

A photograph of a muscular man in a pool, holding a kettlebell underwater. The man is wearing a blue patterned swim cap and goggles. He is holding a black kettlebell in his right hand. The background is the blue tiled floor of the pool, with light reflecting off the water's surface.

How To:

**Win The
Fitness Battle!**

S h a u n K o b e r

Track your path to SUCCESS!

Manage What You Measure

In this day and age, we have a myriad of tools that can give us solid data about whether or not we are moving in the right direction regarding our health and fitness...or not.

Below is a list of OBJECTIVE TRACKING tools that I have used to successfully help my clients attain their individual goals. I will dig into the individual benefits and explain the usages of each tool in their own category throughout this guide.



Fig 1. Most wearables will link seamlessly to your phone via an app. I am currently using the Garmin Instinct 2 watch with the Garmin Connect app, which provides valuable data points I can use to track my training output, stress load, sleep quality and quantity, daily movement, waking heart rate, and recoverability. With this information, I can make educated decisions on how my day should play out

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1. Calorie tracking app
2. Activity tracker
3. Body composition analysis/Bio-impedance scales
4. Tape measure
5. Skin-fold measurements
6. Weekly progress photos
7. Clothes
8. Fitness tests
9. Training journal/log

This list is not exhaustive, and these tools are by no means the only way to measure your progress and make adjustments. They do however give an objective view on what is happening with our progress, and the data allows us to make any adjustments to nutrition, training and recovery as necessary. After all, the numbers don't lie!



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We also have SUBJECTIVE TRACKING tools. These will not give solid data, although they do provide anecdotal evidence of the changes that are occurring, which can be extremely valuable if you know what you are looking for.

The second half of this EBook will be dedicated to some of the signs we can keep an eye out for, to track the health of the organism, and protocols to use to improve these subjective factors.

1. Energy levels
2. Productivity
3. Sleep habits
4. Libido
5. Mood, attitude and mental well-being
6. Hair, skin and nails
7. Immune system



OBJECTIVE TRACKING TOOLS

Calorie Tracking Apps

There are a number of apps available that can help you track your energy intake, which are fairly simple to use once you get the hang of it. Some of the better calorie counters on the market are:

- My Fitness Pal
- Fat Secret
- Lose It
- Chronometer

I personally recommend My Fitness Pal because it is very user-friendly, with a decent enough available database, whilst still doing what it needs to do - count calories, track macros, and provide information on potential nutrient deficiencies.

In saying that, Chronometer has a better database that is a lot more accurate if you are looking for a higher end product, however, you will pay for this experience.

*The below directions are for My Fitness Pal, however, they will all be similar.

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The first goal is track everything you eat and drink for a week, then we make some adjustments. This will be explained in more detail later.

Basic Instructions

- Download the app of your choice

- Input your details and set up your account

- Set your calorie and macronutrient goals

- Add foods. Explore the interface

- Dial it in and start measuring

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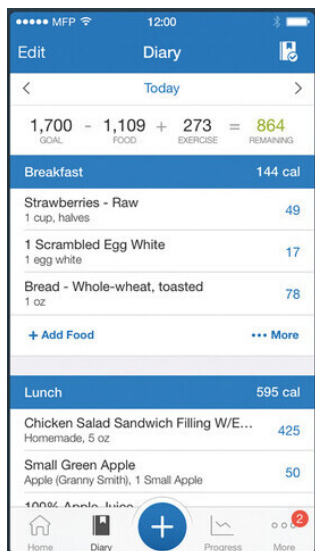
ADVANCED INSTRUCTIONS

You will need your starting/current weight, goal weight, and daily activity level etc. The system will use an algorithm to come up with your recommended daily intake. This is great, but is not totally accurate. Before you start chasing numbers, we need to figure out what your metabolism is currently like.

Go to the menu and click on Goals. Go to calorie and macronutrient goals. Change the calories to 0 (100 if it doesn't allow 0).

Leave the Carbohydrates, Proteins, and Fats as is, and start tracking to get a feel for it. To re-iterate, we're not trying to hit these numbers...YET!

Type in the last food you ate in detail. Eg. spaghetti carbonara. A list



will come up by brands/homemade, some with a green tick, some without. If it has a green tick, it is likely verified and the caloric and macronutrient content will be reasonably accurate. Click on this and adjust the number of servings and/or serving size to suit. Play around with the app for a day or two and get used to logging everything you eat and drink.

You don't have to get too crazy with it yet, just get comfortable with the interface and how it works.

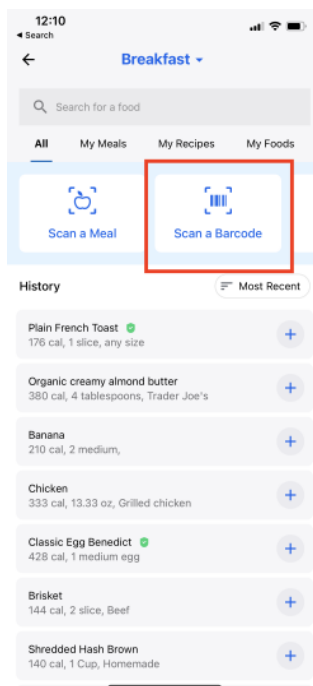
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You will require a set of kitchen scales to log home cooked meals.

Let's say you are making spaghetti carbonara. First, prep all of the food and have it to the left side of the bench, with your scales in the middle. Take each ingredient and weigh it, taking a photo or noting it down, and place it to the right side of the bench. Cooking oil and sauces etc. should also be measured and logged. Go through the process, cook your meal, then ration it out into halves or quarters etc. If you halve it, log half of the original weights of individual ingredients etc. Eg. 400 grams of spaghetti becomes 200 grams.



**There is a bar-code function which will make life so much easier.*



When you log food, you will see a bar-code icon to the right of the search bar. You can simply scan bar-codes and the majority of foods will be listed on the database, with serving sizes and weights etc.

Simply adjust the serving or portion sizes as necessary

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Be consistent - This is important. Try not to change your current eating or drinking habits just yet. If you have a beer after work every day, continue to do so. If you have ice-cream every night, continue to do so without changing the serving sizes.

- There are a few reasons for this

a) I need an idea of where your metabolism is at. You need to keep your current eating and drinking habits the same so I can see what's going on, and make an educated decision on any adjustments we will make in the future. If you are over-eating, it is an easy adjustment, however if you are under-eating, you may have slowed your metabolism, and we will need to reverse diet to reset your metabolism...goal dependent of course

b) We will only make small changes, each day/week. This journey is about setting you up for wins

When you can stack the daily wins, it creates momentum. You win more days through the week than you lose, you win the week. Repeat this for a month, a quarter, a year...that's how you CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

** Wholesale restrictions are simply not sustainable, that's why I don't give out meal plans. I like to see what my clients are eating, and what they enjoy so we can take a flexible approach, and include the things that you like. This is not about cutting out foods, but being flexible and still allowing you to enjoy life.*

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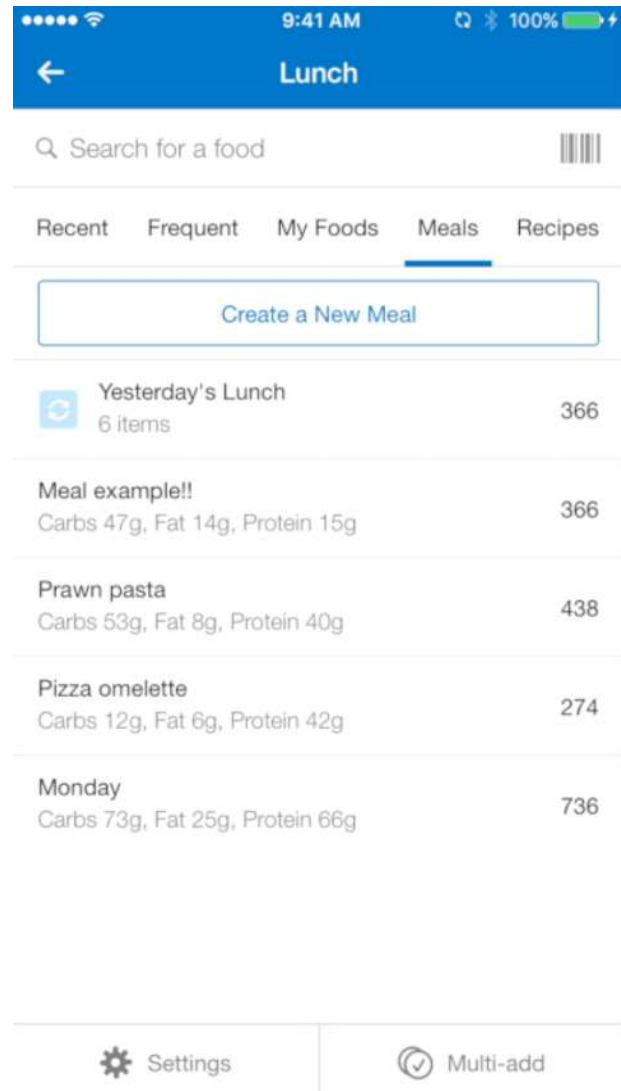
Streamline your efforts - After a few days of getting comfortable with the app, you will be able to log a lot more efficiently and effectively.

If you have the same thing for breakfast every day, go to breakfast, and underneath the calories is the ... symbol. Click on that and then 'add meal.' Save this as whatever you like.

- Eg. 2 pieces of toast
- 25 grams of avocado
- 3 scrambled eggs
- 2 pieces of bacon
- 5 grams of butter
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Tabasco sauce
- Coffee with milk

I will save this as "Breakfast 1"

The next time I have this breakfast, I simply click on add breakfast, scroll across to meals, and add "Breakfast 1"



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Plan ahead for meals out - It is extremely hard to accurately track if you are always eating out. But we can try our best. I recommend planning ahead and looking at the menu online prior to going to a restaurant. Make a conscious decision on what you are going to eat, or choose between two or three meals that you are interested in. Again, this is not going to be totally accurate but at least it will give you a ballpark figure...something is better than nothing.

Track for a week and figure out your daily average - Once you have consistently and accurately tracked, we can start making adjustments to calorie intake and macronutrient ratios. Log down all of your caloric intake numbers from the past week. Add them up and divide by the number of days you have tracked for (ideally 7). This will give us both an understanding of where your metabolism is at. If you have been eating this way already for 6 months, my recommendations will be different to if you have been eating this way for 3 weeks. **CONTEXT MATTERS!**

Adjust your numbers according to your goals - Now that we have your baseline metabolism, we can start adjusting numbers to suit goals.

For educational purposes, I'm going to say that your daily average caloric intake for the past 7 days is 2150 kCal, and you've been eating this way for 3 months, along with an adjustment in training program around the same time.

You got great results to begin with, now you've hit a plateau, and don't know where to go. I've got you covered.

Here's an example of your next steps...

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+ Let's say you want to build strength and put on some muscle/size.



We need you to be in a caloric surplus to support the building and re-generation of muscle tissue without putting on excess fat. This is called an **ANABOLIC ENVIRONMENT**.

We do this by bumping your daily caloric needs up to roughly 2400. You might maintain this for a period of 4 to 6 weeks before returning back to maintenance levels (2150)

Or, if you've put on a little muscle without too much fat, you could repeat the process by bumping up to 2700kCal per day.

Not only is nutrition important, so too is training. They work hand-in-hand.

We also need to be sending the right signal. This is done through big compound movements, where the focus is on generating tension. Sleds and carries, deadlift/squat/lunge variations, push/pull variations, and core based movement/anti-movement exercises are my Go-To's for this category. I like a blend of Strongman,

Powerlifting, and Bodybuilding style work in this phase, along with low level AEROBIC work. If you understand how to use periodisation, you will adjust the training to match the bumps in calories. You could quite easily have 3



months of solid growth ahead of you to put on some quality muscle, then go through a 'BURN' phase to reduce body fat...

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- If you want to drop some body weight and lean out a little, we need to



put you into enough of a caloric deficit that you start tapping into stored fat, without also burning off hard earned muscle. This is called a CATABOLIC ENVIRONMENT.

We do this by dropping your daily caloric needs to roughly 1700. You might maintain this for a period of 4 to 6 weeks before returning back to maintenance levels (2150) over the course of a few weeks. This is an

example of how I like to use a reverse diet. I build it into the system.

For example

6 weeks at 1700cals

1 week at 1800cals

1 week at 1900cals

1 week at 2000cals

1 week at 2150cals

From here, you will have likely lost a few kgs, and been able to keep it off, whilst getting stronger in the gym, and back to eating 'normal'.

If this process has gone well, I will typically recommend continuing to bump calories up for another few weeks. We essentially go through a BUILD phase. If I can get someone to drop a few kgs of fat, then put on some muscle and strength, and after 3 months they are the same weight, stronger, leaner, healthier, and eating 2800 calories per day...it's a much stronger position to start the next BURN phase!

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The art is in finding the sweet spot for each individual!

Not only is nutrition important, so too is training. They work hand-in-hand.

We also need to be sending the right signal. This is done mainly through big compound movements, where the focus is on full range of movement exercises for higher reps. Goblet squats, wall balls, kettlebell swings, glute bridges, step ups, lunges, pushups, pullups, dips, rows, presses, and direct abs work are my Go-To's for this category.



I like a blend of Bodybuilding style work, and short, intense CrossFit style work in this phase, along with mid level AEROBIC work. If you understand how to use periodisation, you will adjust the training to match the reduction in calories. You could quite easily have a month or two of solid leaning out ahead of you to drop some body fat, then go through a 'BUILD' phase to add muscle mass...

I've found the best way to create a sustainable energy deficit, is by adding in some extra movement by way of steps each day, whilst reducing calories in the form of food/drink.

Move a little more. Eat a little less.

One last thing to consider. In a CATABOLIC state, the goal is not to be hitting PR's in the gym. The goal is on improving body composition.

Ensure you're focusing on the right numbers!

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= If you are happy with your current weight and just want to maintain, whilst putting on a little muscle and burning a little fat, then we maintain your calories at the maintenance level (2150) and simply make some adjustments to your macronutrient ratios.

I like the 40:30:30 Carbs:Proteins:Fats ratio to begin with (as mentioned earlier) and from there we can assess how the body feels and adjust as necessary.

This will be determined by your individual needs, and factors to consider are; Energy levels, baseline metabolism, sleep patterns, training regime, current strength and fitness levels, daily activities, hobbies, stress, and ability to recover etc.

An example of how I would structure training and nutrition would be as follows:

Week 1 - 3: 2400cals and Strongman/BodyBuilding blend style training (BUILD)

Week 4 - 6: 1900cals and Spin or lower intensity, longer duration, circuit style training (BURN)

Week 7 - 9: 2150cals and CrossFit/F45/Orange Theory style training (BALANCE)

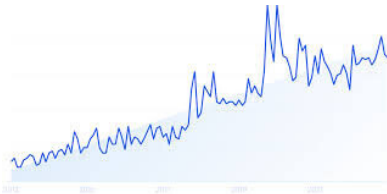
****These guidelines do not account for your individual needs, however I've found them to be a good starting point for educational purposes.***

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Due to the law of thermodynamics, it is very hard to build muscle and burn fat at the same time, unless you are a beginner trainee, or you understand how to manipulate macronutrients and training variables. Whilst it is possible, we should be focused on either building (ANABOLIC STATE) or burning (CATABOLIC STATE) if our goal is Body Re-composition.

It is not a great idea to stay in a surplus or deficit for extended periods of time. Our body is an adaptive organism and it will up-regulate or down-regulate our metabolism according to our energy intake. I recommend cycling between building and burning, for shorter periods, whilst eating at maintenance level the majority of the time, but I will go through this process with you during our coaching calls.

"The man that chases two rabbits catches neither!"



Test and adjust - The importance of tracking your progress can not be under-estimated.

This will let you know whether what you are doing is working, or if you need to make some adjustments.

*All of the upcoming tools are necessary to provide feedback and data for how your mind and body is responding. Good quality Nutrition is one of the best and most effective ways to make changes to your Mindset and Performance. Even with the best training program money can buy, it's how we fuel and recover that yields the best results.

"We can only manage what we measure!"

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Activity/Fitness Trackers



Costing anywhere from an average of \$50 up to \$500+, an activity tracker can be a sizeable investment - something many of us are happy to make - providing they add benefit.

Since they arrived on the market in the early/mid 20XX/teens, activity or fitness trackers/wearables have made a huge impact, becoming the must-have gadget for those looking to boost their activity, get fitter and shed the kilos.

Millions of activity trackers, from a range of brands are sold worldwide each year, so clearly there is something about these wearable tech gadgets that has people hooked.

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Able to track and monitor a range of variables, can what is effectively a souped-up pedometer really help people to get fit and shed the kilos? In short, the answer is yes! Thanks to the information an activity tracker provides, wearers are better able to see where they need to up their activity levels. However, an activity tracker only provides information and it is up to the user how they interpret this data.

Logging everything from movement to heart rate, calories and sleep, activity trackers/wearables are marketed at everybody, irrespective of current fitness levels.

I see massive benefits for everyone, from those that need a prompt to get some extra movement in to shed some weight, as well as those at the top end trying to optimise performance!

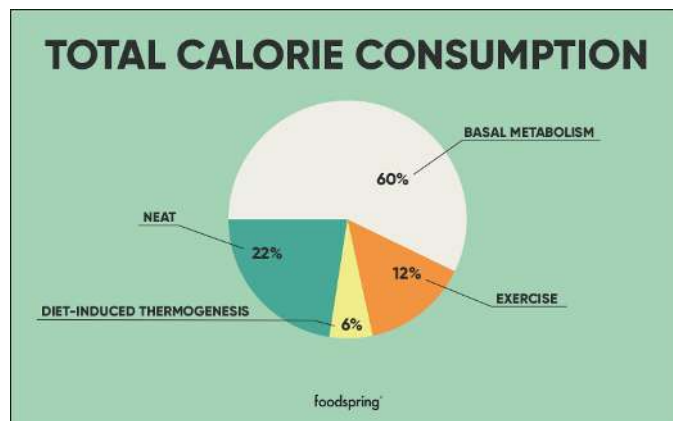
Once your activity, or lack of, is highlighted to you it becomes easier to tackle it.

Small changes in your NEAT (Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis) activity – those everyday movements, excluding sleeping, eating and sports, that help to burn calories – can have a big impact.

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In fact, NEAT activity could be an important element of overall fitness. It is estimated* that highly active individuals expend 50% of their energy through NEAT activity compared to just 15% for those who live a more sedentary lifestyle.

For those who spend much of their time sitting, such as office workers and those who drive for a living, activity trackers with features such as a



'move prompt' can be really useful. Simply set the tracker to prompt movement, or muscle activation every 30 minutes or so, and wearers will soon find their NEAT activity levels rising.

*Consider this; Due to the technology currently available, we no longer have to do as many physical tasks. There are now robots that will vacuum your floor for you. You can order takeaway and not even have to get off the couch. How many people do you know that work in an office all day, to then drive to the gym, to sit on an exercise bike?

I myself wear a watch, and find it extremely intriguing when I have a busy day to find myself covering 20,000 steps, or 15kms +. Other days when I am not coaching as much, and spend time working on my laptop, I may only hit 6,000 steps or about 4kms throughout the day. To me, this data is gold, because it allows me to adjust my daily nutrition accordingly. I move more, I get to eat more. Less than 10,000 steps per day, I limit my food and drink intake...

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My Top Tips for IMPROVING your Fitness and Body Composition

❖ Up your NEAT.

Little changes such as parking the car further away from where you are headed, taking the stairs and walking more will all help to burn calories and boost your energy levels. Simply walking for an hour a day can help you burn through more energy, and leave you in a caloric deficit if your goal is weight loss. It's not difficult to do, and you can actually be productive whilst doing it. This is when I recommend making your phone calls, scroll through socials, answer emails, or catch up with friends etc. Plus it has the added benefit of leaving you feeling refreshed due to fresh air and getting some daily movement in

❖ Find a fitness activity you enjoy.

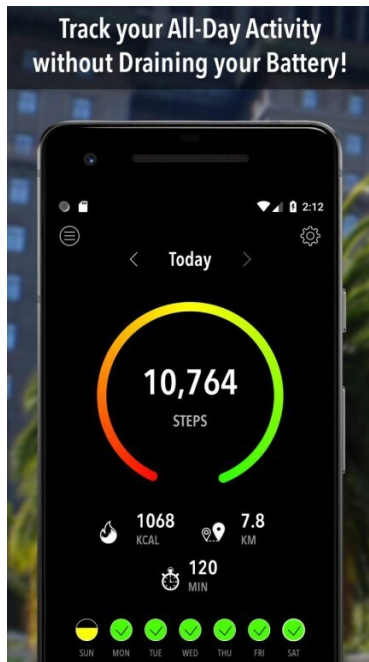
As with everything in life there is no 'one size fits all' solution to getting fitter or changing your body composition. Try as many different activities as you need to until one sticks. It might be as simple as throwing a frisbee or kicking a footy around with your mates or family etc. Then make a commitment to XX minutes per week

❖ Make fitness a part of your day.

Rather than viewing physical activity as just another job to get done, integrate your workouts into your day, and you'll be less likely to skip sessions.

This doesn't have to be anything hardcore. Just simply getting some extra movement throughout the day should be sufficient

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**An activity tracker will give you the data you require. It is up to you to take that data and apply the necessary steps to ensure you are at least being moderately active. An example of this is to track your daily steps and take an average over the course of a week. If you are considerably under 10,000 steps, periodically add an extra 1,000 – 2,000 steps per day to bump your numbers up over a couple of weeks until you are consistently hitting 10,000 steps.*

This is a very simple way of increasing your energy output without having to resort to harder exercise, or diving into long and arduous cardio sessions. They are tools for you to apply once you hit a plateau. At the end of the day, if you can get better results with little effort, other than simply being aware of how active or inactive you are on a daily basis, then you too can consider your energy (food and drink) requirements each day.

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Body Composition Analysis/ Bio-Impedance Scales



Scales can be a wonderful tool to track any weight changes that occur during any adjustments to the nutrition and training regime...but they don't tell the full story. Yes you may see that you've lost some weight, but it doesn't tell you where that weight loss has come from.

Have you lost hard earned muscle, which provides a service for us, like: movement, strength, and stability etc...or has it come from reducing your fat stores?

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A simple and effective way to measure your progress regarding changes in body composition is to utilise a bio-impedance scale, or to book yourself in for a professional body composition analysis.

There are a number of devices available that can tell you what your body is composed of, and I will cover a few of them below, along with their benefits and drawbacks.

DEXA scan DEXA or Dual Energy X-Ray Absorptiometry

DEXA is an advanced, medically-developed technology originally used to assess bone health, and has more recently become the gold standard in body composition measurement.

- This will give you a very accurate reading on your body composition, which includes muscle mass, bone density, and fat stores in kilograms and as a percentage, as well as your BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate) and a whole host of other information

- Although this is the gold standard of testing, they also attract a gold standard price. DEXA scans generally take around five minutes to complete, and start around the \$80 mark...which could add up quite quickly if you are testing consistently

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Underwater (Hydrostatic) Weighing

Previously known as the gold standard in the industry for testing body composition, this is changing and has recently been replaced by DEXA scans, simply because of the cumbersome specialist equipment required, and the impracticality of finding the correct specialist equipment.

I won't go into detail on the methods used because it is unlikely that you will go down this path for your testing, however feel free to do your own research if it is something you are interested in.

Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis (BIA)

There are two different types of BIA machines, for professional use and at home use, however they work in a similar way.

A very low, safe electrical signal is sent from metal electrodes through your feet to your legs and abdomen. In segmental models, the hand-held electrodes will provide extra readings for each leg, arm and abdominal area. The electrical signal passes quickly through water that is present in hydrated muscle tissue, but meets resistance when it hits fat tissue. This resistance, known as impedance, is measured and input into scientifically validated equations to calculate body composition measurements. Depending on the monitor, body composition measurements are provided in under 20 seconds.

The best BIA machines are generally for professional use and come with a hefty price tag to buy outright. Find someone in your area that has a machine and ask for a discount on multiple readings if you go down this path.

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InBody and Tanita machines are some of the better options for testing and will give results for total skeletal muscle mass, total body fat, total body fat percentage, visceral fat, total body water, segmental muscle and fat analysis, bone mineral content, and BMR.

These consultations, tests, and analysis of the results start from about \$40 - \$50 each depending on what comes with the service, but you should get a cheaper deal if you ask for a multi-deal package.



These sturdy machines will have segmental components consisting of metal electrodes on the platform which you stand, as well as handles to grasp, which will give you a more accurate reading of the composition of your individual limbs (to see structural imbalances) as well as total body analysis.

Body fat scales

These scales are relatively cheap, but are very practical for at home use. You can buy them from most home-ware outlets and for the most basic versions you will be paying about \$30 - \$40, but can quickly jump up to around \$200 for the higher end products.

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Body fat scales can be a better indicator of overall health than their conventional weighing scale cousins. They work by sending a very low



electrical current through your body via your feet. Tissue containing a lot of water, such as muscle, lets the current through easily, but fat contains comparatively little water, so it resists the current – the higher the impedance, the more fat there is in your body. The scales use that data,

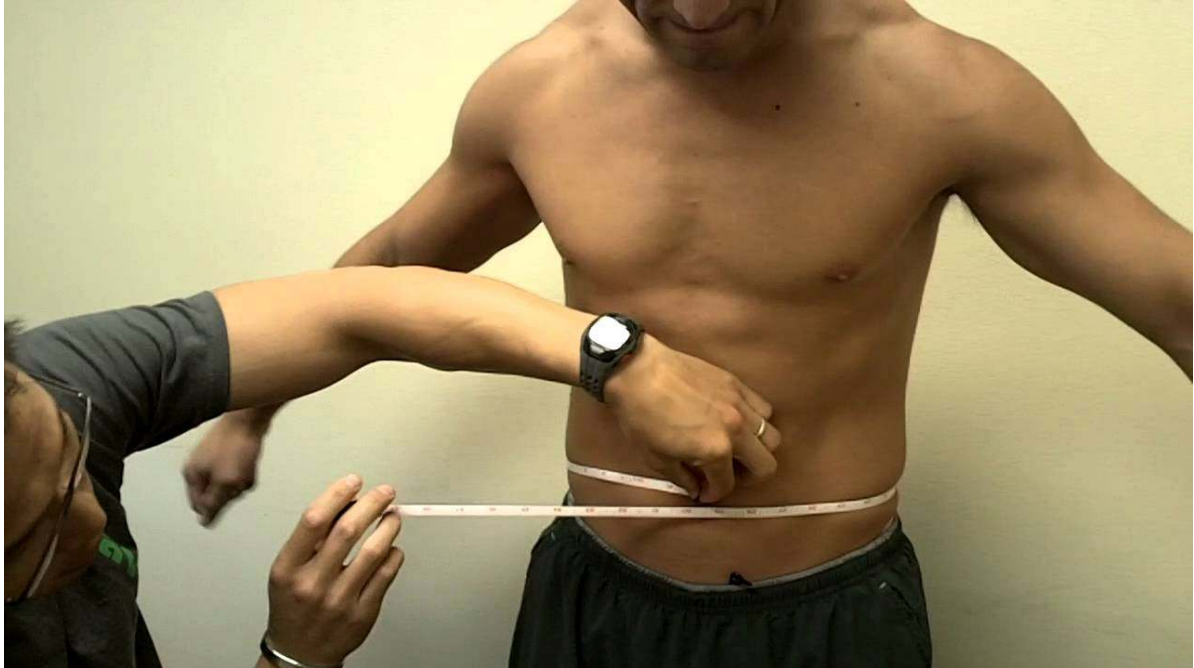
together with personal data you enter such as your height, age, sex and fitness level, to calculate your body fat percentage.

While these are relatively practical and easy to use, please understand that the accuracy can be questionable compared with other means of body composition testing. If using these scales, the reading will generally only be considering the lower body and will be “guessing” the composition of the trunk and upper limbs.

This is not a great issue if you are relatively balanced, but it will throw off the readings if you store more fat in the upper body than you do in the lower, or vice versa.

**It is important to note that you need to be consistent in the testing methods that you use. If possible, always use the same machine, under the same conditions. You cannot compare two different methods, or different machines.*

Tape measure



There are two types of fat, white fat and brown fat.

Brown fat is common in infants and helps them to stay warm by generating heat. By the time we are adults, most brown fat is gone and we are left with white fat.

White fat is stored two different ways, as subcutaneous fat and visceral fat.

Of these two types, subcutaneous fat is the most easily identifiable because it is stored directly under the skin.

Visceral fat, on the other hand, is stored inside the body, around the organs.

Of the two storage areas for fat, subcutaneous fat is the more desirable physiologically, however it is unsightly and may be a worry to people who are concerned about their appearance. Subcutaneous fat basically covers your muscles and can give a “puffy” look.

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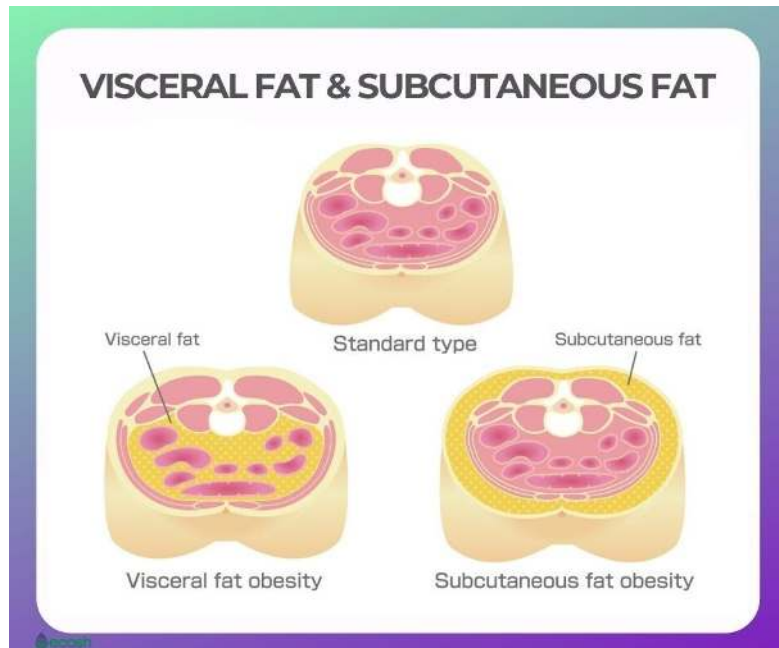
Visceral fat is the more dangerous fat, slowly secreting inflammatory chemicals known as cytokines into the blood that can lead to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and many other health problems.

Because we can't "see" visceral fat, it is not generally seen as a

concern for most people. However if you have higher/excess levels of subcutaneous fat, it will generally be a great indicator of higher levels of visceral fat surrounding your organs, and a sign of a potential reduction in other health markers.

Subsequently, this could lead to increased risks of chronic illnesses and diseases, if not addressed through addressing and improving the **LIFESTYLE FACTORS**.

The simple and basic, yet practical tape measure is a great tool to check in, and see if your training and nutrition regime is moving you in the right direction. Whilst it is certainly not the most accurate way of tracking your changes in body composition, it can certainly be a good gauge as to whether or not you are trending in the right direction.



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An example of this is if you haven't lost any weight on the scales, but your tape measure results have decreased...particularly around the waist. These numbers (in centimetres or inches) will indicate that you have likely lost some visceral and subcutaneous fat, and decreased your risk of developing chronic issues through improving your health. If this is the case, it may indicate that you have actually put on around about the same amount of muscle as the fat you have lost. Nice work!

Using the tape measure, you simply take a girth measurement from a number of sites on the body. Try to use reference points like moles or freckles, or belly button etc. to ensure you are accurate in your readings. Ensure the tape measure is evenly wrapped and parallel to the ground. It can be easier to ask a friend or family member to help with the taking of measurements if need be.

There are a number of areas I like to measure which include:

- Neck (measure at thickest point)
- Chest (measure around the nipples)
- Waist (measure at the narrowest point)
- Hips (measure at the widest point)
- Thigh* (measure at the thickest point) [Can be difficult to judge]
- Calf* (measure at the thickest point)
- Upper arm* (measure at the thickest point)

*Ideally, measure limbs on the right side for consistency purposes. The caveat to this is if you are left handed/footed. Measure your dominant side, but take note of the side that is measured. As with any progress tracking tool, we want to minimise the variables to ensure repeatability.

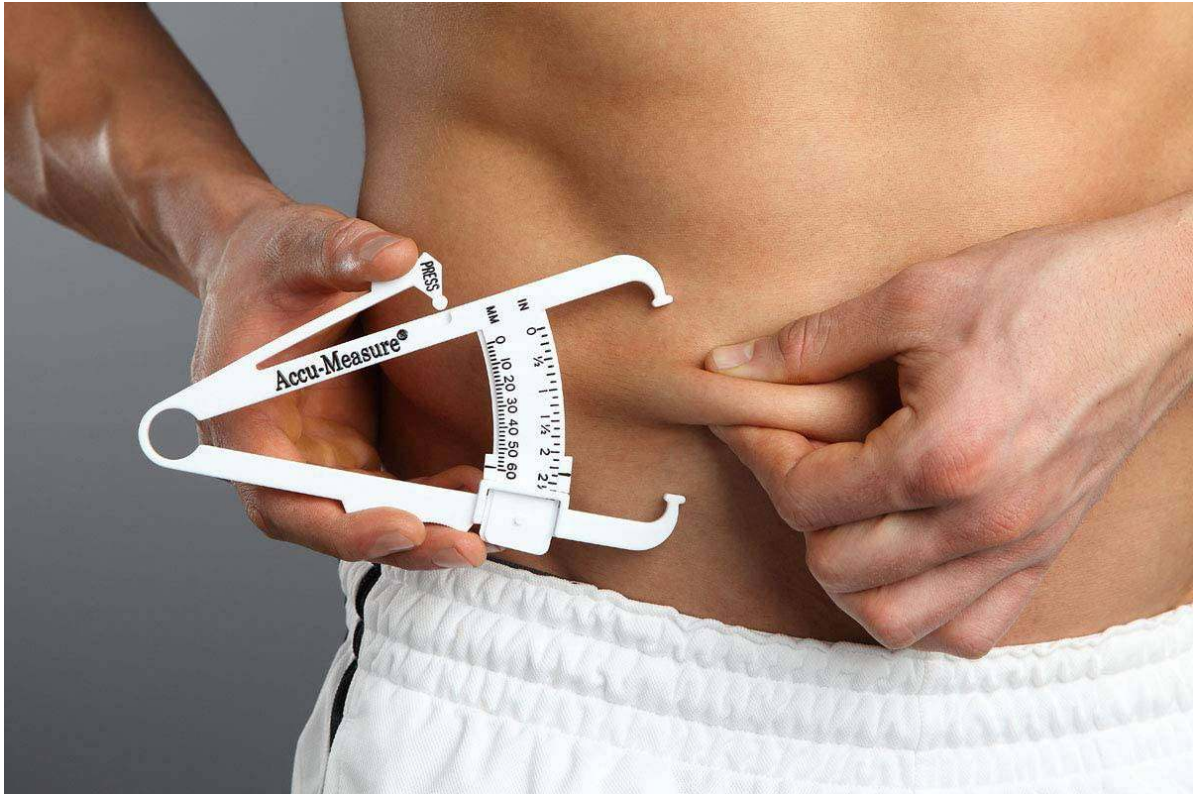
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Measure at the same time, on the same day, under the same conditions, if possible. The aim of this game is REPEATABILITY.

An excellent time to do this is first thing in the morning right after getting out of bed. Get on the scales, take some progress photos (front side and back) and then take your girth measurements. Do this weekly over a sustained period of time, say three months. Whilst the results won't be huge from week to week, you should start seeing your numbers decrease over time (if you're goal is to lose weight/fat) or increase in the right areas (if your goal is to put on weight/muscle)

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Skin Fold Calipers



The skinfold caliper is a simple device which measures the thickness of a fold of your skin, with its underlying layer of fat (subcutaneous fat).

By doing this at key locations on the body, you can get quite an accurate representation of the total amount of fat that is on your body. It is also possible to estimate the total percentage of body fat that you are carrying, by using a number of formulas available.

There are many different types of skinfold calipers, ranging from \$10 up to \$500. You will need to search in your local area for some decent, yet inexpensive calipers that will aid you in tracking any body composition changes. You should be able to buy these at any decent sports store close by...otherwise you can order them online.

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Procedure for taking skinfold measurements:

1. Ideally, have a friend take your measurements - This will allow you to use a formula which includes more sites that you won't be able to reach yourself, and subsequently, provide a more accurate reading.

If you don't have someone to do it for you, you will need to choose a method that you can carry out yourself, which will include easier to reach places, but less sites to measure

With a friend – Use the Parrillo method (9 sites) or the Jackson/Pollock 7 caliper method (7 sites)

On your own – Use the Jackson/Pollock 4 caliper method (4 sites)

Use this site: <http://www.linear-software.com/online.html>

2. Firmly grasp a fold of your skin about an inch wide, between your thumb and index finger and pull straight out from the skin. The skinfold should include two thicknesses; one of skin, and one of the subcutaneous fat, but no muscle or fascia.

3. Place the contact surface of the calipers at a 90 degree angle to the skinfold, approximately 1cm below the fingers. Slightly release the pressure between the fingers, but remain holding the skinfold so that a greater pressure is applied by the calipers. Release the handle of the calipers and read the needle to the nearest 0.1mm approximately 2 seconds after the pressure is released.



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4. It is recommended to take a reading from each site, then go through the process again at least once. If you get a reading that is not consistent with the first measurement, move on to complete all of the sites, then return to those sites to get a confirmation reading.

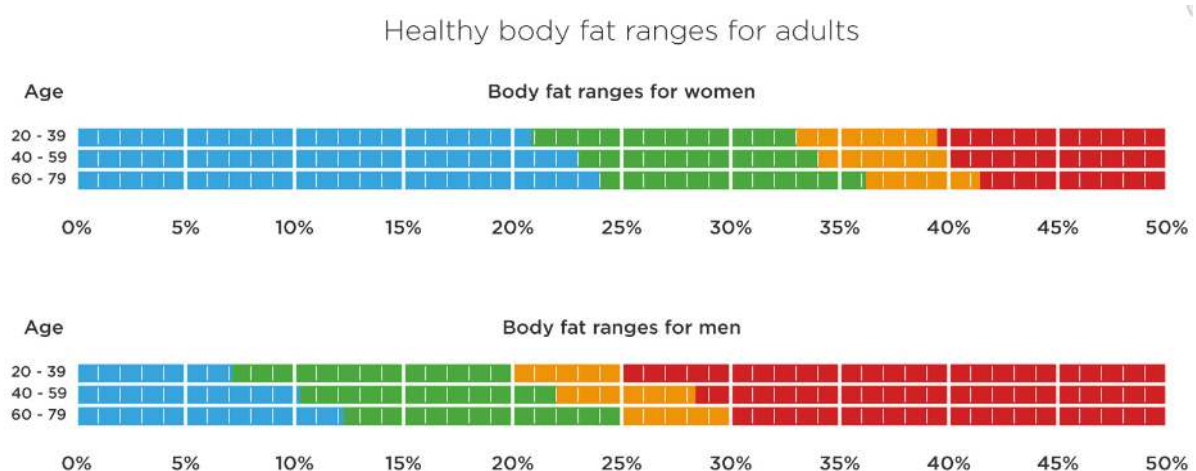
If you get three different readings each time, note the average and use that.

5. Log the results from each site, along with your metrics (kg/cm, lb/in), sex, age and weight.

Use this site: <http://www.linear-software.com/online.html>

6. You will get a reading which includes your estimated body fat percentage, how much fat you are carrying in kilograms or pounds, and your lean body mass/weight.

Record these results and check again periodically. I suggest every three to four weeks to ensure your training and nutrition is moving you in the right direction.



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Here are some key points to remember when taking skinfold measurements:

- Ensure you are careful in locating the anatomical landmarks used to identify the skinfold site
- Take all skinfolds on the right side of the body (for reliability)
- Ensure that you take the skinfold in a rotational order (circuit) and do not complete consecutive readings at each skinfold site
- Grasp the skinfold firmly between your thumb and index finger of your left hand. The skinfold is lifted 1 cm and recorded with the calipers held in the right hand
- Keep the fold elevated while the measurement is recorded
- Take the skinfold measurement 2 seconds after the caliper pressure is released
- Take a minimum of two measurements at each site. The acceptable range between repeated measures is 1mm. If the values vary by more than 1mm take an additional measurement and use the average of the three measurements
- Skinfold measurements should not be taken when the skin is wet or after exercise
- Age, size and state of hydration may affect skinfold measurement

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***As with everything, consistency is key! Try to replicate the scenario as accurately as possible each time, as there are a number of factors which will influence the accuracy of the results. These include water and sodium levels, nutrition, when you exercised last, stress levels etc.**

Ideally, these measurements should be taken first thing in the morning as soon as you get out of bed at the same time and day, along with any other progress tracking tools you are using.

Monday morning is generally an easy time to schedule, however if you like to have a drink on the weekend you may be better off using a Friday morning.

It is also important to note that you must be consistent with the method that you use. You could enter the data from each site into a different method (Parrillo, Jackson/Pollock 7 caliper, 4 caliper etc.) and each will give you a different result.

Don't read into the differing results from these methods.

Simply replicate the method each time and compare the results.

****If you decide to use a different method in the future, you must void the previous results as it is not an accurate representation for comparison!***

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Weekly progress photos

Everyone is on the constant lookout for the newest app or piece of technology that will help them take their health and fitness journey to the next level. Well, you already carry one with you everywhere you go, and it is built into your phone.

One of the most practical, yet under-utilised tracking tools you have available is weekly progress photos. Everyone has a mobile phone, and everyone knows how to use a camera. The simplicity of taking before and after photos, or progress photos each week is often overlooked. However, this can be an awesome way to see your body changing...even if the scale weight doesn't.

Because we live with ourselves every day, we don't see the incremental changes that occur over time. But compare two photos three months apart and you will definitely see some changes, providing your training, nutrition and recovery are in order.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci9kvEnpMPi/?hl=en>

Watch my own 6-Week Transformation at the link above

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Watch the Full 6-Week Transformation Series here:

[https://youtube.com/playlist?](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpGfAuoXCoBNuuD3Bkyq0UYZ1eu5lfzVz)

[list=PLpGfAuoXCoBNuuD3Bkyq0UYZ1eu5lfzVz](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpGfAuoXCoBNuuD3Bkyq0UYZ1eu5lfzVz)

Think about a friend who has recently bought a puppy.

Let's say you don't see this person and their new pup for a couple of months.

Now when you see them you remark "Wow he's grown so much!"

Your friend won't have realised just how much, as they see the puppy every day.

It is the same with our bodies.

Physiological changes take time to occur, and the daily changes are generally so small that they go unnoticed.

Give it some time and then compare week to week, month to month, before and after etc.

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❖ Choose a day that is going to suit you to take your progress pics.

Monday is always a fan favourite, however I like Friday mornings as you have generally been pretty good throughout the week. Wednesday is a good balance.

Ideally, every day works best, if you can tag it into your morning routine somewhere.

"I will take my morning photo after I have been on the scale, and before I brush my teeth."

*Insert what is repeatable for you with little effort.

❖ Try to replicate the conditions as closely as possible.

Mornings, after emptying the bowels is usually the best time, simply because it's the easiest to minimise/control the variables.

I have literally taken my body composition analysis 6 times across a work day, simply because I have access to a machine, and I wanted to test for myself how much variance there is in the readings under different circumstances.

It was staggering.

My body composition reading swung by up to 3% changes in Body Fat Percentage within an hour timeframe.

I was intentionally measuring at different periods, to understand how manipulating water, food, training and timing affected the results.

Pre and post breakfast.

Pre training and post training.

Pre and post lunch.

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I have never conducted the same experiment with photos, however, I guarantee that if you did take multiple photos and weigh-ins across the day, you would start asking questions about how and why you need an understanding of the factors that influence weight/look/performance.

❖ Take a photo from the front, side, and back if possible.

Relax in the shots.

Try to wear the same underwear and duplicate the distance, angle, lighting etc each time.

❖ Store them in a folder on your phone or upload to your computer.

Better yet, print them out and blu-tac them to the inside of your bedroom door, and watch the magic unfold as you compare daily, weekly and monthly progress photos.

There's nothing more humbling than taking absolute ownership of your situation. Progress photos are a representation of your daily actions and priorities, whether you like that or not. If you really want to change your current situation, you have to take a progress photo every single day for the next year. This is for the person you were, the person you are, and the person you will become!

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Clothes

How your clothes fit over time can be a reliable indicator of changes that occur in your body, even if weight hasn't shifted.

Muscle is denser than fat, so it takes up less space on your body. If the scales haven't changed up or down, but your clothes are fitting better, you can put money on you having built some muscle and losing some fat.

This ties in with the tape measure results. Any reduction in girth

measurements will mean a reduction in weight and/or body fat.

It's likely at this point you will also notice a little more definition in one or two areas of your progress photos, that wasn't there before.

I recommend finding an item, or items of clothing that you used to be able to comfortably wear, but now doesn't fit as well as it used to. Or something else that you have bought or were gifted that you would love to wear, but didn't quite feel right.



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Try them on and take some photos. Take note of how they feel and how they fit. Hang them somewhere that you will see them every day. This will be a reminder to you that you have set a goal and you need to consistently work towards that goal. Try them on the same day that you take your progress photos and any other metrics you are using to track progress. Again, take notes and photos for comparison purposes. If it feels looser somewhere, note it down. If it is swimming on you and you are trying to fill it out, note it down. Check in once a week, or fortnight, for any changes that have occurred and make some adjustments as necessary.

*Point to note – it takes a while for physiological changes to occur. Don't be frustrated if you haven't seen the results you want after a week or two. Give it time for the processes you have put in place to take hold, and your body to start physically changing. How you feel, your sleep, your energy levels and productivity levels are also great indicators for things moving in the right direction. Just give it time and be patient.

I have had clients call me, super excited because they no longer fit into their clothes, and are required to go shopping for a whole new wardrobe.

This is a process, it takes time. But give it the necessary time and discipline, and the reward of buying a whole new wardrobe will get you through...if you're that way inclined.

If not, then the improved health and energy levels will suffice!

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Fitness Testing

First of all... **WHAT IS FITNESS?**



Fitness has a different meaning to everyone. What is important to you may not be important to the next person, however there are some universal qualities that the majority of people would like to improve.

These are as follows:

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- Cardiovascular / respiratory endurance - The ability of the body's systems to gather, process, and deliver oxygen
- Stamina - The ability of the body's systems to process, deliver, store, and utilise energy
- Strength - The ability of a muscular unit, or combination of muscular units, to apply different types of force
- Mobility/Flexibility - The ability to maximise the range of motion at a given joint, under control
- Power - The ability of a muscular unit, or combination of muscular units, to apply maximum force in minimum time
- Speed - The ability to minimise the time cycle of a repeated movement
- Coordination - The ability to combine several distinct movement patterns into a singular distinct movement
- Agility - The ability to minimise transition time from one movement pattern or direction to another
- Balance - The ability to control the placement of the body's centre of gravity in relation to its support base
- Accuracy - The ability to control movement in a given direction or at a given intensity

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Improvements in endurance, stamina, strength, and flexibility develop through training. Training refers to activity that improves performance through a measurable organic change in the body (1 – 4)

By contrast, improvements in coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy improve through practice. Practice refers to activity that improves performance through changes in the nervous system (7 – 10)

Power and speed are adaptations of both training AND practice (5 & 6)

Whilst all of the above components are important, they should be prioritised in order to develop 1 to 3 qualities at a time. There will be some carry-over of these physical qualities to each other, however, to maximise results and economy of effort, you should use phasing within your training program to accomplish the desired effect. This is covered in a lot more detail in the TRAIN + package, where I will be available for group coaching

You can find an extensive list of testing protocols at the following website: <http://www.topendsports.com/testing/tests.htm>

I couldn't find any great tests for accuracy online, but think about throwing a cricket ball at stumps, or a dart at a board etc. Fitness testing is simply taking periodic measurements of the body's capabilities and its responses to exercise so that we can work out where a component of someone's fitness is, at any given moment in time.

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This will allow us to make any necessary changes to the training program, or will give us an idea of whether or not our programming is working effectively.

Keeping track of these numbers can really give you a boost in confidence and give you some solid data to show that the work you are putting in, is getting you the results you desire, particularly if you are high performance, or sports focused.

I keep a log of all of my 1RM lifts, and the dates that I hit them stored in my notes on my phone.

I also have a fitness test that I have developed for myself and my clients over the years that combines all of the primary movement patterns, which I will test periodically to determine if I need to add, drop, or change anything in my training program.

Training Journal/Logbook

Using a training journal isn't very sexy...but it's damn impactful!

There are so many reasons why it is beneficial to have a training diary. From knowing exactly what you are doing, to knowing exactly how much you've progressed. Keep a log of everything you lift and everything you measure, to help keep you on track or allow you to make educated decisions on what to change.

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The image shows an open spiral-bound notebook with two blank pages for tracking exercise. Each page is divided into three main sections:

- DATE:** A small box at the top left of each page for writing the date.
- Exercise:** A large grid for recording workout data. It has 8 columns labeled SET 1 through SET 8. Each set column is further divided into two sub-columns: WEIGHT and REPS. The word "Exercise" is written in a cursive font in the top left of this section.
- Cardio / Notes:** A rectangular box at the bottom of each page for recording cardio activity or additional notes.

Studies have pointed to the effectiveness of self-monitoring, which involves regularly tuning into, and recording observations of your progress toward goals. Using a training log is a great tool for collecting your training data, and can provide concrete indicators of change and strategy effectiveness. Plus, it has a way of holding us accountable for our behaviours.

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Keeps you honest

How many times have you walked into the gym without a clear plan of what you wanted to do? Did you complete your workout efficiently? Or did you skip out on some exercises and sets because you simply weren't "feeling it?"

Having your workout written out ahead of time in your logbook eliminates the mental struggle we engage in, the back-and-forth, where we try to legitimise ducking out early.

Make better goals

The only thing worse than not setting goals is setting unrealistic goals. Creating ambitious goals that stretch you to your limits are great, but massive and ultimately unrealistic goals leading you to fall short, only serve to discourage and demoralise.

Seeing how quickly (or alternatively, how slowly) you progress at the gym provides you with the feedback necessary to set fitness goals that are realistic, and will keep you from prematurely discouraging yourself.

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Get inspired

One of the most rewarding aspects of keeping track of your workouts is the ability to periodically flip through and look over the work you have done.

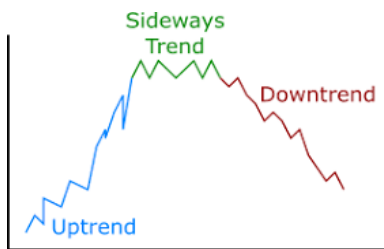
You'll see results where you burst through plateaus, where you ran longer and faster than you ever thought possible, where you strung together 14 consecutive days of workouts. These feats in your exercise history will fill you with a sense of pride and remind you just how capable you are.

More importantly, it will give you that jolt of fire in your belly to get back at it and maintain the rage.

Find patterns

Taking note of your workouts, nutrition, rest and stress levels, will allow you to find patterns.

Why do you feel like a beast some days, while on other days you are shuffling along, barely interested in going for a walk, let alone the gym? How many times have you not felt the best at the gym, and not really bothered to ask yourself why? Odds are you passed it off, and trudged along with your day, not bothering to investigate why you felt a little off. Usually the reasons aren't completely apparent; a bad night's sleep, poor nutrition the day before, and so on.



Having all of that information can allow you to establish patterns, so you can maximise the days you feel like a boss, and minimise the ones where you don't feel so great.

Think of it as the ultimate feedback loop for your physical fitness.

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Train harder

An aspect of keeping a workout journal that most people don't necessarily think about is the desire to write out a good workout each day. I cannot count how many times the thought of having to write out a bad workout actually kept me from having one. Dips in motivation and focus will happen at the gym, but often the trepidation of detailing a less than stellar workout will overrule the yearning to bounce early.

Steps towards your goals

Not only can a workout log help you craft better goals, it can also be the battle plan for achieving them. Whether the goals are ultra short term (that day), or the big audacious long term goals, you can track and measure all of them within the pages of a training journal.

Blow off some steam

Track your fitness regimen, and then write out how you felt that day, including your mood, any extra factors that affected your workout, or anything else that is bouncing around that brain of yours.

Your workout log gives you a chance to vent, and provides a judgement-free sounding board for how you're feeling.

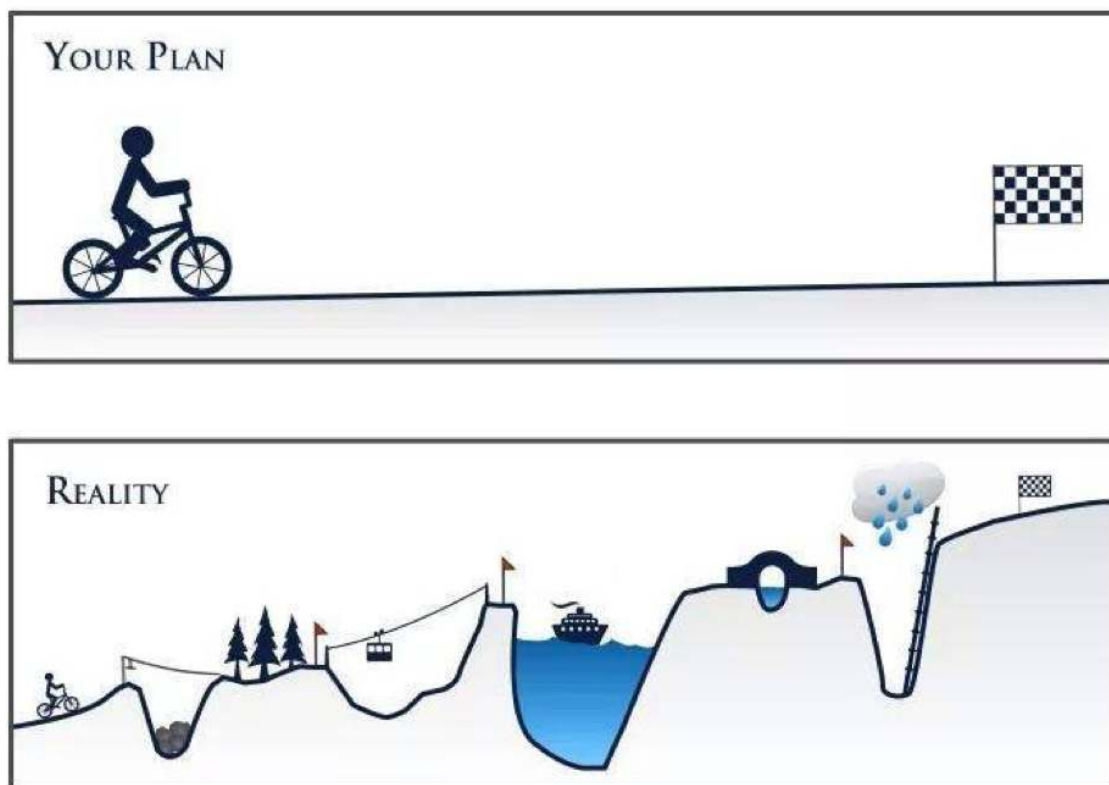
I still have training logs from 10 years ago when I was deployed to Iraq with the Australian Army. I periodically flick through them to see how my training was back then, and to see how far I have progressed. The weight on the bar might not have been making huge progress at the time, but looking back on my journal has proven to me time and again that CONSISTENCY IS KING.

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I may have only added five kilograms every two or three months or so, but that adds up to 20 - 30kgs on my squat over a year, which has added up to me recently hitting 195 kgs for a 1RM back squat. (Correct as at late 2017)

****The numbers don't lie, so the more data you can collect, the more educated your decision making process and accountability will be. I've said it once and I'll say it again.***

We can only manage what we measure!



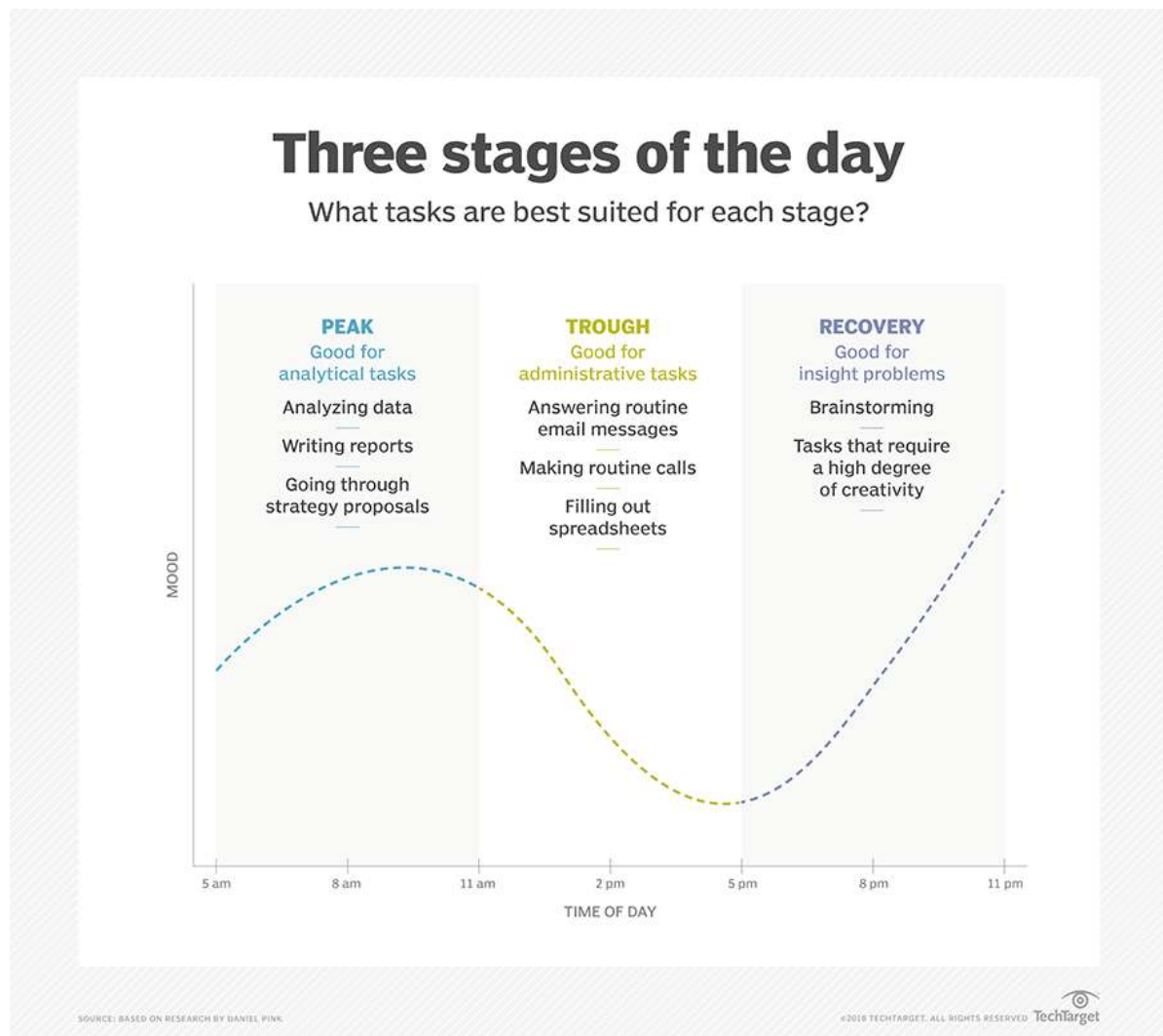
SUBJECTIVE TRACKING TOOLS

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Energy Levels

Everyone has high energy and low energy cycles throughout the day. This is driven by CIRCADIAN RHYTHM, which can be influenced by sleep patterns, exercise or eating habits, light exposure and work hours etc.

Knowing when you typically have peaks and troughs in energy levels is extremely beneficial if you want to be performing at your best across many aspects of life...and why wouldn't you?



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Set a timer for every hour throughout the day, and write down or mark off where your energy level is on a scale of 1 to 5. Are you a morning person, or do you really start to pick up steam after lunch? Or do you feel sharpest later in the evening, and are known amongst your friends as a night owl?

Keeping track of your energy levels lets you better plan your day, as well as give an indication of how to optimise your life through adjusting the variables that make up each and every day.

Creativity Levels

Finding your peak creativity level is a great way to find the best time for things that require your fullest attention.

Creative blocks and mind blanks can often be a symptom of working at a time when your creativity, and energy levels are low. Using the same method as tracking energy level, begin to track when you feel most creative, and when you don't.

This may be a little more difficult to determine than energy level, but over the course of a few days, you'll begin to see patterns develop.

Social Levels

One area that's not usually associated with cycles is what I call my social levels – when I feel like talking and being around people, and when I don't. When I discuss this with clients, friends and family, many have one of those ah-ha moments, and realise they too have varying social levels during the day.

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I try to schedule calls, podcast interviews, meetings, and any other task that requires me to interact with others during those times when my social levels are high. I find that it usually coincides with my high energy levels, so I need to prioritise between my high energy investment/cognitive function tasks, and interacting with others. It may be totally psychological, but it works for me, and for those I've recommended it to.

My low energy times also becomes my quiet time, and I use it for



replying to messages across social platforms, editing videos, social media posts, emails, and other less intensive and more boring and mundane tasks.

What to do?

If you are lucky enough to be self employed, or at least self directed, you can use your daily cycles to your advantage.

Scheduling work and other tasks around times when you can best accomplish them makes for a more productive day. However, although you may have less control of your own schedule, knowing your cycles will allow you to better utilise the time you do have, more efficiently!

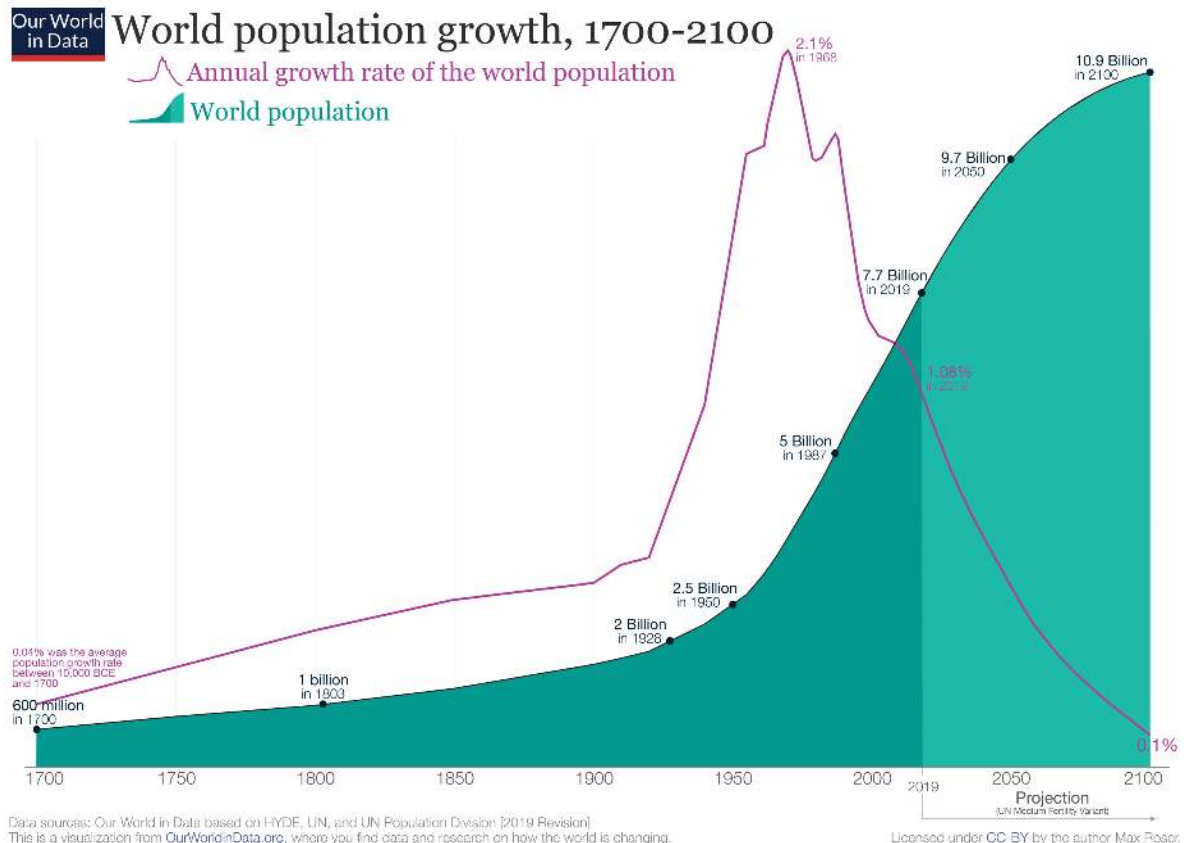
PRODUCTIVITY

Humans have been following a steady daily rhythm for hundreds of thousands of years:

Wake/work/hunt/survive with the sun

Eat/drink/procreate/sleep with the moon

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And then the industrial revolution happened from the mid 1700's.

Which ended around the same time the lightbulb became widely available in the 1880's. It took another 40 - 50 years for electricity to become commonly accepted and available to the masses...and then the worlds population exploded.

As a race, our productivity skyrocketed.

This is clearly one of the safest times in human history to be alive, for the majority. However, there are some unintended consequences which need to be considered.

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In fact, numerous studies over the last decade or so have indicated there is a higher prevalence of mental and physical health detriments and considerations that should be factored in when accepting work in jobs that require night shift/shift work, due to the impact it has on CIRCADIAN RHYTHM.

I recommend doing a little research if you fall into this category. Start here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmLUfaq5OYs>



Some people are annoying first thing in the morning.

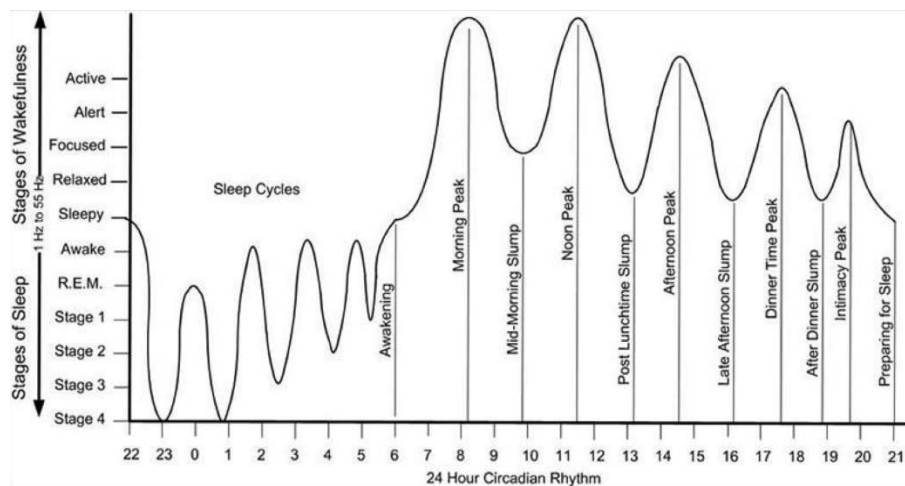
They're so perky, and you're still trying to peel your eyes open.

You might get a big bump of energy a few hours later, then have a little crash after lunch, before picking up some steam in the late afternoon, into the evening.

If you have recognised this pattern, you can use it to your advantage. Do monotonous tasks which don't require much thinking through the slumps, and time your most energy intensive/creative work for those bumps or boosts.

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****Once we have observed our daily energy levels, we can plan our day around these fluctuations to optimise our productivity. We can break down work into 3 groups (High, Medium, and Low energy), all of which represent different demands for energy, focus, creativity and alertness.***



High Energy Tasks (8 – 10)

This is where your most critical tasks of the day will usually fall.

Depending on the type of work you do, this can mean meeting with clients, writing an article, interviews, or your hardest study or training periods.

This is also when you have the most energy to solve complex issues and do anything that requires a lot of creative energy.

I wouldn't recommend tackling demanding tasks during times of the day when energy tends to fall below 8, while I would aim to chip away as much as I can during my peak energy times of the day – from 8am to 11am for me personally.

We only have so much of that peak time available during each day – usually no longer than 3 to 4 hours. Often-times less.

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It is imperative that we protect our high energy periods.

Remove distractions from these times.

External inputs like emails, messages, and other menial tasks will fight for your attention, and can easily be dealt with in times of lower energy.

If you are working on something in your high-energy time, fully immerse yourself and your attention on this particular task for 90 minutes.

Don't take the 'easy win' by ticking something off the list, earn the 'hard win' by making progress on something difficult, that requires your full attention.

MAKE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING!

Medium Energy Tasks (5 - 7)

Now that the top priority tasks have been allocated to that precious peak time, scheduling the rest of the day is much simpler.

Most people have more average time at moderate energy levels than when they're at their highest levels, and even lowest levels the majority of the time. This is where a lot of tasks are going to end up, such as tasks that are communication-related, or tasks that require non-essential decisions (ordering products online, going through your inbox, social media posts, interactions with others etc).

We don't really want to do much work during our lowest energy level times, so it's important that we do what we need to do during this phase while we still have the liveliness.

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Low Energy Tasks (0 – 4)

This, by default, is where all of the mundane and least important tasks will end up such as: entering data, surfing the net, listening to podcasts, and any other task that requires the least amount of cognitive function.

It's a good habit to peg your leisure activities to times of low energy.

Nothing is more counter-productive than spending your moments of peak energy checking Facebook or watching YouTube videos for amusement.

However, after you've put in your work and done the most important tasks of the day, low-energy time is great for those passive activities like watching, reading, or browsing. Especially if it's at the end of the day.

WORK IN ULTRADIAN CYCLES

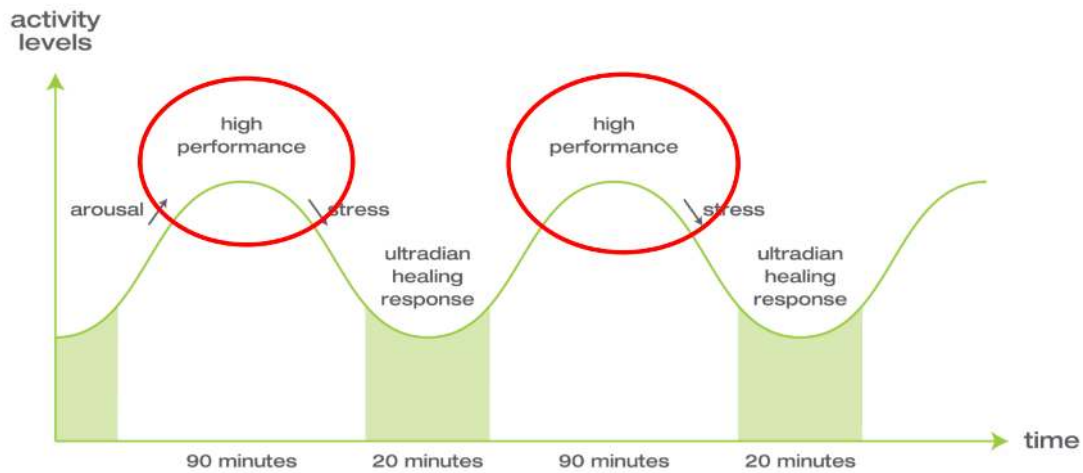
Because of ultradian rhythms (a recurrent period or cycle repeated throughout a 24-hour circadian day), the optimal time we can focus on a task before taking a break is usually around 90 minutes.

Beyond that, as energy levels and attention begins to wane, we become more easily distracted and are looking for reasons to change the scenery.

This is the time to take a 'restoration' break, before we can get back to work and perform at our best again.

People tend to do this naturally. We want to be aware of this phenomenon, and allocate specific tasks to specific time periods, as well as use our restoration time intentionally, knowing what tasks are approaching through the next time-periods.

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Try this Ultradian Rhythm Cycle

1. For the first 60 - 90 minutes of your work day, do nothing but focus on one specific task or project.

2. As your attention begins to wane, negotiate another xx minutes with yourself, then take a 15 - 45minute break.

Eat, train, read, podcast, nap, stretch, mobilise, stabilise, walk, meditate, journal, interact...whatever you need to recharge you enough to get through the next block of work.

Note how long the ability to focus lasted. Aim to match the duration, but with a different energy level focus. Or, blast out another High Energy Period for a quick sprint (30 - 45minutes)

3. Rinse and repeat. Each 60 - 90 minute block may be a different task on the same project, falling into High, Medium, or Low Energy Tasks.

4. Test and adjust. Maybe you find different **Work:Rest** ratios that come naturally to you. Once you identify these, use them to your advantage.

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SLEEP

Sleep is critical for good health and well-being. However, due to our modern lifestyles, most people do not get enough quality and quantity sleep - a problem that can lead to lack of attention, irritability, digestive issues, poor judgement, and drowsiness during the day.

Sleep deficiency has also been linked to more serious physical health issues, including diabetes, high blood pressure, immune deficiencies, increased risk of heart disease, depression, suicide, and risktaking behaviours. Therefore, getting good, restful sleep can improve both physical and mental health, enhance our quality of life, help us learn more efficiently, and enable us to manage our daily energy levels and productivity better.

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Your behaviours during the day, and especially before bedtime, can have a major impact on your sleep. They will promote healthy sleep or contribute to sleeplessness.

What and when you eat/drink/train, the medications you take, how you schedule your days, and how you choose to spend your evenings – can significantly impact your quality of sleep. Even a few slight adjustments can, in some cases, mean the difference between sound sleep, and a restless night.

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Completing a two-week sleep diary can help you understand how your routines affect your sleep. The term “sleep hygiene” refers to a series of

The image shows a 'Sleep Diary' form. It has a header with a sun icon and the text 'Complete in the MORNING'. Below this are four rows for tracking: 'I went to bed last night at (time):', 'I got up this morning at (time):', 'I slept for a total of (hours):', and 'I woke up during the night (# times):'. The second section has a moon icon and the text 'Complete in the EVENING'. Below this are four rows for tracking: 'Number of caffeinated drinks today:', 'Time of last caffeinated drink:', 'Exercise completed today (minutes):', and 'What I did in the hour before I fell asleep:'. The final row is 'Mood today? (0=awful, 10=great:'. The form is divided into columns for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The logo 'PSYCHOLOGYTOOLS' is at the bottom left.

healthy sleep habits that can improve your ability to fall asleep, and stay asleep. These habits are a cornerstone of cognitive behavioral therapy, the most effective long-term treatment for people with chronic insomnia. CBT can

help address the thoughts and behaviours that prevent people from sleeping well. It also includes techniques for stress reduction, relaxation and sleep schedule management.

****How well you sleep, and your daily routines and energy levels are inversely related. A good night's sleep will allow you to wake up feeling refreshed and lively. Minimising negative habits/choices that affect your health and well-being (nicotine, excess amounts of caffeine, poor dietary choices, lack of daily movement etc.) will also have an impact on your ability to get a good night's rest. They both affect one another!***

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How to improve your sleep hygiene

1. Make time for sleep

I know that for me to be at my best, I need about 7.5 hours a night, with 75 - 90 mins of both deep sleep and REM sleep. Because I know this, I can plan for it. It also helps me prepare for those days/nights I know I'm not going to get quality sleep.

Very often, sleep is the first thing busy people compromise, so simply making time to sleep will help protect our health and well-being. To achieve this, you can create and commit to a schedule. The best time to go to bed is when you want to start the process of winding down and switching off...not when you're ready to sleep. It is also ideal to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, whether it is a weeknight or a weekend. This can regulate your body's clock, and help you fall, and stay asleep during the night.

2. Reduce stimulants 8 hours before you want to be asleep

Both nicotine and caffeine are stimulants, whilst alcohol initially causes drowsiness, but ultimately can disrupt sleep, leaving you feeling tired the following day. I don't drink coffee after 2pm...unless I'm planning on staying up that night ;)

3. Limit artificial light once the sun goes down

I wear bluelight blocking glasses to get around the fact that artificial lighting is absolutely everywhere if you are out and about after dark. When possible, at home I only use the lighting that is necessary, with different shades of lamps and bulbs.

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4. Restorative movement

Take a walk after your evening meal or practice light, restorative stretches, mobility work or yoga etc.

However, it is best not to engage in hard exercise too close to bedtime, otherwise you might feel too energised to fall asleep.

5. Do a brain dump

Make some notes. Either in a journal. A diary. A scheduler, a sticky note, a scrap piece of paper.



Write down 1 thing you are grateful for today.

Write down 1 thing you will achieve tomorrow.

Then plan out a rough draft of your next day.

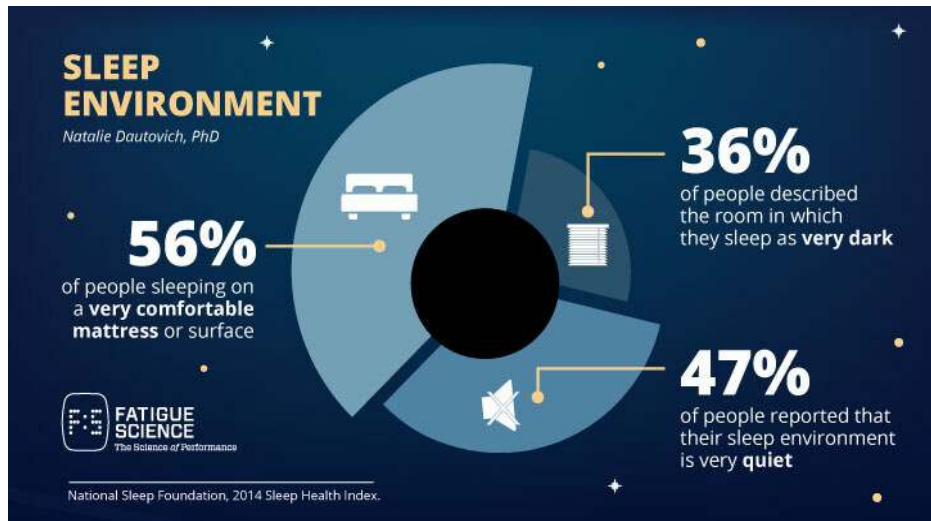
Anything that's swirling in your mind, get it in ink so

you don't keep yourself up, "reminding" yourself about what you need to do the next day.

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6. Create a comfortable sleeping environment

Keeping the bedroom tidy, quiet, dark and cool is conducive to relaxation and restful sleep. Keep your bedroom free of clutter, remove



noises as much as possible (earplugs) and dampen lights/cover light sources etc. to

promote a relaxing, calm, stress free environment.

**I will sometimes sleep with an eye mask if it's on an overnight flight, or I'm in an unfamiliar environment. I also asked my landlord to replace the light curtains with some dark/blackout curtains. GAMECHANGER!*

COOL/QUIET/CALM

We need to feel safe to fall asleep, and remain asleep. We need to lay out the red carpet before we get into bed.

The majority of the day we have a constant stream of low level stressors being processed by our systems. This up-regulates our sympathetic (fight or flight) nervous system. The physiological response is that we keep producing a handful of hormones that signal that there is danger lurking.

To create a sense of safety, do something within 2 hours of bed that allows you to unwind.

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7. Establish a ritual that signals it is time to unwind

Create quiet time before bed—one that does not include television, computers, or social media—as a lot of research suggests that the bright/blue lights of screens before bedtime can interfere with sleep. This “no-screen” time is where I will do my brain dump and next-day planning. I might make a hot tea to sip on whilst reading, and take a multivitamin as I climb into bed.

**This is called habit stacking. One cornerstone habit initiates a domino effect. When we can anchor a few cornerstone habits to specific times of the day, or already established routines, we can almost go through our day on autopilot, making positive decisions as the path of least resistance.*

Those who show the most discipline, likely have set up their day to not have to use discipline.

For me, my phone is off at 9pm every night, with a few exceptions. This is a habit I've built, and been consistent with for many years. I have my watch as an alarm, which allows me to not have to rely on my phone. This is also a great habit to have to kick off my morning routine as I don't look at my phone until I have gone through my morning routine to set me up for the day ahead. I also went through a long period where I only used social media for 90minutes per day, which is challenging. This built the habit of being intentional with my time, building the skill of non-distraction, and using the time-blocking methods mentioned earlier in the PRODUCTIVITY Section.

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8. Breathwork to finish

Do any breathwork practice that allows you to breathe in deep, and exhale long. If this is to the sounds of some soothing music? Great! If you are using guided meditation? Awesome! It doesn't matter what you call it.

The message we want to send to our brain, via our breath, is that we are in a safe environment, and we can relax, hence down-regulating our sympathetic nervous system, by up-regulating the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest)

*Avoid daytime naps, unless necessary. Although you may feel tired during the day when you have not had a good night's rest the evening before, it's important that you avoid daytime naps, particularly those in the afternoon. Stay awake when it's light, go to sleep when it's dark.

Successful Sleep Routine



8:00pm: Set morning alarm



8:15 pm: Write to-do list for tomorrow



8:30 pm: Have a warm shower



9:00 pm: Drink something warm and read



10:00pm: Meditate



10:30pm: Lights out



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LIBIDO

If your sex drive has taken a hit and is below your typical baseline, it could be pointing to a few things that are not quite in check.

Improving your libido is a complex game.

Nutritional deficiencies, poor stress management, lack of sleep and low mood can all contribute to a low sex drive, as can the declining hormone profile that most people encounter with age and lack of daily movement. Throw in toxicity loads from environmental pollution and household cleaning/healthcare/skincare products, and it's not surprising that **TESTOSTERONE LEVELS** in Males have been on a steady **DECLINE** since the 1970's.

Getting your mojo back is not as simple as having a few super foods to help you on your way...but it can help. The secret is often to think about



the organism as a whole. You need to be simultaneously supporting hormone production, blood flow, healthy stress levels, gut and brain health, which certainly influences your mood. It's also important to note that deeper underlying medical conditions can play a role in a low sex drive.

As ever, with matters of the body, it's always best to consult with your doctor in case of concern.

There are however, a few nutritional tricks you can try if you've already reduced stress levels and are training consistently:

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Zinc rich foods

Aphrodisiac foods such as oysters, and fruits representing fertility symbols may have a poetic ring to them, but do they actually have an effect on your libido?

The answer is, possibly.

Oysters are rich in zinc, which helps the body to produce hormones such as testosterone – a key component in getting (and keeping) you in

MYFOODDATA

Top 10 Foods Highest in Zinc

11mg of Zinc = 100% of the Daily Value (%DV)

1 Oysters  472% DV (52mg) per 6 oysters 67 calories	2 Beef (Chuck Steak)  140% DV (15mg) per 5oz steak 268 calories
3 Chicken Leg  49% DV (5mg) per roasted leg (thigh and leg) 475 calories	4 Firm Tofu  36% DV (4mg) per cup 363 calories
5 Lean Pork Chops  32% DV (4mg) in a 6oz chop 332 calories	6 Squash and Pumpkin Seeds  27% DV (3mg) per 1 oz handful 127 calories
7 Lentils  23% DV (3mg) per cup 230 calories	8 Low-Fat Yogurt  22% DV (2mg) per cup 137 calories
9 Oatmeal  21% DV (2mg) per cup 166 calories	10 Shiitake Mushrooms  18% DV (2mg) per cup cooked 81 calories

the mood. However, the great problem with oysters is that they're not exactly an everyday staple: you need a good local supply and a fair amount of disposable income if you're going to dine out on oysters every night. The good news is that zinc can also be found in many other foods such as those pictured.

Zinc also helps to increase sperm production, so it's an important mineral for fertility too!

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Foods for healthy blood flow

A healthy blood flow can do wonders for your libido by increasing circulation to your sexual organs. Foods that increase circulation include garlic, chilli peppers and ginger. They contain allicin, which dilates blood vessels and thins the blood. Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish also help to thin the blood and increase elasticity of blood vessels, allowing for easier blood flow. So, baked salmon with a spicy chilli garlic sauce makes for the perfect recipe to get your blood flowing.

Brain foods to put you in the mood

Having a high libido is not just about optimising your body's physical performance, but is also very closely related to brain health. Put simply, it's hard to get your libido up when you're stressed about work. Your brain is a very complex network of chemical messengers called neurotransmitters, which can influence whether you feel sad, happy or motivated. Neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine can give you feelings of well-being by heightening your mood, and require good quality protein to operate. Omega-3 fatty acids also help here. Keep up,



or increase intake of foods such as meat, fish, shellfish, eggs, cheese, yoghurt, nuts, seeds and mushrooms. If you feel that you do not get enough protein in your diet, consider adding whey protein to

home made smoothies.

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Reduce stress

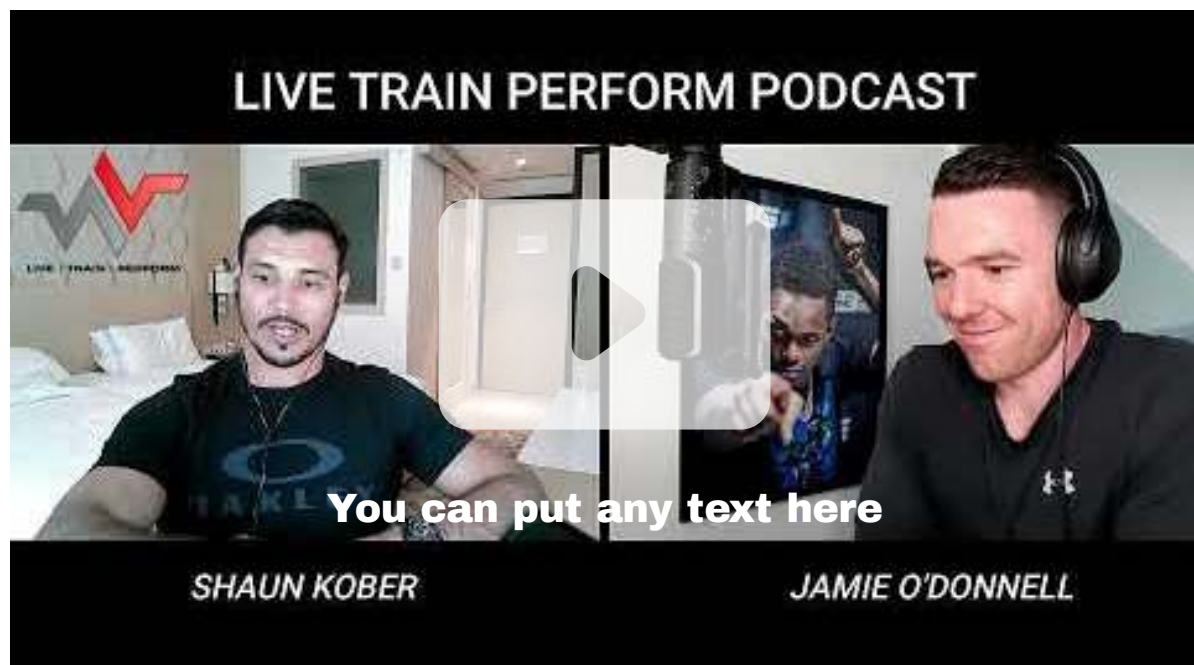
Stress is not just something in your mind, it is a physical reaction to your surroundings, both perceived, and real.

Hormones are chemical messengers. They signal to their workforce around the body, of what is to occur to deal with the current circumstances.

When you are stressed, you release hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. This message signals to the brain that there is a threat to our survival/livelihood/wellbeing.

Or, is the brain signaling to the body that there is a threat that needs to be eliminated?

Both can be true!



More on stress in the next chapter..

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Dark chocolate

The way women obsess over chocolate could have some logical cause. Cocoa contains a host of beneficial compounds such as antioxidants called flavonoids, a high iron content, and much, much more. Most importantly, it contains phenylethylamine, which gives a stimulating effect and releases the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin in the brain.

Unfortunately, the majority of chocolate you buy from the supermarkets is filled with sugar, so its health benefits are minimal, likely detrimental.

Instead, you want the very dark stuff: 85pc cocoa is a good mark to aim for. Once you get used to eating this (often quite bitter) food, try adding 100pc cocoa powder to your favourite smoothie mix.

Exercise, particularly resistance training

Resistance training can have a large influence on hormone levels. The key is to perform big compound movements with moderate - heavy loads in a relatively low rep range/distance.

I like 3 main tools for STRONGMAN style training.

Sled work

Carry work

Turkish get up variations

This is the perfect environment for stimulating your natural testosterone and production of growth hormone.

*The key to this is the rest period required, to get more hard work done!

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Try to find the balance between deliberate overload and overtraining.



The former will have you making great strides in your workouts with optimal hormone levels, and the latter could leave your libido on the floor due to a lack of recovery.

Mood, Attitude & Mental Well-being

Just as consistent physical training helps build our bodies alongside specific individualised skills, mental fitness helps us to build, achieve and sustain a state of good mental health, an even keel so to speak.

When we are mentally healthy, we enjoy our life and environment, and the people in it. We can be creative, learn, try new things, and take risks. We are better able to cope with difficult times in our personal and professional lives. We feel the sadness and anger that can come with the death of a loved one, a job loss or relationship problems and other difficult events, but in time, we are able to get on with continue our lives at our baseline happiness level...

<https://bigthink.com/plus/escape-the-hedonic-treadmill-how-positive-psychology-can-increase-your-base-level-of-happiness/>

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Nurturing our mental health can help combat or prevent the mental health problems that are sometimes associated with a chronic physical illness or condition. In some cases, it can prevent the onset or relapse of a physical or mental illness.

Managing stress well, for instance, can have a positive impact on heart disease. Chances are, you are already taking steps to sustain your mental health, as well as your physical health – you just might not realise it.

3 Ways to Build Mental Fitness

Get Physical

Fuel Sufficiently

Manage Stress

Get Physical

We've known for a long time about the benefits of exercise as a



proactive way to enhance our physical condition and combat disease; now, exercise is more widely being recognised as an essential element in building and maintaining mental health and

fitness. So, if you already do exercise of some kind, give yourself two pats on the back – you're improving your physical and mental states.

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We may not realise what caused it, but most of us have felt it. Whether we're engaged in a leisurely swim or an adrenaline-charged rock climb, there is that moment when suddenly pain or discomfort drops away and we are filled with a sense of euphoria.

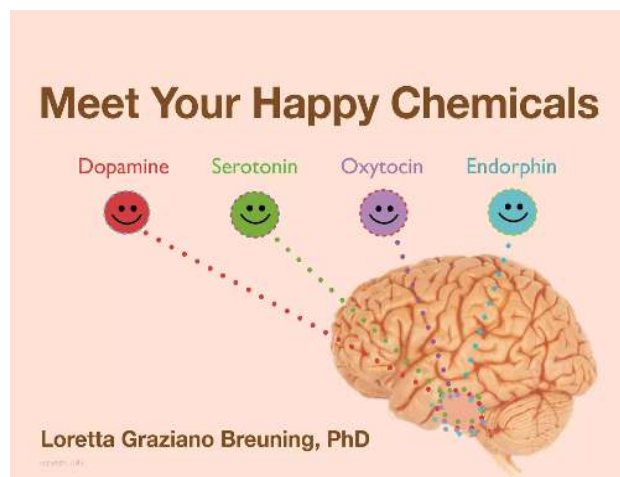
We have endorphins to thank for these moments of bliss.

Endorphins are chemicals produced in the brain, which bind to neuro-receptors to provide a little pain relief. Discovered in 1975, the role of endorphins is still being studied. They are believed to: relieve pain; enhance the immune system; reduce stress; and delay the aging process.

Exercise stimulates the release of endorphins, sending these depression-fighting, contentment-building chemicals throughout the body. No wonder we feel good after we get the heart, lungs and muscles going for a while!

Increasing the body's natural endorphin levels may be an effective way for a person to improve their overall health.

High endorphin levels may also help:



- Reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression
- Improve mood
- Boost self-esteem
- Support cognitive function
- Promote immune system health
- Reduce inflammation
- Regulate appetite

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Endorphin release varies from person to person. Some people will feel an endorphin rush, or second wind, after jogging for 10 minutes. Others will jog for half an hour before their second wind kicks in. You don't have to exercise vigorously to stimulate endorphin release: meditation, acupuncture, massage therapy, even just listening to the waves roll in and breathing deeply – these all cause your body to produce endorphins naturally. So enjoy some light - moderate movement, and feel the endorphin rush!

<https://www.mindmypeelings.com/blog/daily-dose-of-happiness-chemicals>

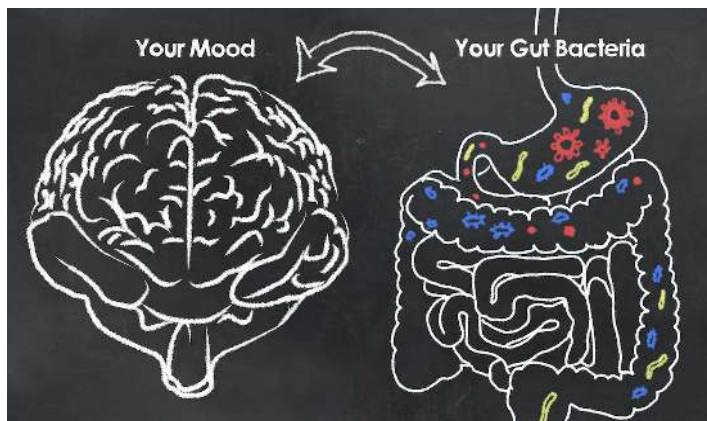
Eat Right

The link between food and mood has many possible explanations, including fluctuations in blood sugar levels, vitamin and mineral levels, brain chemicals affected by what we eat, and sensitivities or allergies. Sometimes our moods are affected by a lack of something, such as certain vitamins or essential energy; other times our moods are affected by eating or drinking too much of something, such as alcohol, sugar or caffeine, which can cause headaches, nausea and anxiety.

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A recent study by the UK's Mental Health Foundation suggests that poor diet has played a role in the significant increase in mental health problems over the past 50 years. The trend away from eating less fresh produce and consuming more saturated fats and sugars, including substances like pesticides, additives and trans-fats, can prevent the brain from functioning properly, says the Feeding Minds study.

It makes a persuasive link between changing food fads and increases in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Alzheimer's disease and schizophrenia.



The message is not a new one, but it is perhaps the most forceful argument yet for paying more attention to the nutrition-mental health connection.

What we put on our plates becomes the raw material for our brains to manufacture hormones and neurotransmitters – chemical substances that control our sleep, mood and behaviour. If we shortchange the brain, we also shortchange our intellectual and emotional potential.

Mental health professionals point out that good eating habits are vital for people wanting to optimise the effectiveness of, and cope with possible side effects of medications used to treat mental illnesses.

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Clearly, selecting how you choose to fuel has consequences beyond immediate taste bud satisfaction. To optimise our health and brain function, we need to eat a balanced diet of minimally processed foods made up of protein and produce...of multiple colours.



Take Control of Stress

Stress is a fact of life. No matter how much we might long for a stress-free existence, the fact is, stress is actually necessary. It's how we respond to stress that can negatively affect our lives.

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Stress is defined as any change that we have to adapt to. This includes difficult life events (bereavement, illness) and positive ones. Getting a new job or going on holiday are certainly perceived to be happy occurrences, but they, too, are changes, also known as stress, that require some adaptation.

Learning to effectively cope with stress can ease our bodies and our minds. Meditation and other relaxation methods like exercise and visualisation are all helpful techniques for reducing the negative impact of stress. Stress can be beneficial – in moderation. That's because short



episodes of stress trigger chemicals that improve memory, increase energy levels and enhance alertness and productivity.

However, chronic stress has debilitating effects on our overall health. Physically, it can contribute to migraines, ulcers, muscle tension and a disease state.

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How we interpret things – a conversation, a performance review, even a look – determines whether something becomes a stressor.

Negative self talk, where we focus on self-criticism and pessimistic over-analysis, can turn an innocent remark into a major source of stress.

Understanding where your stress originates can help you decide on a course of action.

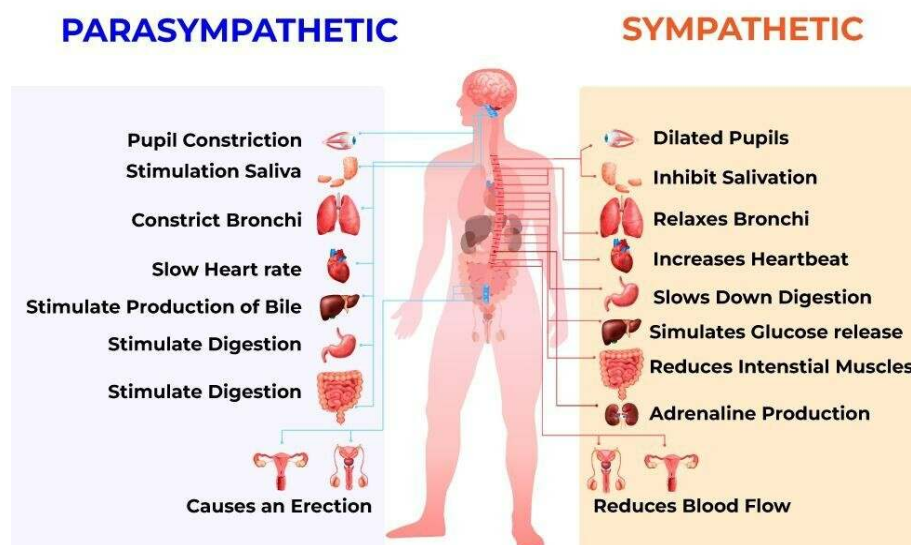
External stressors, like bereavement or career changes, can be managed over time and with the support of family and friends.

Internal stressors, caused by our own negative interpretation, require changes in attitude and behaviour.

The goal of managing stress is to cue the “Parasympathetic Response”.

This is the physiological and psychological calming process our mind and body goes through when we perceive that danger, or a stressful period, has passed. It is essential that we signal that we are "SAFE!"

Autonomic Nervous System



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Here are some tips for triggering the relaxation response:

- Learn relaxation techniques – Practicing meditation or breathing awareness every day can relieve both acute and chronic stress, and realign your outlook in a more positive way. Good breathing habits alone can improve both your psychological and physical well-being
- Set realistic goals – Learning to say no is essential for some people. Assess your schedule and identify tasks or activities that you can or should let go. Don't automatically volunteer to do something until you've considered whether it is feasible and healthy for you to do so
- Exercise – You don't have to train for a marathon, but regular, moderate exercise helps ease tension, improves sleep and self-esteem. Making exercise a habit is key
- Enjoy yourself – Taking the time for a favourite hobby is a great way of connecting with and nurturing your creative self
- Visualisation – Athletes achieve results by picturing themselves crossing the finish line first. Use the same technique to practice "seeing" yourself succeed in whatever situation is uppermost in your mind
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle – A good diet is often the first thing to go when we're feeling stressed. Making a meal instead of buying one ready-made may seem like a challenge, but it will probably be cheaper and certainly better for you and the simple action of doing something good for yourself can soothe stressful feelings

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- Talk about it – Sharing your troubles with a friend may help you put things in perspective, and provide comfort that you're not alone. You may also learn some other ways to manage stress effectively

- Get enough sleep - Too little sleep and/or disturbed sleep patterns can have a significant impact on your mental wellbeing. It can make you feel irritable and stressed and can affect your concentration and productivity during the day. It is also a major cause of depression.

Most adults need between 6-9 hours of sleep each night, although everyone is different. Your ideal amount of sleep will be the amount needed to make you feel refreshed and able to function the following day.

If you have trouble falling asleep, you may benefit from a regular bedtime routine to help your body prepare for sleep, so try to sleep at regular hours. 'Wind down' time before you go to bed is also important - many people choose this time to watch TV, but TV actually stimulates the mind rather than relaxes it which can make it more difficult to get to sleep. Instead, try reading a book or magazine, take a bath, listen to relaxing music, or do some relaxation exercises such as light yoga and or mobility work/stretching. If you find that thinking or worrying about things keeps you awake, write to-do lists or talk to someone to clear your mind of distractions. There are many possible causes of sleep problems. If you regularly struggle to get a good night's sleep, speak with a specialist who can diagnose any underlying health conditions, review any medication you may be on, discuss possible lifestyle adjustments, or explore psychological therapy options.

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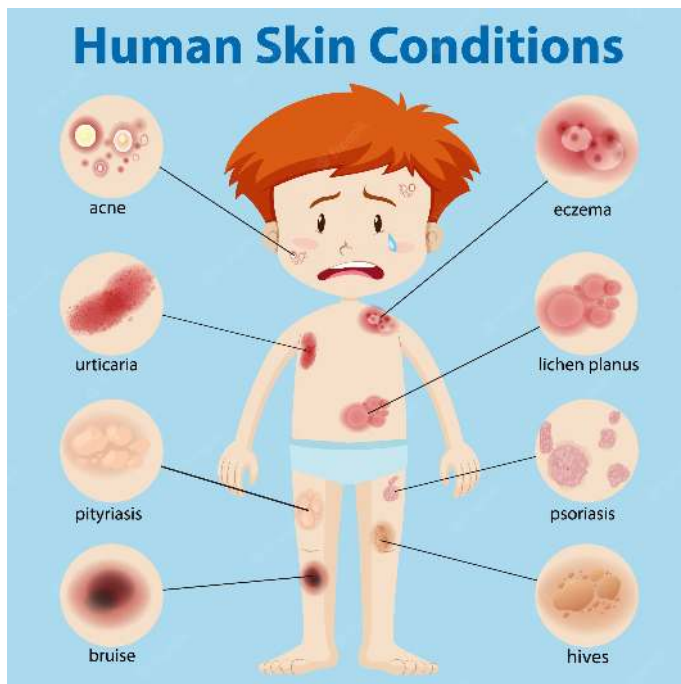
Hair, Skin & Nails

We can get some powerful clues about our health from our appearance. Skin conditions such as acne, eczema, and rashes can reveal deficiencies or even offer clues about how well your digestive tract and detox systems are functioning.

Thinning hair and weak nails can indicate you may have mineral deficiencies or even certain health conditions like hypothyroidism. So take a look in the mirror and interpret what your body is telling you about your health.

Skin

Did you know that the health of your skin mirrors the health of your gut? They're both permeable barriers designed to keep the good stuff in



and the bad stuff out.

Epidemiological evidence shows a clear association between gut problems and skin disorders. People with SIBO (small intestinal bacterial overgrowth) and dysbiosis are up to ten times more likely to struggle with acne and/or rosacea.

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Inflammation in the gut due to leaky gut or over-consuming sugar, alcohol, and foods to which you are sensitive also contributes to inflammatory skin conditions.

For example, sufferers of eczema, which is an autoimmune condition, may see improvement when they remove common food allergens such as eggs, gluten and dairy, along with foods high in irritating anti-nutrients, such as nightshades and nuts.

Eggs, dairy, grains, soy, legumes, nuts, and nightshades are



recommended foods for removal on an autoimmune protocol. Kicking foods to which you have any type of reaction can help inflammatory skin conditions overall.

Those who struggle with acne often see huge improvements when they

remove dairy, which contains androgenic hormones that may worsen acne and inflammatory skin conditions. I recommend those struggling with skin rashes, acne, eczema, or psoriasis follow an autoimmune protocol elimination diet for at least a month to determine food sensitivities. Avoiding allergenic foods will help heal both the digestive tract and enhance skin health.

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Healing a leaky gut will help you better absorb all the nutrients, protein, and fatty acids in your food necessary for a clear complexion.

Supplementing with zinc and vitamins A and C can help acne also.

Finally, a congested liver can contribute to acne and rashes. Your liver is in charge of neutralising toxins in everything you eat, drink, and breathe (not to mention metabolising hormones and cholesterol and a host of other tasks). Poor diet, OTC drugs, alcohol, sugar, coffee, and bodycare products loaded with endocrine-disrupting chemicals increase the liver's toxic burden.

The body stores excess circulating toxins in fat tissue that can affect hormone levels and skin health. An individualised, whole foods-based nutrition protocol, along with a reduction in toxicity load in your environment is a great jumpstart for detoxing the body, and obtaining clear skin.

Hair

If nutrient levels are low it will be expressed through the hair. Hair follicles rooted in the scalp need to be surrounded by a rich supply of blood to ensure they are sufficiently nourished. Hair loss represents low mineral status, specifically lack of zinc, selenium, calcium, sodium and potassium. It can also signify iron-deficiency. Even if you are not anaemic (a reduction in the concentration of haemoglobin or oxygen carrying constituents of the red blood cells) you may still have low iron stores which can affect hair loss.



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Meat provides the best source of iron. Try to eat lean red meats or liver at least once a week. Organ meats are incredible if you can get them from the Farmers Market.

An alternative is an iron supplement, available from most chemists or pharmacies.

Lack of protein in the diet (common in vegetarians and vegans), zinc deficiency, and low minerals can contribute to thinning hair and poor hair health, along with malabsorption issues due to poor gut health and immune system factors.

Nails

Brittle, thin nails can be caused by hypothyroidism. When your thyroid is under-performing, the body slows down and conserves energy for the most important metabolic functions, so the health of your skin, hair, and



nails is the first to suffer. Using biotin may help both nail and hair growth. You can also take a hair-skin-nails complex that will include essential micronutrients and enzymes to

encourage healthy hair, skin and nails, by plugging up deficiencies not being covered through diet.

Other conditions such as ridges in nails, horizontal depressions, or spoon nails can signify deficiencies or even certain diseases.

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Want healthy, shiny hair, strong nails, and clear skin?

Get your doctor to run a complete blood panel to check hormone levels and determine if you have nutrient deficiencies.

Try an elimination diet and exclude reactive foods from your diet.

Consider supplementing with a fatty acid, a hair-skin-nails complex, or a supplement that offers necessary nutrients for healthy skin.

Take a probiotic for a healthy gut.

Above all, make sure you're getting adequate protein, plenty of antioxidant rich fruits and veggies, and healthy fats.

Immune System

Our Immune System, technically falls under control of the Autonomic Nervous System, made up of three main branches:

Sympathetic Nervous System or SNS (Fight, flight or freeze)

Parasympathetic Nervous System or PSNS (Rest and digest)

Enteric Nervous System or ENS (the 'gut brain', or gastrointestinal health)

During this article piece, I will focus primarily on the final branch of the ANS, however - it's important to note that anything that has an impact on any one system of the body, will have a flow on effect, and impact every other system of the body. I will have an article linked below, explaining the two other branches the ENS works alongside to send and receive signals from the brain, about how to interpret and manage both internal and external data/information.

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<https://anviltd.com/blogs/all-articles/preservation-in-isolation-part-two>

The multiple systems of the body are not isolated, but rather, integrated. A crucial point regarding the ENS - it lies in the gut, and is commonly referred to as the second brain due to its direct link via the vagus nerve. Roughly 80% of our immune system also is linked to the gut, so gut health is absolutely critical for optimal health and function.

Our guts' ability to break down the foods we ingest into their most basic compounds to fuel our systems energy requirements, at the cellular level, can significantly impact many body regulatory mechanisms - such as hormone regulation, neuro-transmitter health and function, mood and attitude, libido, energy levels and performance, ability to recover... and so on.



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It should come as no surprise that washing your hands often, being fully vaccinated, getting enough sleep, and eating a healthy diet are effective ways of protecting yourself against viruses and other germs. What you may not realise is that other factors in your life could be compromising your body's ability to protect itself.

How you spend your free time, your level of stress, how often you drink, how much physical activity you get, and even the air you breathe can take a toll on your immune system.

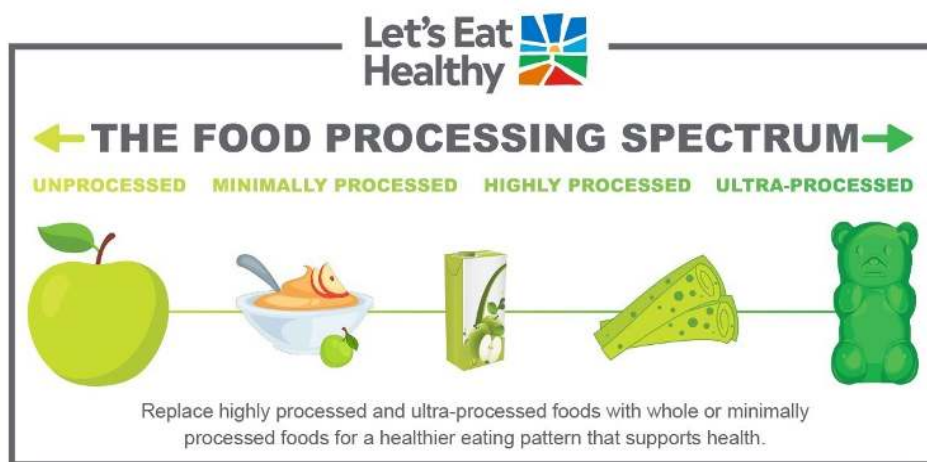
An immune system that functions efficiently protects against disease, while a poorly functioning immune system allows disease to develop. Certain lifestyle factors can weaken immune function including poor diet, smoking, chronic stress, inefficient sleep, lack of vitamin D, and excessive alcohol consumption.

Conversely, a healthy lifestyle can strengthen and support your immune system and lead to better overall health and longevity, which is after all, THE AIM OF THE GAME!

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Eat Minimally Processed

Poor diet or malnutrition can lead to immune deficiency. Fried foods and oils that contain disproportionate amounts of omega-6 fatty acids can cause inflammation, which over time can lead to a host of chronic diseases. Refined sugar can suppress the immune system's white blood cells and reduce their ability to destroy pathogens. A diet devoid of whole foods does not provide the nutrients and antioxidants the



immune system relies on to fight against free radical cell damage.

A diet rich in whole fresh foods, including vegetables, fruits, lean meats, fish and healthy fats, will provide the body with the nutrients it requires for a healthy immune system, and overall function.

Next time you go grocery shopping, read the ingredients list of everything you want. If you don't know what more than two ingredients listed are, it doesn't go into your cart. If you left that food on the bench for a week, would it still look the same? If yes, that's a no.

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How to put quality foods above quantity.

Use the "traffic light" system to put quality first. Make your own list of red, yellow, and green light foods.



"Red" foods are "no-gos" that you tend to overeat, make you feel sick, or don't help you meet your goals.



"Yellow" foods aren't the worst choices, but if you eat too much of them you might have regrets.



"Green" foods are nutritious and make your body and mind feel good. Eat these whenever you want.

Your list may be unique to you—i.e. chocolate chip cookies might be "red" for you, but "green" for your friend.

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Reduce Stress

Chronic stress has the ability to make the body more susceptible to infection by reducing its white blood cell count. In addition, it reduces the strength of T-cells, which are another important part of the immune system.

Moreover, stress causes the body to redistribute immune system cells to the skin and lymph nodes, taking them away from the rest of the body, where an infection may be lurking.



One key method for reducing stress includes avoiding conversations, people, environments or situations which are reliable sources of stress. Reducing one's number of chores and trimming to-do lists is another major stress reduction technique.

LIVE TRAIN PERFORM PODCAST

What happens when we are stressed?

SHAUN KOBER **LUKE LEAMAN**

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Optimise Healthy Living

Living a healthy and active lifestyle is critical to improving one's immune system. One way to do that is to put a stop to harmful habits such as smoking or excessive alcohol consumption.

Positive healthy steps that people should adopt include drinking plenty of water, consistent daily movement, and sufficient sunshine.

Dehydration allows pathogens to enter the body and is problematic to the body's defense system.

Excess weight and obesity have been found to aggravate a number of problems, including heart disease. In addition, obesity is detrimental to the immune system and prevents it from protecting the body the way that it should. Exercising and a healthy diet are not only a good way to reduce one's weight, but also improve the performance of the immune system. Even moderate weight loss is capable of significantly strengthening the human body's ability to fight off diseases.

Sleep Soundly

Studies show that people who don't get quality sleep or enough sleep are more likely to get sick after being exposed to a virus, such as a common cold virus. Lack of sleep can also affect how fast you recover if you do get sick.

During sleep, your immune system releases proteins called cytokines, some of which help promote sleep. Certain cytokines need to increase when you have an infection or inflammation, or when you're under stress.

Track your path to SUCCESS!

Sleep deprivation may decrease production of these protective cytokines. In addition, infection-fighting antibodies and cells are reduced during periods when you don't get enough sleep.

Ideally, for maximum benefit an adult should receive no less than seven hours of sleep a night. The amount of sleep needed rises the younger a person is. For example, a teen should get between nine and ten hours of restful sleep, while younger children should aim for at least ten.

Get Some Sunshine Our bodies create vitamin D when our skin is exposed to sunlight outdoors.

Vitamin D helps to keep our finely tuned immune systems in balance by, for example, stimulating the development of cells that prevent



the autoimmune responses seen in conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis. It is also used by macrophages to help kill harmful bacteria, and supports our defenses against colds and flu. To get sufficient vitamin D, spend 10 - 30 minutes each day in the sunshine without sunscreen or take a good quality supplement containing 2,000 IU of vitamin D3 daily, especially in Winter.