

**THE MODEL  
HEALTH  
SHOW**

**EPISODE 849**

# **My 5 Favorite Fitness Gifts**

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**SHAWN STEVENSON:** It's that time of year again when people are more focused on family, friends, and giving gifts to the ones that we love. And today, more than ever, there's no greater gift to give than the gift of good health. There's a powerful quote that says, "a healthy person has a thousand wishes, but a sick person only has one." Our health is truly an invaluable asset that we often don't truly appreciate until we don't have it. Let's make this time of year about cultivating good health and supporting the wellbeing of the ones that we love. Today I'm going to share with you my five favorite fitness gifts. And these are gifts that I've personally given to friends and family on their birthdays, Christmas's and sometimes those just because gifts to show some love to the people that I appreciate and who give value in my life and, you know, that I want to be able to give back to.

Now the question is why fitness gifts? Well, I'm going to share with you three specific reasons why fitness gifts are my favorite gifts. Number one is to support my loved one's mental health. A huge meta analysis published in the BMJ that included over 1000 randomized controlled trials and nearly 130,000 participants revealed that physical activity is 1.5 times more effective at reducing mild to moderate symptoms of depression, psychological stress, and anxiety than medication or psychotherapy. This matters today more than ever. Currently, depression is the number one cause of disability and absenteeism in the workplace in the United States. And the annual global cost of mental health disorders have skyrocketed in recent years.

The current health care and economic cost of this epidemic is nearly 3 trillion dollars this year alone, and it's projected to reach six trillion dollars within the next five years. Family, faith, connection, and essential health inputs are critical to solving this crisis. And physical activity is one of the essential epigenetic inputs that has a measurable impact on our mental health. Of course, movement alone does not solve every issue but it cannot be overlooked as a powerful epigenetic influence that is controlling so many aspects of our health, including our mental health. And the largest data set ever collected on this subject has affirmed that exercise fitness movement is 1.5 times more effective at resolving the symptoms of depression, anxiety and psychological stress, then psychotherapy and medication.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** There is a place for those other treatments. Exercise simply works better. The largest data set ever collected has affirmed that. So this can be part of an overall comprehensive plan to support our mental health, but this cannot be overlooked. Our genes expect us to move. We need this vital input and this is why fitness gifts are some of my favorite gifts. Now to move on to the second reason why I love to give fitness gifts. Number two is because I want to protect my loved ones from getting sick. Of course, anyone can get sick from time to time, but today there are so many things that are making people sick more often and reducing their ability to recover quickly.

Well, a meta analysis published in Exercise and Sports Science Reviews determined that regular exercise significantly improves human immune system response to infections and reduces susceptibility to things like viruses. Now the question might arise, how does exercise do this? Because it does it very, very well. Well, one reason is because exercise stimulates something called immunosurveillance. It improves the ability of our immune system cells to identify potentially harmful pathogens and to put together a strategy. Essentially, it's like the guy in the van, you know, being able to monitor things and to put together a strategy on when to release the SWAT team to take out the rogue activity.

All right. And it really starts with healthy Immunosurveillance, and that's something that exercise has been proven to do. Also, exercise reduces systemic inflammation. Now when we're exercising, getting that input, and depending on the type of exercise, we can stimulate and create some inflammation. But as the body is healing, it's building back better, it's coming back more efficient in reducing inflammation and also improving our body's response to inflammation. This antioxidant response, it helps to reduce oxidative stress. So exercise reduces systemic inflammation. Another reason it's so powerful is that exercise improves something called immunomodulation.

Immunomodulation is a critical aspect of the health of our immune system. It's the ability of our immune system to be ramped up when need be and also to be able to bring itself down when need be. One of the biggest issues today is that we're having hyper responses of our immune system or autoimmunity. We have epidemics of autoimmune conditions. Hundreds of millions of people are experiencing symptoms of autoimmunity every single day. And a big

part of this is healthy immunomodulation, being able to recognize friend from foe, and also not being overstimulated and overreactive because our immune system, a lot of people don't realize this.

Our immune system is what is presenting the symptoms. When we get sick, it is our immune system that is presenting those symptoms. It's not the thing. It's not the virus. It's not the pathogen. It's not the bacteria. It's not the fungi. It's our immune system's response to those things. As it's trying to either burn them out, make the building too hot and uncomfortable, creating a fever. As it's trapping it and coating things in mucus. As it's stimulating inflammation to get these things out of our system in any manner necessary. Those are the symptoms that we experience. And that can be coupled with low mood, low energy, because our immune system is doing its best to keep our energy reserves because our immune system requires a lot of energy when it's trying to deal with something that it feels as a threat.

So it will slow us down, shut us down, have us lay our behind down, sit down while it's trying to do this job of getting us well. And so again, a lot of people don't realize that they think it's the thing. So we want our bodies to Mount an appropriate response to an exposure, not to go overboard. And that's where immunomodulation takes place. And lastly, among many other reasons why exercise is so impactful for our immune system, exercise delays the onset of something called immunosenescence. And this refers to the gradual degradation of our immune system, and this is associated with aging. And this is regarded why a lot of people, once they get into their senior years, are more susceptible to things like flus, colds, viruses, bacteria, that kind of thing.

Because of immunosenescence, a lot of immune cells have essentially died off. And so exercise dramatically delays the onset of immunosenescence. It keeps our immune systems robust and healthy and fit. Much like our external appearance if we're engaging in exercise. We're going to tend to look younger than our counterparts, whatever age bracket that we're in as we, especially when we get into those senior years. And so health is from the inside out truly. So it's not one aspect of our health. If we are expressing a level of fitness externally, we want to see that mirrored internally as well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And so again, that's the second reason why fitness gifts are my favorite types of gift. The third and final reason, honestly, there are many other reasons, but the third that I'm going to share with you, these are the main reasons.

The third reason is to keep my loved ones more resilient. An analysis of physical activity and medical records for more than 100,000 people over a 30 year study period found that individuals who performed the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services currently recommended range of moderate exercise, which is 150 to 300 minutes each week or vigorous exercise for 75 to 150 minutes each week, respectively. They observed about a 20 percent reduction in risk from death from all causes, all right. And we're talking about the minimum if we're talking about these organizations like the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They don't set a high bar, all right. They're looking at an unhealthy population as it is and seeing these kinds of benefits when we're just getting in 150 Minutes a week at minimum of moderate exercise, right?

We're looking at about a 20% reduction in risk of early death from all causes. Now if you're a little bit of an overachiever if you're somebody who's like, you know what? That's so little. I like to exercise. I like being active. Well, I've got good news for you. In this study individuals who performed two to upwards of four times the amount of the recommended physical activity had about a 30% reduction in the risk of death from all causes. Again, this is one of the largest studies ever conducted on exercise and mortality, exercise and reducing the risk of early death. And so, right around, we'll say 300 minutes a week, you can get that extra benefit. 30 percent reduction in risk of death from all causes. So, fitness gifts are my favorite gifts because it's making my loved ones more resilient.

And with that, let's dive into my five favorite fitness gifts. First up on this list of my five favorite fitness gifts are Primal Bells. And this is because there's so much diversity in what you can do. Literally hundreds of different exercises and variations of exercises with one cool tool, right? It's not just the fact that this tool is amazing, but it looks super awesome as well. From kettlebell swings to snatches and presses to Turkish get ups to halos, where you hold the kettlebell and you're going around your head and work in all manner of your core and shoulders and all these little muscles that don't get a lot of attention.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** All of those movements can be truly total body exercises, including targeting our core. But we can get even more core work with doing suitcase carries, farmer's carries, and the waiter's walk, just to name a few. Now, what truly makes primal bells so special and a great gift to give is that they're so unique. The design of these primal bells are amazing. They've got these perfectly chiseled primate faces. And also sizes and personalities based on the weight of the kettlebell. So I've got the collection, most of them already, I've got the collection. So they've got the howler monkey as their smallest kettlebell.

It's 18 pounds. And you know, for me personally, my kettlebells, my primal bells are part of the family. They've got names named all of our primal bells. And the howler, his name Howley Mandel. All right. I'm just gonna be honest. That's the name of the howler monkey Primal Bell that we have. And I encourage you when you get your primal bell. You give it as a gift, encourage them to name it, give it personality. We've even painted some of them. My kids painted some of the primal bells as well to give them again, just to bring them to life, more personality. And they're just so cool. And some of you want to pick up and, and play with, and just get some of those, you know, this paradigm of micro dosing exercise, even, you know, throughout the day.

Then I have two of the chimp primal bells and they are 36 pounds each. One of them is named Chimp. Little C's after Caesar from Planet of the Apes, but also that's a little if you get that little C's He was also a rapper with Junior Mafia. Alright, so Lil C's, but it's a play on, you know, the double entendre, it's got two meanings to it. And then the other one is Bubbles. Alright, of course. Alright. And then we have the Orangatang Primal Bell, which is 54 pounds. And that one is named Orangletangle. All right. So another incredible design when we're talking about these primal bells. And then finally we have the gorilla, the big dog, 72 pounds.

I call that one DK short for Donkey Kong. All right. Now, actually where we get all of our primal bells and the people who brought this to the market is from my friends at Onnit. All right. Onnit also has another step up from there. And now they've gone from the primal to the straight up wild and crazy and they have the bigfoot primal bell, all right. Bigfoot is 90 pounds. I do not have bigfoot. What would I do with bigfoot? All right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** Of course, I got a couple of ideas. But you know, you pick your spot, what you think would be valuable and useful for you and to be able to do a lot of these different movements and exercises. And again, they're so cool. They're so fun. It's an incredible gift to give.

I've given so many people primal bells as gifts, and it's one of my favorite gifts to give. And so again, the primal kettlebells are coming from my friends at onnit, go to [onnit.com/model](https://onnit.com/model). And this is one of the only ways it's exclusive for their fitness equipment. You can get 10 percent off of their fitness equipment. Again, that's Onnit. [ONNIT.com/model](https://onnit.com/model) 10 percent off all their fitness equipment. You still got time to get this as a gift for the people that you care about. So this is a great time of year for this. This is the new paradigm for jingle bells right here. And so when you're thinking about the jingle bell vibe, all right, we could bring a whole new paradigm to what the bells look like.

All right. The primal kettlebells are incredible. So that's number one on my list of my five favorite fitness gifts. We're going to move on to number two on this list of my five favorite fitness gifts to give. And number two is a heavy rope for rope flow. There are very few forms of exercise that can teach you how to move better, how to breathe better, how to restore the engagement and mobility and health of your spine that can improve your cognitive function and put you into a flow state with ease.

In addition to that, it activates and improves the mobility of all of your joints from your feet all the way up to your neck. I am in love with this form of exercise. I get some in every single day now and I can go on and on about why rope flow is an integral part of my health and fitness today. And if you happen to not know what rope flow is, conventional jump rope is awesome by the way. And there's variations, there's speed ropes all the way to a little bit of a heavier rope, but it's still for the purpose of jumping. The rope flow rope is oftentimes it can be a significantly heavier rope than even a heavy jump rope. It's a whole different paradigm. And the material that is made out of as well. And this offers the ability for us to move our spine and all of these unique and dynamic ways and get these inputs that we would be getting if we were living a normal life as a human being. But we tend to become very constricted, very robotic in our movements.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And this really just helps to unlock so much of our human potential in our movement. And it's translating over, this is the biggest thing that I'm seeing, it's translating over into other areas of our lives. Whether we're playing a sport, whether we are engaging in a whole number of different physical activities that humans do. This is one of those things that's translating over to being able to do those things well, to do those things better.

And also another reason that I can't leave out is that it also offers up because the rope is weighted. So as we're swinging the rope and its momentum is going down and then its momentum its inertia is pulling itself upward. We're going with it. It's creating a gentle spinal decompression the weight of that rope and it's something that is so subtle, so invigorating, so nourishing for our spine that can be easily overlooked. And there are very few things in our reality that can offer up that moment of Decompression. And also i'm coupling this with, and I just gave this gift to a friend of mine for his birthday, access to free training on all the different movements and cool things that you can do with it that was created by my friend, Nsima Inyang. And he's a yes world champion Brazilian jiu jitsu guy, all right, he's an accomplished natural bodybuilder and accomplished power lift, all the things.

But this guy moves like few people I have ever seen. It's not by accident. He was once robotic, all right, but he has trained in a way that has made him so much more mobile and flexible. And just to have these kinds of cat-like abilities and reflexes and rope flow is a big tool and has helped to unlock so much for him. And so he's got a free training for you once you get your hands on a heavy rope. If you go to [skool.com/thestrongerhuman](http://skool.com/thestrongerhuman), so skool is spelled S K O O L. Okay, so that's [skool.com/thestrongerhuman](http://skool.com/thestrongerhuman). And he's got all of these incredible videos. He took the time to create for free that give you all these basic movements and some advanced stuff as well that you can do with the heavy rope flow rope.

And I encourage you, by the way, if you're getting started to not use that heavy of rope, all right. You want to get the basic movements down and just enjoy the process because part of what he trains is being able to breathe as we're moving and not in this robotic fashion that myself included was trained to breathe a certain way while we're exercising. And so but life doesn't come at us like that.



**SHAWN STEVENSON:** We don't have these moments, when we're doing things, when we're supposed to be holding our breath per se. And so unlocking this ability to breathe freely through different movements is super incredible. And if you're looking for great ropes, of course, you know, he recommends too, you can go to a hardware store. And you know, if you, if you got the handy vibe in you, you know, you like to, you know, your way around a hardware store, you can go there and get yourself a heavy rope and cut it to your particular needs, but they've got great ropes.

And even just to get a look at what they look like. I recommend checking out [thestrongerhumanstore.com](http://thestrongerhumanstore.com). So it's [thestrongerhumanstore.com](http://thestrongerhumanstore.com). Now, again, that is my second of my five favorite fitness gifts. And before we move any further, I want you to understand that health and fitness are synonymous, but they are not the same. They are not the same. Somebody can be very outwardly fit, but still be very unhealthy on the inside. I'm gonna put my hand up for that one because at the age of, you know, 18 to 20, I looked very, very fit from the outside, but inside I was dealing with severe degeneration of my bones, my spine, because of the lifestyle that I was living, the foods that I was eating. I was making my tissues out of ultra processed food was the vast majority, about 90 percent of the food that I was eating.

Because of the environment that I came from because of how I was, you know, kind of indoctrinated that this is even food in the first place. And so my body was falling apart from the inside, but outwardly people would think I was incredibly fit. And so these two things are not synonymous, but they do go hand in hand. They do go together in many aspects. But with that being said, part of the reason that I chose this as my next gift is that this is the input that supports our fitness by providing the raw materials that our tissues are made out of. That our muscles and our joints are made out of, and that is our food.

And so my third gift is really leaning into the sentiment that abs are made in the kitchen. But the other side of that is that abs can be destroyed in the kitchen as well. And my third favorite gift is non toxic cookware. There's nothing more impactful on your health and on your fitness than the food that you eat. And cooking is such a vital part of the human experience.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** But for years, Teflon nonstick cookware has been effectively poisoning our world citizens. And one of the most notorious compounds used to make Teflon cookware is a chemical called perfluorooctanoic acid or PFOAs and has been found repeatedly in peer reviewed studies to contribute to higher rates of infertility, liver disease, and a variety of cancers.

For instance, a study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute concluded that PFOAs are strong kidney carcinogens with the risk of kidney cancer increasing in tandem with our levels of exposure. And by the way the company that introduced Teflon into our society, the company Dupont. Only recently about 10 years ago took This compound out of their cookware, all right. Very, very recent after decades because we're talking about near the 1940s and 50s of this really becoming a part of the culture. So for decades and they knew this data coming into it. They had a huge body of data and we've talked about this on episodes in the model health show. As a matter of fact I put that episode for you to check out in the show notes to get more information on this because today, testing people all over the world.

Approximately 98 percent of people, on earth today, have this compound in their bloodstream. Now it is in our bodies. And it's one of these Forever chemicals. It's in this category, this growing list of chemicals that just don't seem to be metabolized and broken down and they just tend to stay in our bodies and in our environment. And keeping that in mind. Okay, so they took it out. What do they do? Well, they created another compound called Gen X that Multiple studies have found them to be essentially as toxic as PFOA. So Gen X We're looking at these companies that are doing the same thing over and over again, trying to game the system without really looking at integrity and doing things right.

And oftentimes it is more challenging to make a great product, but that's what we have access to today. And so for safe, real, time tested, non toxic, non stick ceramic coated cookware. One of my favorite gifts to give is from the amazing folks at Our Place. Again, Our Place Cookware is non toxic, PFAS free, ceramic coated, and has over 75, 000 five star reviews on their award winning cookware, pressure cookers, air fryers, and more. And definitely check out their titanium non-stick cookware as well. They're really leading the industry right now. As a matter of fact, over a million people have switched over.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** To our place cookware and this might be my favorite christmas gift this year because i'm taking advantage of their 35 off site wide holiday sale, available right now.

Just go to [fromourplace.com/Model](https://fromourplace.com/Model) to take advantage of this right now. Again, see why over a million people have made the switch to our place and with their 100 day risk free trial free shipping and free returns. You can give this gift to yourself and others with total confidence. Take advantage of their 35 percent off holiday sale right now. When you go to [fromourplace.com/model](https://fromourplace.com/model), that's F R O M O U R P L A C E . C O M / M O D E L. Take advantage of this right now. I'm telling you I cannot wait to give this gift as a matter of fact to a special someone that I have in mind right now. They're going to get a kitchen makeover with this incredible cookware, and I cannot wait. Oh, I cannot wait to share it.

So this was number three on my list of my five favorite fitness gifts now, we're gonna move on to number four on this list and number four is a weighted vest. We know that walking has an absurd amount of benefits for our health, including improving our insulin sensitivity, our leptin sensitivity, helping our bodies to efficiently burn body fat as well. As a matter of fact, researchers at Harvard Medical School found that study participants who did at least 30 minutes of daily brisk walking slashed their risk of diabetes by 30 percent. While another study that was conducted with a group of women found that walking briskly for about an hour a day decreased their belly fat by 20 percent after 14 weeks without changing their eating habits.

So we know that walking is, and this is a scientific term, the shiznit. We know that it's something that our genes expect us to do. It's a critical component. It's an epigenetic controller. We're designed to walk. We are bipedal. And today, of course, more and more we are walking and moving so much less, but this is the number one form of exercise that we're designed to do is very, very valuable. But with that being said, how can we, how can we upgrade it just a little bit, just a little bit by adding in a little bit of extra weight onto our frame, right? Putting on a weighted vest, for example, and this is something, That I just gave as a gift recently for my friend and mentor, Dr. Michael Beckwith for his recent birthday as well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And if you're watching the video version, you'll see us when I gave him the gift, he put it right on, he walked around with it. He just kept it on for the rest of his little party get together. That's why I love that about him. And keep in mind that it doesn't have to be a fancy weighted vest. This could be, there are also, of course there's a paradigm of rucksacks and things like that, that you can pack with all kinds of different things and weights and things like that. But even if you've got a book bag, now I'm from the Midwest. So, you know, people say different things. It could be the book bag. It could be a backpack, backpack, backpack. The Jansport, whatever. But if you've got a book bag and you get it nice and snug, you could put some items in there to give it a little bit more weight.

But of course you want to make sure that it's nice and snug close to your frame and you have good posture, good walking mechanics, all those things to stay safe and smart. But adding five, 10, some people are putting, you know, of course, 20 pounds and up on their frame and just making their walk more challenging because it is so much less impact. Then something like jogging. Okay. That's how they say it in Sweden. All right. And I'm just kidding. I don't know how they say jogging by the way. But jogging can be very detrimental over time on your joints and things like that. But not to dissuade people that love to run and jog. Of course you can have healthy, supple, amazing joints and tissues and all that stuff and have that practice.

But for many people, and also people are just even in recovery from running or an injury or something like that. And they want to get in a little bit more action when it comes to burning fat and giving themselves more challenge and getting those endorphins going, adding some weight via a weighted vest, via Rucksack, via a backpack with some weights in it, via a person, right? You can carry a person, right? Especially like a small person in your life. A kid is great. You know, putting, you know, personal, I've had all my kids, of course, on my back and walking them around or, you know, carrying them is something that humans do. We evolve doing this. All right. Also keep in mind that a weighted vest is a great way to add resistance to bodyweight exercises. Like pull ups, push ups, lunges, et cetera. Throwing on a weighted vest can make each of these exercises a little bit more challenging. And so there's so many different creative ways to add this in. This is why it's another one of my favorite gifts to give.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** So look into that as well, giving somebody a weighted vest. And I've done this many times as a gift. And this just reminds me, even that experience on a holiday of getting together and hanging out as a kid and, you know, being able to walk around and my uncle Leroy is carrying me walking around and that kind of thing. And I remember early on, one of my first memories of a gift was a fitness related gift.

Funny enough, you know, I had to be like four and I got a Knight Rider big wheel. All right. I didn't just get a big wheel. I got the Knight Rider. All right. So I'm swerving around the streets. And, you know, this was before Tokyo Drift was a thing. I was out there drifting. I was Tokyo drifting. All right. St. Louis drifting in this big wheel. But, you know, this is something for us to keep our mind on, even as we're giving gifts for kids. Getting that bike today still can be an amazing experience. And, you know, skateboards or surfboards or, you know, the list goes on and on and different things that we can do.

Invite our kids into, you know, different sport equipment, basketball. Like that's one of my favorite gifts that I've ever gotten was a new basketball. All right. So keep that in mind as we're looking for gifts for the people that we care about that it can involve something that can last, like be something that's a part of their life. And that is bringing about more joy and movement and fun as well. All right. So that's number four on our list of my five favorite fitness gifts and my final one of these five favorite fitness gifts. Number five is to give the gift of your time. There's nothing more impactful for our friends and family members than us than our time, than being present. That time investment is so powerful. And investing our time and doing things that are active. And doing physical activities together can truly change bring families closer.

We need this today more than ever. We need to be the model. We need to be the one who's inviting and getting people together under the spirit of activity and movement. Whether it's getting our friends together to go for a hike or asking your friends to meet you at the gym. Or just going on a walk together after dinner or you know, after lunch or just hanging out and just having a conversation when you go for a walk. Or, of course for us, there's so many different holiday traditions of getting out. We had the tur, we had the Turkey Day football game, all right.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** In Missouri neighborhood, kids are getting together, you know, sometimes it be snow on the ground and we out here. I mean, to be honest, we shouldn't have been playing tackle football like that, but you know, but getting out there and having fun and doing these. We looked so for, we knew it was going down.

We knew it was going down. We had so much fun just getting outside and playing with our friends on these holidays and being active. And it's just a big part of our culture that's getting stolen. It's slowly being siphoned away from our kids' experiences. And so how can we create an environment where this is more plentiful? Ask the question, sit with it. Let this be a guidance for your heart, for your decision making, and also get yourself involved. So often, you know, we can run off to the gym to get our fitness in, which is awesome. We need that. That's all good. But at some point I realized that I'm doing this thing that's separate from my family.

And I found ways to invite them in. So I started, especially this last year, which has been a very, very tough year. I found myself working out at home more often and inviting my youngest son, and training with him and doing more things with my wife at the house. And, you know, of course we've spent many, many times going to the gym together, but just being able to get that time together to go for a walk and to hang out and get that quality time in by doing something active and just being more intentional about that. Because life is going to happen. Life be life. But our time is the greatest gift that we can give. And so I invite you to use this as your North Star this holiday season. Yes, think about giving the gift of fitness, but most importantly, be proactive in giving the gift of your time. I hope you enjoyed this episode to the fullest and I hope that you have an amazing holiday season.

We've got so much more in store for you. We're not done yet. We're not even remotely close. So many incredible things in store, so much goodness. So make sure to stay tuned. We've got some epic masterclasses and world class guests coming your way very, very soon. So make sure to stay tuned, take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon. And for more after the 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 got a comment, you can leave me a comment there as well.

**SHAWN STEVENSON:** And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome. And I appreciate that so much and take care. I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.