

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

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CrossFit Akwesasne: Done With the Blame Game

The affiliate is the first on a First Nations reservation in Canada, and it's giving new fitness options to the country's indigenous people. Emily Beers reports.

By **Emily Beers** CrossFit Vancouver

January 2012



All images: Courtesy of Josee Quenneville

There's no point in sugarcoating the truth: Life for many indigenous people in Canada is rough.

Diseases like diabetes are four times more prevalent among the indigenous population than the rest of the country. Life expectancy on a reservation is eight years less in men and five-and-a-half years less in women. Suicide rates are also three times as high among indigenous people. Alcoholism is rampant and so is obesity. And proper nutrition is often not understood, let alone followed.

Where do we place the blame? We have asked, analyzed and beat the crap out of this question for decades. Time and time again, the answer comes down to the history of the country.

Indigenous people in Canada have been through years of tremendous oppression. It culminated with the disaster that was the residential school system, a national program started in the 19th century and aimed at assimilating indigenous children into European-Canadian society. Indigenous children were taken from their parents at a young age, put into Canadian schools, and forced to abandon their native languages and cultures. Often, they were abused.

The residential-school system was abandoned in the 1960s, but its legacy has left indigenous people with permanent scars and non-indigenous Canadians with a guilty conscience.

Despite federal incentives and funding to improve the living conditions and health of First Nations people, year after year statistics show that, as a whole, they rank low in most socio-economic measurements.

Perhaps feeling indebted to indigenous communities and because of successful lobbying by Aboriginal people across the country, the Canadian government coughs up billions of dollars each year to First Nations communities. Despite federal incentives and funding to improve the living conditions and health of First Nations people, year after year statistics show that, as a whole, they rank low in most socio-economic measurements.

But on at least one First Nations reservation in Canada, you'll find a group who are tired of the blame game, tired of spending time analyzing exactly why and how their people got where they are today. The members of this group are choosing to take problems into their own hands and are committing to improving their lives.



The first CrossFit affiliate on a Canadian First Nations reservation is doing battle with obesity, diabetes and overall poor health.

This place is found on Cornwall Island, Ont. The people are members of the Mohawk Nation, a community with a population of 14,000. Cornwall Island is home to the first CrossFit affiliate on a Canadian First Nations reservation: CrossFit Akwesasne.

A Different Kind of Reservation

In her living room on the Akwesasne reservation, 34-year-old Tasha Thompson does not serve her children Kraft Dinner or feel sorry for herself for having grown up in a community where diabetes and alcoholism are almost an accepted part of the culture.

You'll find her, her 11-year-old twin boys and her 12-year-old daughter busting out burpees during commercial breaks of their favorite TV shows while meat and vegetables simmer in the kitchen.

It wasn't always this way.

A year-and-a-half ago, Thompson, a nurse, was almost 40 lb. heavier. Like most families, she and her husband work full time. After a long day at work, they return home to their second full-time job: raising their three young children. Proper nutrition and fitness used to fall by the wayside.

**“Back then, if I was having
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I wouldn’t have even
thought twice about it.”**

—Tasha Thompson

“Back then, if I was having a busy day, I’d just bring pizza home for the family,” Thompson said. “I wouldn’t have even thought twice about it.”



***Most of CrossFit Akwesasne’s members are children who
attend group classes after school.***

All this changed in January 2010, when Tyler Touchette opened CrossFit Akwesasne.

Things quickly started to change—not just for Thompson and her family, but also for many children and parents in her community.

A Different Kind of CrossFit Box

Five-and-a-half years ago, Touchette, owner of Caveman Strong (also known as Cornwall CrossFit), was hired by Diabetes Canada to coach a series of bootcamps for indigenous people who lived in the Cornwall area. Once he had success there, he came up with the idea to open an affiliate on the Akwesasne reservation on Cornwall Island.

Getting government funding for the new affiliate was a lengthy process. Touchette wrote and submitted a proposal to Akwesasne’s governing body, the Mohawk Council. Eventually, Touchette’s proposal was approved, and the council agreed to subsidize 50 percent of its members’ CrossFit fees.

So began CrossFit Akwesasne.

At first, only a couple of people showed up, but in just a few short months his classes of two eager CrossFitters became a class of 40.

**“There’s a night-and-day
awareness now. They actually
believe health is obtainable
now. We’ve lost 240 lb. this
year between 40 kids.”**

—Tyler Touchette

Today, the majority of CrossFit Akwesasne’s members are children in grades six, seven and eight who come for group classes after school. Now, 80 children from four schools are involved, and the adult clientele is on the rise. About 30 adults regularly come to the evening classes.

One of the main challenges for the people of Cornwall Island is nutrition education, Touchette said.

"They've been fed bad information for years," said Touchette, who has spent a lot of time educating his clients about the Paleo Diet. "There's a night-and-day awareness now. They actually believe health is obtainable now. We've lost 240 lb. this year between 40 kids."

Touchette pointed to people like Tasha Thompson and 27-year-old Nate Thompson as role models who are helping improve lives. Nate Thompson, a father of two, grew up on Cornwall Island. He started CrossFit at the beginning of the year and said he is amazed by the changes he has seen in himself and others at the box. He agreed with Touchette that the key component has been the nutrition focus.

"The biggest thing I've paid attention to is diet," he said. "The Paleo Diet just really makes a lot of sense. That's how indigenous people used to eat, and we didn't use to have these health problems."

As soon as he transitioned to the Paleo Diet, Thompson said he lost 7 lb. in the first seven days.

"I noticed that I felt alive again. And being around individuals who are constantly pushing to better themselves," he said, "it makes me work harder, and I feel inspired to try to get to Tyler's (Touchette's) fitness level."

"I like what we're creating with these kids. We're building confidence in them. We're helping them grow to become greater and healthier people."

— Josee Quenneville

Thompson, who holds a bachelor's degree in science and psychology, recently completed the CrossFit Level 1 Seminar and now coaches.

"The younger you can reach children about the importance of fitness and nutrition, the better," Thompson said.



Once people see their friends and family looking and feeling better, they want the same for themselves.

"Kids do what you do. So I try to set a positive role model and remain healthy. With my children, if they see I'm active, they'll follow suit," he said.

Another CrossFit Akwesasne coach who said she has seen the benefits of working with children is 28-year-old Josee Quenneville.

"I like what we're creating with these kids," she said. "We're building confidence in them. We're helping them grow to become greater and healthier people."

Working with indigenous people has been rewarding, Quenneville said. She said she has been inspired by their sense of community.

"They all knew each other even before they started coming to CrossFit. And they all know each other's families," she said. "They're a community outside of the box, too."

"I never thought I'd fit in because it's a native community and they're kind of separate. I thought they'd be hard on me, but from Day 1 ... they accepted me with open arms," she added. "There are a lot of warm people who live here. They've touched my life as much as I've touched theirs."

A Long Way to Go

Tasha Thompson is the first to admit that although having a CrossFit box on the reservation has helped drive positive change, it's only one step in the right direction.

"My people are not healthy. They're obese; they're diabetic. Our reservation isn't very big, so we're overpopulated here, and we don't have gardens and farms like we used to," she said. "So it's easier for most people to buy a box of something processed."

There's no point in focusing on who or what is blame for her people's poor health, Thompson said. She'd rather focus on action to improve lives, she said. For her, a large part of the solution is the CrossFit way of life.

"When I walk through those doors, I know I'm going to be supported and encouraged. Nothing bad will happen in there. We're all on the same page."

—Tasha Thompson

"When I walk through those doors, I know I'm going to be supported and encouraged. Nothing bad will happen in there. We're all on the same page," Thompson said. "We all want to be clean and healthy there, but not everyone in our community thinks like that—yet."

Both Thompson and Touchette said they are committed to getting more people on board.

"It's not about blaming anymore. It's not their fault. It's not our fault. Here's where they're at, and with hard work, awareness and proper eating protocols, we can see some real change," Touchette said. "It takes a while to get through to people, but it's starting to happen."

As for Nate Thompson, he's not shying away from the challenge.

"We're a very proud community," he said. "And this community won't go down without a fight."



Courtesy of Emily Beers

About the Author

Emily Beers has a master's degree in journalism from the University of Western Ontario. She worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Beers now hosts [WOD HOG](#), a not-always-PG publication featuring Canada West's CrossFit community.

As an athlete and CrossFitter, Beers started as a gymnast, competing at the national level. After growing too tall for gymnastics, she played NCAA Division 1 basketball for the University of Idaho, then returned home and played for the University of British Columbia. After three years of playing basketball, she started rowing, competing at the varsity level at the University of Western Ontario for two years. While trying to make the National Rowing Team in 2009, she discovered CrossFit and became utterly addicted. Soon, CrossFit was meant to be a way to cross-train for rowing but became her greatest passion. She moved back to Vancouver in September 2009 and found CrossFit Vancouver, where she now trains and works as an apprentice coach.

In her first season competing in CrossFit, she won the British Columbia Sectional competition in 2010. She ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010 and served as the Canada West Regional media director while recovering from surgery. She competed in the 2011 CrossFit Games with CrossFit Vancouver, finishing 19th.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

CrossFit Kids “Switch”

Mikki Lee Martin explains a simple game that’s been getting rave reviews at CrossFit Brand X.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

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Danell Marks/CrossFit Kids



Sometimes the simplest things are the most engaging for kids. Think empty refrigerator carton vs. expensive, high-tech toy.

We recently tried this game with our CrossFit Kids classes, and the kids responded by asking for it over and over again. It is easily adjustable for all age groups by varying the difficulty of the exercises.

Divide the class into two teams. Name the teams after well-known local sports teams, preferably with a current or recent rivalry or matchup.

Equipment

- 30-foot rope
- 4 cones

Set-Up

Divide play area (about 30 feet x 30 feet) down the middle with rope. Place cones at the opposite edges of playing area (like goals).

Rules of Play

A trainer announces an exercise, and upon “go!” teams perform the exercise as fast and accurately as possible while getting to the other team’s side first (past the cones). The first team to have all its players behind the cones scores a point.

Here are some exercises that work well: broad jumps, roving plank, high-knees skipping, sprinting, side shuffling, soccer-style carioca, crab walk, duck walk, seal drag, alligator walk, bear crawl, baby crawl, army crawl, frog hop, and bunny hop.

Standard movements can be incorporated by calling out, “Five squats then broad jump,” or, “Five push-ups then lunge.” Maybe try, “Three burpees then sprint.”

Pre-teen and Teen exercises might include carrying a medicine ball while sprinting, overhead plate lunges, or 5 dumbbell clean and jerks followed by side shuffle—just to name a few.



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Made in the U.S.A.

E.M. Burton examines domestic manufacturing in post-industrial America.

By E.M. Burton

January 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

I played a small part today in creating an American job. I donated \$5 at my local Starbucks to their Create Jobs for USA program. Once 599 other people make the same donation, they estimate one job will be created.

A small contribution, granted, but it felt pretty good; the Opportunity Finance Network administers the fund to provide micro-financing opportunities for people who deserve them. But it started me thinking. Giving someone a job is one of the most direct ways you can help someone: you are improving a person's capacity to provide for necessities of life.

Most affiliate owners know a thing or two about this. There's a shift in thinking that occurs between being dependent on others for a job and making a job for oneself. There's another shift that takes place when you hire someone else.

How cool would it feel to create a bunch of jobs? But is it even possible or sustainable in an economic climate that has been nothing less than chaotic in the years since 9/11?

Things Suck

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate this past season was 9 percent. Public debt has climbed to \$14.58 trillion, putting it over the \$14.53-trillion size of the U.S. economy in 2010. Recent economic reports have shown weakness in everything

from consumer spending to manufacturing. Suggestions of a double-dip recession have run rampant in the news bolstered by factors such as a decline in the stock market, low housing prices and debt troubles in Europe. And local economies can be a volatile mixed bag; California has the highest unemployment rate in the nation yet the greatest degree of job creation.

Political protests are taking place in countries where such activity is outlawed at the same time the Occupy movement is reaching around the globe. While the protests might not coalesce around one specific theme, the protesters' demands to be heard indicate we are experiencing a break or "generational shift" from a society oriented around a late capitalist form of production to some new model where the elite have less control over the rest of society. The protest movement is demanding we reshape the way we think and embrace new—or new-again—values. Whatever positive indicators the next few months might bring, things at home and around the world are shifting rapidly.



American Apparel and other companies are committed to domestic manufacturing at a time when the phrase "made in America" isn't heard as often as it used to be.

American manufacturing has been in decline since the 1970s, a period that has seen the expansion of free trade and globalization. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. manufacturing employment has dropped by roughly 34 percent since 1970, equivalent to 6 million jobs. Between 2001 and 2009, the U.S. lost over 42,000 factories and 38 percent of factories that employ between 500 and 999 employees.

As a major sector of the economy, manufacturing has been bleeding.

As a major sector of the economy, manufacturing has been bleeding. In the mid-'60s, manufacturing supported 53 percent of the American economy. By 1988 it was down to 39 percent, and by the first decade of the new century, it accounted for just 9 percent, obviously with significant associated job losses. Some major firms that have laid people off last year—though not necessarily due to job relocation—include Lockheed Martin, Merck & Co., Cisco Systems, Research in Motion, and Borders. Boston Scientific has let American jobs go and increased employment in China. Even Pfizer is cutting American research-and-development positions.



In the 21st century, large factories are far rarer than they were in the 1970s.

What happened? Domestic manufacturing is inextricably bound up with the development of the United States. Not only was it an economic practice, but it was also an iterative, productive aspect of American culture. “Made in America” was largely taken for granted and expressed with more than a bit of patriotic pride as recently as the ‘80s. It was closely bound up with Cold War culture and Reaganomics, and just as quickly as the U.S. had to transition into post-Cold War politics, domestic manufacturing had to co-exist with the rapid emergence of large-scale post-industrialism.

This went largely unnoticed in daily life because Americans still had plenty of things to buy from the same old brands. Now, post-9/11 and well into the 21st century, people are feeling the loss of manufacturing jobs more acutely but don’t understand how it came about. Perhaps this is because it happened rather gradually, with each year after 1970 showing a steady loss of manufacturing jobs. Perhaps the decline was too gradual and too hidden among other pressing economic matters to make people and their government sit up and take notice.

For many, there is now a bit of a knee-jerk reaction—“Oh, shit! We’ve gotta start making stuff here again!”—but no attempt to understand how that culture of domestic industry was eroded, why nobody noticed the process, and why we are now somewhat compelled to notice standout companies that have chosen to go against the tide by setting up shop at home and stamping “Made in America” on their products.

The rationale of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009—the stimulus package—is derived from Keynesian macroeconomic theory. Controversial and contributing to the debt-ceiling crisis of 2011, the final “conference version” amount was set at \$787 billion. Of that, a tiny amount was earmarked for small-business development or incentives for manufacturing. The problem with the stimulus package is that it attempts to inject capital into a system that is no longer sustainable or functioning, and as such, it’s a temporary solution to a problem that won’t go away. It doesn’t stimulate production, which is necessary if one wants to have something on which to spend. The fact that post-stimulus spending hasn’t nearly met estimates speaks to this.

The doom-and-gloomers see job losses and claim the demon is outsourcing and globalization. They claim, as a consequence, Americans will get poorer, and the average American's standard of living will decline. Free trade is often seen as the enemy, too—as if a large group of humans could get everything they need from within a set of physical borders; take gasoline, for example.

The economy is not that simple.

**Despite this rather
challenging economic
climate for domestic
manufacturing, some U.S.
producers are thriving in the
current economy.**

Proponents of globalization argue that freer access to foreign markets and cheap labor increase corporate profits and benefit the U.S. economy. While this may be true in the short term, it ignores the fact that America's wealth and technology are slowly migrating to other nations. Once new technologies have been developed in the U.S., offshore producers can invest in advancing these technologies and take the lead in their future development. According to Scott Paul, executive director of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, "When you separate the production from the innovation, the innovation leaves. It goes, and it goes where the production is." Organizing a manufacturing process with design and innovation in the U.S. and labor sourced elsewhere is a death knell for R&D. The future for U.S. domestic manufacturing is in innovation and technology, and research and development in these areas cannot be physically separated from the production that is its result.

Many companies have moved most or all of their production abroad. India and China are emerging markets. China, for one, is graduating thousands of engineers every year, an educational sector on the decline in the U.S. In fact, there are many vacant positions for trained, skilled workers in the U.S., and the jobs remain unfilled. However,

the standard of living is rising in China and other countries in Asia and Southeast Asia, causing some manufacturers like Jarden Corp. to return to the U.S.

There is more to this picture, and cheap labor is not the only villain.

Despite this rather challenging economic climate for domestic manufacturing, some U.S. producers are thriving in the current economy and making a difference by creating jobs, providing a stimulus to communities, and perhaps pointing a way out of the recession. Among all the bad news can be found signs of optimism and recovery. Many economists feel we are in the midst of a "crisis of confidence," and confidence can shift upwards again if the economy starts to show signs of steady improvement.

One economic indicator that's providing optimism for some is found in domestic manufacturing, which in many cases is as important to patriotic pride and the more ethereal economic drivers as it is to hard numbers on job creation, employment and GDP.

"Amid a lackluster economic rebound, the manufacturing in this country has, for the first time in decades, seen an unlikely boom," Stephen Gandel wrote on May 16, 2011, in the *Curious Capitalist* article "A surprising jobs recovery: American manufacturing is back."



Can it still be made in America? Some companies say yes.



Rogue Fitness of Columbus, Ohio, now employs 65 people and fabricates strength-and-conditioning gear stateside.

It makes sense to provide for established and emerging needs by producing proportionally more at home. The critical factor is the degree to which the needs are considered, developed and continually renewed. The two areas singled out in the stimulus package are \$400 million for electric-car technology, and \$2 billion for the manufacture of “advanced car battery systems.” That’s a tiny fraction of the package’s provisions but is encouraging nonetheless. Innovation in emerging and meaningful aspects of technology calls for testing, development and production—at home.

Going Rogue

Rogue Fitness is well known by those in the CrossFit community. Indeed, someone new to the program just might encounter Rogue gear before learning much about CrossFit itself.

For the uninitiated, Rogue Fitness is a designer, manufacturer and retailer of made-in-America strength-and-conditioning equipment. It’s also a CrossFit affiliate,

a sponsor of athletes, and a sponsor and supplier of the CrossFit Games to the tune of 20 people and nine semi-trailers of equipment at the Home Depot Center in 2011. Rogue just celebrated its fifth anniversary in fall of 2011, and in those five years the company has gone from one employee to 65 people now employed in their premises in Columbus, Ohio.

In Rogue’s September newsletter, owner and founder Bill Henniger noted how the five years began with a sleep-in-on-the-floor start, and Henniger attributes much of Rogue’s success to his experience working in factories, apprenticing under a generation that “didn’t accept defeat.” The experience of that time taught him that the bottom line in business is job creation and the value of his people. Rather than measuring his success in ways that can be immediately monetized, he gauges it in terms of jobs. If you’re unclear on the connections between the national economy, job creation and local manufacturing, spend some time talking to Henniger.

"Without manufacturing, there is a broken chain of events in our country," he said with reference to the February 2011 Rogue newsletter. "An American-made barbell, for example, is a steel shaft made at a foundry, which employs not only steelworkers but also all those who work for the secondary companies supplying that factory. Machinists then machine and finish the assembly of the bar. The equipment seller in turn employs the sales and warehousing staff. If a barbell is imported, the customer sales and warehousing staff will have jobs, but it's easy to see that these two models have very different effects."

Quality control and innovation go hand in hand at Rogue. What's interesting about its method is that it, too, is constantly evolving; Rogue's methods of production are inherently innovative due to open-source use of feedback channels. Sharing design prototypes with the world is not the way most companies think of improving their products. If difficulties arise, it doesn't matter; on balance, feedback is the only way they advance their work.

"So far, having everyone involved in the Idea Factory has worked, and I can't see it happening any other way. Regardless of when we bring out a prototype, someone will copy it in some respect. We are not reinventing the wheel but are putting a new-school spin on old-school equipment. For the most part, the input and feedback that we get from Facebook and the message board are essential to the evolution of our equipment," Henniger said.

Indeed, there can be perils associated with ignoring feedback.



Owner Bill Henniger measures Rogue Fitness' success in terms of jobs created.

"I like the example of the Pontiac Aztec," Henniger said. "If you have never seen it, it's very ugly. Pontiac refused to listen to anyone that said it was terrible and pushed it on the public. Big-time fail there, and I think it's unnecessary. We learn everything we need to know from the community, from a T-shirt that may offend to a specialty bar that may hurt someone."

"The issues facing these large manufacturers result because, in fact, they got so large they quit listening. They built cars that people didn't want and told people that quality problems are the norm. With today's economy there is no excuse; you have to figure it out."

One of the benefits of feedback and making your stuff at home is that the movement from initial concept to final sale and beyond can be extremely efficient.

Building relationships in the Internet age means posting daily and asking for feedback. As of press time, 44,813 people like Rogue Fitness' Facebook page.

Rogue, of course, is closely linked to CrossFit: Rogue's gear, and that of other retailers, is used in many CrossFit workouts. And CrossFit, now featured on ESPN2 and appearing in *Men's Health* articles and Reebok commercials, has been an open-source fitness program since the workouts started appearing on CrossFit.com in 2001. CrossFit's "post results to comments" mode of taking in new information, and its affiliate model where individual gym owners are free to experiment and implement best practices, has positive benefits, it would seem, for the manufacturing process.

"For the most part, our business was built upon word of mouth and our involvement with CrossFit," Henniger said. "We never want to grow so big that we can't stop listening to people. That is what drives my team to excellence. It may look easy, but the work it takes to do the common uncommonly well weeds many out."



Rogue integrates the CrossFit community into its design process by having athletes and customers test new equipment and provide feedback.

One of the benefits of feedback and making your stuff at home is that the movement from initial concept to final sale and beyond can be extremely efficient. According to Henniger, the manufacturing process at Rogue is streamlined.

"The part that is pretty standard is safety testing; everything else is moving fast and breaking things. We design the product, test a ton and then launch."

The CrossFit community has been participating in the design process and the testing of Rogue gear from Day 1. Rogue tests new products in its facility for extreme case failure, and from there the gear is sent to their HQ training facility so it can really get worked on. They then send out three to five units to people through Facebook, to Rogue-sponsored athletes or to existing customers to give products the final assault. Assuming a product makes it through these trials, Rogue launches it.

Henniger has noted that "building capacity" is critical to his business's growth. Other than his new 15,000-square-foot facilities in which he literally owns his own manufacturing and welding processes, there are other conscious ways he builds his capacity. In this regard, he echoes many

frustrated would-be employers: "The hard part is finding good people. From the beginning, we have had to invest in people, in training them, in paying them a salary. And that was the best thing we ever did."

Rogue also actively seeks out entrepreneurial people who have become experts in their niche. Ian Maclean and Kris Warner are both part of the Rogue team but began by supplying its store. Rogue also works with Rob Orlando's stone molds, Steve Slater's logs and Chuck Rumbley's Hi-Temp bumpers.

"These guys have a passion for what they do, and their equipment doesn't come via shipping container," Henniger notes. "If you want to make plyo boxes, then you should find people that understand design first and wood second. These people are not all that common, but if they are successful by working with us, then they will continue to provide new and creative products for us to carry."

Despite his success building boxes, squat racks, pull-up systems and other products, Henniger has noted that it's nearly impossible to manufacture shoes in the U.S. Yet he notes that with the demand created by CrossFitters, it might even be possible to "light-switch a shoe factory."

Rogue has some definitive ways to think about what it means to do business. At first glance it might seem that its approach is traditional and old school, advocating a return to some of the practices of generations past: emphasizing the significance of employees, investing in training, focusing on hard work. Yet in many ways Rogue is forging new paths for domestic manufacturing. Rogue's commitment to innovation through testing like mad is evident in its process, and the way the company views its bottom line in terms of job creation rather than profitability points to a new, post-capitalist form of currency.

Henniger's commitment to domestic manufacturing also extends to the products he buys.

"We print our T-shirts only on American Apparel, and I wear Oakleys that have been made in the U.S.," he said. "You can tell the quality of something that has been made in the U.S.; it looks and feels American. Some things are tough to get made in the U.S., but it won't stop us from pursuing them."

Oakley: Innovation

As Oakley's web editor Danny Evans so eloquently puts it on dannyevans.com, the company's internal mission statement can be summed up as, "We make cool s—t. F—k you."

Founded in 1975 in Southern California, Oakley Inc. designs, manufactures and distributes products such as sunglasses, prescription lenses and frames, goggles, apparel and accessories, bags and packs, footwear, and watches.

Oakley understands the importance of keeping research and development in close contact with production.

Known for trailblazing innovation and high quality, Oakley continues to make its home base in Foothill Ranch, Calif., where it employs most of its staff. Holding more than 600 patents and 1,100 trademarks globally, Oakley is a design-driven company that aims to create—like Apple—not those products people want but those products people will want. Oakley also operates more than 145 retail stores worldwide. The company went public in 1995 (NYSE: OO) and as of 2007 is no longer American owned.



Oakley's headquarters building in California looks exactly like you would expect it to look.

In recent years, with rapid growth and a sale by owner and founder Jim Jannard—to the Italian luxury eyewear manufacturer Luxottica in a cash deal worth \$2.1 billion—foreign ownership is guiding Oakley in a different direction. With its new international approach, Oakley continues to prosper. In 2010, Oakley led Orange County in job growth among the largest foreign-owned companies by adding nearly 450 jobs for a total of 2,110 workers at the Foothill Ranch-based company.

Oakley understands the importance of keeping research and development in close contact with production. Oakley's innovation and dedication to developing new cutting-edge products is extremely unique in its field, though not all Oakley's products are manufactured in America. The company recognizes, however, that in order to maintain exacting standards of quality, the eyewear must continue to be manufactured at the source of the ideas. All design, research and development, as well as a large part of eyewear manufacturing, continue to take place in Southern California.



***With design and R&D located together,
innovation is encouraged at Oakley.***

Having the design, research and development work in one location allows for rapid prototyping and testing, providing Oakley with the ability to craft products exactly as desired. This drive to produce highly evolved, high-quality products requires Oakley to design its own machinery, build its own parts, and to even develop new mold processes. According to Oakley's CEO, Colin Baden, "There are no machines on the planet that can make our products the way we want them. We are forced to make the machine that makes our products."

As with Rogue, many of Oakley's products are created in close consultation with its athletes, providing input for the development of new products as well as rigorous testing. Through a relationship forged by providing protective eyewear to the military, Oakley designed tactical performance footwear and tactical assault gloves for the U.S. Special Forces, and the equipment is now standard issue.

That's a far cry from the early days. Oakley was famously started by Jannard in his garage with an initial investment of \$300. He then sold the grips he'd made out of his trunk at racing events. According to Jannard, there is a strong relationship between Oakley's success and the pursuit of excellence.

"It's a really good recipe. Do good work ... and it's hard to fail," he said in a *Los Angeles Loyolan* interview published on Nov. 17, 2011 ("Oakley, Inc. founder inventor of Red Camera Jim Jannard visits LMU," by Luisa Barron).

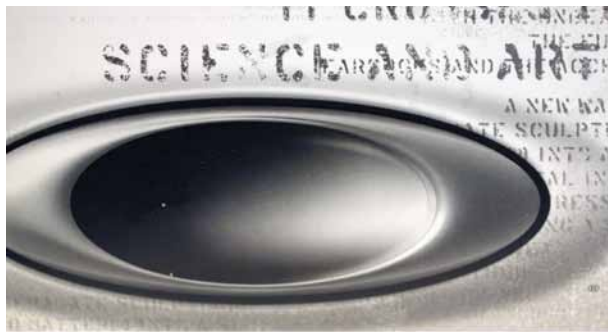
The company sees itself as heir to an impressive legacy of American innovation and technology booms. A visit to Foothill Ranch makes that pretty clear.

The publicly accessible areas flow together to form an art gallery, museum, retail store and archive. At the main entrance roundabout sits a war-era torpedo, followed closely on entry by three ejector seats arranged like quiet sentries. Further inside in the main gallery is a soapbox racer emblazoned with the rather cryptic words "dedicated to purpose beyond reason" and the not so cryptic image of a Gibson Girl-type straddling a bomb. The objects' reverent placement and arrangement indicate the significance of the pieces as works of art: the iconic, made-in-America technological advances of the past. This is the legacy inherited by Oakley designers. And they're reminded of it every day when they arrive at work.

The gallery contains now-iconic artifacts tracing the trajectory of Oakley's development from the earliest days, the idea of art and science combined in service of an end use. In Oakley's case it's an important use: there is a level of expectation of product quality when someone's life hangs in the balance.

For the rest, the clothing, bags, etc., the increased scale and need for market share carries with it the seemingly inherent need for sales of peripheral articles not manufactured in the U.S. As critic Christopher Ketcham has noted in "The curse of bigness" in the March/April 2010 issue of *Orion*, size can be negative, with "too big to fail" being part of a mentality that's linked to a "corrosive and counterintuitive ideology."

As for Jannard, what came after he sold Oakley? He founded Red Digital Cinema Camera Company, which to date produces three digital cinematography cameras that have changed the way some very prominent filmmakers think about making moving images.



"We make cool s—t. F—k you." —Danny Evans

American Apparel at Home in L.A.

Like Oakley, American Apparel has navigated waters muddied by the effects of getting big and, unlike Oakley, of having a rather eccentric founder. The company's dogged pursuit of innovative production methods is at the heart of its business.

American Apparel Inc. is a publicly listed company on the American Stock Exchange with market capitalization in excess of \$450 million (AMEX: APP). With the exception of retail outlets, it is based exclusively in downtown Los Angeles in 800,000 square feet of space. This proud and purposely made-in-America clothing company is a basics garment manufacturer, distributor and retailer employing roughly 10,000 people globally. Approximately

5,000 people work in the Los Angeles premises, making it one of L.A.'s largest employers. The company operates the largest garment factory in the United States and is known not only for its provocative advertisements and its controversial founder, Dov Charney, but also for its unique business approach.

At a time when most apparel production is occurring overseas, American Apparel has created what it calls in its own literature and ads an "industrial revolution."

At a time when most apparel production is occurring overseas, American Apparel has created what it calls in its own literature and ads an "industrial revolution." By performing all designing, knitting, dyeing, cutting, sewing, photography, marketing and distribution functions out of the company's facilities in L.A., the use of subcontractors and offshore labor is eliminated. Products are shipped to and sold at the more than 280 American Apparel retail stores across the globe, allowing the company to furnish the stores with the right merchandise at precisely the right time. In addition to retail stores, American Apparel also operates wholesale and online distribution channels, supplying screen printers and other similar distributors. The "vertically integrated" business model is extremely efficient and allows for close collaboration among departments and the rapid evolution of ideas to products.

For U.S. clothing manufacturers, vertical integration represents a big innovation. Because all American Apparel merchandise originates from a single location, there are efficiencies in shipping and a liquidity of merchandise that are unavailable to other retailers. In the typical model, merchandise is produced and shipped from a number of different countries around the globe, each with its own trade and shipping regulations. The process of managing inventory and keeping the American Apparel stores adequately stocked is streamlined without red tape written in a host of different languages.



The American Apparel factory in L.A. is a rarity in a clothing industry that has migrated out of the United States.

According to founder/CEO/majority shareholder Charney, combining all the company's operations from design to distribution under one roof is more cost effective and efficient, regardless of scale. The time it takes to go from having a new idea to having something in stores can happen in a matter of days.

"You can design it on a Monday, cut it on a Tuesday, sew it on a Wednesday, and have it in London by the following Monday," Charney said on PBS in 2006.

If you discount several sexual-harassment lawsuits (no allegations were ever proven), American Apparel treats its employees well. The company trains them and retains them. Benefits include medical, dental, vision, meals, ESL training, productivity bonuses and a medical clinic. In January 2008, factory workers were granted \$25 million in stock.

Still, the garment manufacturer has faced other challenges. In 2009, it was forced to lay off nearly 1,600 employees due to immigration reforms. Many of the casualties had been with the company for close to 10 years and had developed skills that had allowed the company to produce 800,000 garments per week while keeping prices competitive with imports.

The proclivity of the founder toward a legal and moral edge beyond which most wouldn't go is a matter of public record, as is his "contrarian" leadership style. The company's advertisements are controversial, deriving as they do from Charney's desk and not an agency, which would likely play it much safer. Charney lets the world know what he thinks through his advertisements and the banners that adorn his buildings, and controversial as they might be, you can identify an American Apparel ad even without seeing any text.

A visit to the factory is a blast; the sheer scale of the operations is immediately apparent and quite impressive. Two seven-story, large-scale industrial buildings, sitting side-by-side and adjoined by walkways, comprise the premises. With just the right amount of room in front and in between them, the buildings are monolithic twins simultaneously reminiscent of both a sacred space and the traces of American industry of the past. This is the company's work of art, a monument to the processes of the human activity within. The banners slap you out of it, however, calling to mind Jenny Holzer Truisms.

It's Charney's history of entrepreneurship that's the most revealing. As a child born in Montreal, Que., he received public attention for his efforts to sell rainwater in jars and newspapers he'd created. While still in high school, he imported T-shirts (a lot of them) and sold them to fellow students while developing a deep admiration of Americans. As with many Canadian boys his age, that passion came to center around California and girls, girls, girls.

Eventually Charney figured out—by doing it—that he could make both the shirts and the process better by creating the garments himself. He had drive and perseverance and didn't give up even after filing for bankruptcy. He had a vision that a common T-shirt could be reconstructed to have a better fit, a better edge and a sexier line. Clearly, he knew someone would agree with him.

Blue-Collar Values

In *Great by Choice*, Jim Collins outlines a "recipe" for success in any endeavor: be "specific, methodical and consistent." And adhere to the recipe with "fanatic discipline," "paranoid production" and "empirical creativity."

Perhaps this sounds simplistic, but it's actually even simpler than that.

Companies like Oakley, Rogue and American Apparel, like CrossFit, don't come out of nowhere. They come from the same place: the philosophy and mentality of those people who create innovation and blaze trails with new products that meet evolving needs.

In practice, this translates into behavior that can be described as hard work, perseverance in the face of adversity, and the ability to get up the next day and do it all again—repeating ad nauseam. Innovative people care deeply about the product they're producing, they believe passionately in the necessity of that product, and they care about the people with whom they make it.

Some worry that the entrepreneurial spirit is mostly dead in the current economic climate, when disposable income is rare, debt levels are enormous and credit is difficult to obtain, but it would seem that's far from the case. The impetus is there: "Today's ideal social form is not the commune or the movement or even the individual creator as such; it's the small business," William Deresiewicz opined in *The New York Times* in "Generation sell" on Nov. 12, 2011. He was referring to a phenomenon of youth culture to see just about everything as having an identity that can be marketed and branded, but he's onto something.



Will domestic manufacturing return in the 21st century?

"Our culture hero is not the artist or reformer, not the saint or scientist, but the entrepreneur," he wrote. "Autonomy, adventure, imagination: entrepreneurship comprehends all this and more for us."

Earlier I mentioned that it's hard enough to create a job for oneself. But the bottom line is that doing so might be thought of as "financial fitness" for a family and for a nation. Investment in small businesses that produce things we need is an area in which the country should expend some energy.

For my part, I'm not worried about Americans. Ingenuity and entrepreneurship are part of the human condition for which Americans seem to have an abundance of enthusiasm. Perhaps it's pioneer spirit bred in the bone, but the nation has always attracted people with these qualities.

I asked Bill Henniger about the connections between fitness and success in business.

His reply was succinct:

"In short, without hard work there is little result."



Author the Author

E. M. Burton is a CrossFit Journal staff writer.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Out of the Box

The owners of the newly opened CrossFit Ocean Beach take advantage of their surroundings and bring CrossFit to the streets.

Hilary Achauer reports.

By Hilary Achauer

January 2012



All images: CrossFit Ocean Beach

Ocean Beach is a coastal town in San Diego, Calif., known for its funky, hippy vibe. The main street, Newport Avenue, is full of antique stores, head shops, tattoo parlors, bars and surf shops. Most of the businesses are independent and locally owned.

The residents of Ocean Beach are so committed to locally owned businesses that when they got wind of a Starbucks opening in their neighborhood in 2001, they organized a grassroots protest to block the chain. They were unsuccessful, but the addition of the ubiquitous green logo has not altered the one-of-a-kind feel of the laid-back town.



Free your mind: it's just another kind of box jump.

When Chad Timm and Philip Kavanagh decided to open CrossFit Ocean Beach in October 2011, they knew they would need to embrace the local culture. Rather than setting up in an out-of-the-way warehouse, they found a place not far from Newport Avenue and just two blocks from the beach.

They opened their doors Oct. 1 and—not wasting any time—held their first outdoor WOD on the beach on Saturday, Oct. 5. Athletes sprinted in the soft sand and did lunges, bear crawls, broad-jump burpees and sand-hole jumps.

Next, Timm and Kavanagh reached out to local surfers and started offering a Surfer's Strength and Skills class. Held every second and fourth Saturday of the month, the class uses typical CrossFit movements like burpees, box jumps and pull-ups along with slackline work and practice on an Indo Board (a balance board placed on a roller to work balance and core strength).



The CrossFit Ocean Beach crew laughs at rubber mats.

"We put an emphasis on core strength and pulling strength," Timm said. "The idea is to increase surfers' strength, flexibility and speed so they can pop up quicker and not get fatigued as quickly."

Timm was looking for other ways to get his athletes outside and make a splash in the community when he remembered the monthly urban adventure race put on by a running and walking shoe store in his hometown of Portland, Ore. Many new business owners would not plan such an event a month after opening their doors, but Timm and Kavanagh hoped the race would attract attention and bring together the members they did have.

They settled on Saturday, Nov. 12, as the race date, with all proceeds benefitting a local woman's shelter. Timm and Kavanagh hit the pavement and got about a dozen businesses to support them with gift certificates, gear and the permission to do strange-looking exercises outside their stores.

"We got about 20 participants," Timm said. "It rained all day, but we were super lucky that it stopped right when the race started. Our good luck served to enhance the experience."

Participants paid \$25 to enter and competed in small groups. They were given a map and told which businesses to visit.



Functional fitness with a good dose of fun.

"They had a coach stationed at each business we visited," said Debbie Dugan, a participant in the race and a member of CrossFit Ocean Beach. "We'd get there and have to do 20 burpees or 20 air squats and get a raffle ticket after completing each exercise."

When they reached the beach, athletes ran out onto Ocean Beach Pier. At 1,971 feet, it's the longest concrete pier on the West Coast and home to a restaurant and a bait shop. Once at the end of the pier, the participants did box jumps onto benches. Each team had 60 minutes to visit as many locations as possible, with the goal being to acquire the maximum amount of raffle tickets.

Once the teams returned to CrossFit Ocean Beach, they had to do hill sprints on a nearby street with a 60-degree grade.

"My goal was to get through all of the stops," Dugan said. "I wasn't going to do the sprints."

She got caught up the competitive spirit, however, and ran up the hill, where she discovered that she had to do high knees and air squats before heading back down.

"It was fun! I have never done anything like that," Dugan said.

A nurse practitioner and healing touch therapist, Dugan joined CrossFit Ocean Beach the week it opened. Prior to joining, she hadn't worked out in a year.

"I love CrossFit," she said. "It kicks my butt."

The raffle drawing, which included prizes from local businesses as well as Life as Rx and Rx Jump Ropes, was held after the race finished. One of the participants won a gift certificate to CrossFit Ocean Beach's on-ramp program, and another woman won so many prizes she started giving them away to people around her.

As they grow their gym, Timm and Kavanagh continue to look around them for fitness inspiration. On a recent Saturday, they ran the class out the door and to a nearby playground where the WOD included a monkey-bar traverse, scaling a play structure, pull-ups and kettlebell squats in the sand.

Have you done a creative workout at your box? Post ideas to comments!



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Think Like a Bumblebee, Train Like a Racehorse

Ben Bergeron teaches a few CrossFit lessons
learned from the animal kingdom.

By Ben Bergeron CrossFit New England

January 2012



All images: Staff/CrossFit Journal

One of the most powerful and motivating coaching mantras I have ever stolen (yes, I steal from other coaches) was given to me while I was a triathlete training for the Ironman in my former life.

Joe Friel, a world-class endurance coach and author of *The Triathlete's Training Bible*, has a powerful message he uses to get his athletes to stay focused and believe in themselves during the long training season.

His message is "think like a bumblebee and train like a racehorse." This message works as well, or even better, for CrossFitters as it does for endurance athletes. I have employed this message with every top-level CrossFit athlete I have coached, and I believe it is enough to bring an athlete from good to great.

Last spring when I was coaching the CrossFit New England team to prepare for the CrossFit Games, this was a constant theme at every practice. The women on the team even got bumblebee earrings to remind themselves of this powerful message.



Racehorses don't question their program, their coach or their training; they do exactly what is asked of them.



Like the bumblebee, elite CrossFit athletes have ultimate faith in themselves to do the impossible.

Think Like a Bumblebee

Bumblebees are relatively huge, furry insects with tiny little wings that fly with incredible speed, accuracy and agility. NASA scientists were infatuated with the bumblebee. How could something that big and furry fly with such little wings? So they studied the bumblebee. The thought process was that if they could replicate the physics of the bumblebee, they could build aircrafts and weapons of similar ability.

You, as an athlete, need to have an unyielding belief in yourself. Don't let your past, your peers, your family or your competitors limit your performance.

After extensive research, the scientists unanimously came to the same conclusion: bumblebees can't fly. The physics behind bumblebees simply say they are too large and too heavy. But here is the interesting part: No one told the bumblebee it can't fly, so it goes right on flying. It flies even though the smartest people on Earth doubt it can.

Because the bee has ultimate faith in itself, it is able to do amazing things. You, as an athlete, need to have unyielding belief in yourself. Don't let your past, your peers, your family or your competitors limit your performance. You, like the bee, can fly if you believe you can.

Train Like a Racehorse

Racehorses are just like other elite athletes. They know they are athletes, and they know they are different from the other horses.

They train with heart-rate monitors. They do intervals and lactate-threshold training. They eat a special diet designed to improve performance. They have coaches, and they get nervous on race day just like you.

The difference between racehorses and you is racehorses don't second-guess their training program, their abilities or their coaches. Racehorses go all out when asked to; they don't save something for tomorrow. You'll never see a racehorse doing extra laps around the track because it felt like it should be doing more. Racehorses don't look at other horses' training programs and freak out because the other horses are doing double days. Racehorses just do exactly what is asked of them—nothing more, nothing less.

Racehorses don't look at other horses' training programs and freak out because the other horses are doing double days.

Racehorses have 100 percent commitment to their program, to their coaches and to being the best they can be.



Live your life with a singular purpose and a singular focus, never questioning, never doubting.

How much extra energy do you spend examining the programming of other gyms or athletes? Do you jump from site to site, never letting the benefits of a single program take effect?

How about comparing yourself with other athletes? Do you think racehorses build up extra anxiety by comparing their times or bodies with other horses? Racehorses, just like you as an elite athlete, have one purpose in their lives: to get faster and stronger, to be better.

If you are a strong athlete and have a good coach and live your life with a singular purpose with a singular focus on one goal, one mission, you will become elite.

The take-home message is to have complete belief in yourself. Believing you are capable is the first and most important step in becoming elite. Second, you must train with purpose. If you are constantly second-guessing, you undermine your accomplishments and will never reach the highest levels.

Think like a bumblebee, train like a racehorse.



Courtesy of CrossFit New England

About the Author

Ben Bergeron, along with his wife Heather, is the owner and operator of [CrossFit New England](#) in Natick, Mass. Bergeron has been coaching for more than 15 years, is a member of the Level 1 Seminar Staff and coached his affiliate team to a first-place finish at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Bringing Nutrition Home

When it comes to food, kids and teens require a special approach. Shannon Jones offers some advice.

By Shannon Jones

January 2012



All images: Courtesy of Shannon Jones

The CrossFit Kids program is unique because it focuses on teaching kids how to “push, pull, run, throw, climb, lift and jump effectively and safely.”

Thus, an integral component of CrossFit Kids programming is a focus on nutrition, which is vital to facilitate these levels of activity. However, nutrition can be a sensitive topic.

While some of us CrossFit Kids trainers might possess strong opinions on how children should eat, we need to remain cautious in how we present our nutritional information so as not to alienate our clients' parents. Our most imperative message to families is evolving bodies need prime fuel to learn and grow. Therefore, nutrition is one of the key building blocks for health and fitness in children.

While many of the children at CrossFit Kids Zone come to us from parents who regularly CrossFit, the remainder of our CrossFit Kids clients come from sedentary families. Their reasons for coming vary, but now that we have them in our gym, the opportunity to effect change in their family's nutrition patterns is too great to ignore.

I often get calls from parents unfamiliar with CrossFit requesting information about our CrossFit Kids Zone program because their child needs to "lose some weight." They see exercise as the most apparent quick fix to this more deeply entrenched problem of childhood obesity. While they are absolutely correct that regular physical activity can help their child gain an advantage—both mentally and physically—what they are often overlooking is the need for proper nutrition inside the home to support physical activity.

Nutrition is one of the key building blocks for health and fitness in children.

But how do you get this message across to parents in a way that will take root?

Get to Know Your Client

When working with kids, it's important to remember they are not your only clients; their parents come as part of a packaged deal.



Getting kids to help out in the kitchen is a great way to teach them about nutrition.

As caregivers, parents are responsible for ensuring children show up to your class, are well fed and have access to all possible opportunities for physical activity. When figuring out how to address the specific educational needs of each group of kids, I have found it can be helpful to form a relationship with the parents in the same way you become familiar with the kids.

Whenever possible, spend time talking to parents. You can pick up important clues about each family that will help you tailor your approach when teaching nutrition. Having more accurate information about each family's socioeconomic status, hobbies, habits and nutrition patterns can be invaluable.

Get Kids in the Kitchen

Advertisers figured out long ago that getting children excited about a product or idea is the best way to sell it.

Anyone who has seen commercials that air during Saturday-morning cartoons knows what I'm talking about. When it comes to teaching nutrition to families as a whole, the same rule applies. The trick is getting kids to take these ideas about nutrition home.

One answer is to indirectly get the children involved in meal preparation. Kids love to help out and feel important. Use this to your advantage.

I started giving children at CrossFit Kids Zone handouts at the end of class as a souvenir to take home. These handouts just so happened to be recipes from the "CrossFit Kitchen for Kids" series in the *CrossFit Journal*. Week by week, I have been handing out various fun and easy recipes kids can make with their families. Then, I make it a point to ask the kids in class each week whether they made it, how the recipe went over and how they thought it tasted.

By giving kids a vested interest in what goes on their plate, you are, in effect, influencing what parents are more likely to provide for them.

As an added bonus, giving kids something to look forward to at mealtime means they are likely to have more direct conversations with their parents about preparing and eating those healthy foods you recommended. By giving kids a vested interest in what goes on their plate, you are, in effect, influencing what parents are more likely to provide for them.



Children in a CrossFit Kids Zone class draw their idea of a healthy meal on a paper plate, an exercise designed to promote discussion about nutrition.

Seeing is Believing

Visualization is an important tool when working with kids. If you want to really cement an idea into a child's brain, teach it with concepts he or she can see.

For example, to illustrate how much sugar really hides in some of the most popular drinks and snack foods, measure out the amount with sugar cubes or a baggie full of bulk sugar and display it for kids. I tried this during a nutrition talk to a group of local middle-schoolers and it really got some reactions.

One serving of baby carrots, for instance, contains 4 grams of sugar, or one sugar cube. Whereas two Twinkies contain 37 grams of sugar, or nine-and-a-half sugar cubes. As for drinks, a 1-liter bottle of Mountain Dew contains 124 grams of sugar, or 31 sugar cubes. Meanwhile, a 1-liter bottle of water contains no sugar.

Moving through such a visual exercise means kids will have a mental picture of what they are actually putting into their bodies when they make these food choices. If parents are present, you can bet that pyramid of sugar cubes is a visual that will stick with them, especially the next time they are cruising the aisles at the supermarket with the family grocery list.

Keep It Simple

As always with kids, you only have a specific window of time before they stop listening to what you're saying and begin to lose interest. This is why it's crucial to use simple, easy-to-grasp and age-appropriate concepts they can quickly process.

During the skills portion of class one day at CrossFit Kids Zone, for instance, I asked each child to take a paper plate and draw a "healthy meal."

During the activity, the children began to have self-directed conversations about what they were drawing, which foods were appropriate and what their family had eaten for dinner the night before. It just so happened that while we chatted, the parents were observing the class, listening to what their children had to share about meals at home. As the children drew, I was able to glean a fair amount of information about each family's nutritional values, as well as each child's grasp of nutrition. When they were done, we reviewed each drawing as a group and briefly spoke about the contents of the plates.

As we were tidying up, one of the little girls smiled at me and said, "That was a fun activity!" This reinforced my hope that this simple exercise was enough to make an impression on their thought processes without being tedious or overly instructive. I merely presented an idea, let them run with it and then helped them tie it all together.

What we hope to bring about in kids and teens is awareness that whatever food goes into their bodies is there for a specific purpose.

When children fully understand a theory, they are more likely to pass it on to someone else. After all, this regurgitating of newfound knowledge is really your final aim when working with children from sedentary families. Often, kids will be the ones who are responsible for passing the lesson they learned on to their families.

Explain the Whys

If you have ever tried to discuss the merits of nutrition with a group of teenagers, you likely will have noticed their ideas about why we eat can be vastly different from the actual facts. Sadly, the media and other sources propagate ideas about proper nutrition and health that entail *not* eating. Rather, what we hope to bring about in kids and teens is awareness that whatever food goes into their bodies is there for a specific purpose. Eating food doesn't necessarily make you fat, and it can keep you healthy.

The other day I asked my kids class why it's important to eat healthy foods. One of my little guys piped up immediately, saying, "So you don't grow up to be disgusting and fat!"

While I grudgingly acknowledged this statement held some truth, I gently nudged them toward the more essential idea that good food is beneficial for your body rather than the belief that bad food makes you fat. If one of my CrossFit Kids students goes home, puts two and two together and seizes an opportunity to remind his big sister she should eat her breakfast to stay strong, then I have done my job.



Focus on the positive—talk to kids about how eating healthy makes them feel good and stay strong.

Sending Signals

It can be beneficial for kids to learn how to listen to their own bodies. Encourage them to examine how a particular food makes them feel after they eat it.

Encourage them to examine how a particular food makes them feel after they eat it.

Over the years, I have asked many children to tell me what happens to their bodies when they eat sugar. Most of them, big and small, have laughingly told me about how it makes them "hyper" and gives them a "sugar rush," making them go "crazy." If they've noticed this, you can bet their parents have noticed it, too.

This is a good opening to address the idea that what you eat affects how you act. If this cause-and-effect concept works in the gym, get kids thinking about whether eating healthy foods will help them in the classroom as well. This idea can create an opening for parents to understand that the food with which they are fueling their children can also be used to help influence their behavior, attention span and learning ability. It gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, "Food for thought."

Seize the Moment

If planned activities aren't your thing, take heart. Keep your eyes open. Chances are there will be plenty of unplanned opportunities to relay information to your CrossFit Kids clients about nutrition. You just have to seize the teachable moments when they arise.

Watch for openings in conversation with parents, listen to questions children ask, and stay on the lookout for cues from the kids about what they are ready to learn and absorb. If you follow the lead of your group and play to its particular interests, you can transfer a lot of information in some really creative ways.

**You just have to seize
the teachable moments
when they arise.**

As all of you zealous CrossFit Kids instructors already know, it is your very own brand of enthusiasm and passion for this program that keeps your clients coming back. This fervor is communicated to them through your teaching methods each week, and it continues to breed their desire for success.

As you are no doubt watching displays of hunger for achievement spill out of your clients, I have great faith you will find effective ways to translate this into an appetite for adequate nutrition.



About the Author

Shannon Jones has an early childhood care and education diploma and a bachelor's degree in child and youth care. Jones has worked with preschool and school-aged children since 1999. She has specific training in special-needs adaptation, handling difficult behaviors, facilitating and organizing developmentally appropriate programming, and keeping learning fun and interactive for diverse abilities and age groups. Jones completed the CrossFit Level 1 and CrossFit Kids programs and owns and operates [CrossFit Kids Zone](#) in Victoria, B.C.

THE CrossFit[®] *kitchen* K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



SQUASH THIS

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet
[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

Getting kids to eat vegetables isn't as easy as it sounds—but some vegetables are easier than others. This recipe puts a spin on roasted butternut squash and gives it a little kick! Watch the red pepper flakes if you don't like it too spicy.

This recipe is a great carbohydrate side dish to serve with lean protein and a hearty helping of leafy greens.

ingredients

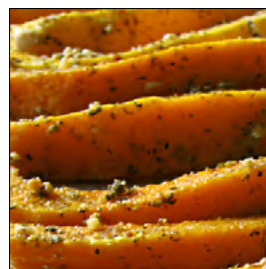
- 1 butternut squash (medium size)
- 2 tsp. coriander seed
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp. fennel seed
- 1-2 tsp. crushed red peppers
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 clove garlic, crushed

notes

Recipe makes 8-10 servings, depending on the size of your squash. Serve the spicy squash wedges (about 3-4) alongside a grilled chicken breast and a plate full of leafy greens for a full meal.

directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. In a food processor, combine all dry spices and pulse until finely ground. Set aside.
3. Wash and cut squash lengthwise and peel. Then cut each half horizontally, then into lengthwise wedges (think potato wedges). One squash will yield about 32 total wedges.
4. Place squash in a large bowl, drizzle with olive oil and toss to cover.
5. Next, rub squash with garlic and dry seasoning mixture.
6. Arrange on baking sheet so the pieces are not touching.
7. Bake 30 minutes, until squash is slightly golden and a little crispy.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Full Reverse, Admiral

Retired U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Bill Center was obese and in declining health.
He reached his goals to achieve functional fitness by giving CrossFit a chance.

By Bill Center

January 2012



All images: Courtesy of Bill Center

I couldn't get up from the floor.

My body—270 lb. and just 63 years old—lay prone because I lacked the strength to command it upright.

1 of 4

Rising from the floor is such a basic capability, a natural motion first achieved before most of us could even walk. And it was suddenly a capability that existed only in my past. As a retired rear admiral of the U.S. Navy, this was a new and alarming experience. You don't get to command warships with hundreds or even thousands of crew because you are incapable. My career took me to such a rank precisely because I'd always been so capable. I routinely surpassed a Navy-mandated level of physical fitness decade after decade.

While I weighed 175 lb. in my prime, I was now obese and profoundly debilitated.

Now, after leading destroyers and aircraft carriers through times of war and peace, I could not lead my own body to simply stand up.

How did this happen?

The short answer is that I'd lain on the floor so I could read *Goodnight Moon* to my twin granddaughters. And, of course, I never imagined I wouldn't be able to get back up. My physical decline, while dramatic, did not happen overnight.

While I weighed 175 lb. in my prime, I was now obese and profoundly debilitated. And my steep decline came with a steep cost: my plans to travel with my wife of 40 years, my dreams of watching my granddaughters grow up, my hopes of renovating our home, my independence.

How did I ever get like this? And, if I couldn't even stand up on my own, how could I get back to being a capable, physically active person?

My Body Turns on Me

The onset was sudden.

In 1989, I was commanding the cruiser USS Reeves; we were on our third trip to the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War. Eleven laps around the deck made a mile, and I regularly ran three miles at the start of every day. One morning, after easily completing three miles just the day before, I could barely manage a couple of laps. With a war going on, it was a stressful environment, and I thought I might've been



As a rear admiral in the U.S. Navy, Center had commanded warships and thousands of crew, but at age 63 he found he couldn't get up off the floor.

coming down with a cold. By the following morning, the cold hadn't materialized, but I had no strength. It was like I just had an empty gas tank. With my assignment aboard Reeves nearing an end, I got caught up in my duties and ignored the symptoms.

In this condition, my fitness habits unsurprisingly eroded to new lows. I was depressed, and I started gaining more and more weight.

After multiple blood tests and doctor visits, a senior physician from Georgetown University examined me and offered a diagnosis, though it was hardly definitive.



One of Center's goals was to be able to get down on the floor and play with his granddaughters—and get back up again.

"It's essentially an autoimmune disorder similar to fibromyalgia, so let's treat it like fibromyalgia," he said.

The vagueness of the diagnosis, coupled with chronic pain, didn't provide me with much encouragement. Basic life functions—e.g., getting in and out of a chair—were laborious. In this condition, my fitness habits unsurprisingly eroded to new lows. I was depressed, and I started gaining more and more weight.

**It was a revelation to me,
because I had become stuck
in the idea that I'd never
recover any level of fitness.**

Turning Back the Tide

One morning, I stepped onto the bathroom scale and the numbers stared back at me: 270. When I saw that number—roughly 80 lb. more than I'd been in the Navy—something happened. I just said to myself, "This is the end. This is just unacceptable, and I won't let this continue. It stops now."

Counting calories helped me lose a quick 30 lb.

Over the years, I'd had poor experiences with personal trainers, especially those pushing a no-pain, no-gain mentality. I had plenty of pain already! But as I started my weight loss, a close friend kept nudging me to go see a trainer he knew at a nearby CrossFit gym in Seattle. After six months of resistance, I agreed to at least try it.

The trainer immediately asked me, "What are your goals?"

At this point, all my goals were really about functional fitness and doing everyday tasks autonomously. So I told him I wanted to be able to get down on the floor and play with my granddaughters and get back up on my own. I told him I wanted to travel, to get on and off airplanes, and to get in and out of taxis without any trouble.

We took baby steps forward at every session. At first, the exercises were very moderate. Stepping up and down a few inches, pushing away from the wall, lifting a stick, basic stretching. Then the trainer gradually increased the intensity. My initial attempts at squats involved sitting on a box higher than a chair. Soon enough, though, I was squatting all the way down on a medicine ball. It was a revelation to me, because I had become stuck in the idea that I'd never recover any level of fitness.



Center wanted to travel with his wife of 40 years, something he couldn't do when he was overweight and battling chronic pain.

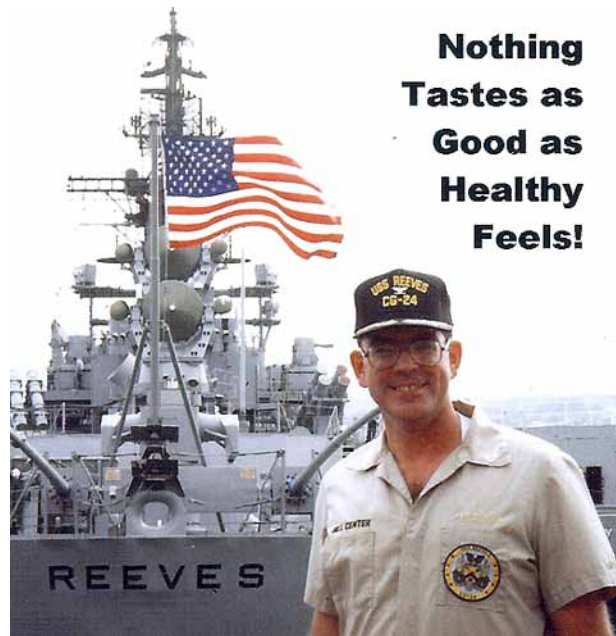
After a year of working with the trainer, going three times a week for the first six months and then twice weekly thereafter, my fitness improved exponentially. I even started running again. My mindset changed as well. If I got up in the morning and felt stiff and sore, I didn't think, "Oh, I can't go to the gym because I'm stiff and sore." Instead, I'd think, "I've got to go to the gym because I feel stiff and sore." More and more, I realized moving around was keeping me loose and limber. I still got tired after exercising, but I always felt better than when I walked into the workout.

**So much of my motivation
has come from simply
realizing it was possible to
reverse my decline.**

So much of my motivation has come from simply realizing it was possible to reverse my decline. I lost 5 lb. And then another 5 lb. And then another. Every pound lost boosted my confidence. Every physical ability recovered added to my resolve to keep getting better. I now keep a 30-lb. sandbag at the bottom of my stairs. Whenever I go up or down the stairs, I put that sandbag on my shoulders. I do it to remind myself what it feels like to carry around extra weight. I don't know how I did it!

**Today, my basic fitness level
is greater than 10 years ago
when I retired.**

This reminder is another effective motivator. I need this motivation because I have more work to do—more weight to lose, greater levels of fitness to achieve. The more I do this, the more my autoimmune disorder goes away. Besides, there is a joy in this journey, and regaining my ability to think positively has arguably been the most important aspect. Eating right. Sleeping well. Exercising. They're all choices I make to feel good.



**Nothing
Tastes as
Good as
Healthy
Feels!**

The symptoms of Center's autoimmune disorder improved as he became more fit and he started eating better, sleeping better and thinking positively.

Audacity

Every day I see the progress I've made. I just remodeled a room for my granddaughters to stay in, which was a big project. I put in new drywall, wainscoting and new crown molding and installed a new closet. At one point, when I was tearing up the old carpeting, it occurred to me that not too long ago it was the very floor I couldn't get up from! Now look at me.

Today, my basic fitness level is greater than 10 years ago when I retired. I just had my annual physical, and the doctor wrote, "These labs look great!" He underlined "great" and added some exclamation points. Seeing that was pure joy.

Perhaps I don't fit the stereotypical CrossFit mold in that I'm not a 20- or 30-year-old with a chiseled, athletic build. Or perhaps that's the point: CrossFit can be for everyone, including me, on my path to regaining functional fitness and ultimately a higher quality of living.



About the Author

Bill Center is the author of *The Admiral's Comeback*. The unabridged version is available at Foreverathletes.com.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Tales of a 40-Year-Old Superhero

After spending her 30s overweight and unhappy, Lisa Erickson discovers CrossFit and her inner superhero at age 40.

By Lisa Erickson

January 2012



To say that CrossFit changed my life is an understatement. It might even sound a little overdramatic to some people. But for those of us who love CrossFit, it's completely understandable.

I was a moderately fit and athletic young person, but because of health problems and life in general, I spent the better part of my 30s more than 100 lb. overweight. I was married, had two children and was just getting by on a daily basis. I finally hit rock bottom one hot summer day at SeaWorld. I was so heavy my knees hurt and I was a sweaty mess. I went to the rental counter to rent an electric scooter. All of a sudden, I realized I was so fat and miserable I was actually going to rent a scooter. I was beyond disgusted with myself.

The next day, embarrassed and unsure, I and my friend Jena Pickard (aka G.I. Jena) walked into a Globo Gym and signed up for a membership and personal training. I didn't know it then, but my life was about to change.



Before Erickson started CrossFit.



Erickson with trainer Ivan Lugo after a half marathon.

I was so lucky to get Armando Macias, whom everyone calls “Mando,” as my trainer. At first I was sure Macias was too quiet and that I’d be able to get away with being a slacker. I thought I’d be doing leg lifts on the machine or walking on a treadmill. But he had me doing crazy things.

“You want me to carry this medicine ball up and down the stairs how many times?”

I had never in my life even touched a loaded barbell, and there I was lifting it over my head. One day I asked him why all the other trainers put their clients on machines and I had to lunge around the gym with dumbbells above my head.

He said one word: “CrossFit.”

I went home and Googled it and thought there was no way I could be doing what these people were doing. Certainly I was too old and overweight.

About six months after I started with Macias, he had the opportunity to be part of his own CrossFit gym. I canceled my gym membership without hesitation and went with him. Over the last two years, CrossFit (and Macias) have transformed my mind and body from an unhappy, frumpy, overweight, stay-at-home mom to some sort of superhero who can do just about anything. At least that’s how I feel.

With over 90 lb. gone and what seems like the strength of an Amazon woman, I feel like a whole new person—and I love it. I never knew I could love Olympic lifting so much. And each time I PR on something, I think about the old me and how far I have come.

An important moment came about last year when we were trying for our 1-rep-max deadlift. I hit a PR of 272 lb. The number 272 made me emotional because 272 lb. was how much I weighed when I started this journey. To lift that heavy weight and feel the burden it put on my whole body as I lifted it resonated through my mind and reminded me how far I’ve come.



Erickson on her 40th birthday. She says, "Don't worry: I didn't eat the cake."

Sometimes I wish I hadn't wasted so much of my 30s being fat and unhappy. But regret won't get me anywhere. Instead, I am focusing on my 40s and hoping to be able to compete in CrossFit masters competitions some day.

I still have a lot of skills to master. When I started training with Macias, he would have me hang on the pull-up bars for as long as possible. I had terrible grip strength, and I was too heavy, so I could only hold on for a few seconds. When all the other new ladies at our box would come in and get a pull-up within a few months, I started to feel like I'd never get it.

My 40th birthday was in January 2011, and I set a goal that I would do a pull-up before my 40th birthday. I practiced with bands. I practiced kipping. I practiced a lot. And then one day while practicing, I accidentally did it. Then I did it again and again. My hands will never be the same.

My next goals are to master handstand push-ups and ring dips.

I want to thank CrossFit, Macias, Ivan and all my amazing friends at RainCross CrossFit.

A special note to all women who think they are too fat, too old, too weak, too out of shape to walk through the doors and try CrossFit: don't let that stop you. There's a superhero inside you trying to get out.



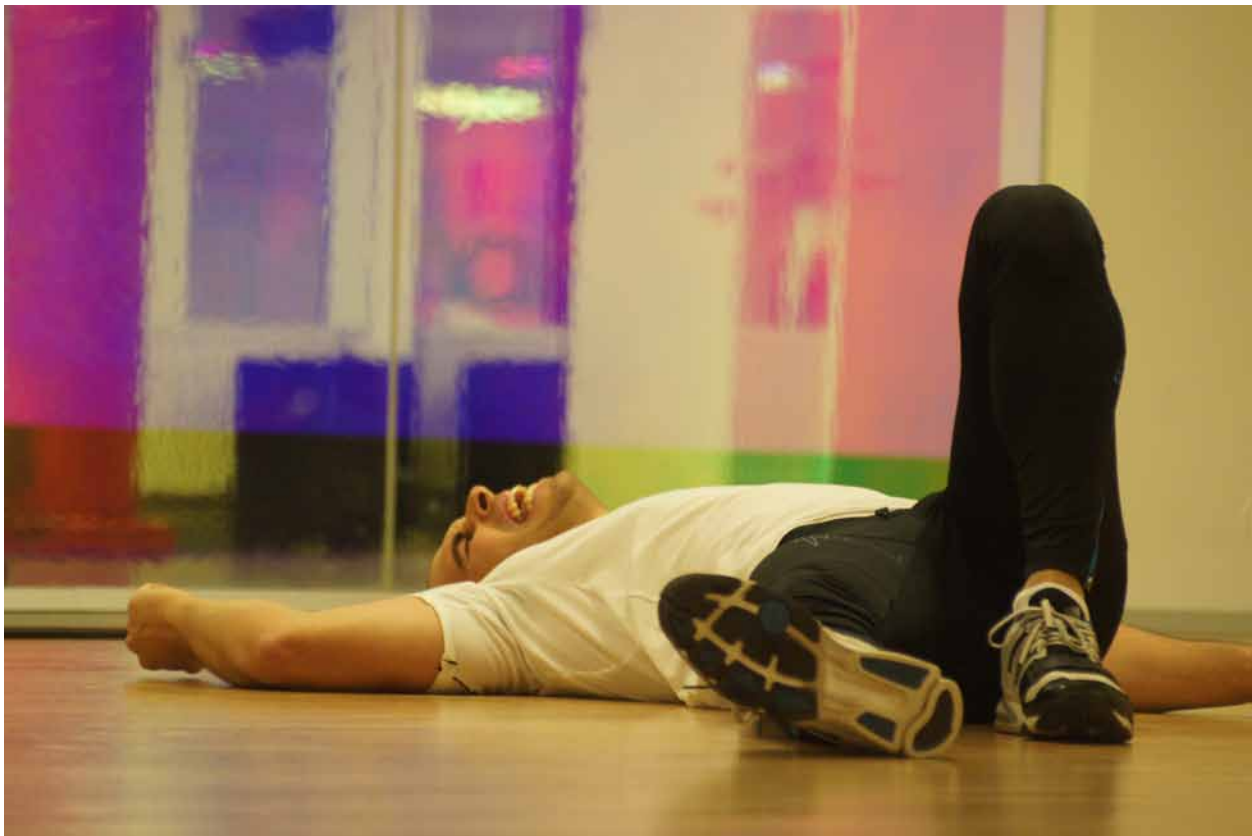
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Building Mental Toughness

Swedish CrossFit trainer John Hermiz says to get mentally tougher, you have to stick to your plan—in or out of the gym.

By John Hermiz

January 2012



All images: Karin Reimondos

My first encounter with CrossFit was about two years ago. It was dramatic and ugly, and it changed my naive self-image of being in shape.

I had just gotten off work and was on my way to the gym for yet another one of my slow-pace, lifting-heavy workout sessions. In the staff area, one of my colleagues was preparing a workout he called "300":

25 burpees

50 kettlebell front squats

50 kettlebell sumo deadlift high pulls

50 push-ups

50 American sit-ups

50 kettlebell clean and jerks

25 burpees

Most of it meant nothing to me at the time, but I knew what a push-up was and that I easily could do 50 of them in less than a minute. So I decided to tag along for what I considered a light workout that would give me a chance to regain my strength for my next gym session.

Thirteen burpees later, I was in complete shock.

Thirteen burpees later, I was in complete shock. My heart was racing, my lactic-acid levels were off the charts, my tongue was hanging out of my mouth, and I felt like throwing up. I thought, "What the hell is happening?" "I can't finish this workout," and "I'm going to throw up and pass out." I believed all these thoughts; subsequently my emotional state was affected.

I was terrified, stressed and anxious. Of course, that didn't help much. Because I was in a group, quitting wasn't an option; had I been by myself, I instantly would have quit and comforted myself with a high-sugar protein drink and a call to my girlfriend. But I saw the damn thing through in a near-death experience of 18:40. Then I crawled into the fetal position, where I stayed for another 10 minutes.

My ego was bruised. How could I consider myself fit when I couldn't handle a workout like that? I decided to change my ways and have since followed a CrossFit regimen that has done wonders for my physique. Interestingly enough, there has been a side effect to my changed exercise routine, as well. CrossFit—in combination with techniques I learned while studying to become a psychologist at Stockholm University—has developed mental toughness.

Solving Problems

What do I mean by the term "mental toughness"?

I consider mental toughness to be the ability to continue according to plan in a way that is in line with your values even though negative thoughts and emotions are pulling you in another direction. Or, in layman's terms: The ability to get present and move forward in a stressful situation.

So how can CrossFit help a person develop mental toughness?

To explain, I'll first have to explain the medical model of solving problems.



Mental toughness means fighting against negative thoughts and emotions in order to finish according to plan.



Feelings of fear and anxiety are inevitable. The key is how you handle these feelings.

In medicine, the way to solve a problem is to find it and remove it. Say you had high blood pressure. Your doctor would prescribe medicine to lower the pressure. Or if you had a tumor, a proper way to treat it would be to find it and surgically remove it. Problem solved.

Even in daily life, if you have a problem, this is a good approach to handle it: isolate it and remove it. Small apartment? Find a larger one. Don't like your job? Find another one. This model is frequently used in mental health care as well. Depression? Take antidepressants. Anxiety? Try a sedative. Disturbing thoughts? Replace them with "better" ones.

Traditional cognitive therapy focuses on identifying maladaptive thought patterns and replacing them with more adaptive ways of thinking. In mental health care, this model works off the idea that negative thoughts and emotions aren't normal and healthy. Therefore—in accordance with the medical model of solving problems—they need to be isolated and removed. The problem with

this idea is that it can create a vicious cycle. If anxiety isn't considered normal, a person could get anxious from feeling anxious and start to avoid situations causing feelings and thoughts associated with anxiousness.

**In the inner world of
feelings and thoughts,
evidence points to a paradox:
If you're not willing to have it,
you've got it!**

Let me give you an example. Let's say you were to give a presentation. On your way to the venue you feel your heart beating faster and sweat in your palms. Thoughts and images of failure and the embarrassing consequences of failing start popping into your mind. If these feelings and thoughts were viewed as a problem, they would certainly lead to a reaction like, "Oh, no! Why is this happening to me now? I can't feel this way and give my presentation! Now I will fail for sure!" Thoughts like that would then cause more anxiety and more negative thoughts, and, worst-case scenario, you would call in sick, go home and go back to bed.

There seems to be a difference between the inner and the outer world in terms of how problems are best solved. In the outer world, problems often can be successfully handled by removal. But in the inner world of feelings and thoughts, evidence points to a paradox: if you're not willing to have it, you've got it! Unwillingness to experience certain feelings can lead to an increased frequency of those same feelings and also can cause avoidance behaviors that limit life.

Choosing Behaviors

A modern approach called the "third wave of cognitive behavioral therapy"—the most renowned therapy form in third-wave CBT is acceptance and commitment therapy, or ACT (1)—has a different belief about negative thoughts and emotions. Those thoughts and emotions are considered a normal part of life and a natural consequence of a person's experience. In these therapy forms, the goal isn't to get rid of disturbing thoughts and emotions, it's the opposite: to increase tolerance for them.

Through a process called “cognitive defusion,” patients learn to separate themselves from their thoughts and feelings to allow them to look at their thoughts and feelings from a different perspective—as having them rather than being them. This skill gives patients more flexibility to choose their behavior in stressful situations. In the best cases, when you get negative thoughts and emotions, you recognize them and continue in a way that is in line with your values.

What's important is being able to do what you're supposed to do, even if you're feeling bad.

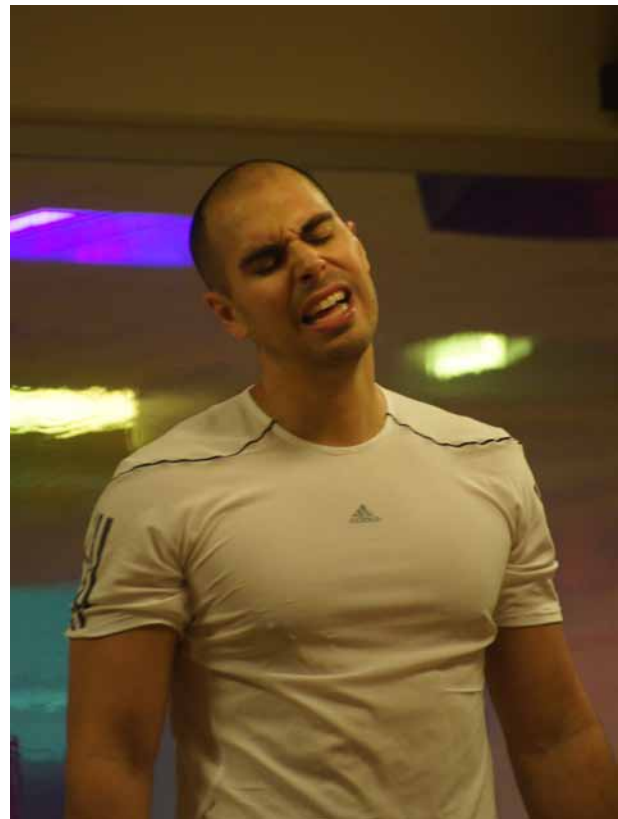
Say you have a value to lead a healthy lifestyle. A behavior associated with that value is exercising, perhaps four times a week. You decided your workout days are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Monday, after work, you feel tired and hungry and the last thing you want to do is head off to the gym. In your mind, you're now entertaining thoughts like: “I'm too tired today,” “I really don't want to exercise,” “I can exercise tomorrow instead,” “It won't be a good workout anyway if I'm this tired.” This is the time to stop and observe your thoughts and recognize they are a natural consequence of working all day and missing your afternoon snack. And, most important, this is the time for committed action. Now more than ever it's important to act according to your value of being healthy and get your ass to the gym.

During your workout, you might start feeling differently, or not. That's not important. What's important is being able to do what you're supposed to do, even if you're feeling bad. To constantly act according to plan will build tolerance and toughness. A common misconception is people think they need to “feel” like doing an activity in order to start doing it. Often, thoughts and feelings change when you start a behavior. This is called “acting from outside and in.” A depressed person often wants to stay at home and watch TV with the curtains down. He or she doesn't feel like doing anything and least of all meeting other people. Staying at home actually contributes to feelings of depression. One of the most powerful therapeutic methods for treating depression is activity. Patients are coached to resume behaviors that gave their lives joy and meaning before the depression, even though they don't feel like it.

Connecting the Dots

So what's the connection to CrossFit and mental toughness?

Research and experience show that when levels of exertion rise to a level where the anaerobic energy system is providing most of the energy, affective responses tend to be less positive and more negative (2). Basically when levels of exertion rise, so do levels of fear, stress and anxiety. During physical exercise, pain is triggered when work surpasses the lactic-acid threshold (3). Byproducts from the anaerobic process—lactic-acid, carbon dioxide, etc.—cause pain receptors in the tissue to fire; the athlete experiences the signals as pain and discomfort, which cause a negative affective response. At some point, thought processes will be affected. Depending on the athlete's previous experience of similar situations, thoughts of hopelessness, giving up and/or changing the workout—lowering reps, sets, load, etc.—might appear in the athlete's mind.



As levels of exertion rise, it is normal to feel anxiety, stress and fear. Acknowledge these feelings and keep moving.



Try applying the mental toughness you've developed in CrossFit to other areas of your life.

CrossFit workouts are known for their high intensity, which means an athlete training according to the methodology will get ample opportunity for exposure to negative thoughts and emotions. And, if coached correctly, athletes will be trained to push through and continue work regardless of these negative thoughts and emotions in line with the never-quit spirit of CrossFit. When a person experiences tough situations and gets through them, some sort of cognitive restructuring takes place. A rule forms in the athlete's mind: "A situation might seem hopeless

and overwhelming, but if I keep going, I'll get through it." Overcoming tough situations builds confidence in the ability to handle similar situations.

How does this transfer to life outside of the gym?

We all run into stressful and challenging situations in life. Say you came home late from work, it was raining outside, and all you wanted to do was kick off your shoes, lie down on the couch and order pizza. However, in accordance with your value of eating healthy and home-cooked food, you had planned to go grocery shopping and cook dinner. At this point, it would be easy to change your plans.

**Overcoming tough situations
builds confidence in the ability
to handle similar situations.**

A person with the experience of overcoming difficulty and sticking to a plan can acknowledge thoughts of changing plans and perhaps draw a parallel to how he or she handles a challenging workout: "A situation might seem hopeless and overwhelming, but if I keep going I'll get through it." Best-case scenario: you'd put on your raincoat, hop on your bike and head off to the supermarket. And by doing so, you'd get a little bit mentally tougher!

Make Your Own Rules

A few rules I have found useful in helping athletes and myself develop toughness and confidence are:

1. Start off at the right level. A beginner needs to experience success, not failure. Therefore, use proper scaling. Set up yourself and others for success. No one gets better by constantly failing. It won't help to get injured either. Don't try to run a marathon without proper preparations. It will be a horrible experience, and if you manage to push yourself through, there's a real risk of injury.
2. Push the limit. Always try to better yourself by setting realistic challenges.
3. Commit to your workout. Plan your workout, prepare and then do it. Quitting is not an option unless there's a risk of injury. Every time you succeed to follow your plans, you'll get tougher. Every time you quit or change your plans, you'll get mentally weaker and more prone to quitting and changing plans.
4. Train yourself at observing thoughts and feelings. Learn to recognize your normal thought patterns during strenuous exercise. If you normally get thoughts trying to negotiate a change in your workouts—"Maybe three laps is enough today, I have to save some energy for tomorrow"—try to recognize those thoughts, but don't buy into them. Thoughts are just thoughts—no more, no less.



About the Author

John Hermiz is a personal trainer of nine years at Balance Training in Stockholm, Sweden. He is a Level 1 CrossFit trainer and a Poliquin International Certification Program level 2 strength coach. Hermiz is also a psychologist specializing in behavior change. He teaches applied psychology to students pursuing careers in the health industry at [Sverigehälsan](#) in Stockholm.

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THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Saved by the Barbell

A group of women find strength of body and mind in CrossFit, giving writer Emily Beers the courage to tell her own story of self-doubt.

By Emily Beers CrossFit Vancouver

January 2012



Courtesy of Kelsey Nagel

Seattle native Kelsey Nagel stands close to 6 feet and weighs in at 175 lb.

She's Greek-god-like in stature, and when you throw her gorgeous hair and smile into the equation, she's difficult to ignore.

At least, that's what the people who were watching the recent Gorilla Games in Bellevue, Wash., said when they saw Nagel compete.

"I can't stop looking at her. She's gorgeous," said a fan who had just witnessed Nagel bust out six 275-lb. speed deadlifts in the 10-second time limit during a lift-off to break a tie on the second event of the day.

Nagel, who went on to win the Gorilla Games competition, has always been a bit of an Amazonian type of athlete. Today, at the age of 26, she is able to embrace this fact. But it wasn't always so easy.

"Growing up, my brother's friends used to make fun of me all the time. They would call me things like 'whale,'" Nagel said. "It forced me to develop thick skin at an early age."

"It's great being around people who think having a 300-lb. deadlift is hot and sexy."

—Kelsey Nagel

Accepting her size was something Nagel found easier when she went to college. A varsity soccer player on a Division I scholarship in California, Nagel was surrounded by others just like her.

"All of a sudden there were 7-foot-tall volleyball and basketball men walking around campus. I was in heaven," she said.

But on the soccer field, Nagel's size continued to set her apart.

"Other team's fans would call me 'Shrek,' 'Beast' or 'Helmet Boy,'" said Nagel, who had to wear a full helmet throughout her career to avoid concussions.

"I remember one team's fans calling me 'Balco.' I didn't understand the name at first, and I had to Google it. Apparently, there was some steroid scandal, and the steroid company's name was 'Balco,'" laughed Nagel.

She added: "I was actually pretty entertained by it. I thought it was a pretty creative name."

When she graduated, Nagel was hesitant to try CrossFit, fearing she would bulk up in her upper body—the last thing she wanted.

"I already scared the shit out of people, so I figured if I got even bigger I'd never get a guy," Nagel said.

But when she found her legs out of commission after hip surgery in 2008, she decided to give CrossFit a go. And to her surprise, her new community not only accepted her size they also embraced it.

"It's great being around people who think having a 300-lb. deadlift is hot and sexy," said Nagel, who is 10 lb. heavier today than when she started CrossFit.

"Now when guys come up to me in a bar and say, 'Holy shit, you're a beast,' I'm able to say, 'Thank you,'" Nagel said with a laugh.

Despite the lifelong name-calling Nagel has endured, she managed to avoid major body-image eating disorders and depression.

She is one of the lucky ones.

The Power of One

Dec. 9, 2011.

Something happened that day and in the days that immediately followed—something more powerful than any CrossFit competition.

The pain that crept into the three women's minds was undeniable. But there was another feeling present that morning: a feeling of comfort.

It was Friday morning. Twenty-five-year-old Mandy Gill, a radio anchor and minor celebrity in Vancouver, was overcome by a surge of pain. She couldn't control the tears that started streaming down her face as she found herself thinking about her battle with anorexia in her late teens. She was brought back to the days when all she could think about was food, when she weighed just 80 lb., when she stopped menstruating and her hair fell out in clumps.

The same morning, on the other end of the city, 23-year-old Martha Woodruff wiped tears from her eyes. Woodruff has been overweight her whole life. That day, she started thinking about her childhood—about the grade-school days when she was bullied so hard she stopped going to school. She vividly remembered the pain of having no self-esteem, the pain of feeling worthless.

On the other side of the country, in Ontario, Jenna Scott was hit with her own painful memories as she ate breakfast. She thought about her life at the age of 14, when she diligently measured herself every week. Suicide often crept into her mind. That Friday, Scott's mind went back to the days before CrossFit and Paleo eating, to a time when she followed an obsessive vegan diet that left her constantly stressed about food. In those days, she avoided social situations involving food and battled constant digestive problems along with a host of other health concerns.

**"I have witnessed the
quest to be strong save
a life and I believe it can
save many more."**

—Chris Schaalo

The pain that crept into the three women's minds was undeniable. But there was another feeling present that morning: a feeling of comfort.

The emotions—both painful and hopeful—were initiated by a simple post on the [Old Country Strong blog](#).

The title of the blog post: "The Flower that Blooms in Adversity is the most Rare and Beautiful of all..."

The post, written by Chris Schaalo of CrossFit Taranis, told the story of a young woman close to him, the story of two-time individual CrossFit Games competitor Alicia Connors.

"I have witnessed the quest to be strong save a life and I believe it can save many more," wrote Schaalo, who went on to reveal that Connors, a girl idolized in the community as being one of the best CrossFitters in the world, attempted suicide a few years ago after a long battle with depression, anxiety and eating disorders.

It was a simple post. It couldn't have been more than 1,000 words. But there was something about the honesty and genuine love in the words, something so raw about the way Schaalo told the story, that not only made girls across the CrossFit community feel understood but also gave them the courage to share their own pain—some of them for the first time.



Courtesy of Mandy Gill

CrossFit helped Mandy Gill focus on skill and strength, not on the number she saw on the scale.

Suddenly girls started to talk, to reach out to each other, creating a dialogue between strangers.

"This is the first time I've really spoken about these things openly," Scott said.

I was one of the women who read Connors' story on Dec. 9. I read it. And I re-read it. Again. And again. Tears flowed with each read.

And for the first time, I feel ready to share a story or two of my own.

When Big Wasn't Beautiful

When I was about 10 years old, my grandmother said to me, "I never believed big was beautiful."

I nodded in agreement.

"Big isn't beautiful," I repeated.

This wasn't just a belief. In my 10-year-old mind, it was a fact that small was attractive. And conversely, it was a fact that big was not.



In the world of competitive gymnastics, smaller is better—a lesson a young Emily Beers learned too well.

I was a gymnast for many years. I trained every day with Kate Richardson, my lifelong friend who went on to compete at two Olympic Games for Canada. Today, at the age of 27, Kate is 5 feet tall and 110 lb. Back then she couldn't have weighed more than 50 lb.

When I read Connors' story, I subconsciously found myself back in that place—to a day I had blocked out for years.

By the time we were 9, Kate could do things with her body I'd never be able to do. Coaches' eyes lit up when they saw her. The gymnastics world adored her.

To a certain degree, I had accepted the fact I was the biggest gymnast in the group, and I started to find other ways to get noticed. I was the one who told the stories, who made everyone laugh, who brought comedy to training. Generally, I was happy there and still have tons of great gymnastics memories.

**Then I decide to try it:
I cautiously stick my finger
down my throat for the first
time. To my surprise, it works.
I throw up.**

But I never stopped believing smaller was better. When you were small, coaches gave you more attention and gymnastics was easier. It seemed even the judges handed out "cutesy" points to Kate. Although, in hindsight, this was probably more due to the fact that Kate's feet were so tiny that nobody noticed when they weren't pointed, whereas I had flippers at the end of my ankles, a recipe for deductions, not to mention an eyesore to the sport of gymnastics.

When I was 10, my coach started bringing a scale to the gym. He weighed us on Saturday mornings. If we gained weight, we would have to stand in front of the mirror to make sure we hadn't gained any of what he referred to as "negative weight."

I remember the day he first brought the scale to the gym.

When I read Connors' story, I subconsciously found myself back in that place—to a day I had blocked out for years.

All of a sudden, I am 10 again.

I see the scale under his arm; I know what it's for.

I rush to the bathroom, panicked. I look at myself in the mirror and see terror in my own eyes.

Then I decide to try it: I cautiously stick my finger down my throat for the first time. To my surprise, it works. I throw up.

I don't feel any better. I know that I'm still about to be exposed on the scale as the heaviest girl there. There's no way out of this.

I leave the bathroom shaking and join my training mates in a line.

One by one, girls step onto the scale.

Finally, it's my turn.

Heart pounding, red-faced, I cautiously mount the scale.

I try to put all my weight on my left leg, hoping it will make me lighter.

I'm terrified of the number that's about to appear on the screen.

My coach sees what I'm trying to do.

"Emily," he said. "The point of this isn't to stand on one leg to make yourself as light as possible."

Everyone laughs.

I get back on the scale. It spits out a number. I weigh 96 lb., a solid 30 lb. more than Kate, Desiree, Carly, Carla and Megan.

I am horrified.

Old Country Strong

Zach Filer, from Seattle, started the Old Country Strong blog in March 2010. It was meant to be a place where his community could talk not just about CrossFit but also about life.

**"Having women shy away
from lifting because of some
myth broke my heart."**

—Marissa Luchau

One of his athletes, 23-year-old Marissa Luchau, came up with the idea of posting stories about how strong is beautiful. Her idea was to dedicate one week each year to this concept.

Luchau was tired of women who avoid strength training and lifting for fear of bulking up.



Courtesy of Kelsey Nagel

**Kelsey Nagel (left), winner of the recent
Gorilla Games competition.**

"Having women shy away from lifting because of some myth broke my heart. And to hear men around me tell females they shouldn't lift because having muscles isn't attractive ... quite honestly crossed a line with me, and I didn't want to sit around anymore and hear these myths," she explained.

Luchau said she wanted people to see how the barbell, and the desire to be strong, can change lives. It changed hers.

She was a javelin thrower and aspired to throw in college. Then she blew out her shoulder.

"Throwing in college was my dream and all of the sudden that was taken away. I coped by turning to food and not working out, and before I knew it I had put on 30 lb.," Luchau said.

Then she discovered CrossFit.

"I found that the longer I was there, the more I believed in myself. And the stronger I became physically, the stronger I became mentally and emotionally," she said.

When Luchau heard Connors' story, she knew it was the kind of post that would inspire, that could save women from their demons.

"I didn't sleep the Thursday night the blog had gone up because I couldn't help but be overwhelmed," Luchau said.

What overwhelmed her was how big the idea she had a year ago had become. Overnight, the blog spread like a virus. The next morning, it seemed everyone was reading it.

Kim Bellevance



Through CrossFit, Emily Beers began to accept that big can be beautiful.

Gill read the story at work and started crying her eyes out right before she was supposed to go on air. Reading the story made her feel less alone.

“I’m so impressed with Alicia’s accomplishments. Knowing where she came from and what she’s been able to achieve is truly inspirational.”

—Lisa Bridges-Makofa

“It only goes to show that we’re all human,” said Gill, who said she considers Connors her CrossFit idol.

Lisa Bridges-Makofa, a CrossFitter from Calgary, was relaxing with her family and cruising Facebook when she saw Connors’ status update thanking people for their support. Curious, she dug a little bit deeper and found the blog.

“I’m so impressed with Alicia’s accomplishments. Knowing where she came from and what she’s been able to achieve is truly inspirational,” said Bridges-Makofa, who said she was never insecure about her body until she gained weight during two pregnancies.

Like Connors and Luchau, Bridges-Makofa was saved by gaining physical strength.

“In the first four months of CrossFit, I regained my health, my marriage and my life. The barbell truly saved me and has changed me in more ways than just physically,” she said.

Woodruff added: “There are so many things I want to say about the barbell and what it’s done for me, but I’m finding it hard to put it into words.”

Even girls and women who haven't been consumed by body-image issues found themselves identifying with Connors' story.

"This is a message that needs to be heard, and it needs to be more than just a message; it needs to be a movement."

—Marissa Luchau

Annie Tasaka from North Vancouver is one.

"I was just so touched by Alicia's willingness to share her story," Tasaka said. "It never ceases to amaze me how empowering strength and power are, and I wish every woman could pick up a barbell. I will make sure my daughter picks one up."

As for Luchau, she said she couldn't be more pleased with the response to the idea she came up with in 2010.

"This is a message that needs to be heard, and it needs to be more than just a message; it needs to be a movement. And I truly believe that this is the start of something amazing," she said.

If I Knew What I Know

When I read Connors' story, my jaw dropped.

It was as if someone had literally injected inspiration into my body. And in the process, her courage to reveal, to initiate a dialogue, immediately helped me to better understand my own issues.

While I've never been depressed or suicidal, I've had my own demons, demons that CrossFit has helped me battle.

I only wish I had known what I know now when I was growing up.

If I knew what I know now, I would have told 10-year-old Emily that it's OK that she weighs 96 lb.

If I knew what I know now, I never would have cried myself to sleep when a guy I was dating, a guy I wasn't even into, broke up with me because he didn't think he could ever get over how big I was.

If I knew at 17 that big could be beautiful, I wouldn't have weighed myself five times every day, each time feeling more discouraged than the last.

Knowing what I know today, I'm able to embrace who I am. I will never be a little girl, and at least in theory I'm OK with this.

Today, I'm able to react to situations differently than I would have prior to CrossFit.

Life With CrossFit

August 2010

Someone decides my nickname should be "Hulkamania." My first instinct is to be horrified I have just been named after a 1990s male WWE star.

But just for a moment.

Because I have CrossFit in my life, I find a way to turn that around and embrace the cause. I go online and order a Hulkamania costume to wear on Halloween.

"I'm going to be the sexiest Hulkamania you've ever seen," I announce.



Kim Belevance

Embracing her "Hulkamania" nickname, Beers dressed up as a sexy Hulk Hogan for Halloween.

July 2011

I receive a text message from one of my client's sisters. It says, "I don't like what CrossFit is doing to my sister's body. She is getting too muscular."

"Too muscular for what?" I write back.

She doesn't reply.

"You should consider taking that picture down. Men like their women to look like women. Not men. Just trying to help."
—Plenty of Fish male user

November 2011

I'm in the car with a group of CrossFitters, driving back from Seattle from the Gorilla Games.

We're talking about online dating, and I tell my friends about a message I received on Plenty of Fish just a couple of minutes after I posted a picture of myself in a sports bra doing a thruster.

It said, "You should consider taking that picture down. Men like their women to look like women. Not men. Just trying to help." The message was followed up with a smiley face.

I tell my friends that three years ago I would have listened to the strange man's advice and taken the picture down. But today I'm able to laugh at the message and become even more confident about the picture I posted, a picture that shows who I really am.

"Speaking of Plenty of Fish, let's check out what the old inbox has for me today," I say with a laugh, pulling out my BlackBerry.

"Read your messages to us," my friend says. "I want to hear what kind of things men say on that site."

"OK, let's see," I begin. "Supersonic22 says, 'Wow, muscle girl! When can we start pounding meat together?'"

We break into a fit of laughter.

Dan Fontaine, the one male in the car, smiles and reassures me and my two friends that he isn't attracted to skinny girls.

Then we start talking about how hot Kelsey Nagel is.

"I want to be able to deadlift like her," I say.

"I'm still intrigued by what she would look like naked," Dan says. "She would dominate me."

He pauses before adding, "And I'd be OK with that."

I smile to myself. In this moment, at least, I believe that big can be beautiful.



Courtesy of Emily Beers

About the Author

*Emily Beers finished a master's degree in journalism at the University of Western Ontario in the spring of 2009. Upon graduation, she worked as a sportswriter at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, where she covered figure skating and short-track speed skating. Currently, she hosts **WOD HOG**, a not-always-PG publication of the CrossFit Vancouver School of Fitness. She ruptured her Achilles tendon in December 2010 and served as the Canada West Regional media director while recovering from Achilles surgery, and she competed in the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games with CrossFit Vancouver.*

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Where Are Your Knees?

Jeff Martin explains how and when to cue kids who are squatting in your box.

By Jeff Martin CrossFit Kids

January 2012



All photos: CrossFit Kids

"Knees out! Knees out!"

If the workout has squats in it and you are in a CrossFit box, you will hear this cue—or you should hear it—being yelled out throughout the WOD. When we teach the mechanics of the squat, we discuss that the knees must be in line with the feet. This is the most efficient and safest way for us to squat.



Use creative ways to get athletes to keep their knees in line with their feet.

Most of our kids begin squatting by letting their knees fall in. With teenagers, this can be due to inflexibility, weakness or just a lack of kinesthetic awareness. Whatever the reason, we cannot allow it to continue; it is neither efficient nor safe in the long run. But with a little focus work, these teens will have beautiful squats.

Before discussing the fixes, though, let's discuss how and when to cue knees out. When we are dealing with adults, we can often cue while they move. Cuing teens, especially teens just starting out, often involves stopping the movement and discussing with them what we want and expect. We are dealing with kids, and we always want to remain positive.

Recently, I watched a trainer working with a teenager getting ready to back squat at a powerlifting competition. Her trainer kept saying, "Don't let your knees come in." Next squat: "Don't let your knees come in." The trainer was missing the boat entirely. For maximum compliance, the discussion must be framed in a positive manner:

"I need you to keep your knees out."

Once you have positively framed your wants and expectations, make sure your teens fully grasp what you want them to do. Ask them if they understand what you want, have them repeat it back to you, and then request that they show you. This involves them in the teaching process.

So when do you cue knees out? Going back to the example above, the young lady's trainer would yell "Don't let your knees come in" as she was pushing out of the hole. Too late!

Cuing the knees out at the bottom of the squat (when they are already tracking in) is akin to yelling "Set your back!" in the middle of a deadlift. The cue is for the beginning of the squat. The hips push back and the knees push out at the beginning of the squat. This sets up the hips and legs to lift a load.

How to Fix a Squat

We now know how to cue this, and when to do it, so let's go over some fixes.

Kinesthetic awareness—teens don't have it. Have you ever watched a 14-year-old boy walk through a door? One time his shoulder smacks the door frame, and the next time it's an elbow. Teens simply don't know where they are in space. So how can we expect them to understand where they need to put their knees when they squat?

For this kind of problem, we want to help the kid find his knees. Our standard CrossFit Kids fix has been to use two pieces of PVC placed on the outside of each pinky toe. The kid begins the squat and, as he descends, tries to push his knees out to touch the PVC.

Alison Patenaude, a middle-school teacher and the CrossFit Kids Schools Coordinator, uses Jump Stretch bands to fix squats. The kid stands on the band with his feet in the squat position, then loops the other end over his head. As he squats, he pushes his knees out to touch the bands. Patenaude's method allows teens to address this technical issue with less intense trainer oversight.

Remember: this fix is for kids who need to find their knees. They are strong and flexible enough to squat correctly, and once you show them where their knees are and where they need to be, these kids will be able to correctly align their knees throughout the squat.

Inflexibility can be fixed quickly with a little hamstring/adductor mobility work. Enter the supple leopard, Dr. K-Starr, and his wonderful [MobilityWOD](#) project. With a little work, you can assess what is going wrong with the squat and what needs to be worked on. Google “MobilityWOD adductor,” and you have a whole page of really top-notch instruction on how to fix adductor problems. The key now is to get the kids to work on their flexibility.

At CrossFit Kids HQ, our Teen class ends with trainer-led stretching. It’s a group thing. Kids sit together working on flexibility. Most of the kids go through standard work while a few with specific problems work on their issues. The key here is that they are gathered with their mates and a trainer is leading the mobility work or moving around the class helping the kids. We get better compliance if all the kids are doing it, and we need to be involved. Sending a group of teenagers off to mobilize on their own is asking for trouble. They won’t do it, and they will find something else to do. That something will probably be destructive to either themselves or your property. Besides, this is called “training”; it’s what we do, and while this might not be the most exciting part of the class, for many it is the most important.

Finally, we come to the young people who are just not strong enough to squat correctly. They cannot keep their knees out. These kids are often overweight or extremely deconditioned. Yet a disturbing growing trend is the number of young athletes—kids participating year-round in a sport—who are simply not exposed to functional movements. These kids are stars on the soccer field, baseball diamond or basketball court but cannot squat without shooting their knees forward and compromising their back position.

It is one thing to be standing with a parent of a child who is 100 lb. overweight and explaining the problems that child is facing and how we are going to help. It is quite another to stand with a parent who is beaming with pride and talking about what a wonderful athlete his child is while you explain that the child has trouble with basic human movement.

We have found box squatting to a fairly high box to be beneficial. The box squat requires that children push their hips back and keep their knees pushed out throughout the movement. The box should be high enough that the



For athletes who lack the strength to squat properly, box squats are a great way to scale the movement.

child meets success with every squat, with success being defined by the points of performance you ask them to meet. As the workout progresses, we are often able to lower the box substantially, but only to the point that the child is able to maintain correct movement. Keep in mind that you will probably have to go through this process for quite a while. If a child is squatting to a 20-inch box at the end of a workout, the next time he squats you will have to start higher than that and work back down. That is just the way it is.

Don’t get frustrated and don’t let the little things slip. A constant and diligent focus on mechanics will reap great rewards for both your kids and your program.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

You Were Saying ... With Nicole Scott Smith

Nicole Scott Smith of CrossFit SoMo talks about life, CrossFit and more.

By E.M. Burton

January 2012



All images: Courtesy of Nicole Scott Smith

The *CrossFit Journal* is pleased to present the first in a series of profiles designed to help you get to know some of the best people in our community.

Nicole Scott Smith

I first heard about CrossFit from ... Rodney Hamby. I completed a bootcamp with him and then signed up for a second one. Somewhere in there he must have gone for his Level 1 because—holy hell—our little housewife bootcamp got serious! On our last session, he announced that he was going to affiliate and start teaching a little thing called “CrossFit.” I signed up immediately.

My first CrossFit workout was ... wow. I have no idea. I couldn’t have told you the day of the week in those first few months; I was so tired! I was actually afraid to drive home after class, I felt so impaired.

If I could force one person to do Heavy Fran, it would be ... this guy at a gym I used to go to. He liked to tell everyone what they were doing wrong, and he would yell it from the elliptical. I would be so far up his butt his prostate would feel the heat of my breath.

My favorite workout is ... G.I. Jane or Navy SEAL Man Makers.

The person I would most like do a WOD with is ... Miranda Oldroyd, for sure. I love her attitude! I love Joe DeGain’s communication skills. He would be so much fun!

When I was growing up, I wanted to be ... an actress.

When I grow up, I want to be ... Chuck Norris’ shadow.

The most rewarding thing about training people is ... watching people complete what seemed impossible to them when they walked through the door. Clichéd but true.

My favorite movie character is ... Scarlett O’Hara.

The greatest challenge in coaching is ... making people believe in themselves. That and explaining Zone blocks—jeez.

The movement I find hardest to teach is ... HSPU.

The thing that makes a successful coach is ... being open to learning new methods and being able to read multiple athletes at one time.

My secret identity is ... we gave ourselves superhero names one day. Mine is “Power Snatch.” I’m also “Fitness TaTanyia.”

The thing I most value is ... my husband Chase, who is a Level 1 and co-owner of our affiliate, CrossFit SoMo, and our daughter, Sydney.



Nicole makes wall-balls look easy at CrossFit SoMo.

The thing that sets my coaching apart from others is ... my unique way of connecting to the athletes and my sense of humor.

The most outrageous thing I’ve seen someone do during a WOD is ... some pretty big PRs! We have a 4-year-old that can rip out HSPU. One guy Hulk Hoganed his shirt one time ...

The country I’d most like to visit is ... Ireland.

The CrossFit trainer I most admire is ... gosh, I’m not going for bigger and better Christmas presents or a pay raise, but my husband. For too many reasons to list, he is an amazing man.

The non-CrossFit person I most admire is ... my mom is so damn positive—always and no matter what. And it’s genuine. Anyone who knows her envies it. She is great.

The thing I have the most patience for is ... at the box, nutritional counseling. We have a female-dominant box, so there is a lot of that.

The thing I have the least patience for is ... when I tell someone they did well and they say, "No, I didn't." I don't hand out false praise.

When I have a challenging athlete on my hands, I ... try to help them relax. And hope that they can't read my thoughts.

A favorite book is ... *Little Women*.

More than anything, I fear ... not being able to protect my child. The thing is we have to let them grow up. That's hard.

My most guilty pleasure is ... Lululemon, and writing my blog, [Panties in a WOD](#).

My greatest regret is ... always not thinking before I speak.

I'm really looking forward to ... turning 45 and qualifying for the masters. I'm 40 now. This is my goal.

My favorite coaching cue is ... in rowing, "Knee, nipple, knee ... reach!"

My favorite food is ... crispy, delicious bacon.

The most inspiring person/athlete I've ever worked with is ... my gosh, that's hard. I'm not afraid to play favorites, but I get inspired every day. We have an athlete who is one of the busiest mothers I know and still makes it in every day. She lives and works on a farm, is a full-time nurse and a full-time mother and grandmother. She has every excuse to slack off but still comes in and is a crazy strong RX'd athlete. She does not know the definition of quit. We should all be so lucky to have her as an example. She is dialed in in a way that most of us are not.



Nicole Scott Smith is a Level One trainer at [CrossFit SoMo](#) in West Plains, Mo.

THE CrossFit LIFE

Trunk Full of CrossFit

Derik Ledesma turned the trunk of his Honda CRV into a mobile CrossFit gym—and still made room for his kids' car seats. Hilary Achauer reports.

By Hilary Achauer

January 2012



All images: Derik Ledesma

The most common places to do CrossFit are in an affiliate, a home gym or a Globo Gym.

Derik Ledesma does CrossFit out of his car.

Ledesma is graphic designer who works for an ad agency in Omaha, Neb. He has two children, ages 2 and 1. A lifelong athlete—Ledesma played college football at Concordia University—he used to work for a business where he would hit up the company wellness center every lunch break.

"This was two years ago," Ledesma said. He worked out with a group of friends, and "we kept each other accountable and could not see ourselves sitting at our desk through lunch."

Ledesma went through a few rounds of P90X in October 2008. He finished 89 of the days, missing the last one because he was in the hospital welcoming his daughter Ava into the world.

"I started another round of P90X a few months later and kept some of the workouts going at the gym with my buddies. We stuck to the traditional style of training since we never really knew of much else. One of the workers at the gym noticed our workouts and mentioned we should try something called 'Barbara.' So we came in the next day and decided that would be our workout. I was hooked immediately and started to incorporate some WODs in our routine," Ledesma said.

Ledesma loved the beatdown from CrossFit. He and his friends switched to a gym with more equipment so they could do more CrossFit workouts, but it was still a typical Globo Gym setting.

"We definitely got some weird looks as we were carrying 45-lb. plates overhead while running and doing all the other fun stuff," Ledesma said.

He quit the gym when he had accumulated enough bumpers, bars and kettlebells. He installed a pull-up bar in his garage, covered the wall with dry-erase paint, and gathered sleds and his own tractor tire.

"It was a great feeling!" Ledesma said.

Even though Ledesma had a fully equipped garage gym, his lunch break was still the best time to work out, especially with two young children at home. Ledesma was addicted to CrossFit and had all the equipment. How could he continue to do CrossFit at lunch without an affiliate near his work?

One day, Ledesma had an idea. He decided to load the equipment he needed for the day's WOD in the trunk of his Honda CRV. A new routine was born.

"What I usually will do is check the main-site WOD or some other affiliates I follow. Based off of what they post, I load my car in the morning before heading off to work. One day I did heavy deadlifts and had 450 lb. of bumpers and bars in my small Honda CRV!" Ledesma said.

His kids love riding surrounded by his CrossFit toys on their way to daycare. His daughter often asks about his workout for the day.

"Someday I'll get a truck, but for now the equipment fits in my car, and I even use the side of my car to do handstand push-ups. I don't ever want to have an excuse for why I cannot get a workout in," Ledesma said.

Equipment Loaded in Ledesma's Honda CRV

- Bumpers: four 45s, two 35s and two 15s
- Rogue bar
- 11-foot rope he braided himself
- Olympic-lifting shoes
- Chalk bucket
- Squat stand
- PVC pipe
- Jump rope
- 1.5-pood kettlebell
- 2 rubber pads to save his seats and for bumpers to land on instead of concrete
- Two toddler car seats





Sometimes, Ledesma treats himself to an indoor WOD. But only sometimes.

Another essential element in Ledesma's car CrossFit routine is **WODstack**, loaded on his iPad. WODstack is a free application developed by CrossFitters that includes a WOD log, sorting and tracking features, and the ability to keep WODs private or share them with an affiliate or other people using WODstack. WODstack users can also follow other users on Twitter, which is how Ledesma discovered the application.

"I try to follow several people within the community to stay connected to the latest news and get support from them to help me become a better athlete," Ledesma said. "I use it (WODstack) to track my benchmarks while away from my garage. Before I would have my wife snap a photo of it if I forgot some of my numbers and text it to me so I knew what to shoot for during my lunch WODs. Now I just pull it up on my iPad, start the timer and go!"

In addition to his lunchtime car workouts, Ledesma just joined an affiliate, CrossFit 402 in Omaha, Neb., to get help with his Olympic-lifting form and put himself into a competitive environment. Ledesma is looking forward to doing the 2012 Reebok CrossFit Games Open WODs there; last year he had to get someone to film and judge them for him.

"What I love most about CrossFit is the community and the feeling you get after seeing yourself and others push each other to the limits. I never had this feeling doing biceps in the gym for an hour. I think the other part I love most about CrossFit is the Olympic lifting. Perfecting technique and then increasing your load on the lifts and hitting a PR is an awesome feeling!"



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

A Beginner's Perspective

Warrington Parker offers affiliate owners and coaches tips on how to keep athletes coming back.

By Warrington Parker

January 2012



All images: Courtesy of Warrington Parker/San Francisco CrossFit

A little more than two years ago, I attended my first CrossFit class. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. My friend, who suggested I go, called it “boot camp.” He said he loved it because it lasted an hour, there was some stretching, and the workouts were short. That’s all I knew about CrossFit. Nothing more.

I also knew I needed some form of exercise badly. I was 44 years old. I had played rugby until I was 41. I had barely exercised between the ages of 41 and 44. I had gained enough weight—well, a lot of weight—so I could no longer run without pain. From rugby, my back was so stiff I could barely bend over to pick up things. I felt old. I felt stuck. No team sports. Lifting weights alone would not fix things, and running any long distance was out of the question.

From rugby, my back was so stiff I could barely bend over to pick up things. I felt old. I felt stuck.

Today, I find myself thinking about what it was like as a CrossFit beginner and what made me come back time and again. In this article, I share those thoughts in hopes that a view from a “consumer” will help affiliate owners, coaches and other beginners.

One caveat: What I relate are my own views. I happen to be blessed with wonderful coaches at San Francisco CrossFit. Whether consciously—and I believe it is conscious—they have made CrossFit accessible, challenging and fun for beginners to firebreathers. I say that because I don't mean to suggest these are solely my ideas. I do mean to relate my experiences and opinions on how CrossFit can be made available to a wide variety of people.

Enter CrossFit—The Beginner's Class

The first thing that SF CrossFit got right was the beginner's class. It lasted for two weeks—three days each week. It comprised beginners. Not fat beginners. Not uncoordinated beginners. Just beginners.

Why is the beginner's class important, and why do I note its composition? It addresses two issues I believe stand in the beginner's way: pride and pain.

I have read CrossFit articles touting a beginner's class as important to avoiding injuries. That is true. But that is not why I believe the beginner thinks it's important.

When I showed up, I was not thinking, “I am glad they did this because I want to start slowly and build up.” I was there to get in shape. If I had been thrown into a regular class that first day, I would have been delighted. I would have gone at it furiously for the entire first minute of the WOD before I fell to the ground exhausted.

Pride

Pride is an issue from a number of perspectives.

First, there is the fact CrossFit requires new and different skills. For example, I had lifted weights on and off throughout my life. And in rugby, my position was a strength position. But I had never done a snatch. I had never done a pure deadlift. I would never imagine doing a squat with weights—it hurt my knees too badly. That says nothing of just doing a squat—one without weights. For the life of me, I could not get down into a squat. It looked more like I was bending over to look at my feet.

Having a class comprising everyone was great for me. Sure, I didn't like coming in last, but that was a reality I had to accept.

Second, not only is one learning new things, but one is also learning new things one cannot do well, no matter how hard one tries. As noted above, there were the squats that were not squats. There are other things as well: double-unders, pull-ups, box jumps, wall-ball shots. All were challenging, not to all and not to all in equal measure. But they do take some doing. Double-unders were foreign to me. Pull-ups and box jumps were beyond me. And my wall-ball form took some talking about.

Thirdly, even though badly out of shape and overweight, I did not want to be in some remedial class. I did not want to feel like I had been sent to a fat farm or the “slow” class. Now, I understand there might be some who show up who simply must have individualized attention—they are grossly obese or have some other medical issue preventing them from being thrown into a class, even a beginner's class. But I was not one of those, at least not in my mind.



Beginners need time to adjust to the pain of CrossFit, a new feeling for many.

I was a former athlete who needed to work out. I could finish the beginner's-class WODs, even if I was the slowest. So having a class comprising everyone was great for me. Sure, I didn't like coming in last, but that was a reality I had to accept. I did not have to additionally accept that I just was not up to snuff in every other way.

And perhaps most importantly, I did not have to accept that CrossFit, as a form of exercise, had no real place for someone like me.

Pain

A beginner's class also allows the beginner to confront and understand a second aspect of CrossFit: pain.

All exercise is painful in some way, shape or form. But CrossFit pain is different. It is a difficult pain for me to describe. It is not like the pain of running. It is not like the pain of lifting weights. The easiest way to describe the pain is that it feels like the pain one experiences in rugby—almost identical. It is an overall pain—one that comes from combining running with lifting with throwing your body around with push-ups or pull-ups.

So for me, the pain aspect was less of a consideration. I knew how my body would respond. I knew I was not going to die.

But compare that with someone who is a long-distance runner, a soccer player, a pure weightlifter. These are all marvelous sports, and I envy anyone skilled at these types of things. But the pain of those sports—running or lifting weights—is different. I am not suggesting the pain is less. It is different. A weightlifter is not called on to run after doing back squats. A runner is not asked to do power snatches before a 5K.

And if you are an athlete who shows up at CrossFit, you have to deal with that new experience. This might strike you as slightly strange. But imagine when you are new to something athletic. You wonder whether it should hurt there or whether it should hurt that much there. And, as the pain builds, your mind starts talking back, like on a long run when it screams to you, "I am not getting enough oxygen." After just a short time of running, you know both intellectually and physically that the feeling you are not getting enough oxygen is just something to work through.

But now imagine an athlete who is a fine runner or otherwise superb in some form of fitness. That athlete, for the first time in a while, will be experiencing a different type of pain. That can be hard to deal with. The athlete might not recall that when he first began to run, he had to deal with how the body reacted. These athletes again have to learn that no, this won't kill you; yes, it is fine to feel this way.

A beginner's course helps all to adjust to the new experience.

A beginner's course helps all to adjust to the new experience. After teaching a new movement, it can be incorporated into a scaled or modified WOD. Sure, you might lose people because they might ask, "Is this all there is to it?" But no one in my beginner's class was asking for more. Instead, we looked around at each other and were grinning that we had gotten it done.

Graduation—The Regular Class

When moving from beginner's to a regular class, the same two issues arise: pride and pain. Both have to be managed.

Your beginners have now moved into the main class. Likely they have been watching these fit, muscular folk throwing around weights, pulling themselves up, doing handstand push-ups, running like fiends, and the beginners are feeling like they're not going to top the charts. What to do?

The first thing is to just understand that dynamic. That's how a beginner is going to feel and should feel. This is a challenge. The folks in the regular class have been going at it for longer. Of course they will be better. If they are not in better shape—and likely they are—they have better form. They move more fluidly. Oh well.

Not every beginner can finish a WOD. I recall one time where the coach put up some WOD. It had a woman's name—surprise. The coach capped the time for completion at 20 minutes. The WOD was not literally this, but it might as well have been: 10 push-ups, 10 box jumps, 10 burpees, 10 knees-to-elbows until you reach 1,000.

With regard to adjusting a WOD, it does not always have to mean cutting repetitions.

I thought to myself, “No point in keeping track of the number of repetitions for each aspect of this WOD. I won't finish. So, for me, this is a 20-minute workout.” That took pressure off me. I just did the rotation for 20 minutes. My pride was salvaged. I walked away saying, “I did this for 20 minutes straight.”

Now, I did not need the coach to tell me that. I just figured that was how I had to go about it because that was the only way I could. The coach could have said that. Not to me specifically, but to everyone. And even if she had said it to me specifically, I would have been OK with that.

Individual WODs

In a similar vein, a coach can adjust the WOD on the fly for the beginner by saying something like, “Hey, instead of 10 squats and then a run, do 5 and then a run.” It can be a private conversation. The beginner is given “permission” to either try the whole thing or scale down. Sure, this might mean the coach has to make a decision about what to write on the whiteboard, but it helps to ensure the athlete does not feel like he or she is quitting or outright cheating. It helps to ensure the athlete will return the next day, wanting to go at it again.

With regard to adjusting a WOD, it does not always have to mean cutting repetitions. For example, you can tell the athlete to put his or her knees down to do push-ups. It happened to me. I was slightly embarrassed. I was particularly embarrassed when, in the middle of my knees-on-the-ground push-ups, the coach told me I was not doing them correctly because I was not going all the way down. But the coach also came up to me after and told me it was just fine and this was part of improving. My ego was bruised, but only because I needed to get in shape.

Team WODs

Now, what I have just described works when the WOD has to be completed by each athlete. What to do when there are group WODs? These come in a number of flavors, and how a coach handles them depends on the WOD. Let's take the one I dread most: the WOD where one athlete must do a task—e.g., push-ups or burpees—until the other athlete completes another task—e.g., 10 power snatches or deadlifts.

Why do I dread this the most? Because someone suffers until you finish. Talking to yourself over a barbell might be fine and good when it is an individual WOD. But trying to convince your inner soul to get back at it takes on new meaning when someone is tasked with push-ups until you're done.



Give beginners permission to scale their workouts so they are challenged but can still finish.

So what do you do? The easiest solution is for the coach to pair athletes based on their caliber of fitness.

Trying to convince your inner soul to get back at it takes on new meaning when someone is tasked with push-ups until you're done.

Is that the only solution? No. Every CrossFit box has firebreathers. Every CrossFit box has the man or woman who wants the lowest time. The two are not necessarily the same. In my experience, firebreathers are not the ones with whom I am most afraid to be paired. Those in the best shape can do those extra push-ups or burpees, and they always have enough energy to goad, cajole and encourage.



In team WODs, it usually works well to pair a firebreather with a beginner because the experienced athlete can handle the extra work.

To speak in some generalities, the ones I am always most worried about are those who are just below firebreather. The “almost folks.” They are fit. But they just aren't yet at the top. These are the folks who most likely to let form go, who don't do the full squat, for example, so they can post a fast time. These are the folks who don't have any energy to spare to push you along. And these are the folks I think coaches should ensure aren't paired with the newbie.

The impulse to post the best time is good. I don't want to suggest otherwise. But it is that athlete's natural desire to do his or her best that can be most corrosive to a beginner, even if completely unintentional. The relationship can become one where an athlete feels like his or her partner held him or her back.

Chippers and Station WODs

That leaves things like chippers or rotation workouts, where each person is at a station and rotates when others have completed their station. Some of these things work themselves out naturally because you can pair athletes up by the amount of weight each group will be lifting. For example, Group 1 is going to put 200 lb. on the bar for the deadlift portion of the chipper or rotation; Group 2 will use 160 lb. This tends to sort groups in such a way that not all beginners are together.

The better shape you are in, the more of each task you can complete. It means the workout is more difficult for those who can handle the more difficult workouts.

For chippers, this is particularly important because a group of beginners will be chipping away for a long time, which can be disheartening. But again, one can always adjust the WOD on the fly. For rotation workouts, this is less important because a group of beginners simply does fewer rotations.

Moreover, and focusing again on chippers, it is good to have a mix of athletes. Again, the better shape you are in, the more of each task you can complete. It means the workout is more difficult for those who can handle the more difficult workouts.

And again, there is that person who just wants to post a fast time and damn all else. That is the athlete who bears the most watching for two reasons. First, you don't want to have a beginner paired up with that person. Second, that person might be posting that time by cutting corners.

The Shout-Out

Finally, and I am a little embarrassed to admit this, it is just nice to have a coach acknowledge your progress—however small it might be. I am embarrassed because I am far too old to look for that type of encouragement. But I do. The harder the workout, the more I push myself, the more it means when a coach says, “Nice job!” or “Keep it up!” or “You are coming along.”

It means something beyond the simple praise. It means something because I have found that progress is not always as obvious to the athlete. Part of this is due, in my opinion, to the fact that progress in CrossFit is different. One thing I love about CrossFit is that every day is different—different movements and different workouts. That also can mean that progress on any particular movement or workout is not always clear to the athlete.

CrossFit is not like another sport where one does a set number of things at each practice and the progress is obvious. To be sure, the wonderful thing about CrossFit is that it trains the entire body so every workout does influence every other workout. But I can say from personal experience that is not obvious at all. Sometimes, the praise is praise. Sometimes, it is perspective.



About the Author

Warrington Parker is a 47-year-old lawyer in San Francisco who still does far too much sitting. April will mark his third year as a CrossFitter. He and his two teenage daughters work out at [San Francisco CrossFit](#). All that is left is to convince his lovely wife to join him. CrossFit continues to humble Parker, provide perspective and keep him healthy—all good things in his book.

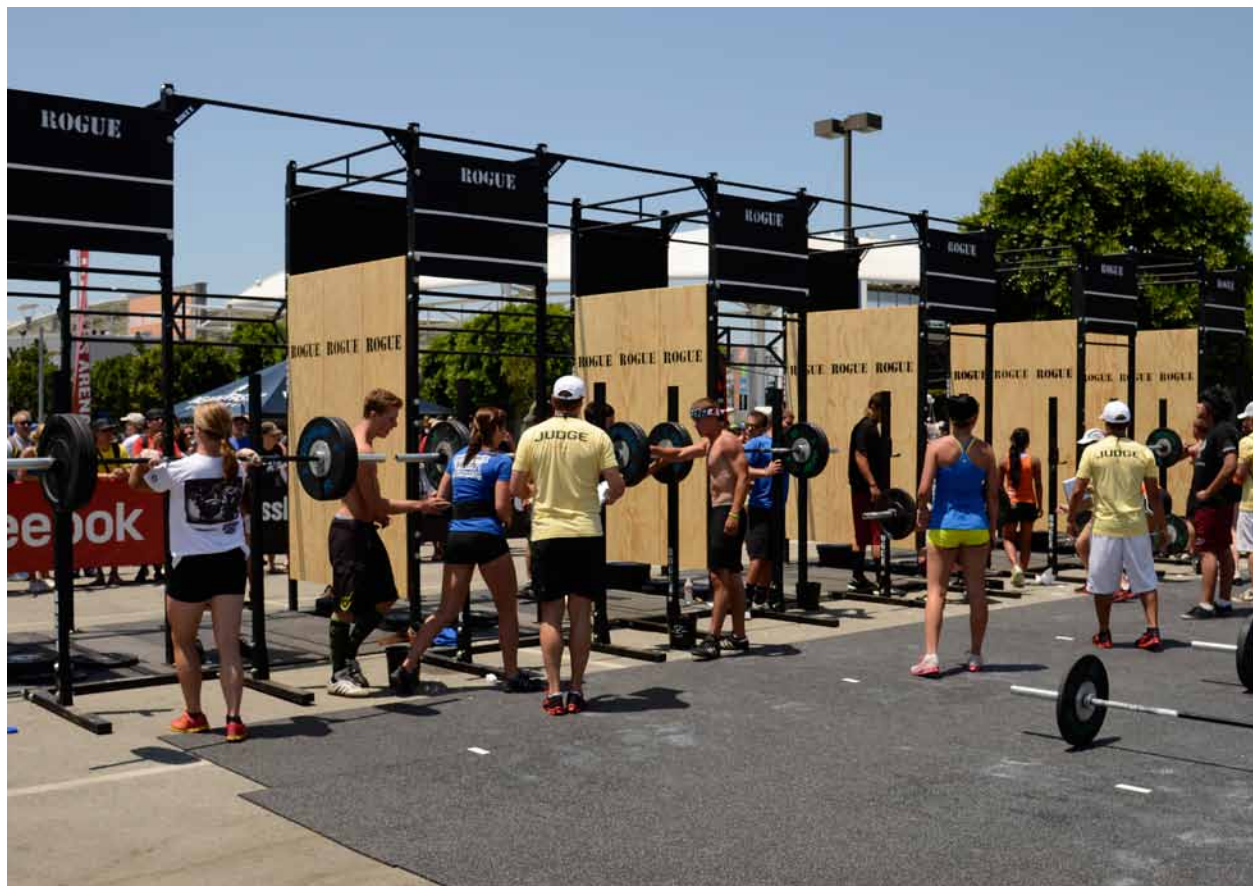
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

What Can Your Kid Do? Are You Sure?

The Games' first CrossFit Kids Teen Challenge exemplifies what the youth program is all about. Dan Edelman explains.

By Dan Edelman

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Staff/CrossFit Journal

It's Fri., July 29, in Carson, Calif. The Home Depot Center is hopping. Masters, Affiliate Cup contenders and the rest of the fittest men and women on Earth are breathing fire for a piece of a million-dollar purse.

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Believe it or not, however, as part of CrossFit Kids HQ, my attention is elsewhere. Teams are arriving at the CrossFit Kids booth for the CrossFit Kids Teen Challenge. This year, the challenge is essentially an exhibition, a showcase, the first time out, the start of something. Seven CrossFit Kids affiliates have registered to compete. Four are from Southern California, but teams have traveled from as far away as Colorado, New Jersey and Washington state. Like I said, just the beginning.

**As the teams approach
and athletes saunter and
shuffle up to the booth as
only teens can ... it is not the
stuff of slow-motion cinema.
But I think it's bitchin'.
This is a big deal.**

At the moment, I've been tasked with registering the teams: documenting team, competitor and coach names and providing team and athlete numbers. In just a little while, the first WOD of the Teen Challenge will go off in Lot 17. For now, simmering nervous energy. CrossFit Kids HQ has been working for months to ensure the challenge captures not only the essence of CrossFit Kids, but also what it is that Jeff Martin, CrossFit director of youth training, and the other CrossFit Kids trainers have seen emerge from their classes.

As the teams approach and athletes saunter and shuffle up to the booth as only teens can, it is not grandiose, it is not spectacular, and it is not the stuff of slow-motion cinema. But I think it's bitchin'. This is a big deal. My humble sense is that what is about to happen on Lot 17 with these teenage athletes is not well understood in the CrossFit community at large.

The kids are making light conversation, joking and smiling. Yet it's plain to see that some of those smiles don't quite warm their eyes, which wear a patina of pre-go-time angst. Yeah, it's been labeled an "exhibition," but these athletes are here not just to demonstrate their skills, not just to

compete, but also to win. And you'd be mistaken if you thought their coaches considered the Teen Challenge to be merely some kind of sideshow demonstration.

In fact, as I'm checking in a team, one of its coaches (a bevy of them represented this particular team) asks a colleague of mine about the programming for the first WOD. It quickly becomes apparent he's not happy with the power-clean component. My interpretation of his discontent is as follows:

The RX'd weight is too heavy. When my colleague indicates all the WODs are scalable (as they would be in our Teen/Advanced Class), the coach is unconvinced. What's the point of inviting kids to a challenge in which they are unable to fully participate? What's to be gained by having kids standing over a bar they cannot lift?



Staff/CrossFit Journal

The CrossFit Kids Teen Challenge was technically an exhibition, but the teens were there to compete ... and win.



Staff/CrossFit Journal

The influence of a CrossFit Kids coach reaches into every facet of a young athlete's life, helping him or her handle the challenges of adolescence and adulthood.

The coach views the programming as problematic; it appears elitist and biased. Eventually, Martin is called over to hear this coach's concerns but is likewise unable to placate him. The episode ends with the coach clearly dissatisfied. I assume the team will scale the power cleans.

I'm not the only one witnessing this exchange. The upset coach's team observes it, too. I wonder just what's going through their heads. Me, I'm considering just how un-Amundson this guy's attitude is.

Greg Amundson speaks eloquently about negative self-talk, but what about this? Negative other talk. Negative-significant-other talk. As a coach, this guy wields a lot of influence over his athletes. Regardless of whether there is any basis for his distress, his obligation this close to go time is to properly prepare his athletes for the competition at hand.

Presumably, he has their best interests at heart, but to avow his team's imminent failure in his athletes' presence strikes me as tragically counterproductive—and well outside the boundaries of CrossFit Kids teaching guidelines.

My dictionary defines “significant other” simply: a person who is important to one's well-being. Sums up a CrossFit Kids trainer pretty well, I think.

Community and the Significance of Others

What are we doing as CrossFit Kids trainers? Teaching children how to squat and stuff, I know. But really, what are we about? Understanding the culture of CrossFit might suggest an answer. How often have you heard the culture of CrossFit described in one word as “community”? Such a positive-sounding word, and for good reason, too. Too nuanced and layered a concept to explore fully here, but I want to look at it a bit anyway.

Most successful affiliates can boast of a tight-knit core membership, one characteristic of which is that a goodly proportion of the world and world view of these committed clients revolves around CrossFit and the box. CrossFit assumes such a high degree of significance that trainers often find themselves inside clients' circles of trust. So when the children of those clients join an affiliate's CrossFit Kids program, something happens: CrossFit Kids trainers become significant others to these children. My dictionary defines “significant other” simply: a person who is important to one's well-being. Sums up a CrossFit Kids trainer pretty well, I think.

CrossFit's culture of community means trainers—of adults or children—take on a load of responsibility when they take on clients, a load that surpasses that of a typical personal trainer operating at more traditional gyms. CrossFit Kids understands this responsibility in terms of a series of aims rooted in the primary objective of coupling fitness with fun. Establish that pairing, and a CrossFit Kids trainer has the opportunity to have a positive effect on a child.

CrossFit Kids provides children with lifelong definitions of health and fitness based on the 10 general skills, the hopper, the three energy pathways and the sickness-wellness-fitness continuum. These models all fit within a preventative healthcare framework targeting prevalent health problems typically arising from lifestyle.

As far as CrossFit Kids is concerned ... effective instruction requires the confluence of substance and style, self- and other awareness, leadership and learning, motivation but not cheerleading.

CrossFit Kids then feeds directly back into the community idea that helps drive it, fostering a safe and supportive environment for children and teens where they are understood and encouraged to make the kind of life choices CrossFit advocates. Where they can learn life lessons—hard work, problem-solving, goal setting and achieving—that are increasingly scrubbed of their substance amid the excesses of hypermodernity. Where the insidious peer pressures of school and beyond are shut out and positive influences thrive. Where the impact of ubiquitous and detrimental social attitudes are blunted at the level of identity formation. Where achievement trumps image as kids define themselves by what they can accomplish rather than by what they see in a mirror too often distorted by the machinations of pop culture.

We Are a Community

CrossFit's culture of community elevates these aims from feel-good fantasy to legitimate mission statement, and it's the responsibility of CrossFit Kids trainers to execute that mission. This is accomplished via word and action. Seems pretty obvious when put that way. However, as far as CrossFit Kids is concerned—and I'd argue this is true of any sport or training program—effective instruction requires the confluence of substance and style, self- and other awareness, leadership and learning, motivation but not cheerleading.

These traits manifest differently depending on the age group you're training. For the Teen/Advanced Class, if you're not comfortable contending with the physiological and psychosocial tumult of adolescence, find someone who is. This someone will be in tune with the teenage world. This person understands that an adolescent client can Jekyll-and-Hyde physically and emotionally from one day to the next and will be able to roll with it while remaining true to the CrossFit Kids mission. Not only should Teen/Advanced trainers have a grasp of the adolescent experience in general, but they should also know their individual clients. This should play out in all trainer-client interactions—be they class or personal discussions, movement explanations and demonstrations, cues, and greetings and good-byes—and has implications for client retention, programming, safety and training efficacy.

These two dimensions of client relations articulate around the idea of respect. For the burgeoning adults and even the preteens in your Teen/Advanced Class, respect—that is, being shown respect—ties directly to CrossFit Kids' principal goal of pairing fitness and fun as well as the multifaceted objective of shaping lives.

To Give is to Get

Creating a fun atmosphere and finishing class with a game has proven critical to the success of the core CrossFit Kids class. In the Teen/Advanced class, however, trainers are confronted with a more refined sense of fun. Frankly, it's starting to resemble adult fun, and sustaining it for teens requires nuance, balance and flexibility on the part of trainers.



Danell Marks

Teaching a Teen/Advanced CrossFit class involves navigating the often-murky waters of adolescence.

Danell Marks



When kids transition from CrossFit Kids to the Teen/Advanced class, both the weights and the expectations increase.

This begins with the community idea and making your Teen/Advanced class a supportive environment for adolescent self-expression and self-actualization. I'm veering perilously close to psychobabble, I know, but this age group is at that point where wings are being tested. And, as significant others, CrossFit Kids trainers are in a position to help these kids safely begin their flight toward adulthood. In this fruitful and controlled environment for adolescent exploration, one way trainers can accomplish this is by giving their young clients due respect.

As significant others, CrossFit Kids trainers are in a position to help these kids safely begin their flight toward adulthood.

This plays out as a sense of higher expectations for our teen clients, and it manifests in different ways. For example, the clock is emphasized more, which dovetails with the adolescent's evolving definition of fun, including now an appreciation for competition.

That said, proper mechanics and safety remain paramount, and consistently excellent technique might be rewarded with a heavier load, an opportunity to work front and center with other "big dawgs" during the WOD or an invite to the teen weightlifting class.

We might even solicit opinions from more experienced teens with regard to their loads for certain WODs. Competence feedback is given without criticism, and trainers will often discuss the rationale for movements. Further, we have more frank discussions on various topics like nutrition, rest/recovery and ramifications of inconsistent attendance. We recognize the importance of flexibility for developing adolescent bodies and expect the clients to work that skill after the WOD, often under the guidance of a mobility-wise trainer. We also explore the brain-function-exercise connection and request teens bring homework for post-WOD study.

While a number of our teens have adopted CrossFit as their primary sport, some adolescent clients use CrossFit as a strength-and-conditioning program for other sports, so we tailor their programming to accommodate their pre-, in- and offseason fitness needs. Our goal here is to keep them CrossFitting without undercutting their ability to perform elsewhere. We make it clear we appreciate the place these other sports assume in our clients' lives and endeavor to help them excel at those. All these things operate to cultivate an atmosphere that tends to be more grown up. As with competition, being treated like an adult is enjoyable for teens. Consequences remain confined to class time, but the benefits resonate over the course of life.

Blending with the fundamental tone of respect in our Teen/Advanced class is an overtone of accountability. Yes, the programming is deliberate; loads, reps, rounds and time domains can be trainer-dictated for each client if need be, and the trainers are eyes-on all the time. But there is still space for kids to assume ownership of their exercise and/or WOD mastery. Returning to CrossFit Kids' aims for a moment, bearing this responsibility provides a potent if not necessarily tangible impetus for learning the value of persistence, goal setting, problem-solving, integrity and hard work.

Community, respect, accountability—what does that triumvirate amount to?

Motivation.

What Drives Kids?

Intrinsic motivation—it's the internal drive determining the why, level of effort and persistence of an individual's engagement in an activity (15). Intrinsic motivation can be construed as participating in an activity for its inherent satisfaction and enjoyment (6), which serves to increase or sustain participation (5) as the innate psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness are met (15). Contrast that with non-self-determined extrinsic motivation, which centers on activity engagement for external reward or to avoid a consequence. Research indicates that, generally speaking, intrinsic motivation is associated with improved learning and information processing in addition to higher psychological well-being (e.g., self-esteem) vis-à-vis non-internalized, non-self-determined extrinsic motivation (e.g., 17,18), which works against deep processing and well-being. Again, this is simplistic, and it is important to note that the relative benefits of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are determined by the interaction of many individual and contextual variables.

**“I am always doing things
I can't do; that's how I get
to do them.”**

—Pablo Picasso

Evidence points to the salience of environmental factors in the development of intrinsic motivation (e.g., 3, 8, 15, 18, 19). If we consider the Teen/Advanced class, the context and the coaching and the climate, then we can look at the impact of CrossFit Kids in a new light, particularly in terms of how trainers can create a motivational environment that allows learning and improved performance (16). I'm not saying successful CrossFit Kids trainers wield some kind of arcane pedagogical magic. They need only stick to CrossFit Kids' teaching approach, which is 100 percent CrossFit, and, one assumes, the method applied in their own learning.

At its most fundamental level, the Teen/Advanced class applies CrossFit's mechanics-consistency-intensity model, known as MCI. Loads are light until proper technique is executed consistently. A technically proficient teen then



Competition, if not handled correctly, can lead to social comparison and extrinsic motivation.

will be rewarded with a little more weight, maybe even “graduating” from dumbbells to a barbell. As the basis for the teaching methodology, this is an essential component. It generates what can be referred to as a “mastery climate,” which is related to the learner's engagement in adaptive behaviors; e.g., choosing challenges and focusing on effort (16). MCI's emphasis on temporal progress and task mastery enhance a client's perceived competence, which feeds into intrinsic motivation (3,5).

Further, MCI offsets the potential negative effects of competition, which is a key driver of the model's third pillar: intensity. Competition also is linked to performance, which can be viewed as a form of social comparison, and an environment focused on that—an ego climate—is more conducive to the development of a less beneficial kind of extrinsic motivation if clients discover their only measure of competence is to be found in how they perform compared with their peers (3,17). In CrossFit Brand X's Teen/Advanced class, we address this in a few ways.

First, when dealing with the intensity component, trainers are careful to emphasize the clock over client-to-client competition. Because trainers are hands-on during, if we're not cueing technique, we're encouraging young clients to continue moving and working hard. For certain, this does not entail screaming to "get on the bar" or other coercive forms of "cheerleading." We reinforce this post-WOD and direct our attention especially at those kids who might have taken the longest and who are likely the newest members of our class. Their time is downplayed, their efforts lauded. Our goal is not to have the kids thinking, "Man, I just got crushed by Big Dawg Chuck," but rather, "Man, I worked hard and soon I'll be able to do what Big Dawg Chuck does."

Second, Ryan and Deci (15) assert that security and relatedness, which can be seen as characteristics of community, foster intrinsic motivation. CrossFit boxes are gatherings of like-minded people who lean on each other

before, during and after they enter the WOD crucible. This is true in CrossFit Brand X's Teen/Advanced class as well, and the competitive dimension of that program is often characterized by the same sportsmanship witnessed not only at the 2011 Reebok CrossFit Games but also across the country at affiliates every day.

Third, and this is crucial, even while trainers stress individual client vs. clock as a means of reinforcing task mastery over social comparison, competing develops organically in the CrossFit context, and competing among teens comes naturally and is not to be discouraged. The externally derived form of motivation that springs from the CrossFit environment is often internalized when the newbie "drinks the Kool-Aid" and thereby is personally endorsed; that is, the external value is embraced and feeds a self-determined extrinsic motivation that has a more positive impact than extrinsically motivated behaviors for the sake of complying with an outside regulation (9,15). As mentioned above, competition underpins intensity, but more relevant, it is part of adolescent fun.

**Competition is fun.
Consistently getting buried
by the WOD and one's
WOD-mates is not.**

The Teen/Advanced class is open to kids between the ages of 12 and 17 (at CrossFit Brand X, we have some younger kids, too). Frankly, with such a broad age range, the athletes cannot square off on equal footing without manipulation; that is, without scaling. Competition is fun. Consistently getting buried by the WOD and one's WOD-mates is not.

Scaling is the Colt revolver of CrossFit Kids: the great equalizer. Properly applied, it generates spirited WODs where pups are keeping up with big dawgs and big dawgs are desperately trying not to fall behind the pups. Is that social comparison? Well, yeah, but it's internalized such that this form of extrinsic motivation is self-determined. Teens fully accept the value of winning over each other. They are not competing because trainers are insisting on it or because they're supposed to. They do it because it's fun.



If the weights and intensity are properly scaled for each athlete's ability, competition remains fun for all participants.

Scaling is a programming cornerstone in the Teen/Advanced class and, perhaps more significantly, it is utterly normalized as part of MCI. Again, despite the fact that Brand X trainers assign varying loads and volumes—exert external control over the situation—it does not undermine the clients' sense of autonomy. This relates positively to intrinsic motivation, as well as to self-determined extrinsic motivation because the kids understand the primacy of technical excellence in our approach and its connection to earning increased loads and volumes (1,9).

So even with this cursory look at motivation, it's easy to see how, within the framework of the Teen/Advanced class and via consistent application of the CrossFit Kids training methodology, Brand X trainers are helping to engender qualities in adolescents that will not only make them better adult CrossFitters but will also serve them throughout their lives.

**“As is our confidence,
so is our capacity.”**
—William Hazlitt

MCI in Action

We are near the end of CrossFit Brand X's Teen weightlifting class. Fifteen-year-old M. tightens his belt and steps onto the platform. In pursuit of a one-rep max back squat, he has already PR'd, so this 285-lb. attempt is gravy. He positions himself under the bar, lifts it and steps out of the rack. Jeff Martin spots him from behind. I take up position to the side of the platform to monitor his depth. M. goes for it. Nothing looks right. He is wiggly, buckles and gets buried. To the naked eye, it appears he bit off more than he could chew.

Martin helps him back to the rack.

“You want to try again?” he asks as M. undoes his belt.

The young man blinks, nods.

“Yeah,” he says.

A few minutes later, M. belts up, unracks the bar and backs out. Big breath, hips back and down. Rock solid. Boom. M. explodes out of the hole and stands with a huge PR. He racks the bar.

**“Argue for your
limitations and, sure
enough, they're yours.”**
—Richard Bach

“Nice lift,” Martin tells him.

M. turns to me with a giant grin.

“I wanted that!” he says.

A few minutes later, with a nonchalant fist bump, I tell him, “Way to get back under the bar.”

“I knew exactly what I did wrong,” he tells me, smiling, “and how to fix it.”

Two days later, during a CrossFit Total, M. PRs on his back squat again with a beautiful 300-lb. lift. That same WOD, he chooses not to pursue a deadlift PR (as of this writing, M.'s deadlift PR stands at 330 lb.), calling it a day—a good day—at 305 lb.

“Not feelin' it,” he says to me.

Three days later, he pulls 320 lb. three times with 70 lb. of chain.

The Essence of it All

Back at the Reebok CrossFit Games, the first WOD of the Teen Challenge is in full swing. I am prowling Lot 17, sporting my you-can-run-but-you'll-only-die-tired yellow judge shirt. Ostensibly, I am a head judge (OK, some kind of Dwight-Schrutian second-assistant to the head judge), but my real job during the WODs is to ensure athlete safety. Given the technical requirements of the power clean for this workout and given that this is the challenge's first WOD, my colleagues and I are monitoring the athletes closely.



Looking at these young athletes, you'll see a difference in load but not intensity.

I pace the Rogue complex and find myself watching the two young men whose coach expended so much energy trying to convince us these kids would fail the power cleans at the RX'd weight. They are definitely laboring with the scaled 95-lb. barbell, but they are moving. And moving well. Both athletes wear near-identical scowls of tenacious determination. I step in closer to compliment their efforts and, because I am not used to the size of the competition bumpers, realize only then that they are in fact cleaning the RX'd 135 lb. Over and over and over again.

I spin around looking for the doubting coach. But I cannot find him. Another one of the team's coaches is behind me. I thrust a finger back at the toiling young men.

"Do you see?" I ask, a little more sharply than I intended.

But I'm riled. And I'm glad I'm wearing sunglasses because I'm misty-eyed now and I detest being weepy in public.

"Do you see that?" I ask again. "That's what we're about."

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Courtesy of Dan Edelman

About the Author

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THE CrossFit *kitchen* K I D S

Sweet Cheeks Headquarters



SWEET CAULIFLOWER MASH

by Shirley Brown and Alyssa Dazet

[Sweet Cheeks Headquarters](#)

overview

Turn kids on to vegetables when they're younger and they'll have a lifetime of healthy eating ahead of them. One way of doing this is by dolling those veggies up with all things fun and delicious. Turn a bland head of cauliflower into a sweet and crunchy mash, and soon your kids will ask you to make them vegetables!

serving size

One serving is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup; total servings dependent on size of cauliflower head.

ingredients

- 1 cauliflower head, chopped up
- 1 cup coconut milk
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. nutmeg
- Dash sea salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins or cranberries, optional
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of your favorite nut, optional

notes

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of mash goes great with chicken!

directions

1. Place cauliflower, coconut milk, water, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt in a pot. Cover and bring to a boil. Then lower heat to a simmer and let it cook for 20 minutes until it's extremely soft.
2. Use a potato masher or fork to mash the cauliflower until it resembles mashed potatoes.
3. Add your kid's favorite dried fruit and/or nuts to the dish.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Moving Beyond Muscle

Kevin J. Kula asks why CrossFitters use muscle-based soft-tissue therapies. For chronic problems, he says fascially-based therapies are the solution.

By Kevin J. Kula

January 2012



Courtesy of Kevin J. Kula

CrossFitters demand more from their exercise program than the average gym rat schooled in the outdated exercise science of the biceps and leg curls. Why, then, do we have exercise standards consisting of high-level gymnastics movements and Olympic weightlifting while relying on outdated muscle-based therapies like trigger-point therapy and deep-tissue massage?

1 of 11

Individuals partaking in an exercise program like CrossFit can benefit from understanding the difference not only between isolation exercises and functional movements, but also between muscle-based therapies and those that address the body globally in a functional way.

Poor flexibility and orthopedic imbalances many CrossFitters display aren't a result of CrossFit—as some contend—but from poor work posture and old injuries.

The poor flexibility and orthopedic imbalances many CrossFitters display aren't a result of CrossFit—as some contend—but from poor work posture and old injuries. While movement patterns improve with CrossFit, it is my own experience from coaching athletes, teaching self-care and providing soft-tissue work to CrossFitters that some of these imbalances do not just go away with CrossFit but are chronic and continue to limit performance. It is these chronic restrictions that muscle-based therapies fail to resolve and only are addressed with a fascially-based approach like structural integration, or SI.

The Problem: Muscle-Based Kinesiology

The basis for personal-training programs, physical therapy, athletic training and massage therapy is muscle-based kinesiology. In traditional anatomy/kinesiology, the skeletal system is taught first. Then the muscles are learned from origin to insertion (where they attach to bone). Movements are taught from this understanding of how each muscle individually operates. Each muscle acts as a lever directing the bones through a certain range of motion. The problem with this logic is muscles are being conceptualized as isolated structures in the body. Muscles do not exist independently in the body; they are distinctions an anatomist creates with a scalpel. True muscle function then needs to be studied from a viewpoint that looks at the body as an integrated whole.

Massage therapists are taught to treat muscles in a variety of ways, often focusing on trigger points, which are contracted spots in the muscle bellies. In massage, lotion is applied so that the therapist's hand, knuckle or elbow can glide over the body's skin/muscle. In a deep-tissue massage, the therapist's elbow glides across the length of the muscle while applying pressure at a deeper level. This can be compared with a car's wheels hydroplaning over the road; the tires are not actually in contact with the road but with a thin layer of water. Fascially-based therapies, on the other hand, require the tissue be "hooked" so traction—like the tire gripping the road—can be applied. By first sinking into or hooking the tissue with an elbow and then scooping (lifting or dropping) the tissue in a specific direction, the layers of tissue in the body are able to regain their sliding motion on one another, improving hydration and pliability.

Active release technique, or ART, is one of the highest level soft-tissue therapies I have encountered but is mostly muscle-based. ART grew out of the chiropractic community due to the need for soft-tissue training for chiropractors and is very detailed and constantly evolving. But the nature of chiropractic scheduling makes this therapy merely a very effective pain-reduction approach. I first heard about ART from Brian MacKenzie of CrossFit Endurance. I went through the training, and I found success with some clients (treating their symptoms) and more limited success with others.

SI ... treats the whole body, correcting the source of the problem, not the symptoms.

ART primarily uses pin-and-stretch techniques and is generally focused on a particular problem. For example, a person with plantar fasciitis would be treated by having the tissue on the bottom of his or her foot pinned down with the therapist's thumb while the person moves the toes up and down. This therapy does help remove fascial restrictions, as does some types of massage, such as myofascial release.

SI, on the other hand, treats the whole body, correcting the source of the problem, not the symptoms. It is worth noting that many holistic therapies operate from a symptom-based philosophy using natural solutions but relying on the same logic as our current medical system. Massage therapists, for example, spend a lot of time treating the neck and shoulders, which are often symptomatic due to other factors in the body. ART and high-level massage are effective for continuous maintenance, but the focus of this article is more profound.

What if, through corrective structural work, the body was better aligned? What if maintenance work was minimized and chronic pain eliminated? The body's ready state would enable you to exponentially increase your level of fitness through CrossFit.

Structural Integration

Last year, I was fortunate to work with Luke Kayyem, co-owner of CrossFit Scottsdale. I took Luke, an incredible athlete and Games competitor, through a 12-session series of SI. When I approached him, he asked me, "How is structural integration different from ART or deep-tissue

massage?" I told him it's like trading in your car for a Ferrari instead of putting rims on your broken-down Chevy. SI rebalances the entire body, not just focusing on tight areas or localized pain, ensuring long-term results and optimal performance, rather than just maintenance. To see an example of this, I have included my before and after pictures from my training.

Below is a great example of the poor alignment I had before undergoing SI. The photo on the left was taken before I received any work, and the photo on the right was taken after a series of 12 weekly 90-minute sessions. You can see how this drastic imbalance (left shift of the rib cage) limited overhead mobility. I was also easily fatigued after workouts, limited in breathing and very tight in the shoulders and lats.

In the second photo, you can see the greater support going up the legs and much improved alignment above. My spinal curvature also changed for the better (confirmed through X-rays). The centered rib cage, level clavicles and relaxed arms shown in the second photo make for a much better Fran time.



Before and after 12 sessions of structural integration. Major imbalances in left photo: Left rib cage shift relative to pelvis; right-shift neck relative to rib cage; right-tilt neck relative to rib cage; right-tilt shoulder girdle relative to rib cage (left shoulder higher); X-leg pattern in lower (knock knees); tensional bowstring in arms.

To get a sense of my old pattern, stand up, and without moving your head or neck, shift your rib cage to the left. Now, tilt your head to the right and raise your left shoulder. Now try doing a shoulder press. How does that feel? No matter how well you get set for the movement—elbows forward of the bar, sternum down, chin tucked—the movement is going to be limited. In my case, I became very strong around my imbalances before plateauing in my work capacity.

**“If your symptoms get better,
that’s your tough luck.”**

—Ida Rolf

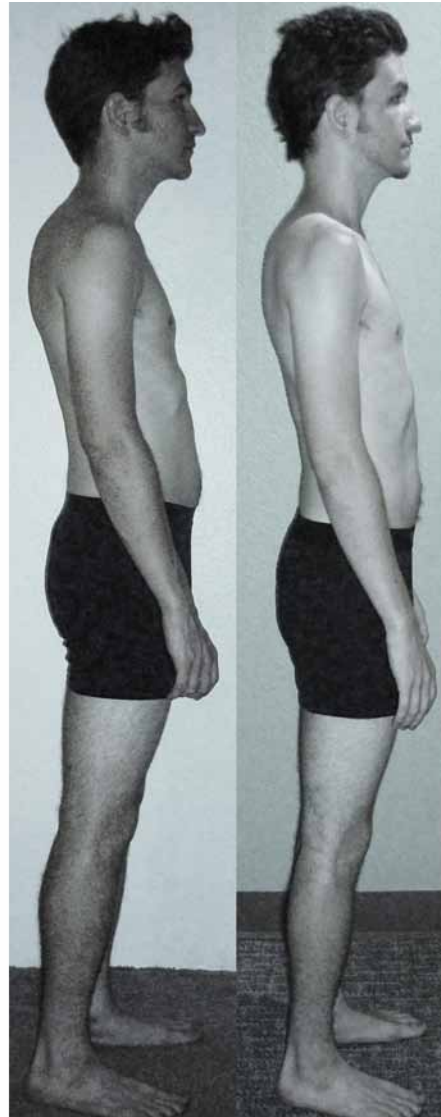
“Your body will find ways to compensate for any imbalances. That can create inefficient movement patterns and limit performance,” Dr. John Zimmer convincingly states in his October 2010 *CrossFit Journal* article [Sub-Failure Injury](#).

The intention of SI is not directed by the source of the pain but informed by realigning the entire body, creating support. This produces better movement, flexibility and overall energy and endurance. When someone comes into my office, I listen to his or her complaints and note the site of pain. But I am more interested in the overall alignment of the body.

“If your symptoms get better, that’s your tough luck,” said Ida Rolf, the founder of SI, meaning the problem will often self-correct when the body’s inherent stability is supported through proper alignment.

I start with a standing assessment and look for rotations, shifts, tilts and bends. I then take into account how this lack of alignment is contributing to pain. Jon, who came to me with neck/shoulder pain, presented the following imbalances as seen in the left photo on this page.

The photo on the right was taken after Jon received three sessions of SI. To eliminate the strain on the neck and shoulders, I had to rebalance the rib cage over the pelvis, eliminating the posterior tilt. Notice in the first photo how the forward neck is associated with the tilted rib cage. By



Courtesy of Kevin J. Kula

Imbalances: posteriorly tilted rib cage; head-forward posture (anterior shift of neck relative to rib cage); medially tilted and laterally shifted scapula relative to rib cage; anterior shift of femurs relative to feet; bowstring that includes whole front and back of body.

getting the rib cage more vertical—think of the top of the rib cage coming forward and the bottom shifting back—I was able to create better support for the shoulder girdle and the neck. I then rebalanced the shoulder girdle, eliminating the strong anterior tilt of the scapula tilting forward on the rib cage.

I can describe what I did in a muscular way—activated the overstretched deep-neck flexors, lengthened pec minor and serratus anterior—but to get an idea of the global configuration of Jon's pattern, looking at the fascial bowstring, or outline, of his entire body is useful.

The posterior tilt of the rib cage in the upper body is a common compensation of an anterior shift in the lower body. Notice the head of his femur is forward of his heel, the weight falling more on the ball of the foot. Upper-body imbalance often affects the lower body, and vice versa. It doesn't matter what caused the imbalance; the relationships between the contributing elements need to be addressed. Stand up and try rocking forward on the balls of your feet until you almost fall forward. Now tilt your rib cage back and notice how this displaces the center of gravity backward. As the rib cage tilts back, feel how your head wants to come forward. Imagine being stuck in that pattern.

Now you can understand that to fully address Jon's neck complaint, I also had to lessen the anterior shift of his pelvis, which was supporting the pattern of the posterior rib cage. Looking at the second photo, you can see the changes best by again looking at this outline of the entire body; the lower shift has lessened, the rib cage straightened and the neck and shoulders are better supported.

SI, in a sense, is the Western counterpart to Chinese medicine, using a wide-angle lens and looking at the person as fluid and adaptable.

No other therapy specializes in addressing the whole body. There is a place for a focused lens, but the alignment of the body needs to be examined. In this way we can look at optimizing posture and movement relative to that person and his or her lifestyle. Problems arise when every professional hammer treats every client's problem as a nail; chiropractic focusing on the spine, massage on the muscles and physical therapy on the joints. SI, in a sense, is the Western counterpart to Chinese medicine, using a wide-angle lens and looking at the person as fluid and

adaptable. I often have to adapt my original strategy based on how the person responds. It is important to note I am not just looking for ideal posture in a standing position. I am looking for fluid and adaptable movement that comes from the core.

Who Benefits From SI?

Anyone with the following can be helped by SI treatment:

- Fallen or lifted arches/foot immobility.
- Strong pelvic tilt/chronically tight hamstrings.
- Excessive or insufficient lumbar curve.
- Recurring plantar fasciitis or ITB syndrome.
- Scar tissue and prior surgery.
- Poor posture and restricted breathing.
- Forward head posture/chronic neck or shoulder tension.
- Range-of-motion/flexibility limitations.
- Movement imbalances and plateaued fitness.
- Unresolved complaints after seeing other health professionals.

Understanding SI The ABCs of SI

The events of your life have shaped your body over time. How your body feels and functions is affected by old injuries, poor posture, immobility and stiffness. Over time, these limitations create compensations in the body that seem normal and unavoidable. Pain is merely the symptom of these imbalances.

SI improves your body's alignment, which improves posture, range of motion and flexibility. The symptoms of these chronic imbalances—neck, shoulder and low-back pain—will be permanently resolved once balance is restored.

These lasting changes will improve your energy, movement and body awareness—all of which will empower you to return to the active lifestyle you want to live.



Courtesy of Kevin J. Kula

A structural integration session.

The Sessions

SI always is done in a series of sessions, ranging from 10 to 12, depending on the school the practitioner attended. Sessions range from 60 to 90 minutes and are generally once a week.

Some structural integrators offer an intensive three-session series as a starting point. The first session addresses the lower body: creating support through the arches of the feet and freeing the pelvis from shifts, tilts or rotations.

The second session looks at the relation of the rib cage to the pelvis, the shoulder girdle and breathing. The third session focuses on the neck and spine, tying everything together—integrating movement with body alignment—once support in the lower body is created.

Trigger points often resolve on their own—minus all the pain—when the fascial covering of the affected muscle and surrounding layer is rebalanced.

The sessions consist of long, slow massage strokes that create space in the body and bring length to short and tight muscles and connective tissue. Directed ankle, knee, hip and shoulder movements help to free restrictions, resulting in a feeling of freedom and openness. On the left is an in-class photo of me going through SI.

The Strategy and Technique

Restrictions are often between muscles or muscle groups.

“The goal is to get surfaces to slide on one another,” Kelly Starrett said.

Trigger points often resolve on their own—minus all the pain—when the fascial covering of the affected muscle and surrounding layer is rebalanced.

To give an example of the techniques involved in SI, I will focus on the arches of the feet. Many people ask if the changes hold over time and how permanent changes are possible. Another important question is, “How is the body able to quickly adapt to the work in some people yet take much more time in others?” I will address these questions from a kinesis myofascial integration (KMI) perspective. KMI is the school for SI that I attended; it was founded by Tom Myers, author of the book *Anatomy Trains*.

Myers points out there are three components that hold the arch in place: the shape of the bones, the plantar ligament/muscles and the upward pull from the lower leg myofasciature (muscles, tendons and fascia). He explains that the arches are pulled into existence through walking and running. The foot has three arches that form an upside-down triangle when traced on the bottom. Take your finger and trace the bone under the big toe (left foot) to the bone under the little toe (covering the ball of the foot). This is the transverse arch. Now take your finger down to the heel, this is the lateral longitudinal arch. Lastly, take your finger from your heel back to the bone under the big toe to complete the triangle; this is the medial longitudinal arch.

If a client has fallen arches (medially tilted or collapsed medial arch), I will examine the musculature itself as well as the relationship of pelvic tilt to the arches. For the sake of simplicity, I will look at the strategy and techniques for the lower leg. Keep in mind that a posteriorly tilted pelvis (possibly due to short hamstrings) will affect my strategy differently than an anteriorly tilted pelvis. There are multiple patterns as the pelvis itself can be tilted relative to the femur but also anteriorly shifted relative to the feet.

After doing my visual assessment, I observe the client has fallen (medially tilted) arches with an anteriorly tilted pelvis. She wears custom orthotics to raise the medial arch. Here is how the first five sessions would affect the arches specifically. Keep in mind that there is no recipe based on what

imbalance is seen or what restriction is felt. Everyone's restrictions differ and need to be addressed accordingly; there is no standard recipe. In the 12-session series, the first four sessions address the superficial layers of muscles and fascia: pec major/abdominals, quads/hamstrings/IT band, tibialis anterior/calves. The next four sessions address the core: tibialis posterior, adductors, pelvic floor, QL, diaphragm and deep neck flexors. The last four sessions (integration sessions) are critical to long-term success, helping the person integrate alignment and movement.

Session 1: Superficial Front Line

On a superficial level, I would start by freeing up the crural fascia that is a connective-tissue-like sock of the lower leg and is similar to the fascia lata (covering) of the thigh. This is accomplished by sinking the flat of my knuckles into the lower leg (hooking the tissue) before "scooping" the layer upward while the client moves the ankle up and down. The movement itself helps to mobilize the layer while reinforcing proper movement throughout the ankle. This often-used method of scooping the superficial layer is why no lotion is used.

Think of this connective-tissue layer functioning like the pork or lamb casing used to hold together the contents of a sausage. Before addressing the inside layers, the outer layers are loosened. The muscles of the lower leg are separated by connective tissue, similar to how the segments of an orange are individually wrapped.

I also would free up the ankle retinaculum that holds down the tendons of the lower leg. I would ensure the connective-tissue layer is allowing the tendons to glide underneath. This is a big factor in ankle mobility; ankle dorsiflexion is crucial to a good squat. I would then hook tibialis anterior (the muscle on the front of the lower leg) with the flat of my knuckles. By lifting the tissue superiorly while the client moves the ankle up and down, I would help lift this component of support for the medial arch. Tibialis anterior has a central tendon and is a very deep muscle that often gets adhered to the layer underneath. Part of lifting the muscle superiorly involves this freeing of the muscle from the deep layer. The territory of this session would guide me to continue to lift the entire front line from foot to hip (possibly lifting rectus femoris as well).



Improved ankle mobility will help you get deeper into a squat.

Courtesy of Kevin J. Kula

Session 2: Superficial Back Line

I might begin by lengthening the tissue associated with the transverse, medial and lateral arches. I would then lengthen the plantar fascia with the intention of creating a suppler and more supportive bottom of the foot. I would also hook the soleus (calf muscle) and pull it away from the deeper connective tissue layer while I drop it inferiorly toward the ankle. This is one technique that helps create more space at the heel (behind the ankle). CrossFitters who shift forward to the balls of their feet during the squat often lack the ability to ground the heel. The work in the front and back of the lower leg in the first two sessions really helps with ankle dorsiflexion in the squat.

Sessions 3 and 4: Lateral and Spiral Lines

The tendons of the tibialis anterior and the fibularis longus (lateral line) connect under the bottom of the foot, creating a sling that bridles the ankle. Sitting in a chair, place your right foot flat on the floor and lift the inside of the foot off the floor (supination). Now lower the inside and take your right hand and lift the outside of your foot (pronation). Can you see how if the muscle on the outside (fibularis longus) was pulled up, it would collapse the arch medially? Rock your ankle to the left and to the right (toes should stay forward pointed) and notice how the pull from the muscle above tenses the foot. Whereas the superficial front line (tibialis anterior) is raised to try and support the arch, fibularis longus (outside leg muscle) is freed from the surrounding layers and then dropped in Session 3.

To get a sense of the spiral line, step on a jump rope with your right foot and hold the handles taut next to your right hip. The spiral line forms a sling from the foot to the hip and has a significant effect on the arches (as mentioned) and pelvic tilt. By pulling on one handle you can see the connection between the pelvis and hip. The spiral line is often responsible for superficial rotations in the body, rotations that often counter deeper rotations. Many body workers treat the psoas (one of the deep hip flexors) and deep rotations in the body without looking at the relationships of superficial and deep rotations (held in different fascial layers).

Session 5: Deep Front Line

The deep front line (the core) starts at the instep of the foot and travels up through the adductors to the pelvic floor. Whereas the other “lines” generally contain one muscle or layer, the deep front line, or DFL, is more of a three-dimensional space. It continues up in front of the spine to the diaphragm and the deep neck flexors. The pericardial

fascia (surrounding the heart) and even the tongue can be dissected out of the body as part of this line. The approach to this line would be similar to the others involving the differentiation of layers, the lifting of tendons and fascia, and deep work that affects the connective tissue between and surrounding the bones. This work is very different than deep-tissue massage or other therapies that might just be compressing muscle tissue. Two-handed pressure (above and below) is used with the intention of working deeply.

SI: After the Series

The cumulative effect of these sessions would be to build the arch from foot to hip, creating more support and stability each session. Once the body has enough support (lower leg myofasciature, especially) the arches can maintain themselves. Some of my clients gradually transition to minimal footwear, helping to strengthen the connective tissue of the lower leg that supports the arch. Some people have more of the lines involved and more restrictions, so they take longer to change; other people have greater awareness that helps to support the change.

Assuming the person does not engage in a behavior that puts the body back into the compromised position, the body does not regress over time. It continues to strengthen and develop into its new pattern. The client needs to commit to the process and trust in the work while doing his or her own part to change patterns. CrossFit is the perfect complement to SI, helping to develop and heighten global movement patterns.

Resources

Fascial Stretch Therapy

The other major fascially-based therapy that is emerging is called “fascial stretch therapy,” or FST. CrossFit coaches can become certified through workshops offered globally by Ann and Chris Frederick of [Stretch to Win](#).

FST uses tractioning, fascially based stretching and contract-relax and works with breath, tuning the nervous system. The Fredericks book *Stretch to Win* is a great resource for trainers and for self-stretching. Chris Frederick, physical therapist, structural integrator, dancer/martial artist, reminds me of Starrett in his innovative methods and cutting-edge philosophy. Ann Frederick is one of the most gifted body workers I have ever encountered. She transmits her skill and touch directly. At their workshops, you learn “feel” and “presence”—something that takes years in different manipulative fields.



Tom Myers/Anatomy Trains

To SI practitioners, it doesn't make sense to treat the body as a isolated parts.

Fascial Anatomy: Tom Myers and the Anatomy Trains

For years, the medical community that named the muscles in medical textbooks we reference today discarded the body's connective tissue that wraps, connects, separates and protects the body's structures. The resulting anatomy that early anatomists created has been very helpful and is not wrong but simplistic. People like Myers have been arguing for years that muscles and ligaments are not separate; the distinction is created artificially with a sideways scalpel. He has revolutionized anatomy and manual and movement therapy with his concept of anatomy trains.

What are Anatomy Trains?

We have four cardinal lines: front, back and two lateral lines. We can zoom in and look at muscles or use the anatomy trains concept to take a wide-angle-lens view.

The IT band is part of the lateral line. Its role is largely to help stabilize and lend support to the front (quads) and back (hamstrings) lines, while opposing the deep front line (adductors). People who have been saying "it's all connected" now have a basis for evaluation and treatment and a common language that can be used across professions. The anatomy trains explain fascial continuities (connectedness of muscles, tendons and fascia) in the body. This creates a framework for assessing shifts, tilts, bends and rotations in the body.

The superficial back line, for example, originates at the bottom of the foot, continues via the Achilles tendon up the calf muscles, then the hamstrings, only to connect to the long ropey erector spinae muscles of the back through the sacrotuberous ligament. This longitudinal fascial line ends at the back of the neck, is stretched in a down dog, and its restrictions vary—for example, having to bend your knees to pick up your keys.

Anatomy Trains Short Courses

Manual/movement therapists can hugely benefit their clients by understanding how to body read, assess and apply fascial techniques—even if in a limited way through workshops. The range of practitioners studying SI varies widely. My classmates included physical therapists, yoga/Pilates teachers, ART/massage practitioners, acupuncturists, shiatsu/Thai massage practitioners, strength and conditioning coaches, visceral manipulators and cranio-sacral therapists. Information about a wide variety of courses also is available through [the Anatomy Trains website](http://www.anatomytrains.com). Myers offers many short courses through his website. To learn more about fascial anatomy, strategy and technique, consult his books *Anatomy Trains*, *Body3: A Therapist's Anatomy Reader* and *Fascial Release for Structural Balance*.

Fascial Fitness Courses

Fascia's role in movement has been largely ignored for years. Myers and Robert Schleip are pioneers and have recently created a new term, "fascial fitness," that looks at the role of the connective tissue in movement. People wearing Vibram FiveFingers, for example, are strengthening not just the muscles but also the connective tissue in the lower leg and ankle, which current research shows takes 18 months to accomplish. Integral CrossFit in Boulder, Colo., is the first affiliate I know of that is hosting a fascial fitness course.

SI

There are at least 12 main SI schools in the United States and many worldwide. The [International Association of Structural Integrators](#) is the main organization, and its website has information about the various schools and profession.

Maintenance vs. Optimization

CrossFit is constantly evolving. The level of training staff, trainers, athletes and the whole community is exponentially growing. The importance of mobility and recovery has recently been elevated in the community as Starrett has provided an invaluable resource in the MobilityWOD and in his Movement and Mobility Seminar.

While MobilityWOD helps correct structural imbalances, there is a difference between high-level maintenance and corrective/structural work with a professional. Depending on the level of misalignment, some people might find maintenance sufficient, while other people might benefit from structural (fascially oriented) work.

**We must acknowledge
limitations in certain
approaches, recognize
the role of fascially based
methods and learn how to
use innovative new therapies.**

Self-Assessment Exercise

Try this exercise: Look in the mirror and notice if your shoulders are level. Is your head tilted to one side? Do your arms hang at about the same distance from your rib cage on both sides? Take a big breath in and notice where breathing is restricted. Are your sides expanding/ribs flaring out to allow for breath? Looking at the side of your body, determine if your hip is centered over the foot. Is your hip shifted forward, moving the weight onto the balls of your feet?

Close your eyes and notice where your weight falls. Is it evenly distributed across both feet or is your weight on the front of one foot and back of the other? These exercises will help determine the level of alignment, what areas to address and if more extensive work is needed.

**Just as CrossFit and our
understanding of exercise
continue to evolve, so
will the understanding of
complementary therapies.**

An All-Inclusive View

Daniel Christie's [explanation](#) of neuromuscular therapy/myoskeletal alignment techniques and Christian Lemburg's description of pain referral are both highly valuable resources. Almost everyone can attest to the benefits of massage, neuromuscular therapy and active release. There is no question that those methods are valuable. These advanced practitioners are especially beneficial to CrossFitters.

However, we must acknowledge limitations in certain approaches, recognize the role of fascially-based methods and learn how to use innovative new therapies. Getting a series of SI sessions will enable more effective integration of other soft-tissue methods and more effective maintenance work, and it will unquestionably increase work capacity/fitness.

In March 2012 I will be attending The Third Annual Fascial Research Conference in Vancouver, Canada, where scientists and practitioners from all over the world will be getting together to discuss how the latest fascial research affects treatment strategies. Future research will help all soft-tissue practitioners better understand how they can work together, incorporating and integrating their methods. Just as CrossFit and our understanding of exercise continue to evolve, so will the understanding of complementary therapies.



Courtesy of Kevin J. Kula

Pre- and post-session assessment.

CrossFit and SI

I am reminded of Greg Glassman when I hear the following Rolf quote, "When I started this work, there was no 'book.' There was no law and there were no prophets. And still there is very little law, and there are even fewer prophets. You have to stop and experiment, and the law and the prophets come out of what the experiment shows. When we experiment with bodies working in the same way, the same pattern shows the same map."

My passion for CrossFit motivated me to become a trainer and coach. It was my clients' passion for CrossFit and their dedication to exploring their own potential that inspired me to pursue methods of becoming a better coach. That journey led me to SI. I share my knowledge and experience in hopes there will be future dialogue between the innovative and passionate members of the CrossFit community and those of the SI community. Together, we can help evoke human potential, forging elite fitness by moving beyond muscle.



About the Author

Kevin J. Kula is the owner of [Ready State Fitness](http://ReadyStateFitness.com), a Phoenix-based business that offers KMI Structural Integration, Fascial Stretch Therapy and Paleo nutrition. Kula has attended five CrossFit seminars: Level 1, Gymnastics, Running/Endurance, Nutrition, and Movement and Mobility. He lectures about the Paleo diet at Whole Foods, is part of the Phoenix Paleo Meetup Group and plans to complete a functional medicine program next year through [Functional Medicine Town](http://FunctionalMedicineTown.com). He also conducts stretching and movement workshops and is writing several e-books about nutrition and stretching. Kula can be reached at kevin@readystatefitness.com.

THE CrossFit LIFE

I Am Not Cancer. I Am CrossFit.

Exhausted and overwhelmed after battling thyroid cancer, Kelly Knight discovers CrossFit and newfound energy and confidence. Hilary Achauer reports.

By Hilary Achauer

January 2012



Malinda Sanchez

Tyson Para, Kelly Knight and Joey Sanchez (l-r) at RSA CrossFit in Washington state.

When Kelly Knight turns on her phone, the first thing she sees is this quote by Martha Washington: "I am determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may find myself."

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Knight, a 48-year-old registered nurse, has found herself in some dark situations lately. Her son, now 25, has been sick for the past five years. Nobody could figure out the problem until a recent visit to the Mayo Clinic uncovered a tumor in his adrenal glands.

In the midst of caring for and worrying about her son, Knight was diagnosed with thyroid cancer in December 2010. The cancer spread to her lymph nodes, and she went through two full rounds of radiation.

Despite this treatment, Knight's tumor was still so large it destroyed her parathyroid glands, which regulate how much calcium is in the body. This caused Knight to develop tetany, a combination of symptoms caused by very low calcium in the blood. Knight's hands cramp up, her face goes numb, and she has to go to the hospital for intravenous calcium treatments. This past year she ended up in the hospital almost every third day.

"I was exhausted all of the time," Knight said. Looking for something that might make her feel better, she was intrigued when a friend told her about CrossFit.

In October 2011, Knight visited RSA CrossFit in Kennewick, Wash. Owner Joey Sanchez, a cancer survivor himself, greeted her and showed her around. Sanchez was diagnosed with synovial cell sarcoma when he was 15 years old. He almost lost his left arm, but after several surgeries and chemotherapy, he has been cancer-free for 15 years.

Knight started slowly but was immediately hooked. She came to CrossFit two or three times a week, and after a few weeks she found she had more energy throughout the day. Then, in late December, Knight went to the doctor for some tests and a checkup.

"After reviewing my tests, he cut my medicine in half. He asked what I had been doing differently, and I said, 'CrossFit.'"



Joey Sanchez

For cancer survivors like Kelly Knight, CrossFit is a way to just feel like a normal person.

Instead of ending up in the hospital every third day because of tetany, Knight realized she was only going in once a week.

Of course, this is not to say CrossFit cures cancer. There could be any number of reasons for Knight's improved health. Sanchez says while Knight's improved health is amazing, as a fellow cancer survivor, he recognizes another benefit that is just as important.

Joey Sanchez



"I made a decision that I wasn't going to let cancer stop me."

"CrossFit is a way to feel like a normal person, not a cancer patient," Sanchez said. "I always felt like a sick person when I had cancer because everyone felt sorry for me, and I hated it. I wanted to feel normal."

Knight said the sudden improvement in her health took her by surprise.

"I'm pretty competitive," she said with a laugh. "The more I go, the more I like CrossFit. It's more interesting than anything I've ever done. After dealing with my son's sickness for so long, I made a decision that I wasn't going to let cancer stop me."

According to Sanchez, Knight "embodies everything CrossFit with her heart, determination and the will to survive no matter the circumstances. She comes in after radiation treatments and never complains. She motivates other people even though she doesn't feel well."

"She told me that CrossFit helps her deal with cancer," Sanchez said. "She said that she feels like a normal person in the gym, not someone who is sick."

Knight says she hopes to try a CrossFit competition someday. Her favorite movement is the pull-up; she's progressed to the skinniest band and thinks she'll get an unassisted pull-up very soon.

Knight is undergoing more cancer treatment in April. Like breast cancer, the fight against thyroid cancer is ongoing.

"I'm going to keep doing CrossFit," she said.



THE CrossFit JOURNAL

You Were Saying ... With Nathan Chmura

Nathan Chmura of CrossFit Nor'Easter talks
about CrossFit, beer and *The Big Lebowski*.

By E.M. Burton

January 2012



Roland Dufresne

The *CrossFit Journal* is pleased to present the first in a series of profiles designed to help you get to know some of the best people in our community.

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Jennifer Sirko



How would Abraham Lincoln handle this load?

Nathan Chmura

I got involved in athletics because ... I think it breaks down to part camaraderie and part the challenge of it all.

I first heard about CrossFit from ... my wife, who heard about it from a friend. She started by making me do planks and burpees in our living room. Eventually she dragged me to a few classes; I liked it enough. Then I decided to give it a shot for a few months to get ready for mountain-bike season. I don't bike much anymore.

My first CrossFit workout was ... a terrible and humbling experience: kettlebell cards. I walked into an ambush! It started out innocently enough with three rather unassuming, ordinary, everyday folks, two of whom were pushing 60. I got absolutely crushed. I now take some solace in the fact that one of these people took seventh place in the 60-Plus Masters Division at the 2011 CrossFit Games. Still ... crushed. I will never forget that day.

If I could force one person to do Heavy Fran, it would be ... I am a being of light. I wouldn't dare.

My favorite workout is ... I keep seeing that "Rest Day" one showing up on the main site. I think I would really like that one. Unfortunately, if you own an affiliate, they don't tell you what it is.

The person I would most like to WOD with is ... Abraham Lincoln. Dude was all into strongman-type working out.

When I was growing up, I wanted to be a ... full-on lab-coat-wearing scientist with beakers and test tubes. Maybe even crazy hair.

When I grow up, I want to be ... I have no idea!

The most rewarding thing about training people is ... watching people evolve through CrossFit.

The greatest challenge in coaching is ... the first five minutes after waking up to teach the morning classes.

Jennifer Sirko



Chmura tells his athletes to go hard and be smart—and keep their shoes and socks on. He hates feet.

The movement I find hardest to teach is ... I want to say the snatch or clean because there are so many moving parts to it. But all that comes to mind is how I have to remind people nonstop to keep their elbows out in front of the bar when starting any type of overhead barbell movement.

My favorite coaching cue is ... I often find myself telling people to “go hard and be smart,” ... or something like that.

My favorite cheat food is ... beer and fries. Yes, that is two.

The most inspiring person/athlete I’ve ever worked with is ... Coach B (Mike Burgener). He has amazing knowledge, presence and enthusiasm.

I find the thing that makes a successful coach is ... patience and genuine investment.

My secret identity is ... in the CrossFit world? A vegetarian.

The thing I most value is ... “egolessness.” Unless that is not a real word. Then I am going to go with “dictionary.”

The thing that sets my coaching apart from others is ... apparently I am not mean enough, but I think some weeks my programming tells a different story.

The most outrageous thing someone has done while I’ve been training them is ... I let them know this is no time for shenanigans; this is CrossFit!

My ideal mate is ... my wife, of course.

The country I’d most like to visit is ... Belgium, because I like beer, and word on the street is they have crazy good fries there. I have had their waffles at IHOP, and if they are any indication ...

The CrossFit trainer I most admire is ... E.C. (Synkowski). She is tall and understands my plight.

The non-CrossFit person I most admire is ... I want to say somebody along the lines of Gandhi, Einstein, Vonnegut—but Bill Murray keeps coming to mind.

The thing I have the most patience for is ... athletes who want to get things right.

And the thing I have the least patience for is ... people not paying attention. I would annoy the shit out of myself.

My favorite movie is ... while I probably end up watching *The Hunt for Red October* or *Point Break* once a week on TBS, I think it comes down to *The Big Lebowski*.

More than anything, I fear ... I think feet are disgusting, almost to the point of fearing them.

My most guilty pleasure is ... beer and fries. Yes, that is two. Sorry again.

My greatest regret is ... I ran a half marathon this past fall. The good news is that CrossFit works! The bad news is that it was so boring. I don’t regret it, but I do regret that I am thinking about shooting for the full pull next year.

I’m really looking forward to ... the arrival of our daughter in March! Look out CrossFit Games 2030!



Nate Chmura is a Level 1 trainer at [CrossFit Nor’Easter](#), in Hartford, Conn.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Grief and Pull-Ups

Natalie Taylor uses CrossFit to confront—and beat—her monsters.

By Natalie Taylor Stay Strong CrossFit

January 2012



Courtesy of Natalie Taylor

The Power of One, by Bryce Courtenay, is about a little boy named Peekay, who has some very, very big problems. At school, the bigger, stronger bullies incessantly harass him. Similarly, when Peekay looks out at the real world, the same power system exists.

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His story is set in South Africa in the 1940s—amidst apartheid, English-Dutch clashes and World War II. On all scales, both at school and in the world, the big seem to crush the small. Majorities destroy minorities. But then Peekay discovers the sport of boxing and things start to change.

Courtenay refers to Peekay's boxing gloves as "the great equalizers." Once Peekay begins competing, both he and the reader come to understand what the phrase means: boxing gloves don't care what color your skin is, what language you speak, how tall you are, or where you land in the social pecking order. They only care how hard you can hit and with what level of skill you can wield them.

Two years ago when I found CrossFit, the phrase "the great equalizers" came back to me. So first of all, yes, I confess, I am a book nerd who compares things like exercise and fitness to literature. But because I am an English teacher, literature never leaves my head. Ever. And though I've never boxed a day in my life, Courtenay's novel is one of my all-time favorites. The thing I love most about *The Power of One* is that although it is an intensely complex story, at the root of it is the most basic concept of life, literature and athletics: facing monsters.

From Pity to Burpees

Three-and-a-half years ago, I slammed into my first real-life monster. I lost my husband, Josh, in an accident. At the time of his death, I was 24 years old and five months pregnant with our first son. The year following my husband's death was a lot of things—confusing and sad at first, and then exhausting and sad once I had my son. I spent a lot of time crying in my bathrobe and feeling like I was aging at an exponential rate. I loved my new baby, but my own identity was deteriorating at an alarming speed.

Somehow, I realized that
exercise was an essential part
of recovering my former self.

Somehow, I realized that exercise was an essential part of recovering my former self and that internal strength and endurance were directly proportional to external strength and endurance. I started jogging and biking, and I felt like I was at least moving in a forward direction, but there were still many monsters lingering.

My older sister Moo (her name is Sarah, but no one calls her that) kept pushing me to start CrossFit. When she was home for the holidays, I couldn't believe how much stronger she looked from just a few months of CrossFit. I chalked it up to her natural physique. She has always been taller and thinner than me.

"You're just built for stuff like that," I told her. "No matter what I do, I can never look like you."

And for the first time since my husband died, she stopped feeling sorry for me.

"I look this way because I work my ass off," she said. "And if you worked as hard as I did, you could change too."

This was not the sort of pity I was used to. I was annoyed but challenged.

Slowly Moo got me started on CrossFit, despite the fact that I had every excuse in the book: no time, no money for a gym, no equipment, no space. But for every reason I had, she had a response.

No time? Most workouts are under 25 minutes.

You don't need a gym, she told me.

No space? Get your car out of your garage.

No equipment? I'll never forget when she said, "Let me show you what a burpee is."

Just like that, it started. As months passed, I bought one more small thing to add to my gym. And while my son slept, I would be in my garage using some pretty awful form to try to resurrect my broken body and soul. The craziest part is that it actually started to work.

Strong—Inside and Out

It does seem odd to say that working out has helped me with the complex mental issue of grief and surviving after a loss. The two seem completely unrelated. But like Peekay, and like so many great stories, sports and competition are parallel to life's greatest successes and failures.



Bob Gibson/Joust CrossFit

Through CrossFit, Natalie Taylor found a way to overcome any obstacle she faces.

The pull-up bar, the kettlebell
and the wall-ball don't care
if I'm tired, if I'm a single
parent, if I'm a woman or
if I've had a baby. They want
to know how many and
how fast.

The pull-up bar, the kettlebell, the wall-ball (man, do I hate the wall-ball), the Olympic bar, are all my great equalizers. They don't care if I'm tired, if I didn't sleep through the night, if I'm a single parent, if I'm a woman or if I've had a baby. They pay no mind to these things. They want to know how many and how fast. That's all they care about.

Although I find these items unforgiving, there is a huge sense of relief in knowing that none of the issues of my life matters when I start a WOD. When I go to work out, everything that plagues my head disappears because if I don't focus 100 percent of my attention on that bar or that ball, it's going to get the best of me.

Even if you're not a book nerd like me, it's hard to deny the connection between performed WODs and printed words. Every English student knows there are two types of conflict in literature—internal and external. And every heroic journey shows that no matter how big the monsters are on the outside, the biggest ones are on the inside. From Luke Skywalker to Harry Potter to Peekay, the only way we are strong enough to slay the dragon at the end is if we have conquered the one in our own brain. CrossFit works under this same premise.

Two years after starting CrossFit in my garage, things in my life have drastically improved. I recently joined an actual box (and now cannot imagine my life without it), and I started working out with my co-workers at lunch. And although you may never see "Natalie Taylor on today's WOD" on CrossFit.com, that hardly matters.

All of us know that every single person who walks into a box or a garage on a daily basis is there for a reason: we are there to prove something to ourselves. We are there to slowly and patiently face the monsters on the outside, but all of it is done in an effort to defeat those within.

I am hugely relieved I have found my great equalizers. Just like Peekay, it is the first act in liberating myself from the things that stand in my way.



About the Author

Natalie Taylor has her master's degree in education and currently teaches 11th-grade English at Berkley High School in Berkley, Mich. Her first book, *Signs of Life: A Memoir*, was released in April 2011. Natalie works out at Stay Strong CrossFit in Troy, Mich.

THE CrossFit JOURNAL KIDS

Are Repetition and Novelty at Odds?

Mikki Lee Martin describes ways to drill your Kids repeatedly without boring them to distraction.

By Mikki Lee Martin CrossFit Kids

January 2012



At the CrossFit Kids Trainer Course, we discuss some teaching methodologies based on how kids learn. They learn primarily through imitation and shared attention, and retention is then further enhanced through repetition, novelty and complexity. Novel experiences are more likely to be retained (2).

Likewise, youngsters with short attention spans learning perishable skills will also benefit and retain more through repetition. Think of it as a kind of insurance that important concepts and movements will be embedded through the development of neural and motor pathways that will be retained through the period when “pruning” begins.

Upon first glance, these concepts of repetition and novelty seem to be at odds with each other. This is where creativity comes in. For instance, think of how many environments in which you have seen people squat. At the beach, I have seen people squat on the sand, on the rocks near the beach, in the water, and on surfboards. At a local park where we sometimes hold CrossFit classes, I have seen people squat on the playground structures, teeter-totters, grass, benches and picnic tables. In the gym, I have seen people squat on balance beams, parallel bars, parallettes, medicine balls and each other. Very simply, we have both novelty and repetition.

With kids, this is just an ongoing project of playfulness to add novelty to what needs repetition (at the very least, the nine foundational movements).

Let’s use the squat for illustration:

- Squat over a strongman peeler log
- Squat over a balloon
- Squat while holding a punching balloon
- Squat outside, squat inside
- Squat standing on jump boxes
- Squat while holding a small object
- Squat while answering questions
- Squat to the beat of a song
- Squat with a friend and take turns
- Squat super slowly
- Squat jumps

Use whole-brain learning techniques—auditory, visual and tactile communication—as a means of generating repetition. In other words, have the kids draw the squat. Ask the kids to describe the squat. Create a teaching circle—trainer in the middle—and ask them to teach you by describing the movement. Have a discussion about how it feels to do a squat.

Consider creating a squat record board: max in one WOD, max in one day, max in a week, max in a month. Use the broader community by showing videos of other CrossFit Kids classes squatting—CrossFit.com, CrossFitKids.com, the *CrossFit Journal*, YouTube and Facebook are full of examples.

As the wonderful Kimi Bozman once said to me, “Repetition and novelty—it is just like the book *Green Eggs and Ham*” (1).

Do you like green eggs and ham?

I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.

I do not like green eggs and ham.

Would you like them here or there?

I would not like them here or there.

I would not like them anywhere.

I do not like green eggs and ham.

I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.

Would you like them in a house?

Would you like them with a mouse?

I do not like them in a house.

I do not like them with a mouse.

I do not like them here or there.

It’s hard to forget the phrase “green eggs and ham” or the name of Sam-I Am when they’re repeatedly presented in novel ways: here, there, anywhere, in a house and with a mouse.

Dr. Seuss was a master at combining repetition and novelty. Bring that genius to your Kids program and your kids will thrive.



References

1. Dr. Seuss. *Green Eggs and Ham*. N.Y.: Random House, 1960.
2. Medina J. *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*. Seattle, Wash.: Pear Press, 2008.