

**HOW TO GET
STRONGER AT WORK
WHILE YOUR
BOSS ISN'T
LOOKING**



BY

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WORLD'S STRONGEST LIBRARIAN

Dedication

For my little Samurai Max, the reason all my free time is gone. I'm pretty good with words but I love you more than I know how to say. I'm sorry you're doomed to wind up looking like me.



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LIFE AND DEATH AT THE LIBRARY!

One morning at work I found myself dangling upside down from the library's meeting room door, my face turning purple and my arms disintegrating beneath me. I couldn't scream for help—I was there early and alone. And maybe I wouldn't have screamed—there are things managers shouldn't be seen doing, like a disastrous attempt at a handstand pushup.

Very few people can do a handstand pushup right away, but almost anyone can work up to them. Progressions typically involve doing a handstand against a wall multiple times a day, holding for time, and doing partial reps until you're finally strong enough to do one. Most of my sessions would be at work and I'd use the meeting room for privacy.

So that first morning I kicked up against the metal double doors, held, did some inch-deep presses, and lowered under control...except I didn't move. I couldn't get back to the ground. I'd worn my Doc Marten boots that day and that stupid loop on my boots caught the upper hinge of the door.

Trapped! Gravity took over. My arms were noodles, and worse, people would soon be arriving to find their manager in a most compromising position. There was one chance—I curled all the way up and held that mega-crunch long enough to untie the laces. Ears ringing and with the wind knocked out of me, I awoke on the floor to the tune of my staff

arriving for work. The boot was still on the hinge. But I'd escaped and nobody would know. (And then I told them all. It's just too good of a story).



This is the door. Picture my foot in that boot.

I started training at work for two specific reasons.

- 1. I had training goals that I was determined to meet**
- 2. I had less free time than ever at home and wasn't meeting my training goals**

I had goals, and they weren't happening. It wasn't anyone's fault. Keep in mind that I was committed to my goals—I had all the willpower and drive in the world, but circumstances had conspired to keep me from training as hard and as often as I wanted to.

The birth of my son and increased responsibilities at work had taken much of what little free time I had. I was up lifting as early as 5:30 and my performance was suffering because of too little sleep, even though I worked my guts out. At 31 years old, I wasn't recovering as quickly as a few years earlier, even with enough sleep and proper nutrition. Whenever I could I fell into bed earlier and earlier. When I could spare 15 minutes at home, it was barely enough time to even warm up.

THE LIGHT BULB MOMENT

But at work, I got at least 30 minutes for lunch and a couple of 15-minute breaks. Potentially 75-90 minutes every day that I could use however I chose. I'm not sure why I overlooked this, but I did. I began to rethink my training schedule—and the concept of training itself—and have never looked back. My progress has been modest but steady. Nobody should be impressed by the numbers I'm putting up, but that isn't the point—the point is that I found a way to progress during the most demanding year of my life. Unless you are one of the lucky few with too *much* time to train, or you've met all your goals and won't ever make new ones, I believe you can find something of value here.

All of the concepts and exercises that follow have been examined by smarter and stronger people than your humble author. It's not my intention to improve on what others have said, but to compile a reference book of ideas for anyone who clings to the notion that there isn't enough time in the day for strength training and everything it entails. I don't pretend that this book is comprehensive, but I do believe that it is a starting point and will

spark reader's imaginations. The more creative you can be with your surroundings, the less likely you are to have to set aside your training—and your goals—for that more convenient time that never seems to arrive.

MY TYPICAL DAY AT WORK

If any of the following apply to you, this book can help:

- You never sweat at work
- Your job doesn't require you to raise your arms above your head
- Your job doesn't require that you get down on the floor
- Your job doesn't require that you walk for more than 30 seconds at a time
- Your job requires you to wear a dress or tie (looking at you, executives)

Although this book can benefit anyone with a job and a lack of time, it is intended for those who work in an office setting where physical activity is rare. If your job is physical and you sweat for your money, you are way ahead of the Training at Work game. I hope you'll continue reading anyways.

If you're unfamiliar with librarianship, let me tell you that it is not physically demanding. I am the branch manager of one library in a larger system here in Salt Lake City. As manager, I spend about six hours at my desk every day, typing on the computer all hunched over and squinting like Mr. Magoo. I spend the other two hours helping people on the public desk. If my heart rate ever rises, it's usually because I'm speaking at a school or because I've told someone not to look at porn on the public computers and they are yelling at me, but these things don't happen enough to be considered aerobic training.

Almost nothing I get paid to do requires that I reach above my head, bend down, squat, etc. The whole world of white-collar workers these days exists in a small box in front of you. It's where you reach to type, answer the phone, and put donuts in your mouth. If this sounds familiar, you are probably not doing anything that can be considered "training" at work, with the exception of how carefully you currently watch your nutrition.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TRAIN?

This book focuses both on strength/fitness training at work and the necessary components that compliment a strength program. But whatever your goals, make no mistake—training of any sort is about one thing: making incremental progress towards the achievement of goals. Whether you want to lose fat, feel good, feel better, set a world record in the next Glutton Bowl, be a Parkour master, improve your memory, bowl 300, or win on *Jeopardy!*, you have a goal you need to train for. You train to improve, bit by bit.

The way to improve at the quickest pace is to think things through and have a plan. You need to be able to see the big picture in terms of days, months, and years—not just the hour you spend in the gym, snarling through a set of cable curls in your wife-beater and Tapout© hat.

Not that there's anything wrong with feeling good about sweating and dying in the gym, but you can undo all of that hard work by losing sight of the many other things that come into play in any strength or fitness program. Washing down a killer set of 20-rep squats with a donut and a keg is not helpful. Is it better than nothing? Sure! After all, you did those squats. But why chase a goal half-heartedly? Why commit to do something in five years that could be accomplished in two with some discipline, foresight, and planning?

If you have goals you're going to meet, *anything* that helps you take a step towards those goals is part of your training. *Anything*. If you want to squat 1,000 pounds, taking a nap whenever possible is part of your training. If your goal is 100 consecutive pushups, reading an anatomy book could help. If you want to be the World's Strongest Man, you won't get there without drinking enough water, no matter how many gun safes you can spin on your finger—lack of hydration will stop your progress, so proper hydration becomes training. Every piece of the puzzle is important, every day. If you don't pay attention to all of the pieces, the details of the small picture can slow or even destroy the big picture.



It all matters

ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL STRENGTH OR FITNESS PROGRAM

Aerobic Fitness

The word “aerobics” might put a bad taste in your mouth and conjure up all sorts of bad images.



This way lies madness...

Nevertheless, aerobic exercise is a foundation of any health program. If you aren't aerobically healthy, you can't get enough oxygen when you are suddenly required to exert yourself. Aerobic exercise makes your heart and lungs work better. The more you do it, the more efficient your heart and lungs get at sending oxygen through your bloodstream.

If you are thinking, “I want to lift weights and do something manly—not wear leg warmers,” I'm with you. But first remember that anything that gets you breathing harder

or deeper is a form of aerobic exercise. Including lifting weights? Yes, if you do it the right way! We'll investigate different ways to increase your aerobic health at work later on. For now, just remember that unless your respiratory system is working at full capacity, everything else will suffer.

Why would you *not* want a heart that worked better?

MUSCULAR FITNESS—THAT’S MORE LIKE IT

Muscular fitness is just what it sounds like—making your muscles stronger. This may or may not involve building bulky or “showy” muscles, depending on what you want. You can get strong without getting big, and you can get strong and big, but you can also get big without getting strong, which should be less desirable. There is no downside to being strong, so why not get some power along with big muscles, if a good-looking physique is what you’re after.

Some benefits of muscular fitness:

- More muscle = less fat
- You’ll look good
- Higher metabolism (you can burn more calories with more muscle)
- Muscular fitness can result in lowered cholesterol and blood pressure
- Resistance to injury
- Stronger joints, especially important in older strength seekers
- Better balance
- Stronger bones—you can’t move muscles without moving bones, and the increased load on a bone results in greater bone density to fight nasty things like Osteoporosis.

Why would you *not* want stronger muscles?

FLEXIBILITY

I was recently speaking an orthopedist about an alignment issue with my right knee. During our conversation he mentioned that he was nearly 60 and still trained every day. “Weights and flexibility,” he said. “These old people that you see walking around like they can barely move...being old isn’t their problem—they’re weak and inflexible. I’m old and I can move just fine!” To prove his point, he raised his leg and grabbed his toes. Then he demanded that I approve of his flexed bicep. Not bad for 60ish, that’s for sure.

So why would we ignore flexibility? I would suggest that:

1. It’s not very fun. The end.

But what are you missing out on if you’re not flexible? Better performance, that’s what.



If you can do the splits at any age, it means a lot of things are working right

Unless your body is limber, it won’t be able to perform movements that call for a great range of motion. I recently found that I couldn’t do an overhead squat because of how

inflexible my shoulders are. It doesn't matter that I'm willing to do them and I want to do them—I am physically unable until I get some shoulder flexibility. More on specific flexibility techniques later.

Some benefits of flexibility:

- Better performance
- Reduced muscle soreness
- Improved coordination
- Improved posture
- Decreased risk of injury
- Decreased lower back pain
- It makes just about everything more enjoyable because you'll be more comfortable

Why would you *not* want to be more flexible?

JOINT MOBILITY

Your joints can rebel against you for three primary reasons—

1. They are overused
2. They are underused
3. They are out of alignment and also subject to one or both of the above.

If they're overused, they need to heal. If they're underused, they must be unlocked again.

If they're out of alignment, the result is undue stress and a dysfunctional body. Any movement you practice with joints that are misaligned is imperfect practice. It is the practice and perfection of dysfunction.

OVERUSE

Overuse is easy to grasp because we all know what pain feels like. If you overuse your joints, they ache and hurt and will be more susceptible to injury until healing is complete.

UNDERUSE

In *The Egoscue Method of Health Through Motion*: Pete Egoscue asks you to picture yourself being stranded on a desert island for years. His premise is that you would eventually lose the range of motion in your arm, shoulder, and elbow required to wave hello or good-bye to someone. Why? Because there wouldn't be anyone to wave to and your joints wouldn't get to practice the movement.



Don't get rusty!

This theory makes sense to me and is the core of joint mobility. Joint mobility is about “unlocking” joints that have locked up due to inactivity. Most of our jobs don't require us to perform certain movements. If you lose the ability to stretch your arms over your head because you never do it, you'll have problems when you decide you want to perform any exercises that demand that very ability. Maybe you want to press a barbell straight up, but your shoulders are locked forward in a rounded position—you won't be able to make any progress in that lift until your shoulders are capable of assuming the correct position. Or if your ankles lose flexibility and mold to the position they're in under your desk for 40 hours a week, you might not be able to do a full squat, merely because your ankles don't want to bend the way you need them to.

Alignment

As far as alignment goes, here's my personal example: My right foot is everted, meaning it points outward like a duck's foot. This is not how it is supposed to be. When at rest, the knee should track the toe and follow its lead.

When I'm at rest, my knee points inward and my toe points outwards. When I try to do a one-legged squat with my right leg, this misalignment results in undue pressure and would eventually result in pain or injury if I persisted. It's not that I can't do the movement—it's just that I can't do it correctly, and so there's no point in doing it until it is fixed.

The reason you can perform some movement even when you have obvious misalignments like mine is that you get help from all the muscles surrounding the problem joint. In my left leg, all of the muscles that should be assisting in the one-legged squat do what they're supposed to because my hip, knee, and foot are all aligned well. If I do the squat on my right leg, other muscles rush in to compensate for the screwy structure, and *these other muscles are the ones that get stronger*. The dysfunction is reinforced with every rep while the muscle(s) that should be doing the job just sits there, buried and languishing. There is no upside to persisting with imperfect practice, and that's been my main reason for practicing joint mobility.

Every joint needs regular work, even if to maintain the mobility you've already achieved. I do about 90% of my joint mobility at work. It isn't physically demanding, and, unless your joints are **very** stiff and immobile, joint mobility work doesn't need to take up much of your time.

Why wouldn't you want more mobile joints?

PROPER NUTRITION

This should be a no-brainer. You don't have to be a scientist to know if you're eating habits are good or not. But depending on your goals, you may not be as sure about how much you should eat, when you should eat it, and what the appropriate ratio of protein/fats/carbs is for you.

You are probably safe to assume that you could be drinking more water and eating more often than you are, especially if you work in a hectic place. The science of nutrition is waaaay beyond the scope of this book, but bear in mind the following simple guidelines:

- Eat more often than less often. Six smaller meals a day will keep your metabolism revving, your portions sensible, and you won't feel hungry very often.
- Avoid junk. Whatever is in your vending machine should either be off limits or taken in moderation. You can't progress on a steady stream of garbage. Even delicious garbage.



Sad, but true.

- Drink water. As much as you can. I'm not sure who came up with "eight glasses a day." Enough well-respected people in the fitness industry have questioned this number for me to question it as well. If you're like most people, you probably aren't drinking three glasses a day, let alone eight, so don't get too hung up on numbers. Likewise, if you've heard about "water intoxication" or "hyponatremia," know that these are very real things, but again—unless you have reason to suspect that you're drinking too much water, keep at it. Water intoxication is almost always a result of drinking too much water too fast, not just drinking too much. Your kidneys can process a lot of water in a day, just not all at once.

If you can drink more, drink more.

Why *wouldn't* you want to eat better to feel better?

KNOWLEDGE—CRAWL BEFORE YOU WALK BEFORE YOU RUN

Kettlebell mastermind, jiu-jitsu genius, and all around stud Steve Maxwell writes a blog called “[It’s How You Put It Together.](#)” He talks a lot about the importance of having all the pieces in place, and knowing how and when to use them. First and foremost comes knowledge. When it comes to training, and your body in general, you can’t know too much. I’m not advocating that you jump from program to program every time a magazine comes out or that each fad diet is the way to go. Rather, that it is your responsibility to educate yourself to the point where you can make informed decisions. This is definitely an area that can be improved at work with limited time.

Your own health will never feel as important to anyone else as it does to you. So learn from the best, soak up everything you can that’s useful, experiment and try new schedules, lifts, and foods, whatever—but when it comes to training don’t ever believe something just because someone else says it. There are so many people I look up to in the strength world. Most of them have never endorsed a program or routine that hasn’t worked for me. But before setting out, I made sure I knew exactly why it was supposed to work, and I could always say that it would help me reach the goals I had set at that time.

A strong knowledge base will help you commit and keep you focused. [Master RKC Brett Jones](#) speaks of the distractions of “Shiny things.” He’s talking about anything that pulls you away from your goals, away from the basic truths of strength and health. When you’ve paid your dues in study time, you’ll know better than to chase every sparkly, easy thing that comes your way.



Get smart. Train smart. Then get smarter. Then train smarter.
Repeat until you die.

Why wouldn't you want to keep learning?

TRAINING AT WORK: WHAT WORKS FOR ME

You've committed to improving your aerobic health, muscular strength, nutritional habits, flexibility, and knowledge of these areas. You can take steps towards all of these at work. If you have a gym, a shower, and the time to really work out at the office, go for it. I have none of those things at work, so I focus on other aspects.

Your training time at work should **not** replace your weightlifting program, sports practice, or anything else that requires a lot of your time and focus. My training-time at work is spent progressing on the little things I don't make time for during my daily workouts with kettlebells or barbells. I work on my flexibility, knowledge, eating habits, and do most of my physical therapy, joint mobility, and prehab stuff at the office on my lunch and during breaks.

This is because proper stretching or injury prevention routines—or yoga for that matter, if that's what you want—take longer than a minute or two to do correctly. When I stretch, I often stretch aggressively for 30 minutes at a time. My joint mobility routines are a little shorter, but not by much. I usually work my grip strength at work, rather than incorporating it into my barbell or kettlebell routines. I've never had the time or the inclination to tack 30 minute stretching or joint mobility session onto my workouts. Stretching poorly or inadequate joint mobility

work is barely better than not stretching, so the worst thing I find I can do is to rush through them and not give the focus they require.

A QUICK NOTE ON OVERTRAINING

Overtraining means training too much, more than your body can handle and recover from. If you're someone like me, trying to sneak in something extra whenever possible, you need to be careful. Pay attention to your body, listen to what hurts, and mix it up. There is no reason you can't do some sort of training four, five, or even six days a week, as long as you vary the intensity and focus on different things. You also have to get enough sleep and eat a lot of good, healthy food.

Figure out what works for you, and then do what works for you. Trying to do too much isn't macho—it's obsessive and shortsighted and you'll only regret it.

STRENGTH AS A SKILL: GREASE THE GROOVE

“Greasing the groove” is a training technique I first heard of from Pavel in his book *The Naked Warrior*. Pavel suggests thinking about strength as a skill. As with any skill, you must practice frequently, and you must practice perfectly. If you want to improve your piano playing, say that you must play 1,000 scales perfectly. You would not be wise to try and do this all at once. Your fingers would eventually cramp, your back would tire from the rigid posture pianists require, and the final 100 scales would probably not have the same quality as the first 100.

Many strength exercises are potentially dangerous when performed incorrectly. When practicing a strength exercise like the deadlift, for example, it is critical that every rep is perfect. There should be no margin for error, especially if you are using heavy poundages. Playing a piano scale incorrectly won’t wreck your back—deadlifting when fatigued or unfocused just might.

Pavel’s basic tenets for GTG, in my own words:

- If you want to get better at something, practice it a lot
- Keep the reps low—otherwise your form will fail as your lose focus, and then you’re just practicing an incorrect movement
- Keep the volume high—yes! Even though the reps of each set are low, you can spread the volume out throughout your entire day.

For example, in 2008 I was preparing for the [Tactical Strength Challenge](#), a competition that challenges each contestant in the max deadlift, consecutive pull-ups, and kettlebell snatches in five minutes. I was confident in my deadlift and snatching abilities, and they fit well into the training routine I was already doing. But pull-ups were different. I am 6'8" tall and typically weigh between 240 and 250. That's a long way to pull a lot of weight, and so I ignored pull-ups because I'm insecure and don't like to do things I'm not good at immediately.

Joking aside, I read about GTG with pull-ups in *The Naked Warrior*. People were also talking about success with pull-ups and GTG on the [Dragon Door forum](#). I spend at least 40 hours a week at work, and I wanted to be able to do pull-ups at work. It would just require a few each hour. I wouldn't smoke myself out, get too sweaty, or need to add pull-ups to the already lengthy routine I was doing at the gym each morning. So I bought a pull-up station and put it in my office.

The result? In just three months of preparation, I was able to go from doing six pull-ups, to doing 14 at the competition. This was achieved with frequent, low rep pull-up practice at work. Just a few seconds each hour, but my body learned how to perform the movement more efficiently, and I did so many pull-ups in those three months that I got undeniable results. But it never felt hard. It never felt like a workout.

It's probably become obvious so far that I'm a kettlebell addict and Pavel is one of my heroes. My goals are in line with the principles of his "hard-style" system. This

doesn't mean that GTG lends itself to every exercise or goal. It's not the right protocol for some exercises. But it does lend itself perfectly to the sorts of training you can do at work, in just a few minutes here and there.

As always, find out what works for you. Take whatever suggestions intrigue you, give them a try, and discard anything that doesn't help you progress. And now, without any further yammering....the actual training.

In each of the following sections, I've tried to focus on the exercises or movements in each category that have given me the greatest benefit in the least time. The list doesn't pretend to be comprehensive, so add whatever you like and throw out whatever you don't need or want.

BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES

If you work in an office space, you'll be hard pressed to sneak in a power rack and a bunch of weights. Nevertheless, you can make a log of progress with your bodyweight alone. Bodyweight exercises can build a great foundation of strength before graduating to more "serious" weights (ask any ripped gymnast about their sissy bodyweight routines), and can also maintain structural integrity and support for the most advanced lifters. Even if you're benching 800 lbs, a bunch of pushups can strengthen all the little things that make that big bench possible.

SPEAKING OF PUSHUPS...

The good old pushup is one of the best exercises you can do, and probably one of the most underused. Most people who lift weights eventually have some sort of shoulder discomfort, if not an injury. Pushups work tons of the stabilizer muscles and are fantastic for strengthening the shoulder girdle. Alwyn Cosgrove has stated that his clients have to "earn the right to lift with weights." This would mean a client would need to be able to do a few bodyweight pushups before graduating to a movement like the bench press.

ONE ARM

As you can probably guess, one-arm pushups are harder than two. In theory, you just drop down and push back up, just like a normal pushup.



I first remember seeing the one arm pushup during a *Rocky* movie. Then I was introduced to [The Naked Warrior](#). *NW* has an extensive breakdown of the technique for the one-arm pushup, as well as many techniques for breathing and whole body tension that may surprise you. They surprised me. If you can't wait and want to start practicing this minute, the progression is essentially this: do one-arm pushups on a desk, a box, or against a wall if you have to start there, gradually moving to a lower box, table, etc. And if the exercise is too easy, elevate your feet on something, go up on your fingertips, etc. If you really want to perfect the one arm pushup, I can't recommend *The Naked Warrior* enough.

HANDSTAND PUSHUPS

If you can be smarter than me, handstand pushups shouldn't kill you. In theory, it's as simple as it sounds—you do a handstand, then lower under control so the top of your

head touches the ground, then you push back up. If you are unable to hold a handstand without support, simply lean against a wall.



Just like this, now do a pushup.

No matter how much you weight or how long your arms are, there are ways to start working on the handstand pushup if you are interested. The monstrous Jim Bathurst has written an excellent online tutorial on the handstand pushup at [Beast Skills](#). Don't feel bad if you can't do everything he can—nobody can, as far as I can tell.

PULL-UPS

Anyone who's spent much time in a gym knows how rare it is to see someone knocking out high-rep pull-ups. You might never see anyone doing them at all. This is a shame because the pull-up is a superior exercise that works a ton of muscles. There are also a lot of different grips worth experimenting with.



Don't say girls can't do pull-ups

Of course, doing pull-ups at work means you have something you can hang from. Don't think it has to be a bar. On the contrary, doing pull-ups on surfaces with different textures, diameters, and grips can do more for you than a typical thin bar.



Be creative. Use whatever you've got.

ISOMETRIC HOLDS

Isometric exercise essentially means pushing against resistance that can't be moved. I'm not talking about that 400 lb bench press you can't get moving—I mean resistance that an army of [Max Shanks](#) couldn't budge. Pushing against a wall, a mountain, or the floor are all examples of isometrics, or “static” contractions. The muscles don't lengthen or contract much, and the joint angle doesn't change much either. Thom Jones wrote a boxing short story called “Dynamite Hands” in which the boxer just pushes on walls all day long in short burst, as hard as he can. Then one day—Bang! He's got dynamite hands. You push against something as hard as you can, until one day it's taken away and you can summon all the explosive force of pushing on the immovable, except now there's nothing to stop them.

I can't vouch for the dynamite hands, but Bruce Lee regularly included isometrics in his routines. If anybody has ever had fists of TNT, it was Bruce. There are some isometric exercises I absolutely love, especially when I don't have kettlebells or weights around and I'm feeling antsy. I've also used isometrics with great success during the rehabilitation of various injuries. More on that later. These are the static contraction exercises I have experience with and have given me noticeable results:

PLANKS

You get into a pushup position and hold it for a fixed time period, or until you give out.



I think this guy might work with me.

You can do planks on your knees if that's all you're strong enough for, with your arms extended, on one arm, on one leg, on one arm and one leg—lots of options. To make it harder you can start from the bottom position and push up about an inch and hold it there. When I started doing these, I was surprised by how hard it was to hold for even 20 seconds.

ISOMETRIC SQUATS (WALL SQUATS)

While I was having some knee issues, I wasn't able to handle much weight at any point in the movement of the barbell squat. My physical therapist recommended wall squats for a time. To do a wall squat, you press your back against a wall, and then gradually ease down until your thighs are either parallel to the ground, or just below. If either one of these options are unusually comfortable, don't do them! Either don't go as deep or pick another exercise.



Wall squats work best for me when I do them for time. Most people I've spoken with are able to increase their time quickly. By the time I worked up to a personal best of 5 minutes, my knees were ready for barbell squats again.

SQUATS

Speaking of squats, there's nothing with doing a bunch of bodyweight squats if you can afford to get sweaty enough to make them worth your while. Low reps aren't going to do much for you if we're talking about squatting on two legs. To make things a little harder if you choose to try low reps, you could pause for several seconds at the bottom, in the middle, or all along the range of motion. But I personally believe there's a better way—

THE PISTOL

In my opinion, this is the absolute best exercise for Greasing the Groove. A pistol is a one-legged squat, done to parallel or even lower. After months of practice, I was finally able to drop all the way to the ground and get back up smoothly on my left leg. My right still lags, but I'm working on it.



Top Position



Bottom Position

Above, my raised leg could be a lot higher, but I'm not flexible enough yet. The pistol is hard to master (I haven't even come close to mastering it) and that is one of the greatest things about it. Learning how to do a pistol under control means developing an acute awareness of total body tension. There is no faking a pistol. You can either do it or you can't, and if you can, it means a lot of things in your body and mind are clicking efficiently on all cylinders.

Above all, pistols take practice, and that is where GTG comes in. Practice the pistol progression several times a day for a few reps, pay attention to how it feels, and try to get better each session. As for the progression, [Mike Mahler's stair-step approach](#) has worked well for me. And *The Naked Warrior* breaks down the pistol as comprehensively as possible.

A word of caution: watch your knees! If the knee of your working leg doesn't point directly out over your toe, don't try a pistol until that alignment issue has been sorted out. If your knee buckles inward or bows outward, you have to deal with that before going further. I learned this the hard way.

CORE/ABS/TORSO—CALL IT WHATEVER YOU LIKE

A lot of people out there hate the word “core” to describe the area between your pelvis and shoulders. A lot of people hate the thought of training “abs,” as it brings to their minds the artificial narcissism of bodybuilding.

I honestly don’t have a preference, so I’m going to use midsection—it feels neutral enough.

THE CRUNCH

Another exercise that seems to polarize people. Crunches are “idiotic” or “dangerous” as often as I hear them called “essential.” Like most exercises, you can definitely do crunches with terrible form and get little or no benefit from them—or you can make them as intense as you can stand.

High reps have never worked for me. Perhaps to my discredit, marathon crunch sessions always end in me rushing through them and getting sloppy, a waste of time. But if I do just a few reps of crunch with a maximal contraction and a short range of motion, a few are all I can take and I feel it for a couple of days afterwards. And you can do a few reps at work in just one minute.

I normally only come up high enough to get my shoulder blades off the ground. Any more and I'm craning my neck forward and it gets uncomfortable and potentially very bad. Pavel's advice is to think of the crunch as a shortening of the midsection. Try to crush your navel down into your pelvis like an accordion. That little movement is a killer if you concentrate and do it for a few reps of a few seconds.

DRAGON FLAGS

Bruce Lee again. Mr. Lee apparently couldn't get enough of these. The Dragon Flags is an advanced exercise that hurts like hell (in a good way) once you can do it.



Dig those massive legs. Dig 'em!

At work, if you have a door you can close, try hooking your fingers under it and see if it can support your weight. I've often done these under our vending machine as it can handle my weight better than my door. Experiment and see what you can come up with. I'd love to hear your ideas. Do the Dragon Flags for reps, for time, or both. Perform the exercise under control, deliberately focusing on the hardest parts of the movement. When you feel like a pillar of concrete, you're onto something good.

KETTLEBELLS

A kettlebell is simple and brutal: a big metal ball with a handle.



In my opinion, kettlebells are the ultimate tool for versatility, portability, and pain levels the Marquis de Sade would have approved of.

If you can get a KB to work, you could practice with it every day of the year and not repeat a routine if you didn't want to. The core of my KB workouts involves high rep ballistic exercises for many minutes at a time—I do not do these routines at work because I get too disgusting and red-faced. The following KB lifts are my favorites for the office setting. You can make a lot of progress with low reps, strict attention to detail, and frequent practice throughout the day.

THE KB MILITARY PRESS

Pressing a weight overhead used to be one of the standards for measuring strength. The bench press has its benefits, but back in the day, the old-time strongmen were more interested with putting the weight up over their heads while standing.

For me, pressing KBs overhead is easier on my shoulders than with a barbell or with two dumbbells. The groove is a little friendlier. Rather than pressing the bell straight up, the groove is more of a circular motion—think about drawing a circle with the elbow.



The Rack



Top Position (almost)

Two things about the pictures above.

1. In the top position, my elbow should be locked out. This is another shoulder flexibility issue I'm still working on.
2. I wasn't trying to look quite this intense. Good grief.

[The KB military press](#) is great for GTG. I took a 32kg KB to work with me for about a month. Three or Four times each day, I would press it overhead once or twice. The volume was high enough that my practice paid off. The frequency of the practice meant that muscle memory kicked in and made the movement more efficient. At the end of that month, I was able to press the 40 kg KB when it arrived at my door, even though I'd never touched one before, and all of my practice had been with a lighter weight.

RKC Jordan Vezina has made some fantastic videos of Kettlebell tutorials and corrections. Find him on Youtube or on [Average2elite](#).

SUITCASE DEADLIFT WITH KB

The suitcase deadlift is a wonderful exercise that works well with low reps. Place a heavy (for you) kettlebell on the ground next to your foot. Using the hand on the same side as that foot, squat, grab the KB, and stand up. The entire body must rise as one unit. The suitcase DL is not a side bend. The weight is terribly off center, which is a good thing—as it tries to pull your shoulder down, you must tense up your whole body to make sure that the weight can't pull you off balance.

THE HALF GET-UP

If you have the space, nothing beats a full Turkish Get-Up. I don't have nearly enough room at work to feel safe doing the full TGU. It is a movement that demands extreme precision and focus, as well as the ability to bail out of it and drop the KB if it goes badly.

The half get-up, while not a less precise movement, is an abbreviated get-up and doesn't require as much space.



The grass was wet



Stop here and reverse the movement

JOINT MOBILITY

There are a lot of joint mobility systems out there. I can only personally recommend two, because I've only used two. Pete Egoscue's book *The Art of Healing Through Motion*, and Pavel's *Super Joints*. The author of each system has different ideas about the order in which to perform the routines, and length of the routines, etc. But the premise is the same: strong joints with a full range of motion benefit everything else and without them your body is a screwy vehicle that's going to betray you and break down eventually. If you're not already doing joint mobility, I encourage you to test-drive the exercises below. If they help at all, look more deeply into joint mobility so you can find a resource that is tailored to your needs. There is a suggested reading list at the end of the book containing more joint mobility books and systems.

The key to joint mobility is to listen to your body. If you try any of these simple movements and they are surprisingly difficult—not that they hurt, but that they *seem* like they should be easier than they are—you need more mobility work because your body isn't functioning as well as it could. Joint mobility isn't sexy or all that fun, but it's measurable. You'll know when these movements are getting easier. If they're getting easier, it means your body is getting closer to having the motion capability it deserves.

BACK RELEASE

This technique doesn't look like much, but it has made my back feel better than just about anything else. Lie in the position shown below until your back loosens up. Your shoulders will flatten out and settle to the floor. Your hips will do the same. When I'm finished, my back feels loose and any aches are usually gone or reduced.

Lie flat on your back with your legs resting at a 90-degree angle on something. I use my piano bench. The position is just like if you were sitting up straight with your back against a chair and your thighs parallel to the floor. Now pretend that the floor is the back of that chair, lie down, and give it a try. You'll be surprised at how good lying in this position and breathing through your diaphragm can help you feel, even if you only do it for ten minutes.

GROIN STRETCH

This is similar to the static back technique. I usually perform it directly after. These techniques seem to compliment each other, and I get more relief from the groin stretch if I've done static back first.

Get in the same position as static back, but leave one leg on the floor if you can. If that leg isn't flexible enough to settle on the floor naturally, elevate it on something else—lower than the surface your other leg is resting on, but higher than the floor. The foot of

the straightened leg should remain upright. Prop something against its outer edge so you don't have to focus on keeping the foot in position.

This technique will loosen your hips and groin up. Done long enough to be effective, it is possible to actually feel when your hips let go of your straightened leg and it settles to the floor. The length of time is up to you. However, if you're unable to put the straightened leg on the floor, do it long enough so that you can gradually lower that foot. Always make getting that straightened leg to the ground—as long as it doesn't hurt—the goal. Once there, the real work of loosening up starts.

When I'm done, any movements I do for the next several hours feel better and easier. It feels **really** good. Try it!

ELBOW HINGES AND CIRCLES

With all the kettlebelling I do, my aches are usually in my elbows or shoulders. What can I say? I usually don't quit when I should, and occasionally I pay for it. Doing elbow hinges and elbow circles aggressively, and resting for a couple of days is usually all I need to be ready to go again.

To do the elbow hinge, stand against a wall. You want your head and shoulder blades to stay against the wall throughout the movement. Put the flat space between your fingernails and your first knuckle against your temples, with your thumbs pointing down. Bring your elbows forward smoothly until they touch in front of your face. Don't let one

arm go higher or lower than the other. Reverse the movement until the backs of your arms are resting against the wall again.

ANKLE CIRCLES

Tight or immobile ankles can cause you problems in all sorts of activities. Maybe you can't squat properly because you can't keep your weight on your heels as you descend. If you play a stop-and-go sport with a lot of lateral movement, you need your ankles to do whatever you tell them to.

If you don't know the status of your ankles, doing ankle circles will be a quick teacher.

Lie on your back with your legs flat on the ground. Lift one leg so that your shin is parallel to the ground. Lace your fingers around that thigh so you don't have to support the weight of the working leg. Make sure your knee doesn't move (and it will try to).

Your ankles have to do all the work. Always make sure that what you do with one side of the body, you also do with the other. If your left ankle works perfectly, you still have to do it after you treat your right. The body is a unit.

Make full circles, moving only from the ankle. Draw the circle with your big toe. First clockwise, then counter-clockwise. If you can do 30 reps with little or no discomfort, congratulations! You're probably okay in this department. If, like me, your first attempt leaves you quivering after about ten extremely slow and ugly "ovals," you've got some work to do.

The good news is, ankle circles start to feel great when they get easier, and they do get easier. As I've mentioned, my right foot "naturally" points out like a duck's. After doing ankle circles, that foot points forward more naturally for a few hours. The more I do ankle circles, the longer my foot does what it's supposed to afterwards. That's the goal of mobility work—get your body doing what it's supposed to do, and then maintain it. Eventually, it will forget it was ever screwed up, and it will maintain itself, because any movement you do will be free of dysfunction.

THERE'S MORE...MUCH MORE

It would be a joke for me to pretend to give any more advice on joint mobility. I know what is, and I know what "works" for me, but I'm still experimenting and investigating new systems. I've heard great things about Z-Health, for example, but have no experience with it. I believe joint mobility to be an undervalued part of strength work, and suspect that the perfect mobility program would lead to results that would surprise anyone.

Talk to a mobility specialist who can run a movement screen on you and assess what your needs actually are. Don't guess. Don't just decide that you have a misaligned this or that—this is worth doing right, just like anything else you put the kind of effort into that serious training requires.

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is a must in any strength program. To get flexible, you have to stretch. What are the best stretches you can do? Answering that question involves knowing your goals. Gymnasts need to be more flexible than powerlifters, and a ballerina needs a different type of flexibility than a hard-style kettlebell practitioner. Sometimes you don't find out where you could use some flexibility until an injury forces you to realize it, so I'd recommend stretching your whole body as often--and with as much variety--as you need, and no more.

HOW TO STRETCH

Stretching doesn't really lend itself to the "No guts, no glory" paradigm. Stretching has to be done right (for you), or you can make more trouble for yourself. You must know your limitations and push at the edges of them, but not try to outrun them in leaps and bounds. Here are a few guidelines for safe stretching:

- Breathe!
- Don't stretch so far that you're in pain.
- Focus. Let the stretch guide you. If you pay attention, you'll know when to go further.
- Know the difference between the relatively mild discomfort of stretching to your limit and the pain that is a **warning**.
- Don't bounce

- Don't rush

My tightest muscles are usually my back, hamstrings, and ITB bands. Please remember, there is no shortage of stretches you can do, so take some time evaluating your flexibility needs and put together a program that works for you. I don't do all of the stretches below every day, but here is an example of the areas a full-body stretching program should cover:

Areas to be stretched:

- Head and neck
- Shoulders
- Back
- Hamstrings
- Quads
- Calves

DOWNWARD DOG



Like all yoga poses, there is a “perfect” way to do Downward Dog (DD) pose. “What is a perfect Downward dog?” is a bigger question than you might think—I’ll leave it to you

to go read some yoga books or find your local asana if you want to know how seriously some people take this exercise.

While I don't believe it's life, death, or salvation, DD makes me feel good, and that's why I do it. It engages your shoulders, hamstrings, and while I may never reach perfection, I find that DD requires a lot of focus. It's never a bad thing to do something that forces you to concentrate. Give it a try, and if it does nothing for you, either keep working at it or replace it with a different stretch.

Get as close to the position pictured above as your body will let you. Do not worry if you can't put your heels on the floor. It took me months of practice before I could do it. Keep your head down and pull your hips in enough to keep your back flat. Breathe. Concentrate on getting your heels to the ground.

I don't do marathon DD sessions. I hold the pose two or three times every day during my stretching routine, and I never hold it for longer than one minute. But feel free to go longer. Maybe you'll fall in love and become America's Next Top Yogi.

Note: If you have a door you can close, close it during your DD practice. People love to laugh at me whenever they catch me doing DD and my fragile ego couldn't take it.

IT BAND STRETCH

Your Iliotibial Band runs down your outer from the thigh to the knee. It's a big mess of tough fibers that works to stabilize the leg. How's that for scientific? Runners are the ones most often plagued by ITB problems. For them, the ITB works to stabilize the muscles used during running. ITB Syndrome is often called "Runner's Knee."

When you're having ITB band problems, you might feel pain or discomfort when:

- Kneeling
- Squatting deeply (when my ITB is fussy, I can squat to about parallel without feeling it. Any deeper and I can't ignore it)
- Running
- Climbing Stairs

This annoying condition typically manifests as pain on the outer knee, or the back of the knee. It's hard to describe—it's not exactly tightness to me, almost more of a burning sensation in the tissue behind my knee—but stretching is the first step in solving this problem. Here is the stretch I've had the most luck with:



The T-1000, with ITB problems

I usually hold this position for 30-60 seconds, 2-3 times each session, 3-5 sessions a day. The stretch should be forceful enough to actually stretch the band, but “light” enough so that you don’t feel pain. If you’re doing this right, you’ll feel a “tugging” sensation in the IT band.

Also, the foam roller is the best thing that’s ever happened to your stubborn ITBs. Roll around like [this](#) for a while and your ITBs will be feeling sassy in no time. Be smart. Sometimes you have to just rest and ice the stupid thing. See a doctor. The recommendations I’ve made above were first recommended by a Physical Therapist I was referred to by a Real Live Doctor.

BAND OR DOWEL DISLOCATES

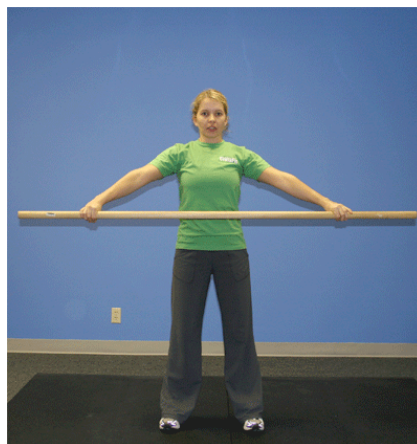
Bands are an awesome tool with near-infinite uses. You can use them for rehab if you’re trying to regain strength but aren’t ready for weights. They can be used to make most

lifts harder if you are pushing or pulling against a band. I mainly use bands for flexibility work and rotator cuff exercises. There is a rotator cuff section later on in the **RECOVERY** section of this book.

If shoulder dislocations make you think of *Lethal Weapon 2* and straitjackets, go splash some water on your face and get right. Our dislocates aren't that dramatic.

You can also do this stretch with a wooden dowel or a broomstick. I prefer bands, because they're easier to make adjustments with, especially if you're starting out with very inflexible shoulders.

Here's how it works: place your hands on the band or dowel so that they are about 12" wider than shoulder width.



Starting Position

(The finished position is just the reverse, with dowel or band behind back)

Smoothly raise your hands over your head and put them down behind your back, ideally stopping down by your butt. If it's too hard or uncomfortable to do, spread your hands wider on the dowel or stretch the band. If it's too easy, move your hands closer together at the start.

As your hands move behind your head and start moving downwards, you'll feel your shoulders pulled backwards and then down by the resistance of the band/dowel and the weird leverage of the position. It doesn't sound good, but it feels good. As it gets easier, move your hand closer together and start over. When you can keep your hands at about shoulder width and do dislocates, you've got really flexible shoulders. Go get yourself a trophy made.

I'm not going to go into more depth with stretching. There is a lot of information out there. Do your best to determine what needs to be stretched and flexible-ized (sorry) through joint mobility work, and then find someone who can guide you into specific stretches for your needs if you aren't confident creating a routine for yourself.

GRIP, HANDS, WRISTS AND FOREARMS

A strong grip benefits any exercise where you're required to hold onto something.

Whether you're a powerlifter trying to hold onto an 800lb deadlift, or a Mixed Martial Artist trying to hold onto your opponent's wrists, the stronger your hands are, the better off you'll be. Grip strength is often neglected, which is unfortunate—first and foremost, grip training is FUN, but strong hands are useful. Below we'll look at the different types of grip strength, and look at exercises to work each type of grip and the wrists.

All of the types of hand strength have two components: maximum power and endurance. Maximum power is like when you hear the guy talking about his “max” bench. How much weight can you move one time, for one maximal effort. Endurance, or sustained effort strength, means how long you can exert force for. Pick up two buckets of water and start walking. How far can you go? That's sustained effort.

There's no downside to having strong hands. If you decide to get into hand strength, I would suggest two things: 1) Plan on getting addicted, and 2) There are four types of hand strength, which I'll discuss below. **Don't neglect any of them.** If you wind up with hands that are strong in one plane but weak in another, you won't be as strong as possible. Worse, your chances of injuring yourself go up as the imbalance increases.

A NOTE ON OVERTRAINING YOUR HANDS

If you do much weightlifting or kettlebells, and you also want to throw in specific grip training, LISTEN TO YOUR HANDS. Grip is involved in so many other lifts that you can overtrain without realizing it. I schedule my grip training on days when I won't be doing any other exercise. I also don't do any specific grip work unless my hands feel fresh and painless. Be smart: if you have to interrupt your training because you've injured your hands from overuse, your options for training are going to be limited.

1. CRUSH GRIP

Shaking hands is an example of crush grip. Essentially, how hard you can squeeze is how strong your crush grip is.

GRIPPERS

Nothing beats closing some HEAVY grippers for improving crush grip strength. Forget about the little grippers you might see in the impulse buy rack at your local Shopko.

Check out Ironmind's Captains of Crush Grippers or the Robert Baraban's over at Fat Bastard Barbell.

2. EXTENSORS

Extensors are the muscles that open your hand—the opposite of crush grip. I have three favorite exercises for this, both recommended by gripmaster John Brookfield.

OPENING AGAINST RESISTANCE:

BANDS

If you don't have anything else, throw a few rubber bands around your fingers and force them open a few times. You'll quickly get a feel for how much resistance you need and how many reps it will take you to get a good session in.

SAND BUCKET

When winter ended, I took the sandbags out of the back of my truck, dumped one in a bucket, and started using the sand for extensor work. Basically, you stick your hand in to the wrist, force your hand open, and repeat. This is surprisingly hard at first. Again, listen to your hands and do enough to feel like you've worked hard, then stop.

RESISTING WITH YOUR OTHER HAND

John Brookfield is so simple in his methods, but so creative. This extensor exercise is as basic as it gets: make a fist with one hand, rest the other palm against the knuckles of the hand making the fist, then open the fist, pressing lightly against it with the other hand.

The goal is not to try to keep the fist from opening. Don't push against it with all your might. Do 30 reps with light resistance and I think you'll be shocked at the burn you'll get.

3. PINCH GRIP

Pinch grip strength refers to how hard you can pinch, but there's more to it than you might think. Think about pinching another person with your thumb and index finger—that's pinch grip, but only one example. Squeezing your fingertips into your thumb pad—the meaty part of your palm that your thumb projects from—is also pinch grip. So pinch grip can refer to pinching between your thumb and any one fingertip (or all fingertips at once), or also pinching something against your thumb pad. Tearing a phonebook is an example of an activity that requires extreme pinch strength with the thumb pad.

PINCH BLOCK

The pinch block is a superior exercise for improving pinch grip strength. Pictures will speak louder than words on this one. Below is the pinch block made for me by Ryan Pitts at Strongergrip.com



Isn't she wonderful!

Pinch blocks can be made in different thicknesses, widths, and with different lengths of extension. Block can be made large enough to accommodate all fingers (there are also two-handed pinch blocks), or small enough so that only one or two fingers are worked at a time. Some of the more serious grip people I know use several types of pinch blocks regularly.

The pinch block is also great for wrists and their ligaments and tendons. The more weight you put on, and the further out on the extension you place it, the harder it gets. The further away the weight gets from your hand, the harder it tries to break your wrist as you curl the weight.

PINCHING TWO BOARDS

Place two boards on the ground, pinch them together, and pick them up. You can do this either for reps or for time. You can vary the thickness and lengths of the boards. Weight can be attached to one of the boards with a bolt and chain or rope. Resistance can also be added by the use of resistance bands. Pinch strength is not always about the amount of weight you can lift, but how hard you can pinch. Dennis Rogers recommends using a much lighter weight than your max, but to focus on digging the fingertips into the boards for 8-10 seconds, making the exercise more of an isometric hold.

Honestly, you can pinch two of anything together and have this work. Just focus on the pressure you can generate to hold them together, not the weight of the object. PRETEND it weighs 1000 lbs and you'll pinch hard enough.

4. OPEN-HAND STRENGTH

Open-hand strength refers to how hard you can squeeze without your fingers closed. For example, picture a pipe so thick that you can get your hand around it but can't hook your fingertips underneath it. You can squeeze, but only with an open hand. My favorite technique for increasing open-hand grip strength is to wrap piping insulation around any tool I am using. You can make any dumbbell, barbell, or kettlebell handle as thick as you like, depending on the diameter of insulation you use.

THICK HANDLED DUMBBELL ROWS

My favorite exercise for open-hand strength is the dumbbell row with a thick handle.

Dennis Rogers recommends releasing the DB between each rep. This eliminates the compromise your hand might start making when it starts fatiguing, such as hooking the fingers underneath the dumbbell. By starting new on each rep, you can really focus on the generation of pressure, each time.

SLEDGE HAMMERS LEVERS

The sledge is a great tool that can help you build formidable wrist strength. You can do levers from any angle. You can also do levers with different objects, but I find the length and balance (and portability) of the sledgehammer make it a superior tool for leverage work. Here's Scott Styles with an example. His [Grip FAQ](#) online is great. Check it out for many more examples of sledge strength builders.



RECOVERY/INJURY PREVENTION

ROTATOR CUFF

ROTATOR CUFF WORK

Rotator Cuff care gets its own section under recovery because I feel like I've been dealing with it my whole lifting life and it takes up a good chunk of my recovery/prevention efforts.

Anyone who's lifted for a few years has probably experienced either shoulder discomfort if not outright pain. Shoulder injuries are not fun—there are a ton of little mechanisms in the shoulder girdle. Any of them can get hurt, and the smallest tweak can wind up causing a world of trouble, especially if you like to do any form of upper-body presses. In my experience, when something goes wrong in my shoulder, it usually involves the rotator cuff being stressed, torn, tweaked...you name it, I've had it.

The good news is, you can fix a rotator cuff tear. The Better news is, you can strengthen your rotator cuff long before an injury forces you to. Rotator cuff exercises involve light weight and brief routines, making them a perfect addition to our at-work options.

The following exercises are what have been prescribed by my physical therapist more than once. They have always sorted out the problem, assuming that I did them correctly. I also laid off all pressing exercises and movements that caused any shoulder discomfort during the recover, and when I returned to pressing, I pressed LIGHT, and then gradually increased the weight in small increments.

- For lots of helpful shoulder stretches, warm-up ideas, and rehab exercises, watch The Diesel Crew's [Shoulder Circuit](#).

RKC ARM BARS

This is a superior technique for loosening up your shoulders and strengthening the connective tissue in the shoulder girdle. My friend Adam Glass has put together a fantastic [video](#) on this and has explained it as well as anyone could.

RECOVERY: OTHER

NAPS

Any physical activity takes its toll, however minute, on your body and your central nervous system. There are two ways to recover—rest and eat. That's about it. If you have a couch or a floor you can lie on, every minute of extra sleep you can get helps. There are lots of books out there on why sleep is important, but I doubt you need them to tell you that.

WALKS

You can get a lot of benefit just by taking a walk at lunch. Ask yourself: How often do I really walk when I don't need to? Walking is good for your heart, good for your body, and the motion of walking is a great way to break up a day full of sitting. A gentle walk can still be a shock to a system/body that just sits around all day. Get that body moving whenever you can!

FOAM ROLLER

A foam roller acts like a giant rolling pin for any areas of your body that are tight and full of knots.

You may not know that you have a knot in your back, but when you lie down on a foam roller and put your bodyweight on it, you'll know that knot is there. A few daily sessions later, you'll find that the pain has either vanished or has improved to the point where you know it's only a matter of time before you've got it under control.

Foam roller massage can be painful, so ease into it. I use the foam roller after every deadlift or kettlebell session, and I roll my ITB bands daily. I've no doubt that it plays a large part in how good I feel and how few injuries I've had with such a huge amount of physical strain.

HYDRATE

Drink a lot of water. A lot.

EAT

When you exert yourself physically, you expend energy. Then you need to eat things that put that energy back into your body for the next time. That's what it boils down to.

Please revisit the **PROPER NUTRITION** Section for some guidelines.

FEATS OF STRENGTH

There are many classic feats of strength—strongmen in any age have developed the odd habit of mutilating anything they can get their hands on. Nothing is safe, as many a rolled-up frying pan or bent crescent wrench could tell you. I'm only going to discuss two feats, since I can currently only do two feats (and they are both fairly office-friendly), but check out this [montage of Adam's shows](#) and you'll get an idea of what's possible.

TEARING CARDS

Every Monday at lunch I got to the Dollar Store and buy about 10 packs of playing cards to tear in half during the week. Tearing cards might not sound like much of a workout to anyone who hasn't tried it, but believe me when I tell you that the effort it takes to tear that deck is incredibly draining. It's tiring in a way that is hard to explain, so get some cards, try and tear them up, and let me know if it was too easy for you and you're already bored.

There are a lot of different techniques that I can't explain well because I can only tear with one method at the moment. If you're really interested, check out Jedd Johnson's [Card Tearing Ebook](#). It's as comprehensive a look at card tearing as you're going to get.

TEARING PHONEBOOKS

No matter how many times I've told people that the library has enough phonebooks, we still get about a dozen a week. Rather than just throw them in the recycling bin, I started trying to tear them in half and *then* put them in the recycling bin. It's hard, but it is currently much easier for me to tear phonebooks than playing cards. Tearing phonebooks basically comes down to two things:

1. How hard you can pinch
2. How hard you can pull

Please revisit the section on grip strength for examples of how to increase these types of strength.

KNOWLEDGE

You may find that many of the suggestions and exercises we've talked about just aren't realistic for you. You may not have an office or a place with any privacy. You might be too shy to exercise in front of other people, and that's fine. But there will always, always be something you can do—if you have enough room to crack open a book or use a computer, there are options.

Your progress depends on your continued curiosity, passion, and desire to adapt. You can't maintain any of these things without proactive effort. If the only facet of training you can get done at work is learning more about training, that's still a plus. Keep in mind that there are lots of people out there who spend way more time in forums and books who do little or nothing else. That's not training—unless you're training to be a poser.

Creating a username on a strength forum doesn't make you strong. Reading a book by a bodybuilder doesn't make you a bodybuilder. This sounds obvious, but it still happens. I know people it's is happening to right now.

Never stop learning, but don't fool yourself—you're never going to study yourself into a sweat. Especially not in the little down time you're given at work.

READ

Lots of brilliant, strong people have written books that can (and should) inspire you. Lots of people spend their breaks or lunches keeping up with *US Weekly* or *People* or *Cosmopolitan*. Don't do it. Get on Amazon and buy some used books, or if you don't want to buy, go to your library! If they don't have the books you want, ask them to order them. The library I work for owns most of the books you'll find in the reading list at the end of the book. They didn't own most of them before I started working there—I asked, they gave.

ASK

There's nothing wrong with needing help. The world of strength training can be intimidating to jump into, especially if you've never trained. Everybody wants to be an authority; there are millions of theories, too many salesmen, too many Internet heroes, etc.

None of this means you should get discouraged—only that you must be discerning.

There's an easy solution: find someone who can do what you want to do, who looks the way you want to look, and ask them how they did it. You'll find someone generous who wants to help you. And never forget that people like flattery, even if they won't admit it. Being approached as an expert feels good, or so I'm told☺. The online forums have some weenies that are there to waste people's time and stir up trouble, but there is more good than bad. Check out [this article](#) I wrote for Straight To The Bar: it's my love letter to the world of strength online and contains some Dos and Don'ts.

See the end of the book for a list of helpful forums.

CONCLUSION

If I could choose five things that for you to remember from this book, they would be:

1. Have specific goals and use every minute possible to reach them.
2. Find a mentor (or several) who has achieved the result you want, whether it's lifting big weight or losing weight or tearing a phonebook and pick their brain. Don't take advice from people who haven't **Been There** and **Done That**.
3. When you see someone do something amazing, don't be intimidated: be inspired. If you'd done every rep that person had ever done, you'd be just as strong. Wishing you were farther along isn't helpful. Move on and quit fussing.
4. Spend more time training than typing about training online.
5. ENJOY THIS. It is a privilege to be able-bodied and train hard. Always remember that there is more to life than this stuff—much, much, much more—but training makes every other part of my life more enjoyable. Have fun, and never neglect any of the things that **really** matter: Family, Peace of Mind, and Health. If you can avoid training obsessively and stay humble, you can have it all.

Thanks for reading. Above all, remember this: if you're going to get little stick-legs like mine, follow the advice in this book to the letter! It's your only chance.

Get Stronger, Get Smarter, Live Better...Every day.

Josh Hanagarne, 2009

RESOURCES AND CITATIONS

BOOKS I'VE EITHER QUOTED OR REALLY LOVE THAT YOU SHOULD READ

The Art of Expressing the Human Body: Bruce Lee and John Little, 1998. Tuttle Publishing

Beyond Brawn: The Insider's Encyclopedia on How to Build Muscle and Might: Stuart McRobert, 2007. C S Publishing.

Brother Iron, Sister Steel: A Bodybuilder's Book: Dave Draper, 2001. On Target Publications.

Dinosaur Training: Lost Secrets of Strength and Development: Brooks Kubik (can be ordered through [Brooks' website](#))

The Egoscue Method of Health Through Motion: Revolutionary Program That Lets You Rediscover the Body's Power to Rejuvenate It: Pete Egoscue, 1993. Collins Living.

Enter The Kettlebell! Strength Secret of the Soviet Supermen: Pavel Tsatsouline, 2006. Dragon Door Publications

The Grip Master's Manual: John Brookfield, 2002. Ironmind Enterprises.

The Naked Warrior: Pavel Tsatsouline, 2003. Dragon Door Publications.

Relax Into Stretch! Instant Flexibility Through Mastering Muscle Tension: Pavel Tsatsouline, 2001. Dragon Door Publications.

Power to the People! Russian Strength Secrets For Every American: Pavel Tsatsouline, 1999. Dragon Door Publications.

Starting Strength: Mark Ripptoe and Lon Kilgore, 2007 2nd edition. The Aasgaard Company

Strength, Inspiration, Grip Sites, Forums, and Tools

(alphabetical)

[Applied Strength](#): Home of Master RKC Brett Jones. Grip grip grip and lots of KB stuff.

[Average To Elite Training Systems](#): Home of RKC Jordan Vezina. Lots of great video tutorials on KB stuff. And he's pretty funny.

[Beast Skills](#): tons of meticulous bodyweight tutorials by Jim Bathurst.

[Dennis Rogers](#): Grandmaster strongman. Prepare to be amazed.

[Diesel Crew](#): home of "Napalm" Jedd Johnson, gripmaster extraordinaire. Has a great forum for grip people and powerlifters.

[Dragon Door](#): Start here if you've got any interest in KBs.

[Fat Bastard Barbell](#): More affordable grip equipment and a great selection for benders. Offers several certifications on their products. This is great if you're looking for goals to shoot for.

[Fighting With Myself](#): Marty's a nice, big guy who's lost a lot of weight with KBs. I check in on him regularly when I need to see someone working hard at a big goal.

[The Gripboard](#): A large forum of crazies, talking about nothing but the tools, armwrestling, and how much they love to squeeze, pinch, and tear.

[Gripfaq](#): Maintained by Scott Styles. Lots of clear, useful grip information in one place.

[Ironmind Enterprises](#): Home of the Captains of Crush grippers, and many other fantastic tools.

[Irontamer](#): Senior RKC David Whitley. Awesome guy, great instructor, lots of grip stuff here.

[It's How You Put it Together](#): Steve Maxwell, KB, bodyweight, and KB genius.

[Mike the Machine Bruce](#): Mike is a strongman and a student of Dennis Rogers. Down-to-earth, great guy, motivational speaker, super strong.

[Ryan Pitts Stronger Grip Custom Made Grip Tools](#): Ryan is a really cool guy who makes superior custom grip equipment. If you can picture it, he can probably make it.

[The Science of Total Training](#): Alwyn Cosgrove's site. Brilliant guy in so many ways.

[Straight To The Bar: All Things Strength](#): Scott Bird's Strength bazaar extravaganorium. Just go look at it. Lots of cools stuff.

[Strong as Hell](#): Home of Max Shank, who taught me how to make a fat bar. Nice guy, very helpful, strong as you know what.

[Unbreakable Adam T. Glass](#): The heinously strong Adam likes to think of himself as a grouch. My experience has been that he's incredibly generous with his time and knowledge. He always answers my questions thoroughly and has a genuine interest in helping other people get strong.