

EPISODE 377

## Functional Training, Kettlebell Flows, & Developing Body Awareness - With The Primal Swoledier Eric Leija

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**Shawn Stevenson:** Welcome to The Model Health Show. This is fitness and nutrition expert Shawn Stevenson and I am so grateful for you tuning in with me today.

I'm really pumped about this episode, this is all about training. This is about mastering that level of fitness that we're all aspiring to and somebody who is truly a representation of that is on the show today. So I'm really pumped about that.

I'm also pumped it's game day for my son, his next football game, college football game is coming up tomorrow. And I was just at his game last week which was a great game, came out with the W.

But in the game, he had a few tackles, I think he had maybe 3 or 4 tackles, solo tackles, couple of passes defended he's a safety. But he came in, he was trying to get a pick instead of going for the tackle but he ended up getting the tackle but hit his leg on the player an awkward way and he got a contusion in his thigh, all right, a little contusion.

And that's one of those things where sometimes you just kind of walk it off which he did he took a play or two off and got back in there. But he was feeling it after the game, a lot of times when you're competing and a lot of athletes know this, you don't really feel when little things happen, maybe you get scratched or maybe you get a little injury, a little bump or bruise but you don't really know till later.

And so he was walking pretty funny when he got back to the house that evening and I was like, "Dude, you've got to make sure that you massage that, hit that Ease magnesium on your leg."

And he's been utilizing this for many years as well and so he did that, applied the Ease magnesium and the next day he was like 80-ish percent better, he was like, "I'm good." Because I was kind of concerned like, "Well maybe let's not go where we were going to go the next day," he's like, "Dad, I'm good."

And this just speaks to, and again, it's not that magnesium is an end-all, be-all, cure-all type of thing when it comes to specifically muscle issues right, so this was a muscular issue. But it

is one of those things we need to understand is helping to regulate many processes in our body and many related to relaxation.

And so part of things to understand is that magnesium is related to that relaxation process to the degree that it has been clinically proven to help to deactivate the sympathetic fight or flight part of our nervous system and turn on the relaxation parasympathetic part of our nervous systems, it's really really remarkable.

And also this got me thinking about what is likely the most important muscle in our body? It's our heart. And you've got to hear this study, this is crazy stuff, listen to this: the American Heart Journal revealed that magnesium is actually essential in counterbalancing the effects of calcium on your heart cells, now listen to this— calcium helps your heart muscle cells, your muscle fibers in your heart to contract, obviously important.

But they also need to relax, and magnesium is one of the primal, funny enough, the guest we have today was one of the primal primary drivers of your heart muscle fibers being able to relax. We need both of those things working together.

And so what the researchers found was that deficiency in magnesium can actually overstimulate your heart muscle cells. That's no good, that's no bueno, all right. So this is why magnesium is so important for our muscles and also this important muscle hiding behind your rib cage.

All right, so again, I've seen this time and time again, this is one of the things that I utilize, I have it by my nightstand, I keep it close to me, Ease magnesium, I've been using it for at least 5 years now and my son has this bottle as well.

Your body can only absorb as much as it can use if it's put on topically, taking an oral magnesium supplement, that's a whole different story, you can't absorb as much as you might need because magnesium taken orally creates more moisture or water getting pulled to your bowels and it hits what's called bowel tolerance, it can cause diarrhea.

So trying to get your magnesium levels optimized might end up in le poopy pants and that's not what we're really shooting for. Shooting for— never mind. And so make sure that you get yourself topical magnesium, get the real stuff, get the good stuff, get the original Ease magnesium.

Supercritical extract, dead sea salts. This is fancy stuff, but you get it at a discounted fancy price. Hit [easemagnesium.com/model](http://easemagnesium.com/model), you get an exclusive 15 percent off of their topical magnesium from Activation Products.

So that's Ease, E-A-S-E [magnesium.com/model](http://easemagnesium.com/model), 15 percent off their spreadable topical magnesium and also they have a deep soak that I put into if I want to improve my sleep, I really get a good night's sleep, if I've been training really hard they have the deep soap that you add to your bathwater as well.

This goes back to just years and years of this anecdotal evidence, but now we have clinical evidence to the use of things like Epsom salt in a bath but this is like taking it to another level. So pop over there, check them out, Ease magnesium dot com/model for 15 percent off. Now let's get the Apple Podcast review of the week.

**Apple Podcast Review:** Another 5-star review titled Great Wellbeing Nuggets by Ladybuglita:

"I heard you on Secret Success podcast and immediately subscribed to your podcast. I have been non stop listening to episodes. You really break down so many health facts that have helped me understand an issue I recently have been dealing with— my blood pressure.

Episode 317 was one of the many episodes that were impactful for me. I have researched and read so many facts in reference to blood pressure, but that episode was like blood pressure for dummies for me. I have shared your podcasts with everyone. Continue bringing us these great nuggets for overall well-being."

**Shawn Stevenson:** Awesome, Ladybuglita, thank you so much for sharing that review over on Apple podcasts, I appreciate that so very much. And listen, if you've yet to do so, please pop over to Apple podcasts and leave a review for the show.

And just whatever platform you're listening on please leave a review if you're able to or if you're watching this on YouTube, make sure to leave a comment after you watch the show and let us know what you thought about the episode, and I think you're really, really going to love this one. So now let's get to our special guest and the topic of the day.

Today we're talking with one of the most influential people in fitness online today, and his name is Eric Leija. But a lot of people don't know him by his real name, they know him as Primal Swoledier.

And he's really just taking the game by storm online with these really creative and innovative workouts, but you'll be surprised to hear that it's really layered with a lot of intentionalities and a lot of intelligence to not just provide people with some cool workouts to do and really help them to train and develop muscular fitness or mobility, things like that, but also recovery and sustainability.

And you're going to hear him say "longevity" several times throughout this episode. And his work with professional athletes as well as everyday folks, as well as everybody from college students to folks who are senior citizens I've seen they're personally working out with Eric at Onnit headquarters and what's so great about it is he's sharing all of his knowledge and his great stuff out there on social media, on Instagram so make sure to check him out and follow him, I think you are going to love his style and his workouts.

And he's just got a huge heart and a lot of knowledge and we are going to jump into this conversation with the incredible Eric Leija.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But you know what's so funny is that I've been to gyms literally all over the world and I can't tell you how many times I might be out at a gym with Onnit shirt on, and somebody comes up to me like, "Hey do you know Primal Swoledier?"

And I'm like, I'm telling you, it happened at least 10 times. And I was like, "Oh, you mean Eric?" So where did the name come from in the first place, where Primal Swoledier came from?

**Eric Leija:** It's kind of a funny story. I remember I used to hate social media, I always had kind of like social anxiety, I didn't like posting anything out, I didn't want to be like an open book, point stuff out for people to see and get into my personal life.

But then I became a trainer at Onnit, like 5 years ago and our head coach at the time, our head of marketing was like, "Man, you coaches need to really hop on social media market yourself."

**Shawn Stevenson:** Isn't the head trainer, isn't that your brother?

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, but at the time we had this other guy, yeah my brother is the GM there at Onnit gym. And he's got a whole other history, he's the one that really influenced me to start training in his ways. But when it came to that Primal Swoledier name, we had this guy Mark Degrasse, he had this magazine.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, I know Mark, he's cool.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, he's super cool. And so he had a lot of really great ideas when they came to building up the brand, building up the gym. And he's like, Eric, you need to market yourself, you need to get on social media.

And I'm like, "Man, I don't want to do that, I hate taking selfies and talking about myself." He's like, "No, you've got to do it". I was like, "All right." Well, kind of being like trying to go against the grain I was like, "Man, what's the dumbest thing that I could make up, what is the silliest name?"

At the time we were selling primal kettlebells and we were super into the whole primal thing because Joe Rogan was all about being the savage. And so it was like, "Alright, Primal, it's got to have primal in it because I'm with Onnit," and then I was like, "And I want to be like swole, I like to get my pump on, work on my physique, but something that's also demanding and tough like a soldier. Oh, Swoledier, that kind of rhymes that kind of fits."

I was like, "Primal Swoledier" I thought it was so silly, dude, I even took it up with the marketing team at Onnit, I was like, "What do you guys think of this name, check it out— Primal Swoledier," and they just laughed me out of the room and they thought it was the silliest thing.

But I just stuck with it and that's what people know me now, they're like, "Hey, what's up Primal, I really dig your stuff," I'm like, "Hey, my name is Eric, Man." But thanks, it's cool though, I appreciate all the support I get from everybody.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, that is so dope, man. And even when I just saw you guys walking in and I was honking my horn, and I was wondering if he's probably thinking like somebody's about to yell out, "Primal Swoledier" or something.

But yeah true story, several times people have come up to me and asking, they don't call you Eric, it's Primal Swoledier, that's like, you are that person.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, Primal Swoledier. A lot of my friends don't even know me as my name, everybody calls me Primal. That's the way social media works nowadays, man, you know everybody by your online interactions, you don't really know their real name anymore, unless you're really close to people, it's like everybody's like, that guy Ross, everybody knows him as Just Train or my friend Jay, JTM Fit, that's his name.

You really got to get close to people to know their real name. But it's cool though man, the community online, it's super inspiring to have any kind of support anyways. So I don't get mad about it, it's just, it's cool.

**Shawn Stevenson:** This is the first time I thought about this, but that has happened to me a lot. I was taking my son, my oldest son Jordan, he was a senior prom, like going to get his tux and then he's bumped into some friends of his and they're like, "Dude, it's Shawn Model." You know because they either follow me or whatever it is and I'm just like, "I'm Shawn."

Anyways, but yeah man, that's really funny how that happens. But speaking of people close to you, you've got your brother who's in fitness and you're the youngest in your family, but so I'm wondering like, take me back to baby Swoledier. Alright, younger Swoledier, when you were a kid. So were you always into fitness, how did this kind of get started?

**Eric Leija:** Not at all man, I mean I always appreciated Arnold Schwarzenegger, my dad was always super swole, super fit. He was a truck driver so he had like these swole forearms, he used to left all the time, stay swole.

And my brother picked up after him and my uncles and they would work out all the time. But growing up I looked up to them, but I was still not into fitness, I was a fat boy growing up, man, I used to eat like McDonald's and Wendy's, Taco Bell, playing video games like that was my lifestyle, just a little chubby kid.

But I don't think there was anything wrong with it, I was thought to myself, "Man, I'm an elementary school, I don't have to worry about being fit, I'll grow into myself later on." My mom was, my mom always loved me, she gave me everything I wanted. I mean I was pretty spoiled growing up, I was the youngest, I was pretty far apart from my older brother and older sister too, she was, she's like 7 years older than me, my brother is about 8, almost 9 years. So yes, I was definitely the baby in the family.

**Shawn Stevenson:** That's like my 2 sons.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, so growing up I just like eating fast food, playing video games, so I was the hefty kid but then going into middle school I kind of kept up that pace. In 6th grade, I was doing alright in school but I still liked playing video games, eating what I wanted.

And then I remember going into the summer before seventh grade, I was going to trial for football and kind of start, kind of trying to step my game up but then my brother and my sister started really like making fun of me, man, like just talking crap, saying, "Oh, man, when I was your age I was already holding hands and kissing girls, and man, you're fat, you're never going to have a girlfriend if you stay fat."

I'm just like thinking about having a girlfriend at this point, I'm like, "What, that sucks, no, man." So I started running, started working out right after 6th grade but it definitely got to me, made me feel insecure.

**Shawn Steveson:** Yeah, that sibling psychology.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, dude, they messed me up. But I'm grateful for them for pushing me to get after it because I lost a ton of weight, I ended up getting like super shredded before 7th grade, I did football, obviously, doing the twice a day trainings that got me super shredded.

But I didn't really like football, I ended up—I did like a year of football, it was great but then I remember leaving, going into 8th grade, I was training to go back to football and I was in like the best shape.

I remember everybody used to call me Roids in middle school because I was like so swole. I had my dad's genetics I had like these crazy forearms but you could see all the definition in my arms, I was the new kid at this middle school I walked in.

And then I sat down next to this kid, he was like, "Man, what are you on, bro, do you drink protein?" And he's like, "I can see all the muscles in your forearm, it's nuts." So that like boost up my confidence and I actually took up martial arts training, I started doing jujitsu, kickboxing and that kind of became like my hobby in school. So that's how I kind of really got into unconventional training.

A lot of the stuff that you see with kettlebells and steel maces, like slamming tires and more like the real world, applicable like functional type techniques and so that's how I kind of fell in love with training.

But before that I was kind of struggling to kind of come into my own— even like when I was training in for martial arts, I remember the first couple of weeks I stepped on the mats, doing jujitsu and kickboxing, everybody was beating me up, like everybody, I thought I was swole, and I thought I was tough, I was like, "Man, I'm in shape, I can beat these people up," and everybody in the gym was mopping the floor with me, dude.

And I was like, the training that I'm doing it's not really applicable like doing curls and bench press and these like single playing motions aren't really like translating well to the strength that's needed to actually like fight and do it like a sport.

And so that's when I kind of realized that bodybuilding type of steady training was good to help you look good but it wasn't good to help you actually perform well. And so when I started training with some of the pros, seeing how they were doing their training with kettlebells and unconventional stuff I got a lot better and I started really falling in love with martial arts and unconventional training.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, wow that's so fascinating because you got that firsthand experience of seeing like this push-pull monotony doesn't translate very well over into this very dynamic area, right.

**Eric Leija:** Exactly.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And so, but we're seeing this now in all kinds of sports, where they're not just doing the typical push-pull, even those things again, like they are great for power, they are great for certain things but this concept of functional training is just like taking over.

And so one of those tools and implements that I think you're really widely known for, and again, I'm just thinking back to one of the people that came up to me in the gym, like, "Do you know him?" And he had just come back from taking a kettlebell certification.

**Eric Leija:** Oh, nice.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And so this implement, this kettlebell, which again, it has been around for a long time, but you are one of the people that has really popularized it because it's so dynamic, there's so much you can do with it.

So I want to ask you, when I've first seen the kettlebell, I'm just thinking like there's not much that you could do with it. How can you train your whole body with this one tool?

**Eric Leija:** Well, man, there is, the possibilities are endless, this is literally just weight with a handle on it and the that's the cool thing about it too, you can grab it, and grip it in various positions so you can add load to like different positions that you wouldn't normally be able to do with like a barbell.

Maybe with dumbbells, but it becomes a lot easier to do like different transitions, adding loads of different movement patterns that are like super functional and that translate well to sport and like different martial arts and stuff.

But I'm not dissing like normal, traditional training, that's all stuff that I still do. I still build a strong foundation, I build maximum strength with barbells, dumbbells and I still, like I said, I like to work on looking good too, you know. I want to look the part but also move well and feel good.

So I still work out like the traditional lifts and bodybuilding routines, but I make sure I balance it out with stuff that's helping me move in different ranges and positions so that I'm pain-free. Because I really noticed, man, when I'm not mixing it up and I just like, because I'll get into my patterns where I kind of go back to just doing bodybuilding routines, because I am starting to see some good results and I can see the difference and my physique is transforming.

But then I kind of get stuck in that for like too long to where I stop doing the unconventional stuff and I've gone through different phases that I feel aches and pains and that's when I realize, "Whoa, I got to go back to the drawing board, I've really got to stay well rounded."

Because it's doing well-rounded routines that keep you, that increases your longevity so that you can keep performing at your optimum levels and still seeing results. Because if you're just hammering yourself into the ground all the time with heavy lifts, heavy squats, heavy deadlifts, bench press, it can take a toll on your body.

Because the whole point about the training that we do is to stress our bodies but then the real reward and the results come when we recover. So part of recovery is, and recovery is, like active recovery is doing movements that take you out of your mundane patterns that you just repeatedly stress in your body through, so for me it's all about mixing it up and staying well-rounded.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, so with that said, one of the other things that we would come up against with the typical push-pull squat, mentality, which again, those things are valuable, you just pointed out that you're not dissing that. But it's the fact that your body adapts, there are diminishing returns that take place.

**Eric Leija:** Exactly.

**Shawn Stevenson:** And so adding in these different implements and different movements, different "slots" that you can put your body into, because I remember even in high school football, that we were supposed to put our legs in this one position to do squats, but in real life, like when you're on a football field, your legs are never in this one, static position, you know what I'm saying?

And so that's one of the things that's really interesting about it. And you mentioned the word, you said transitions, right? So you've got this implement that you can do these transitions with, which is what you call these kettlebell flows. What is that exactly?

**Eric Leija:** It's just basically like a complex movement. I call them flows because it helps me get into like a state of flow where I feel like I'm just in the zone, and we can do that with like I said other lifts too, but for me, it's a lot more fun and engaging when I can mix up various different movements.

They're not just like whimsical, like I'm just dancing around, that's cool too, you can mix it up, dance around free flow and really assess where your body's at, but there are also flows that



you can put together that can help you build strength, help you work on muscle gain, getting shredded, mobility.

The possibilities are endless, it's all about your foundation, the movements that you know right or know how to do correctly, and then putting them together with smooth transitions and proper techniques so that you can transition between positions a lot easier and a lot more holistically so that you don't hurt yourself.

Because flows can be dangerous, and if you don't have the correct technique, it can be bad for you. So that's why when I teach my workshops and courses to my clients and classes, I always make sure I build people up with the fundamentals before we start doing anything fancy. But a lot of the stuff that I do online, a lot of the fancy things, that's like 5 percent of what I actually do. It shows you what you can do. If you ask any professional athlete or lifter, they're not maxing out 500, 600 pounds every day of the week, maybe not even once or twice in a training cycle with like 6 months, you know, they really like, they have this line where you're kind of pushing the limits, but you're trying not to step over that line it's all about training under— like for example, if you have let's say your training is like a ceiling, it's a roof, you're trying to raise the roof little by little, you can't raise the roof by getting on top of the roof and trying to lift it up. That's not how it works, you want to get under.

**Shawn Stevenson:** It's like that dude, there was like a meme where these guys are trying to push the truck out of a ditch and then there's a guy standing in the truck who's pushing against the back of the truck. Like, what are you doing? So I see that analogy.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, so it's all about slowly pushing that edge. And so it's really, find the movements where you're able to do all these crazy things, where you see me doing rotational snatches and these crazy movements that are impressive, you have to own the foundation, that's where 95 percent of my work is. And that doesn't mean I'm just doing boring stuff all the time, simple doesn't have to be boring.

You can crank up the intensity with different tactics and that's how you know you really earn people's respect is by putting them through a workout that's not all over the place and crazy, where you're throwing everything in the kitchen sink at somebody, it's where they don't learn anything.

It's all about showing them the things that are simple, that they can take away and really apply to their training and get better from. And from there they respect you as a coach and they appreciate you taking the time to teach them something that's actually going to benefit them and help them reach that level where they can mix it up and have fun and all these crazy positions.

But yeah, I do the kettlebell, it's awesome because you can do, like I said, whatever you want with it, but you need to build that foundation first.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. I'm glad that you said that because there are a lot of trainers and aspiring trainers who listen to this show.

And one of the things that I always see, I spent 2 years as a trainer, is people having this idea, like even clients, they are coming in with this concept of what it looks like, which is like you sprawled out on the floor, you know what I'm saying, a pool of your own sweat and urine, just like, "That was the greatest workout I ever did."

Just, like you are literally, that is the exact opposite of what you want to achieve, right, we want to give people things that are effective, yet they are not destroyed. Because what you're doing when you take somebody new through something like that, you're literally connecting this neuro-association between training and pain.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, that's not good.

**Shawn Stevenson:** That's not good. Because the human psyche is driven to avoid pain and to move towards pleasure, right?

And so let's give people a safe and smart onramp and that's one of the things that I think is often overlooked in the training space, because we want to show people how much we know, we want to throw a lot of stuff at them, to look smart and to be too complicated, right? When in reality, the place of a trainer is giving smart programming and personal attention, like paying attention to the person, right?

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, for sure.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So I got to ask you about this, man. If you could just give an example of like when you mentioned the transition or a flow, what does that look like?

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, for example, one of my foundational, I would consider like a beginner kettlebell flow that I love to use for myself literally all the time, I still use it, because like I said, 95 percent of my training is foundational movements.

I'd like to do like a single-arm deadlift from the floor with one hand on the kettlebell, it forces me to kind of fight rotation work the core, prevent from rotating so it's great for the core but I hit that deadlift, great for the legs. I put it back on the floor, I'll do a row to like light up my lats and initiate this pulling movement that I then kind of conditions a clean, so then I clean it, I pull it into my rack position, from there I like to hit a squat, and then a press. So basically I get all the fundamental movement patterns in one exercise.

So it's a great way to kind of, like I said, when I build people up I would take somebody through that by doing just single arm deadlifts for like 5 reps and then I'll have them do just rows, 5 reps, cleans 5 reps, 5 squats, 5 presses.

Once I can see that they own all those movements, they own those positions, boom, we put it together, it's fast-paced, it's fun, or you can slow it down, own every position, own every rep, get a squeeze, isometric holds, there are all kinds of ways to intensify and make it fun.

And for me man, it's all about making it fun and like staying engaged with your training because if you're just doing the same things all the time not only is your body going to get

bored, get tired and possibly result in injury, but you're going to get bored mentally and probably not want to come back to the gym or train with that trainer because you're always doing the same stuff.

And all I'm saying to focus on the fundamentals, but you can still focus on the fundamentals with exercise variety; you can still focus on doing a back squat or a squat pattern. Instead of doing back squat all the time, give them a break, do a front squat or do a belt squat, there are all kinds of varieties you can choose from.

Kettlebell squats, that are going to help you, keep you moving forward and progressing in those movement patterns without having to get used to a develop, like hit a plateau or result in compounding issues in your body that can hurt you over time. So for me, it's all about mixing it up, but staying true to the fundamentals. And it's all about balance.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, I love that man. And it's also, it's a thing of beauty when you put all the pieces together like you just described, seeing you do those flows, and this is something that you can learn from him, like people can actually learn from you because you train people online, like you've got your online courses.

And you also, of course, you teach workshops, you're here in town doing one, that's how we got together today. And where can people get information about those techniques?

**Eric Leija:** You can go check out my website, ericleija.com or you can just go to my Instagram, Primal Swoledier, the link is in my bio. I have workout programs that are kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells as well. Kettlebell only bodyweight stuff.

I actually have a kettlebell course where it's like over 150 videos of pretty much all the kettlebell techniques that I like to do, explained in full detail, so it's a great way to if you can't make it to a certification or a workshop you can learn online.

But if you want to make it to certification, I teach for Onnit, we have a really in-depth 2-day seminar where we take you through all the fundamentals, me and a coach John Wolf, he is my mentor, he's the one that's taught me a lot these last few years.

I also teach one-day workshop which is what I'm doing here this weekend with my girlfriend Francheska and that's where we combine kettlebell flows and animal and bodyweight flows together into a really fun, cool experience.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. We're going to get to the animal flows in a second, but I just want to take a step back. So Coach Wolf, John Wolf, that's my guy too, like he's taught me stuff. Whenever I come to Onnit, that's who I work with. And so that's incredible, man.

But you just honestly, like you took things to another level with the exposure that you've given Onnit, this is a really, it's a world-class facility, but people really know that there are world-class teachers there and no matter where you are, you don't have to fly to Austin to get this training. And so that's Eric Leija, that's L-E-I-J-A.com. And people can check that stuff out.

And, of course, check you out on social media as well, it's Primal Swoledier. And so this particular workshop and this training technique, this is something I see you do online as well, it's these animal flows. And even the name of it sounds dope, you know what I am saying? But so what is that exactly? What does that look like?

**Eric Leija:** It's like a bodyweight type training that takes inspiration from all kinds of different like arts, like Capoeira, Break dancing, Yoga. It was developed by Mike Fitch, the Animal Flow system.

So I actually got to train with him on several occasions. I actually took his certification twice and got to hang out with him at Onnit, we had him come to teach workshops at our facility. But man, he's a beast when it comes to movement, he spent a lot of time developing the Animal flow system.

So learning from him, I adopted his training style and kind of, like I do with anything, like when I take a new workshop or certification, I try to absorb as much this knowledge as I can from all these coaches and add what I can to my arsenal and then try to expand on that and I kind of add my own style to it.

And that's what my girlfriend Francheska does too, and she's able to teach those Animal flow techniques with her own little flair to it, which is super inspiring. And she actually keeps inspiring me to keep practicing with the bodyweight stuff, because I mean, not to say that guys only like lifting heavy weights and smashing stuff, I like to do that a lot.

So sometimes she helps me really stay focused and realize, "Hey, obviously your back is hurting you, your shoulders are hurting because you need to keep mixing it up, so let's do some animal flow together," it's just some recovery, I'll take a day off and let's just flow and do some bodyweight, and so that's why it's a really great synergistic effect when we come together and teach these workshops.

Because I provide the hardstyle training with the kettlebells and she's a good balance with her Animal flow techniques. The Animal flow is all about owning different bodyweight positions that have like this really animalistic style to it, you're like doing these kicks that look really beautiful and you do like these beast positions on your hands, like a quadruped position that you kind of step your feet back and sit back you look like a tiger, jumping forward, launching kicking, it's like super, super fun, but super challenging just because hardly anybody spends a lot of time on their hands and wrists doing bodyweight movements besides pushups.

So when you're trying to do all these crazy techniques on the ground, trying to look like an animal, you've got to learn how to be one too, by spending some time being a little savage on the ground, mixing it up. It's hard to kind of just jump in there.

So that's why animal flow has become really popular because people are seeing that it's like, it looks cool but if you want to try to look like that you really have to spend some time on your mobility and not just lifting heavy weights all the time.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, right. Man, that's so good. From my perspective, in just being in this space for so long, I think that this is probably the most important thing, is just mastering your body, just being able to move within space and having this body awareness.

I think it translates into so many areas of our lives, but it really even translates into our longevity, this is something that people tend to lose as they get older, it's proprioception and just being aware of your body in space.

We need to train for that as well, especially again, we're just doing one type of thing or we're so distracted in our lives and we're sitting a lot more than we normally would through evolution and just all these different things, training like this and really learning how to use your body. Because if you've got a body, you've got a gym.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, exactly.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So that's what's so remarkable about it, man, and so I think again, like this is for me personally the most important form of training is bodyweight training and these animal flows like take things to another level. And Francheska's here in the house too, hanging out with us, which is dope.

But you guys getting together and bringing that synergy to what you're doing is something really special. And so guys, if you can come to one of their workshops, make sure to do that. Again. Check out [ericleija.com](http://ericleija.com). And another thing, man, you mentioned there are different components in there, the Capoeira, for example.

It just got me thinking about, because Francheska's shoes reminded me of a Bruce Lee movie and they reminded me of Tekken, the video game Tekken, there's a character on there, Law, and so I know some people that would be like, "Yeah, Law " But he's got like the Bruce Lee vibe to him, but there's another character on there that does the Capoeira, Eddy. Eddy Gordo, bro.

**Eric Leija:** Eddy Gordo, he is the man.

**Shawn Stevenson:** I am not trying to toot my own horn, but I am, I'm undefeated with Eddy. My kids can't stand it when I get Eddy, it's just not fair, but what was so funny, we just played it a little while ago and then that night we watched a movie, my wife and I, and this was not a family film by the way and it was Shaft, it was like the new Shaft with Samuel L. Jackson in there but he's got his son in this one.

And there's a scene where his son is like a little tipsy and somebody and, Shaft thinks his son is just super soft and then the guy was trying to fight him and he just, he's doing Capoeira, but nobody knew except me, I'm like, "He's doing Capoeira." And he just like kicked the dude's butt, he looked like he was just dancing, it was beautiful, he was flowing.

But you know, it was like this form of training that I think slaves were doing that looked like dancing, you know but it was like this sort of martial art. Maybe they weren't necessarily slaves but just people who are oppressed, and like creating art.

So there are so many different types of martial art and training and it's something you've been utilizing as well, different types of training for many years. So what did you do with that, like getting into mixed martial arts? Was that like when you first saw UFC, like did this become something that just kind of flipped the switch for you?

**Eric Leija:** When I first saw UFC, I was still in my zone of trying to get a girlfriend. It goes back to my brother and sister making fun of me, and telling me I'm ever going to—

**Shawn Stevenson:** Trying to hold hands, man.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, trying to hold hands. So I saw these UFC guys, I thought they were the manliest, same as Gladiator came out around the same time. I was like, Maximus, he is the man. I wanted to be like those guys in the ring, in the cage, they are like Maximus, they are like Gladiator, like modern-day gladiators slaying each other and they're so jacked and in shape and like they can whoop anybody on the street. I just thought it was super dope.

And then I got more into it when I actually met these people for real, these professional fighters, I got to train with them and I realized, "Man, they're some of the coolest, most humble, nicest people I've ever met."

Because it doesn't, when you get beat up day in day out, you beat other people up you learn to respect each other, and realize that it's not about being tough, martial arts is about having respect for your opponents and getting in there and mixing up your techniques and trying to apply what you learned, not just trying to kill somebody.

But that was something I was still learning at the time when I had my first and only MMA fight, it was an amateur MMA fight. I had all this training, I thought I was calm and collected, I remember going into the cage, they locked the door on us and I was just like, "Oh, man all my training just got thrown out the window bro."

And then I saw this kid, this other guy's looking at me across the cage and we just, we go toe to toe, I remember I laid some good ones on him and I caught him pretty good and he looked like I was about to knock him out so he started running away, so I'm chasing him down, I'm trying to finish him as hard as I can, but I ended up, dude blowing my load, I was tired, I lost all my energy trying to knock this kid out, that going into the second and third rounds I was dead tired, I was literally just trying to survive.

I was getting beat up, I was taking some nasty shots, like a Rocky movie, I was just trying to stay alive. I remember I actually felt like I was knocked out standing up, I saw like tunnel vision. But I remember thinking, "Man, my mom's here, my dad's here, I cannot fall."

I convinced him it will be all right with me fighting a fight, to get knocked out in front of them they're going to be so pissed, this was for me so embarrassing. Obviously, they wouldn't

probably care, but that's how I felt, so I'm going to stack my bones even though I feel like I'm out, I am going to stack my bones and I'll recover.

I recovered, I ended up finishing the fight, I took the guy down, had some ground and pound but I remember realizing after the fight, I was like, "Man, I got a long way to go."

The adrenaline took over, it's like I wasn't calm and collected and I took some time off. And it wasn't until like another year and a half after that that I took up a kickboxing match at Onnit, it was like a sparring event. So Whitney—

**Shawn Stevenson:** I remember this.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, she was fighting a local MMA fighter who had a ton of experience so she spent a lot of time training, getting ready for that fight. And so they asked me to be a part of it, I'm like, "Alright, let's do it."

I jumped in there man, I remember thinking to myself, "I have to stay calm and collected, I have to just relax and not let my adrenaline take over and get too aggressive." And I ended up doing way better in that fight, I was able to mix it up, have fun in there, do some cool combinations, kind of trick the guy with some feints and then land some cool kicks and combos.

And that was when I finally realized like, this is, it's not just a fight like a deathmatch, it's a skill, it's a game, it's something you need to stay calm for and stay in that flow state and kind of be able to stay focused and have enough energy to not just blow all your energy in the first round trying to kill somebody.

It's all about staying calm, collected and using the techniques that you've been working so hard to learn. And so I've been able to take that mentality and apply that to my training in fitness and with my coaching and clients. I'm not just trying to kill my clients like we were talking about earlier, I am not trying to smash them into the ground. I am trying to ramp them up, build up their conditioning, build up their strength, add some skills, show them some dope skills so that they can keep progressing forward.

And with these skill trainings, they appreciate learning something new and they're able to take those types of training and train on their own. So my goal is not to have a client with me for life and have them constantly depend on me to work out, I'm trying to give them actionable and valuable information that hopefully one day that they can train themselves.

But like we talked about earlier too, if you develop a relationship with somebody and you become their friend, they still come back even though they can do the workouts on their own at this point, they don't need you anymore, more but since they respect you so much and you're basically like friends they'll keep coming back.

And so that's how you can run a business, but also affect somebody in a positive way to actually keep getting better. And so it all comes full circle, from martial arts to training people

and everyday life, it's all about staying calm, collected and not just let your emotions get the best of you.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, man, I love that. That's such a great story. One of the things that jumped out at the beginning of the story I just want to come back to, you mentioned meeting and spending time with a lot of these fighters, these athletes, and again, we have this idea of what they would be like, just like there's salivating, they've got like rabies saliva coming down all the time.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, some of them do, man.

**Shawn Stevenson:** But the ones who are, who have longevity and the ones who have happiness outside of the ring— I was just with a fighter last week and he was talking, and it was my first time meeting him, he was talking about honor and patience and love and integrity and all these things.

Literally, this guy was one in his space, when he was fighting one of the top 3 in the world. And to hear these things was really like, "Yeah, there's a different level there." And so I'm so glad that you brought that up, because being a warrior in our lives is not just about being able to smash and destroy everything, it's about being able to put the right amount of pressure in different situation and having that patience and all the things that you learned along the way.

And I see that in your work and how you're applying things and how you're teaching. And so I want to ask you, because this is that secret sauce, like there are countless people online, in the social media space, for example, talking about fitness, teaching fitness. But there's something that you're doing that is making you stand out. So what do you feel that is yourself?

**Eric Leija:** I keep it real man, like it's all about keeping it real but also listening to people, listening to what people want and giving them what they want but also giving them what they need. I know people want to look good, they want to get swole, look shredded for the pool, the beach, whatever.

But they also need to feel good and move well. So my secret sauce is making sure that although I'm giving them these crazy techniques, these fun-looking kettlebell flows, I still show them some mobility flows, some decompression techniques, some foundational movements that they can apply right away and start applying to their routines and making a difference in their training.

So it's like I said, it's not just about smashing people, it's about caring about them and making sure that they have longevity so that they can keep performing. You can't just keep training hard, hard, hard, just keep putting out videos and content that's just super hardcore training, it's about having a balance to it so that you can show more about what you really do and who you really are and what you really do and how you're able to attain those results that you're at, and able to keep training at that intensity.



And it's not just training hard all the time, it's being real with people and telling them that it's not about these crazy techniques all the time, it's also about recovering and getting enough sleep, eating a good diet and working on active recovery techniques.

At Onnit, we're really big on durability training, it's all about doing decompressive exercises and bodyweight movements that help you release tension that you might build in your normal day training. So we're all about longevity and performance. Longevity first.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Love it. So one of the things too, and again I don't know if you are cognizant of this, but like you give so much as well, like that's one of the things that is really remarkable.

I'm not saying that a lot of people do this, but I think a lot of people are worried about it, about giving away their workouts and their best stuff. Is that a part of it, what you're doing, because you give so much, is that something you are intentionally doing?

**Eric Leija:** Oh, man, the way I like to look at it is workouts and exercises, there's only so much variety, nobody has the secret workout, there are only so many different ways— same soup different bowl, everybody has got their own secret sauce.

But at the end of the day, for me, it's all the same stuff and people are going to get it either from you or from somebody else. So instead of being stingy with your work and being afraid to give away all your tips, I like to just give it all the way so that people see that I care, I have value and it's not just about my knowledge, but about me as a person. I'm a giving person, I like to give a lot and hopefully, it comes back to me.

That's what we like to talk about, I remember Aubrey used to tell me this a lot, it was about the law of reciprocity— the more you give without expecting anything in return, usually it comes back tenfold. I remember before I had sold anything online, I just put out a bunch of free videos, free content.

And when I finally asked for money or I sold the products, a ton of people buying the product and some of them didn't even do the course or the program, they just, they sent me an email, "Hey man, I loved all the free stuff you shared with me in the past and just to support you and show you that I appreciate it, I am going to buy your program."

And so it comes back, the stuff that you put out. And what I like to teach a lot of coaches, even though I'm a young coach, I feel like I have a lot of experience, so I like to tell a lot of other people is don't be afraid, especially when you're trying to pick, for example, like if you have a classroom full of clients and you see somebody kind of struggling and then they kind of approach you after class and they ask you for some tips.

That's kind of the time when we like to tell our coaches that's a way you can kind of upsell them and sell them some sessions, because they probably need some private training and you don't have a lot of time to give them that one on one attention in a large group setting.

And so instead of being afraid to, when you're doing an assessment, being afraid to give them too much and too many cues and techniques, give them everything you know so that they know what you're all about, so that they see your value and see that you care, you're not just trying to make money.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah man, so awesome. So one of the really cool things— so I met you at Onnit HQ in Austin and it's really out-picturing of a lot of different pieces of health and wellness. I remember going there the first time, it was pretty much just a warehouse and then now, this is the world-class gym. They've got the nutrition. So there's this place you can get smoothies and stuff like that which is amazing.

I think I was there when it first opened and I did some videos for the team there, for Aubrey and those guys, like behind the counter like I was making something out of nothing. But what is so crazy is like there are a lot of other gyms that have this concept, they've got their smoothie bar, whatever you get your pre-workout, but it's not the same.

I just went to, because you know we just moved to LA, I went with my son to a gym that shall remain nameless and they've got their smoothie bar and they got their different supplements up on the counter, my son wanted to get a pre-workout drink and when the pre-workout it was called Total War. That was the name of it, Total War.

And there was a warning on it, it literally was like a warning like, this will definitely cause you to have a heart attack, you have like 97 percent chance of dying from this pre-workout, Total War. And so, and then the guy behind the counter says like, yeah, this is, he's like recommending like you know, this one if you're serious, you know.

Obviously, he didn't get that one but the thing is like everything at Onnit, it is like Earth grown nutrients, it's coming from real food sources and organic sources, whenever you guys can. And it's just something that like it resonates with your body, everybody, it's so crazy when you go in there just like why does everybody feel good, just happy and like there is just great energy there.

And it comes to the food, it comes to training. So I want to talk a little bit about the, since you're here, the different tools that they have. Because you guys have really helped to push this in popular culture. So obviously, the kettlebells but then you've got like the primal bells, right. What about the clubs?

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, we've got the clubs, steel clubs, which are like a bat-shaped, weighted tool. And we have steel maces, steel maces are super popular because it looks like a Viking sledge or like a hammer but it's a long stick with weighted ball at the end of the spear, so all the weight is concentrated at the end, the bar is almost weightless so that when you're doing training, like curls, the offset load really intensifies the exercise. You can do swings behind your head, they are really great for shoulder mobility.

We have our kettlebells obviously, battle ropes and the steel clubs are really great for shoulder mobility as well, just because the grip, it's like stuff the Iranian wrestlers would use, like for I think thousands of years ago. They have the Indian clubs what we call them. We

have steel clubs, Indian clubs are originally like massive, wooden clubs. If you look up YouTube videos these guys are swinging around like 100 pound clubs, but that's our version of it, it's steel club, we keep it nice and light, we just work on good form and technique, but it's really great for mobility.

And actually we might be coming out with this bodyweight durability and steel club durability type trainings, just because all the techniques you can do with a club they're really great for doing like external rotation by gripping the club, the weighted bat, you are able to like externally rotate and do spirals around your head that really condition all the fascia around your shoulder joints or elbows and wrists.

It can be tight a lot of the times from being in this position, typing all day, kind of doing this external rotation with weighted clubs, they are not even that heavy, you can take a 10 to 15 pound club and you can get a really tough workout that's not just challenging for like burning calories, but really great for mobility.

The same thing with the steel mace, counterweight really great for activating the core and it's a really great assessment tool to kind of see where your imbalances are at, if you're like trying to hold this mace and you feel your joint, your shoulders trying to shrug, your overactive traps, you can really kind of see where your body is at and see what other areas you really need to work on with your other type of training like dumbbells and barbells.

So really great assessment tools but they can also be challenging workouts, we're actually, Onnit it has these 6-week programs that we sell online, the steel mace is one of them and it's one of our most popular ones. Because besides being this new fun and exciting tool that is really great for core cause of offset, it's actually really great to mix up in all kinds of techniques and it's really fun.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Man, I'm literally having a flashback, because again, like I think I'm strong and then you use one of these tools like I remember the first time when I used the steel mace, it humbles you. Because your shoulder is like, it's the most mobile of all your joints, there are so many different positions that it can be in, but again, we're typically training like one or 2 positions.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah we're always just going overhead, or pressing—

**Shawn Stevenson:** And so to have a tool that is engaging so many different parts of this muscle and this joint and these tendons, it's just like it wakes your body up in a different way, but of course, like that's why you start the weight is very light and I'm just like, "Oh this is too light, man." And you know, you almost fall over.

And when I work with John, the last time, John Wolf, it was the steel clubs he was teaching me some stuff with this and I'm just like come on, man, and I'm just at the end of it I'm like— because also in your brain too, and I'm just going to point this out for folks, if you've ever noticed this, no matter how fit you are, if you do a different type of workout, you find that you're sweating more, like it's just harder, right.

**Eric Leija:** It's so much harder on your nervous system to try and adapt something new for sure.

**Shawn Stevenson:** That's the thing. So it's really cool man and so, by the way, guys, we're one of the only places, this show, where you can actually get 10 percent off all their training equipment too, and I've got the collection, I've got primal bells, I've got the steel clubs, and so go to [Onnit.com/model](http://Onnit.com/model), that's O-N-N-I-T.com/model, you get 10 percent off every piece of fitness equipment, and also their supplements, their foods as well. My cabinets are stocked with Onnit goodies as well. I often give these away to friends like especially the MCT oil, the emulsified MCT oil.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, that's good stuff.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, so we just moved in, I gave it to my neighbors, because it's love, it's like love in a bottle. So pop over to check them out, [Onnit.com/model](http://Onnit.com/model). And dude, there are so many things I want to ask you about, while I've got you here. So you just mentioned you guys are possibly going to have bodyweight and still clubs—

**Eric Leija:** Steel clubs and durability training, like a 6-week program I think they're thinking about doing. So that is going to be a great program you can do after you like you've gone through a cycle of intense training where you're really pounding your body into the ground and you can take like 6 weeks to do the whole program or just do some of it where you incorporate, use that block to just focus on durability and focus on giving your body a break, giving it time to adapt to that hard training you put it through and while still staying mobile and still staying active.

For me, people ask me all the time, like, "How many times a week do you train?" I train every day. It doesn't mean I train hard every day, I don't go hard in the paint, every single day, I sometimes just take a day to move some steel clubs and steel maces around that are lightweight, low impact but keep me moving in different ranges and positions, and really active recovery for the hard training that I did during the week.

Because it's hard for me to sit still, and I'm always trying to have fun, innovate the exercises and mix it up, so it's a great way to just do some low impact training that's still really beneficial for durability.

**Shawn Stevenson:** That's what I wanted to ask specifically and you just went into it which was like the importance of switching things up. Because just like with all of the different tools and the things that you have a level of mastery, why would you even bring this tool into the equation?

Like you said, like getting out and going to different certifications yourself and learning from the best people in different areas. If you could just speak to that, I mean you've been touching on it throughout the episode but like the importance of switching it up.

**Eric Leija:** Like we were talking about earlier, if you're trying to focus on longevity when we train we're stressing our bodies, we're trying to make it positive stresses that we can recover

from and make gains. But sometimes through repetitive movements, we can develop some negative stresses that over time can add up and result in injury or pain.

And so to try to avoid pain or possibly injury, it's good to add exercise variety and different movements that you're not going into, like if you're a powerlifter or a weight lifter and you're constantly having to do the same movements, it's highly recommended to not stray away from your program if your goal is to compete, but after you compete taper off, take some time off and do some stuff that's good for your body.

Any sport we're asking these athletes to push their bodies to the limit, it's not about taking it easy, you have to perform at the highest level, so you're going to have to push your body.

All we're asking is instead of— you don't have to add this whole other program to your training routine that's going to take away from what you're doing, just on your days off, on your recovery days, add a couple of different moves in there that are low impact and can help you move in different positions that you might be lacking in so that you cannot hurt yourself if you run into that position when you're on the field and you're not familiar with it, if you're in this awkward shin angle and your ankle hurts, you blow out your knee because you've never been in that position before; if you're able to train that movement every now and then with light load, low impact it can be a lot safer to hit that on the field.

Because changing directions the chaos of sport, it's a super demanding, so if you're able to condition your body to be more familiar with these positions, it can be really beneficial. So you can have longevity and you can keep doing what you love.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah. Love it, man, that's so great. So man, I'm just grateful, I'm grateful that everything lined up. So funny, you're going to be right across the street.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, I'll be right across the street.

**Shawn Stevenson:** So people are going to miss this one, but just stay up to date with you guys, hit the website. I'm grateful to the little swoledier, he was like I'm going to get this together, and start to seek out and learn and to experiment, to put yourself in tough situations.

**Eric Leija:** Oh yeah, it's how we grow.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, and become the person you are, man, and then transitioning that into the relationship that you're fostering and sharing with the rest of the world too, that's really inspiring. You guys are straight teaching together man, it's really awesome.

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, we do. I remember I first met her, that's like what I envisioned, like, "Man, she's dope, we like a lot of the same things, we could travel the country together and show our love to other people and coach and spread it," and it's been great so far. I am looking forward to keep doing it and maybe go international next year, and just keep inspiring.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, you got fans all over the place, man. So the final question— what is the model that you are here to set in the world with the way you live your life personally?

**Eric Leija:** It's just having no fear, don't be afraid of what everybody else thinks about you if you're doing this funny looking exercise in the gym or you're picking up a new hobby that you think your friends might think you're goofy for doing.

If you need to mix it up to give your head space some time off from work or from the stuff that you do every day, that can kind of get repetitive and boring, do it, you do what you need to do to stay with it and stay mentally healthy just because we all get tired of doing the same things and it can take its toll.

For example, I love working out but when it's your job, you can kind of start hating it or not liking it, so it's a fine balance between reading books, working on art, even playing video games or watching a cool show to help you stay well rounded, not just physically but mentally so that you can keep putting your best effort into the stuff that you like to do.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Yeah, love it, dude. Can you share again where people can connect with you online, your website and also on social media?

**Eric Leija:** Yeah, you guys can check me out at [EricLeija.com](http://EricLeija.com) or Primal Swoldier on Instagram. You can find all my information on there, I hope to see you at a workshop or if you want to train with me online.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Awesome, man. Thank you so much for coming in, I appreciate it.

**Eric Leija:** Thank you, thanks for having me.

**Shawn Stevenson:** Everybody thank you so much for tuning into the show today. I hope you got a lot of value out of this, I know I did. And I just love how you know things come together, it's not an accident, he's just right across the street and we bumped into each other several times at Onnit.

And just seeing somebody who's taking action in the world like nobody gave him permission to do the stuff he's doing, he took it upon himself to put this out there and even start off with just like this is silly, he thought, he tried to make the silliest name possible and now it's like how countless people around the world see him, and it's become something that's really inspired people and he has become this brand in this movement.

And this is what's possible for all of us, you've got to understand like nobody's going to give you permission to do the things that you're here to do. You've got to take it upon yourself and decide.

And also one of the things that is really special that I'm picking up and seeing in his story, is the fact that he made it a mandate to learn from the best, right so spending time and with the animal flows, who is the best person in the space, who is the person who made it a thing and learning from that person?

And then implementing it and giving it his own flavor. And the same thing with the fighting like he put himself, he immersed himself into that world, spent time with fighters and extracted valuable gifts that then show up in the work that he's doing as well. And so again 2 things sign your own permission slip and make it a mandate to learn from the best.

If you got a lot of value out of this please make sure to share this out with your friends and family on social media and tag me, tag Eric let him know what you thought about the episode. We've got some powerhouse stuff coming your way soon, so make sure to be ready. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after this show, make sure to head over to [themodelhealthshow.com](http://themodelhealthshow.com), that's where you can find all of the show notes, you can find transcriptions, videos for each episode, and if you've got a comment you can leave me a comment there as well.

And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that this show is awesome and I appreciate that so much.

And take care, I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to have to transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.