

---

# THE CrossFit JOURNAL

---

## CrossFit Changed My ... Wife?

Corey Lapell explains how he revitalized his marriage by introducing his partner to CrossFit.

---

By **Corey and Sunghee Lapell** CrossFit Vancouver

June 2012

---



All images: Courtesy of Corey and Sunghee Lapell

I never imagined my wife as a CrossFitter.

Born 1967 in Seoul, South Korea, Sunghee's only exposure to athletics growing up was gym class. Sunghee is an art teacher by training and profession, and sports did not become part of her life until after we were married in 1998. In fact, on our first date I took her for a walk in North Vancouver's Lynn Canyon, and she barely made it up the steps climbing out of the canyon!

---

1 of 5

In 2001, Sunghee got involved in dragon boating on recreational teams—her first sporting experience—and in 2008 she became a certified hatha yoga instructor. By that time, I had been CrossFitting in my garage for a couple of years, and though she had joined in a couple of workouts, I didn't see evidence that she had the fire or desire for high-intensity training. Her yoga kept her fit—or so we thought.

Certainly, Sunghee's yoga practice provided her with an excellent functional range of motion, but it did not help relieve chronic back problems. The cause: lifting our then-4-year-old son. Hundreds of chiropractic and massage dollars later, her back remained problematic, and the shallow lumbar curve of her spine left her no margin for error.

By winter 2008, we had an additional problem. Besides reinjuring her back, Sunghee was suffering from severe fatigue necessitating daily afternoon naps and significantly cutting down on her productivity and enjoyment of life. After a trip to our family doctor and some blood work, Sunghee returned with a label of "borderline anemic" and a prescription for iron supplementation.



*Yoga did nothing to relieve Sunghee's chronic back problems, fatigue and anemia.*

---

**"The motivation to introduce my wife to CrossFit came about instead as an attempt to revitalize our marriage."**

**—Corey Lapell**

---

Sunghee: "I thought playing with my son would tire him out enough so that he'd take a nap. Instead, after our play sessions I found myself exhausted and I was the one napping."

None of Sunghee's problems appeared to me to be treatable through exercise. In fact, I would have at that time recommended against high-intensity training that might reinjure her back and would certainly deplete what limited energy stores she possessed.

The motivation to introduce her to CrossFit came about instead as an attempt to revitalize our marriage.

### **"Here, Drink This."**

In January 2009 I had begun regularly attending group classes at CrossFit Vancouver, and I was completely in love with the people and the vibrant community. I would return home flushed from another brutal WOD to my aching, tired and uninspired wife only to rave on about my coaches and classmates. I would talk about who did this, who said that, etc. Pretty soon I started noticing Sunghee tiredly rolling her eyes as I launched into another post-WOD tale as she tried to feign interest.

Sunghee: "I felt like Corey was living in a different world. Corey would return home so energized, and I couldn't relate. It seemed like he was living in a vibrant world that I could not imagine."

After a decade of marriage, there was no doubt that we were drifting apart. CrossFit Vancouver had given me a new life, a life that Sunghee just wasn't a part of. That was my eureka moment. I knew for certain that if only she could meet the great folks of my newfound community that she would be just as enthusiastic as I was.

I was by that time already a Level 1 CrossFit coach, but recalling my failed attempts as driving instructor from early in our marriage, I had a moment of uncommon wisdom: I decided to hire an outsider to safeguard our marriage and get Sunghee through her personal-training sessions.

I chose veteran CrossFit Vancouver coach Chris (The Shepherd) Saini, an energetic, fun-loving, caring, people person I knew would take care of my wife without letting her slack off.

### A Cleansing by Pukie

In March 2008 I recall my wife returning home after her intro session.

"How did it go?" I asked.

"I puked," Sunghee answered, "It was awesome!"

I knew then that there was hope.

Sunghee: "I felt like I already knew all the characters at CrossFit Vancouver thanks to Corey's daily sharing. The workout was so hard, but it felt cleansing, like a new start to my life."

When Sunghee first joined me for some home WODs, she needed to do her push-ups standing against the wall because she wasn't strong enough to do them from her knees or on a bench. By December 2008, after just nine months of CrossFitting, she completed all Murph's 200 push-ups from her toes. It was one of those defining CrossFit moments.

---

**"I puked. It was awesome!"**

**—Sunghee Lapell**

---

Veteran CrossFit competitor Jen Dober described watching Sunghee struggling for one last good push-up, failing and trying again as one of her most inspiring CrossFit moments.



*Sunghee puked after her first WOD, but that didn't stop her.*



*Her health problems disappeared after a few months of CrossFit, and 43-year-old Sunghee says she now has the energy of a 20-year-old.*

Sunghee: "My last push-up took what felt like 20 minutes. I'd completed 199 full push-ups and just kept failing on the last one, but I was determined to finish! I had to get up and walk around the gym before coming back to get that last push-up."

### **New Life, New Energy**

Sunghee and I continue to build our lives and that of our son around the great community that owner and scotch-bottle-saint Craig Patterson has built for "his people."

Our son is 8 years old now and must weigh in excess of 60 lb., and my dainty, darling, petite wife, now also a Level 1 CrossFit coach, can haul his sleepy, sagging body from car booster seat to bedroom without any help from me and without any pain in her previously troublesome back. She sports a healthy and attractive lumbar curve that makes her more functional today at 43 than she was when I married her almost 13 years ago.

And what about her low energy, borderline anemia and iron supplements? Within her first month of CrossFit training, there was no trace of any such issue. Afternoon naps are a rarity, iron pills are no longer on our shopping list, and she has more energy than the girl I married ever did—even after completing her daily WOD.

Sunghee: "I feel 20 years younger. I couldn't imagine having this much energy or good health. I believed that fatigue and loss of function were inevitable results of aging. CrossFit gave me the life I always wanted. Every CrossFit workout is like my life in microcosm as I face the challenge of getting to the gym and getting through another brutal WOD, but when I am done—the sense of accomplishment! The rest of my day is easy; I am ready for any challenge. CrossFit has taken (and continues to take) my life to new levels."

CrossFit and the CrossFit Vancouver community have given us a level of health and function we never imagined possible.

---

“Soon it’s all we were  
talking about at home  
around the dinner table:  
CrossFit stories and stories  
about CrossFitters.”

—Corey Lapell

---

And what about our marriage? Sunghee loved the CrossFit Vancouver community every bit as much as I did. Its members are some of the best people we have met in our lives. Pretty soon it was all we were talking about at home around the dinner table: CrossFit stories and stories about CrossFitters.

Sunghee: “Wherever I go I talk about CrossFit, I feel like a walking, talking CrossFit advertisement.”

It was so bad that her sisters—Team Princess—were soon curious enough to check it out and see what all the fuss was about.

And what happened when the lovely and fragile Korean princesses stepped into CrossFit Vancouver’s rough industrial playground? Well, that’s a story for another article.



### About the Authors



*Corey Lapell is a Level 1 CrossFit coach and the first graduate of CrossFit Vancouver’s Apprenticeship Program. Outside CrossFit training, he is part owner of [Delta Kaigan Judo](#) and of [Epic Nutrients](#), a company that provides premium-grade fish oil specifically for CrossFit athletes. As a Blauer Tactical-certified PDR coach, Corey also acts as a director and instructor for the Canadian Personal Defence Institute.*



*Sunghee Lapell is a Level 1 CrossFit coach, a certified hatha yoga instructor and laughter-yoga leader. She is the owner of [Forthejoyofyoga.com](#).*