

# **Thinking Big II**

**Aspiring to a Higher Level of  
Bodybuilding Achievement!**

**By Skip La Cour**

# Thinking Big II

## Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!

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# **Part I**

## **Building a Solid Foundation for Success**







# 1

## **This Book Can Be A Powerful Step In Your Compelling Journey!**

I know what you want—and I'm committed to helping you get it!

I feel privileged to have this opportunity to share my thoughts, opinions, ideas, mental strategies, and the lessons I have learned. It is my sincere desire that this book will provide information and inspiration to get you closer to earning the physique you ultimately want. Whether it's by means of one of the exercises that creates clarity and improves your training intensity or a personal challenge or struggle I share that gives you the courage to try just one more time, I want to be your coach and friend who helps you reach your bodybuilding goals.

### **How Mental Strategies Became the Cornerstone of Everything I Share**

You may be aware of my accomplishments on the competitive stage but may wonder how I evolved into a “motivational bodybuilder” or “mental strength coach” who writes books, articles for magazines, and conducts seminars around the world. These unique titles and distinctions have come as a result of my love for bodybuilding and my commitment to becoming more efficient at educating others.

I used to spend hours upon hours explaining bodybuilding strategies in the areas of training, nutrition, and supplementation—but had only limited success with the people I helped. It wasn't that those people weren't benefiting from my knowledge and efforts. I just felt *every* person I invested my time in had to follow through and actually achieve the results they *told me* they wanted. People being people, that was *never* going to happen!

Very early in my career, I came to the conclusion that what made people successful at anything they did in life was their *mindset*—not any secret strategy or a “magic bullet” everyone seems to be looking for. When I thought about my own experiences, what made me successful in bodybuilding was an outstanding psychology. I thought like a champion and therefore became a champion. I found this way of thinking is universal among all people who are successful.

It became apparent to me that even the very best strategy fueled by a poor way of thinking would produce only mediocre results—at best! On the other hand, a

mediocre strategy fortified with an outstanding way of thinking would produce results far better than anyone could ever imagine.

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**Very early in my career, I came to the conclusion that what made people successful at anything they did in life was their *mindset*—not any secret strategy or a “magic bullet” everyone seems to be looking for.**

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I decided I'd be dramatically more effective helping people make improvements to their bodies by focusing on getting them in the right state of mind—and *then* I would offer great training, nutrition, and supplementation strategies.

### **The Tremendous Impact of My First Book, *Thinking Big***

The frustration caused by being ineffective at helping people by my using only specific training, nutrition, and supplementation concepts was the driving force behind writing my first book, *Thinking Big*. This step-by-step workbook guides bodybuilders into setting goals and reevaluating limiting beliefs. It provides mental exercises that help make the process of bodybuilding a more enjoyable experience. *Thinking Big* helps bodybuilders identify what they want and helps them get what they want.

*Thinking Big* was received with remarkable international approval. In fact, the book was nominated for Book of the Year by the Weider Awards.

Here are only a few of the hundreds of letters I received about *Thinking Big*:

*“I received your book Thinking Big for my birthday and read it from cover to cover. Although you have already motivated me by your articles in Ironman, your book Thinking Big put me over the edge. If there were any doubts in my mind about my potential or my drive to become outstanding, that book put those thoughts to rest. Your book has helped put everything into focus for me and has given me the knowledge to become not only the best bodybuilder I can be, but also the best person I can be!”*

Marc Platt  
St. Clair Shores, MI

*“Your book, Thinking Big, is by far one of the best books on motivation. It really has helped me to understand how to motivate myself. After having listed my goals and all the compelling reasons along with the consequences, I can't wait to train. I am 43 years old and I have set some ambitious goals for myself. I only wish I had bought your book sooner!”*

Bert Hernandez  
Somerville, NJ

*"I just finished reading Thinking Big, and I wanted to express my gratitude for your contributions to the sport of drug-free bodybuilding. The book was outstanding to say the least, and my workouts have already improved with my new appreciation of and outlook toward my goals."*

Keith Davis  
Cedar Park, TX

*"I really enjoyed Thinking Big! I plan to read it over again and fill out the exercises. You really did a great job on it and you really do a great job on helping other people reach their full potential. If only the fitness community had more people like you."*

Travis Sisco  
Manhattan, KS

*"Thinking Big is a phenomenal book, and has completely changed the way I view my physique goals. I personally have used it to advance myself in bodybuilding and improve my interactions with others."*

Ed Bednar III  
Wintersville, OH

If you really liked *Thinking Big*, you're going to absolutely love *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!*

### **Raising Your Expectations Will Dramatically Improve Your Development**

Through my personal experience and through the experience of those I've had the pleasure to come in contact with over the years I know that drug-free bodybuilders generally have very limiting beliefs about what they can and cannot achieve without using steroids or other illegal physique-enhancement drugs. "You can't get big or ripped without drugs!" is a common opinion among many in our bodybuilding community.

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**If you really liked *Thinking Big*, you're going to absolutely love *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!***

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As the years go by, the advancements in our understanding of training and nutrition are expanding enormously. The scientifically researched supplements are rapidly becoming more effective. An extremely disempowering belief structure prevents drug-free bodybuilders from evolving at the same pace. This mentality of inadequacy has the sport of drug-free bodybuilding needlessly moving along at a snail's pace.

In today's society, just about *everything* is bigger, stronger, and faster than just a few years ago. Whether it's in computer technology or sports performance, the world's ability to produce better results is improving at an incredible rate.

When I was on my high school basketball team years ago, rarely could anyone, regardless of his height, dunk the basketball. The biggest reason why was that dunking the basketball was illegal in regulation play back then. For the longest time, dunking was never really a desire or goal, except for during an occasional pick-up game on the playground.

I remember the first season the ban on dunking was lifted. The 6'6" senior star of my high school's varsity team barely managed to stuff during a game. Everyone in the crowd went absolutely wild over the rarely seen feat.

Boy, have times changed! Over 20 years later, if you go to any high school basketball game, you will notice almost every single player on any team can dunk the basketball—whether the player is as short as 5'6" or as tall as 6'6".

How can such an amazing athletic evolution—in this case, the increase in jumping ability of so many high school players—occur within such a short time period? The tremendous progress and evolution took place because of two significant factors: goal setting and empowering beliefs.

Once dunking became legal, youngsters began dreaming of one day hearing the crowd roar as they drove down the lane and "jammed it home." With that lofty goal firmly implanted in their minds, developing incredible jumping ability became a highly sought-after attribute. Owning awesome vertical leaping ability was something that was worked for at every practice session. Soon, many young players started touching the net. Soon, they set their sights higher and eventually tried to touch the rim.

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While watching professional basketball on television, they saw their hero, Michael "Air" Jordan, soar over the court with unbelievable style and elegance and became even more inspired to reach their goal. They progressed to dunking a tennis ball and then graduated to a volleyball. As a player gained confidence in his development, he started *believing* he eventually would be able to dunk. And

as he saw others accomplish the feat, their leadership made him even more determined and persistent.

Then, after stretching his mental and physical abilities for years, a player would finally reach his goal and join the elite club of high flyers who could play “above the rim.” Having accomplished this, the player would never look back! He would immediately set higher and more ambitious goals. Now he wanted to do more than just simply dunk it, he wanted to twist 360 degrees through the air and cram the ball down with authority!

Drug-free bodybuilding offers the opportunity for the same type of amazing personal evolution. For this to happen, however, we must also be able to optimistically set ambitious goals and must have the unshakable belief we can actually achieve them.

With many of our current mindsets, we have set the goal of adding significant muscle mass and getting shredded without drugs, but we *do not* have the essential empowering belief structure that will make those dreams a reality.

Advancements in sport supplementation alone (like creatine and whey protein) have made packing on size incredibly easier for us as opposed to our bodybuilding predecessors. We have plenty of examples of successful drug-free bodybuilders, but too many of us refuse to believe anyone who is exceptionally muscular is truly drug free.

If this were high school basketball, would we rationalize that the reason for such awesome progress is due to rampant drug use, especially if we ourselves were among those who couldn't dunk yet? Most of the time, we come to this conclusion after just a brief period of time training. Let me make one point emphatically clear: You will never be able to “dunk” or achieve what you want until you start believing you can. It's my belief that we drug-free bodybuilders are most responsible for keeping ourselves, as well as the entire sport of drug-free bodybuilding, from progressing at a more appropriate rate.

*Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!* is designed to help you reevaluate your current belief structure. I want to provide you with a new set of references (like the high school basketball story) and strategically inject examples of success and excellence (such as Michael Jordan) to challenge the philosophy of failure that has been pounded into your head since the day you began training.

This book is designed to fortify and empower you with a belief structure that makes building an outstanding physique without steroids or other physique-enhancing drugs a realistic possibility.

## **Training without Drugs Isn't Easy—But Don't Make It Harder Than It Needs to Be**

I am not telling you that your task will be an easy one. Training drug free will not be as quick or effective as if you were using drugs. That's simply not the case and I would be misleading you if I had you believing so.

You must be careful, however, to not make training without drugs any harder than it needs to be.

I will tell you with certainty that there is *always* a higher level to achieve in every aspect of life—even drug-free bodybuilding. If you were to embrace this one single statement as true—without even using any fancy training strategies or cutting-edge diet secrets—you would see significant improvement from your efforts over time.

Make no mistake about the fact that your beliefs guide you toward success—or lead you to failure. The beliefs of too many drug-free bodybuilders are simply abominable. It is my mission to influence drug-free bodybuilders to raise the standards of what they expect from themselves. Helping you is what excites me more than any other aspect of bodybuilding.

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***Thinking Big II: Aspiring To A Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!* is designed to help you reevaluate your current belief structure. I want to provide you with a new set of references and strategically inject examples of success and excellence to challenge the philosophy of failure that has been pounded into your head since the day you began training.**

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For some of you, buying what I have to say might be a bit challenging. But I encourage you to give me, my philosophies, and my strategies a chance. What do you have to lose besides a lot of frustration and half-hearted development of your physique that may not satisfy you?

What do you have to gain? Well, besides a better body, you will feel more optimistic and more in control of your bodybuilding destiny, rather than see yourself as an underdog who is disadvantaged or doomed to eventual failure. Through the exercises in this book, you will have the opportunity to become empowered with a belief structure that will make bodybuilding an amazingly fulfilling experience.

## **We Must Take Full Responsibility for Our Success and Failure!**

What you *should not* expect from *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!* is reading how I blame the guys on drugs for any of our challenges as bodybuilders. What they choose to do has nothing to do with how well we maximize our own physiques. For the same reason, I don't waste any time or energy passing judgment on them either. It's their lives and they will do what they want with them. The best I can do to influence those who use drugs is to become a great example of what's possible to achieve without drugs and offer effective strategies.

I have enough of a battle on my hands concentrating on building my own physique to outstanding standards while, at the same time, helping you do the same. Dr. Laura Schlessinger will have to work on the morality issues—not me. I believe you can influence more people by what you accomplish than by what you say. Besides, shaming someone will only make you feel better—not change someone else's habits.

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**The best I can do to influence those who use drugs is to become a great example of what is possible to achieve without drugs and offer effective strategies.**

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I will *never* offer any excuses for the challenges we face by our choice to train drug free. Instead, I will focus on creating solutions. I am all about drug-free bodybuilders taking full responsibility for our own development.

What you can expect from this book is 100 percent of my energy and passion for bodybuilding in every chapter. You can be assured that I will openly share any mental strategy or technique I believe will help you build a better physique.

Whether you are a big fan of mine or you seriously doubt I am truly drug free, you can benefit from this book.

How? If you are a fan, I will motivate you, teach you, and give you (at the very least) a glimmer of hope that you can indeed make significant improvements to your body.

If you doubt I am truly drug free or doubt you really can obtain a good physique without drugs, I will do my best to challenge your limiting way of thinking. I will do my best to help you convince *yourself* that you can really succeed. I will reveal my way of thinking and encourage you to compare it to your own mental patterns. You'll be able to see if there are any noticeable differences. If you see any differences, you'll have the opportunity to try them for yourself.

In a nutshell, I will help you become a better bodybuilder by maximizing the effectiveness of every one of your mental and physical resources that are already available to you in abundance.

### **Use This Book to Get Clear on Exactly What You Want to Accomplish**

You will put yourself miles ahead of the majority of your buddies training in the gym if you simply take the time to determine *exactly* what you want to accomplish from the effort you are putting forth. Sounds too easy, doesn't it?

Your brain will immediately and efficiently seek out all the resources that are available to help you reach your goals. Sometimes, it seems somewhat magical when an extremely helpful paragraph in one of the chapters in this book, an article in a magazine, or information about a muscle-building diet suddenly makes sense to you. It wasn't magic that made these gems of knowledge show up in your life—you just became mentally prepared to receive them.

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While you are reading this book, start tapping into your tremendous potential by implementing this process of getting clear on what you want.

### **When You Read This Book, Be Sure to THINK BIG!**

When you have taken the time to get clear on exactly what you want to accomplish, be certain you have asked enough from yourself. Bodybuilding, as well as life itself, is an all-you-can-eat buffet!

Don't sit down at your table and wish you had loaded a little more of this delicious treat and a little more of that delectable delight on your plate. You are more than likely capable of achieving a whole lot more than you currently believe. In other words, *think big!*

A man will set his goals based on what he believes about himself. If your goal is to get big, you must first think big. Walk, talk, stand, and carry yourself as if you were already that person you are trying to become—and start doing so *immediately*. Your actions form your beliefs. Consequently, your beliefs propel your actions.



**In a magazine interview I read years ago, John Hanson (who later became the ABA's Mr. Natural Olympia) said, "I want to become the Arnold Schwarzenegger of natural bodybuilding!" When I read of his dream, I was impressed and inspired. He had the courage to set an outrageously ambitious goal. Hanson's ability to think big was the catalyst that helped lead me to where I am today. "If he can do it, so can I!" I decided back then.**

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One of the greatest things about what I do is I have the unique privilege to connect with many people just like you. Whether or not we ever actually meet face to face, it doesn't matter as far as I'm concerned. I feel fortunate our paths have crossed through our mutual passion for bodybuilding.

I applaud you for making the investment of both your time and money to get this book. I'll be *excited* for you if you are persistent enough to read *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!* in its entirety. I'll be *ecstatic* if you follow through with all of the exercises. I'll be watching out for you if you apply the mental strategies to your bodybuilding efforts, as well as your life. I'll be *watching out for you* because you, my friend, are surely going places!

### **My Story Could Become Your Story**

I believe you and I are very much the same, don't you think? We love to train; We always strive to push ourselves to achieve more—both in and out of the gym; We constantly search for new, more efficient ways to improve our bodybuilding efforts.

Am I right? I thought so! I'm sure that's the biggest reason why we've developed this special connection. I like to think of it as a "Thinking Man's Bodybuilding Fraternity." There's no doubt we are definitely cut from the same cloth.

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**A man will set his goals based on what he believes about himself. If your goal is to get big, you must first think big.**

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If you know my story, you'll probably see a lot of similarities—and that should excite you! Our similarities should get you excited because, wherever you currently are in life's journey, you have within yourself the potential to accomplish some truly amazing things.

I'm sure I grew up with the same ambitions and dreams you had: One day when I grew up, I was going to be special!

My mother always told me I would be. I had many people throughout my life tell me I was going to be special in one way or another when I was older. I really *thought* success was going to happen for me. In my mind, it was only a matter of time.

It's really easy to *think* you are going to make it big someday when you're young. But as you get older and still haven't accomplished anything out of the ordinary, you begin to question yourself. Maybe you've felt the same way at times.

As the years went by, I still had big dreams—but I had no unique talents; I didn't have any special skills or any detailed plans outlined to accomplish those big dreams!

As a young adult, I worked my way up the management ladder for a grocery store chain and eventually even became one of the youngest store managers. I worked for that company for 15 years. It was a good, safe, and solid job. I knew in my heart, however, I was destined to do something else with my life.

During this time, at the relatively late age of 27, I started bodybuilding. I *immediately* knew I had found what I was put on this earth to do.

But things didn't just happen for me quickly and easily. I had to make a game plan to achieve my "outrageous" goal of making a huge impact on the bodybuilding world. I had to "pay the price" as well. My journey over the years has been filled with many victories and defeats, ups and downs, twists and turns, ultimate pleasure and extreme pain—to say the least!

For years I would wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning, sit down at my computer, and passionately write about bodybuilding. After preparing my food and clothes for the day, I would get to the gym at 5 o'clock to train intensely with some very heavy weight.

I was usually preparing for one of the more 20 contests I've competed in over an 11-year stretch of time—which meant I was dieting and in a calorie-deprivation mode most of the time. I'd go to my job at 7:30 in the morning and put in a stressful 10-hour day. Immediately afterwards, I'd go back to the gym for another session of cardiovascular training. I'd then head back home to write about bodybuilding some more until about 11 o'clock at night—only to wake up early the next morning to do it all over again. My weekends were packed primarily with more bodybuilding—training and writing; writing and training; training and writing.

I eventually mustered up enough courage to quit that job I had been working at for so many years. That's when things really began to come together for me!

Mind you, I still had—and continue to have—many ups and downs along the way. But it was only after I got out of my comfort zone and took some risks, started letting my love and passion for bodybuilding pour out of me, and aggressively began going for what I *really* wanted with my life, that I started progressing at a rapid pace. I wish I had developed that courage much sooner!

If you want to become *outstanding* at anything in life, you're going to have to concentrate all of your power, focus, and effort at that one special dream in your life you want the most. You are going to have to become courageous. You'll need to come up with a detailed game plan.

Although I openly share my personal experiences in *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!*, this book is really not about me at all. I didn't write this to tell you about all the things I've accomplished.

My hope—and the main purpose of this book—is to inspire and encourage you to go for your goals and dreams. Whether those goals and dreams are to make it in bodybuilding or anything else in life, it doesn't matter. I want to help you realize the magic behind concentrating your power and focus. I want to help you unleash that courage I *know* is inside of you. I want to help get your creative juices flowing after learning about what I've experienced. I want to impress upon you the need to develop your specific game plan.

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If a prematurely balding, 27-year-old grocery store worker like me can one day become a national champion bodybuilder, best-selling book author, influential magazine writer, and a positive influence to thousands of people around the world—just think what's possible for you and your life!

*You are just like me!*

However, you just can't sit back and hope your life will change for the better. You can't just hope that someone else will come along and change it for you—you're going to have to take action and change your life for yourself!

This book, *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!* can be a powerful step in your compelling journey—if you decide to make it so. Make that decision right now!

## **Step into the Future for a Moment**

Let me ask you a couple of questions. Imagine for a moment that you are 99 years old and on your deathbed. That sounds kind of gruesome, doesn't it? I know, but just play along for a moment if you will.

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**This book, *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!* can be a powerful step in your compelling journey—if you decide to make it so. Make that decision right now!**

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Let's say you had the magical power of going back in time and giving the "you of today" some wise, sage advice. Which direction would the old, gray, and decrepit you of the distant future tell the younger, vibrant, and enthusiastic you of today?

Would that advice be to focus on your dreams and go for it with all of your heart? Or would that version of you who's ready to "check out" for the very last time tell you to sit back, live your life conservatively, and proceed with extreme caution?

Think about it! And remember, you won't start getting big until you start *thinking* big!

## CHAPTER ONE EXERCISES

### **This Book Can Be a Powerful Step in Your Compelling Journey!**

**1. What motivated you to invest your money in this book?**

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**2. Were there any specific events (either good or bad) in your life that prompted you to take action now rather than later?**

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**3. For you to consider this book to be an outstanding value, what specifically must happen? How must you feel afterwards? What specific actions must you take?**

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**4. Why are you committed to reading this book in its entirety and completing all of the exercises?**

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**5. What specific date have you set as a goal to complete this book and all of the exercises?**

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# 2

## Creating Your Mission Statement Will Pull You Toward Your Goals

Do you ever wish you could look into the future? Wouldn't it be nice to see what was going to happen during the different stages of your life? Is all of this effort you are putting into bodybuilding ever going to pay off the way you want it to? Will you ever actually achieve those goals you've been ambitiously setting?

Just think of how great it would be to know in advance what was ultimately going to happen. Life sure would be nicer when you were going through really challenging periods. Wouldn't it be comforting to know you were *finally* going to find the right set of strategies to build the physique you ultimately desire? It would be awesome just having the peace of mind, confidence, and certainty knowing everything was going to work out just fine—even if it took you another five years and trying 100 more techniques!

If you had such amazing powers, how differently would you act? What would you do—in both good times and bad? Would you be a little more patient? Would you be more persistent? If you knew for sure that your hard work would pay off, would you let anything stand in your way? Can you see yourself ever missing another workout? Can you ever see yourself indulging in that junk food when you've promised yourself you wouldn't?

How would you feel if you could see how events in your life would unfold in advance? Would you take more risks? Would you exhibit more courage? Would you exude more confidence? Do you think you would enjoy and appreciate the bodybuilding experience at a greater level?

Yes, for an ambitious bodybuilder, it would be *fantastic* to have the ability to see into the future!

But you know what? You'll never be able to see the future. Life just doesn't work that way. There are no guarantees in life. The best you can do is put forth your best effort, keep plugging away, have faith, and hope for the best. When you think about it, would you really want it any other way? Wouldn't knowing all the great accomplishments and experiences ahead of time spoil all the fun once they actually happened?

You can use the power of your mind, however, to generate the next best thing. You can invent your compelling bodybuilding journey in advance. You can do so by creating your own mission statement.

Taking the time to determine where I ultimately wanted has pulled me closer to my goals. I cannot begin to tell you how the magic of my personal mission statement has propelled my efforts forward over the years. It has been the catalyst that helped me celebrate during the good times. It has pumped me up when I've failed to appreciate just how much I've been able to accomplish. My mission statement gave me the confidence boost I needed when times were extremely difficult. It gave me hope when it seemed that the only person who believed in me and my vision was *me*.

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**You can invent your compelling bodybuilding journey in advance. You can do so by creating your mission statement.**

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My goal is to have this magic start working for you immediately. This chapter is meant to convince you of the importance of creating a mission statement, give you a few suggestions for what you can include in it, and guide you through the process of constructing an effective one.

### **The Objectives of a Mission Statement**

By investing the time to create a mission statement, you can put yourself far ahead of the average person. A mission statement will *force* you to take some time to determine your ultimate destination—and do so in specific detail. How many people do you know who have really taken the time to decide exactly what they wish to produce from their efforts—whether those efforts are in bodybuilding or anything else?

Another benefit of creating a mission statement is that you'll create a general roadmap of how you will reach your destination. Being especially specific about how you expect to reach your ultimate goals is not important to an effective mission statement. Coming up with just a few general strategies and methods will work nicely for what we wish to accomplish here.

A mission statement is normally intended for important, involved, long-range goals. In other words, mission statements are best suited for a major goal that would usually take years to actualize.

After years of working hard, seeing that you are on target for accomplishing your mission is an unbelievably great feeling. The road to success is sometimes long, winding, and seemingly never-ending. Reviewing your mission statement on a regular basis and noticing you are actually making progress—even in the

slightest ways—will give you a sense of pride and the strength to carry on. One of the biggest tragedies in life occurs when we fail to appreciate and take notice of the victories we experience. By creating a mission statement, you will greatly reduce the chances of failing to appreciate what you've achieved.

Have you ever used the expression “uphill battle” while describing an endeavor you found especially difficult? Do you ever feel as though your bodybuilding efforts are an uphill battle? I know the feeling. I have felt that way as well—many times over the years! A mission statement has the unique ability to draw you toward your goals. Instead of an uphill battle, your journey will seem metaphorically more positive. Mission statements have the ability to pull you toward your goals as a big piece of metal is drawn toward the awesome force of a gigantic magnet.”

Most people have no problem putting forth their best effort when things are going well. Unfortunately, good times will not last forever. During every journey, you will inevitably encounter challenges. Distractions, setbacks, and obstacles are all part of the game.

Setbacks such as an injury, feeling hopeless because you think you've tried virtually everything to improve a lagging body part, having your girlfriend leave you because she doesn't support your passion for bodybuilding, or placing far below what you expected in a bodybuilding contest you put your heart and soul into for months can be devastating and can threaten your will to persevere.

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**Instead of an uphill battle, your journey will seem metaphorically more positive. Mission statements have the ability to pull you toward your goals as a big piece of metal is drawn toward the awesome force of a gigantic magnet.**

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Wouldn't it be great to have the awesome to into the future when these difficult events occur? Wouldn't you like to know you're going to be okay? When tough times do come around, those who can remain confident and continue to do all the things they know they must—regardless of those challenges—are the ones who eventually succeed.

A mission statement can give you the strength to continue grinding towards your dream. A mission statement, one that you've taken the time to plan thoroughly, can serve as a ray of hope or that glimpse into the future I mentioned earlier. It can keep you on track and remind you why you are so committed to endure—and eventually conquer—the challenges you will undoubtedly face as you strive to achieve what's most important to you.

Another great attribute in store for you when you create a mission statement is that it works in perfect harmony with your subconscious mind. You will unleash the creative genius inside you and come up with all kinds of great ideas to reach your goals. You find yourself making intelligent, guided decisions without really being aware what the implications will be in the future. It isn't that you don't know. You've just planted a seed in the back of your mind by creating your mission statement—and it's working without even being consciously activated.

A mission statement will oftentimes steer you clear of ineffective, time-wasting strategies and methods that distract you and take you off course.

### **The Components of a Great Mission Statement**

Although you don't need to be overly precise when you create your mission statement, you may wish to include the following components:

#### *Your Ultimate Destination*

Even though you might want to win a bodybuilding contest this coming year, your *ultimate* purpose for doing so might be to create a great reputation that allows you to make a great living as a bodybuilding journalist. Be sure to determine what you want to achieve when everything is said and done.

#### *Reasons Why You Are Committed to Reaching Your Ultimate Destination*

In most cases, we choose to do the things we do to attain certain feelings. Why are you so committed to achieving your dreams? Do you wish to help others feel good about themselves? Do you finally want to do something meaningful with your life and have a positive impact on the world? Would achieving your ultimate goal give you a sense of freedom? Do you want to prove to that old girlfriend (or boyfriend) she was dead wrong when she said you'd never amount to anything? Whatever the reasons are that drive you toward your mission, take the time to list a few of the most important ones.

#### *Major Steps or Actions You Must Take to Reach Your Ultimate Destination*

During every journey, there are a few critical steps or actions you must take along the way. I suggest you list a few of them in your mission statement as well. Don't worry about creating an ironclad plan, you'll have plenty of time to do that along the way. Just write down a few of the most important steps.

### **Steps for Creating Your Mission Statement**

After brainstorming and randomly writing down all the ideas that come to mind in the categories I previously outlined, start dreaming of anything that will motivate you to consistently put forth your best effort. You can write down words that

describe your outstanding efforts, complimentary statements other people have told you in the past, character qualities you must possess in order to meet your objectives, or some of your most noteworthy accomplishments. Have fun with this part of the process! Dare to dream! Think big!

Then, you should narrow down your selections to fit on one side of a sheet of paper. Be sure to choose only the actions, steps, reasons, feelings, words, statements, character qualities, and past accomplishments that get you the most excited and fuel the fire within you to achieve your dreams.

You should take the time to review this mission statement on a regular basis. I suggest you make it a habit to review your mission statement *at least* once a week. To prevent yourself from making the review process a major task or investment of time, you should be able to read the entire statement in just a couple of minutes.

On the following pages, I have listed a couple of my mission statements for you to review and that hopefully will generate some ideas for what you might want to include in yours.

### **Skip La Cour's Bodybuilding Mission**

- To inspire, educate, and empower both competitive and noncompetitive bodybuilders around the world to improve the quality of their training, physique development, and mental development strategies. In a continuation of their achievements, they will apply the lessons they have learned in the gym to create quality lives for themselves and the people they have the privilege to come in contact with in their lives.
- To supply drug-free bodybuilders around the world with information and inspiration to develop their physiques to the highest level of their genetic potential. I will provide information in the many articles I write and the seminars I give on training. This information will be generated not only from my experiences, but also from the most successful drug-free bodybuilders. I will provide inspiration through my motivational articles and speeches, as well as from the example I set by what I accomplish without drugs.
- To give hope those who currently believe that bodybuilding takes the use of steroids and other physique-enhancing drugs and convince them that building their bodies can be done successfully with the proper attitude and knowledge. I welcome with open arms those who are searching for a viable alternative to drug use.
- To communicate in a “real world” manner—not overly scientific or in a know-it-all fashion, explaining concepts in a bodybuilder-to-bodybuilder style using real-life situations.
- To get our community to focus on what is great about bodybuilding—instead of focusing on what is negative. To unite the bodybuilding world to work together to solve our internal problems for the greater good of our sport, competitive bodybuilders, and fans.

## **Skip La Cour's Mission Statement for the Business of Bodybuilding**

I have an intense passion to become an outstanding bodybuilder (the *world's* best drug-free bodybuilder!) and an all-out obsession to help other bodybuilders around the world achieve their goals.

I constantly strive to increase my level of knowledge in all aspects of training, nutrition, supplementation, motivation, organization, and ways to earn money from my passion for bodybuilding. I strive to continually improve the way I communicate my vast knowledge and experiences with others in both my writing and my speaking skills.

I appreciate and take full advantage of the financial and life-fulfilling opportunities my tremendous passion for bodybuilding allows me to enjoy. I am a world leader. I am fulfilling my mission in life, creating my destiny, and doing what I was put on this earth to do.

I provide an outstanding value to others—far more than they anything they expect. At the same time, I am paid extremely well for what I give and am never afraid to ask for more—I certainly deserve it!

I have awesome marketing skills to make bodybuilders around the world aware of the exceptional information and inspiration I have to offer them. I constantly search for new, unique, and effective methods to share my information and information (such as utilizing different publications, mailing lists, one-on-one contact, and the Internet). I have a sincere desire to help them become their very best.

I am willing to work 15 hours a day to achieve my ambitious financial goals. More important than my willingness to put in the time, I work intelligently, elegantly, and efficiently.

I concentrate my power and effort as in a laser beam! I am focused, creative, passionate, dedicated, effective, and the very best on the planet at what I do.

I am fearless, hungry, and purpose-driven!

These are the reasons why, without a doubt, I deserve to reach my ambitious financial goal of earning x a month every month in the year 2000!





## CHAPTER TWO EXERCISES

### Creating Your Mission Statement Will Pull You toward Your Goals

1. What are your ultimate long-term objectives, goals, and dreams that you want to achieve most from your bodybuilding efforts?

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2. What have you determined to be your most important ultimate long-term objective?

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3. What are some of the reasons why you are committed to reaching your most important long-term objective despite any challenges or setbacks you may encounter along the way?

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**4. What are some of the specific major steps and actions you must take in order to reach your most important long-term objective?**

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**5. What words best describe the character qualities you already possess (or need to possess) in order to reach your long-term objective?**

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**6. What are some of your past accomplishments that give you confidence that you will meet your long-term objective?**

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**7. What are some of the comments people have told you that make them certain you have what's needed to meet your long-term objective?**

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# 3

## **Turn Your Bodybuilding Into A Masterpiece**

“I’m the king of the world!” exclaimed director James Cameron after winning the prestigious Academy Award for his work on the blockbuster movie *Titanic*. What a rewarding experience that must have been for him. After years of commitment, focus, and perseverance, Cameron has the privilege of knowing that his contribution has added enormous entertainment value for the entire world to enjoy. People around the globe have been touched by this movie at a deep emotional level.

*Titanic* won a record-tying 11 Academy Awards and will soon become the highest grossing film of all time as its earnings exceed 500 million dollars.

Cameron has every right to feel as though he is “king of the world.” He has created a masterpiece that will enthrall viewers for decades to come. Doing what he truly enjoys, the director has made a difference in people’s lives on a very large scale.

We as bodybuilders have the same opportunity to create our own masterpiece by doing what we enjoy. Most of us hope to experience the same fulfillment for developing our physiques as Cameron enjoyed for directing his movie.

Whether or not you ever plan to enter a contest, bodybuilding can give you a sense of pride and accomplishment. If your physique becomes outstanding, you can experience achievement, significance, and respect. These are just some of the feelings you have to look forward to earning from bodybuilding—but only if you strive for your goals with 100 percent of your mental and physical abilities.

We can make our bodybuilding efforts true masterpieces if we are determined. What will it take? It will take commitment and perseverance—just like Cameron possessed when he made *Titanic*. You will need courage, persistence, and flexibility. Earning the physique you truly desire will require effective strategies in the areas of training, nutrition, and supplementation. You must also have exceptional organizational skills to incorporate everything you have found successful into an easy-to-follow plan.

Did success come easily for Cameron? Was he an overnight sensation? Certainly not. Cameron invested several years of his life grossed in learning everything he could about the legendary vessel. He interviewed literally hundreds

of people to create his perception of the story line. While constructing the movie sets, Cameron's attention to intricate, historical detail was phenomenal.

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**If your physique becomes outstanding, you can experience achievement, significance, and respect. These are just some of the feelings you have to look forward to earning from bodybuilding—but only if you strive for your goals with 100 percent of your mental and physical abilities.**

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Cameron went well above and far beyond what an average director would do under the same circumstances. He understood that if he were to exert an average amount of effort, he would achieve average results—at best. This director was not about to settle for anything less than outstanding results. He took many risks in order to make *Titanic* the treasure he had envisioned. Cameron persuaded his production studio to invest over 200 million dollars to make his dream a reality. He even gambled on forfeiting his lucrative eight-million-dollar director's salary and percentage of the gate receipts when the studio became greatly concerned about the amount of money the movie was costing to make.

If you want to do what an average bodybuilder does, I'll save you a lot of time trying to figuring that out. Average bodybuilders give average effort—but spend a lot of time trying to convince themselves and others that they are really giving 100 percent. Average bodybuilders whine about being hardgainers, instead of appreciating their gifts and focusing on better ways to improve the areas that offer the most challenges. Average bodybuilders are convinced that everyone who has a better physique than they do must be taking drugs. I have the feeling that you want to be more than just an average bodybuilder. Am I right?

As a bodybuilder, you will be required to make major sacrifices in order to achieve outstanding development. You must spend time and energy becoming a student who is constantly learning the latest advancements in training, nutrition, and supplementation. You will need to invest money in books and magazines, the proper amount of nutritious foods, and effective supplements. This investment of your income may be considered excessive to many people around you. And of course, you will also need to dedicate a considerable amount of time training with weights, doing cardiovascular exercise, preparing food, and planning your day.

You may also have to take risks if you want your hard work to eventually pay off. There will be times when you must get out of your safety zone and try different methods. As you try to take yourself to a higher level, some of these new strategies have the potential of slowing down or even halting your progress. But

these are the chances you may need to take from time to time. One thing is certain: You cannot merely do what the average person will do. Not if you want outstanding results. Not if you want to create a masterpiece.

It is my belief that most of us would become just as dedicated to our bodybuilding as Cameron was to *Titanic*—if there were an absolute, 100 percent guarantee that we would be rewarded for doing so. With this kind of certainty, I have little doubt people who might otherwise be described as big disappointments would suddenly become astonishing success stories. Unfortunately, that's not how life works. There are no such guarantees.

You must develop this absolute certainty within yourself. You must create your own references that you are indeed destined for greatness. If you speak with those who have become successful in bodybuilding, business, school, or in any other area of life, they have had the uncanny ability to develop remarkable confidence and certainty within themselves. Usually they have done so long before they had any proof or evidence they should have such feelings.

Cameron would not succumb to doing what conventional thinking dictated. The media attacked him unmercifully over the amount of time and money the movie was absorbing. Some of the press even predicted *Titanic* would become the biggest box office flop in history.

You can be assured there will be some people along the way who will challenge your dedication and willingness to dream. They will try to discourage you from putting your heart and soul into just one area of your life. Some of these individuals will do so out of legitimate concern for you, while others will be trying to meet their own agendas. But if you conform to the beliefs and opinions of others, you will only be able to manage the same mediocrity that most people suffer in their lives. Toning down your dreams because you have bought into the limiting beliefs of others will not make your bodybuilding efforts an endeavor of lasting value.

Staying faithful to your dreams will eventually have its rewards. By taking the time to read this book, you are showing that you have a passion for bodybuilding. I also bet that you have shared your love for training and living a healthy lifestyle with others.

From my personal experience, I have discovered the best way to become successful is to become sincerely interested in helping others succeed. This is also a very effective strategy to recruit others to your environment of supportive people or “team.” The more members you have on your team, the easier it will be to achieve success.

Not only did *Titanic* bolster Cameron's self-esteem, career, and bank account, his work elevated everyone who was associated with his movie. The tremendous

success of the film catapulted virtually everyone involved to a higher level of fulfillment and achievement. This deed would have been impossible if the director had planned on serving only his own interests when developing the project.

Sharing your passion and knowledge for bodybuilding will contribute to your success in many ways. First of all, it will make you hold yourself to a higher standard because you are now forced to practice what you preach or “walk your talk.” Secondly, other people will *want* to help you succeed because they appreciate you helping them. Contributing to others also makes bodybuilding a much more rewarding experience than merely developing big muscles or winning a trophy. You will become a “people builder,” which in my opinion, is just as satisfying.

In my value system, Cameron has won the ultimate victory life has to offer. When James Cameron takes his last breath many years from now, he can look back on his life knowing he has given the world a gift of tremendous value. He has the comfort of knowing he gave 100 percent doing what he loved to do most.

Boxing legend Muhammad Ali once confessed, “I hated every minute of the training, but I said, ‘Don’t quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.’ ”

Let me ask you a question: If you were to be totally honest with yourself, are you putting 100 percent effort into your training? Are you determined to make your bodybuilding a masterpiece, or have you been using a balanced, level-headed, or conservative approach?

If the latter, are you conserving your energy and focus for something more important in your life? I suggest that there may be a way to do more of the things you want to do if you are truly committed. Or are you restraining yourself out of fear? Are you bracing your fall and protecting yourself from the pain of potential disappointment? Are you guarding yourself from the possibility of grief if you give 100 percent and fail? Are you approaching your bodybuilding cautiously so you won’t be embarrassed if others know you set an ambitious goal and came up short?

Bodybuilding with such reservations will not make your efforts a masterpiece. Balance is not going to create one either. Level headedness will never have a positive effect on other people’s lives. When you are old and gray, your conservative efforts will not give you the satisfaction of knowing that you used your talents to their fullest potential when you had the chance.

Do you ever look back at times in your life and wish you had tried harder at anything? Have you ever thought about what your life could be like now if you had put more effort into high school football, your education, or a hobby like playing a musical instrument? I know I have! Unfortunately, you can’t go back in



time and change what you have done or haven't done. You do, however, have the opportunity to take full advantage of this day forward and start focusing on becoming the best bodybuilder you can possibly be. Don't squander this precious time! Don't waste this special passion you have!

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**When you are old and gray, your conservative efforts will not give you the satisfaction of knowing that you used your talents to their fullest potential when you had the chance.**

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Now is the time to start creating your masterpiece! Deciding to do so will develop a physique that not only impresses others, but also will give you the satisfaction of knowing you gave 100 percent of your effort when you had this opportunity in your life. Your dedication to bodybuilding will make you feel as though you were "king of the world."

This strategy can soon spread to all areas of your life. Practice this mentality and you will start discovering that your whole life can transform into a magnificent masterpiece as well!



## CHAPTER THREE EXERCISES

### Turn Your Bodybuilding into a Masterpiece

1. What would need to happen for you to consider your bodybuilding efforts a “masterpiece”?

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2. When most, if not all, of those events occurred and you truly felt you had created a masterpiece from your bodybuilding efforts, how would that make you feel?

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# 4

## Creating an Empowering Identity Can Change Your Bodybuilding Destiny

One exciting aspect of bodybuilding—and life, for that matter—is you never know when a new idea, suggestion, or strategy will guide you in a different and more productive direction. In an *instant*, a concept that once seemed so complex and confusing in your mind can suddenly become crystal clear and drive you directly toward achieving your goals.

Most successful people *live* in a continual state of anticipation. These resourceful individuals are *certain* they can find inspiration and wisdom at any time and even from the most unexpected sources. They are confident they can pull significant meaning to help them toward their dreams from seemingly unrelated conversations, situations, books, magazines, seminars, news, or even movies.

One of the most exciting aspects of writing to help bodybuilders is discovering exactly what will stimulate me to develop a theme to help us break through the limitations of our mindsets and reach our genetic bodybuilding potential. For example, while watching the movie *Braveheart*, I couldn't help but see the similarities in this film between the mindset of many drug-free bodybuilders and the current state of drug-free bodybuilding.

For those of you who haven't seen *Braveheart*, the movie was nominated for 10 Academy Awards in 1995, including Best Motion Picture. If you are a natural bodybuilder anxious to take yourself to the next level, I encourage you to rent the video as soon as possible.

The movie takes place in Scotland back in 1280 and centers around a character by the name of William Wallace (played by Mel Gibson). At this time, the Scots were being tortured and dominated by the powerful armies of England. The story begins with a horrible massacre of innocent Scottish villagers who suffered the deliberate wrath of cruel English soldiers.

The surviving men of the village planned to avenge this attack. William, who was probably about eight years old at the time, wanted to join the men. His wise father said to the boy, "I know you can fight . . . but it's our *wits* that make us men."

Many natural bodybuilders feel they are embattled in the same sort of conflict with steroid users—and they are ready to fight to the end with their angry words. Many natural bodybuilders feel their success is limited and compromised by drug-using athletes.

The truth is that too many natural bodybuilders have a very limiting, or disempowering, identity of themselves. Oftentimes, our real enemies are our own limited beliefs, misdirected focus, and lack of information.

To change the direction of drug-free bodybuilding, we must change our identity from one that is weak and oppressed to one that is strong and empowered!

Young William's father didn't come back alive from the battle against the English. When the boy looked at his father's lifeless corpse, the dead body said to him, "Your heart is free. Have the courage to follow it."

Sometimes I wonder about the route many drug-free bodybuilders choose to follow: Are they looking deep within themselves to muster the courage and strength to seek out the advanced knowledge and internal drive needed to accomplish their goals for their physique? Or are they conveniently blaming the drug users for the fact their physiques are not where they want?

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**To change the direction of drug-free bodybuilding, we must change our identity from one that is weak and oppressed to one that is strong and empowered!**

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William's uncle said, "First learn to use this [as he pointed to his head] then I will teach you to use this [as he pointed to his sword]." When we as natural bodybuilders have exhausted every ounce of our efforts learning the latest information on drug-free training, nutrition, supplementation, and mental skills, then we can start looking at the other guys. I don't know about you, but I feel I am a long way from knowing it all!

The day any one of us knows it all will probably never come, in any case. Instead, we will have to earn a more empowering identity by redirecting our focus and putting the responsibility of building our physiques back upon ourselves.

I received a letter from a competitive drug-free bodybuilder who respectfully told me that I was being naive when I fielded comments about whether the top drug-free stars feel that their competitors were truly natural. He also went on to tell me how the drug testing at those events is out of date and very easy to fool.

I can understand this gentleman's frustrations. Drug-free bodybuilding is too new for everyone to understand what can really be accomplished by its participants. If

an athlete's physique appears to be too outstanding, there is no doubt his credibility will be questioned due to the widespread perceptions people have about the human body *today*.

I can't stand up for every bodybuilder who says he's drug-free—and I have never claimed to do so. The only way you can *really* know if a person is truly drug free is to follow him everywhere he goes, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. I've seen guys who use drugs who are far inferior to great natural bodybuilders. The bottom line is there is no way to visually tell for sure – regardless of what the local gym expert believes.

People usually fall into one of two categories: matchers or mismatchers. Regardless of which category you fall into, you will usually feel that your way of thinking is the *right* way of thinking.

Matchers are the people who generally look for what “right” or consistent in everything that is said to them. They are generally considered to be agreeable and optimistic people. Mismatchers are just the opposite. They look for inconsistencies and incongruencies in almost everything they come across.

Which is the best point of view? Matchers see themselves as positive, optimistic, and trusting individuals who expect the best out of every situation. Matchers may tend to think that mismatchers are negative and pessimistic people who are always looking for the worst in every situation.

What do mismatchers think of matchers? They believe they are naive, gullible, and have a “Pollyanna” view of the world. They see themselves as being levelheaded, realistic, and able to see the world as it truly is.

Who's right? They both are. They will *create* their own reality from their own perceptions. Political spin doctors are great at this. These manipulators can listen to the very same speech and the same crowd reaction and then construe them in ways that seem to validate their own specific agendas.

But the comments in the letter about the so-called drug-free bodybuilders or the drug testing are not what I found most intriguing. What was truly interesting was that the writer enclosed his contest photo and wrote, “...and as you can see, I live by my words.” I reread the letter a couple of times, not quite sure of his meaning.

Let me ask you a question: What do you suppose the physique in the picture looked like? Do you think he was this huge, muscular guy with awesome genetics and conditioning? Do you think he was a person who had to constantly defend himself against others who speculated he was taking drugs because his physique was so outstanding? Do you think he had the muscle mass of a Johnny

Stewart? Do you think he had the rock-hard conditioning of a Chris Faildo? Do you think he had the God-given symmetry of a Ron Coleman?

Well, not exactly. He was far from having any of those attributes. It almost seemed as though he identified himself as a bodybuilder by his “believably” natural physique. It seemed as though he was proud to own a physique so unremarkable that no one would even question if he was drug free. Good for him, I suppose!

Is this an empowering identity? Or, is he merely stuck in a comfortable way of settling for less? Believe me, a whole lot of work isn't required to become “believably” natural!

In the movie *Braveheart*, Robert the Bruce was stuck in a comfortable way of settling for less. He was the leading candidate to become the king of Scotland, although that position was just a sell out or puppet position for the enemy king of England.

Robert the Bruce's father did everything he could to “pump him up” and convince him that he was viewing the situation intelligently. He persuaded Robert to believe that the real enemies were the Scottish rebels who wanted to change things. Keeping themselves in their comfort zone – even though they lived in oppression – they thought was easier than fighting. Because of this, Robert the Bruce's father plotted to destroy the efforts of Wallace.

Many natural bodybuilding contest promoters are acting just like Robert the Bruce's father. In an effort to attract more competitors and promote their organizations, they often resort to searching for what's not exactly right with the other drug-tested organizations. “Our organization uses this method and that method. Their federation only uses that method!” they often profess.

They may not realize they are subtly, or sometimes not so subtly, questioning the credibility of the other organizations. This stance also indirectly attacks the character of the *bodybuilders* of the rival natural organizations. They pit one group of natural bodybuilders against other groups. These promoters fail to understand that we are all in this together.

Being a matcher by nature, my experience dealing with many of the natural organizations is that they are more similar than they are different. Any one of these groups is usually just as passionate and as dedicated to the cause of drug-free bodybuilding as any other.

Any mismatcher could easily declare to any one of these organizations, “I don't care what type of testing you use! A cheater can get around all of your silly testing!”



Let me take you back to the movie. William Wallace was not going to sell out to the mighty English. He was prepared to fight for what he believed. So admirable were his intentions, he even earned the respect of his arch-nemesis Robert of Bruce. “He fights with passion and inspires!” he said of William.

William did inspire many of his fellow Scots to join him in fighting their enemies. Although the odds were heavily against them, they fought with passion and intelligence, and by implementing clever strategies. Most of the Scottish clan fought also with courage and unity.

But there were also many within their own camp who tried to kill Wallace and extinguish his efforts. Isn't this similar to the state of drug-free bodybuilding today? If anyone comes close to achieving outstanding results, their fellow drug-free peers come down on them like a ton of bricks accusing them of using steroids!

Some cowardly warriors wanted to give up the battle and flee to save their lives. “Will you fight?” Wallace asked. Many of the men said, “No! We will run—and we will live!”

In one of the most emotional parts of the movie, Wallace delivered a very eloquent speech saying, “Fight, and you *may* die. Run, and you will live—at least for a while. And when dying in your beds, many years from now, you would be willing to trade all the days from this day to that one for one chance, just one chance, to come back and tell our enemies that they can take our lives—but they cannot take away our freedom!”

Whether you courageously join the natural movement to push yourself toward a new level of excellence—or stay in your comfort zone—the sport will continue to evolve. Bodybuilders using drugs will not have anything to do with your own development. The only person oppressing you is *you*. You are free to take your body to its genetic potential—if you choose to do so.

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**In one of the most emotional parts of the movie, Wallace delivered a very eloquent speech saying, “Fight, and you *may* die. Run, and you will live—at least for a while. And when dying in your beds, many years from now, you would be willing to trade all the days from this day to that one for one chance, just one chance, to come back and tell our enemies that they can take our lives—but they cannot take away our freedom!”**

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Don't find yourself years from now wishing you had fought hard to find out every strategy possible to develop your drug-free physique to outstanding levels.

Fight to find these strategies with courage and passion! People today are searching for leaders. People follow those with courage. Become a model of what can be accomplished without the use of drugs to others in your gym.

"I want to believe as he does," said a regretful Robert of Bruce. Then, in a moment of strength he declares, "I will never be on the wrong side again!"

At the end of the movie, Wallace suffers the ultimate sacrifice and dies for his beliefs.

Personally, I would never want to succumb to regressing to a "believably" natural physique to appease the masses. Doing so would be a sure sign that I had slipped into mediocrity. I'd rather die!

If you have embraced an identity of being "believably" natural, is it serving you well? Is holding onto your beliefs that your body can only "realistically" get so good helping or hurting your efforts? Does that belief make you a better bodybuilder, or does it merely brace your fall if you fail to achieve what you *really* want?

Wouldn't natural bodybuilding be better if we all viewed ourselves as a bunch of zealous, warriors determined to annihilate the perception that we can only take our physiques so far? Wouldn't that Braveheart perception of ourselves be a far more empowering identity?

## **CHAPTER FOUR EXERCISES**

### **Creating an Empowering Identity Can Change Your Bodybuilding Destiny**

- 1. Who are some of your heroes and role models? (They do not necessarily need to come exclusively from the bodybuilding world.)**

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- 2. What makes them so special in your eyes? What are some of the character qualities they possess that have earned your respect and admiration?**

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- 3. If you were to adopt the character qualities that you admire most in your heroes and role models, how would they positively affect your bodybuilding efforts?**

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# 5

## How Do You Know You Are Working Hard?

Dedicated. Committed. Driven. Focused. Disciplined. Determined. This is how we often describe the effort we put into developing our physiques. In other words, we *work hard!*

Are *you* working hard to reach your physique-enhancing goals? If you feel you are, congratulations! You have every right to be proud of what you've accomplished. You should feel great about the effort you've invested in your passion for bodybuilding.

Working hard is very good, but are you getting the results you feel you deserve? When you consider the amount of effort you are exerting, are you being rewarded accordingly with significant improvements in your physique?

When you don't feel your hard work is paying off, what happens? What do you tend to do during those times when you *don't* achieve results equal to all the hard work you're putting in? How do you feel?

Most bodybuilders I talk to feel they are dedicated and committed. If I were to ask 10 guys who are training on a consistent basis "Do you work hard?" I can almost guarantee you *at least* 9 of the 10 would emphatically answer "Yes!"

Are all these bodybuilders *really* working hard as they think they are? Yes—according to what working hard means to them. And, although they describe their efforts the same way, they will all experience different levels of success.

There are many different levels to working hard—and each one of us has own own interpretation of what it means to us. Can all nine bodybuilders truly be putting in the same amount of effort? Obviously, the chances are slim they really are.

Here's the challenge: How can you get people to understand that, regardless of what they think, they actually may not be working hard enough to reach their personal goals? It's an extremely delicate subject to address. People do not appreciate being told they are not working hard enough—and they will usually do everything they can to discredit anyone who tells them so and/or deflect the blame away from themselves. Unfortunately, until a person can come to grips with reality, the chance for success will be limited. Such people will have a

difficult time reaching their full genetic potential and feeling happy with the bodybuilding process.

No one can force you to get the right perspective. Although books such as this one may be helpful, you must gain an objective and empowering viewpoint for yourself. Ultimately, *you* must be your own quality-control inspector, coach, and motivator. You must take the responsibility of accurately monitoring your own progress—if you wish to be successful in your bodybuilding efforts.

After considering what I've just expressed, ask yourself the same question I asked earlier. Are you working hard to reach your physique-enhancing goals?

How do you know for sure? Do you compare your efforts to those of your peers? How do you define working hard? Is what you are asking yourself going to really take you where you want to go? Are you actually living up to your own requirements for success on a consistent basis?

If you take the time to do the following exercise in its entirety, I am certain you will be able to answer those questions—and a lot more!

### **The “Working Hard” Exercise**

I have discovered a powerful exercise to help you create a clear definition of what working hard means to you. If you can define it for yourself and live up to your own self-imposed, clear, and precise definition, you'll have a better chance of getting results and being happy with your progress.

Take a few minutes to determine the specific actions and steps a person—just like you—must do on a consistent basis in order to achieve three different levels of physique development:

- a pretty darn good physique
- a great physique
- an absolutely amazing physique

This exercise sounds simple—but give it a try! Oftentimes, it's the simplest things in life that make the biggest impact.

The specific words you use to describe the three different levels of accomplishment are not important. What is important is that you realize exactly what a person must do—or how hard he or she must work—to achieve those different levels requires varying degrees of effort. A client of mine that I took through the process labeled the different levels as “Mr. Pretty Good”; “Mr. Outstanding”; and “Mr. Machine.”

I took myself through this exercise and found it to be extremely enlightening. I sincerely hope it helps you reach your goals. With 12 weeks remaining before an important contest and the determination to work hard to become my best, I listed my own standards. I segregated what I felt “working hard” would be to me into three different groups: “to place in the top three”; “to win the national championship”; and “to set a new standard for drug-free bodybuilders who have ever competed in the Team Universe.”

Not only did this exercise make me carefully and consciously outline what working hard at these different levels meant to me, it forced me to reconsider my previous definitions.

The end result was that I immediately raised my standards! Better yet, now that I was conscious of what kind of effort it would take to set a new and higher standard, I instantly began to follow through on many of those “outrageous” demands. I boxed myself in to total commitment—with little or no room for any excuses or rationalization.

### **The Benefits of Doing the “Working Hard” Exercise**

Here is what this exercise will do for you:

- forces you to consciously account for everything you are currently doing to meet your personal goals
- forces you to re-evaluate what you are currently doing to meet your personal goals—and judge their effectiveness and your follow-through abilities
- creates a checklist so you can easily monitor your own follow-through (or lack of follow-through)
- forces you to take 100 percent responsibility for your actions and realize your destiny is in your control
- helps you to create more efficient guidelines and standards—which will lead to better improvement in a shorter period of time

#### *You’ll Account for Everything You Are Currently Doing to Meet Your Personal Goals*

Honestly assess your current standards. Are they high enough to get you where you want to go? The standards you set for yourself will determine what working hard means to you, but are your standards high enough for what you want to accomplish? This is the challenge I face when trying to help others figure out exactly why they are not progressing at the rate they think they should.

Honestly evaluating your standards is critical to your bodybuilding success! It's important for you to honestly assess your standards before confusion, frustration, and complacency creep into your psyche.

I had a one-on-one phone consultation with a very ambitious bodybuilder/businessman who, just like you and me, believed he was working hard preparing for an upcoming contest. He was experienced, intelligent, and extremely motivated to do what he *thought* he must to place well in his show.

When he outlined exactly what he was doing to prepare for his contest, I immediately noticed he was only doing one session of cardiovascular training every day. Not that I feel it's mandatory to do more than one cardiovascular session, mind you, but many competitive bodybuilders choose the two-a-day cardio session strategy.

"You know, many bodybuilders do two sessions of cardiovascular when getting in shape for a show," I said. "Why are you only doing one? What's your reasoning or strategy for only doing one session a day?"

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**Honestly evaluating your standards is critical to your bodybuilding success! It's important for you to honestly assess your standards before confusion, frustration, and complacency creep into your psyche.**

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After a few minutes of reflection, he answered was only doing one because of his extremely demanding business schedule. In addition to getting ready for his own bodybuilding contest, he was helping a couple of other competitors get ready as well. He was simultaneously running his own business, preparing to move the location of that business, and promoting a different upcoming bodybuilding show. Understandably, he simply didn't feel he had enough time in his day for more cardiovascular training.

Do you think he *thought* he was doing everything he could to become his very best for his show? Yes. Do you think he believed he was working hard? You bet he did! And, yes, he was indeed working hard—according to how he set up what working hard meant to him. He was living up to his own standards.

Were his standards high enough to reach his ambitious goal of placing well in his upcoming national-level contest? After thinking about it, he came to the conclusion he was not working hard enough—at least to meet his contest goal. He believed that, if he had sacrificed some of his business productivity for a period of time, he could have—and should have—been working even harder.



Simply working hard to reach your personal bodybuilding goals may not be enough for you do so!

*You Will Be Forced to Re-Evaluate What You Are Currently Doing to Meet Your Personal Goals*

So, you feel you are working hard—but are not achieving the results you feel you deserve? Re-evaluate your standards! Although we may truly feel we are working hard, the standards we set for ourselves will determine the level of success we enjoy. Make sure your standards are demanding enough to get you where you really want to go.

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**The standards we set for ourselves will determine the level of success we will enjoy.**

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*You'll Have a Checklist So You Can Easily Monitor Your Progress*

Once you've taken the time to actually write down exactly what you must do to reach your goals, use the three different lists to monitor your level of commitment. Are you *really* doing everything you think you should? Review the three lists often to “anchor in” everything you are doing well. The lists can also serve as a nagging reminder when you are not doing enough and need to step up your efforts.

*You Are Forced to Take 100 Percent Responsibility*

Since you are the person who created the definitions and the standards on the three different lists, you have no one to blame but yourself if you don't follow through. Putting the pressure on yourself to follow through is a common quality among all those who are successful.

*You'll Create More Efficient Guidelines and Standards*

Chances are you may need to raise your standards and level of commitment after doing this exercise. I know I did! But although it may be a little bruising to your ego to admit you weren't doing everything you needed to do to reach your goals, your body will benefit in the long run. You'll benefit by producing more impressive improvements.

## **Guidelines to This Exercise**

Here are some important keys to consider while doing this exercise:

- This exercise is based on your own personal goals, needs, desires, priorities, and values. When doing it, take into account your own personal time constraints, physical limitations, and other challenges. You should also factor in your own special genetic gifts, abilities, and advantages many other bodybuilders don't enjoy.
- Create your standards for what it will take to become the very *best* you can be. Be careful not to underestimate what you'll need to do to reach your goals. When setting your standards, never underestimate what others will do and not do to reach their goals.
- Be very specific about the standards you create.
- Once you've established your new, improved, and higher set of standards, never lower them. If you do, please be honest with yourself and *do not* expect to still achieve the same outstanding results.
- Take responsibility for your successes and failures.
- This exercise is based on your current level of knowledge and how well you follow through with what you already know. Using the rationale "I can't start setting higher standards until I learn more!" is not acceptable! You'll see how quickly the knowledge you need comes to you once you are totally committed and have raised your standards.

### *Your Own Personal Goals, Needs, Desires, Priorities, And Values*

We all want different things from our bodybuilding efforts. Whatever your individual goals—whether they are to become a national bodybuilding champion, enhance your performance in the gym, gain a few pounds of muscle, or lose a few pounds of body fat—I believe this mental strategy can work for you. It was certainly an eye-opener for me!

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**Whatever your individual goals—whether they are to become a national bodybuilding champion, enhance your performance in the gym, gain a few pounds of muscle, or lose a few pounds of body fat—I believe this mental strategy can work for you.**

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Let me make this perfectly clear: I'm not saying everyone should do whatever it takes to become the next Mr. Olympia. What you want to achieve from your bodybuilding efforts is up to you to decide. Whatever it is you ultimately decide, however, you'll make yourself accountable for your own actions. It doesn't matter what I think you should want or anyone else thinks for that matter. What matters is what *you* think you want.

*Never Overestimate What You'll Need to Do to Reach Your Goals—or Underestimate What Other People Are Willing to Do to Reach Theirs*

Bill Bradley, former New York Knicks basketball star and New York senator, has a great saying I always try to remember "There is *always* someone somewhere out there working harder than you are!"

Many bodybuilders give themselves too much credit—and their peers too little credit—when it comes to the amount of effort they are exerting in their physique development.

I had a person e-mail me writing, "I don't know how a drug-free bodybuilder can get as big as you! I've made good gains over the years—but not nearly as good as you. I train heavy and I stay within four to six reps—just like you. I'm pretty big, but why aren't I as big as you?"

I'm sure this guy was working hard—but is he kidding? Are those standards (heavy training and a rep scheme) the only ones he is considering? Does the fact that I eat, sleep, and breathe bodybuilding factor into his equation? How about my history and track record? I've focused, prepared for, and entered all seven of the drug-tested NPC Team Universe contests over the last seven years. The year before that long stretch, I entered the first two Musclemania Natural Bodybuilding Championships. Does the duration of my time at that level of intensity and focus compare to what he's done in that time period? Despite the fact we both might be working hard, wouldn't those factors *alone* contribute to a difference in our development?

As I stated before, there are many different levels to working hard and everyone has their own interpretation of what working hard means to them.

Unfortunately, many bodybuilders do not—or choose not to—consider those factors and standards when trying to figure out why they are not progressing the way they feel they should. They are oftentimes too quick to blame circumstances out of their control like genetics and the possibility that those who are better are using steroids and other physique-enhancing drugs. Then, to make matters even worse, they choose to spend their time commiserating with other bodybuilders with the same disempowering mindset and fall deeper into the vortex of underachievers.

In my opinion, those assumptions about one's lack of genetic quality and better bodybuilders using drugs are too easy to make. Maybe you don't have the greatest genetics of all time—but are they really as deficient as you make them out to be? I have no idea what other bodybuilders do behind closed doors, but do you really believe every one of those guys with better physiques are taking drugs? Is it possible their standards are higher than yours?

*Be Specific*

Being specific about the standards you establish is a very important aspect to this process. The more specific you are, the better!

Setting the standard for doing 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise each day is a good start. However, there is a big difference in the results you'll get if those 30 minutes are spent on a treadmill at a challenging pace as opposed to 30 minutes on a stationary bike. After a month, there will be a massive difference in the results that each of the cardiovascular exercises produces. The person who spends his time on the stationary bike would be foolish to think "I do just as much cardio as Joe—and I don't look nearly as good as he does! He's just blessed with a fast metabolism and I'm cursed with a slow one!"

I know that example seems obvious, but believe me, I hear the same type of rationale from bodybuilders all the time in the other areas of bodybuilding such as training, nutrition, and supplementation.

Instead of setting the standard of

*I will do 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise five days a week.*

you will get better results by zeroing on the details of that cardiovascular exercise. You may wish to set a higher, more specific standard such as

*I will do 30 minutes on the treadmill five days a week. All 30 minutes will be at a 2.8 speed or higher and at a 12 percent incline grade. I will not hold on to the handrail at any time during my sessions.*

Does that sound a little *extreme* to you? Well, the person who has earned the physique like the one you ultimately want probably has that type of extreme standards—whether you want to believe that to be true or not.

*Once You've Set Your New, Improved, and Higher Standards, Never Lower Them*

If you set your standards and fall short, never lower them. How can you honestly expect to get the same outstanding results and not work as hard? Are you

misguided in your rationalization? If you must lower your standards, be realistic! You'll obviously need to lower your expectations as well.

You need to make yourself happy. The best way to do this is by living up to your own, self-imposed, ambitious standards created from a position of strength and optimism—not weakness and pessimism.

### *Take Responsibility for Your Success and Failure*

Look, you don't want to end up like one of those guys who are always squawking about how great they *could be* if they resorted to taking illegal drugs. You also don't want to end up like those guys who are always sure to tell you they are a 100 percent, drug-free-for-life, grade-A certified bodybuilder. Believe me, I don't think anyone would have a single doubt they were drug free when they looked at the quality of their physique.

You will never know what it means to really work hard until you actually feel it. You will never actually feel what it means to work hard until you get a clear definition of what that means to you first. After getting clear on your own definition and setting precise standards, your final challenge is to execute. If you execute on a consistent basis, then you have truly worked hard. If you do not, at least you know your destiny was—and is—in your own hands.

Maybe, after gaining that perspective, you'll become incredibly determined to live up to the standards you created for yourself. Maybe you'll decide the extra effort isn't worth doing to reach your goals. Whatever you choose to do, you'll be in control of your own success or failure.

As long as you follow through with what you set out to do, you'll feel as though you are working hard.

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**Look, you don't want to end up like one of those guys who are always squawking about how great they *could be* if they resorted to taking illegal drugs. You also don't want to end up like those guys who are always sure to tell you they are a 100 percent, drug-free-for-life, grade-A certified bodybuilder. Believe me, I don't think anyone would have a single doubt they were drug free when they looked at the quality of their physique.**

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### *This Exercise Is Based on Your Current Level of Knowledge*

Whether you've been training for three months, three years, or three decades, this process can help take your physique to the next level. Don't set your

standards based on knowledge you haven't acquired yet. Yes, you can always learn more and when you do, you can expect better results. But never use the excuse of "I'm going to really get serious about doing what I need to do when I get more knowledge." When you begin setting outrageous standards for yourself and really working hard to meet them, you'll be amazed how quickly you'll start gathering information in the areas of training, nutrition, and supplementation.

### **Step Up to the Challenge!**

It's my belief the biggest reason why we become frustrated with our lack of progress is that, whether we want to admit it or not, we are not living up to our own standards. Deep inside, we know when we are making the most of the gifts we have and we know when we are making excuses for ourselves. Blaming factors outside our control is just a diversion to take the pressure off ourselves. If we can convince ourselves, we think we are not entirely responsible for our less-than-satisfactory results. Unfortunately, we can't fool ourselves for very long. We will eventually realize we let our own selves down. The only problem with learning lessons this way is we waste valuable time. That's time we will *never* get back!

So why waste time? Let's muster up the courage right here and now. Let's look ourselves in the eye and step up to the challenge. Although it may be painful to admit when we are not working as hard as we once thought we were, we will be the true winners in the end. The pressure we put on ourselves will force us to follow through with the things we say we are willing to do to build great physiques. Now, all we need to do is execute!

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**Let's muster up the courage right here and now. Let's look ourselves in the eye and step up to the challenge. Although it may be painful to admit when we are not working as hard as we once thought we were, we will be the true winners in the end.**

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After seeing how this exercise helps you create a better physique, be sure to use it in other areas of your life. The "Working Hard" Exercise can help you improve as a student, businessman, artist, writer—whatever it is you are committed to becoming your very best at in life!

**THE NEXT 12 WEEKS STANDARDS I MUST LIVE BY**  
**(Doing These Things Will Get Me into the Top Three in My Class)**

1. Stay focused on working toward what I ultimately want for my bodybuilding career:
  - 2x Team Universe champion,
  - 3x Team USA Team member,
  - 3x Heavyweight class Champion,
  - Exceed the level of muscularity and conditioning I achieved in 1998.

All business and personal matters MUST take a back seat for the next 12 weeks.

2. Train hard, heavy, focused, and with passion during every single workout. Never settle for anything less! Always strive to reach a higher level!
3. All meals—or no more than 10 minutes off.
4. Drink three gallons of water every day
5. All supplements—on time
6. No meals between 9 p.m. and 7a.m. (nothing between standard #8 and #1)
7. A.M. cardio—every morning.  
Treadmill—30 minutes, 2.6 and higher, no hands, 15 percent incline; squeeze glutes and hamstrings for 10 of 30 minutes.  
Gauntlet-15 minutes, 5 minutes 2-step
8. P.M. cardio—every night  
30 minutes, 2.6 and higher, no hands, 15 percent incline

**\*\*\*\*Absolutely no loosening up of cardio standards! I can never be too lean! Fight hard to preserve muscle with heavy weight and protein consumption, but if I get down to 210 pounds—so be it!**

9. Squeeze hamstrings and glutes 10 of the 30 minutes of treadmill work
10. Drink at least three cups of coffee every day
11. When I start eating starchy carbs with 6 weeks left, DO NOT eat even a single extra grain of rice!
12. No salsa

13. No gum
14. No Diet Coke
15. Tan every day. At least four days every week in the sun (one hour)
16. Thiomucase on skin every day
17. Consciously tighten stomach throughout the day
18. Plan every outstanding day in my planner
19. Review every outstanding day in planner

**What It Will Take to Produce a NATIONAL CHAMPION-CALIBER EFFORT**

1. Create a positive environment and surround myself with people who support and encourage my efforts to become my all-time best
  - Never let personal matters come first
  - Never let business matters come first
2. Never back off my heaviest weight in gym (maybe fewer reps, but never less weight!)
3. Keep vegetable carbs to a minimum
4. Eat no more than four ounces of chicken breast during a meal—weigh every portion
5. A.M. treadmill—10 minutes at 2.6; 15 percent incline; no hands. 10 minutes at 2.8; 15 percent incline; no hands. 10 minutes at 3.0; 15 percent incline; no hands. Squeeze glutes and hamstrings 20 of 30 minutes on treadmill work
6. A.M. gauntlet—Stand erect 10 of 15 minutes
7. Never miss a cardio session
8. Every meal EXACTLY on time
9. Tan in sun five days a week (1 1/2 hours)
10. Thiomucase on skin 24/7
11. Bundle up all day/night long



12. Squeeze and pose five times throughout the day
13. Last 6 weeks--one hour of posing practice; mandatory, 60 second, and night show routine
14. Master controlling
  - Separation in quads at all times
  - Separation in hamstrings
  - Glutes from rear
  - Glutes from side poses
  - Calves separation
15. Stay off scale
16. **Never let up on the cardio—no matter what my mind tells me! I have pounds of muscle to lose in order to achieve outstanding conditioning; with a helluva fight of course!**
17. Document my progress in a daily training journal

**What It Will Take to Set a NEW STANDARD in Drug-Free Bodybuilding**

1. Convince and persuade everyone in my environment to do everything they can to support my efforts to become my all-time best
2. Make so much money efficiently and stress free that I don't ever have to suffer financially in order to give my very best effort as a bodybuilder
3. Look so great so soon, I can do a week of photo shoots in Los Angeles! Look great for them, and never miss a beat when it comes to my contest preparation and focus
4. Read this list every day—no matter how painful it may be to see I may be falling short
5. Document my progress in an up-to-date daily training journal that will inspire bodybuilders for years to come—at standards that makes me step up, constantly reflect, and be accountable for all of my actions
6. Never go lower than my most weight for an exercise—and always match or even exceed my most reps at that weight
7. Create, practice, and master a posing presentation and routines that literally shock everyone who sees or hears about them



## CHAPTER FIVE EXERCISES

### How Do You Know You Are Working Hard?

1. What makes you feel you are currently working hard? How do you measure your work ethic? To whom do you compare yourself?

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2. Create special names for the following levels of effort needed to create the following type of physiques: (1) a person with a good physique, (2) a person with a very good physique (almost the very best training in your gym), (3) a person with an outstanding physique (one of the very best you would ever see in or out of the gym). Be sure to choose names that have special meanings to you. These names should get you excited!

(1) A person with a good physique

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(2) A person with a very good physique (almost the very best training in your gym)

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(3) A person with an outstanding physique (one of the very best you would see in or out of the gym)

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# 6

## Examining Your Current Beliefs about What You Can Accomplish

What you currently believe you can and cannot accomplish as a bodybuilder is determining your destiny. When was the last time you examined those beliefs and checked their accuracy? In this book, I've identified some of the disempowering thinking patterns and the common fears that limit what drug-free bodybuilders can accomplish.

How we interpret past experiences determines what we believe we can and cannot accomplish in the future as drug-free bodybuilders. Our personal experiences, our tested and untested theories, and our perceptions of events all combined. We also use the experiences, theories, and the perceptions of other people who have some degree of influence in our lives.

These experiences create what we call our references. References are our "evidence" that our interpretations are accurate.

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**How we interpret past experiences determines what we believe we can and cannot accomplish in the future as drug-free bodybuilders.**

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The sources of our references, how many references you have, and how strongly you feel about them will influence your interpretations. The degree of emotional intensity you have for these references will differentiate them into *opinions*, *beliefs*, or *convictions*.

### Opinions

An *opinion* is something you are somewhat sure is true. You are not unyielding in your way of thinking and would be open to changing this opinion if you thought a more empowering alternative was available. Here are examples of either my current or past opinions:

- *I should do harder cardiovascular exercise sessions to get lean for a contest.*
  - *I am very sensitive to carbohydrates and should do away with as many of them as possible during my pre-contest dieting phase.*
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## **An opinion is something you are somewhat sure is true.**

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### **Beliefs**

A *belief* is a feeling of certainty. You have either more references or stronger references supporting your belief that something is true than you have for an opinion. A belief is definitely stronger than an opinion, and it would be harder to change your way of thinking. Here are examples of either my current or past beliefs:

- *Whether a guy uses drugs or not, there is something valuable I can learn from him if he has become a champion.*
- *A drug-free bodybuilder can't get striated glutes.*

### **Convictions**

A *conviction* is formed when you feel very strongly about something being true. A conviction is much stronger than any belief and usually has some intense emotional factors that support this way of thinking. Here are examples of either my current or past convictions:

- *Training one body part, once a week, is an outstanding regimen for drug-free bodybuilders.*
- *Becoming a top amateur bodybuilder is better for publicity and fame than being a professional who can't crack the Top Ten.*

Take the time to identify your interpretations of what is achievable in bodybuilding—specifically drug-free bodybuilding—and identify your experiences supporting them. How have these references been created? How strongly do you feel they are true? Which interpretations are opinions? Which ones are beliefs? Which ones are convictions?

Your ultimate goal should not be to simply make yourself feel better. The danger of forming opinions, beliefs, and convictions too quickly (and without experience or good sources) is that you could box yourself into a disempowering way of

thinking. Oftentimes, what makes you feel better in the short run will not help you achieve what you really want in the long run.

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**A belief is a feeling of certainty. You have either more references or stronger references supporting your belief that something is true than you have for an opinion.**

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If you want to become truly successful in your bodybuilding efforts, you must achieve outstanding, tangible results. Only when you have the best mindset and the best information will you be able to create the best results.

Sometimes your opinions, beliefs, and convictions can help you. Sometimes they can hurt you. Let's examine the ones I currently have or have had at some time during my bodybuilding career.

- *I should do harder cardiovascular exercise sessions to get lean for a contest.*

This is an *opinion* I came up with through trial and error over time. To tell you the truth, I would love to form a different opinion. This opinion can help me by forcing me to work harder to get in great shape. It could possibly hurt me if I lose a significant amount of precious muscle along the way.

- *I am very sensitive to carbohydrates and should do away with as many as possible during my pre-contest dieting phase.*

This is another *opinion* I came up with through trial and error. And, just like the preceding opinion I mentioned about cardiovascular exercise, I would love to disprove this one. This opinion can help me by making sure I don't eat an excessive amount of calories and inhibit the fat-loss process. It could possibly hurt me because not eating enough carbohydrates could limit protein synthesis which is critical for building muscle.

By the way, I now feel most people need to carefully monitor their carbohydrates as they prepare for a show.

- *Whether a guy uses drugs or not, there is something valuable I can learn from him if he has become a champion.*

This *belief* comes from my everyday mental makeup in life. This belief can help me because, although I won't model such a bodybuilder's drug-use strategies, I could tap into his successful training, eating, or motivational methods. This belief could potentially hurt me if I follow a strategy that has been indirectly aided by

drugs and become frustrated because I don't produce results as good as I think I should.

- *A drug-free bodybuilder can't get striated glutes.*

I no longer have this *belief*, but I did in the past. How did this belief get formed? I'm not exactly sure. I think I believed getting lean is very difficult for naturals and I had never seen any drug-free competitors with striated glutes. Obviously, this belief would hurt me because I would never make that degree of conditioning a goal in the first place. I don't know how it could help me—except for the fact that my lowered expectations would take some pressure off me and I would most likely avoid the discomfort of more intense contest dieting.

I now believe that I can't even consider myself ready for a contest unless my glutes are striated.

- *Training one body part, once a week, is an outstanding regimen for drug-free bodybuilders.*

I have formed this *conviction* through my personal experiences and the experiences of hundreds of drug-free bodybuilders around the world. This conviction helps me to feel confident about my methods and totally go for it in the gym. It could hurt me if a better strategy comes along and I steadfastly hold on to only what has worked in the past.

- *Becoming a top amateur bodybuilder is better for publicity and fame than being a professional who can't crack the Top Ten.*

Why is this a *conviction*? Where are all the guys who were extremely popular when they were top amateurs but weren't good enough to become Top Ten professionals? Paul DeMayo . . . John Sherman. . . Tom Varga. . . Michio Grubbs. . . Darryl Stafford. . . Chris Duffy—the list goes on and on.

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**A *conviction* is formed when you feel very strongly about something being true. A conviction is much stronger than any belief and usually has some intense emotional factors that support this way of thinking.**

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I think these great bodybuilders would still be featured heavily in the bodybuilding magazines today if they had never become professionals. This conviction can help me because I'll be satisfied even if I never qualify to become a professional bodybuilder. This conviction could hurt me because, without having such an

inspiring ultimate goal like earning elite professional bodybuilding status, I may not fully tap into all my physical and mental abilities. I may therefore never reach my full genetic potential.

Are your opinions, beliefs, and convictions helping you or hurting you? Are they making you stronger or weaker? Are they putting the pressure on you that forces you to step up and use the gifts that God blessed you with to the fullest? Or are they relieving the pressure by creating convenient excuses? Are they empowering you or disempowering you?

Whether you are conscious of their effects or not, your opinions, beliefs, and convictions are shaping your bodybuilding destiny. Even if you never change the way you think, don't you think it is good idea to become aware of them?



**CHAPTER SIX EXERCISES**

**Examining Your Current Beliefs about What You Can Accomplish**

1. **Regardless of what others tell you, what are some of your *opinions* about what you can and cannot achieve without the use of drugs?**

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2. **Regardless of what others tell you, what are some of your *beliefs* about what you can and cannot achieve without the use of drugs?**

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# 7

## **Reversing Common Pitfalls in Your Belief Structure Could Catapult You into a New Level of Drug-Free Growth**

All right, I'll admit it! I am *horrible* at following driving directions! I don't care how many times you tell me or how clear and detailed the instructions are to get from point A to point B, I will get lost. You know what is even more frustrating than being lost? After spending so much time driving down street after street, hoping the next street will be the right one, only to discover later (usually much later) that I took a wrong turn on the highway 20 miles earlier! It wouldn't matter how many streets I looked down at this point—that wrong turn long ago made my goal of finding the right street in that area impossible.

Unfortunately, many people training in the gym put themselves into similar scenarios when it comes to their bodybuilding efforts. Specifically, in the areas of *training* and *nutrition*—although they do so in totally opposite ways.

Bodybuilding, when done in an ideal manner, is a lifestyle. The ingredients that will make you an excellent bodybuilder—like training, eating correctly, supplementing what you eat, getting enough rest, and staying motivated to put forth your best effort—sprawl throughout your entire day. Only when you live this type of lifestyle day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, can you expect to earn the impressive distinction of becoming outstanding.

Whew! When you look at bodybuilding from that perspective, it seems like an overwhelming endeavor, doesn't it? Maybe that's why many of us who start ambitious attempts to become the next Arnold Schwarzenegger come and go so quickly.

The trick to handling the challenges of this sport is devising a sensible plan to break them down into smaller, bite-size pieces. Maybe just putting one foot in front of the other is a more intelligent approach for keeping the situation manageable.

Two aspects of bodybuilding in which a sensible plan becomes especially important are the areas of training and nutrition. Organizing your thoughts and belief structures in these two areas of bodybuilding in ways that empower you—or in other words, bring strength and confidence to your efforts—is critical to your success—maybe even to your survival.

Oftentimes, many drug-free bodybuilders do just the opposite. They tend to make things more complicated than they have to be. These misguided lifters align their thoughts and belief structures in ways that totally disempower, confuse, and frustrate them. I believe we, as human beings, do this most of the time without being aware of what we are actually doing—even when we sincerely want to succeed.

In my opinion, we do this for basically two reasons: First of all, we simply lack the knowledge needed to make things more simple and effective. That's just the way things go sometimes. We often must do things the *wrong* way before we can figure out how to do them *correctly*. This is simply a part of the learning process in bodybuilding—and in most endeavors in life. If we are persistent enough, however, we can usually discover ways to accomplish these endeavors more easily and efficiently.

The other reason why we make things more difficult than they have to be is that we adopt the wrong strategy, mindset, or belief structure to figure out the right answers. That's not where the problem lies. As I stated earlier, doing things wrong before we do them correctly is normal.

The problem arises when we become inflexible in our approach—despite the fact that the same approach fails us time and time again. Especially when our approach was selected with a limited amount of experience or knowledge.

Through my appearances, articles, books, seminars, and website, I have had the unique privilege of fielding literally thousands of questions from bodybuilders from around the globe. I have discovered two common belief structures that threaten to *destroy* the foundation of many of these lifters' bodybuilding success. The two common mistakes in the way these bodybuilders view their efforts are

1. Most bodybuilders *overestimate* their level of competence and knowledge in the area of *training*.
2. Most bodybuilders *underestimate* their level of competence and knowledge in the area of *nutrition*.

### **Overestimating Training Knowledge**

Whether a person has been training for three weeks, three months, three years, or three decades, I have found that most bodybuilders are extremely confident that they have a *great* training strategy working for them.

I believe this assumption is a big mistake! Training is much too complex a subject for this supposition. Adopting this belief structure can seriously damage your progress as a bodybuilder. The worst part about overestimating your training

knowledge is not merely short-term lack of progress; this way of thinking can hamper your evolution as a bodybuilder the entire length of time you participate in this lifestyle. As I stated before, the frustration that such a mindset usually generates is what makes too many lifters give up bodybuilding, or at the least, prevents them from giving their best effort. You could find yourself much later looking down a series of wrong roads in the wrong city, so to speak, as I sometimes do when following driving directions.

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**The trick to handling the challenges of this sport is devising a sensible plan to break them down into smaller, bite-size pieces.**

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There are too many different factors and variables for you to feel as though you *ever* know it all. Let's take training your shoulders for example: You could train them once a week or twice. You could even train them once every other week. You could train them very heavily, moderately, or lightly. You could put extra focus on the negative movement. You could perform a high number of repetitions or very few. You could train with a partner or alone. You could have a person spot you or use only as much weight as you can handle yourself. You could train in the morning, when your natural growth hormone is supposed to be at its highest, or later, when your closest rival is there to motivate you to take your training to the next level. You could train your shoulders after setting a contest date for one year from now, or 12 weeks, or after initiating a "shoulder-building contest" with your buddies. You could train your shoulders while on a high-protein, moderate-protein, or low-protein diet. You could train them with different amounts of carbohydrates in your system or with the many different nutritional supplements available today. Then you switch, mix up, and rotate every single one of these variables for different periods of time.

Would each of these different factors lead to different results in the development of your shoulders? You bet they would! Let me ask you another question: How many times will you try a different strategy on your most stubborn body part before you start calling yourself a hardgainer, or blame poor genetics—or the fact that you don't take drugs for your poor development?

Think about it for a moment: Why do you think there are so many different training philosophies? There must be hundreds of strategies! How many have you tried—honestly? How could you possibly determine the very best one of those hundreds in such a short period of time—if ever?

I have a personal belief that if something goes wrong the first time, I must have made a mistake. Usually, I will continue to think this way for a while or a number of attempts. I try not to blame others for my difficulties or challenges, or at least, not right away. A lot of my friends and family say I am too tough on myself

sometimes. Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar has a saying that I like: "When we get a little tougher on ourselves, life gets a whole lot easier for us."

An empowering belief structure when it comes to training might be something like this:

*There is always a more efficient way for me to build my physique. I am committed to finding the very best way—regardless of how long it takes me. I know how well my plan is currently working; there is always a better way to train to earn an even better physique. I will never stop looking and never stop trying to take my body to a higher level of development!*

### **Underestimating Nutritional Knowledge**

Eating to build muscle is a *way of thinking* just as much as it is an activity. Many bodybuilders let themselves get easily confused, frustrated, and eventually overwhelmed when it comes to the subject of proper nutrition. The process doesn't need to be so complicated in order to be effective. Let's break it down. You basically need to determine three things:

1. The major purpose of each of the three macro-nutrients: protein, carbohydrates, and fat
2. The number of calories you need to consume in order to meet your specific physique-enhancement goals
3. The ratio, or percentages, of these calories that protein, carbohydrates, and fat should each contribute to establish the program needed to help you meet your bodybuilding goals

Good nutrition seems much easier when you look at it from this perspective, doesn't it? But how do you calculate the total number of calories you need and determine the ratio of protein, carbohydrates, and fat that will meet your body's individual needs?

The answers are not necessarily easy to find, but with some *experimentation*, *patience*, and *persistence*, you will figure out what's best to help you reach your goals. Unfortunately, there is no other way around this fact. There are no magic numbers that I, or anyone else, can give you. These amounts not only vary from person to person, they also can vary within the same person at different periods of time.

Let's get honest with ourselves. Is the difficulty in this particular focus in *understanding* nutrition? Or, is it in *following through* with eating the way we know we should?

Let's face what really is going on for some of us. Eating is one of life's great pleasures. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to stay away from food that doesn't support our bodybuilding efforts. Great-tasting but unhealthy food becomes too much of a temptation for us. Even when we are more committed to eating well, we sometimes find it too difficult to break away from our busy schedules and eat a meal—whether it's good for us or not.

The key to eating to build muscle comes down to being properly motivated to do so. Maybe right now is a great time to determine exactly *why today* is the day you will absolutely commit to eating the way you should to build the physique you really want. If you know *why* you want to do something, figuring out *how* will become much easier. You must take care of the *why* and, hopefully, this chapter will help with the procedure of determining *how* you can meet your goals.

An empowering belief structure when it comes to proper nutrition might be something like this:

*I know the basics of eating the way I need to grow! It's really not so complicated. I just need to follow through with what I already know, experiment, be patient, and be persistent!*

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**The key to eating to build muscle comes down to being properly motivated to do so. Maybe right now is a great time to determine exactly *why today* is the day you will absolutely commit to eating the way you should to build the physique you really want.**

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As you strive to become the best bodybuilder you can be, take the time to re-examine your belief structures in regard to training and nutrition. Maybe a little more investigation into different training methods and a little more confidence in what you already know about eating right are what you need to fortify your efforts to reach your full genetic potential.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN EXERCISES**

### **Reversing Common Pitfalls in Your Belief Structure Could Catapult You into a New Level of Drug-Free Growth**

- 1. Evaluate your level of training knowledge. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?**

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- 2. What references make you certain the way you evaluate your level of training knowledge is accurate?**

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- 3. Evaluate your level of nutrition knowledge. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?**

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- 4. What references make you certain the way you evaluate your level of nutrition knowledge is accurate?**

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# **Part II**

## **Winning The Battle Against Yourself**



# 8

## **The First Step Toward Succeeding in Drug-Free Bodybuilding Is Acknowledging Your Fears**

Kids are hilarious, aren't they? Have you ever noticed how strangely little boys act during a Little League game when faced with difficult situations? If you ever played Little League baseball as a child, maybe you can remember how you thought and acted during some of the especially challenging times that you experienced.

When I played years ago, it seemed that there was always one pitcher who was athletically superior to the rest of us. Maybe it was because he had matured a little earlier, had started playing at a younger age, or was able to grasp the skills better, but in any case this pitcher usually had a fastball that batters rarely hit.

This kid would often dominate the competition, striking out batter after batter with style and ease. He was so exceptional that the opposing team members never looked forward to their turn at bat.

Oftentimes the batters would be defeated even *before* stepping up to the plate. Kids being kids, they would tend to blame the umpire for their striking out, rather than examine their own shortcomings. "This ump is horrible!" they would argue. "There was *no way* that last pitch was a strike!"

As the pitcher racked up strikeout after strikeout, you could almost see the batters' fear of impending failure from the way they walked up to the plate and from the expressions on their faces. It seemed as though they were already complaining about a "badly called" third strike before the pitch even crossed the plate! Their excuses were ready so they wouldn't look bad in front of their teammates and families. Their focus and energy were placed on whatever they could blame for striking out instead of on the primary objective every batter should have: hitting the pitch!

Yes, kids sure are funny. It's a good thing you and I would never be so silly, being such intelligent, mature adults, isn't it?

But stop and think for a moment. If we are honest with ourselves, aren't we just as silly as those kids sometimes when we are faced with a challenging situation—like building our bodies naturally?

Just like the batter whose focus and energy are on preparing for failure, many natural bodybuilders have a long list of ready-made reasons why they can't build good physiques without drugs. Those natural bodybuilders must focus on what they *want*, instead of constantly worrying about what they *do not want*.

Fear of failure is what ultimately stops us from attempting what we really want in life or from giving 100 percent of our effort when we do.

Isn't this true? Whether you choose not to apply for a promotion at work that you think you'd enjoy, choose not to approach someone you are attracted to, or choose not to fulfill your desire to enter a bodybuilding contest, fear is usually what is stopping you.

Even when you do make an effort at these things, fear can hold you back from doing your very best at them. You can apply for a promotion, begin a relationship, or enter a bodybuilding contest but give far less than you are capable of giving in order to become successful only at a level you think you are capable of achieving.

Why in the world do people let fear hold them back from experiencing success? Because the *pain* from failure is a feeling they want to avoid at all costs—even if that means sacrificing the pleasure of succeeding. Nobody wants to be disappointed. Nobody wants to put heart and soul into achieving a cherished dream only to fail. Nobody wants to commit to accomplishing a goal then come up short.

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**Fear of failure is what ultimately stops us from attempting what we really want in life or from giving 100 percent of our effort when we do.**

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We do what we think we have to do to avoid looking bad in front of our family, friends, and peers. Nobody wants to be perceived as a loser. This fear prevents us from setting goals and working towards them with every ounce of our God-given abilities and talents. "Yeah, I failed—but, so what? I really didn't even try!" is the explanation we offer ourselves. In our hearts, however, we know what the truth really is.

Some of you might be saying, "What does that have to do with me, La Cour?! I don't have any fears! I'm not holding myself back from achieving my dreams! I'm a drug-free bodybuilder—and I bust my tail trying to be my best!"

First of all, it's perfectly normal to have fears. Lord knows, I have plenty of them. Here are just a couple of my more recent ones:

After placing fifth at the 1997 NPC Team Universe, I thought that would be the end of my bodybuilding career. I truly feared dropping farther down the ladder and ruining my reputation as a champion bodybuilder. I started telling myself that I didn't have the genetic shape to compete at that high level of competition anymore. "The guys now are freaks!" I would tell myself. I started checking into those "little contests" with big, prestigious-sounding titles. You know the one I'm talking about. Like the ABCQ Mr. Galaxy and Beyond which has only six lower-level competitors. "Nobody will really know that this contest wasn't very competitive," I would reason.

When the IFBB announced that bodybuilding was being considered to become an Olympic sport, many of my friends asked me if I would try to make the United States team. "Well," I reasoned, "I don't know how they plan on doing the drug testing. With the Olympics being such a prestigious honor, many 'not-so-natural' bodybuilders are going to want to get on that team also."

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**Fear prevents us from setting goals and working towards them with every ounce of our God-given abilities and talents.**

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What was I doing? Due to my fear of failing, I was protecting myself from the pain I could possibly endure in the future. In my mind, I was ready to blame circumstances that I could not control in the event I failed to do as well as I wanted at my upcoming shows. That energy and focus could have been far better spent looking for different strategies and opportunities to overcome any obstacles that stood in my way.

Whether I was saying that I lacked the genetics necessary to win the Team Universe or that the drug testing methods would determine if I actually had a chance to make the Olympic team, I was already making excuses in the event things didn't turn out well for me. How can I be blamed for my genetic shape? That was my parents' fault—and, as you know, we can't be blamed for not having great genetics!

As far as making the Olympic team was concerned, my fate would be decided by the way the rules were established. "Hey, it's not in my hands!" I subconsciously told myself.

How could I possibly become the best I could be, really go for my dreams, and enjoy the process of bodybuilding with such debilitating fears? I had to admit to myself I could not. Deep in my heart, I always knew what the truth was.

Come on! Now, it's your turn to 'fess up. Do you have any of the following fears or concerns? In order to become the very best you can be as a bodybuilder, being honest with yourself is an absolute must. Ask yourself: Do I . . .

- continually focus on how difficult it is to train without drugs?
- continually tell everyone who will listen how difficult it is to train without drugs?
- have the belief that I can't make it in the sport without using drugs?
- emphasize to your friends and the general public that I am drug free but that most other bodybuilders use drugs to get big?
- continually feel that I don't have the time to become a better bodybuilder?
- refer to myself as a hardgainer?
- refer to myself (even worse!) as a drug-free hardgainer"?
- feel that genetic potential determines about 95 percent of how good I can become as a bodybuilder and that you, unfortunately, do not have great genetics?
- feel that any bodybuilder who takes what *you* consider to be an "excessive" amount of legal supplements is really not drug free?
- continually complain that the major muscle magazines don't offer enough information directed specifically at natural bodybuilders?
- continually find myself complaining that natural bodybuilders don't get enough publicity in the major bodybuilding magazines?
- spend a considerable amount of time thinking about or studying the tremendous results steroids, growth hormone, and other illegal physique-enhancing drugs can do for the bodybuilder who uses them—although I personally would never use them?
- spend time judging the character of bodybuilders who do use drugs?
- continually question the drug-free status of outstanding natural bodybuilders?
- believe that drug-free bodybuilding contests are not truly 100 percent drug free?
- have a considerable number of discussions with my friends about the effectiveness or reliability of drug testing methods used at natural



bodybuilding contests?

- continually have discussions with my friends about which bodybuilders seem to be cheating on the drug tests?
- include among my personal beliefs that anyone who has used drugs in the past should not ever be allowed to compete in a drug-free contest?; or, that many so-called “natural” bodybuilders have elaborate plans to use massive amounts of drugs, quit exactly 365 days before a show, and then enter contests that require being drug free for one year?
- indulge in rumors with my friends about who is really using drugs in your gym?

These fears and concerns are all *distractions* that will prevent you from becoming your best. They will keep you from going all out with 100 percent intensity. They will prevent you from learning new strategies that you should know to take yourself to the next level. These fears may keep you from experimenting with new diets or training methods. You'll start blaming your lack of effort and progress on circumstances that are out of your control. You will be playing a game in your mind that you have made impossible to win.

“But Skip, some of those things are *true* and are *valid* concerns!” you might be saying. Are they true—or do you *perceive* them to be true? Your perceptions will create your reality. In other words, if you believe those things are true, you will train, eat, and sleep as if they were indeed true. Will that make you a better bodybuilder? Have you ever had a perception about bodybuilding that years ago you would have sworn to be true but turned out to be wrong? What if your current perceptions are unwarranted?

Look, I can't vouch for every bodybuilder who says he is natural. I can't say that everything is fair when it comes to bodybuilding genetics. What I can say, however, is that those things are *beyond your control* and you can't worry about them.

I'll share with you an e-mail I received to exemplify my point:

*Skippy,*

*Quit wasting everyone's time with this idea that you can get big without 'roids. Every supplement you push is crap; unless you are naturally gifted, you'll always be small. Training your butt off won't get you muscles! I know a lot of guys that have been training for years and are nothing! So quit writing this crap and say what's right!!!! GET BIG—'ROID OUT! OUT*

*Later, skinny man!*

This guy fails to grasp my message. The only way to set yourself up to win at the “game” of bodybuilding is this:

1. Become the best you can personally be, and
2. Enjoy the process at the same time.

There is no way possible for you to give all of your effort if you think the odds are stacked against you. There is no way possible for you to enjoy the experience of bodybuilding if you feel you are screwed right from the start. Focusing on your fears will ensure ultimate failure. Again, you must focus on what you *want* and not on what you *do not want*. Too many natural bodybuilders are complaining about how much less muscle they can build—without even giving 100 percent of their effort.

The question here is *not* Do you have any fears? More important questions are, What will you do in spite of those fears? Will your fears control you? Will your fears debilitate you? Will you let your fears determine what you try and do not try? Will you let fear ruin the unlimited pleasure you can enjoy from bodybuilding?

I'll emphasize this point through this book: Courage is the antidote for destroying all debilitating fears. Faith is also a very helpful virtue in overcoming them. But what you really may need are some new references to get you to start believing that your fears may be unwarranted.

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**I'll emphasize this point through this book: Courage is the antidote for destroying all debilitating fears. Faith is also a very helpful virtue in overcoming them. But what you really may need are some new references to get you to start believing that your fears may be unwarranted.**

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And you know what? Who cares how they pick the Olympic team? If I'm not at my very best, I don't have a chance to make the team anyway! Maybe I need to focus more on creating the best physique I can without worrying about those things that are out of my control!

I will tackle the fears and limiting beliefs that I have mentioned in this chapter and offer some differing points of view in order to eliminate these impediments from your way of thinking. My goal is to clear your mind of these fears and concerns and get you on course to chase your bodybuilding dreams with undaunted passion!





# 9

## Asking Yourself Better Questions to Create New References and Eliminate Your Fears

Drug-free bodybuilding in general gets very little exposure in the national magazines. There just are not many examples of outstanding drug-free physiques for the world to see. Because of these reasons, the level of development bodybuilders think can be achieved without taking drugs is not particularly awe-inspiring.

The purpose of this chapter is to challenge the opinions, beliefs, and convictions that make you think you are severely limited in what you can accomplish. I want you to get rid of any untrue perceptions about drug-free bodybuilding that may be preventing you from putting forth your best effort.

How badly do you want to take your physique to the next level? How willing are you to leave your nice, safe comfort zone and apply more pressure to yourself for honest-to-goodness, long-term satisfaction? How willing are you to consider viewpoints different from the ones you currently have?

Reconsidering your established beliefs will take courage. You may very well come to realize you have been asking far too little from yourself. Maybe you've assumed what is indeed possible to achieve was impossible. Maybe you will need to admit that you really haven't been doing *everything* you could be doing to earn the physique you really want.

Do you have the courage to re-evaluate your current belief structure? Make that decision *now!*

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### Reconsidering your established beliefs will take courage.

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As I've discussed before, you will find what you look for in life. If you want to find discrepancies in my beliefs, I am certain you will find them. If that's your intention, there is no point in continuing to read this book. But if you are ready and willing to open your mind in order to take your physique to a new level, then read on, my friend!

What will it cost you to hold on to disempowering beliefs? Ultimately everything you have ever hoped to accomplish with your physique without resorting to drugs. Bodybuilders who grapple with a pessimistic outlook toward their training often quit due to frustration. That frustration soon turns into anger. Unfortunately, there are far too many frustrated and angry drug-free bodybuilders around today. Although these bodybuilders may never settle for using steroids or other physique-enhancing drugs, they often do lash out at anyone who has earned a physique better than they have. Whether or not those better bodybuilders do or do not use drugs, angry bodybuilders will usually be convinced they do.

This state of anger is a miserable place to be—and you don't have to go there! The way to prevent yourself from ever getting there is to actively seek promising information and examples. Look for references to outstanding drug-free development whenever and wherever possible.

If you are currently in a place of frustration or anger, I have empathy for you. I, too, have felt the same pain—and still do from time to time. I'm happy to say, however, this feeling does not last very long before I get myself back on the right track.

How am I able to do so? By the questions I ask myself. If you ask a better question, you will direct yourself to finding a better answer. Instead of asking myself disabling questions like “Why do the guys who use drugs get all the magazine publicity?” I'll ask myself a better question like “If I can become an awesome natural bodybuilder, how can I use that accomplishment to get more exposure?” or “If I can add value to a magazine by helping thousands of other bodybuilders, will they give me exposure despite the fact I am not as big or ripped as the other guys?”

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**If you are currently in a place of frustration or anger, I have empathy for you. I, too, at times felt the same pain—and still do from time to time.**

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Although I still face these same challenges, those questions will guide me in an entirely different direction. Instead of feeling frustrated and angry, I will feel empowered and in control of my own bodybuilding destiny.

In the previous chapter of this book, I listed a series of fears and concerns common among many drug-free bodybuilders. Now I would like to list a few of those concerns again.

This time, however, I will follow them with constructive, empowering, and bodybuilding destiny-defining questions designed to help me overcome the

challenges that may stand in the way of accomplishing my goals—and designed to help you achieve yours as well.

Ask yourself: Do I . . .

- *continually focus on how difficult it is to train without drugs?*

Difficult compared to what? Being a quadriplegic? I don't think so! What knowledge could I get from those who have excelled to make the process easier? Isn't anything in life *that is worth having* difficult? If everyone had a great natural physique without it being difficult to achieve, would I really want it? What other things in my life that have been difficult have I succeeded at anyway?

- *continually tell everyone who will listen how difficult it is to train without drugs?*

What good will it do to tell everyone how difficult it is to train naturally? Will telling people this over and over again make me settle for less than my very best? Am I telling them this just to “brace my fall” if I fail? Am I just using this as an excuse because I am a little frustrated right now? Don't they have their own problems? Are they thinking I should just be happy for what I have, do my best to become the best I can be, and stop complaining? Am I sounding like the winner I really am?

- *have the belief that I can't make it in the sport without using drugs?*

What if I were to become an outstanding natural bodybuilder, win a highly publicized show, and market myself well? Could I then make it? If I am more creative, can I find a way to make it in this sport without using drugs? How about if I add tremendous value to other bodybuilders, supplement companies, or magazines? What if I bring something new and unique to the bodybuilding “table”?

- *emphasize to my friends and the general public that I am drug free but that most other bodybuilders use drugs to get big?*

Am I just generalizing about others to make myself feel better about my current development? Is continually emphasizing this generalization making me settle for the same standards I have now? Can I raise my standards and expect more from myself? If I indeed believe what I am telling others, will this prevent me from raising my standards and becoming a better natural bodybuilder?

- *continually feel that I don't have the time to become a better bodybuilder?*

How much time do I *really* need to become a better bodybuilder? Is it that I don't have enough time, or am I not using my time efficiently enough? Is there a bodybuilder I respect who demonstrates time management skills that I can learn? What would I give up in order to have more time to become a better bodybuilder? What if I woke up one hour earlier in the morning to work out? What if I joined a gym that was open more hours during the day and evening? How would I feel about myself when I was older if I gave my bodybuilding more effort at this time in my life?

- *refer to myself as a hardgainer?*

Who am I comparing myself to when I call myself a hardgainer? Is this a fair comparison? Don't I grow more rapidly than some people I know? Are all my body parts slow to grow? Are just a few? Is it really only a couple of parts? For my body parts that have been growing slowly, have I really done *everything* to get them more muscular? Have I tried even a dozen different strategies yet? How hard will I actually train and how well will I eat if I continue to call myself a hardgainer?

- *feel that genetic potential determines about 95 percent of how good I can become as a bodybuilder and that I, unfortunately, do not have great genetics?*

Is this just another excuse that I am using to make myself feel better about my current development? Do I know of any examples of other bodybuilders who don't have great genetics either but still have excelled at this sport? Can I still enjoy bodybuilding and training even though I don't have the best genetics?

- *feel that any bodybuilder who takes what I consider to be an "excessive" amount of legal supplements is really not drug free?*

Is there really anything wrong with taking a lot of supplements as long as they are legal and do not harm me? What makes me feel the amount of supplements that I take is the "right" amount? Am I just saying this because either I don't want to spend the money on supplements or can't afford to spend much money on them? What if they really do work? How much will they help me build my physique? Are supplements a major reason why natural bodybuilders are getting so good these days? Am I missing out because of this belief about what I consider excessive supplementation?

- *continually complain that the major muscle magazines don't offer enough information directed specifically at natural bodybuilders?*

What are the major differences between a physique built with drugs and one without? Can I use at least some of this information to help me build my natural physique? Which philosophies can apply to both types of bodybuilders?











# 10

## **Controlling Your Emotions on a Consistent Basis Is a Key to Bodybuilding Success**

What are the things you must do every day to eventually earn a great physique?

That's a simple question. But, if you've been pursuing this ambitious goal for any length of time, then you already know the answer is quite complicated.

Do you need to train with intensity? Do you need to pay meticulous attention to your eating habits? Is it important to take advantage of the latest developments in sports supplementation?

Yes, yes, and yes! If you really want an outstanding physique, you must train, eat properly, and take supplements. Not only will you need to do all those things, you must do them on a *consistent basis*. And, you must do them consistently *over a significant length of time* if you are truly committed to reaching your genetic potential of development. When you stack up all the major and minor daily tasks it takes to build your body, it can be terribly overwhelming.

### **Bodybuilding Is a Lifestyle**

Bodybuilding isn't something you do for an hour or two and then forget about for the rest of the day. The experts emphasize that successful bodybuilding is a lifestyle. Training in the gym is probably the most prominent aspect of bodybuilding. You must train with weights, add cardiovascular training, focus while you're in the gym, and strive for more knowledge and effort.

As you know, building a great body is far more complex than simply training in the gym. Eating is also a very important part of the equation. Preparing your meals, eating those meals on time, and cleaning up the mess afterwards is all part of the process. There is also the complicated area of supplementation. You must choose the right supplements to meet your specific needs, buy them from a reliable company, take them all at various times throughout the day, and always make sure you won't run out.

However, it often seems as though training, nutrition, and supplementation are the easiest aspects of bodybuilding! Even if you structure your lifestyle in a manner that supports these areas of bodybuilding, the toughest challenges are still ahead of you.

The *mental aspects* of bodybuilding, the ones I focus on in this book, will be your most challenging. And, although some times are easier than others, those mental challenges are constant.

Organization, preparation, motivation, consistency, flexibility, persistence, and determination are just a few of the mental characteristics that will differentiate those who become the best they can be from those who fall short of their personal goals. You must exhibit these mental qualities and characteristics on a consistent, day-to-day basis.

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**The *mental aspects* of bodybuilding, the ones I focus on in this book, will be your most challenging. And, although some times are easier than others, those mental challenges are constant.**

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Did I just say that you must exhibit these mental qualities and characteristics on a *day-to-day* basis? Man, is that an understatement! With all the things you must do throughout the day to build and outstanding physique, you must exhibit these qualities and characteristics on almost an *hourly* basis!

### **Following Through Is Crucial to Your Success!**

Oftentimes, it's not a particular strategy that determines what we look like. What has the biggest impact is how we actually apply the strategies that we've decided upon. In other words, it's not *what* we know, it's actually *doing what we know* that determines our level of success.

This concept is hard to admit to ourselves at times. We rationalize our lack of follow-through by telling ourselves things like "I'm waiting until I get just a little more knowledge"; "I'll get on track when I get my life a little more organized"; "I'll get my act together when my buddy starts helping me out."

Sure, we can always learn better methods. If we are honest with ourselves, however, we know that our current level of knowledge is enough for us to get ourselves going *now*. Our lives can always be a little more organized. Deep down inside, we know that getting ourselves going will get our lives more organized sooner than waiting for everything to get perfectly aligned. If we are lucky enough to have someone help us in our journey, that's great. But you really know it's up to you—and only you—to make your own life the way you want it.

What I try to accomplish in *Thinking Big* and *Thinking Big II* is to help get yourself in a state of mind to do all the things you already know to achieve your goals. Following through is crucial to your success!

## **The Battle with Yourself**

I often receive letters from bodybuilders who are struggling with their inability to follow through. The challenge is so common among us that I receive this type of letter on a weekly basis:

“I often struggle to maintain the extreme mental focus required to adhere to my goals and dreams on a daily basis, especially during or after a stressful day at work. My problem is that I all too easily let my diet or training slip a little. I’m full of guilt afterwards, but that does not help me during the time when I let myself down.”

The battle with yourself to control your mental state is never-ending. I don’t care what you did last month or even last week; failure is imminent if you don’t continue doing the same things today that brought you to this point. “Use it or lose it!” and “What have you done for me lately?” are popular sayings that come to mind as I try to drive this point home. It doesn’t seem fair, but that’s just the way life is sometimes.

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**The battle with yourself to control your mental state is never-ending. I don’t care what you did last month or even last week; failure is imminent if you don’t continue doing the same things today that brought you to this point.**

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The more often you can get yourself to follow through, the more successful you will eventually become. At the very highest level of most competitive endeavors, the difference between a champion and an also-ran competitor will come down to who has the highest standards for himself or herself—and who has been able to continually strive to meet those standards. You must strive to meet your own high standards every hour, every day, every week, and every month. It’s that type of consistency, year after year, that will create a physique and a lifestyle that you’ll be able to look back on with a tremendous sense of pride.

As I look back over my bodybuilding career, there have been many times when I felt absolutely *unstoppable*! I’m sure you’ve felt that way at times as well. Am I right? Some of those times lasted only for a few hours or for a single day. Some lasted for several days. During those periods, I had an abundance of self-confidence that I could eventually achieve my bodybuilding goals. In that state of mind, I was ready, willing, and able to work even harder. I became a “big thinker” and I was determined to do everything it would take—no matter what obstacles were ahead of me—to become the best I could be. It’s probably no surprise that, during those periods, I followed through consistently and performed my very best.

I wouldn't be honest if I didn't share with you the fact that there have been many, many times when I have felt totally *inadequate*! Can you relate to the state of mind that I'm referring to? I'm sure you can. Just like those times when I was riding high on self-confidence, the downtimes generally lasted for only a few hours or for a single day. Sometimes those feelings lasted for several days, and then achieving the goals that I had set for myself seemed impossible. In that state of mind, I had a difficult time getting myself to do the things I needed to do to become my best. I felt it was pointless to try to overcome the challenges and obstacles that stood in my way.

I'm always amazed and, at the same time, somewhat puzzled by the times when I can get myself to do almost anything. I'm equally amazed and stunned by the times I can't get myself to do the simplest bodybuilding tasks. I sometimes feel totally inadequate—within *hours* of feeling absolutely unstoppable!

Have you felt the same at times? We all have! Why do I ask? If we can figure out why we feel this way from time to time, we have a better opportunity to control our mental state, emotional state, level of motivation, and actions.

### **The Emotional State That You Are In at a Particular Time Will Determine If You Will Follow Through**

If we break it down simply, it is the emotional state we are in at any particular time that will determine the level of motivation and effort we put forth. What I've come to realize is my emotional state at a particular time is the biggest factor that determines whether I really go for it or I avoid doing what I should do to become the best bodybuilder I can be. I also realized that it can change from not only month to month, week to week, and day to day; it can change in a matter of hours.

The trick to harnessing the tremendous power of your mind and controlling your emotions is understanding how your own brain works. If you can understand why you do the actions you do, then you have a better chance of doing positive goal-oriented things on a more consistent basis. Just as valuable as that type of self-awareness about your actions, understanding why you don't do them gives you a better chance of correcting those negative behavioral patterns.

To help you achieve your bodybuilding goals, I have always shared my feelings about the challenges I face—without my ego getting in the way or any unnecessary bravado. Why am I so adamant about being open and honest? I believe that keeping this outlook will accomplish three things:

1. Help you realize that the mental challenges you face are normal. Even champions go through tough times.



2. Help you understand that you have the power within you to overcome your challenges and take control of your own bodybuilding destiny. It isn't that champions don't have challenges; it's what they do when they are faced with those challenges that help them succeed.
3. Provide you with a way of thinking and the successful strategies that have helped me overcome the challenges we all face as bodybuilders.

With those objectives in mind, this is what I've discovered about myself as I strive for my bodybuilding goals.

### **My Empowering and Disempowering Habits**

Have you ever been complimented for having a great body? The chances are good that you have been complimented many times. How did that make you feel? More importantly, what effect did that compliment have on your level of motivation to train and eat to make your body even better?

If I experience a situation that I view as positive (like a compliment), my mind starts searching for references in the past (like other compliments) that support my current beliefs about myself and my situation. And in this state of mind, I can always find a lot of them! I see and feel myself experiencing those positive events over and over again in the future. I compound or stack these emotions from the present, past, and future on top of each other. I talk to myself differently and I carry myself differently. I feel confident that I am capable and can do whatever it takes to continue enjoying and experiencing those feelings in the future—and at a higher level. I believe that all of my hard work and effort in the past have paid off—and will continue to pay off in the future.

Life sure is great when you feel this way, isn't it? Magnifying these positive, empowering emotions helps me believe I am in total control of making life even better. I am more willing than ever to do whatever it takes to make my bodybuilding efforts and my life even better!

Conversely, how has a negative comment about your physique made you feel or affected your level of motivation?

If I experience a situation that I view as negative (like an insult), my mind starts searching for references in the past (like other less-than-positive comments) that support my current negative beliefs about myself and my situation. And in this state of mind, I can always find a lot of them! I see and feel myself experiencing those negative events over and over again and also in the future. I compound or stack these emotions from the present, past, and future on top of each other. I talk to myself differently and I carry myself differently. I DO NOT feel very

confident about my ability to change the situation. I believe that all of my hard work and effort in the past have not paid off—and may never pay off in the future.

Life isn't that great when you feel this way, is it? Magnifying these negative, disempowering emotions makes me believe that I'm not in control. I am not as willing to do what I must to improve my bodybuilding efforts and my life.

### **We Are Our Own Spin Doctors**

In the political arena, there is a group of creative individuals called “spin doctors.” No matter what a political figure may say or do, the spin doctors can make a convincing argument that the politician's words or actions were the greatest in the world—or the very worst—depending on which side they are on.

In order to control our emotional states and get ourselves to follow through on a consistent basis, we must become our own positive spin doctors. The truth of the matter is we can choose how to perceive any situation in our lives—and especially, choose how pervasive or continual we think this situation will be in our lives in the future. Whether it's good or bad, it doesn't matter.

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You can take a compliment like “You look great” and get yourself in a funk because your level of development doesn't meet your expectations or was only good enough for fifth place in your last contest. You can also take an insult like “You have really small arms” and use it as a catalyst to push yourself to a new level.

We are in control of our emotional states at all times! Sure, we can wait for something out of our control to happen (like someone going out of their way to cheer us up), but we also have the power to “spin” the situation in any way it serves us best.

Whether we *choose* to engage in empowering patterns of thinking, such as passion, power, gratitude, enthusiasm, motivation; or disempowering patterns of thinking such as frustration, fear, disappointment, or feeling inferiority or overwhelmed, we can control our focus.

I've discovered that my habits in the way I think, whether positive or negative, are basically the same. The habits that I *choose* to engage in from hour to hour, day



















# 11

## **Having the Right Perspective and Giving Your Best Effort Can Help You Appreciate Your Physique Now!**

"When will I really be satisfied with my physique?"

Do you sometimes ask yourself that question as you work toward your bodybuilding goals? Or maybe you've asked yourself a more desperate version of that question like "Will I ever be satisfied with my physique?" If you have, you are not alone! I've asked myself those very same questions hundreds of times throughout my bodybuilding career.

Let me ask you a question: What will have to happen in order for you to feel content with your training efforts? Do you think you'll be satisfied when you gain a certain amount of muscle or lose a specific amount of body fat? Do you believe you'll be happy looking a certain way? What specifically do you feel needs to occur to feel the way you'd like?

The main objective for this book is to share the toughest mental lessons I've learned throughout my bodybuilding journey. I first try to communicate my feelings, experiences, and actions from the challenges I face in a manner you can identify with and understand. Then, I do my best to describe how I successfully overcame those challenges and share the mindset I needed to do so. When you face the same obstacles, my effective mental strategies will provide you with a model or blueprint which will increase your odds for success. If you can grasp the message I'm sharing in this chapter, I can assure you that your chances of actually reaching your bodybuilding goals will be much greater. And, you'll probably enjoy the journey much more along the way. Hopefully, just my openly and honestly revealing my thoughts will give you comfort. If I can feel this way at times, with everything I've accomplished, then maybe you'll be a little more understanding of yourself when you feel the same way. Maybe you'll develop the confidence to persevere as I have.

We've all heard the saying "Happiness is not in reaching the destination, it's in enjoying the journey." I've read those words of wisdom in books dozens of times over the years, but I must confess, I did not discover what they really meant until very recently. Sure, I understood the message on a surface level. But now I know the meaning on a deep, internal, gut level. I want you to get this type of understanding a whole lot sooner than I did.

I remember walking along the ocean in Redondo Beach, California, the morning after my big Musclemania win in 1994. I recall thinking to myself, "Now I can finally be happy with what I've achieved! This victory is just what I needed to be satisfied. This makes all of my hard work and dedication over the years worth the effort."

Strangely enough, I also remember thinking almost the very same thoughts in 1998 while I was walking through the streets of New York City within hours of winning the overall victory at NPC Team Universe. "Now I have accomplished everything I wanted in my bodybuilding career. *Now*, I'm satisfied."

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**If I can feel this way at times, with everything I've accomplished, then maybe you'll be a little more understanding of yourself when you feel the same way. Maybe you'll develop the confidence to persevere as I have.**

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Well, here I am today with a whole new series of ambitious goals—and that exact same edgy, driven feeling in my heart and soul that I had in the months preceding the Musclemania and the Team Universe wins.

When it comes to our pursuit of physical "perfection," the fact of the matter is we will never be "there". I don't care how many contests you win, how many pounds of muscle you pack on, or how many pounds of body fat you lose; the belief that accomplishing these goals will satisfy you for any significant period of time is a fallacy. Adopting this misguided belief will only lead to frustration, disappointment, and unhappiness.

Let me give you an example of what I mean from outside the bodybuilding world. If I gave you a hundred-dollar bill today, you might say, "Wow, this is awesome!" Two months from now, when you remember receiving my gift, you might think, "Hey, that was nice of Skip to give me that extra cash." A couple of years from now, however, more than likely you would be saying something more like "Oh yeah, I remember that time Skip gave me some money." It's just a natural occurrence that, as time goes by, our level of satisfaction seems to diminish.

In your bodybuilding endeavors, you must constantly grow in order to truly be happy. You must constantly strive to take your physique and training habits to the next level. It doesn't matter what you have accomplished in the past. You must improve upon your efforts. Even if you only experience growth in the slightest ways, you must progress forward on a continual basis to be satisfied.

Growth can be experienced with two more pounds of muscle, two fewer pounds of fat, or two more reps on your maximum bench press—it doesn't matter! It

doesn't have to happen in an obvious physical way either. You can experience growth in mental ways like discovering a new level of training intensity, exhibiting awesome courage by just attempting to lift more weight, or developing a few new ways to keep yourself motivated.

Six-time Mr. Olympia Dorian Yates has a lot to be proud of in his accomplished bodybuilding career. Now that his days of competing are over, he will undoubtedly be remembered as one of bodybuilding's greatest warriors of all time. But, do you even think for a moment that Mr. Yates is just sitting back right now totally satisfied with everything he has contributed to the bodybuilding world? No way! I can tell you from speaking personally with Dorian that he's searching for new ways to make a huge impact on our community. That impact may be in the business realm instead of on the competitive stage, but I guarantee you that he is striving for more achievement, adventure, and challenge.

If Dorian feels this way, don't be surprised if your feeling of ecstasy doesn't last very long after you finally reach that magic number on the scale. No, there's nothing wrong with you! That edgy, driven feeling in your heart and soul is the cornerstone of the mindset of a champion. Instead of trying get rid of it, welcome it! That's the mindset you **MUST** have in order to be as successful as you desire to become.

Now, I know what you're probably thinking right now, "You're wrong about this one, Skippy! If I'm lucky enough to just win my *class* at my upcoming show, I'd be pumped! That victory would give me the satisfaction that will last a long, long time."

I've heard many other people say the same thing. As I have shared earlier, I myself have said the same thing. Then, as with most people who achieve ambitious goals, we realize that there is always a higher level to achieve. "Darn! If I could have just been a little bit tighter—I would have won the overall! And come to think of it, I know I can improve on my shoulders. I want big ol' shoulders like Kevin Levrone's. And you know what? My shoulders-to-waist differential isn't as good as it could be. I want to create the illusion of a smaller waist like Flex Wheeler does so well. Jeez, won't I ever be satisfied?"

Personally, I don't believe that's the way the game of life was set up. Stop and think about it for a moment. Haven't you already built a physique far greater than you ever imagined possible when you first began training? Aren't you already the admired by many of your friends and family members? If this is true, why aren't you completely satisfied now?

I think one of the biggest illusions in life is that if we just work long and hard enough, there will eventually come a day when we can just sit back, coast, and be totally happy with everything we've accomplished. That's an illusion! Let me

tell you something, bro. If a day like that ever comes along and sticks around for a long time, it's probably going to be the day you die! As I said before, you are never going to be "there." I know this from firsthand experience and I want to save you from the pain this disempowering belief structure has caused me.

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**I think one of the biggest illusions in life is that if we just work long and hard enough, there will eventually come a day when we can just sit back, coast, and be totally happy with everything we've accomplished. That's an illusion!**

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Happiness is in the journey. What I've discovered over and over again is that I must constantly grow. Somehow, some way, I must grow. Maybe that growth will not be the size of my biceps. Instead, my progress may come through my role as a bodybuilding writer, as a businessman, or as a goodwill ambassador for the sport of bodybuilding.

The satisfaction of reaching goals lasts for what seems to be an inappropriate length of time. I find that when I set a goal, I have already envisioned accomplishing that goal literally thousands of times in my mind before actually achieving it. So, not surprisingly, when I do achieve that goal, the satisfaction can't possibly last forever.

I know that many of you are looking at that next contest win or that next pound of muscle as a vehicle that will lead you to happiness. The best way to feel happy is available to you *right now*. You can experience the sense of satisfaction every single day. The feeling of victory can be felt every time you successfully finish a grueling and productive workout; you can also feel that way after forcing yourself to get to the gym when you really didn't feel like it. The feeling of accomplishment can be felt when you pass up the pizza at a gathering with your friends and family because you know eating junk food won't help you reach your bodybuilding goals. Satisfaction can be achieved just by absorbing more information about bodybuilding on the Internet, in a magazine or book, or by watching a videotape—even if you feel comfortable that you may know everything that you need to know. The feeling of victory can be felt every time you push yourself past your comfort zone.

It's sounds so trite, but being successful in your bodybuilding efforts is about giving your all each and every day. Being successful is about bouncing back after disappointments. Being successful in bodybuilding is about having the hope that tomorrow will be a brighter day—no matter how poorly you think you look right now or how terribly your training is going. The feeling of victory can be felt just by demonstrating the virtue of faith that your efforts will eventually pay off. You can

really find happiness just by mustering up enough courage to push past your fears and try just one more time.

If you're not happy with your bodybuilding efforts right now, let me offer this advice. It's my belief that you know, deep in your heart, that you aren't doing the little things each and every day that you know you must to get you closer to your goals. If you can honestly say that you've given your very best effort, then there is no reason not to be satisfied. It really will not matter if you reach that "ultimate" goal or not.

When I worked in retail management, my job demanded a stressful 50+ hours a week. One year, when I was preparing for the NPC Team Universe, the store was short of employees. The lack of help demanded that I work an additional two hours every day. With my contest preparation demands, my schedule was already jam-packed!

But, with the show approaching quickly, I had to find a way to get all of my training done. I made it an absolute must that I did my 45 minutes of cardiovascular training and my weight training before I had to be at work at 6:30 in the morning. My biggest challenge, however, was that the gyms in the area did not open until 5:00 a.m. If I waited until then, I would not have enough time to do my cardiovascular training and weight training before I went to work. I could do one or the other—but not both.

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**Being successful is about bouncing back after disappointments. Being successful in bodybuilding is about having the hope that tomorrow will be a brighter day—no matter how poorly you think you look right now or how terribly your training is going.**

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Here was the solution: Because a nearby apartment complex had a stationary bike that I wanted to ride very early in the morning, I would lodge a stick in the window—making it not lock properly and making the facility accessible for me to enter when I wanted. I would wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning, break i to the complex's gymnasium, and ride the bike for 45 minutes. I would then run back home, pack up my food and clothes for the day, and race to the gym by 5 a.m. and train with weights. That afforded me just enough time to race down the freeway while I ate my first meal exactly when I was supposed to—even though I had only one hand on the steering wheel and other hand shoving down the food. I would get to work to open the store in barely enough time. I experienced this madness day after day for weeks!

And, you know what I've learned? In retrospect, there is absolutely no difference in my mind remembering the feeling when I was handed the overall trophy at the





**CHAPTER ELEVEN EXERCISES**

**Having the Right Perspective and Giving Your Best Effort Can Help You Appreciate Your Physique Now!**

- 1. What makes you unhappy or dissatisfied about your bodybuilding efforts?**

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- 2. What specific actions can you take to make yourself happier or more satisfied with your bodybuilding efforts?**

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# 12

## **No Matter How It May Appear, Everyone Is Paying the Price**

Do you sometimes notice there are a lot of people who have a much easier time at bodybuilding than you do? They seem to build muscle more rapidly and easily, get ripped with a minimal amount of effort, and were born with much better shape and symmetry? When you start comparing the difficulty of your journey versus theirs, it can be quite frustrating, can't it?

On the surface, they seem to be so lucky, don't they? Let's examine the situation a little more closely—and maybe a little more objectively. Is it really luck, or something other than hard work, that has helped them achieve their admirable physiques?

It seems that in every facet of life, whether it's at the workplace, in the classroom, on the playing field, or in the gym, people seldom want to accept the fact that someone else may have actually *earned* the success they enjoy. Most people don't want to believe others are working as hard or even harder than they are.

“Sty-roids and speed! Sty-roids and speed!” is how a co-worker of my training partner, Tony, thinks *all* bodybuilders achieve their impressive development. “Bodybuilders look the way they do because of sty-roids and speed!” he says. Tony and I are amused with his outrageous way of thinking and the bizarre phrase he uses. We often banter and joke with each other using his words.

It's easy to see how a middle-aged, out-of-shape man who has never worked out a day in his life would discredit and disrespect all bodybuilders that way—simply because of the fact that they are bodybuilders. That's the common perception of the general public. They don't think—not even for a moment—that our physiques are built with discipline, intelligence, years of consistent training, and sound nutrition. No way! It's got to be the “sty-roids and speed”!

But knowledgeable lifters, those people with years of experience living the disciplined bodybuilding lifestyle, would *never* think such idiotic nonsense, would they? You would be surprised.

Tony, himself, would often criticize the professional and top amateur bodybuilders saying, “C'mon, Skip! Most of the top bodybuilders are lazy and don't know more than anyone else. Those guys don't *need* to work hard. They

don't need to train as efficiently or eat as strictly as guys like me. The drugs do all of the tough work for them. And, even if they didn't use the drugs, they are so genetically blessed that it doesn't matter what they do! They're going to grow anyway." As I communicate with hundreds of drug-free bodybuilders around the world, the same sentiment is all too common.

Ironically, Tony has told me (as many as a dozen times) of the opportunities he's had to meet some of the top pros and amateurs. "You know, Skip, that guy is really intelligent, well spoken, and knows a lot about bodybuilding. He's a nice person and is really disciplined."

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### **Most people don't want to believe others are working as hard or even harder than they are.**

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Still, from time to time, Tony launches into that garbage of "All of the top guys are lazy, don't work hard, and look the way they do because they are genetic freaks." The last time he shared a favorable opinion of a top bodybuilder, I stopped him and said, "You must have told me about at least a dozen of the top bodybuilders who you've met that were hard workers. Why do you *still* have this overriding opinion that they are all a bunch of no-good slackers? Are you going to have to meet *every one* of them in person in order for you to change your general, negative opinion?"

Sometimes, I think it's we bodybuilders who perpetuate the "dumb, lazy bodybuilder" stigma just as much as the general public—except that the label doesn't apply to ourselves, naturally!

The path of least resistance, or the easiest thing to do, is believing we have it just a little bit tougher than the next guy. We tend to want to believe that we need to work much harder, be more disciplined, and be more knowledgeable to earn what we have—unlike the other guy who has the great body. It's easier on your ego when you believe that everyone else has an easier time of building muscle, losing body fat, and looking good.

In my opinion, however, adopting this mindset is tremendously disempowering and takes the control of your bodybuilding destiny out of your own hands. That way of thinking may make us feel better in the short run, but it won't help us earn the physique that we ultimately want. As we expend our efforts avoiding the pain of feeling a little inadequate at times, we prevent ourselves from stepping up to the challenge, raising our standards, and seeing what we really can accomplish with our physiques by taking our efforts to the next level. And believe me, there's always a next level. Maybe we'll never look like the next guy, but we can always add a couple more pounds of muscle, drop a few more pounds of body fat, or look just a little better.

You know, you just may not be a hardgainer after all! The quadriplegic who's laying in a hospital bed for the rest of his life—now, that guy's a hardgainer—not you. You're just comparing yourself to the wrong people or have the wrong perception of yourself. I know that diagnosing yourself as a hardgainer would be a nice way to explain why you haven't yet figured out all of the many complexities and challenges of bodybuilding, but it simply may not be necessarily true in your case. And, even if the idea has a little bit of truth, it may not be as limiting as you think.

Consider this statement for a moment: Maybe the reason that someone else has a better physique than you has nothing to do with anything that you are necessarily doing wrong—maybe the other person is just doing a few more things right.

Maybe you're not giving the people with the physiques that are better than yours the credit that they deserve. Maybe they do indeed know more than you do. Maybe they've worked harder, stayed more focused, and paid the price for a longer period of time than you have. Maybe it's not “sty-roids and speed”!

I understand that you are working very hard. I know that you are persevering through the challenges of building your physique and are paying the price. I encourage you to keep doing so. But, if someone is more successful than you, I can assure you they've paid the price to earn that success. Maybe you just don't have any idea of the price that they've paid. Maybe if you had the opportunity to know their story, you would have the same revelations that Tony often has.

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**Sometimes, I think it's we bodybuilders who perpetuate the “dumb, lazy bodybuilder” stigma just as much as the general public—except that the label doesn't apply to ourselves, naturally!**

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Bill Gates of Microsoft earned an estimated 90 billion dollars in 1999. If you are like me, your first instinct might be to think “Hey! With 90 billion dollars in my bank account, my life would be great! I wouldn't have any worries or problems.”

Gates has worked very hard, has exhibited tremendous vision, and has been extremely driven and focused for many, many years. He and his company Microsoft have totally revolutionized how the world operates in terms of business production and communication, as well as how almost everyone on this planet communicates every single day. He has been a powerful influence who has literally changed the world—and will stimulate more massive changes for some time to come. In my opinion, Gates deserves every single penny of that 90 billion

dollars. But, just like everyone else who achieves success at any level, he has certainly paid the price—and continues to pay the price.

Life has got to be easy for him, don't you think? You can bet that's not necessarily the case for Mr. Gates—even with all his money. Don't you think it gnaws at him, at least a tad, that the United States federal government wants to limit what he's trying to create and alter his vision? How about the fact that many smaller computer companies routinely sue him for unfair business practices or that HBO created a movie that basically makes him out to be a villain? There are literally thousands of militant, vocal "Gates-PC haters" out there. I wouldn't be surprised if he constantly worries about his family's safety.

No matter how good it may seem for others, you can be assured they are paying the price. Life oftentimes works like an equal-arm balance. You know, the two measuring pans on chains that the "Justice is blind" statue is holding? For everything that goes great in your life, it's balanced out with some difficulty or price to pay.

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**No matter how good it may seem for others, you can be assured they are paying the price.**

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A client of mine recently expressed how envious he was of the bodybuilding lifestyle that I'm able to live. "Man! I'd love to be able to do what you do for a living. You've got it made doing what you love to do 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year!"

I feel extremely fortunate to live the lifestyle that I've created—by working hard, taking some risks, as well as a lot of lumps along the way. My client didn't realize or see most of those things. He only saw the victories or the end result—just as most people only think of his ungodly amount of money when they see Bill Gates.

My client didn't know about the many times I had of total uncertainty, the long stretches of time I worked long hours and was lucky to get four hours of sleep a night, the relationships with special people that were sacrificed, or the constant self-doubt that I've experienced along the way.

He didn't know about my disappointing contest placings, like the time I came in third place out of three competitors in my class or the time I didn't place in the top 15 at the NPC USA. He didn't know that I've had seminars scheduled where no one showed up. No one. Not a single person. He didn't know about the letters from several endorsers that I've received over the years who no longer desire my services. He didn't know about the nasty, vicious e-mails that I occasionally receive.



He didn't realize the tremendous amount of money that I invested along the way in airfare, hotel rooms, rental cars, computers, contest entry fees, dozens of bottles of Protan, and other business essentials—instead of spending my money on expensive cars or relaxing vacations.

He didn't realize that I don't automatically receive a paycheck, whether I do a good job or not, and I don't have an employer putting money into my retirement account every week or paying my health insurance. This kind of pressure takes its toll at times. I must constantly step up, continually improve, and always provide an outstanding value. If I don't, I go broke!

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, Skip. But the bodybuilding lifestyle is a *lonely* lifestyle. I spend a lot of time alone," he said.

I know what he feels firsthand. The many years of getting up at three o'clock in the morning and going to bed at 11 o'clock or midnight day after day, spending most of that time working on one of the many aspects of bodybuilding (training, dieting, writing, coaching, etc.) doesn't leave lot of time to spend with other people.

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## **The challenges you are going through are normal.**

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After winning one of the biggest shows of my career, the 1994 Musclemania, I watched the national television broadcast by myself. That doesn't sound like much of a celebration, does it? I did the same with a videotaped version of Musclesport USA's showing of my 1998 NPC Team Universe overall victory.

You don't see all of those things when you see my picture in one of the international bodybuilding magazines, do you? No matter how glamorous my lifestyle may seem on the outside, I informed him, there's a price to pay. You may not know what that price is, but trust me, the bigger the reward you receive, the bigger the price you pay!

You know what? No matter how discouraging my story may sound, I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm glad I've paid the price. My efforts and sacrifice have created awesome memories that will last my entire life!

I bet that person you are so envious of in the gym has a story he could tell you too.

The moral of what I'm trying to say is that there will be a price to pay for the bodybuilding success that you are striving to achieve—and everyone is paying it. The challenges that you are going through are all part of the game. You're not so disadvantaged, you're not so unlucky, and you're not getting screwed.

The challenges you are going through are normal. They will make the reward of victory, however you define it, that much more satisfying in the end. Realize that fact; understand that fact; accept that fact; and I would even say, *welcome* that fact. As I always say, God puts a price tag on everything!

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**After winning one of the biggest shows of my career, the 1994 Musclemania, I watched the national television broadcast by myself. That doesn't sound like much of a celebration, does it? I did the same with a videotaped version of Musclesport USA's showing of my 1998 NPC Team Universe overall victory.**

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Maybe an even better mental strategy to help you get through the difficult times is to focus on the *benefits* that you'll ultimately receive instead of constantly focusing on the difficulty of getting there.

Other people are working just as hard, disciplined, and intelligently as you are. In reality, no one else has it that much easier than you. Even if they do, I can tell you that they probably don't think so. Besides, the situation shouldn't affect your mental approach anyway. Just keep plugging away and be the best that you can be. And, most importantly, enjoy the bodybuilding process, darn it!

**CHAPTER TWELVE EXERCISES**

**No Matter How It May Appear,  
Everyone Is Paying the Price**

- 1. Choose a successful bodybuilder or two whose mindset, drive, and work ethic are questionable—despite their achievements.**

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- 2. How does it make you feel about your bodybuilding efforts when you choose to believe they are successful without possessing a great mindset, strong drive, and tremendous work ethic? How do those feelings negatively affect what you are trying to accomplish with your own physique?**

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**3. Assume for a moment you are incorrect about your assumptions about those other bodybuilders. If you *forced* yourself to believe they are indeed working just as hard as you, what specific actions might they be doing that you may not have recognized in the past?**

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**4. What challenges or obstacles do you feel you must overcome that makes your task of building your physique more difficult than others'?**

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# **Part III**

## **Acquiring Effective Bodybuilding Strategies**





# 13

## **Keep an Open Mind to New Bodybuilding Information and Accelerate Your Progress**

There's a lot of valuable time and resources being wasted, guys! If it makes you feel any better, I'm often guilty of wasting them just as much as anyone is.

How many times has someone enthusiastically shared a training strategy that, in your judgment at the time, made absolutely no sense? But, how many times has a technique you once thought was ridiculous provided phenomenal muscle gains when you tried it later? Has this ever happened to you? It's happened to me.

There have been many times when I've been exposed to a of piece bodybuilding information, casually evaluated it, then quickly discarded it. Then, as much as several years later, I'd try that strategy and achieve outstanding results. If only I had been smart enough to take those suggestions to heart and try them sooner. Just think how much more muscle I would have earned by now. Just think how much more momentum I could have created. There is nothing I can do to make up for that lost time. The time you waste is a resource that you can never get back.

I'm sure you can relate to my feelings. This challenge is very common among most of us who train in the gym. Why do our brains seem to immediately find fault with many of the new strategies introduced to us, whether they come from a fellow bodybuilder or an article in a magazine? We have many opportunities to strengthen our bodybuilding efforts from experienced champions with track records of success. There are also knowledgeable experts who generously make their philosophies available in bodybuilding magazine articles, books, and websites. How can we make use of this helpful information? And even better, how can we use it much sooner?

I, myself, occasionally fail to take advantage of state-of-the-art bodybuilding strategies that will help me reach my own goals. I was in Gold's Gym in Venice, California, about three months before I was to defend my Team Universe overall victory. IFBB professional bodybuilder Paul Dillet said to me, "Skip, you could be much bigger and just as lean as you were last year." He then offered me a rather simple, but extremely valuable, piece of nutritional advice. Tito Raymond, who was on the treadmill next to Dillet at the time, nodded in agreement.

How receptive do you think I was to his suggestion? I was just coming off a victory in which I achieved a level of conditioning that surely set a new standard for drug-free heavyweights. I may have been a good 16 or 17 pounds lighter than I had ever been—but I was unbelievably shredded nonetheless.

Long story made short, I didn't use his advice and came in second place that year. I was much heavier, but not quite as ripped. Since that conversation, Dillet won the Night of Champions. Raymond won both the middleweight class at the Team Universe and the professional division of the Musclemania. They are the ones who succeeded—while I had to settle for a disappointing second-place finish in my class.

The most unfortunate part of the story (for me, at least) is that, although I was unaware of exactly what I was doing, I had used this very *same* nutritional strategy for months leading up to my Team Universe victory the year before! I just didn't realize or appreciate how effectively my body had utilized this plan. Now that I am armed with the knowledge, experience, and pain of a missed opportunity, I've implemented this diet again this year and am experiencing amazing results.

Damn! Just think of the position I could be in right now if my mind had been open to Paul's suggestion back then. I could possibly have been the very first back-to-back Team Universe champion. I probably worked just as hard as the year I won, but the difference between a repeat victory and settling for second place just might have been that *single* nutritional strategy.

Wasting valuable information offered to us is not due to a lack of desire. If you're reading this book right now, I can safely assume that you are driven, committed, and constantly searching for ways to become more efficient in your training, nutrition, supplementation, and motivation habits. I know that I am. If we are truly committed to constantly taking our physiques to the next level, why don't we embrace these exceptional pieces of advice?

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**Wasting valuable information offered to us is not due to a lack of desire.**

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As I strive to become one of the very best bodybuilding coaches who helps you achieve your physique-enhancing goals, I often ask myself "How can I respect the natural learning progression of bodybuilders and still influence them to use my effective, proven, and experience-based strategies?" I've asked myself this question literally hundreds of times. Before I could help others, however, I first needed to understand why I myself would sometimes fail to take advantage of the great bodybuilding information suggested to me.

I'll share with you why I believe many bodybuilders fall into this disempowering mindset. Most importantly, I'll outline five specific actions for keeping an open mind to new bodybuilding information and accelerating your progress. Then, I will tell what you stand to lose by not opening your mind to new information and the benefits you can enjoy.

There are a few reasons I believe we are hesitant to accept helpful information. In the natural progression of the learning process, we focus on our differences, and we don't have faith in the source of information.

### **The Natural Progression of the Learning Process**

No matter how hard we try, we can only learn so much information so fast. There is a pattern of acquiring bodybuilding information that's common among many of us. In other words, there's a natural progression of learning that happens in bodybuilding or any other endeavor requiring a certain level of experience. This natural progression needs to happen before any person can be considered good at what he or she does.

This natural progression of the learning process reminds me of a movie that was released in the late 80s titled *Colors*. *Colors* starred actors Sean Penn and Robert Duvall as a police officer duo. Penn played the role of a cocky rookie cop who thought he knew everything about the tough, crime-ridden streets. Duvall, who was the wise and veteran partner, took it upon himself to show Penn the best ways to deal with the challenges of law enforcement. No matter how hard he tried, Duvall couldn't convince Penn his experience-based advice was the best for everyone concerned. Penn's lack of experience and misguided sense of certainty caused him to make many tactical rookie mistakes.

By the time the movie ended, Penn, now much more sophisticated in his approach, had the very same difficult task of giving advice to his own overconfident rookie partner. Ironically, Penn used the same stories, examples, and analogies that Duvall had shared with him years before. (For those of you who have been training a few years and occasionally offer your advice to less-experienced bodybuilders, how familiar does that story sound?)

This scenario is quite understandable. I often share what I feel is solid, hard-earned, valuable bodybuilding advice—only to have it fall upon deaf ears. It's like giving a sixteen-year-old, first-time driver a brand-new Mercedes Benz as his very first car. How can he possibly appreciate the value of such a fine automobile when he doesn't really have anything to compare it to? He has no point of reference. Sure, people can tell him how lucky he is to have such a great car but, until he spends some time behind the wheel of an old, beat-up Chevy, he'll never truly appreciate the value of the Mercedes.

## We Focus on Our Differences

Oftentimes when we are presented with new bodybuilding information intended to make our efforts easier, we instantly look for reasons why our own particular circumstances are unique and require unique strategies. In other words, we tend to focus on our differences.

Sure, most of us think we are unlike most other people training in the gym. We oftentimes believe that our individual circumstances, patterns of thinking, and challenges we face as we try to build our physiques are unique. Many times we choose to believe that our own difficulties are tougher to overcome than those of the other guy.

We actively seek out and zero in on what we think makes us uncommon. We make a point of noticing what makes us unlike other bodybuilders by identifying variables such as training styles, routines, diets, body types, genetics, metabolic rates, number of years of training, age, gender, and whether we train drug free or chemically assisted, just to name a few.

The bottom line is that we are all after the same things: to build muscle, lose body fat, or a combination of building muscle and losing body fat. We also want to do so in the most efficient ways and in the shortest time. It's that simple.

Focusing on our differences is counterproductive! Adopting the belief that our situation is unique and especially difficult to overcome can also be detrimental. Why? Because, despite the particulars, focusing too much on our differences will unnecessarily complicate the bodybuilding process.

All too often, when a typical bodybuilder comes across a stumbling block, he'll begin saying things like "Every strategy works differently for everybody", "People do not respond the same way to different routines or diets", and "What works for you may not work for me!" They can become jaded, their thoughts cynical and pessimistic. They start seeing potentially powerful sources of information as farces.

Although this mentality may relieve some frustration, confusion, burdens, and anxiety in the short run, it may jeopardize a bodybuilder's progress in the long run. Why? Because this type of rationale keeps you in your comfort zone. It takes the pressure off yourself and you won't assess your own thoughts and actions—and how they may contribute or hinder your results.

The fact of the matter is we are more *alike* than we are *different*! Although our results may vary due to our particular circumstances, the strategies needed to effectively build muscle and lose body fat are basically the same for all of us. Adopting *this* belief will simplify the bodybuilding process and force you to take

100 percent responsibility for your mental approach and all of your physical actions.

When I think about it now, when Paul made his diet suggestion, I wasn't getting lean at a rate that was proportionate to the amount of effort I was investing. I wanted to stay in my comfort zone. I looked for every reason in the world why that strategy wasn't as earthshaking as Dillet believed. "He's a pro. He's weighs much more than I do. He has much more muscle mass. He has more experience. He trains under different conditions." Believe me, my mind thought of all the reasons why my circumstances were unlike his!

### **We Don't Have Faith in the Source Of Information**

We all connect in different ways to the people who present us with bodybuilding information. The reasons that we relate to a particular bodybuilder or magazine writer are not always based on concrete scientific logic. We are influenced primarily on an emotional level.

"I don't know what you're talking about, La Cour! There's so much conflicting information out there. I can shoot holes in most of these so-called experts' theories. My strategies are based on pure science!"

The fact of the matter is, someone can *always* shoot holes—and often do—in anyone else's bodybuilding theories. Whether it's because you are drawn to a certain bodybuilders or writers by personality or style, their track record of success, or a friend's endorsement, you are primarily first persuaded emotionally to try their bodybuilding advice. Then, it's your own attitude and hard work that takes over from there and dictates your outcome.

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**Focusing on our differences is counterproductive! Adopting the belief that our situation is unique and especially difficult to overcome can also be detrimental. Why? Because, despite the particulars, focusing too much on our differences will unnecessarily complicate the bodybuilding process.**

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It does not matter how successful the fellow bodybuilder, magazine, or writer offering the information is. If you are not moved emotionally by the person or writer offering the information, there will be little chance that you'll adopt their point of view. If you don't trust the messenger, you won't trust the message.

Who cares if a champion has been pushing himself to an incredibly high standard for ten or fifteen years? We might consider ourselves intermediate, but when the advice presented is above our current level of understanding, we're often

overwhelmed. If we have not been moved emotionally, we'll shoot holes in those theories and hold onto our current beliefs.

Although Paul Dillet was certain about the advice he was giving me, he couldn't sway me enough for me to make immediate changes. After thinking about what he said for months, I eventually implemented his recommendations. At that earlier time, I wasn't inspired, persuaded, or influenced sufficiently to do so.

### **Five Specific Actions for Keeping an Open Mind to New Bodybuilding Information and Accelerating Your Progress**

Here are five specific actions that will allow you to go about your natural progression in the learning process and still take advantage of the valuable information provided by more experienced and knowledgeable bodybuilders.

- 1. Focus on Similarities—Not Differences.** It's a common thought process for bodybuilders to focus on their differences from other bodybuilders—especially when their great strategies conflict with our current beliefs. Force yourself to go against the grain. Instead of focusing on what is different, come up with a few reasons why this information would indeed work well for you. Believe me, there will be plenty of time to make adjustments later.
- 2. Choose a Role Model.** Role modeling is the most efficient pathway to success in bodybuilding. You can continue trying to re-invent the wheel or, in other words, learn how to succeed solely on your own. Unfortunately, you'll be wasting valuable time and must endure the pain and frustration that goes along with the process. Or you can learn quickly and easily from someone who has already discovered proven winning strategies and has applied that knowledge in the gym and on stage. The choice is yours. As the saying goes, it's easier to reach for the stars when you are standing on the shoulders of a giant.
- 3. Make a Decision—Then Give 100 Percent of Your Effort!** In order for you to make good use of any of the information available, you are going to need to use your best judgment and make a decision. Your decision should be based on sound logic. That decision should not be based on fear, complacency, desperation, or any knee-jerk reactions. Once you've made that decision, you must give your chosen strategy all your mental and physical effort to truly evaluate its effectiveness.
- 4. Have Faith!** Let me tell you something: If you're waiting for a sure-fire, fail-safe, slam \-dunk, 100 percent guaranteed strategy to come along and convince you to make changes that catapult you to the next level—it's not going to happen. If you are truly committed to improving your physique, you are going to need some faith. You'll need to

acquire faith that your new information will be effective and you'll eventually see results—even when those results are not immediately apparent.

- 5. Be Patient!** Whether you are open to new information that is given to you or not, the road to building an admirable physique will require patience. Your job of staying patient long enough will always be difficult. Don't make the bodybuilding process even more difficult with impatience. If you keep an open mind, the answers to your questions will eventually make themselves available. Trust me. Just look around your gym and you'll realize most people won't stick around long enough to find the most effective answers.

What do you have to lose by not opening up your mind to new bodybuilding information? You can lose valuable time that you'll never get back. You can become frustrated. You can lose your perspective for the high standards needed to take your physique to the next level.

If you suffer from too many sticking points or plateaus, you will undoubtedly feel a lot of frustration and pain. Because there is so much great information out there, this would be a shame. Too much frustration and pain will make you complacent and apt to settle for results that fall far short of what you are really capable of achieving. The problem with complacency is that you will never know when you are overtaken by it. You'll simply attribute your lack of progress to your poor genetics or to being a hardgainer. Maybe you will successfully convince yourself that you really don't want a great physique that badly. Deep inside your soul, however, you'll know you're just kidding yourself.

What are the benefits you will enjoy by opening up your mind to new bodybuilding information? You can gain a sense of understanding, confidence, and certainty which will provide the mental edge needed to reach your full genetic potential. You can progress more smoothly and efficiently. You could make significant improvements in your physique much sooner. You could generate unstoppable momentum that can produce results that rival those of someone with much more bodybuilding experience. All in all, you could make the entire bodybuilding experience more enjoyable and fulfilling.

My goal over the years has been to find effective ways to shorten the learning process in the different areas of bodybuilding for you. You can be certain that any advice I give comes from my experience and sincere desire to help you become your very best. Once you open your mind to new bodybuilding information, the challenges you have left are to identify the best strategies, implement them, and put forth your best effort.













# 14

## **“Average Joe” Doesn’t Have Any Winning Strategies to Share With You—Champions Do!**

“I can share with you the secret to becoming a millionaire who never pays a nickel in taxes,” comedian Steve Martin brags to his audience. “First, you get a million dollars. Then, you . . .” The crowd groans with disappointment because they were hoping to learn how to easily get something that’s normally difficult.

I have had the privilege to share bodybuilding philosophies and “secrets” with hundreds of lifters around the world, ranging from beginners to professionals. Throughout my experiences, I have also heard many of their questions, requests, and frustrations.

“The magazines need to provide information for us *regular* guys,” is a common statement of frustration for many. “The publications are filled with the training routines and diets for the guys on ‘roids! Those methods won’t work for my drug-free situation!”

The magazines can’t please some of these individuals even when they do print the philosophies of outstanding natural bodybuilders. “The few drug-free athletes featured are so genetically gifted that their methods won’t work for me either. Besides, I have a full-time job and can’t spend all day in a gym as they do. I’m too busy!”

“What the magazines need are training routines, nutrition plans, and supplement programs designed to make the ‘Average Joe’ build some good, quality muscle!” they demand.

I have a saying that goes “Anything that is worth having has a price tag on it.” In other words, if you want a physique that you can be proud of, you are going to have to earn it. Unfortunately, a work ethic like Average Joe’s will get you average results—at best. A regular, everyday approach to your bodybuilding will yield the same physique as every other regular guy. I don’t think a person who takes the time to read a book like this is willing to settle for that. I am sure that’s not what you want, is it? To believe that you can actually achieve—let alone deserve—anything better than mediocrity with this mindset is only wishful thinking.

Does that mean you need to quit your full-time job, move to Southern California, and become a dedicated, focused competitive bodybuilder to benefit from the information I have to share with you? Absolutely not!

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**Unfortunately, a work ethic like Average Joe's will get you average results—at best. A regular, everyday approach to your bodybuilding will yield the same physique as every other regular guy.**

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The key to your success is determined by the state of mind you are in while reading the training routines, diets, and supplement practices that the champions in the bodybuilding magazines offer. You should read them with the anticipation that the very next article will provide just one key distinction or strategy that will launch you into a whole new level of growth. It only takes a couple of *minor* changes in your approach to create some *major* changes in your physique.

You may never wish to become Mr. Olympia, but I think you would be ecstatic if you found a way to add ten pounds of rock-solid muscle during the next year, wouldn't you? Even though you may have no desire to become a national-level competitive bodybuilder, those champions can help you far more than Average Joe can.

Do you really ever expect to see Average Joe's routines in the international bodybuilding and fitness magazines? Trust me, Average Joe has no winning strategies to share with you. He is not going to have any profound distinctions for one simple reason: He has never pushed himself hard enough to find them (at least, not yet). How do you think he earned his name in the first place?

If Average Joe does have a good physique, I can guarantee that either he has already adopted some the top bodybuilder's proven techniques that you haven't yet, or *he's* the one who is genetically gifted by being able to produce good results with a minimal amount of effort!

The dedicated athletes featured in the major bodybuilding magazines have passionately sought after information to help get them where they are today. Don't squander your opportunity to learn from them.

The challenge for many drug-free bodybuilders is to remain open-minded. "Oh, I can't use that 'crazy' system; it only works for him because he's loaded on the 'juice'!" is a familiar complaint. Be sure you don't throw the baby out with the bath water—I can't tell you how many secrets that are working well for me today are ones I shunned years ago because I had this negative perspective.

The single strategy that can produce massive improvements in your body, a “golden nugget” as I refer to it, could be in this very book, my website, or the next article I write for the major bodybuilding and fitness magazines! But that winning plan will slip right past you if you mistakenly believe all of the information is devised by or geared toward “steroid freaks” or the genetically elite. If someone has had their philosophies published in a bodybuilding and fitness magazine, then there is something you, I, and every other lifter can learn from them. It could be in the area of mental attitude or organization, rather than training or nutrition. Some valuable lessons may be more obvious than others, but you *will* find them if you first believe you will.

For me, simply switching to my one-body-part-once-a-week training routine was the small change that made the big difference. When I augmented that regimen with poundage that kept me in the range of 4 to 6 repetitions, I exploded into *gigantic* gains! By my sharing with others these simple discoveries over the last few years, hundreds of Average Joes have been able to graduate to above-average status—all within the context of their busy schedules.

It may be more beneficial to use your effort finding more *efficient* ways of doing things—not necessarily trying harder. Maybe a simple procedure such as keeping a few meal replacement packages in your car, office desk, and gym bag will help you maintain your sound eating habits regardless of your time constraints. These types of bodybuilding discoveries are available to all of us.

Let’s face the facts: We as human beings have a need to feel special, important, or at least above average at something we do. Whether it’s in the context of job, school, bodybuilding, or quality of life, we all want to ascend above the masses in some area of our lives.

The only way to earn the outstanding physique you desire—regardless of your challenges—is to put forth an outstanding effort. In bodybuilding, just as in life, you will *never* truly be happy with any accomplishment unless you have given an above-average amount of effort to achieve it.

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**It only takes a couple of *minor* changes in your approach to create some *major* changes in your physique.**

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Let go of your tendency to ease the pressure by convincing yourself that your circumstances are so difficult and unique. This is especially challenging to many drug-free bodybuilders who sometimes want to believe they are the only ones on the planet who truly are training this way. Whether you are drug free, family oriented, extremely busy, or financially challenged, you *can* find a way to build an above-average physique—if you are committed to doing so. You know it and I know it. Besides, isn’t it the size of the challenge that makes the victory so

rewarding? Think of it this way: You are all set up for an amazingly rewarding experience!

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**The only way to earn the outstanding physique you desire—regardless of your challenges—is to put forth an outstanding effort.**

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As you come to the end of this chapter of *Thinking Big II* and your mind searches for ways to apply this message to your own specific circumstances, you may also want to make a decision. *Now* is the time to rid yourself of the excuses for not doing what you know you need to do. Think of the challenges you have conquered in the past and use those successful references as confidence-boosters to find those “golden nuggets” that will earn you the physique that you *really* want. *Now* is the time to decide that you will make the metamorphosis from Average Joe to *Exceptional* Joe and become everything you are capable of becoming!



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN EXERCISES

### **“Average Joe” Doesn’t Have Any Winning Strategies to Share with You—Champions Do!**

1. Choose a champion bodybuilder whose example you think would not normally offer anything that would help you in your own bodybuilding efforts.

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2. What makes you certain you could not learn anything that would help you from this champion bodybuilder?

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3. What are specific things about this champion bodybuilder that make his circumstances so much different from yours?

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# **Part IV**

## **Peak Performance In The Gym**



# 15

## Specific Training Goals Set the Stage for Outstanding Workouts

In my opinion, there aren't many feelings you can experience as a bodybuilder that are better than walking out of the gym after an awesome workout! Striving for productive and efficient training sessions is usually our number one priority. After all, this is the very first step toward developing an outstanding physique.

How do you define a "great" workout? What are your criteria? What specifically needs to happen during your training session for you to consider it great? As you already know, the method of evaluating the quality of a particular workout can differ from person to person.

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**Overestimating the quality of our training sessions is a common problem for many of us.**

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Aren't your workouts much better *now* than they were when you first started training? Of course they are! Most bodybuilders I talk to feel this way about their training sessions.

I feel as though my workouts are better than they have ever been. In fact, the quality of my workouts has *dramatically* improved since just last year. That's quite an accomplishment when you consider I've been training at a high level of performance for over a decade.

Every step of the way along my bodybuilding journey, however, I would have told you my training sessions were great. How could that be possible? Why did I feel that way? With my initial level of knowledge and experience, they *all* couldn't have been great back then—no matter what I thought at the time.

Haven't you always felt your workouts were great as well? Although you may not feel that way now about your past workouts, didn't you think they were fantastic? Overestimating the quality of our training sessions is a common problem for many of us.

In my case, I didn't really set specific training goals during my first few years of training; so, how could I realistically have come to the conclusion I was having great training sessions when I had no clear-cut definition of what that meant? I couldn't have!

Most of us go to the gym and have a *general* plan for which body parts we are going to train. Hopefully, we also have a good idea of which exercises we will do. If we are very good at planning our workouts, we have a goal of how many repetitions we want to perform and how much weight we are going to lift on that particular day. The extent of our planning usually stops there. Very rarely do we get really *specific* about what our goals are for that session.

The purpose of this chapter is to get you to set specific training goals and review them before every workout.

As I stated earlier, how to determine the quality of a particular workout can vary from person to person. What does a great workout mean to you? Do you need to lift a certain amount of weight? Do you need to perform a certain number of repetitions during every set before you feel a workout is great? Do the muscles you've trained need to feel a certain way? For some people, if they just show up at the gym, they feel their workouts were great!

However you choose to determine the quality of your workouts, you must first set clear standards in your own mind. How else would you really know that your efforts are right on track—or in dire need of improvement?

If you followed through and completed the exercise in the earlier chapter "How Do You Know You Are Working Hard?" it was probably an extremely enlightening experience. Although previously you may have thought you were working hard, more than likely you discovered there was much more you could do—and could have been doing in the past—to propel your bodybuilding efforts forward.

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**However you choose to determine the quality of your workouts, you must first set clear standards in your own mind. How else would you really know you are right on track—or in dire need of improvement?**

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In this chapter, I urge you to invest the time to get specific about what's most important to you during your training session, set new standards, and evaluate your past performance with the new set of standards you've created. Then, to make sure you are always aware of those standards, I encourage you to review them before *every* workout.



## **The Steps for Creating Your Training Goals**

### *Step One: Brainstorm*

First, generate a list of objectives or goals you wish to accomplish during your workouts and as a result of your efforts. Don't spend too much time thinking about which ones you value the most. During this step of the procedure, just "brainstorm," or create a list. After listing all the things that come to your mind first, you'll have plenty of time to add more goals or narrow down your list later.

The objectives or goals you write down can be long-term goals (e.g. getting your bodyweight up to 190 pounds or becoming a national-level bodybuilder); medium-range goals (e.g. getting in great shape for bathing suit weather or winning next year's bodybuilding show); or short-term goals (e.g. lifting your heaviest weight or remaining especially focused during every workout). I suggest that you choose a combination of all three types of training goals.

### *Step Two: Select Your Most Important Training Goals*

Secondly, narrow your list. Select the training goals you feel are most important and write them down on a piece of paper. When you list your most important training goals, be specific. The more clear you are about *exactly* what you want to accomplish, the better your opportunity to achieve success.

You may want to start off with only five or six of your most important goals. You can add a few more—but only after you've consistently met your initial objectives during most of your training sessions.

As you determine your goals, be sure you are asking enough from yourself. The more you ask from yourself, the more productive you will become. Are you currently asking enough from yourself during your workouts—without any excuses or rationalization—to achieve your definition of "great"?

That said, you must avoid overwhelming yourself with a list that is too long. How will you know your list is too long? You'll know you are overwhelmed when you have trouble reaching the majority of your training goals. Instead of feeling the tremendous power of this exercise, you'll start feeling as though you are disempowered. You'll begin to feel like a failure after every session by overwhelming yourself. Ironically, you may actually be doing very well—but are unable to realize and appreciate what you are able to accomplish. You may have just established too many ambitious goals too soon!

### *Step Three: Review Your Goals before Every Workout*

You must invest the time to review your training goals before each and every workout. The couple of minutes needed to read your list will prove invaluable over time.

I can't stress upon you enough the power of your subconscious mind—when you choose to use it to its full potential. When you read your list of goals before every workout, you plant the seed of productivity that is activated when you are training—even when you are unaware it's working. Trust me on this one!

Creating one specific training goal alone (and reviewing that goal before every workout) has catapulted my training performance to a higher level. This far into my career, that's a big statement!

If you look at my own list of training goals on the following pages, you'll notice Number 12 states;

*"I will constantly redefine what 'absolute failure' means to me by pushing myself to give more effort than ever before during every set. I will remind myself to do this before every set."*

Because I have read this training goal, along with the rest of my goals, before every workout for quite some time now, I train this way without even consciously thinking about it. This type of effort, especially over the course of time, generates a tremendous amount of momentum—and rock-solid muscle as well. Consistently producing workouts in which every set is trained until absolute failure will undoubtedly build an outstanding physique.

I'm pleasantly surprised by how my workouts have constantly improved year after year. One of the most important reasons why this has occurred is that I've taken the time to set specific training goals over the last four or five years. I've made sure I've reviewed them before every session. After consistently meeting the standards I've set, I've always set even higher ones and reviewed them before every workout as well.

I'm always dumbfounded when a bodybuilder who has only been training a couple of years tells me he has plateaued and his training performance is just about as good as it can possibly get. Assuming that person has even taken the time to create specific training goals (which I seriously doubt), he can *a/ways* set more ambitious ones.

Take the time to list your training goals. Commit to reviewing them before your next workout—and before every one thereafter. You will soon create such a high

standard of mental preparedness, productivity, and intensity, that you will *never* go back to the level of performance you once *thought* was great. You'll soon see why I believe your previous workouts won't compare to the outstanding sessions you'll begin to have!

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**You must invest the time to review your training goals before each and every workout. The couple of minutes needed to read your list will prove invaluable over time.**

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### **Skip La Cour Training Goals**

1. I will win the heavyweight and overall titles at this year's NPC Team Universe.
2. At this year's Team Universe, I will exceed the conditioning and muscularity I achieved in 1998.
3. I will build upon my outstanding training habits by improving my form and range of motion—while still lifting heavy weight!
4. My quadriceps will be my most improved body part this year. I will add mass and shape—making my physique totally complete and unbeatable!
5. I will achieve these ambitious goals by taking my training performance to an entirely new level, paying meticulous attention to my nutritional habits, implementing efficient cardiovascular training, and mastering my emotional state on a consistent basis.
6. I will arrive at the gym on time—in a peak state and expecting to have an outstanding workout.
7. I will preframe and plan what it will take to have an outstanding workout and identify the challenges I must overcome.
8. I will constantly search for ways to become more efficient during my workouts.
9. I will constantly strive to learn more about training and the way my body responds to my training. I will record my observations for later use.
10. I will constantly strive to become more focused during my workout session. I will remain quiet from the moment I finish my last warm-up set until the end of my weight training to help my concentration.
11. I will strive to push myself to a higher level of performance during each workout by lifting more weight, doing more reps, improving my range of motion, improving my form, or all of the above.
12. I will constantly redefine what “absolute failure” means to me by pushing myself to give more effort than ever during every set. I will remind myself to do this before every set.
13. I will review and evaluate my daily workout performance—whether by doing so mentally or actually writing it down—after every session. I will ask myself What was great? What wasn't perfect YET? What can I do to make my workouts more enjoyable, efficient, and/or productive?
14. I will finish my workout in a timely manner.

- 15. I will preframe and plan what it will take to have an outstanding workout during tomorrow’s session and identify the challenges I must overcome.
- 16. I will meet the cardiovascular training goals I set for myself each day.
- 17. I will take my post-workout supplements immediately after my training session.
- 18. I will start the recovery process immediately by eating meal #1 right after my workout.

## **NOTES**

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- 3. Segregate your list into three stages: (1) what you can comfortably achieve right now; (2) what you can achieve after a few weeks of focus and effort; (3) what you feel may take you three months or more to comfortably achieve.**

**What You Can Comfortably Achieve Right Now**

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**What You Can Achieve After A Few Weeks Of Focus And Effort**

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# 16

## **Programming Your Brain for Peak Performance in the Gym**

We all know how important our training performance is to developing our physiques. There are many different approaches to effectively building muscle and you've probably had at least some success with many of them. Pick up any issue of one of the international bodybuilding magazines and you'll probably be able to find several training strategies that, if applied properly to your training regimen, could become catalysts which produce growth beyond your wildest dreams.

But why is it that one strategy works for one person magnificently while the same routine works miserably for someone else? The key is to properly apply that strategy to your training regimen.

The key to properly applying a certain training technique is dependent on your level of consistency. It may not be in how well you perform in the gym with that awesome training technique, but how well you consistently perform in the gym with it *over a period of time* that will determine how well it works for you.

Training consistency—our ability to effectively apply the strategies that we've learned every week for a period of weeks, months, and years—is crucial in our pursuit of an outstanding physique. As I have said many times before, successful training comes down to how effectively you can use your mind. That's what this book is all about. My goal is to teach you to use your mind to take charge of your training and unlock your full genetic potential.

Training at your highest level of performance—and doing so on a consistent basis—will depend on how well you can manage your emotional state and mental focus. I am certain there have been many times when you've felt totally unstoppable, in control, and powerful in the gym, and thus produced awesome workouts. I am also sure that you've suffered times in the gym when, no matter how badly you wanted to hammer out great sessions, you just couldn't seem to get your act together.

Why is it that we can perform so brilliantly one day and so poorly the next? For that matter, why is it that we can feel so strong and powerful during one set of a particular workout and extremely weak and uncoordinated on the very next set?

Our level of performance in the gym is always determined by the mental state of mind we are in at a particular moment in time.

True champions are those people who can perform at a peak level of performance more consistently than others. These champions can perform so well because they have learned and have *mastered* controlling their mental state while training in the gym. Whether they have done so consciously or unconsciously, it doesn't matter. I can guarantee you that those who consistently and efficiently lift impressive amounts of weight or consistently use awesome form have developed various rituals that they perform on a consistent basis in order to train at their highest level of performance. Some of these effective trainers may not be aware that they have a set of rituals or certain idiosyncrasies when they are at their very best, but I can assure you that they do. Take a careful look at those you really respect in your gym while they are training the next time you're there and see if you can pick up their unique behavioral patterns.

One of my favorite methods of consciously controlling my own mental state during my training sessions is derived from the mental technology of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP. Neuro-Linguistic Programming is the study of human excellence that was developed in the 70s by Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

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**Our level of performance in the gym is always determined by the mental state of mind we are in at a particular moment in time.**

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What exactly is NLP in this case? Well, is there a certain song that, when you hear it, takes you immediately back in time and into a different state of mind? Maybe an old song that was popular back in high school and reminds you of your first love?

How about a certain scent that, when you smell it, reminds you of a certain place and time? Such as a certain perfume that reminds you of your kindergarten teacher when you were five years old?

The song and the perfume would be considered "anchors" or sensory reminders of a certain state of mind. An anchor could utilize any one of your senses: sound (as in the case of the song), smell (the perfume), sight, touch, taste, or emotional "feeling."

What I have learned to do over time is identify which anchors can *instantly* and *subconsciously* trigger me into a peak-performance state of mind. My rituals, or what I do to get myself in a strong and powerful state, are these:

*I walk around the bench, machine, or weights in a half-circular walk from the left side to the right; I peer at the weights from the side of my eyes; I say very softly, “I will redefine what absolute failure means to me on this set! I see it, hear it, feel it, and KNOW it! (emphasizing the KNOW); then slap my left pectoral with my right palm. I’ll do this three times, build the intensity and sharpness in my words and the force in which I slap my chest. Mentally, I might picture other competitors training harder than me or on stage with me. Sometimes, I’ll mentally see myself doing that heavy weight with perfect form—as I have done a hundred times in the past.*

*Then, I attack the heavy weight! These rituals instantly fire me up and get me into a strong and powerful state of mind. Because I have performed these rituals over and over again through the years, I don’t even need to consciously think about them anymore. They are now ingrained or anchored in me—just as in a song that has a strong emotional connection to me personally. And, just like a song, I can’t help but get into that powerful state when I perform these rituals.*

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**Developing your own set of empowering patterns may be just the strategy that can help you take your physique to another level.**

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Now, what do you suppose would happen if I were to walk to the weight from the right to the left? Or if I were to slap my right pectoral with my left hand? Or what if I were to say, “I feel it, know it, see it, HEAR it!”? Or, say it only twice instead of three times? Or if I pictured me being congratulated by my training partners after lifting the heavy weight?

Well, let me ask you this: Would a new version of that old song that reminded you of your first love in high school—let’s say by Barry Manilow instead of the original group or artist—drum up the exact same feelings or put you in the same state of mind? No way! It wouldn’t produce the same results.

You must do everything exactly the same way to be properly anchored in that same strong and powerful state of mind!

Developing your own set of empowering patterns may be just the strategy that can help you take your physique to another level. Is consistency a problem for you? Do you oftentimes have stressful thoughts on your mind that make it difficult for you to concentrate the way you should when you are training? This may be just the answer. When something is bothering you, just use your anchored rituals and—wham!—you can put yourself into that conditioned, powerful state of mind!



## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN EXERCISES**

# **Programming Your Brain for Peak Performance in the Gym**

1. **Think back to a specific time in the gym when you felt especially confident and performed with amazing strength. What were some of the thoughts that were going through your head? Do you remember anything unique about that time compared to ordinary workouts? Did you train at a certain time? Did you have a training partner? Did you eat a bigger or smaller meal within a couple of hours of that workout? Did you say things to yourself before every set during that awesome workout? Did you walk a certain way?**

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# **Part V**

## **Overcoming Challenges And Setbacks**





# 17

## **Working Your Way through the Downtimes**

One of the greatest feelings you can experience as a bodybuilder is being “in the zone” or “on a roll.” It’s those times when your training habits are going so well that they almost seem effortless. I’m sure you’ve had the pleasure of encountering this special feeling, haven’t you?

When we are training with such focus, intensity, and consistency, those periods of time *easily* make up for any of the pain, sacrifice, or deprivation that we must endure in order to accomplish our bodybuilding goals.

The fulfillment that you’ve earned by sticking with your passion for bodybuilding has benefits which have far more of an impact on you than just accumulating muscle mass. More often than not, that sense of accomplishment carries into other areas of your life as well. Your efforts seem to make you a happier and a more complete person. Being consistent with your plan gives you a sense of pride and mental toughness. The discipline that you regularly demonstrate almost becomes a part of your identity.

There’s nothing that can compare to the feeling of being in that zone, is there? If you are currently in that state of mind, congratulations! Be certain to appreciate these special times and, most importantly, enjoy them while they last!

But being on a roll is the easiest part of bodybuilding.

No matter who you are or what you’ve accomplished in the past, you will invariably experience times when you are not so motivated to train. Your drive will undoubtedly wane from time to time.

Among the questions that I am continually asked is how a person can keep himself motivated to train. And furthermore, when your motivation seems to dissipate, what can you do to pull yourself out of that downward spiral?

Believe me, I know from personal experience that these times can be especially painful and frustrating. Your dedication and commitment for training has always been something that you’ve thoroughly enjoyed.

But now, the thrill that you’ve been accustomed to experiencing seems to be all but gone. And even worse, the pain and anxiety of wondering if that fire inside you will ever be back can be excruciating!

Will this pain, frustration, and lack of drive just go away on its own? Or will your motivation to train magically come back to you someday? If so, how soon? What if it doesn't? Hey, you've seen people in your gym come and go over the years. Some of them lasted three days, some lasted three months, and some even lasted for three years. But, no matter how long they stuck it out, they are no longer training consistently today.

Will you become just another bodybuilding statistic? Will you be one of the many who couldn't handle the ups-and-downs and twists and turns that come with this disciplined lifestyle?

One thing is certain: You must take action! You can't just assume you'll miraculously get back to your normal self. You can't just sit around and hope your desire returns. Oftentimes, taking the first step on your journey to get back on track is the toughest. You must develop the courage to take that first step *as soon as possible* so that you don't suffer any long-term damage to your love for training.

What price could you pay for not taking immediate action? For starters, you'll lose momentum. The people with the physiques that you admire most are usually the same people maintain their emotional state of mind consistently throughout the years. They've had the ability to turn things around before they become major problems. Although they experience the same challenges that everyone else does, those problems never become pervasive and cause major damage to their bodybuilding experience.

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**You must take action! You can't just assume you'll miraculously get back to your normal self. You can't just sit around and hope your desire returns.**

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By not taking action, you risk the chance of feeling comfortable with the lowered level of intensity and, in doing so, stalling or even halting your progress. Weeks, months, or even years may come and go and you may find yourself wondering why you are not making progress. What you may not realize is that this complacency can gradually grow inside you like cancer and put a limit on what you can achieve.

You can eventually lose some of the passion and excitement that you've felt in the past from your training efforts. Maybe you'll lose it all if you don't get the situation under control right away. You could possibly join the legions of people whom you've seen quit training altogether due to frustration.

There are also tremendous benefits that you stand to gain by taking action and rekindling your drive to train at the level that you are accustomed to.

You gain power when you can successfully turn a bad situation into a good one. Life is full of challenges. When you've done what it takes to overcome a setback, you gain the confidence needed to handle other downtimes in the future.

You can also gain a new appreciation for your training. Sometimes, all it takes is to feeling really bad for you to appreciate those times in your past when you felt really good. By taking immediate control of your situation, you can gain the perspective that will allow you to enjoy bodybuilding at a much greater level than ever before.

With this newfound strength and energy, working through the downtimes can serve as a catalyst that launches your training performance into the stratosphere!

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**By taking immediate control of your situation, you can gain the perspective that will allow you to enjoy bodybuilding at a much greater level than ever before.**

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Here are some strategies that can help you successfully work through the downtimes that you may experience:

1. Keep in mind that the feelings you're going through are normal. Everyone's level of motivation will wane on occasion. Don't beat yourself up just because you're going through a lull. Even the most respected bodybuilding champions in the world experience downtimes. The characteristic that makes them champions is what they actually do during those difficult periods of time. These individuals have the unique ability to take action, and fight through their difficulties.

Look at these downtimes as an *opportunity* to awaken the champion inside you.

2. Put yourself into the "third person" and then view your situation. In other words, step out of yourself for a moment and examine your circumstances as a good friend would. It's my belief that, when we feel that our challenges in life are unique to us, we have a much more difficult time dealing with them.

When you allow yourself to become a little less emotionally attached to your predicament, you gain a better perspective. With the mindset of an objective friend who sincerely wants to help, what

advice would you give? You can see that, with a more levelheaded approach, your problems will seem much less intimidating. They will become easier to manage.

3. Determine *exactly* what you think needs to happen and/or what feelings you need to experience in order to feel as though you're in your groove again. Break your thoughts down—and be specific! Do you want to start by just getting into the gym as scheduled? Do you want to feel as though you're giving 100 percent of your effort again? Would you be happy if that nagging injury was at least 80 percent back to normal? Is it that you need to conquer your challenge of managing to eat all six meals during the day as you did when you were at your best? Break the problem down!

You'll give yourself the best chance to get back in the zone if you have a clear understanding in your brain of what the zone is supposed to feel like. One of the biggest tragedies in bodybuilding comes when you're winning the game but feel like you're losing. Knowing exactly when you are winning—according to your own standards—is the best way to experience victory again.

4. Focus on a time in the future when you'll be running on all cylinders again. Think of how great that will feel. Whatever you do, try not to dwell on the problems that you are experiencing today. I know it's difficult when times get tough, but if you can allow yourself to feel the thrill of victory in the future, your moment-to-moment, day-to-day, and month-to-month thoughts and actions will actually be pulled in that direction.

How you perceive what is happening in your life will determine your state of mind, what you actually do, and what you do not do. Remember, if you think tomorrow will be a brighter day or that it will be just another day filled with pain and frustration—you're right in either case!

5. Put a time goal on when you expect to be going full tilt again. It's true that Rome wasn't built in a day, so you should understand that it may take a little time to get back where you want to be. If you do not put some pressure on yourself to get back to your normal level of training efficiency sooner rather than later, you'll invite this slump to linger a lot longer than necessary. You may find it easier to set time goals like being back up to 80 percent by the end of the month, 90 percent by the end of next month, and 100 percent in three months.

6. Don't start making excuses for yourself and, whatever you do, *do not* lower your standards during these difficult times! Lowering your expectations may alleviate some of your pain and frustration in the short term but, in the long run, such rationalizations will compromise your dreams! If you successfully resist the temptation to expect less from yourself, you may come back stronger and more determined to reach your bodybuilding goals than ever before.
7. Gain the confidence you need to get through these trying times by feeding off your previous success. Chances are that you've experienced some degree of a slump in the past. Think back to that time and draw from your experience. What did you do back then? What mindset did you adopt back then that helped you? If you've done it before, you can do it again.

You may also want to ask someone you know and respect who has exhibited tremendous longevity, consistency, and perseverance how they've been able to do so. Use those examples of excellence to model their winning habits.

8. Keep plugging away! Persistence is the most common trait among those who appear to be successful. In reality, they are oftentimes just the people who have kept trying long after average people have given up.

Persistence is the ability to believe, no matter how many times you've tried and failed in the past, the very next strategy that you implement could be the one that takes you to the next level. Who knows? Things that seem dreadful today could turn around with a simple change in your perspective or with a big break. You'll never know, however, if you don't keep trying.

9. Keep your guard up! When things do seem to start turning around, be certain not to let yourself get complacent. Just when you think you have a depressed state of mind licked, it has an uncanny ability to knock you back on your tail when you least expect it. Although it may seem that you've made it through the hard times, continue to do the things that made your situation better. The last thing you want is to have to pull yourself out of another downtime soon after turning your current situation around. You may find it much more difficult the next time around.

Isn't it funny how life constantly offers us setbacks in one area of our lives or another? Be patient and work through your times of less-than-normal motivation. Time heals all wounds—both physical and mental.













# 18

## You Can Turn Your Worst Days Into Your Best Days By Thinking Big

In your pursuit to build the physique you desire, you will undoubtedly run into challenges along the way. It doesn't matter if your aspiration is to become a national-level competitive bodybuilder or simply build a little muscle while cutting body fat; your commitment to continue working toward your goals will eventually be tested. Now, I know that sounds negative, but I'm simply stating reality.

Obstacles, problems, or challenges, whether they are something physical, like an injury, or mental, like an unfair placing in a contest, can check the level of your inner strength, will, and desire. How you choose to deal with these obstacles will determine if you will become a mentally tougher and more committed individual—or join the ranks of far too many lifters who give up on their bodybuilding dreams in frustration.

Let me make one point very clear: I believe the choice you make under these circumstances sits squarely upon your own shoulders. Your decision, whether it's to persevere and look for ways to rise to the occasion, or to succumb to the emotional pain that you associate with the setback, will be determined by how you perceive your situation.

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**How you choose to deal with these obstacles will determine if you will become a mentally tougher and more committed individual—or join the ranks of far too many lifters who give up on their bodybuilding dreams in frustration.**

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I have always said that bodybuilding is both fascinating and frustrating. It's *fascinating* because there are so many different strategies in the areas of training, nutrition, supplementation, and motivation—and those strategies are constantly evolving and changing at a rapid pace. You can never be too certain that you have really figured them all out.

Unfortunately, bodybuilding can also be very *frustrating*. So frustrating, in fact, that we sometimes feel like quitting this silly lifestyle—and too many of us actually do. Why? For the exactly the same reasons others find bodybuilding

fascinating. There are so many different strategies in the areas of training, nutrition, supplementation, and motivation—and those strategies are constantly evolving and changing at a rapid pace. You can never be too certain that you have really figured them all out.

You soon begin to realize that the difference between becoming totally fascinated and enthralled with the bodybuilding lifestyle and becoming absolutely frustrated and confused by it, can be very slight.

Which way do you choose to look at your training challenges? Remember, the choice is yours. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying the difficult times you encounter should be easy to fight your way through. Let me ask you a question: Do you really want it to be easy? If bodybuilding were so easy, everyone would be able to excel. How rewarding or special would it be if everyone could do so? Not everyone has the ability to become a champion.

I remember a quote IFBB professional bodybuilder Shawn Ray said on the 1990 *Ironman* Pro Invitational contest videotape: "True champions don't make comebacks, they overcome setbacks." I must have thought about those words about a hundred times since then. YouAll of us—champions or just regular guys—are going to have setbacks. There's no doubt about it. What will make you a champion is overcoming those unavoidable setbacks. Will you become frustrated and quit? Or, will you be prepared for their possible occurrence and deal with them like the champion you are determined to become? Will you become fascinated with the challenge of overcoming setbacks?

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***"True champions don't make comebacks, they overcome setbacks."***

Shawn Ray, IFBB Professional Bodybuilder

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Believe me, I know firsthand how the downtimes can test your desire to continue. I felt that way at the 1997 NPC Team Universe the very instant they called my name for fifth place. I can still remember that horrible feeling as if it were yesterday. My stomach turned violently in disappointment and my face was hot and flushed out of sheer embarrassment.

When I got back home to California, I went into a deep, dark emotional state. For the first time in my career, I had trouble even making it into the gym. When I was there, I trained with absolutely no intensity whatsoever and usually cut my workouts short.

I thought that I was at the end of my bodybuilding career. I truly feared dropping farther down the ladder and ruining my reputation as a champion bodybuilder. I started telling myself that I didn't have the genetic shape to compete at that high

level of competition anymore. “The guys now are freaks!” I would tell myself. I started checking into those “little contests” with big, prestigious-sounding titles. Do you know the one I’m talking about? I contemplated entering shows like the “ABCQ Mr. Galaxy and Beyond,” which would only have about six competitors—three of which couldn’t win their local novice show. “Nobody will really know that this contest wasn’t very competitive,” I would reason.

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**Nobody wants to be disappointed. Nobody wants to put heart and soul into achieving a dream only to fail. Nobody wants to commit to accomplishing a goal then come up short.**

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My setback had me thinking in a total fear mode. Fear was controlling me—and I certainly wasn’t thinking big.

Why in the world would a person let fear hold him back from experiencing success? Because the *pain* from failure is a feeling he wants to avoid at all costs—even if that means sacrificing the pleasure of succeeding. Nobody wants to be disappointed. Nobody wants to put heart and soul into achieving a dream only to fail. Nobody wants to commit to accomplishing a goal then come up short.

We do what we think we have to do to avoid looking bad in front of our family, friends, and peers. Nobody wants to be perceived as a loser. This fear prevents us from setting goals and working towards them with every ounce of our God-given abilities and talents. “Yeah, I failed—but so what? I really didn’t even try!” is the explanation we offer ourselves. In our hearts, however, we know what the truth really is.

Focusing on your fears will ensure ultimate failure. You must focus on what you *want* and not on what you *do not want*. Too many natural bodybuilders are complaining about how big they are not—without even giving 100 percent of their effort.

For a couple of months after that show, I was spiraled downward. How could I possibly become the best I could be, really go for my dreams, and enjoy the process of bodybuilding with such debilitating fears? I had to admit to myself I could not. Deep in my heart, I always knew what the truth was. I had to bounce back from this setback and raise the standards of what I expected out of myself.

Would I learn from my setback? Would I bounce back from disappointment smarter and be willing to try again and again until I reached my dreams? Or would I cower back into a mode of security and safety? Would I retreat to a safe place so I wouldn’t have to experience pain and disappointment again—all the while trying to convince myself that this was the “prudent approach to take?”

I realized I was acting the way I preach *not* to be. I was making convenient excuses for myself so I wouldn't have to experience more disappointment and pain. It just wasn't the impression I had of myself.

I had to get honest with myself. Maybe the reason I came in fifth place at the Team Universe was that I wasn't focused enough and was putting too much effort into other things in my life. Maybe the reason I placed fifth was that I employed the bad strategy of coming in too big and not ripped enough. Yeah, maybe I just ate too many starchy carbohydrates those last few weeks. Maybe I didn't monitor my progress with photos and videos as I have done in the past when I have been more successful.

How did I get myself back on the right track? I realized what was really going on. I admitted to myself that my fear was causing me to not go after what I really wanted. I raised my standards and I stepped up to the challenge.

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### **Focusing on your fears will ensure ultimate failure.**

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But things got worse before they got better. As a spectator, I went to the 1997 Mr. Olympia a couple months after the show. "What's next for you, Skip?" I was asked by several people, who sincerely wished me the best. They just looked at me with surprise and said, "Oh," when I said I was returning to the Team Universe next year.

Twinlab, my supplement-company sponsor at the time, decided not to renew my contract when it ended. A promoter broke a verbal contract for a guest posing appearance, opting for a bodybuilder who hadn't competed in probably five to ten years. I caught word that some of the top-level drug-free bodybuilders were saying I was finished.

But the emotion of pain can be a great motivator if you use it to your advantage by thinking big. I dieted very strictly for the next year's Team Universe for nine and a half months. I did at least an hour of cardio work, often split into two sessions a day, for five months. Every single day, I would write down my goals, how I wanted to look the day of the show, and what I had to do to achieve that look. I scheduled guest posing appearances all year long to force me to stay in shape.

That period leading up to the contest was filled with self-imposed pressure, commitment, intensity, and focus. I have never worked so hard for anything in my life.

I'm proud to say that I won the heavyweight and overall titles at the 1998 NPC Team Universe, shedding almost 20 pounds of contest weight to come in ultra-shredded condition—just as I had envisioned.

But what I'm most proud of, and will remember for the rest of my life, is how I bounced back from disappointment. This will be a lesson that I can apply to every area of my life when times get tough.

So you pulled yourself together, worked your tail off for an entire year, and overcame your setbacks to convincingly win the national championship. Everyone now loves you and respects you, right? Not exactly! At least, not in natural bodybuilding. To some people, there is no such thing as an outstanding drug-free bodybuilder—only a cheater on drugs pretending to be natural.

A certain "friend" of mine vehemently went around telling people, "There is no way that La Cour is drug free! No one could make that degree of improvement in one year!"

When I finally talked to this gentleman about his comments, he had the entire scenario all figured out—or so he thought. "This is the story, La Cour. You had to put it all on the line. You got dusted the last two years. You lost your Twinlab contract—and I don't know what kind of arrangement you have with AST Sports Science, but you probably have to do well to keep it."

"You know you don't have the type of genetics to beat those other guys! So you had nothing to lose. That's why you took drugs in order to win that show! *No heavyweight natural bodybuilder* can get that ripped without drugs!"

This friend took all the factors that drove me to become my best—and downgraded them to reasons why I would resort to cheating. He never considered (or he chose not to consider) that the same sources of pain and frustration that can make a person quit, or even worse, cheat, can be the same foundation that propels a person to a higher level of achievement. The pain associated with failure can make a person dig deep within himself and show what he's really made of to the world.

The choice is yours.

As I walked out of the pump-up room after being presented the overall trophy, I noticed someone in the corner all by himself. It was an obviously dejected Team Universe competitor. Although I had friends waiting for me in the lobby, I went over to him to offer whatever comfort I could.

With tears in his eyes, he told me how he'd never do well in the Team Universe and he wouldn't ever be back again. This was the third year in a row that this bodybuilder had faced this kind of disappointment.

I told him that I had empathy for the way he was feeling. But I also told him that I would not be having the pleasure of experiencing winning this show tonight if I hadn't felt the same pain he was feeling last year. I told him that my pain drove me to work harder and smarter than I ever had before in my life.

I'm not sure if my words made a difference, but that bodybuilder won the overall title in one show and placed second in a non tested contest within the next two months. I also heard that he made some amazing improvements.

Ironically, that bodybuilder is a good buddy of my friend who accused me of using drugs. My friend was so impressed with his improvement that he began predicting that his buddy would *win* the next year's Team Universe! He came in a amazing third place the next year—with one judge even placing him higher than me! I thought about giving my friend a good ribbing by telling him, "*No one* can make that kind of improvement in only one year!"

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**The pain associated with failure can make a person dig deep within himself and show what he's really made of to the world.**

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In closing, let me ask you another question. How will you choose to view your next inevitable setback? I have faith that you have the power within you to turn what may seem like your worst day into your best day—no matter how difficult it may seem at the time.

The next time you are faced with a problem that threatens your passion for bodybuilding, stop, pull yourself together, and say, "Ahhhh . . . so this is what Skip was writing about! This is one of the setbacks Shawn Ray told me I'd need to overcome to become a champion! Well, I'm ready to do whatever it takes to rise to this *fascinating* challenge!"



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN EXERCISES

### You Can Turn Your Worst Days into Your Best Days by Thinking Big

1. Although it may be somewhat painful, think of a time during your bodybuilding efforts in which you were fearful—but failed to admit fear was controlling your thoughts and actions.

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2. How did your fears cause you to think? What were some of the negative things you said to yourself and others? What excuses did you make for not going for what you *really* wanted? What were the specific actions you took instead of the one you knew inside that you should have taken? How did you rationalize your behavior?

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# **Part VI**

## **Insuring Long-Term Success**



# 19

## You Are Never Standing Still

So what? You miss an occasional workout, cardiovascular training session, or a meal. Does it *really* matter? When you look at the big picture, how much of an effect can coming up a little short every once in a while have on your bodybuilding efforts? Just how important is it for you to continually go the extra mile?

If you talk to many experts in the fitness industry, they'll tell you that lightening up on your strict standards is actually *good* for you! "Your mind needs a break every once in a while," they say. Some training gurus preach that you should "listen to your body" and not force yourself to train when you don't necessarily feel like it. As far as nutritional advice goes, if you talk to most guys in the gym, they'll tell you your body desperately needs for you to indulge in junk food when you feel the urge. "The body *needs* the fat!" they insist.

Are these physical benefits legitimate? Hmmmm . . . I can't tell you definitely. However, I can tell you that, although most of these experts zone in on the *physical* benefits of occasionally loosening up on your regimen, the *mental* disadvantages of doing so can far outweigh any rationalized rewards.

I'm not saying you must go full tilt toward your bodybuilding goals 100 percent of the time. I totally appreciate and understand the need for a level of efficiency or "elegance" in your approach. When it comes to bodybuilding, I define efficiency as creating and implementing strategies that produce the *most* significant results while investing the *least* amount of time and effort. In many cases, going 100 percent for extended periods of time would not fit into my definition of efficiency.

Where do you draw the line between being efficient and being lazy? When are you lowering your rigid standards because you're being intelligent and when you are making excuses for yourself?

Bodybuilding is an all-encompassing lifestyle. Our level of success, when you really think about it, is determined by what we do and do not do every few hours every single day. We must constantly step up to the challenge of following through with both the little, seemingly unimportant, details and the big, essential fundamentals.

It's not just showing up at the gym when we're supposed to that determines how successful we'll be, it's making sure we give every set our full effort when we are

there. It's not just eating our scheduled meals every day that will determine the quality of our physique, it's making sure those meals contain the right amount of calories, are in the proper proportion of high-quality protein, carbohydrates, and fat, and are eaten on time as well.

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**Bodybuilding is an all-encompassing lifestyle. Our level of success, when you really think about it, is determined by what we do and do not do every few hours every single day. We must constantly step up to the challenge of following through with both the little, seemingly unimportant, details and the big, essential fundamentals.**

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"It's the *little* things in life that make the *big* difference!" says motivational speaker Zig Ziglar. This chapter is designed to inspire you to take a closer look at every facet of the standards you've already created and reevaluate their importance to your ultimate success. I want to impress upon you that doing so will create momentum that will help you progress in a seemingly easier manner. Then, to keep you on track, I'll explain why keeping the pressure on yourself to continually follow through will ensure your ultimate success.

### **Did I Just Fix a Fax Machine?**

When we are totally honest with ourselves, we really know what we must do in order to reach our training goals, don't we? But how often do we follow through with everything we set out to do each day? How likely are we to simply not do or blow off the seemingly smaller or less important tasks along the way?

Whether a task is something we feel we *must* do or merely one we feel we *should* do, *every* decision we make shapes our destiny. We are sending our brain unmistakable signals as to the kind of people we are when we decide to persist and follow through—or when we decide to give a half-hearted effort and eventually quit.

"You either grow or regress. Nothing stands still," is a quote I read in *Muscle Media* magazine years ago. I've thought about those words of wisdom more than a hundred times since reading them. I've thought about how they related to my bodybuilding efforts—as well as my life. The saying is so true.

One day, those words really hit home for me. Ironically, the impression they made didn't happen when I was in the gym training. The significance of that saying came to me when I was helping some friends fix their fax machine.

To be honest, I thought I'd have no problem whatsoever fixing it for them. Although the machine could receive faxes, the paper would always get jammed when my friends tried to send one. "How difficult could that be to fix?" I scoffed. I am very confident in my mechanical abilities—especially when it comes to things such as computers, scanners, and fax machines.

Well, after about 20 minutes—and about 15 attempts to fix the fax machine—I only managed to figure out how to thread the paper. To say the least, I was no longer so confident in my mechanical abilities. However, I kept on trying.

After about 30 minutes went by and 10 to 15 more attempts to get it to operate, I still had no luck. I thought about giving up several times along the way, but I just wouldn't allow myself.

Finally, after a total of several dozen attempts, I was able to get the fax machine to work—something my friends had not been able to do since they bought it.

I felt great about what I was able to do—but why? What meaning did that small, seemingly insignificant, accomplishment drive into my brain?

By following through, despite the challenges I faced, I showed that I'm an extremely persistent person. The instance illustrated to me that, because I was committed, I eventually found a way to get it to work. That minuscule accomplishment demonstrated to me that, no matter how complex a situation may be, I am intelligent enough to figure it out. It showed me that I could come through for my friends when they needed my help. I *chose* to take from that small feat the meaning that, if I just keep on trying I will inevitably succeed.

What would I have told myself if I had quit in frustration? I very easily could have, you know. My friends hadn't been able to figure out how to get the fax machine working properly for as long as they had it. I would have had no problem rationalizing to myself why I gave up after a dozen or so failed attempts.

When the next challenge in life came my way (and there will *always* be a next challenge), what would my brain tell me about my abilities? What references would I use to support my lack of ability? Would I have the confidence, certainty, and momentum I must have in order to overcome that challenge? Or would I have mixed feelings and uncertainty that could lead to another defeat?

Think about the consequences the next time you plan to go to the gym—but decide not to. Think about them when you think about using those dumbbells that are 10 pounds heavier than you normally lift—but retreat to the weight that you are more comfortable with. Or think about them when you tell yourself you aren't going to eat junk food all week long—but indulge in pizza with your friends just a couple of days later.

What are you telling yourself—now and in the future—if you don't follow through?

Conversely, what would you be telling yourself if you went to the gym anyway, demonstrated some courage and attempted that heavier weight, and passed up the pizza?

In your regular life, will you settle for making that project just “pretty darn good” or will you give your all to make it absolutely outstanding? Will you read that *entire* newspaper article or just half of it? Will you listen to the conversation with your full attention or let your mind drift during part of it?

You are shaping your destiny with every decision you make. Whether your decisions are big ones or little ones—they all count! You are telling yourself—and reinforcing what you are telling yourself—exactly the kind of person you are with every decision you make.

As the saying goes, “You either grow or regress. Nothing stands still.”

### **Creating Unstoppable Momentum Is Critical to Your Bodybuilding Success**

At one time or another, we've all accomplished our short-term bodybuilding goals such as having a good day of training and eating properly. Those victories give us great feelings, don't they? No matter how great that single event or day may be, one training session or one day of outstanding habits alone will not create an outstanding physique.

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**You are shaping your destiny with every decision you make. Whether your decisions are big ones or little ones—they all count!**

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When you can turn that one great day into a great week, that great week into a great month, and string together a series of great months, you begin to create the powerful force known as momentum.

When you can harness the awesome power of momentum to help you in your bodybuilding efforts, the task of constructing an admirable body will suddenly seem incredibly easier. With the power of momentum working for you, the tasks that once seemed difficult to get yourself to do will become amazingly easy.

Most people never have the chance to experience the tremendous benefits created by momentum. Unfortunately, they give up hope, focus, and discipline. They are continually starting and stopping, starting and stopping, and starting and stopping again. Sure, they'll eventually regenerate their enthusiasm and optimistically start again—only to stop when they perceive their challenges as too



difficult to overcome. They see themselves as doing a lot of work—without seeing results they mistakenly believe should match their overestimated efforts.

The longer and more often you do anything, the easier it will become. Physically, you can condition your body to operate more efficiently when you eat the way you should and do so in timely intervals. In the gym, your neuromuscular coordination and training performance will improve over time when you consistently work intensely, intelligently, and efficiently.

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**With the power of momentum working for you, the tasks that once seemed difficult to get yourself to do will become amazingly easy.**

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Mentally, doing the things over and over again that you know you should do to reach your goals—when you know you must do them—builds certainty and confidence. That attitude empowers you with the belief that you will succeed despite any setbacks, obstacles, or challenges that may stand in your way.

A critical stipulation for making the power of momentum work for you is that you exhibit faith, consistency, persistence, and perseverance.

### **Keeping the Pressure On Will Help You Become Your Very Best!**

Too many times, I see those who are working hard to improve their physiques focus on their challenges—and not on their advantages. Instead of identifying what's *great* about their particular circumstances, they choose to emphasize the factors that are especially difficult for them.

“I can't build muscle as easily as others because of my genetically skinny frame” or “I can't get as lean as other people because I have a very slow metabolism” are perspectives frustrated trainers choose to adopt.

These same individuals could just as easily say, “I'm so fortunate to have the ability to lose body fat quickly and easily. When I discover the strategies to pack on more muscle—watch out!” or “Unlike a lot of other people, I can gain muscle size efficiently. I may have to diet longer and more strictly than others—but I can sure pack on the muscle mass!”

Why would anyone want to lessen the bodybuilding experience by focusing on his or her frustrations, challenges, or weak points? People do so in an effort to take some pressure off themselves. Nobody wants to work hard and fail. Nobody wants to set outrageous personal standards just to fall short of them. Nobody wants to be disappointed.

If you can get yourself to believe that success or failure is not totally in your control, failure won't be so painful. It's not *your* fault, for heavens sake! By thinking this way, you've already cushioned yourself for the fall. You've already lowered your expectations.

Seek and you shall find. If you want to focus on all the people who have an easier time than you—you will find them. At the same time, if you look for examples of success among those who have had the same (or even more difficult) challenges as you—you will find them as well!

Some people do have an easier time bodybuilding than you have. There's no doubt about it. But in bodybuilding, as well as in life, it is all about being the very best *you* can be. Their particular situation has absolutely nothing to do with you becoming your personal best. Maybe you'll never become the NPC Team Universe champion, but you could build 10 pounds of rock-solid muscle or lose 10 pounds of stubborn body fat if you were totally committed. Wouldn't that make you happy? You bet it would!

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**Seek and you shall find. If you want to focus on all the people who have an easier time than you—you will find them. At the same time, if you look for examples of success among those who have had the same (or even more difficult) challenges as you—you will find them as well!**

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Here's another key to your bodybuilding success: You'll never reach your goals unless you keep the pressure on yourself to strive for a higher level of achievement. Focusing on challenges you feel are not within your control is not the first step toward ultimate success. There are plenty of other areas within this complex passion for physique development that you can improve upon—trust me! Learning and improving is a never-ending process. In short, focus on what's great about you, give yourself an empowering identity, keep the pressure on yourself, and strive to become the very best you can be.

### **Putting It All Together**

As I end this chapter, I encourage you to reevaluate the effects of not following through with the things you've decided you must do in order to achieve your goals. Are you really being more intelligent in your approach—or just rationalizing out of convenience? Even if these aren't so harmful physically, can't they subconsciously be affecting your determined and winning mindset?

When you do follow through the way you know you should, you will create unstoppable momentum. Continually stepping up to the inevitable challenges you

face will make tasks you once thought were incredibly difficult seem amazingly easy.

Some times will be easier than others. When you face those difficult times, be sure to keep the pressure on yourself to overcome them. Don't look for excuses or reasons why an effort is more challenging for you as opposed to someone else. Don't focus on your disadvantages. Instead, focus on the gifts you were blessed with and use to them to propel your bodybuilding efforts forward.

You are never standing still. I'm certain the kind of person who would invest in this book and make it this far into it would never want to go backwards. The only option acceptable for you is to go forward.

By keeping in mind the things I have shared with you in this chapter, you will definitely launch yourself forward with your bodybuilding efforts. Trust me!



## **CHAPTER NINETEEN EXERCISES**

### **You Are Never Standing Still**

**1. What are five relatively small and unimportant bodybuilding tasks that you do not do on a fairly consistent basis?**

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**2. How do you normally rationalize not doing these things?**

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# 20

## Is Striving for a Balanced Life Sabotaging Your Bodybuilding Goals?

How badly do you want to build an outstanding physique? How hard are you willing to work to achieve the body you *really* want? Most importantly, what are you willing to *sacrifice* in order to earn the quality build you desire?

Many people in this world want to have an extraordinary physique, but very few are willing to pay the price necessary to get it. How about you? Anything in life that is worth achieving comes with a price tag.

In terms of your overall quality of life, what price are you willing to invest in order to achieve your bodybuilding goals? On a scale of 1-10 (1 being extremely difficult, 10 being totally fulfilling), would you live the next year at a “level 1” in order to enjoy the following four years at a level 10? Or, would you choose a more balanced approach and live all five years at a level 5 or 6 instead?

This question is more than hypothetical. Whether you realize it or not, you are being asked this question every single day when it comes to your training. Are you doing all the things you *know* you need to do in order to reach your goals? Is there anything that’s holding you back?

As I talk to bodybuilders around the world, a universal complaint is that they are unable to find the time to dedicate themselves to the demanding bodybuilding lifestyle. They have too many things in their life that they are trying to focus on at one time.

“I can't do everything I need to do to reach my bodybuilding goals because I need have balance in my life is a pattern of thinking among many frustrated bodybuilders. Let me ask you a question: which is more accurate—they *can't* or they *choose not to*?”

Striving for a balanced life may be robbing you of becoming truly outstanding at what you really want most in life—whether that's bodybuilding, your career, family, personal relationships, or anything else that takes real effort. Many people dream of becoming outstanding at something they do in their lives. Maybe for you this one particular endeavor is building your physique.

Let me let you in on a little secret: Balance cannot be measured on a daily, weekly, monthly, or even yearly scale. It just can't be measured in such short time periods if you want to excel at bodybuilding or have an extraordinary quality of life. You must measure balance in life in longer time frames such as five-year spans or even decades.

If you really want to earn a great physique, you may need to give up the parties, eating out with friends, or spending your money on fancy cars or fun vacations for a period of time. You may need to invest your free time in reading books and magazines on training, nutrition, and supplementation. You may need to spend less time with your friends or save your money for massive amounts of quality food or expensive supplements like protein powder for a few years.

Isn't this true in many other aspects of life also? If you plan to enjoy the "golden years," won't that luxury require you to sacrifice to some degree in your 20s, 30s, and 40s? If you want to live your later years being able to relax and travel around the world—without the pressure of working hard to pay the bills--aren't you going to have to earn more money in your younger years, save money, and invest what money you have? Of course you will.

To have the benefit of looking at any accomplishment with real pride, it may be necessary to sacrifice many pleasures now. Mastering anything takes time and energy. One major obstacle many people face when trying to achieve things in life is juggling too many activities at the same time. Trying to focus on too many things at the same time will make it extremely difficult to become good at bodybuilding—or anything else for that matter.

With the needs of our families, work or school, and friends competing for our attention, deciding where to spend our time and energy is an important decision. When we add other priorities, activities, goals, and aspirations, the challenge is greatly magnified.

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**Trying to focus on too many things at the same time will make it extremely difficult to become good at bodybuilding—or anything else for that matter.**

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"Don't put all your eggs in one basket!" we are often warned by our concerned family and friends. But why wouldn't you want to put all your eggs in one basket? A basket filled to the brim with eggs seems as if it would be a great thing to have, doesn't it?

Not if you drop it! Oftentimes the reason we don't totally go for our dreams is fear. We fear the *possibility* of suffering frustration and disappointment after



spending our time and energy trying to achieve something of merit only to see our plans not work out.

Could this be what's holding you back from really going for your training goals and doing all the things you *know* you need to do to achieve them?

Decide what you want to accomplish with your bodybuilding. If we have truly decided what we want to accomplish but cannot seem to do what we need to do, our inability is usually based on our fears. We have the fear of missing out on other things in life.

Instead of focusing on what we really want in life, we often dabble a little here and a little there. We usually don't admit this to ourselves, however. We describe our actions as being "practical" or we are being "reasonable." We become "pretty good" at this and "okay" at that. We never become great at anything. The last thing you want to do is reflect on your life and say, "I was okay at this, pretty good at that, and halfway decent at that other thing. Boy, I wish I had tried harder at bodybuilding! You know, I could have been good."

Keep in mind that even when you are determined to become the best bodybuilder you can be, you may question if you are spending your time wisely or are headed down the right path. I don't care how dedicated and goal oriented you are, sometimes you will question if what you are doing will actually pay off. "Am I doing the right thing? Is all this effort worth it to me? Am I missing out on other things I should be enjoying? These doubts will challenge your commitment from time to time. This is totally understandable, but it's important to stick to your plan.

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**I don't care how dedicated and goal oriented you are, sometimes you will question if what you are doing will actually pay off.**

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Try not to focus on what you have to give up. Instead, focus on all the great achievements and the specific feelings you will enjoy when you have achieved your goals. Always remind yourself of what you really want for yourself. Never settle for anything less than you are truly capable of having in your life.

### **Steps to Achieving Your Goals and Building Long-Term Balance in Life**

1. Determine what you want over the *long term* from your bodybuilding efforts. Be bold and dare to think big! Make sure you decide on what you *really* want—not what you feel is available to you. The state of mind you are in when making these decisions is very important. The best time to determine what you want is when you feel powerful—like right after an awesome workout. Invest an hour or so in doing this

exercise. Believe me, that hour could reward you with direction and fulfillment that last for years.

2. Anticipate as many challenges as you can that could possibly arise and distract you from believing in yourself and continuing to work toward your dreams.
3. For the challenges you have anticipated, think in advance how you will effectively handle them. What will you tell yourself that will help you refocus on your ultimate goals? Statements like “This is merely a short-term sacrifice that will be well worth the happiness I will eventually feel,” or “This too shall pass,” or “I am more than capable of dealing with this distraction because I am so mentally tough” are extremely helpful.
4. Realize that other people may not understand or appreciate your dreams or desires—and that’s okay. Everybody has different values and different ideas of what makes them happy. Their values just happen to be different from yours. Some people unintentionally may cause you difficulty because they want to protect you from the pain of disappointment they feel you could experience. Others may choose to “tear you down” as a way of assuring *themselves* that their values and choices in life are the correct ones. Because you have already taken the time to clearly identify what you want from your bodybuilding and from life, don’t let them distract you. Stick to your guns!
5. Enjoy the entire process of what you are doing—both the ups and the downs. You may be comforted to know that every person who has achieved anything of greatness has probably gone through many of the very same challenges as you. Be proud of the fact you are in some amazing company!

I can’t begin to tell you how many times over the years I’ve contemplated quitting bodybuilding in pursuit of a more balanced life. What pulled me through those difficult times was simply sticking to my plan just a bit longer. Fortunately, I would experience just enough success to keep me going. I was always sure to immediately set a higher and more ambitious goal upon achieving one I had previously set. That strategy allowed me to keep my mind off all the things in life that I thought I was missing out on.

One of those times was right before the 1995 NPC Team Universe. I was caught up in a pattern of noticing all the exciting people, places, and experiences I wasn’t able to enjoy because my life was dedicated to making “tomorrow” a better day. My days were spent getting up at 3:30 A.M. to write for the bodybuilding magazines and prepare my food and clothes for the day. I would then race to the gym at 5 A.M. and train for two hours and then get ready for my

“real job.” After spending 10 hours a day at my stressful job, I would hurry back to the gym at night for an evening cardiovascular session. I would then go home and write some more until 11 P.M. I’d fall fast asleep—only to get ready to do it again the next day. My weekends were full of things like grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and paying bills. Most of the time, I was dieting for contests as I competed in 19 shows in a seven-year period.

Obviously, I did not have much time for deep, meaningful relationships. Because of the Spartan and secluded lifestyle that I lived while preparing for my contests, there were many birthdays and holidays that I spent all alone over those years. Many people thought chasing my dreams was a total waste of my time and energy. Those people implied or directly stated that to me. When I was “here,” I wanted to be “there.” If I ever did let up and go “there” for awhile, I wished I was back over “here.”

But if that lifestyle was a 1, the lifestyle I live now because of my hard work and sacrifice is surely a 10 plus. I still get up very early in the morning but each day is filled with passion, anticipation, and continual growth. I spend my time doing what I love to do. I live, eat, and sleep bodybuilding while helping others on a global scale accomplish their bodybuilding goals. I have the privilege of meeting thousands of new people just like you who share a love for training.

I am not telling you my story so you can feel sorry for me or envy me. I am sharing my experiences so that you can benefit from them also. I want to be your friend who understands the way you feel.

If you are currently in a period of your life that sometimes feels like a 1 and are questioning your commitment to bodybuilding, I want to provide you with the hope that your tomorrow will be a brighter day—if you persist and hold on tightly to your dreams.

If you are in a place in your life where you feel you lack motivation, drive, or a special purpose, I want to inspire you to consider trading short-term gratification for long-term fulfillment. Life is a self-made project. It’s up to you to create your own ultimate destiny!

I heard a great quote somewhere that goes “When people look back on their lives, they usually don’t regret the things that they *have* done. They usually regret the things they *haven’t* done.”

If bodybuilding is something you really love to do, go for it! Knuckle down, focus intensely on your training, do the things you *know* you need to do. Celebrate the victories and willingly accept the sacrifices. Always be sure to enjoy the process. Doing so will give you the best opportunity to become absolutely outstanding!







# 21

## You Never Have to Plateau in Bodybuilding

Hitting a *plateau*, or in other words, having your training progress come to a screeching halt, is probably one of the most feared and frustrating events a bodybuilder can ever experience. There isn't anyone on this planet who wants to work extremely hard at something and not show signs of improvement. This is especially true when it comes to such a demanding lifestyle as bodybuilding.

Becoming stagnant with your training will surely lead to frustration—a feeling that undercuts the level of fulfillment you hope to enjoy from bodybuilding. The mounting frustration, if not quickly alleviated, will eventually overwhelm you. Becoming overwhelmed is the primary reason many lifters stop training altogether.

Unfortunately, too many bodybuilders quit due to the frustration caused by a merely *perceived* lack of progress. With this disempowering perception, they can only muster a halfhearted effort—at best—as a way of protecting themselves from experiencing the pain. This situation occurs whether or not the person realizes what is happening. This is usually the time when you start hearing some natural bodybuilders complain about poor genetics or being hardgainers, or it's the time when they become convinced what they hoped to accomplish with their physiques is impossible because they don't use drugs.

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**Unfortunately, too many bodybuilders quit due to the frustration caused by a merely *perceived* lack of progress.**

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Plateaus are definitely things to be avoided. In my opinion, they can be. The way to do so is by reexamining how you currently define a plateau and start thinking big!

Plateaus are oftentimes mistakenly perceived as the following pitfalls in our thinking:

1. We are not being persistent enough in finding the answers to our training challenges that, if discovered, will propel us into higher levels of development.

2. We really are getting results—but they just aren't visible to us at the time.
3. We make unrealistic and/or unfair comparisons between ourselves and other bodybuilders.
4. We are not being creative enough to uncover new, exciting, and unique ways to enjoy the entire spectrum of fulfillment bodybuilding has to offer.
5. We don't realize we are growing in ways that are more important than physical growth.

### **Persistence Is Needed to Find Better Strategies**

Bodybuilders say to me such things as, "I just can't figure out how to get my shoulders to grow! I've tried so many different routines and nothing seems to work."

"Exactly how many is *so many*?" I ask them. Normally, if they reply honestly, they have actually tried no more than three or four different routines—at most.

As I demonstrated in a previous chapter of this book, there are many more ways to train shoulders than just three or four. I know that you and I would never stop trying after only three or four different routines—and then blame our lack of improvement on a training plateau, would we?

As a drug-free bodybuilder, you will more than likely mature at an older age (in your mid-thirties or older). Don't just assume you'll become outstanding when that time rolls around if you aren't persistent enough to put in enough time, effort, and intelligence into your training efforts today.

### **You May Really Be Getting Results**

Stop and think about your situation for a moment. Can your progress ever really stop if you are consistently putting forth your best effort? If you are training with any type of regularity and intensity, and supporting that training with sound nutritional practices, you can rest assured you are not really stagnant—regardless of what you may think. (If you are not putting in this degree of effort, then you now realize you are not hitting a plateau.) Oftentimes, you will be improving even when you don't necessarily feel you are.

One of my favorite illustrations of what I am explaining comes from motivational speaker Zig Ziglar. In his story "Primin' the Pump," Ziglar talks about a man who goes to an old-fashioned well to pump some drinking water. The man pushes the pump's lever over and over again, and is seemingly making no progress whatsoever.



The man is indeed making progress, however; it just isn't visible to him at the time. Deep in the underground pipes, suction is being created and is slowly siphoning the water to the surface. If he gets discouraged and stops pumping, the water will fall again—and he'll have to start all over.

If he is persistent, the man will eventually see results from his efforts and enjoy a surging flow. At this point, he'll no longer need to pump as hard because now only a little force produces enough water to equal ten times the effort he gave at the beginning.

Sometimes it feels as though you are putting ten times the effort into your training than you seem to be getting in improvements. But, if you are persistent, you will enjoy the benefits of bodybuilding that could be ten times greater than the effort you invest—just like the man who was primin' the pump. You just never know.

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**Sometimes it feels as though you are putting ten times the effort into your training than you seem to be getting in improvements. But, if you are persistent, you will enjoy the benefits of bodybuilding that could be ten times greater than the effort you invest.**

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Another problem may be that you see yourself too often to truly appreciate your progress. Have you ever had a friend who hasn't seen you in a while tell you how muscular you've become? That friend's perception is probably a little more accurate than yours. Oftentimes, we become our own worst enemies. The same drive that motivates us to become our very best sometimes makes us too tough on ourselves—like a double-edged sword.

If you keep pressing yourself to train harder and to learn more, you never know when a big payoff in significant muscle mass will occur. One thing is certain, however: You will not see the results you want if you stop giving 100 percent of your effort, get frustrated, or quit.

### **Making Unfair Comparisons to Others**

As I stated earlier in this book, one of the biggest tragedies in bodybuilding occurs when we are *winning* but feel as though we are losing. I had a training partner who was no better than average when we first began working out together. Within months, his physique dramatically improved and the amount of weight he tackled increased by at least 30 percent.

He was initially ecstatic about his progress and set the ambitious goal of winning the drug-tested Musclemania Bodybuilding Championships later that year.

Unfortunately, his excitement didn't last very long. His gains did not come as quickly as he wanted and he became discouraged. He never was motivated when he looked in the bodybuilding magazines—they often made him depressed. Although he had been training for only about three years (with just a small portion of that at a maximum intensity level), he wanted a great physique *now*.

"I get so down when I look in the magazines, Skip!" he confessed. "I look at those guys and the only thing I think is that I don't look like that."

He was being terribly unfair to himself by making such comparisons. The bodybuilders in the magazines more than likely had *at least* twice as much training experience. In addition, most of their years of training were probably been as focused as his few intense months.

We no longer train together, as other things in his life now have a higher priority. He no longer has dreams of winning a national show or being featured in an international magazine. Bodybuilding, which for a short time brought him so much pride, fulfillment, accomplishment and optimism, is no longer an interest. He had been winning the game in a *big way*, in my opinion, but felt as though he was losing.

### **Enjoy More of the Excitement Bodybuilding Has to Offer**

The truth is you can never really plateau when it comes to bodybuilding because there are countless exciting facets in this complex lifestyle to enjoy! Here's a unique way to break through *any* plateau you feel you're experiencing: *Fall in love with bodybuilding!* Take your passion for our sport to a whole new level. Make it much more than a fun hobby or a passing interest.

"What do you mean, La Cour? I already love to train, eat a lot of protein, and read the magazines every month!" many of you might be thinking. Reducing this lifestyle/sport of bodybuilding to simply working out, eating right, and thumbing through its publications is like saying the Louvre in Paris has a few interesting paintings! You are robbing yourself of tons of stimulation available for you to enjoy.

You could

- plan a trip to a national contest
- plan a trip to the Arnold Schwarzenegger Classic
- plan a trip to the Mr. Olympia contest

- research and find the highest-quality supplements for the best price
- order a bodybuilding book from the Home Gym Warehouse to increase your level of knowledge
- read a book on motivation
- choose a role model to help you in your bodybuilding efforts
- learn everything you can about your favorite bodybuilder
- learn more about the history and legends of bodybuilding
- enter a bodybuilding contest
- volunteer to help run a local bodybuilding contest
- set the goal of getting pictured in a bodybuilding magazine
- start a bodybuilding Internet business

### **You May Be Getting More Than Just a Better Body**

Many lifters focus strictly on the physical or aesthetic qualities of the bodybuilding lifestyle. When a person doesn't see continual muscle growth when he looks into the mirror, he may automatically assume his improvements have either slowed down considerably or have stopped altogether.

However, the growth you are achieving in bodybuilding goes far beyond merely developing big muscles. The courage, discipline, passion, confidence, connection, and many more human qualities this lifestyle creates are much more significant to your total quality of life. Maybe they are making you a better student or employee. Maybe those attributes are making you a better father, mother, son, or daughter. Bodybuilding could be enriching your life for many more years to come—so stick with it and work through those illusionary plateaus!

**NOTES**

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE EXERCISES

### You Never Have to Plateau in Bodybuilding

1. In what areas of *training* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?

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2. In what areas of *nutrition* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?

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3. In what areas of *supplementation* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?

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4. In what areas of *motivation* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?

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# 22

## **Your Ability to Take Risks Will Determine Your Level of Bodybuilding Success**

While talking with many bodybuilders over the years, I have realized most of them are very confused about exactly what it takes to become successful at their bodybuilding and training efforts.

I can identify with these feelings because, long before I started bodybuilding, I felt very confused trying to become successful in different areas of my life. Ever since I was very young, I was determined to be great at something. When I was much younger, the majority of my focus and energy was directed at the different sports I participated in. My older brother and I spent a lot of time trying to figure out which sport we wanted to play professionally. During baseball season, it was baseball. During basketball season, it was basketball. During football season, it was football.

Isn't being a naïve little boy great? As if achieving the highest level of success in athletics would be as easy as making a decision! I would say I was fairly driven even back then. As I grew older, I was still driven, but just as naïve and more confused.

The more confused I became, the more determined I was to discover what people actually did to achieve amazing success. I often wondered why some people, who didn't seem to have any obvious special abilities or unique talents, appeared to be so confident about what they could accomplish. This confidence seemed to help them become outstanding in certain aspects of their lives.

I was equally interested in learning why some other people, who in my opinion had quite a few special abilities and unique talents, were unable to recognize, appreciate, and use them. In fact, no matter what people told them, they really didn't seem to believe they even possessed those attributes. Because of their lack of self-confidence and awareness of what they had to offer the world, they never achieved what I believed their capabilities would allow. Their lack of accomplishments wasn't due to a lack of desire, mind you. They just couldn't figure out how to put things all together.

I definitely considered myself the type of person who wasn't accomplishing what I thought I could. The more people told me how much potential I had, the more frustrated and confused I became.

Can you identify with my feelings? Is my story *your* story as well?

At the age of 21, after going to my first motivational seminar, I really began studying the thinking patterns and specific actions needed to achieve success. I read dozens of books and attended many more seminars. But, even with everything I learned, I was still confused.

When I started bodybuilding at the relatively late age of 27 I *finally* began figuring out what the secrets to success were. I've come to the conclusion that success comes down to four things:

- Passion
- Hard Work
- Intelligence (Fortified by Persistence)
- The Ability to Take Risks

### **Passion**

More than any other factor, your level of *passion* will determine your level of success. If you have a sincere, overwhelming love for and commitment to what you do, everything else you'll need will eventually fall into place. Passion is an astonishingly powerful emotion! Passion is the catalyst that gets the wheels in motion. When you are empowered with enough passion, no challenge or obstacle is impossible to overcome.

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**Passion is an astonishingly powerful emotion! Passion is the catalyst that gets the wheels in motion. When you are empowered with enough passion, no challenge or obstacle is impossible to overcome.**

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I have really *enjoyed* doing many of the things in my life. Not until I started bodybuilding, however, did I truly understand what the word "passion" meant on a deep emotional and gut level.

### **Hard Work**

Most people realize that if you are going to be successful at anything in life, you must work hard. The difference being good at something and being *absolutely outstanding* is probably no more than putting in an extra couple of hours of work every day. As the old saying goes, "The competition to get ahead greatly diminishes after the forty-hour work week."

If you work in just two extra hours every single day (and do so every week, every week of every month, and every month of every year), it's not hard to see that the person who is willing to put in the extra time will experience considerably more success.

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**The difference being good at something and being *absolutely outstanding* is probably no more than putting in an extra couple of hours of work every day.**

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Everyone *thinks* they work hard—and I'm no exception. But, if we are truly honest with ourselves, that is not necessarily the case on every occasion. We must honestly assess our work ethic and decide if we need to make adjustments if we are to get what we really want. (Be sure to invest the time reading and doing the exercises in the chapter "How Do You Know You Are Working Hard?")

An hour or so of extra work every day has led me to where I am now. It's been one article, one follow-up phone call, one extra week of strict dieting, challenging myself to lift five more pounds of weight, and ten more minutes of cardiovascular training that have made the difference. Doing the little things for over ten years has made the difference between me and "the other guy"—not great genetics, lucky breaks, or secret training and nutrition strategies.

### **Intelligence (Fortified by Persistence)**

I assume almost everyone already knows if you want to be successful you must work hard. However, there are many people in the gym who work hard—but still don't have the physiques they really want. Why? Because hard work alone won't do the trick. You'll also need to be intelligent in your approach.

Working intelligently is very important—but you don't necessarily need to put this quality into play right from the start. What you lack in intelligence, you can compensate for in persistence. Persistence, in my opinion, will make you or break you. It's not always the hardest worker who succeeds. It's not always the smartest worker who succeeds either. Usually, it's the person who will try just one more time when other people would normally quit.

I realize I'm not sharing any groundbreaking information, when I tell you that if you want to be truly successful, you must have passion, a good work ethic, intelligence, and persistence.

There is one factor, however, I feel many people just do not understand. I, myself, didn't really understand how important possessing this quality was for many years.

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**Persistence, in my opinion, will make you or break you.**

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### **The Ability to Take Risks**

Your ability to take risks will be the final piece to the puzzle as you strive to become successful at anything you do. Let's face it, if you never put yourself in a position to win big, you'll have absolutely no chance of winning big.

In the gym, you'll never know how great it feels to suppress your fears and tackle those heavy dumbbells until you step up and take action. You should never expect a qualified observer to come up to you and say that you're very strong for your size unless you attempt the lift. If you do, the risk is getting hurt by the weight or being embarrassed if the packed gym sees you fail to get the dumbbells up.

I don't care how great your physique may be, if you never enter a bodybuilding contest, you'll never experience the feeling of accomplishment you'll earn by putting yourself through the physical, mental, and emotional challenges of contest preparation. And the thrill of victory? Impossible! The risk you take doing all of that work only to find out you aren't quite as good as you thought you were.

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**Let's face it, if you never put yourself in a position to win big, you'll have absolutely no chance of winning big.**

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If you're not willing to diet for weeks and weeks on end, you can forget about ever becoming a local bodybuilding champion. You may have to accept a placing lower than your ego wishes to accept, but that's the chance you must take. If you only enter local contests and never even enter a national show, how can you ever expect to be considered one of the very best bodybuilders in the country? Your risk: Your reputation as a local bodybuilding hero may be jeopardized if you return home from the show with the new distinction of being unable to crack the top 15 at the national level.

There's a price tag for everything in life worth having. The bigger the prize you are after, the more it costs. The unfortunate part about taking risks is you may pay an outrageous price for success and have no guarantees the goods will ever be delivered.

I remember when I was an ambitious, hardworking 19-year old employee at the grocery store. One day, I was mapping out my financial future while putting cans of motor oil on a display. “By the age of 27,” I said to myself, “I will be earning \$100,000 a year.”

That was a nice goal to have, but how in the world did I ever expect to do that? Even if I was promoted up the ranks at a rather quick pace (which I was) and I became a store manager at the relatively young age of 27 (which I was as well), how did I ever expect to be earning \$100,000? The manager’s position—even including a great bonus—would only earn about \$75,000. In the job I was working, how did I ever think I was going to earn more? The only way I was going to earn \$100,000 by the age of 27 was to get off that track, take some risks, and do something else for a living! What was I thinking at the time?

I believe many bodybuilders mistakenly expect a level of success far greater than the degree of risk they’re willing to take. I have beginners ask me all the time, “How can I tell right now I have genetics good enough to excel in bodybuilding?” In other words they are saying, “How can I make sure I’m not wasting my time? I don’t want to put in all this effort if it’s not going to pay off!”

If you are truly aiming for amazing success in your bodybuilding efforts, there will be just as much discomfort and anxiety as excitement and satisfaction during your journey. The good and bad feelings are directly proportional—if you are really stretching yourself.

It’s up to you to control your emotions during both the good and bad times. It’s up to you to choose which emotions you will focus on—they are all always present. Risk taking may seem unfair and uncomfortable at times, but this fact is undeniable: Behind every awesome and fulfilling victory lies the possibility of gut-wrenching pain and devastation.

As I said before, if you want to win big you stand the chance of losing big. The two are directly proportional. If, that is, you are going for what you *really* want—and not settling for less based on your fears.

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**I believe many bodybuilders mistakenly expect a level of success far greater than the degree of risk they’re willing to take.**

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You know what? Those same principles apply to *everything* in life. If you want the great position in your company, you may have to work for years climbing the corporate ladder and endure all the office politics that come with it. You’ll need to deal with the heartache, pain, ups and downs, and victories and defeats along the way—with no guarantee you will ever get that sought-after position. If you

want a relationship with a special person, you're going to have to ask that person with all the incredible qualities you really want out on a first date. Even though he or she might reject you on the spot, you'll never go out on a date at all until you approach the object of your desire in some way.

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**Courage is the antidote for fear. There is nothing wrong with feeling the emotion of fear. In fact, I am fearful on a fairly regular basis. What will determine your level of success is what you will ultimately do and do not do when that inevitable fear is present.**

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Courage is what you'll need to take the risks essential for success. Courage is a character quality you must constantly use and refine to achieve what you want at the level you want.

Courage is the antidote for fear. There is nothing wrong with feeling the emotion of fear. In fact, I am fearful on a fairly regular basis. What will determine your level of success is what you ultimately do and do not do when that inevitable fear is present.

### **What Is Success?**

What is success anyway? I guess I should back up for a moment and explain what success means to me. I define success as putting forth my best effort on a consistent basis and using my God-given talents to the best of my ability. If I can say with complete honesty that I've given my all, then I feel as though I'm successful.

If I have worked hard, worked intelligently, have backed up that intelligence with persistence and have taken the necessary risks, I'll be satisfied with what I've done. Success doesn't always come down to bottom-line results. For me, whether I win or lose a bodybuilding contest isn't the absolute measuring stick that determines whether or not I am successful.

When I think of one of my biggest victories, the NPC Team Universe, it wasn't becoming the overall winner that made me feel the most proud. I felt successful three weeks *before* the contest when I knew in my heart I had given everything I had to become my very best for many months—after an absolutely devastating fifth-place finish the year before. What continues to make me feel successful is knowing that I had the courage to risk facing the possibility of feeling devastated again and putting a terrible end to my otherwise great bodybuilding career.

My Musclemania win also came after a year of hard work—and after I was surprised and disappointed by falling short of winning the year before. What

makes me feel successful is that I had courage to take the risks facing the possibility of feeling that same disappointment again.

It's not the fact that I'm able to do what I am most passionate about doing for a living and help others at the same time that makes me feel the most proud. I quit my job (my solid, safe job of 15 years) to go for what I really wanted in life. What makes me feel successful is that I had the courage to risk facing the possibility of giving up a good job and going broke.

Many people consider me one of the very best drug-free bodybuilders in the world. But I may not continue as a competitive bodybuilder if I don't continue to take big risks. Many people became big fans after seeing my winning image at the Musclemania, which was played hundreds of times on international television. But I would never have been seen on television at all if I hadn't taken the risk of being disappointed again.

Many people throughout the world enjoy my books, articles, and videotapes and feel my materials help them propel their bodybuilding efforts forward. But I never would have had the time to write and produce those materials if I hadn't quit my safe but extremely time-consuming job and faced financial instability.

Becoming the NPC Team Universe overall national champion, having my image played on television, and doing what I love to do for a living are all big wins that required me to take big risks!

Even the fact that you are reading this book right now is due to my willingness to take risks. I had to put in hours upon hours of effort, pushing my creative and writing abilities to their limits, with absolutely no guarantee I'd be rewarded. To gain your appreciation and financial investment, I had to give up a lot of my time, energy, and moments with the people who are special in my life with no guarantees my efforts would prove worthwhile.

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**I define success as putting forth my best effort on a consistent basis and using my God-given talents to the best of my ability. If I can say with complete honesty that I've given my all, then I feel as though I'm successful.**

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Wherever you are in the world right now, you and I have made this special connection and you're reading this book because of the risks I have taken. For me, that's a big win!

If you never put yourself in a position to win big, you have absolutely no chance of winning big.





**CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO EXERCISES**

**Your Ability to Take Risks Will Determine Your Level of Bodybuilding Success**

1. How would you rate your risk-taking ability when it comes to reaching your bodybuilding goals? Do you feel you are taking the necessary risks?

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2. If you do feel you are taking the necessary risks—but are not progressing toward your goals at a satisfactory rate, why aren't you? List as many reasons you can think of.

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# 23

## Becoming Brilliant Is Simply A Matter Of Passion, Effort, And Time

For 15 years I worked in a giant grocery and drugstore. One of the basic responsibilities of such an employee is directing the customers to literally thousands of items that fill the shelves. You can imagine how overwhelmed I was being a 19-year-old kid during my first few weeks on the job. Every time a customer came anywhere near me I would sweat with anxiety since I was certain I was going to be asked for something that I didn't have the slightest clue how to find.

"Just one moment, ma'am," I would plead. "I think the light bulbs are right over here on aisle 22." Well, needless to say, during those first few weeks I would usually lead the customers on a wild goose chase searching for the light bulbs or whatever else they were looking for.

But soon, through my desire to help, as well as relieve myself of stress and wear and tear on my poor feet (and of course from simply being asked the same questions over and over again), I eventually became competent at helping people find what they wanted. "You are so brilliant," the customers started complimenting me. "I don't know how you remember where you keep all this merchandise!" To myself I would say, "Lady, if you only knew . . . I am the furthest thing from brilliant." And if they could have spoken, I'm sure my sore feet would have chimed in, "Ain't that the truth!"

I received an e-mail from a person who thanked me for all the information about bodybuilding I openly share in the magazines. "Not many bodybuilders take the time to divulge their expertise," he wrote. "The information you provide is extremely helpful. You are brilliant!"

Uh-oh, there's that word *brilliant* again! The point I want to stress to you in this chapter of *Thinking Big II* is that becoming brilliant is simply a matter of passion, effort, and time.

I am not brilliant—but I do have a burning *passion* for bodybuilding. That passion has given me the drive to work extremely hard searching for the right combination of training, nutrition, supplementation, and mental strategies to take my body to its genetic limits without the use of illegal drugs.

If you have passion for what you are doing, work hard, and do so for a long-enough period of time, you too can appear brilliant to those around you. Whether your passion is bodybuilding or anything else, it doesn't matter. What you need to do is fully immerse yourself in what you truly want to accomplish. There is little doubt that, no matter what level of proficiency you start at, you will eventually get better and better. Look, I am only going to be asked "How does creatine work?" so many times before I make sure I know the answer to avoid appearing stupid. And, although bodybuilding is a complex and constantly evolving subject, there are only so many questions that can possibly be asked of me. Through my articles, seminars, and website, I have put my butt on the line and have forced myself into such a position that I better have done extensive research to find the answers.

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**If you have passion for what you are doing, work hard, and do so for a long-enough period of time, you too can appear brilliant to those around you. Whether your passion is bodybuilding or anything else, it doesn't matter. What you need to do is fully immerse yourself in what you truly want to accomplish.**

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You, too, must put your butt on the line, apply pressure to yourself, and continually step up your efforts to grow—if you truly want to become brilliant.

Everyone wants to become great at something in their lives. Maybe that one thing for you is bodybuilding. Far too many people *want* but never actually *do*. A big reason for this is they believe the journey to become very good at something is too long and too difficult. It's a lot easier than they might think. But these people must muster enough courage to put forth the effort.

Another reason people don't really go for what they want to excel at doing is because they are hesitant about going through the uncomfortable learning process. Believe me, I know this feeling all too well from experiencing all that anxiety at the store I worked in. Certainly, no one wants to feel stupid or inadequate.

If you persist, however, you will eventually make it through any difficult learning process. When you do make it through this uncomfortable period, no one but you has to know what you went through to get there. When people begin to compliment you on how brilliant you are, it will be your own little secret.

In today's society, computers are tools that cause a tremendous amount of stress for those people who have not put themselves on the line to learn how to use this valuable godsend. But anyone can log on to the Internet, copy a beautiful picture of a landscape that was posted on a website designed by an architect from his

kitchen in Argentina. You could then paste that picture into a nice letter that you wrote to your ten best friends and e-mail that document to them anywhere in the world in a matter of minutes if you wanted. Wouldn't you be brilliant then—no matter how apprehensive you were in the past or how long it took you to learn how to do this series of tasks? How good would you feel about yourself if you took on the challenge, expanded your skills, and became proficient at something you once thought was impossible for you to learn?

Intelligence is merely having the ability to identify patterns. Everything in our world runs in patterns. Some are more complex than others, but the patterns are always there. Whether it's building muscle, learning a computer program, or predicting someone's behavior, there are always a series of steps to any process.

Figuring out these patterns is like figuring out the combination to a lock. The sooner you can learn these patterns from someone else or identify them yourself, the more intelligent you are considered. If you really catch on quickly, you will be described as brilliant.

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**Intelligence is merely having the ability to identify patterns. Everything in our world runs in patterns. Some are more complex than others, but the patterns are always there. Whether it's building muscle, learning a computer program, or predicting someone's behavior, there are always a series of steps to any process.**

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Even if you are a slow learner, you can give the appearance of being brilliant to others—as long as you eventually figure the pattern out. Who cares if it took you a thousand tries? What matters most is that you did it!

So what are you going to do with your passion for bodybuilding? Will you jump right in and fully immerse yourself in the process of learning what you need to become the best you can? Will you endure the potentially painful period of time that mastering bodybuilding might require?

The next five years will come and go—regardless of how well you apply yourself. If I were to meet you five years from now, would I be able to describe you as brilliant because you have fully used your passion, effort, and time to the best of your ability? Now is the time to decide!





## **CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE EXERCISES**

### **Becoming Brilliant Is Simply a Matter of Passion, Effort, and Time**

- 1. Identify a particular area of bodybuilding in which you once considered yourself below average but, through time, you became very good.**

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- 2. How did this tremendous improvement occur? What were some of the specific actions you took to create such a turnaround?**

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# **Part VII**

## **Effectively Dealing with the Influence of Other People**



# 24

## **Your Success in Bodybuilding Is Affected by Who Surrounds You**

“How can I make the job of building my physique easier?” This question is being asked by bodybuilders everywhere. In this chapter of *Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!*, I will discuss an influence that is already either helping or hurting your bodybuilding efforts: The people around you.

Oftentimes, doesn't it seem as though you are the only person on the planet who understands your passion for bodybuilding and training? Do you sometimes feel you are all alone in the pursuit of your bodybuilding dreams? Does your disciplined lifestyle of eating and training disconnect you from the rest of the world and make reaching your physique-enhancing goals a painfully difficult process?

If you've felt this way from time to time, believe me, I know what you're going through. “Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently during your bodybuilding career?” I was asked during a magazine interview.

Without a doubt, I would have been more selective of the people I chose to spend my time with. As if living the dedicated bodybuilding lifestyle weren't challenging enough, the people who surround you can make your journey even more difficult.

You can be certain there will be some people along the way who will question your dedication and willingness to dream. They will try to discourage you from putting your heart and soul into just one area of your life. Some of these individuals will do so out of legitimate concern for you, while others will be trying to meet their own agendas. If you conform to the beliefs and opinions of others, you will only be able to manage the same mediocrity that most people suffer in their lives.

You must put yourself in an environment of people who support you if you really want to achieve success. You must build relationships with people with your same mindset, desires, and values. Just think if you had the opportunity to spend your time with people just like you. Wouldn't your journey be a lot more motivating, stimulating, and enjoyable than it is with some people you're trying to deal with now?

The people who surround you are affecting your training performance, your expectations, and the level of optimism and enthusiasm you feel for your bodybuilding efforts. Whether or not you are consciously aware of it, the effect of other people is shaping your destiny. Sometimes, this influence isn't recognizable until a period of time later. The people in your environment are affecting the quality of other areas of your life as well.

The attitudes of other people can either help elevate you toward greatness or force you to settle for less than what you are capable of achieving. You should be aware of this force and concentrate your efforts on manufacturing a positive environment. Enlist the help of positive, productive, and supportive people in the same fashion that ducks help each other during flight or as cyclists aid each other during a race.

The strongest duck in the flock decreases the wind resistance of the others by positioning itself at the tip of the V-formation. Competitive cyclists do the same thing. One racer stays behind and to the side of the lead competitor to reduce his own wind drag. Use the same strategy for success in the gym by putting yourself in the company of those who ask more from themselves on a consistent basis.

If you surround yourself with people who train at a higher level of intensity and efficiency, you will become more intense and efficient. If you hang around people who are optimistic that their training endeavors will be beneficial if they are intelligent and patient, you, too, will be optimistic and try to become more intelligent and patient. If your training partners believe it is possible to build a good physique without drugs, the chances are much better you will adopt that same empowering belief.

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**You can be certain there will be some people along the way who will question your dedication and willingness to dream. They will try to discourage you from putting your heart and soul into just one area of your life.**

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To become the very best you can be as a bodybuilder, invest time and energy into creating a positive environment of people around you. Assembling a group of people of this caliber to surround you will take a concentrated effort—just like anything in life that is worthwhile and sets you apart from the masses who never achieve anything significant. Look for opportunities at the gym to train beside and converse with those who have earned good physiques, demonstrate admirable work ethics, and exude positive attitudes. You will discover it is easier to model and duplicate their success when in their presence often enough. Successful people can help pace you as you move toward achieving excellence yourself. You can adopt their winning strategies and powerful mindset.

I feel fortunate to have started my bodybuilding career asking for advice from a couple who had earned a mixed-pairs national championship. Their empowering belief that hard work and dedication would eventually lead to measurable results was ingrained deeply inside me right from the start. I sometimes wonder where I would be now if I had begun training with a disgruntled fourth-place finisher of a local show.

Who are you currently training with? Are these people improving the quality of your training and mental attitude?

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**If you surround yourself with people who train at a higher level of intensity and efficiency, you will become more intense and efficient. If you hang around people who are optimistic that their training endeavors will be beneficial if they are intelligent and patient, you, too, will be optimistic and try to become more intelligent and patient.**

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How do you know if someone has the right mentality to train with you? How can you assess someone before wasting too much time? There are many strategies to determine whether a person belongs in your inner circle. One of my favorite methods comes from the mental technology of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP. NLP is the study of human excellence that was developed in the 70s by Richard Bandler and John Grinder.

Using these techniques, you could simply ask prospective training partners “What’s most important to you in your training?” They may give you answers such as: training hard, building muscle mass quickly, training naturally, getting each workout done in an hour, or losing body fat. You can then see if their goals work well with the direction you are moving toward.

Words have different meanings to different people. What does “training hard” or “building muscle mass” actually mean to your prospective training partners? To get a clearer understanding of what their standards or expectations are, you might get clarification for their answers by asking them questions such as

- How will you know if you are training hard?
- How much muscle do you want to build? How quickly are you expecting to put on this mass?
- How important is training drug free compared to how badly you want to put on size quickly?

- What's so important about finishing in an hour?
- How much body fat do you want to lose? How will you train to lose fat?

How much focus and effort a people will put toward their goals is determined by how they prioritize their goals. With the same set of goals they previously presented, you can then find out how much importance or what priority they give to the different aspects of their training by simply asking them appropriate questions:

- What's more important to you, training hard or building mass?
- What's more important to you, building muscle mass or training naturally?
- What's more important to you, building muscle mass or losing body fat?
- What's more important to you, training hard or getting done in an hour?

You can use this same valuable method outside the gym to learn more about people's priorities, perspectives, rules, and values. Equipped with this insight, you will have a better chance to properly select the kind of people who can enhance the quality of your life.

This strategy is also a great way to establish and strengthen great relationships with other people. In this society where most people are so busy with their own challenges, you can set yourself apart by taking the time to discover what's most important to other people. Too few people do this on a consistent basis.

In the workplace, many employees are too concerned about "what their employer can do for them." Do you want to take your performance at work to a higher level? Try asking your supervisor this series of questions in regard to your job. Not only will you have specific direction and a clear understanding of how to meet your boss's expectations, he will probably be impressed you even bothered to take the time to ask.

I often share some of my challenges and struggles as a bodybuilder in an effort to prevent you from having to experience the same frustrations. As you work your way toward a better physique, you will undoubtedly encounter negative people who will try to disrupt you from achieving your goals. Whether their attempts are intentional or not, you must learn to properly deal with them.

As I mentioned earlier, in hindsight I would have taken more time to selectively create a larger environment of positive, supportive, healthy people—even if doing so meant taking a year off from competition. The more people I could have



attracted to my “team,” the better off I would have been. I feel that actively and selectively creating this type of environment is that important. At the same time, I wish I had done a better job of immediately identifying negative people and eliminating them from my circle of influence.

If you have high standards for what you expect from your life, you must spend the majority of your time with people who also have high standards. If you really want to make a difference in your life or accomplish anything of real value, doing so will usually not come easily. Don't make accomplishing your dreams more difficult by spending too much of your time with people who are merely trying to get through the day.

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**In this society where most people are so busy with their own challenges, you can set yourself apart by taking the time to discover what's most important to other people. Too few people do this on a consistent basis.**

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Have you ever picked up certain words, phrases, or inflections in your voice from someone you know? Have you ever adopted certain habits from people around you? Have any of these behaviors turned out to be not very productive or beneficial or in what you want to ultimately achieve?

Have you ever noticed when you are aiming for lofty goals, whether they are inside or outside the gym, many people with good intentions just can't understand your motivation? Make no mistake about it: The people in your presence can affect you negatively.

In society, there seems to be a tremendous pressure pulling us downward toward mediocrity. As you probably have already discovered, earning a great physique takes an enormous amount of courage, discipline, sacrifice, optimism, and consistency. Unfortunately for many people, the price that needs to be paid to become successful is too expensive. Instead of raising their standards, these people oftentimes try to persuade us to lower our expectations or they look for every reason to lessen our accomplishments to make themselves feel better about their disappointments in life.

In most bodybuilding contests, there can only be one winner in every class while there are 10 to 15 also-ran competitors. The also-ran competitors are oftentimes unwilling to accept that, on one particular day, their opponent was just simply better than they were.

The sore losers proclaim bodybuilding decisions are always political. In the competitive drug-free bodybuilding circles, too often you hear negative people

argue that the winner was on drugs and cheated the system. What's the end result? We have a lot of unsuccessful, bellyaching competitors spreading their negative, jaded opinions and too few positive bodybuilders/ambassadors spreading the word that competing is a great experience.

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**I would have taken more time to selectively create a larger environment of positive, supportive, healthy people—even if doing so meant taking a year off from competition. The more people I could have attracted to my “team,” the better off I would have been.**

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I have seen dozens of guys who own physiques that could do quite well in a bodybuilding contest—but they will never muster the courage to enter one. They are afraid they will be robbed of their rightful placing by the cheaters using drugs in natural shows or by unfair judges. The would-be competitive bodybuilders have unfortunately been influenced by the wrong people's opinions.

What types of people have your attention? Are they preventing you from chasing your dream of someday entering a contest? More importantly, what type of people are you listening to outside the gym? Which dreams have they convinced you aren't worth trying to turn into reality?

If you are in the company of people who expect very little from themselves and their training, you will be more apt to be satisfied with the level of training you are currently experiencing. If your acquaintances feel that bodybuilding contests are political and only the favorites have the chance to win, at the very least that thought will always be in the back of your mind when a show is approaching. If the guys in the gym feel that anyone with a good physique must be on drugs, you won't always be able to suppress that belief when you hit a plateau in your development.

There is a wide range of consequences you can suffer if you do not carefully select those who are around you. At the very least, they can distract you, subconsciously encourage you to settle for less than you really want to accomplish, or just make you feel complacent. If you are not careful, they can do more damage by draining you of your valuable positive energy. Unguarded exposure to negative people can unknowingly lead you to adopt their bad habits, bad attitudes, and destructive mindsets. You could eventually emulate their disempowering rules, perspectives, and values.

The task of identifying negative people can be easy when their attitude is obvious. The more detrimental people are the ones who are a little more subtle about undermining your confidence toward achieving your goals. They offer

opinions that appear to be said out of concern, but really have an entirely different agenda. Statements such as

- I hear that the judging in those contests is so political.
- *Those guys* were accusing you of being on drugs. *They* say no one can look like that without taking drugs.
- It would never be so important to me to eat that way all the time.
- It's not that important for me to work out so often. I am happy with the way I look.
- He says *this* about you or she says *that* about you.
- You know, a lot of people fail when they try that!

Usually these remarks are followed by something like “But, if that’s important to you—go for it.” Their words are actually camouflaged attempts to tell you what they think you should do with your life or are meant to prop themselves above your efforts—without having to do anything!

Some of you might be saying, “I’m too mentally strong to let negative people affect me!” Assuming this is true, I commend you. You are a much stronger person than I am. When I am in the presence of pessimistic, lazy people or those who lack character and integrity, I am negatively affected. Despite my very best efforts, they will ever so slightly have a destructive impact. I will never adopt their inadequacies, but I spend too much energy questioning their motives. They totally waste my time.

I don’t even need to be in the presence of negative people sometimes to be affected. I can also be affected through the news, magazines, or television shows. When I read negative bodybuilding gossip columns, I begin wondering why I am involved in such a crazy sport. How is that affecting my drive to be successful in this arena? If I see one of those outrageous episodes of the *Jerry Springer Show* on television, I can’t help but think our society is deteriorating rapidly. How will this attitude affect my outlook on life? You need to watch all the sources of influence that are moving through your world.

Let me make this point perfectly clear: I am not saying that you should immediately shut out anyone who is too negative to benefit you. I have discussed in the past the value of mentoring, or sharing your knowledge and experiences to help others. Do your best to help others work through their challenges—and then move on if you must. Determine at which point it’s time to protect yourself and eliminate their negative influence. With all the effort required in the areas of

training, nutrition, and supplementation, accomplishing your bodybuilding goals will be difficult enough without others pulling you down.

Have compassion and empathy for those with bad attitudes. They more than likely have different priorities, perspectives, rules, and values concerning how they wish to conduct their lives. Maybe they have experienced disappointment and pain in their past and sincerely don't want you to suffer the same fate. It is important to remember that *their* failure has nothing to do with what you can accomplish. Don't let their priorities, perspectives, rules, values, and bad experiences derail you from your mission in life—whether that mission is inside or outside the gym.

Contemplate for a moment the things in your life that hold a high priority. You are selective about the kind of car you want to drive, the neighborhood you want to live in, and the type of clothes you wear, don't you? Wouldn't putting 100 times the effort it takes to accomplish those tasks into choosing whom you spend your time with be worth it? Your success depends on it!

In life, you are constantly asked the proverbial question "Is the glass half-full or half-empty?" One of the best ways to attract positive people to your "team" or environment is to become a positive person yourself. The "glass" is whatever you think it is. You make that decision. Every event in your life only means what you *think* it means. The interpretation you attach to a particular event is your choice. I encourage you to condition your mind to make your reality a positive experience.

If you don't place as well as you expected in your next contest, look carefully to see what the judges may have seen. Become a positive ambassador of the sport of bodybuilding in both victory and defeat. If you see someone in the gym who is more successful at building his physique, don't waste your energy searching for some miniscule flaw to minimize his accomplishments to make yourself feel more important. Use that person as a source of inspiration by saying, "If he can do it, so can I!"

One final thought: For the people around you, add to the quality of *their* lives by being a supportive, optimistic member of *their* team. By doing so, you will greatly improve the chances of them wanting to support you as well.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR EXERCISES

# Your Success in Bodybuilding Is Affected by Who Surrounds You

1. Who are the people in your life who do the best job of supporting your bodybuilding efforts?

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2. Exactly what do these people do that makes them supportive? How does that make you feel?

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**3. What can you do to attract more people like these to support your bodybuilding efforts?**

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**4. Who are the people in your life who, whether intentionally or not, undermine your bodybuilding efforts?**

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# 25

## Focus on Yourself and Become Your Very Best

In this chapter of *Thinking Big II* I want to share a letter that expresses the feeling of many people working hard to build their physiques.

*Skip,*

*My name is Mike and I'm proud to say that I'm a lifetime drug-free bodybuilder. I haven't experimented with steroids or diuretics of any sort.*

*I try not to get hung up on the drug issue too much, but I just wanted to get your perception on how the words "drug-free" or "natural" are used. I have friends in the bodybuilding industry from IFBB pros to top natural competitors. One happens to be Mike D'Angelo, and we speak to on a regular basis. He definitely has a lot of respect for you, your goals, and accomplishments—and that is why I wanted to write to you.*

*What do you think of the rules in competitions like the Musclemania and NPC Team Universe that of course are drug-free or natural competitions? What I'm getting at is, why claim or allow competitors to enter these shows who have been drug free for the last six months or so? It's a sad thought, but that will allow some to cycle their training accordingly and compete at these shows on a regular basis. I don't want to mention any names, but there are two guys I know personally who use drugs in the off-season, get off them at a strategic point closer to the Team Universe, and then place higher and higher each year.*

*So, when you say in your columns that "natural bodybuilders oftentimes put a ceiling on ourselves by limiting our mind" I think it's understandable. This way of thinking will always be there if they keep having these highly exposed or respectable competitions that enable athletes to compete even though they've been using drugs six months out and still claim to be drug free. Ultimately, everyone wants an even playing field, but how can you have it with these types of so-called "limitations" or rules?*

*I think it is highly hypocritical to put on the cover of a magazine a "natural athlete" who has taken drugs no more than a year ago and claim that you or the "ordinary Joe" can make the same remarkable gains. Anyone who knows better can read between the lines.*

*I tell you, it's hard to look at some guys and think they are natural because of what I've learned and what I really know. Believe me, I don't get caught up with guessing or commenting about anyone else; that is their business. I'm only concerned with my gains and I know that I can say I'm 100 percent drug free.*

*The contests need to start putting stricter requirements or rules into the equation. Let's see the real genetically gifted, hard-working individuals get ahead—not the expert on beating the system with water-based drugs/diuretics.*

*Mike Berenger*

I can totally understand this person's concerns. Unfortunately, if another bodybuilder wants to cheat the system and illegally use drugs, there's nothing anyone can do about it. As another competitive bodybuilder, I have to tell you it's completely out of your control.

How many of us feel or have felt at one time or another the way this gentleman's does? You don't even need to be a competitive bodybuilder to identify with the way he feels. Sometimes, you can't help but get angry when a strong and massive guy walks by in your gym!

What other people do is out of your control!

What is in your control is becoming the very best you can be. You must constantly strive to make sure that you get the very most out of yourself and your bodybuilding efforts. No matter how hard you train or how intelligent you are in your bodybuilding approach right now, there is always a higher level to achieve. There are always five more pounds to lift, one more rep, a more efficient workout, better eating habits, better supplementation, and the list goes on and on.

The mind is an incredible machine. When you use your mind properly and keep yourself in an empowered emotional state on a daily basis, what you can achieve with your physique is absolutely astonishing.

Personally, I don't believe you can totally tap into that awesome source of power if you are worried about bad things that *might* happen to you and could *possibly* lead to your failure. Even if those thoughts are only in your subconscious mind, I believe they will hold you back. In this case, the thoughts would be about believing other bodybuilders are unfairly using drugs. We can't go all out at being our personal best if the thought of failure—especially if we are cheated in some way—is present. From reading Mike's letter, there is no way he is going to convince me the situation doesn't distract him, as he mentioned it several times. Again, I do understand his concerns.

What do I consider “natural” or “drug free”? Let me start by saying that I don’t make up the rules, but here is my personal opinion about what the words mean: In the bodybuilding world, a “natural” or “drug-free” bodybuilder can be simply described as a bodybuilder who has competed in a contest in which he or she has been drug-tested. Assuming the methods of testing are reliable, those bodybuilders have not used any steroids, growth hormone, or illegal physique-enhancing drugs to build their physiques.

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**The mind is an incredible machine. When you use your mind properly and keep yourself in an empowered emotional state on a daily basis, what you can achieve with your physique is absolutely astonishing.**

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The length of time in which a bodybuilder must be drug free varies with the different organizations that promote the different contests. Most organizations require athletes to be drug free for at least one year. Other contests may require three years, five years, or even a lifetime without the use of drugs. You have your choice to compete in any one you wish if you meet the requirements.

That starts the debate over whether or not a person who has ever used drugs in the past should be included in the description of a “drug-free” athlete. Opinions on this issue seem to be evenly split down the middle. Those who have never used drugs feel past drug users should be excluded from the distinguished “natural” status. Bodybuilders who have employed the assistance of drugs in the past feel that, just as with any other drug, you no longer benefit from their effects once you have discontinued their use.

The different bodybuilding organizations have different methods of testing. The most common and cost-efficient procedure seems to be the use of a polygraph. Other organizations use urinalysis, while others use both methods. Some contests randomly test their participants while most of them test every single participant.

I believe for a bodybuilder to be considered natural or drug free, he or she must not use anything that is not readily available to be purchased legally. This includes illegal recreational drugs or prescribed medications that may not be considered bodybuilding drugs, but can aid in a person losing body fat or getting more sleep to recover.

Not everyone agrees with my definition or opinion, however. I’ve been personally attacked for using prohormones, even though they are legally purchased and are not against the bodybuilding organization rules, and I still claim to be drug free. (How about I’m an “all-legal” bodybuilder?)

There is nothing particularly “natural,” so to speak, about sports supplements, but I believe that their use should be—as they currently are—considered permissible.

If you have read enough of my work, you know that I think the point is moot. It has nothing to do with you and your potential bodybuilding progress. So, you never have or never will use drugs? That’s great! I’ll do what I can to help you achieve your goals. Now let’s get to work.

Here’s lesson number one: It’s up to you to take full responsibility for your own bodybuilding progress and find a way to break through any physical or mental limitations you may have. What anyone else is doing—or has done in the past for that matter—has nothing to do with you and what you can accomplish. Bodybuilding is about being the very best bodybuilder *you* can be.

Some people criticize me for this stance because they believe I should be more “anti-drugs” and condemn those who use them or have used them in the past. Well, that’s a matter of opinion. If people believe that, I must respect their opinion. I believe, however, that it’s my responsibility to share with bodybuilders around the world the strategies—both mental and physical—that have led to my success. One of those mental strategies is not worrying about what the other guy does and instead focusing on myself, what I’m doing, and reaching my own genetic potential. Bodybuilding is a VERY difficult sport all by itself and it is incredibly tough to stay motivated and committed at times. I don’t want to make it even tougher by feeling that I’m so disadvantaged by not doing what the other guys are doing—or what I *think* they are doing.

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Do you know for certain that those other bodybuilders are taking drugs? Or is that just the overriding opinion and gossip of those around you? Remember, most people in this world are very negative and refuse to give anyone else the credit they deserve—especially when it challenges their own significance or importance.

I can’t vouch for the actions of anyone else. Frankly, I don’t know what other people do. And yes, I do believe there are cheaters out there. But I do not think cheating in a natural contest is as prevalent as many natural bodybuilders want to believe.

But, just for a moment, let me challenge the letter writer's theory he has apparently accepted as the truth. First of all, the drug-free time period for the Musclemania and the NPC Team Universe is one year. If those bodybuilders, are, as he said, strategically using drugs and are placing higher and higher every year, they are not "strategically" using the drugs: They are just flat-out cheating—there's no strategy involved! They must be drug-free for a series of years to enter the contests and not a few months. The Musclemania and the NPC Team Universe don't knowingly allow this to occur.

I'm always amazed how it's so convenient to believe that *someone else* would be so dishonest and calculating to win a contest—but never us! Michael D'Angelo, the bodybuilder that Mike Berenger has a lot of respect for, has won his class at the Musclemania. I won both the overall trophies at the Musclemania and the NPC Team Universe—and I can assure you that I was drug free. If those guys you mentioned were indeed cheating, it didn't affect Michael's or my placing in those shows.

Mike won because he is natural and outstanding. I won those shows because of my hard work, knowledge, and experience. And, to be quite honest, I was motivated to achieve such incredible condition at the '98 Team Universe because I was so humiliated with my fifth-place finish the previous year.

What if those guys are improving every year because they too are simply working harder or becoming more intelligent in their approach to contest preparation? Wouldn't it be a shame that they are discredited just because they've become more determined and raised their standards? I'm not so quick to point fingers at others with outstanding physiques because I know firsthand how focus and determination can transform a person. Unfortunately, I also know firsthand how others will call you a cheater and a liar because of your development.

I had this same discussion with my training partner Tony Ruggerio. He also believed a lot of the top drug-free competitors were really taking drugs. There is no doubt that that belief, by his own admission, affected his training, dieting, and "bodybuilding experience" as he prepared for a contest.

One day I said to him, "Tony, what if you do all this worrying, carry all this anxiety, and mentally hold back—and that 'cheater' you are talking about doesn't enter your class? Aren't you going to wish you had all of this precious time back to train harder, diet more strictly, and think more positively?" This is just one more thing to think about. You will never get back the time you've wasted worrying about something out of your control.

In the five months that we trained together, Tony went from a normally lean 171 pounds to a rock-hard 175 pounds. His body responded very well to the heavy, intense training philosophies I shared with him. He has made some massive

gains in both size and strength. I estimate that his body composition changed with him adding about 8 to 10 pounds of lean muscle over that rather short time period.

Tony is a much better bodybuilder since letting go of his anxiety. Once a “natural bodybuilder with some very limiting beliefs,” he is now able to optimistically dream again about creating an outstanding physique—just as he did as a teenager almost a decade ago. Just think of all the physical and mental strategies his mind is now free to absorb and implement!

“Your body can’t use all of that protein you’re eating every day, Skip! What can your body do with anything more than 200 grams of protein a day?” I remember Tony asking me when we first began training. Now, Tony is placing some very large orders for protein every month as he consumes 400 grams daily.

As I said before, you are not going to go all out or raise your standards to that outrageous level if you think you are going to get screwed in the end. Focus on yourself, become the best you can be, never stop striving for a higher level, and enjoy the bodybuilding experience. That’s what you can control. The rest is in God’s hands.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE EXERCISES**

### **Focus on Yourself and Become Your Very Best**

- 1. After reading this chapter, consider if there are any circumstances outside your control that are especially frustrating? Do they have a negative impact on you? Do they affect the amount of effort you put into bodybuilding? Do they make the bodybuilding process less enjoyable?**

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- 2. How can you make those circumstances outside your control have less of a negative impact? How would you need to choose to look at them? What is the mindset you must adopt toward them?**

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# **Part VIII**

## **Creating the Attitude of a True Winner**



# 26

## Winning Is All about Becoming the Best You Can Be

How is your training going? Are you pleased with the progress of your physique? Are your gains coming at a pace that you're satisfied with? Are you happy with your training performance? How about your eating habits? Do they support your efforts to reach your bodybuilding goals?

Yes? No? Sometimes? Not nearly enough? However you've answered these questions, how did you come up with those answers? What were the specific factors that you used to evaluate these areas? What was the standard or criteria that you measured yourself against?

The best way to get what you really want is to decide *exactly* what it is you really want. As I have stated before on several occasions, you must get clear on specifically what you want to achieve from your bodybuilding efforts. If you want to “win” at bodybuilding, you must first invest the time to figure out what “winning” means to you. Whether you want to gain five pounds of quality muscle or win five consecutive national titles, it doesn't matter. Once again, you must clearly outline what you feel *must* happen in order for you to consider yourself a winner.

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**The best way to get what you really want is to decide *exactly* what it is you really want.**

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There are many downsides to failing to get clear on what you really want. One of them is allowing the possibility of outside forces—ones that you have no control over—to determine the meaning of winning for you.

Comparing themselves unfairly to other people is one of the most common mental mistakes that bodybuilders of all different levels of experience make. Someone else's physique—one they currently do not have nor ever had any control over—becomes the standard that's used to make them feel like a winner or a loser.

*You* must take control over how you evaluate your bodybuilding progress. You have no control over another person's development or how they apply important

bodybuilding factors such as their level of motivation, years of training, muscle maturity that comes with age, level of knowledge—and genetic potential!

You must concentrate on yourself and your own development. Aggressive tackling and other strategies can prevent a running back from doing better than you in football—but there's no such defense in bodybuilding!

Have you ever noticed that, when a bodybuilder compares himself to other bodybuilders, he more often than not unfairly compares himself to guys who are genetically superior? ? If he does this often enough, he runs the risk of diminishing all the happiness and fulfillment that training could potentially bring to him—unless he chooses a better perspective.

Why doesn't he ever choose a beginner or a person with average muscle-building potential to compare himself to? That would make him feel better about himself instantly! Actually, some people do, but they are not the people who concern me right now. At least those people are satisfied with their training—whether they should be or not is another story.

“Bodybuilding is a lot tougher for me. I just don't have the natural gifts and talents that those guys do! I have to earn every ounce of muscle I get. And I don't gain much because I have terrible genetics!” is a sentiment I've often heard from frustrated lifters.

Now, I realize what I'm going to say will offend a few people. But, I believe the argument of genetics—whether the ones you have are good, bad, or somewhere in between—is an absolutely moot issue. In other words, I question if we as bodybuilders should be putting so much emphasis on the importance of genetics as we try to become our very best.

We have what we have. Our job as bodybuilders is to make the most out of what we've been given. If we are not careful, we can let our perceived genetic limitations get in the way of our progress—and the level in which we enjoy our bodybuilding efforts. We must learn to consistently focus on what gifts we do have—and not what we don't. Focusing on what we don't have is a total distraction!

“That's easy for you to say, La Cour! You're a genetic freak!” I can hear you screaming right now.

Am I saying that genetics have no bearing on the way you look or how you should train and eat? Certainly not. I firmly believe that good genetics, given to a bodybuilder who has intelligence, knowledge, and drive, will make him an outstanding bodybuilder—and probably at a rapid rate. I also believe that a bodybuilder who has average-at-best intelligence, knowledge, and motivation will

oftentimes still experience very good results from a minimal degree of effort due to his great genetics.

An intelligent, knowledgeable, and driven bodybuilder who *has not* been blessed with the propensity to grow muscle, may only achieve minimal results—even compared to the average-at-best work ethic of a genetically gifted person.

It just doesn't seem fair, does it? But, if you think about it, there are a lot of aspects in life that are not fair. As I said, the point is moot.

Here is a letter that I received:

*“When are you going to offer information that is useful and concrete to the athlete who doesn't have your genetics? You give a lot of ‘New Age’ psychological advice that blames the athlete for not making progress. But, what about the athlete who doesn't have the body he wants and ye, does everything possible to get results? I am very disappointed and discouraged. I prefer that you be honest and admit that, for some athletes, poor genetics may be an insurmountable obstacle and that drugs may be the only way to get results. Is it fair to encourage someone to attain an unreachable goal and to blame him for his failure?”*

What I encourage all bodybuilders to do is to become the very best that *they* can be. Not compared to me, not compared to Mr. Olympia, not even compared to the best bodybuilder in their local gym.

If you have identified *exactly* what you want from your bodybuilding efforts, have created an intelligent plan of attack, consistently follow through on all of the things that you must do to achieve the goals that you have set, are flexible in your approach, and have given yourself a reasonable amount of time to achieve your goals, then you should be happy with what you are accomplishing.

Satisfaction and peace of mind come from giving everything you have to become your very best. Also, keep in mind that feeling disappointed and discouraged are often unfortunate prerequisites on your way to ultimate success. Ask any champion and you will discover that he has felt disappointed and discouraged on many occasions along his journey, but instead of interpreting these feelings as signal to give up or lower the standards of what he expects from himself, he has used them as motivators and signals that he must find another way in order to reach his goals.

What this letter writer is feeling is frustration. Like many of us, he has an intense desire to improve his physique, but just can't seem to find the right answers. I don't claim to know all the answers for everybody, but I do know that people will *never* find the answers if they don't believe they exist.

Of what value would a coach or friend be to you if, when you were challenged, they said to you, "You know, you're right! You really don't have what it takes. Just keep on doing what you're doing. Just learn to be happy with what you already have." Would you feel as though that friend or coach had done you a favor by telling you that? I don't think so!

Don't ever expect me to be that kind of friend or coach to you.

First of all, I believe you should do whatever you must to resist feeling as though you have "done everything possible." No matter how difficult it may be to hear or understand right now, you must understand that there is *a/ways* a higher level of bodybuilding development to achieve. But you will never find that higher level if you do not keep the pressure on yourself to find the answers that will help you get the most out of yourself. That goes for you, me, and Mr. Olympia.

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**What I encourage all bodybuilders to do is to become the very best that *they* can be. Not compared to me, not compared to Mr. Olympia, not even compared to the best bodybuilder in their local gym.**

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You really don't want to begin believing that you've done everything—or you'll eventually just end up quitting. No one is going to keep banging his head against the wall and constantly come back for more with 100 percent intensity. It just will not happen. People must have optimism and hope in order to put forth their best efforts.

Secondly, just what have you defined as "results"? There are probably many people in your gym who would like to look like you—even though you will never look like me. And you know what? I'll never look like Flex Wheeler! There will always be someone who appears to have an easier time excelling at bodybuilding than you.

Imagine, for a moment, that you were blessed with more impressive bodybuilding gifts. Do you really think that if you had my genetics, or the genetics of the biggest guy in your gym, that you'd be satisfied for the rest of your days of training? I hope not! I don't think it's human nature to feel that way. It's definitely not the mindset of a champion.

Do you think Arnold Schwarzenegger, Lee Haney, or Dorian Yates said, "Wow! I've won Mr. Olympia for the first time! I don't need to accomplish anything else. I'm satisfied now."

The champion inside you will always want to take it to the next level—and I think feeling that way is a good thing! But the only way that you'll be able to take it to

that next level is by keeping the pressure on yourself to improve. You must embrace the belief that the very next strategy that you try may launch you into a whole new level of growth. You must constantly strive for more—and firmly believe that you can get it.

Why should you listen to me? A person who obviously has above-average genetics? What information can I possibly share with you? Let me ask you a question. What person would have training, nutritional, supplementation, or motivational strategies that could possibly help a frustrated bodybuilder who adamantly believes although he has done everything possible to improve, his “poor genetics” may be an insurmountable obstacle? Someone who is his *exact* genetic match?

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**The champion inside you will always want to take it to the next level—and I think feeling that way is a good thing! But the only way that you’ll be able to take it to that next level is by keeping the pressure on yourself to improve.**

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The odds of you finding your exact genetic match are impossible. There are just too many variables that make up genetics. What if the person whose advice you follow is an ectomorph and builds muscle at the same rate as you do—but has a faster metabolism? He can eat a lot more junk food than you and still look pretty good. You might not have that luxury. So, will you just follow his training advice and ignore that “genetically gifted” person’s nutritional theories?

You might as well forget about his training philosophies, too. Proper training and sound nutrition are too intertwined and interdependent of each other to be considered individually. You better start looking for your next genetic “match.”

I agree that some good bodybuilders don’t really know much and/or do not train very intelligently. That’s the great genetics working for them. They are *not* the ones that you should be trying to learn from.

I believe you should pick mentors or coaches among these people who you feel are giving 100 percent of their heart and soul in the pursuit of the best physique that they are capable of achieving—whatever that level may be. You should find people who are making the most of everything that they have been given—without any excuses.

You should choose individuals to help you who have already identified *exactly* what they want from their bodybuilding efforts, have created intelligent plans of attack, consistently follow through on all of the things that they must do to achieve their goals, and are flexible in their approach.

You may find these mentors in the professional bodybuilding ranks or at your local gym. Their genetics would not have anything to do with this criteria.

Don't forget that there are many other benefits you can get from bodybuilding besides big muscles or first-place trophies. One of the many benefits that I've received from my years of bodybuilding is the belief that I can achieve anything I set my mind to—but only if I can meet a certain set of requirements.

In order for me to succeed at what I want, I must have an intense passion for it—just as I do for bodybuilding, I know that I must be totally committed and dedicated to it—just as I am to bodybuilding. I must have at least some, but not necessarily an enormous amount, of God-given talent. To become successful at anything I want to do in life, I must become fearless and be willing to give everything I have inside of me. And, as in bodybuilding, I must be prepared to persevere through the ups and downs, the twists and turns, and the highs and lows that I will inevitably encounter during my journey.

I also feel that, if I meet all those ambitious stipulations, it really won't matter if I actually achieve that goal or not—because I'll be so enthralled with the journey the entire way. As you can see, I will have put myself in a “can't lose” situation.

Acquiring this empowering belief structure from bodybuilding will be far more “life-shaping” and bring me much more happiness in my life than will big muscles.

Don't rob yourself of valuable lessons that you can learn from bodybuilding and apply to the overall quality of your life by focusing on your perceived lack of genetic potential.

Winning is about making the biggest improvement you can starting from where you began compared to where you are now. The goal of winning should be to create the largest gap between the two. Winning is about using every physical, mental, and emotional resource and gift that God has made available to you. That's what winning in the game of life is all about as well.

Which of these do you have more respect for: the blue-blooded and privileged businessman who runs his family's multi-million-dollar company; or the hard-working man from the streets who, with barely a grade-school education, builds a profitable and thriving business through sheer determination, passion, and persistence—even if his business only produces one-tenth of the revenue of the more privileged man?

Well, you don't have any control over the type of family that you are born into, but just like the hard-working man, you do have the opportunity to create a thriving business. Wouldn't you agree? The same goes for your bodybuilding efforts. Maybe you'll be able to produce only one-tenth of the physique of a professional



bodybuilder, but with sheer determination, passion, and persistence, you can build a physique that many people will respect just as much. It's all up to you.

I'll end this chapter by telling you a story about someone I know very well, a former national-champion bodybuilder. After suffering a bitter and disappointing contest placing, he was talking to his friend and IFBB professional bodybuilder Ron "Alcatraz" Coleman.

He expressed his fear that he could no longer compete with the top-notch bodybuilders who compete in the NPC Team Universe. This bodybuilder felt that he didn't have the beautiful "lines" or shape—in other words, the genetic attributes—that they did. "The guys are just too gifted these days," he concluded.

Ron calmly assured him that he indeed had the genetics to win again. "You just need to diet strictly all year long. You'll see," he said.

That bodybuilder overcame his perceived limitations and went on to win the national championship that very next year. That bodybuilder was me.

Ron helped me step up and be accountable for my own development. I am so thankful that he didn't tell me, "You know, you're right! You really don't have what it takes. Just keep on doing what you're doing. Just learn to be happy with what you already have."

Ron gave me a gift that helped me become 100 percent responsible for my success or failure. He made me put the focus of my attention back on myself and what I could do for myself to become a better bodybuilder. He helped me eliminate the distraction of worrying about things and people out of my control.

My sincere desire is to give that same gift to you!







# 27

## **Real Leadership Is What's Needed in Drug-Free Bodybuilding**

The state of bodybuilding as it relates to steroids and other physique-enhancing drugs reminds me of a story I heard on the news years ago. Members of this particular religious group decided to go to the place of worship of a different religious group with the intention of getting the different group to change their beliefs. On the different group's most religious day of the year, the determined members literally circled around the other's building and began praying for them to "see the light."

I don't remember ever coming across this particular strategy during any of the times I've read Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Even if their God were the "right" God, is this the most effective way for the first religious group to persuade others to adapt to their way of thinking? How can they be certain they have the "right" answer? How have they become so sure of themselves?

What if the second religious group started a counter-praying strategy so their visitors would switch to *their* religious beliefs? Who would win then?

I have no doubt both sides felt they were praying to the "right" God. When the one group came to pray, did they sincerely have the other group's best interest in mind? Or was the event merely a way to make themselves feel better and more righteous? The bottom line is their actions are pointless. No one is going to successfully persuade anyone else with that strategy.

How does this story relate to our world of bodybuilding? I believe drug-free bodybuilders are totally wasting their time if they think they are going to improve bodybuilding by constantly attacking the character of those who use steroids and other drugs.

As drug-free bodybuilders, what's our real intention? Are we really trying to improve our sport? Or are we trying to make ourselves feel better because we have inferior results with a lot more work than our drug-using counterparts?

When people are questioned on their actions, beliefs, or lifestyles, the most common instinct is to stand firm and defend their position. One of our greatest needs as human beings is to stay consistent with the opinion or view we have of

ourselves. I can guarantee you that the biggest steroid abuser does not see a bad person when he looks into the mirror.

Everyone can justify their actions—no matter what *you* think of them. If it is your intention to improve the sport of bodybuilding, you must deal with those having opinions that differ from yours with compassion, empathy, and patience.

If you draw a line in the sand and view bodybuilders who use drugs as “the enemy, that’s exactly what you will make them—your enemies! What do enemies do to each other? They fight. They challenge everything the other one says and does. They look for chinks in each other’s armor. You will never shame anyone into changing their beliefs or actions.

World-renown motivational speaker Zig Ziglar is quoted as saying, “You don’t want to win *over* people. What you want is to *win them over*.”

I believe there is a better way to handle this situation—but it will take courage, patience, and leadership on the part of the drug-free bodybuilding community.

I did a survey with some of the top drug-free bodybuilders in the country and asked them, “Who was the person who influenced you to start bodybuilding?” More than half said Arnold Schwarzenegger.

When you have heroes or idols, what do you do? You want to walk like them, talk like them, think like them, and hopefully, be successful like them. Would it be safe to say that you might even model their methods and strategies for success? Remember, these were the top *drug-free* bodybuilders I surveyed.

A true leader creates the direction for others to follow. Followers wait to see what the most accepted or easiest path is to take.

Drug-free bodybuilders need to lighten up on passing judgment and just lead by example. As I see it, drug-free bodybuilders should be living, walking, breathing examples that training naturally is the *only* way to train. We can influence more people by what we *accomplish* than by what we *say*.

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**A true leader creates the direction for others to follow. Followers wait to see what the most accepted or easiest path is to take.**

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No one is going to be effective simply by telling another what to. You can persuade others more effectively, however, by *demonstrating* the benefits of your beliefs and they will want to enjoy them as well.







# 28

## **Drug-Free Bodybuilders Are Unknowingly Ruining Drug-Free Bodybuilding!**

This chapter is meant to serve as a call to action for the drug-free bodybuilding community—the *entire* drug-free bodybuilding community. Whether you currently compete in bodybuilding contests, hope to enter a contest in the future, have competed in the past, or just love to train hard and are driven to build significant muscle mass without the aid of steroids or any other physique-enhancing drugs, this message is for you.

Besides training drug free, the passion and desire involve in having built or intending to eventually build an outstanding physique—however you wish to define outstanding—are the only other prerequisites needed for this message to apply to you.

We, ourselves, are preventing drug-free bodybuilding from flourishing.

Drug-free bodybuilders should be concerned about an issue that seems to continually breed within our own drug-free subset of this subculture called bodybuilding. Why? We are limiting our own abilities, restricting our own genetic potential, diminishing our own bodybuilding experiences, and creating dissent among ourselves.

If you are a passionate, determined, and ambitious drug-free lifter, you might be thinking, “What are you saying, La Cour? Drug-free bodybuilding is more popular than ever. People are fed up with the freakish, needle-injecting bodybuilders featured in the magazines. The majority of people want to see toned-down, more realistic, and achievable physiques!”

Let me ask you a few questions: If drug-free bodybuilding is so popular, why don't the best drug-free bodybuilders receive more coverage in the international bodybuilding publications? Why are the numbers of competitors who enter drug-tested contests so much smaller than the non-tested shows? Why are there radically fewer spectators who support those contests as opposed to the non-tested contests?

Here are some other things to think about: When you look at a bodybuilder's physique, what do you consider “toned-down”? What do you consider “realistic”? What does an “achievable” physique look like to you?

Herein lies the challenge with drug-free bodybuilding: A physique that appears to be drug free or natural is all in the eyes of the beholder—and each one of us has a different capacity to believe based on our own perspective and personal experiences. To many people, there is no such thing as a person with an outstanding drug-free physique—only one who uses a smaller amount of drugs than the known users and beats the drug-testing system.

I'm not sure if anyone else has put himself or herself in the middle of this raging controversy as much as I have over the past few years. I've been praised for my efforts by many people and harshly criticized by just as many (if not more) for what I've tried to communicate. What I've learned through my travels around the world and contacts through the Internet is that there is a tremendously wide range of opinions among drug-free bodybuilders in what they believe is realistically achievable without illegal drugs.

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**Herein lies the challenge with drug-free bodybuilding: A physique that appears to be drug free or natural is all in the eyes of the beholder—and each one of us has a different capacity to believe based on our own perspective and personal experiences.**

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Most people think attaining significant muscle mass combined with an exceptional degree of leanness is impossible to achieve without drugs. Some believe you can build a lot of muscle, but getting ripped can't be done. Still, I've run into many others who have seen many drug-free bodybuilders get shredded while holding on to thick, dense muscle—now that's impossible without the aid of physique-enhancing drugs.

I realize accepting some of my opinions and adopting some of the beliefs I suggest will be challenging to say the least. I can honestly admit that, if three or four years into my own training, I had seen a guy who was built like me now and claimed to be drug free, I would have had a difficult time believing. The constant questioning of the credibility among drug-free bodybuilders is a temptation I urge you to resist. I realize this mindset is pervasive, from the local, novice bodybuilders all the way up to the elite champions. The year after I won the NPC Team Universe, two bodybuilders in the crowd said to one another, "Let's see what kind of shape Skip comes in this year. You *know* he had a little 'help' last year!" The gentlemen were unaware they were sitting right behind my training partner. If you've assumed these were just struggling, jealous local competitive bodybuilders, you'd be mistaken. They were two former overall NPC Team Universe champions themselves—both of whom have awesome, drug-free physiques that the masses would see as "unbelievable" themselves.

Let me also say that I do not know or claim to know what other bodybuilders do behind closed doors. You never know for certain whose physique has been built strictly through hard work and diligence, whose has relied on drugs, or whose has the benefit of both. I do know for certain, however, what they choose to do is out of your control. Managing your own physical and mental states on a consistent basis is within your control. If you can manage your states on a consistent basis, you will more than likely put forth your very best effort. If you consistently put forth your very best effort, you will create a physique that will maximize your full genetic potential. Those factors *are* in your control.

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**I can honestly admit that, if three or four years into my own training, I had seen a guy who was built like me now and claimed to be drug free, I would have had a difficult time believing.**

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Around 1994, drug-free bodybuilding enjoyed unprecedented popularity. Unfortunately, our day in the sun didn't last very long. As I stated before, we, ourselves, have prevented drug-free bodybuilding from flourishing.

How did we undermine our own efforts? Well, to fully understand the situation and why I feel this way, we must examine the current state of drug-free bodybuilding and look deeper under the surface. We must first reflect back on how drug-free bodybuilding began receiving recognition—and how we blew our opportunities. Then, we must determine what we all must do to bring life back this segment of bodybuilding—for the good of the *entire* community—and not only for ourselves as individuals.

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**I realize accepting some of my opinions and adopting some of the beliefs I suggest will be challenging to say the least.**

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The only chance for drug-free bodybuilding to regain its popularity for its diligent athletes to be credited with the accolades they deserve is for our own community to make major changes in our beliefs, actions, and standards of excellence.

### **A Look Back**

Motivated by the deaths of high-profile professional bodybuilders, John Balik and *Ironman* magazine were among the first to discuss this controversial issue on a large scale. They featured articles that offered strategies for drug-free physique development, showcased photos of natural bodybuilders, and even spearheaded a series of drug-tested contests. Although many enthusiasts were already

committed to drug-free bodybuilding on a regional, state, and local scale, this was really the first time this segment of bodybuilding was given national and international recognition in a major bodybuilding magazine.

Within a couple of years after Ironman's lead, supplement giant Twinlab discontinued promoting non-tested bodybuilding contests and their athletes and opted for sponsoring only drug-free shows and bodybuilders. Twinlab's magazine changed its title to *All Natural Muscular Development* and dedicated its editorials to those training in the gyms without the use of drugs. Guided by the leadership of Steve Blechman, the company sponsored drug-free bodybuilders and invested a significant amount of money in national television commercials that conveyed its new purpose and mission.

Bill Phillips and *Muscle Media* turned their focus to the "regular guy in the gym" who trained naturally to build muscle and lose body fat. This was a big departure from the magazine's old format that directed a considerable amount of attention to "intelligent" drug-use. Phillips' EAS supplement company hired several fine drug-free bodybuilders to represent its direction.

There is no doubt that a few of these companies wanted to promote drug-free bodybuilding but encountered difficulty and resistance along the way. Many of them received angry letters questioning their rationale and sincerity in promoting drug-free bodybuilding. Many skeptics believed their actions were not done out of concern for the sport of bodybuilding. "They're just using the drug issue as a way to make more money!" the pessimists insisted.

Many drug-free bodybuilders around the country were initially excited. "Now we will have our chance for national magazine recognition. Our day has finally come!" they were certain. However, that excitement would not last long. When the people who *supposedly* intended to support drug-free bodybuilding saw the outstanding drug-free physiques featured in the magazines, their enthusiasm quickly waned. Their excitement and anticipation soon converted into frustration and anger. In their opinion, the bodybuilders pictured in the magazines were too good to be truly drug free. Our own negativity had a damaging impact. Let's look where drug-free bodybuilding is now as opposed to a few years ago.

### **Where Are We Now?**

*Ironman* and *Balik* received many complaints about their actions. Many people cited inconsistencies in their message and voiced their opinions in the forum of the other bodybuilding magazines' gossip columns. Although *Ironman* still has some drug-free information, its focus is not nearly the same as it was before.

The traditional bodybuilding community—and drug-free bodybuilders alike—heavily criticized the efforts of *All Natural Muscular Development*. "How can you

possibly call yourself 'All Natural' with the bodybuilders you feature?" The magazine has now gone back to its original title *Muscular Development*.

From what I've been told, *Muscle Media*, which features bodybuilders with more achievable physiques, in the past received letters doubting the drug-free credibility of their athletes—as well as the credibility of the Body-for-Life contestants. I guess you just can't please everybody.

### **How We Are Holding Ourselves Back**

Why would drug-free bodybuilders destroy their own sport and opportunities? Isn't it true that most natural bodybuilders love natural bodybuilding? Aren't these bodybuilders passionate about living the drug-free training lifestyle? Aren't most, if not all, of these bodybuilders extremely proud to be drug free?

There is no doubt that drug-free lifters love bodybuilding. Who else would take the tougher road to build their physiques and avoid the temptation of steroids and other drugs? They are also very passionate about what their choices. Virtually every letter or e-mail I get from a natural bodybuilder will either capitalize, bold print, underline, italicize, put an exclamation point after the word, or use a combination of all of the above when using the word "natural" or "drug-free" in an effort to separate themselves from their drug-assisted counterparts.

The passion of many drug-free bodybuilders works as a double-edged sword, however. It works for them—but also works *against* them. I believe many drug-free bodybuilders continually destroy the sport they are so committed to in the following ways:

- Many drug-free bodybuilders tightly cling to the disempowering belief that only so much can be achieved without drugs.
- The individual drug-free bodybuilder, in too many cases, has a tremendous need to feel significant and important.
- Many drug-free bodybuilders question the legitimacy of the drug-free status of anyone who has achieved better development naturally compared to themselves.
- Many drug-free bodybuilders talk negatively about drug-free bodybuilding to anyone who will listen.

One of the requirements of any sport that ever hopes to prosper is that its standards of excellence must be constantly elevated. Evolution, not stagnation, must occur. Drug-free bodybuilding seems to thwart its own ability to flourish by creating limits as to how good its lifters can be.

Some drug-free bodybuilders have expectations for what they can accomplish that are too low. There are a lot of drug-free bodybuilders who find great comfort in believing that I and other accomplished bodybuilders are really not drug free. But staying comfortable will *not* produce an outstanding physique. I get hundreds of letters from bodybuilders who have been inspired to levels of natural development they previously thought unattainable.

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## **The passion of many drug-free bodybuilders works as a double-edged sword.**

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What separates the ultimate destinies of the two different types of bodybuilders—even though they are exposed to the very same information? Their belief system will separate them. When the believers eventually meet the nonbelievers on the competitive stage or in the gym, one of them is going to get dusted! I'm sure you know which one that will be. Which one are you going to be?

Which leads me to the question: When is a physique considered too good to be natural? Again, that depends on the belief system of the person who's forming the opinion. I have seen guys from 130 pounds to 230 pounds, ripped and not so ripped, and genetic freaks to genetic inferiors, get accused of using drugs. There seems to be neither rhyme nor reason.

Drug-free bodybuilding is an endeavor wherein the majority of its competitors will remain trapped under a "ceiling" of how much development they believe can be achieved. Many drug-free bodybuilders attack anyone who they even think is taking drugs—whether that use is now or in the past.

I believe this stems primarily from the bodybuilder's need to feel significant, special, or important. We all need to feel this way as humans—no matter how humble you think you are. The key distinction between winners and losers is how they act upon this need.

Before drug-free bodybuilders were featured in national magazines, the majority of drug-free bodybuilders did feel special—no matter what level of development they had actually achieved. If someone was bigger, they just rationalized that the other person was on drugs and they weren't. That's the only reason why another would have more development. Therefore they were still able to feel special. "Well, I'm drug free and he isn't," they always reasoned. No facts were necessary here or requested. They could always look at themselves as "the big fish in the little pond."

Surely, their inferiority could have had nothing to do with genetics, years of training, knowledge, work ethic, nutrition, training, or supplements. If their inferiority was due to these factors then they would no longer be special. People

will fiercely hold on to the identity they have of themselves. The easiest way to feel special is to tear down your rivals—not work harder and improve yourself. All you have to do is move your mouth and talk.

At bodybuilding shows, when a drug-free bodybuilder achieves outstanding muscle mass, balance, or conditioning, that person is immediately questioned if he is truly drug free by at least half of the audience and his peers. I can't tell you how many contests I've been to where the audience leaves muttering among themselves, "There is no way that guy was drug free!" or "Even if he is really drug free now—which I seriously doubt—I know he took drugs in the past! Even though my little Bobby came in sixth place, he's drug free for life!" Look, mom, you are not helping your little Bobby become a better bodybuilder by providing him with excuses!

These doubters go much farther than just complaining after a contest. They express their opinions with absolute certainty to everyone who will listen. They write letters to the magazines. They complain to contest promoters of the Musclemania Natural Bodybuilding Championships and other drug-free bodybuilding contests. They talk among themselves and spread their gospel.

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**When the believers eventually meet the nonbelievers on the competitive stage or in the gym, one of them is going to get dusted! I'm sure you know which one that will be. Which one are you going to be?**

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If you had your own money invested in an ambitious project like cleaning up the competitive sport of bodybuilding—but received a ton of negative comments—how long would you persist? To quote a highly influential source in this area whom I will not name, "Bodybuilding is such a small market to begin with. When you reduce it down to drug-free bodybuilding, the market gets even smaller." I imagine if I pushed him further on this point the person might add, "And the drug-free bodybuilding market is divided even further into those who believe and those who do not believe the bodybuilders featured are truly drug free."

Many drug-free bodybuilders go on to express their negative opinions about how natural bodybuilding is such a sham. Does this sound like anyone you know? Are those people conducting themselves as goodwill ambassadors of drug-free bodybuilding? Do they think they are going to enlist many more enthusiastic participants in the sport by sharing those limiting beliefs with everyone they know? Of course not. Why would they care about the effects of their actions? To them, their own significance is their utmost concern.

## The Results of Our Negativity

Do you think it's bad *now*? Because more and more drug-free bodybuilders are absolutely *convinced* their fellow competitors on stage and peers in the gym are not truly drug free, they are beginning to rationalize taking drugs and considering the possibility of trying to cheat the system themselves. This cycle of limiting beliefs is leading drug-free bodybuilding in a downward spiral. It's becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

What will happen if we don't raise our standards, let go of our individual need for significance, and start talking in a more respectful manner about those who participate in our sport? What will ultimately happen to drug-free bodybuilding?

What will happen when promoters can't persuade enough bodybuilders to enter their drug-tested bodybuilding contests? Who's going to pay for those expensive drug tests? Who will pay to come see the shows? Without the ability to make money, or even break even, how many promoters will be motivated to organize shows? How many drug-tested events with there eventually be to enter in the future?

The only ones who will be left to participate in drug-free bodybuilding are beginners, genetically inferior lifters who knowingly have limited potential, and pretty-darn-good bodybuilders who only take up the sport only as a casual hobby. Those who could excel, have a major impact on the sport, set new and higher standards, and influence thousands of others to follow in their footsteps will be pushed to the "dark side" in an effort to gain the respect and recognition they expect from their abilities. They surely wouldn't expect to get it from other drug-free bodybuilders.

How can drug-free bodybuilders ever expect to be pictured in international bodybuilding magazines, let alone earn endorsement contracts with supplement companies someday if no one is interested, respects, or has any faith in the sport in which they excel? They can't!

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**Those who could excel, have a major impact on the sport, set new and higher standards, and influence thousands of others to follow in their footsteps will be pushed to the "dark side" in an effort to gain the respect and recognition they expect from their abilities. They surely wouldn't expect to get it from other drug-free bodybuilders.**

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How will accomplished noncompetitive drug-free lifters, who have been busting their tails in the gym for years, ever expect to receive the credit they deserve for



their dedication? Will they ever rid themselves of the jeers behind their backs from the rookies who only have a couple of years of training experience?

### **What We Must Do to Promote Drug-Free Bodybuilding in a More Positive Manner**

To prevent the lack of interest and credibility in drug-free bodybuilding, and its ultimate demise, we must all do some very specific things—and do them *immediately*:

- We must change our beliefs from ones that limit what we can really accomplish without the use of drugs and instead create new beliefs that empower us.
- We must let go of our need for significance for the good of the entire sport of drug-free bodybuilding.
- We must respect each other and the efforts of others. We must give other drug-free bodybuilders the benefit of *our* doubts which are caused by *our* own limiting beliefs. We must become *inspired*—not demoralized—by those who have accomplished more than we have. We must learn how they have succeeded.
- We must become positive ambassadors for drug-free bodybuilding.

This means you must change your beliefs. Haven't you accomplished more as a drug-free bodybuilder than you believed was possible only a couple of years ago? How have you made those changes in your beliefs? Whatever you did then, you must start doing now. You must act as if your development will become outstanding when you find the right set of strategies and give yourself enough time. That is an empowering belief!

You must get over yourself. This is a very large world and there is a great possibility that someone, somewhere, can be better than you naturally. It may be hard to swallow for some of us, but it's the truth.

Give other drug-free bodybuilders the respect they deserve. If you are not as good as other bodybuilders, reexamine your bodybuilding habits, raise your standards, and use what they've accomplished as motivation to take yourself to the next level.

You must become a positive ambassador for drug-free bodybuilding. If you were to talk to the top drug-free bodybuilders as I have, you'd immediately discover that they are just as passionate about drug-free bodybuilding as you are. You must adopt the beliefs that these men and women, as well as the accomplished bodybuilders in your very own gym, have used their God-given genetics,

knowledge, work ethic, years of training, or a combination of all of the above in a manner superior to yours—at least at the present time. Don't take the path of least resistance and make yourself feel better by convincing yourself they are really on drugs and are cheating you, themselves, and the system. That's *not* going to take you, your physique, or the sport of drug-free bodybuilding where you really want them all to go.

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**Give other drug-free bodybuilders the respect they deserve. If you are not as good as other bodybuilders, reexamine your bodybuilding habits, raise your standards, and use what they've accomplished as motivation to take yourself to the next level.**

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Give the leaders, promoters, and financial backers of drug-free bodybuilding your full support. Through their efforts, we all win in the long run.

John Balik of Ironman Magazine created the NPC Ironman Naturally series of contests and should be given the credit he deserves, and the contests should be given your support. Steve Blechman should be commended for everything he did to publicize drug-free bodybuilding. He invested a large amount of money and took a lot of grief for his efforts. Bill Phillips deserves a round of applause for how he has contributed. Although his magazine does not provide contest coverage, he has taken our sport to another level first with his EAS Grand Spokesperson and now his Body-For-Life contests. While drug-free bodybuilders in the gym may never set their sights on entering a competitive bodybuilding contest, many will now raise the standards of what they expect from their physiques. Some will join us on stage and learn to respect and admire us for what we've been doing for years. Thousands and thousands of these entrants are pushing drug-free bodybuilding to the next level and are achieving "unbelievable" results. These noncompetitive bodybuilders are making us all reevaluate what we once believed was possible.

Here are a few final questions: What are your new beliefs about what you can accomplish with your drug-free physique? Will you let go of your own need to feel important? Will you give drug-free bodybuilders who are currently better than you the credit they deserve? Will you become a better ambassador for drug-free bodybuilding and promote this sport you love in a positive manner?

The future of drug-free bodybuilding depends on you and me. Our destiny is in our own hands!





# 29

## **Happiness Is Victory**

As a bodybuilder, do you ever feel like an oddball when you're around people who don't train or work out? And no matter how hard you try to explain the happiness you get from your disciplined lifestyle, they just don't seem to get it? "Why in the world would anyone subject himself or herself to such torture?" is a question you're probably often asked. Do you sometimes feel isolated and misunderstood?

Bodybuilding's bad reputation in the eyes of the general public doesn't help you get the respect you deserve either. Most "regular" people incorrectly assume that you're a bodybuilder because you're narcissistic, insecure, or are making up for some inadequacies in your life. People don't always realize that you simply enjoy the physical and mental challenges of the sport. On, no! It must be because you have some major hang-ups!

Many people around fail to understand why bodybuilders or fitness enthusiasts would dedicate so much time and effort depriving themselves of life's pleasures. "That working-out stuff is not my priority in life. I'd rather be having fun with my friends," and "I couldn't eat the boring way you do—I love food too much!" are sayings you've probably heard time and time again.

Why would we even care what those around us think or say? To some degree, we as humans have the need to be accepted by others. Who wants to feel like a salmon swimming upstream? It's much easier to do what everyone else is doing and simply go with the flow. In the short run, it's oftentimes more comfortable to adapt to the lower standards of those who surround you.

But we also have a need as people to feel special, unique, or important in some way in our lives. I'm sure that being a model of health and fitness to those around you makes you feel great, doesn't it? If you are lucky enough to accomplish your goal of becoming special in some way, you'll surely disconnect yourself from some of those around you. Even if that's not your intention, some people will become uncomfortable in your presence and shy away—if you're lucky. If you're not so lucky, you can probably expect a few verbal jabs directed at you and what you are passionate about in life.

By choosing to live the bodybuilding lifestyle, we are often faced with an unfortunate dilemma. How can we enjoy our passion for training and fitness without feeling out of sync with the rest of the world? How can we meet our

common human need to feel unique without disconnecting ourselves from the rest of the world?

These two human needs always seem to battle each other. You're often forced to make a decision between working toward your passion or being accepted. This dilemma can ruin the happiness you experience from your bodybuilding efforts if you let it.

If you experience this type of pain from time to time, you are not alone. I've struggled with those feelings on many occasions throughout my bodybuilding career. Let me try to offer a point of view that can help you work through this challenge.

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**Who wants to feel like a salmon swimming upstream? It's much easier to do what everyone else is doing and simply go with the flow. In the short run, it's oftentimes more comfortable to adapt to the lower standards of those who surround you.**

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In life, you have pleasure and you have victory. Pleasurable events are things like going to movies, parties, or out to dinner with friends. Receiving great gifts for no reason at all is something that brings pleasure.

As a hard-working bodybuilder, victory is something you often feel. Victory is when you string a series of good training weeks and eating habits together and earn the satisfaction of seeing what you've created in the mirror. Victory is when you've worked hard at your job or studied diligently at school and are awarded a raise or an outstanding grade.

Pleasurable events won't necessarily make you happy. Studies have followed lottery winners and have shown that many of them are less happy after winning a tremendous amount of money. Even after experiencing the vacations, cars, and other extravagances that the newfound wealth afforded them. Maybe if they had earned the money to purchase those luxuries themselves they would have felt victory.

Training at 5 o'clock in the morning is one decision I made years ago that has had a tremendous impact on the quality of my life. The greatest benefits I enjoy have nothing to do with my either natural growth hormones supposedly being at their highest at that time or because I'll burn more calories throughout the day either. The feeling of accomplishment, or victory, that I've earned every morning after an awesome workout gets my day off to a great start. Simply knowing that I've already accomplished something that 99 percent of the population knows

they should do, but do not, gives me that feeling of being unique. This mental boost gives me momentum for the rest of the day.

We are constantly striving to be happy. We work towards feeling good. On the road to happiness, however, we often encounter forks in the road. It seems we are often asked to make a choice between pleasure and victory.

Pleasure is a much more passive pursuit than victory. Most of the time, all that you need to do is sit back and be entertained. Pursuing victory is the road less traveled. Why? Victory requires virtues such as courage, patience, persistence, discipline, and faith. Victory demands hard work. Pleasure is instant gratification. In order to experience victory, you'll need to first pay the price. Only then can you enjoy the rewards.

In the long run, only seeking pleasure will not bring happiness. Happiness comes from victory! Victory is what you get out of your training. You do the things you must to get the physique you desire—even when you sometimes don't necessarily want to. You do the things you must do for the greater good.

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**In life, you have pleasure and you have victory. Pleasurable events are things like going to movies, parties, or out to dinner with friends. Receiving great gifts for no reason at all is something that brings pleasure.**

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Don't get me wrong. I believe you should spice up your life with as many pleasurable events as possible. There is definitely a place for balance in your life. But, if you make attaining pleasure your ultimate goal and expect doing so will bring you happiness, you'll be in for a rude awakening.

There are many people in the world who spent most of their time avoiding defeat. What they don't realize is that, even if they are successful at doing so, they're also cutting off all possibility of victory. The only way you can experience victory is by "putting your butt on the line." The possibility of failure is always present while pursuing victory, but you must exhibit courage, confidence, and faith if you ever want to be happy. You'll need to sacrifice short-term safety of for long-term happiness.

Choose the people you associate with wisely. Can you imagine spending the majority of your time around people who don't understand or who reject the one aspect of life that brings you so much happiness? It would lessen your happy experiences to say the least. You'd constantly be going through a "push-pull" situation. On one hand, you are loving life. The same thing that brings you so

much pleasure can also bring you so much pain because some people just do not understand.

I had the unfortunate experience of having someone very close to me say "Skip, you don't know how to have fun!" Those words blew me away!

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**Victory is what you get out of your training. You do the things you must to get the physique you desire-even when you sometimes don't necessarily want to. You do the things you must do for the greater good.**

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Don't know how to have fun? Me? My work is my play. I have the opportunity to live my passion. I also have the opportunity to share my passion and knowledge with others. How can I not be having fun?

The truth is that it's not the discipline and self-sacrifice of bodybuilding that brings me unhappiness. It's trying to fit into a world that has no idea of what makes you or me happy. It's individuals who want to force us into their definition of happiness.

At that moment, I realized something that I probably already knew but was now firmly cemented in my mind. Happiness is not pleasure. Happiness is victory. The epiphany was kind of freeing for me in a way. I hope it has the same effect on you.

Do you ever see little kids who simply have mastered video games? They're fearless! They're jumping over flying objects, destroying evil villains, and racking up awesome scores.

This one little boy I know was playing one of those games. I pushed him aside and jokingly said, "Hey, give me a chance! I'll show you how to play this game!" I grabbed the controls and started maneuvering. I started jumping and wildly started shooting my weapon. The kid was laughing his head off as I failed miserably. I was annihilated within seconds after getting my turn to play.

"No, no, no, Skip!" he screamed. "You don't want to run away from that type of monster!"

"What are you talking about? It looked like a bad monster that wanted to kill me! I thought I was supposed to run away from or kill those kinds of monsters."

"Not those ones," he said. "When you eat those monsters, they make you stronger and let you play longer. You'll win if you eat enough of those monsters!"



There was little chance of me winning at this video game. I had no clue what the object of the game was. Although I was smart enough to know I was supposed to avoid monsters, I didn't know that some would help me.

Too many people are playing the game of life this way. They all want to win at the game of life. They know that happiness is what they're supposed to be after, but they have no clue about how to attain it. They're running away from the "monsters" that they perceive as potentially harmful. They don't understand that if they face these challenges, they will become stronger and have a better chance at being happy. Instead, they spend the majority of their time seeking pleasurable events and can't figure out why they're unhappy.

So, maybe you've had the right idea all along with this disciplined bodybuilding lifestyle. Maybe you understand something about life that they don't. Maybe you should take even more pride in what you're passionate about doing and not let anyone make you feel disconnected.

One last point. As you're hoping for understanding for your passion for bodybuilding from the people around you, be sure that you give that understanding right back. Just because someone may be a little overweight, be respectful to his or her passion. Whether it's politics, computers, reading, fixing up old cars, or basket weaving, don't ever force your ambivalent or negative feelings upon anyone else. These pastimes may be providing them with some awesome victories. You could be lessening their level of happiness in life—and you know how that feels.







## **Review of the Chapter Exercises**

### Chapter One - This Book Can Be a Powerful Step in Your Compelling Journey!

1. What motivated you to invest your money in this book?
2. Were there any specific events (either good or bad) in your life that prompted you to take action now rather than later?
3. For you to consider this book to be an outstanding value, what specifically must happen? How must you feel afterwards? What specific actions must you take?
4. Why are you committed to reading this book in its entirety and completing all of the exercises?
5. What specific date have you set as a goal to complete this book and all of the exercises?
6. Are there any challenges you anticipate that might prevent you from reading this book in its entirety and completing all of the exercises?
7. What are your plans to overcome any challenges that might prevent you from reading this book in its entirety and completing all of the exercises?

### Chapter Two - Creating Your Mission Statement Will Pull You toward Your Goals

1. What are your ultimate long-term objectives, goals, and dreams that you want to achieve most from your bodybuilding efforts?
2. What have you determined to be your most important ultimate long-term objective?
3. What are some of the reasons why you are committed to reaching your most important long-term objective despite any challenges or setbacks you may encounter along the way?
4. What are some of the specific major steps and actions you must take in order to reach your most important long-term objective?
5. What words best describe the character qualities you already possess (or need to possess) in order to reach your long-term objective?
6. What are some of your past accomplishments that give you confidence that you will meet your long-term objective?
7. What are some of the comments people have told you that make them certain you have what's needed to meet your long-term objective?
8. Create your mission statement.

### Chapter Three - Turn Your Bodybuilding into a Masterpiece

1. What would need to happen for you to consider your bodybuilding efforts a masterpiece?
2. When most, if not all, of those events occurred and you truly felt you had created a masterpiece from your bodybuilding efforts, how would that make you feel?

#### Chapter Four - Creating an Empowering Identity Can Change Your Bodybuilding Destiny

1. Who are some of your heroes and role models? (They do not necessarily need to come exclusively from the bodybuilding world.)
2. What makes them so special in your eyes? What are some of the character qualities they possess that have earned your respect and admiration?
3. If you were to adopt the character qualities that you admire most in your heroes and role models, how would they positively affect your bodybuilding efforts?

#### Chapter Five - How Do You Know You Are Working Hard?

1. What makes you feel you are currently working hard? How do you measure your work ethic? To whom do you compare yourself?
2. Create special names for the following levels of effort needed to create the following type of physiques: (1) a person with a good physique, (2) a person with a very good physique (almost the very best training in your gym), (3) a person with an outstanding physique (one of the very best you would ever see in or out of the gym). Be sure to choose names that have special meanings to you. These names should get you excited!
3. List the specific actions these individuals would need to do each and every day to create their physiques.
4. Choosing among these three choices, what type of physique are you truly committed to earning?
5. List the specific actions you would need to do each and every day to create the type of physique you are committed to earning.
6. What have you learned about yourself and the amount of effort you've been putting into your bodybuilding efforts?

#### Chapter Six - Examining Your Current Beliefs about What You Can Accomplish

1. Regardless of what others tell you, what are some of your *opinions* about what you can and cannot achieve without the use of drugs?
2. Regardless of what others tell you, what are some of your *beliefs* about what you can and cannot achieve without the use of drugs?
3. Regardless of what others tell you, what are some of your *convictions* about what you can and cannot achieve without the use of drugs?

#### Chapter Seven - Reversing Common Pitfalls in Your Belief Structure Could Catapult You into a New Level of Drug-Free Growth

1. Evaluate your level of training knowledge. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?

2. What references make you certain the way you evaluate your level of training knowledge is accurate?
3. Evaluate your level of nutrition knowledge. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
4. What references make you certain the way you evaluate your level of nutrition knowledge is accurate?
5. What have you learned from this exercise? From what you've learned, what specific actions can you take immediately that will help take your physique to the next level?

### Chapter Eight - The First Step toward Succeeding in Drug-Free Bodybuilding Is Acknowledging Your Fears

1. What do you feel is holding you back from earning the physique you really want?
2. What are your specific fears? Be honest!

### Chapter Nine - Asking Yourself Better Questions to Create New References and Eliminate Your Fears

1. List the fears you identified during the exercises of the last chapter.
2. For each of the fears you have listed, force yourself to create at least three or four questions that challenge your beliefs. Be tough on yourself! If you can create doubt in your mind that these beliefs are not necessarily true, you will be the winner in the long run.

### Chapter Ten - Controlling Your Emotions on a Consistent Basis Is a Key to Bodybuilding Success

1. How have your bodybuilding efforts *benefited* in the past because you felt confident in your abilities?
2. How have your bodybuilding efforts *suffered* in the past because you didn't feel confident in your abilities?
3. What are the thought patterns you go through when you are confident in your abilities and feel things are going your way? What are some of the feelings you experience?
4. What are the thought patterns you go through when you do not feel confident in your abilities and feel things are not going your way? What are some of the feelings you experience?
5. What have you learned by investing the time to identify your own personal empowering and disempowering thought patterns? How can you use what you've learned to control your emotions more consistently?

Chapter Eleven - Having the Right Perspective and Giving Your Best Effort Can Help You Appreciate Your Physique Now!

1. What makes you unhappy or dissatisfied about your bodybuilding efforts?
2. What specific actions can you take to make yourself happier or more satisfied with your bodybuilding efforts?
3. What has to happen or what must you look like in order for you to be happy or satisfied with your bodybuilding efforts?
4. Review what you've listed in question #3. Are your expectations within your own control? Are you being fair to yourself by creating these expectations?
5. Assume for a moment the expectations you have listed are never met. What other great qualities can you identify about your bodybuilding efforts that could make you feel great about what you are already doing or have already accomplished?
6. What have you learned about yourself and your bodybuilding efforts by investing the time to complete this exercise?

Chapter Twelve - No Matter How It May Appear, Everyone Is Paying the Price

1. Choose a successful bodybuilder or two whose mindset, drive, and work ethic are questionable—despite their achievements.
2. How does it make you feel about your bodybuilding efforts when you choose to believe they are successful without possessing a great mindset, strong drive, and tremendous work ethic? How do those feelings negatively affect what you are trying to accomplish with your own physique?
3. Assume for a moment you are incorrect about your assumptions about those other bodybuilders. If you *forced* yourself to believe they are indeed working just as hard as you, what specific actions might they be doing that you may not have recognized in the past?
4. What challenges or obstacles do you feel you must overcome that makes your task of building your physique more difficult than others'?
5. Examine what you listed in question #4. Are your perceptions accurate? Do you indeed have it more difficult than others?
6. What have you learned about yourself and your bodybuilding efforts from this exercise?

Chapter Thirteen - Keep an Open Mind to New Bodybuilding Information and Accelerate Your Progress

1. Are there any bodybuilding strategies that you once thought were ineffective or ridiculous but, once you tried them, discovered they were very effective? List them.
2. What made you decide *not* to use those strategies when you first learned of them?
3. What made you finally decide to give them a try?



4. What areas of your bodybuilding efforts or physique development, if you could find a way to improve them, would catapult your physique to the next level?
5. Are there any strategies that you've seen or heard about that have promised improvement in your development in these areas—but that you chose to ignore? List them.
6. Force yourself for a moment to take another look at these strategies. List anything that is common both to them and to your own current way of thinking. If you forced yourself, what reasons could you come up with that would validate the effectiveness of these strategies?

#### Chapter Fourteen - "Average Joe" Doesn't Have Any Winning Strategies to Share with You—Champions Do!

1. Choose a champion bodybuilder whose example you think would not normally offer anything that would help you in your own bodybuilding efforts.
2. What makes you certain you could not learn anything that would help you from this champion bodybuilder?
3. What are specific things about this champion bodybuilder that make his circumstances so much different from yours?
4. Force yourself to identify the circumstances you and this champion bodybuilder have in common (either inside or outside the gym; mental or physical).
5. How has this champion bodybuilder handled those *similar* circumstances differently than you have?
6. Is it possible that this champion bodybuilder's different approach to your similar circumstances has contributed to his or her success? If so, exactly how do you think it has?
7. What have you learned about yourself and your bodybuilding efforts from this exercise?

#### Chapter Fifteen - Specific Training Goals Set the Stage for Outstanding Workouts

1. What are all the things that you must do or that must happen in order for you to feel you've had an outstanding workout?
2. What are the most important things that you must do or that must happen in order for you to feel you've had an outstanding workout? Prioritize what you've listed in order of importance.
3. Segregate your list into three stages: (1) what you can comfortably achieve right now; (2) what you can achieve after a few weeks of focus and effort; (3) what you feel may take you three months or more to comfortably achieve.

#### Chapter Sixteen - Programming Your Brain for Peak Performance in the Gym

1. Think back to a specific time in the gym when you felt especially confident and performed with amazing strength. What were some of the thoughts that

were going through your head? Do you remember anything unique about that time compared to ordinary workouts? Did you train at a certain time? Did you have a training partner? Did you eat a bigger or smaller meal within a couple of hours of that workout? Did you say things to yourself before every set during that awesome workout? Did you walk a certain way?

2. Create a set of events that you will try to duplicate during every workout.
3. Create a unique physical “anchor” that will signal to your brain you are in your power state (such as snapping your fingers, clapping your hands, slapping your chest, saying something to yourself, etc.).

### Chapter Seventeen - Working Your Way through the Downtimes

1. Think back to a particular downtime that you pulled yourself out of especially well. How did you do it? What specific actions did you take? What mental strategies did you use to keep your emotions under control? What were some of the things you said to yourself? What was the number one reason why you were able to keep this downtime from lingering?
2. Think back to a particular downtime that you *did not* pull yourself out of very well. Why were you unable to pull yourself out of the downward spiral? What specific actions did you take or choose not to take to pull you out of that downtime? What mental strategies did you choose not to use that would have kept your emotions under control? What were some of the negative things you said to yourself? What was the number one reason why you were unable to prevent these downtimes from lingering?
3. What empowering or disempowering patterns have you discovered you fall into in good times and bad?
4. With your newfound awareness of your emotional patterns, what strategies can you create to keep in control of your emotions and put forth more consistent effort?

### Chapter Eighteen - You Can Turn Your Worst Days into Your Best Days by Thinking Big

1. Although it may be somewhat painful, think of a time during your bodybuilding efforts in which you were fearful—but failed to admit fear was controlling your thoughts and actions.
2. How did your fears cause you to think? What were some of the negative things you said to yourself and others? What excuses did you make for not going for what you *really* wanted? What were the specific actions you took instead of the one you knew inside that you should have taken? How did you rationalize your behavior?
3. How would the new and improved you of today handle that same situation? How would your thought processes be different now? What would you do differently?

### Chapter Nineteen - You Are Never Standing Still

1. What are five relatively small and unimportant bodybuilding tasks that you do not do on a fairly consistent basis?
2. How do you normally rationalize not doing these things?
3. Although not following through with these tasks may seem unimportant, how can this behavior negatively affect your entire bodybuilding discipline?

### Chapter Twenty - Is Striving for a Balanced Life Sabotaging Your Bodybuilding Goals?

1. What are some of the most challenging sacrifices that you are making in your life to achieve your long-term bodybuilding goals?
2. For the challenges you've identified, write a couple of sentences that tell why you feel the short-term gratification that you are sacrificing will result in the tremendous rewards you are committed to enjoying in the long-run.

### Chapter Twenty-One - You Never Have to Plateau in Bodybuilding

1. In what areas of *training* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?
2. In what areas of *nutrition* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?
3. In what areas of *supplementation* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?
4. In what areas of *motivation* could you increase your level of knowledge or execution in order to take your bodybuilding efforts to the next level? What plans will you create to do so?
5. What plans can you think of to make the bodybuilding process more enjoyable?

### Chapter Twenty-Two - Your Ability to Take Risks Will Determine Your Level of Bodybuilding Success

1. How would you rate your risk-taking ability when it comes to reaching your bodybuilding goals? Do you feel you are taking the necessary risks?
2. If you do feel you are taking the necessary risks—but are not progressing toward your goals at a satisfactory rate, why aren't you? List as many reasons you can think of.
3. If you do not feel you are taking enough of the risks that are necessary to achieve your bodybuilding goals, what do you feel is holding you back?
4. What have you *gained* by not taking the necessary risks?
5. What have you *lost* by not taking the necessary risks?

6. What do you feel needs to happen in order for you to start taking the necessary risks?

Chapter Twenty-Three - Becoming Brilliant Is Simply a Matter of Passion, Effort, and Time

1. Identify a particular area of bodybuilding in which you once considered yourself below average but, through time, you became very good.
2. How did this tremendous improvement occur? What were some of the specific actions you took to create such a turnaround?

Chapter Twenty-Four - Your Success in Bodybuilding Is Affected by Who Surrounds You

1. Who are the people in your life who do the best job of supporting your bodybuilding efforts?
2. Exactly what do these people do that makes them supportive? How does that make you feel?
3. What can you do to attract more people like these to support your bodybuilding efforts?
4. Who are the people in your life who, whether intentionally or not, undermine your bodybuilding efforts?
5. What do these people do that undermines your efforts? How does that make you feel?
6. What can you do to encourage these people to start supporting your efforts? What will you do if they are unable to support your efforts?

Chapter Twenty-Five - Focus on Yourself and Become Your Very Best

1. After reading this chapter, consider if there are any circumstances outside your control that are especially frustrating? Do they have a negative impact on you? Do they affect the amount of effort you put into bodybuilding? Do they make the bodybuilding process less enjoyable?
2. How can you make those circumstances outside your control have less of a negative impact? How would you need to choose to look at them? What is the mindset you must adopt toward them?
3. What is it costing you in terms of enjoyment, accomplishment, muscle, etc. by letting these circumstances outside your control have such a negative impact on you?
4. List all the reasons why you are committed to never letting those circumstances potentially rob you of your bodybuilding dreams again.

Chapter Twenty-Six - Winning Is All about Becoming the Best You Can Be

1. What has to happen in order for you to feel as though you are winning at this game of bodybuilding? Please be as specific as you can. Are you sure you

will consider yourself a winner if you meet these objectives? Are those factors totally within your control?

Chapter Twenty-Seven - Real Leadership Is What's Needed in Drug-Free Bodybuilding

1. What do you feel you must do to become a positive ambassador for the sport of bodybuilding? What kind of attitude must you have? What are the things you feel you must do—and must not do?

Chapter Twenty-Eight - Drug-Free Bodybuilders Are Unknowingly Ruining Drug-Free Bodybuilding

1. Take a moment to reflect on how you have personally impacted drug-free bodybuilding? What are some of the *good things* you do for the entire sport?
2. What are some of the *negative things* you currently do that reflect upon the entire sport?
3. Is it important for you to change these negative actions? If so, how do you plan to change for the betterment of drug-free bodybuilding?

Chapter Twenty-Nine – Happiness Is Victory

1. Identify some of the challenges you've faced along your bodybuilding journey—and have successfully conquered.
2. How did it make you feel to experience victory over those challenges? What did those victories mean to you?
3. What are some of the most challenging obstacles you currently face in your bodybuilding efforts?
4. How would it feel and what would it mean to you to overcome the challenges you currently find the most frustrating?



## **About Skip La Cour**

Skip La Cour has become a pioneer in drug-free bodybuilding through the example he has set on the competitive bodybuilding stage and through his articles and seminars about natural bodybuilding. Delivering what he describes as "information and inspiration for drug-free training," La Cour is fulfilling his mission by helping thousands of people around the world improve their nutritional and supplementation habits, increase their level of training knowledge, and become more motivated to develop their physiques to outstanding levels without the use of drugs.

La Cour, who was born in 1962, lives in Walnut Creek, California. He has been training for 11 years and has been competing for 10 years. In that 10-year time span, La Cour has competed in 21 bodybuilding competitions. At 5' 10", La Cour's competition weight ranges from 218 to 230 pounds.

His biggest win to date was undoubtedly the 1998 NPC (National Physique Committee) Team Universe, in which La Cour won the heavyweight and overall titles. Dropping 16 pounds from his physique, which had earned a disappointing fifth place finish in his class the year before, La Cour competed in unbelievably shredded condition and set a new standard of conditioning for drug-free heavyweights in 1998. The 1998 NPC Team Universe victory earned him the position of captain of Team USA. Unfortunately, Team USA was unable to compete in the IFBB World Amateur Championships (formerly known as the Mr. Universe) in Izmir, Turkey due to political unrest at the time.

La Cour was named "Natural Bodybuilder of the Year" by the Academy of Bodybuilding, Fitness and Sports Awards in 1998.

He became known as one of the top amateur drug-free bodybuilders in the nation by becoming the 1995 NPC Team Universe Heavyweight National Champion and earning a spot on the five-man USA Bodybuilding Team competing in the Mr. Universe contest in Guam, where he placed sixth.

Drug-free for life, La Cour first appeared on the national scene in 1994, when he won the Musclemenia Natural Bodybuilding Championships, which aired on ESPN television. Two years earlier in 1992, he became the first man in the history of the AAU to win the Mr. California and Mr. Natural California in the same year.

He has accomplished much as a writer, in his *books Thinking Big, Thinking Big: The Next Level Workbook, Thinking Big II: Aspiring to a Higher Level of Bodybuilding Achievement!* and *Skip La Cour's Daily Training Journal*; his special reports *How I Packed-On 16 Pounds of Drug-Free Muscle in Just One Year!* and *Skip La Cour's Answers The 50 Most-Often Asked-Questions about Bodybuilding*

*and Training*; and his contributions to several regional, national, and international bodybuilding publications.

His latest contributions to up-and-coming bodybuilders around the world are his hot, new videotapes *Skip La Cour's Mass Machine Hardcore, Heavy, and Intense!, Dare To Dream!, Success is a Planned Event: A Day in the Life of Skip La Cour*, and *Skip La Cour's Live! Bodybuilding and Training Seminar*.

His book *Thinking Big* is selling quickly to bodybuilders all over the world. In *Thinking Big*, La Cour shows you his most effective strategies and techniques to excel in their efforts to build a great physique without the use of anabolic steroids or other physique-enhancing drugs. His step-by-step approach teaches effective ways to unlock the tremendous power of your mind and break through any self-imposed limitations that have been preventing bodybuilders from realizing their full potential. La Cour's secondary aim is to teach bodybuilders to apply the valuable lessons learned in the gym to make everyday life a more passionate, successful, and fulfilling experience.

His second book, *Skip La Cour's Daily Training Journal*, chronicles La Cour's strategies and experiences as he prepared for the 1998 IFFB World Amateur Championships. In this book's more than 200 pages, La Cour reveals the training, nutrition, supplementation, and organizing principles that have helped him succeed as a competitive natural bodybuilder.

La Cour is currently a contributing writer for *Ironman Magazine* with his monthly column "Thinking Big" as well as several training features. Over the years his work has appeared in *Muscular Development, Great Lakes Fitness Guide, High-Performance Muscle, Steele Jungle, Natural Muscle, Max Muscle*, and in such international publications as *Bodybuilding Monthly Japan*.

La Cour's successes in business include earning multi-year, paid endorsement contracts with large supplement companies such as Met-Rx, TWINLAB, and AST Sports Science, all of which he has accomplished while still only an amateur bodybuilder! Champion Nutrition and Musashi have also supported his efforts in the past by supplying him with free product. In addition to negotiating those business relationships, he created other opportunities with the clothing company House of Pain and the tanning supply company Jan Tana. Other business relationships in the past have included Jagware and Protan.

He is now operating his very own supplement company named Mass Machine Nutrition. The company's foundation is built upon the very same qualities which have made him a national champion and one of the world's most-recognized drug-free bodybuilders in the world: passion, integrity, and leadership.

La Cour has also starred in national television commercials and currently appears on *Anthony Robbins' Personal Power II* infomercial.