

ARE YOU GETTING STRONGER?

“Effort only fully releases its reward after a person refuses to quit.”
-Napolean Hill

- **Are you doing what you really need, or only what you’re good at?** It’s a simple truth that the more willing you are to do the things that you know you need, which may not be enjoyable for you, the more successful you’ll be. And as many have said, it does seem as though the universe is constantly conspiring against us, doesn’t it?

It is SO easy to fall back into the trap of letting the really hard things go, while we “practice” those things we are already good at. In my past life as a musician, I knew I needed to practice those skills or pieces of music I wasn’t as good at, in order to improve my overall musicianship. *Training is no different.* Don’t let yourself get caught and trapped by the universe into doing only what you’re good at, instead of what it is you really need.

- **Are you planning for adequate recovery?** There’s a common phrase in strength training/weight lifting circles that goes like this: *fatigue masks fitness.*

I actually think there’s a correlation with endurance training also. So what does it mean? I’ll use myself as an example: my PB for wide grip pull ups is probably 15 (I think). However... most days of the week, I can only manage 7 or 8. What’s the reason?

Like YOU, I spend most days of the week carrying some residual fatigue. So the key for me to consistently improve is to plan in some structured rest, where I “de-load” and fully recover, thus allowing for the training I’ve done to sink in. It is in THAT period that I adapt to become stronger.

An effective long term training formula is simple, but not necessarily always easy to execute: *on one hand, you want to impose enough fatigue on the body to create super-compensation (adaptation), while at the same time, not imposing so much fatigue on your body that you end up digging yourself a hole you can't get out of without a long period of time off.*

To progress, we all need periods where we step back, recover (with a period of lower training stress) and then take it up a notch moving forward. You can't just go in and hit personal bests in every single training session – and if you try, you're going to wind up exhausted.

- **Are you being consistent?** There are many factors that contribute to our success as athletes. One of them is consistency in our approach - in our routine. Sometimes I think of it as “the grind.” You know, that day in-day out routine of training.

While doing things in the same way from day to day and week to week is rarely ever ideal, there is a lot to be said for being consistent in what we do. With repetition (lots of it), capillaries are grown, mitochondria multiply, neural engrams are grooved, and coordination and skill improve.

Provided you’re applying good skills and progressing appropriately, there are few things that are more important than a consistent approach to training. One key to building a consistent “routine,” is to ensure what you are trying to do daily truly fits into your life. When you find a good balance, it is much easier to be consistent. **Combine consistency with movement quality and a desire to improve, and magical things happen!**

- **Are you working to steadily increase resistance?** One very well-known fact about the training we do, is that our body tends to adapt very quickly. In order to continue to improve, we need “progressive overload.” It IS easy to settle into the same resistance level and then wonder why we aren’t getting stronger, so be sure once you have grooved a movement, to start pushing resistance up consistently. You’ll hit some occasional plateaus and ceilings, which is OK. In order to improve, you have to push the resistance without losing movement quality. It isn’t always easy to do, but it is important!
- **Are you looking to add small variations or variables to change things up?** Similar to #4 in this list, which is to add resistance progressively, mixing up and adding in some variables or movement variations can be a great asset to continual progress.

You can mix reps and sets and total training volume, play with small changes to the position of a band or weight or change the TIME of day or position of the exercise relative to the sports training (doing it beforehand, OR afterward). These are all examples of how slight variation can help you bust a plateau and keep YOU moving forward.