, Primal eating, or vegetarianism is the best diet. In fact, I'd like you to believe that no matter what your current diet is you should change it — at least eventually.

If you're a fitness enthusiast (and maybe even if you're not) you will have noticed that trends in diet come and go in cycles. A decade ago, low-fat dieting was all the rage both in mainstream media as well as in bodybuilding circles. It seemed to pass the common-sense sniff test: "If you don't eat fat, you won't be fat." This cycle lasted for many years, until a wide enough swath of bodybuilders realized they were trading major biological functions (mildly important things like, you know, sex drive) in exchange for keeping their fat intake so low.

Then the tide shifted toward predominantly low-carb dieting, with much higher fat intake. Naturally, this worked exceptionally well for a while as people learned that body fat is much more closely linked to carbohydrate intake (and the associated hormone responses) and that dropping carbs very low created rapid fat loss. Most recently, formerly low-carb evangelists have realized that carbs, too, are needed for healthy metabolic function. Having nowhere left to turn, with protein being sacred and realizing that neither fat nor carbs can be injudiciously eliminated from a diet, these folks are turning to more of a "everything in moderation" approach. But they're still wrong.

A few years ago a couple bright, innovative authors and researchers proposed a very controversial idea. Brad Pilon and Martin Berkhan suggested that maybe, just maybe, you don't need to eat the widely accepted 6 meals per day. In fact, these guys recommended fasting completely anywhere from 16 to 24 hours per day. People who have implemented this strategy have reported exceptional results, especially in fat loss. Those who came directly from a habit of eating meals every 3 to 4 hours often observe the most pronounced positive effects.

The shift from carbs to fat, and eating often to taking large breaks from eating just has one major thing in common: change.

It's not, contrary to the flawed understanding of many of the premature evangelists of these ideas, that any one of these macro dietary trends is necessarily better than the other. For example, when you've been eating low-carb for a long time and you begin to reintroduce carbs in your diet, you will likely experience marked improvements in performance, body composition, and health. Your clone in

opposite world will experience the same level of improvement when they reintroduce fat into their low-fat diet. The point is that when you let the pendulum swing too far in any one direction, you can expect that a change of direction is going to happen — whether you like it or not. The people who try to maintain stability in the face of impending change are in for a world of pain.

Life, in a very real way, is chaos, change, and the response to it. What separates you from a rock is that when a pick splits the rock in half the rock will never be whole again, much less bigger than whole. When you lift weights, your muscle is (figuratively) split in half and then put back together again — not only whole, but better than before. Nassim Taleb wrote what I consider to be one of the most important books of our time on this phenomenon, coining a new term for it: antifragile.

A champagne glass is fragile. A short fall from a low ledge will shatter it to pieces. It can't handle any disorder.

A pint glass is still fragile, but a bit more robust. A fall from a ledge may not break it, but a fall from a table will create more disorder than it can ever recover from.

Your body is antifragile. If you looked at muscle and blood markers of distress after a workout, you would assume the body had suffered an injury. Some time later, everything would be back to normal and in fact measurably better than before. An antifragile system does not suffer when disorder is introduced — it benefits from it.

Relentlessly sticking to a very specific and stable dietary philosophy is fragile. You will experience disorder and you will not be able to react to it. A tree bends in the wind to handle disorder in its environment — but a big, stable tree can't bend as far before it breaks. A recent and common example, which you can verify with a few minutes on Facebook or reading blogs in the fitness industry, is the extremely high prevalence of Hashimoto's thyroiditis. Chronically low carbohydrate intake, as seen with rigid ideological low-carb dieting, often combined with high stress, is associated to serious thyroid dysfunction.

In nature, everything moves in waves, with crests and troughs. Biology can be explained by chemistry, chemistry can be explained by physics. An oversimplification, to be sure, but it is our current understanding. We know that the very foundation of physics is the movement of matter through space in the form of waves. Waves carry energy. In a very real sense, change or lack of change carries energy. At a certain point it will take more energy to resist the change than it does to move with the change. The longer you resist the change, the bigger the correction will be when the change of direction finally occurs. Anyone who has seen a figure

competitor binge after a contest can attest to this.

Perhaps you have experienced this yourself. You may have eaten a certain way for quite a while with either positive changes you wanted to see (such as fat loss) or no change at all if you were happy with your current state. Whatever you were doing, you might say it was working for you. At some point, though, it stopped working. You stopped losing fat, maybe even started *gaining* weight even though you were eating the same way. This gets frustrating, so you increase the compliance with whatever you're doing. If you're eating low carb, you cut your carbs even lower. If you're fasting, you fast even more often. If you're eating small meals with high protein, you eat even smaller meals and up your protein intake. Essentially, you apply more effort (no different than the first topic in this book) but it doesn't work. And it *won't* work, because the entire system has changed. You don't need to go further in the same direction, you need to go in an entirely different direction.

Whatever you are doing right now, whatever "works for you" in this moment, is not going to work forever. You should be prepared to change it, and in fact you have to be prepared to anticipate the change and shift before you're forced to. The longer a system has been stable, the more unstable it is. Change will happen. Will you be ready to surf the wave, or will you be drowned by it?

Questions to Ask

1. What are you eating the most of?
2. What are you eating the least of? Could you eat more of that?
3. How many different things, in different categories, do you eat?
4. Are there things you can't eat at all? Can you find a variation, or something close to what you can't eat that you CAN eat? [Ex: You can't drink milk, but you can eat hard cheese. Can you eat softer cheeses?]
5. How often do you eat? Can you eat less often? More often?
6. Can you eat large meals?
7. Can you eat many small meals?
8. Can you go 12 hours without food? 18? 24? 36?
9. Can you operate at your highest level of performance eating low levels of carbohydrates?
10. Can you operate at your highest level of performance eating low levels of fat?
11. Can you operate at your highest level of performance eating low levels of protein?

4. None of the experts actually know better – but you do.

Every once in a while I will run into a frustrating situation with a gym member or online client. Well, it used to be frustrating before I learned to expect it. This person will be making amazing progress. Ridiculous, amazing, unparalleled progress toward his goal, whatever it is. He will of course be thrilled with how things are going. Until he comes to me with doubts and second guesses about what he's doing. All of a sudden, “It can't possibly work!”

This scene has played out enough times that I already know what happened. He had a conversation with some sort of “expert” on the topic. The expert will tell them his plan can't possibly work, and that he'll never achieve his goals. Despite the fact that he are making absurd progress toward it, the expert will tell them it's not possible.

Never mind whether or not this person is legitimately an expert. Oftentimes it's an armchair quarterback who doesn't know much. But even when that person is a legitimate expert in the field, he or she still may not know that much...at least not about you.

Here is why:

What said experts don't understand is that this person has cracked his own DaVinci Code of what unlocks his fastest progress. It may not last forever, as we discussed in the diet topic, but it is working right now. In fact, it is working so well because it is not the mainstream idea of what will work. What usually works for the widest range of people will deliver at best average results for the individual.

Experts can still be useful. An idea from an expert or guru can provide a starting point for testing, or a new direction to experiment in. Some experts even provide a good example of what *not* to do. I'm most interested in ideas from those who did and still do, then those who did but don't, and not interested at all in those who never did.

“Figure out what works for you” is a mantra that deserves more than lip service. You must structure your training, diet, and life so that it's a constant experiment. Ask a question, figure out how you're going to test it, record your results, and analyze. Then, after you've completed all the steps of the experimental method, if you lack ideas for where to go next you should consult an expert for their opinion. Take their opinion, design a new experiment, and test it.

Run your own shit. Be your own scientist. Quit waiting for someone to tell you what else to do. If you like not having to think about it, or just being told what to do, then be prepared to accept mediocrity. You have no idea how good you could be, but a good way to never find out is to expect someone else to take control for you.

Acknowledgements

Nearly everything important I have learned in training has been from Adam T. Glass and Frankie Faires. The concepts I have gleaned from Frankie have literally transformed my worldview, and the application ideas and associations I've learned from Adam have informed my own training and training of others faster than I ever could have on my own. When I first learned the Gym Movement protocol I immediately knew that it was something that needed to be shared. Soon after, I literally dedicated my life to teaching others the Movement protocol through my gym The Movement Minneapolis and through my online presence. The ideas I'm presenting have become my own, and I have evolved them through my application, but I owe a debt to Frankie and Adam for teaching me the fundamental concepts.