



EPISODE 925

Transform Your Body with These Science-Backed Fitness Tips

**With Guests: Don Saldino, Jay Ferruggia & Sal Di
Stefano.**

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SHAWN STEVENSON: Summer is not over yet. We still have time to craft to create that summer fitness that we're all looking for. As a matter of fact, it does even matter, even if summer is over, we wanna build on this momentum, take this into the holidays, be fitter than ever. The time is now. Every day that we let go by is another day that we have a missed opportunity. Eventually we've gotta hit that button. We gotta press that go button and really get locked in. And so today I wanted to inspire you to provide some resources. If you're ready to hit that go button. If you're ready to get that physical transformation on ya. Today, I am gonna make it easier than ever by providing you with three of the leading experts in the world in physical transformation.

These are the people behind the bodies that you see performing out there in all of these respective sports. We're talking Major League Baseball, N-F-L, N-B-A, W-N-B-A, major League Soccer, the WWE. Oh, you're not into the sports and the athletic performance and all that kind of stuff. Well, these individuals are behind the bodies that we're seeing on the big screen that we're seeing in these incredible movies, these superhero movies in particular, we've got an expert who is the trainer behind the transformation of Ryan Reynolds, Sebastian Stan. Hugh Jackman. Annie Hathaway. Remember, she played Catwoman for five seconds. The movie's kind of dope. Her performance, wish we could've saw more, but the list goes on and on. If you're gonna get some advice for that transformation, why not learn from the best? First up, you're gonna hear from Elite Strength and Conditioning coach Don Saladino.

Now Don is the one who inspired this episode because I just saw Don at a phenomenal event in Atlanta for the FitBody World Conference, the FitBody community. Shout out to everybody. That event was so good for my spirit. I did the opening keynote. I'm so grateful, so blessed to be able to participate in something like that and to contribute and just to meet everybody and to hear the stories, and to answer the questions and all the love. And it was just such a very special thing. And I didn't know that my spirit needed that so much, and so big shout out to you guys. But I bumped into Don backstage. Don is my guy. He's just so warm. So kind, so generous with his insights. You know, showed a lot of love to my son as well. And he is a trainer and creator of superheroes because he's one himself.

And so first up, you're gonna hear from the one and only Don Saladino. He's gonna be sharing why you need to take more of a minimalistic approach with your workouts. He's gonna share the critical meaning and importance behind the idea of earning the right to do certain exercises. He's gonna share five types of exercise that everyone should do, and I'm gonna ask him the big question because he's the guy for this. What is the number one exercise if there is one that he utilizes with his superstar clients for getting the six pack abs, the flat belly, however you wanna name it and claim it. What's the secret? Share the tea. Clock the tea. Alright, so this is filled with insights and this is just the first of our experts. Check out this segment from the one and only Don Saladino.

DON SALADINO: Take a minimalistic approach, break a sweat move, get your heart rate pumping. Allow your body to just gain a little elasticity and let's build some confidence. And then in time, maybe the question is, well, let me, let me try 10 minutes today. The problem that I have in our fitness world is that it's becoming very fluffy. And even though we're getting people off the couch and we're getting 'em to move, it's all about what new sexy exercise can I show? And then people are looking at this and they haven't really earned the right to even, I mean, most people don't earn the right to do any of the stuff being put on social, unfortunately.

But when you take someone who's not used to moving or sitting for eight to 10 hours a day and then they're trying to, you know, do a headstand on a bosu ball, something bad's gonna happen. That's a bad example, but.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's a great example.

DON SALADINO: But I, but I think, I think you get where I'm getting at is that absolutely what I'm trying to do with the people that I work with is I get them moving.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

DON SALADINO: Now, my high level people, the Ryan Reynolds, the people who are, are getting ready for these movies and they have to move and they have to have this performance physique

They have to live in this performance physique world. Yeah. It's a little bit of a different equation there, but if we get you moving a little bit. You wanna make better choices, then you think about maybe not having the ice cream seven nights a week and maybe not having the alcohol seven nights a week, and maybe you're even cutting back to three nights. There may still be a problem there, but at least we're going in the right direction. At least we're building a little bit of good, good habit.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. That's what it's really all about, man.

DON SALADINO: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And I'm so grateful you said that because..

DON SALADINO: Thank you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's just going in the right direction and we tend to have this all or nothing mentality.

DON SALADINO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: A lot of times, and like you said, it, things can be really overly complicated. Especially with, so the, the advent of social media being such a dominant force in our lives.

DON SALADINO: Oh, I mean, listen, everyone puts up what, what, what they wanna show you. You know, this morning I left the gym, I was shot, I went and I met my buddy, this guy Eric Smalls, who's, um, he handles confused muscles. He does all the calisthenics. And I was trying to do muscle up. I couldn't do muscle up. I was like, okay, fine. I can't do muscle up. I was like, big deal. Let's go work on other stuff. Like, I'm not sitting there trying to front or trying to play it off like I'm doing. Like, no, I'll, I'll talk about it guys. I was tired. I couldn't do a muscle up. Like, sorry, like, like we move on. But I think a lot of times it, it gets in people's heads 'cause we're always showing that perfect angle or that perfect shot or that perfect move and

I, I, I think yeah, it's motivating certain people, but I think it's also shedding up a poor light on, on what fitness is all about.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. And it's really boils down to simplicity. Let's talk about that a little bit because with that simplicity, you said something in our first conversation that I still think about today.

DON SALADINO: Oh, cool. Alright.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Which is somebody earning the right to do a certain exercise.

DON SALADINO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: When you said that like that was a, a shift in my, because these are things that I think about, but you put words to it.

DON SALADINO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so getting to a place where we earn the right to do more advanced things. What are those foundational things for every one of us that we need to invoke in our lives? Just for basic physical culture and functionality?

DON SALADINO: Move. I mean, there's certain things that we need to be able to do in our life. Like we need to be able to sit on a toilet. Like, it's just, it's just how it is. So am I telling you to put a bar on your back and start squatting 500 pounds? No, but we have to start establishing those basic movements. I think with us and the amount of sitting that we do all the time, we start losing this elasticity in our muscles. And that's why our body really starts feeling like junk. So on day one, am I taking someone who hasn't moved in 10 years and I'm gonna get them to imply atrics? No, but the goal is to get those joints, get some lubrication in those joints. Get some elasticity in those muscles and get them to the point where I can get them moving again like they did as a kid.

Now it's all at a different level. 'cause certain people, yeah, we, we might not be doing a 50 inch box jump. Let's accept that. But if I can take someone in their fifties who came in with back pain, and then in time maybe work with our team of physical therapists or maybe work with, you know, our team of nutritionists to get inflammation to calm down. And then in time we see that their body, oh wow, sleep's improving. Wow. We got 15 minutes extra sleep every night. 30 minutes extra. We're in the right direction. How you feeling? Body's feeling better. Not feeling so tight. I'm getting outta the car and I can actually, I feel like I could jog across the street.

Alright, we're into something. Maybe let's start with some light jogging. Well, how much, like three miles? No, like five to 10 seconds. Let's see how your body feels and just reestablishing that movement. And I think when we do that, you would be surprised on how good you can get your body to feel. And I think a lot of us just check out. I, I think, oh, I'm getting older. Yeah, it's, it's harder to put muscle on. I'm really proud to admit that over the last six months I lost eight pounds of fat and put on two pounds of muscle for my, I didn't even know I was shooting the cover of Muscle and Fitness till four weeks before. But I came in with a strategy.

I came in with a plan. I was able to do that naturally at 44 years old. So for those people saying that you can't do it. Well, you know, it it, it's done to a level there. You can, you can, you can argue it to a specific point, but, you know, I'm proud to say as I'm getting older, I feel like I'm moving better. I feel like I'm, I'm working on things in my life, you know, from a rest and recovery standpoint. Yeah. And, but for me, it's fun. It's not, it's not a job. It's something I really enjoy doing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. That's the secret. Yeah. Tapping into that fun. And I love the fact that I asked you about fitness and you immediately deferred to nutrition, sleep, all these other components that these things matter.

DON SALADINO: Because it all, 'cause you know what? It, it all works. If you get someone off the couch and you get 'em doing something, just, just don't, don't hurt 'em. Like, you know what I'm saying? Like, but if you're breaking a sweat and they're moving, like people are like, well, you don't like burpees. Like, no, I don't say, I didn't say that. I said I don't like burpees for

the majority of the population. 'cause they can't maintain a plank and they always go into excessive extension or they can't even do a proper pushup. So why are we doing a ballistic, I wanna get my heart rate up, get on an Airdyne bike, go as hard as you can for 10 seconds, tell me how you feel.

There's just a better selection of things that we can do to be able to promote that same training effect. But we all, so many of us are going to that fluffy movement and they end up hurting themselves, or they're not able to push at the, at the rate that they can eventually be able to push at if they went in with a little bit more thought.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah, I love that. So the complimentary aspect, so obviously working on movement, doing what we can. But having the, having the sleep. Addressed having the nutrition addressed.

DON SALADINO: You got it.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Maybe some other services, some physical therapy, whatever needs to push us along. Now I want to ask you to get specific because like you mentioned, being able to sit on the toilet, that's a, a squat.

DON SALADINO: It's important.

SHAWN STEVENSON: All right. So we've got a squat dial then we probably need to be able to, you know, if we're just looking at functionality to be able to, you know, walk in a, you know, a decent way, hip hinge.

DON SALADINO: Yeah. So I, I think, I think a squat, a hinge, a push, a pull and some type of a core movement, and I think at, at a very minimalistic approach, if someone was to come in and choose those five movements. Body weight squat, body weight, RDL or maybe an inverted hamstring, which would be a one-legged RDL. That would be a progression, a pushup, some type of a row or a pull-up or, if you don't have any exercise, maybe like a prone cobra if you don't have any equipment, maybe a prone cobra and then working on your plank or your side plank or, but at a very bare minimum. working on those things

Well, I can't do a pushup off the floor. We'll do it off an elevation. You know, Annie Hathaway and I started working a few years ago, and I remember when I met her, I could talk about this. She was like, I wanna do a pushup. You know, I, I, I'm, I'm, yes. We started her on a high desk, then we moved her down to a, a bench. She's doing sets of pushups now, like perfect hard style pushups. Like she develops strength. Like Annie's, you know, Annie's not 20 years old. She's getting older like the rest of us are, and she's getting stronger. So for me, that's what it's about. It's just accepting where you're at and let's just try and find a little bit of consistency and that'll lead to improvement.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I love that, man. That made me think about one of my mentors, really good friend of mine, he's actually in his eighties now. And he came in and it's one of those situations where you end up learning a lot from the person that you're working with that's coming to you for assistance.

DON SALADINO: Oh yeah, it's happening me.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But he came in, he couldn't lift his arm over his head and his, you know, physician unfortunately was just like, you know, there's something gonna kind of have to deal with. But, you know, we got him in touch with a, you know, different physician who had the same goal as him. He's working along with me and cut to, it took a year. And we started him once he had functionality with his shoulder, we had him holding the Smith machine Bar.

DON SALADINO: Oh, yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And brought that down to use for pushups.

DON SALADINO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, he's almost standing up the first time, but he could drop down on the floor and do full pushups.

DON SALADINO: It's amazing.

SHAWN STEVENSON: After about a year.

DON SALADINO: You removed that and you removed that parking break. There was a shoulder issue, and you removed that parking brake and you gave it some freedom, and then you were able to build strength. Mobility is a strong word in, in, in my vocabulary. I mean, people always refer to flexibility. They're like, oh, well I'm not flexible. I'm like, you're plenty flexible. You're, you're doing a split and you can hold your leg in the air. You're a dancer. You might be lacking in stability. Stability in my opinion is the, I'm sorry. Mobility, in my opinion, is a combination of flexibility and stability. That equals mobility. Mobility is combining flexibility and strength, and it's important for us to have that. In my opinion, you can get a golfer.

As big, as strong as you want, as long as they're able to get into those positions that you need them to get into. And golf is the one sport. Oh, if he gets bigger, if she gets bigger, she'll get too tight. I'm like, no. We've seen some big golfers out there now who can hit the ball very far and that are really strong, but they can get into positions. Dustin Johnson's a strong guy. I've worked out next to him in the gym a lot, or Roy McElroy know well, like these are strong people and um, you know, they're, um, they're additional muscles. As long as it's purposeful, as long as it's functional, it's gonna apply well to their sport.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Over the years and especially recently, I really found a lot of value in Carrie's. What do you think about that?

DON SALADINO: Oh my God. I think probably the most underrated of all exercises. I mean, I, I, I think a farmer walk. It's funny, I, um, oh God, what, what publication was it? Did an article on all the superheroes. I get ready for movies and they're like, they're, uh, what's the magic exercise? I'm like, there is no magic exercise. But the one exercise that they all did in common was, was some form of a carry variation. So whether it's an overhead carry, a rack carry a farmer walk a one arm, carry a bottoms up carry, every one of my clients I have do a carry. And I, I just think that they're, they're magic. It's a carry, for me, is a moving plank.

It's a moving plank where you stabilize and you create stability in the entire body. It's safe. We'll get people post rehab when they're, when they're transitioning from their physical

therapist, we can get them loading heavy. We've developed incredible shoulder pressing strength by doing carries with someone who's, you know, has an injured shoulder. So for me, you can go heavy. They're very safe. There's still things to think about. I don't want someone going and trying to pick up 800 pounds.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Can you detail, let's give maybe two versions of Carrie's detail, what it looks like for people listening.

DON SALADINO: Yeah. So I think a carry would be like a very basic farmer walk. So it'd be like if you were picking up two suitcases and you were walking through the airport with them, envisioning doing that with a dumb, two dumbbells or two kettlebells. For really strong people, they might stand in the middle of a trap bar and they might walk and the purpose is to stabilize and, and keep your shoulders level and good posture and making sure that you're not arching your back. So you're really, it really is a full body exercise, but it's a moving plank. So you train everything from the ground up. And then there's different variations of 'em. You can do 'em one handed. You know, I could do an overhead where I have a kettlebell in my hand and I have to promote keeping my ribs down.

Now we're working on shoulder stability. Now we have to really lock in that Latin. As you're walking and you're carrying a 48 kilo bell over your hand. You tell me how your body's feeling. You're gonna be like, oh, wait, I gotta correct myself, and get myself into this position. That's gonna promote strength on one half of the body to stabilize. So I hope that wasn't too confusing for the, for the followers, but for the viewers. But, they are magic exercises. I think at the very, minimal approach, start with a two-handed farmer walk. Pick up two eights, walk across your gym for 25 to 50 yards, or 25 to 50 steps anywhere in that range I like.

And then in time, as you develop some consistency, go heavier. Go heavier and go heavier. And then your heart rate's gonna be working, and then you're gonna be sweating. And then you're gonna focus on creating tension in the body, which is really important for strength building and body composition.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Well, I can't have you here without giving the people what they want, man.

DON SALADINO: Uh oh.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Which is, we gotta talk. What are, what are the secrets to the six pack Dom? We gotta talk about it.

DON SALADINO: Oh man.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We gotta talk about, I mean, this is, this is the thing again, when people are seeing the magazine cover.

DON SALADINO: Yeah, sure.

SHAWN STEVENSON: They're seeing, you know, Ryan Reynolds, they're seeing all these folks and, you know, it's something that we aspire towards as a physical culture. Like we, we admire the physical culture of, you know, the Greeks and the Romans.

DON SALADINO: Sure.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And, you know, even the, the, the ancient Egyptians, what do we do to access that physique? You know, that, that, that the illustrious six pack, what is the secret here?

DON SALADINO: One movement. It's only one. No. Okay.

SHAWN STEVENSON: No. I know it's not gonna be what people think.

DON SALADINO: No, you wanna know it. So, first off, like when I'm for, for my, you know, for the six pack, I probably train at. My abs directly, maybe twice a week at the most on a good week. So maybe it's once a week. I have a couple exercises I love to do. I love some type of a hanging leg raise. I love like a Copenhagen Plank. I love.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Can you explain that?

DON SALADINO: Yeah. Copenhagen Plank would be where you're getting into a side plank position with your foot, with your leg elevated up on a bench or a block, and you're almost taking one leg and like putting it into a sprinter pose. And you have to heavily engage everything from your serus to your obliques to your, to your core. So, it's a way of training all of this from an anti rotational standpoint. So I love, and I, I'll actually throw in a weighted kneeling crunch. I don't, I, I don't ever do crunches, but a kneeling crunch where my elbows will go to my knees, I actually believe in adding some type of resistance with our abs because.

We're just sitting here. I mean, I'm not gonna grab a five pound weight and do this 500 times. Why am I gonna sit there and just, I like to develop my abs to be a little blockier and a little thicker developing. I try and make my abs more muscular. And then through nutrition, I'm able to keep my, my skin thinner and my fat level's lower. So when I went in for adex, a, my, my fat, my, my body fat percentage around my midsection was at 5%. So my midsection is lean, my body fat was higher. It's 'cause my legs might hold a little bit more from a lot of the power lifting that I ended up doing and that type of training. So I know a lot of my abdominal work.

Doesn't really come from those abdominal exercises that I named. AB Wheels. I love ab wheels. It came from me deadlifting and doing some form of a squat and being able, um, to run. I mean, in college, I in college I was a little bit of a runner. I ran a 4 52 mile in college. I can move at about 219 pounds. I was a big guy. I'm about 212 pounds now, so I was heavier enough.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's scary.

DON SALADINO: I, I can run.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's scary.

DON SALADINO: Three to five miles. I was like, I was fast for, for a big guy.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

DON SALADINO: But I don't run as much anymore, but going in and hitting my cardio, not overstay my welcome and developing strength and hypertrophy. So going in and building muscle is how I get my body to be really tight in conjunction with a proper eating plan. So, when I need to get my abs a little bit sharper, yeah, the macros dial in and everything becomes a little monotonous from day to day. But my training all year long, I train hard. It's if I'm training at 20 reps, people are like, well, do you train light or heavy?

I'm like, I always train heavy. It's bad to train at low reps. I didn't say that. I said I always train heavy. If it's 20 reps, it's heavy. If it's 10 reps, it's heavy. If it's one rep, it's heavy. It's always, it's always hard and heavy. And I have to adjust intensity according to how I feel, maybe how my readiness is, or if I'm coming off of a specific type of training, that's a lot of power and a lot of strength. And I'm starting to overstay my welcome. I, I adjust my training to maybe work more on work capacity or muscular endurance, and then I'll maybe lose a little bit of strength, but focus on those other qualities. So I think it's the fact that I'm always going into a program and when I go into that program, I commit to it and I try and be the best I can with it.

But my nutrition's always tight and the AB training's there and, just try and be strong. I mean, it's the combination of all those things. It's just all those things working together. In time, I believe is what can give you a physique that's, you know, as I call cover ready.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. This, this is. The thing is, the formula is so simple.

DON SALADINO: Not sexy.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You, you didn't really, most of what you shared was not about ab exercises. No. So I want to reiterate this because the truth is our basic human template. You know, like my son, my youngest son is nine and he's, he's got a six pack, you know, like you could see the definition, the muscles are there. We all have these abdominal muscles already there. But it can get covered up with some stuff.

DON SALADINO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you can specifically target, like you said, to make those muscles thicker. But in the reality, what we want to do is to reduce the body fat. And through all the other things that you said, and just have overall functionality and all the things that tie into the abs. It's not just the rectus abdominis, it's the whole area in the, around that.

DON SALADINO: Yeah. From a functionality standpoint, for me that's, that's most important. If I can get up and I can get on a trap bar and pick up 700 pounds and walk, you know, 20 yards with it. My abs have to be strong, right? My core has to be strong. If I'm, you know, doing a, a zercher squat and I've got at least three 15 or 365 in my arms and I can hold that with a perfect spine, like my core is strong and my abs are getting a lot of work doing that. So I still like, individually touching, I always call it touching like the abs and maybe hitting it once or twice a week. 'Cause I like to feel like they're tight and feel like they're good. And, and, and I do believe it helps a little bit, but we gotta get that other stuff right first.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I hope that you enjoyed that first segment from the one and only Don Saladino. He's sharing the goods. He's sharing the goods, and even though he pointed to having some form of a carry and being like this really powerful, glorified standing mobile walking plank, that isn't the holy grail when it comes to having those visible abs. It is quite possibly in the cup, the holy grail. But he reiterated that the nutrition is so important in this statement. You hear it again and again. Sometimes we just don't want to hear it. La la, la, la. We wanna plug our ears. We don't want to hear it. That the abs are made in the kitchen. And so cooking and preparing high quality food, and again, that word means a lot.

The quality, the food quality can make a world of difference. And not only are more people becoming educated about food quality, but more people are becoming educated about what we're cooking on in our kitchens in the first place. Because the era of that non-stick Teflon cookware. The Teflon Dons out there, those days are numbered because for years, Teflon was knowingly poisoning our population, and there are wonderful documentaries on this subject matter. But in short, one of the most notorious compounds used to make Teflon is a chemical

called per Flua Octo NOIC acid, or PFOA. It has been repeatedly shown 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 PFOA is a strong kidney carcinogen linked with risk increasing in tandem with levels of exposure, and they only recently removed this chemical from our cookware and the cookware supply out there only to replace it with other synthetic chemicals like Gen X. That's been found to be similarly toxic according to a report from the Environmental Protection Agency. Again, we're trusting in these companies and they keep finding ways to cut corners and keep doing the same thing that they've been doing. And the question is, how do we break free from this? Well, utilizing time tested cookware like cast iron, like stainless steel, these are great options and you could do so much with that if you have the skill.

But there are other options as well. And for safe, beautiful non-stick cookware that my family utilizes every single day, we utilize the cookware from our place. It's non-toxic PFAS free ceramic coated and has over 75,005 star reviews on their award-winning cookware. Just head over to fromourplace.com/model. That's F-R-O-M-O-U-R-P-L-A-C e.com/model. And you're gonna get hooked up with 10% off all of their cookware and appliances when you use the code model. That's the key. Use the code model at checkout and they have a 100 day risk-free trial, free shipping, and free returns. So give this gift to yourself and your family. Head over there, check 'em out fromourplace.com/model.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Abs are made in the kitchen. Absolutely. But overall, our health is made in the kitchen and next up in our summers, not over body transformation, fitness focused masterclass. Our next expert is, and this guy is one of my guys, I'm sorry, we go to concerts together. So many meals we've shared together. Lots of laughs. But also if you just, if you saw him just walking down the street, like I'm not trying to mess with this guy. Very, very tough demeanor. He's been in the fitness game for, we're talking about 30 years, like he was doing stuff that's popular today. He was doing at his, what he would call meathead gym back in Jersey decades ago.

He's so far ahead of the curve and today he is the person that the Los Angeles Dodgers. Players are reaching out to the WE Superstars, NHL. The list goes on and on. It's not just about the fitness, it's the functionality. It's the performance. He's got both in the bag, he knows his stuff, and I'm talking about the one and only Jay Ferruggia. Now, even though Jay might scare you to maybe cross over to the other side of the street, he's one of the kindest, smartest, greatest people that I know, and he's so giving with his time and with his wisdom, and in this segment, he's gonna be sharing why most people waste valuable time and energy warming up incorrectly.

This changed the game for me, immediate gains I saw firsthand when I started to warm up like Jay. And what Jay advises for his clients, he's gonna be sharing the truth about the amount of value that you need to implement to build muscle and change your body faster. And he's also gonna be sharing the top three leg exercises to get the biggest benefit in the shortest amount of time. Enjoy this next segment from the incredible Jay Ferruggia. Talk a little bit more about junk volume, and also start off by talking about how much of volume do we ideally need to target to build muscle, maintain our muscle, and also stay relatively lean.

JAY FERRUGGIA: So it, it's a complicated answer and it's, it becomes more, it becomes increasingly difficult to give a clear answer on that just because of all the research we have now and just the individual kind of differences between people. But, and so we used to look at weekly training volume, which I think is still a good metric, but it really kind of comes down to how much volume you do today in today's workout will determine how much you can do 48, 72, 96 hours later. And so I like to look at, there's a few ways to break it down. Like you could look at per workout, how many, how many total sets should you do.

That's an easy way to measure volume. So I generally keep most of my clients in anywhere between eight total work sets and about 15, 16, that's it. Now most people go to the gym. They probably do exponentially more than that. They're probably doing 20, 30 sets. So we'll look at that. So in general, a eight to 12 for most of my guys. And then you, we look at also body parts specific, right? So generally, like there's been meta-analysis multiple over the last few years where they study, they look at people doing five sets per body part per week versus 10 versus 15 versus 20. They make the most gains in the five to 10 range. There's some crazy

outlandish studies where they'll say the more volume the better, but then if you, if what you look at with those is the rest periods, this is kind of crazy and it's hard to even wrap your head around.

If you have short rest periods, because each set is less efficient, you need way more volume. But if you're resting three minutes between sets, then you're fully recovered. You don't need as much volume. So it, it seems to be for most people, that's why I, I like to look at studies, but also like to base it on 30 years worth of experience that I have and then talk to other people who have that kind of experience too. We know that it's the sweet spot's right around six to 10 sets per week, per body part. Now you can do all 10 of those sets on Monday, or you could do 3, 3, 4 on Monday, Wednesday, Friday. There's different ways to break it up. But it's not that easy though. That's the thing. And, and that's where it gets a little complicated.

And then, then we also have, like, this, this creates fatigue too. So going back, so, so let's say I go to the gym right now, I do eight sets of chest, that's my whole workout. Eight sets of chest. That will create more fatigue for me tomorrow than if I went to the gym and did eight sets, but did two sets of back, two sets of chest, two sets of legs, two sets of triceps, because I won't have as much soreness and muscle damage. So if soreness and muscle damage creates fatigue, so now tomorrow's workout is gonna suffer more if I just did eight sets of chest. See what I'm saying?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course.

JAY FERRUGGIA: So, so you, ideally you wanna break up the volume and do a little bit less. You don't wanna cause all that inflammation and all that fatigue. Right? So that's where it gets a little tricky to, to give a, a super strict kind of, you know, straight answer. It really depends on the individual. I would say for most people do less. Like I start most people out on a full body workout either three days a week or every other day. I actually prefer every other day. When you're doing that, you, you really wanna start at baseline, which is one set, which is crazy. You do a few warm up sets and you do one hard set for body per each body, bar, chest, shoulders, back, legs, you know, whatever. And then we assess volume and how much you can recover from, and then we'll push it up a little bit.

When you do it that way, the strength gains are insane. Like you'll gain strength. Most of my guys are like, dude, it's like I'm on steroids. These strength gains are crazy. Now where where we get more complex is certain muscles take longer to recover. So you might be able to run that for like, let's say 6, 8, 10 weeks. And everything is skyrocketing. But chest always is the slowest pressing. People are like, yo, I'm stalled out on pressing, pressing universally stalls out the fastest. Pecs are just easily damaged and they're hard to recover. Hamstring's probably second or tied depending on the individual hamstrings get damaged very easily.

They recover slowly. So that's why it's hard 'cause it's like individual muscle. It's like, and then what are you doing? Right? So if you're doing a bunch of like. For example, if you do three sets of a standing leg curl, which trains the, the hamstring in the shortened position, that's exponentially easier to recover from than if you did three sets of stiff legged deadlift that trains the hamstring in the lengthened position. Now we're gonna have a ton of soreness, muscle damage, and fatigue. Whereas with a standing leg curl, we're gonna have no muscle soreness, no muscle damage. So very little fatigue. Right. So you might be able to do more. So all these things have to be taken into account, which is like, it gets very complex. I like to simplify things, but if we're really talking, you know, like really dialing it in, it is like rocket science.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah. Literally. And we are the rocket.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know? Yeah. And this, this is such an important thing. You mentioned the rest time. Like this is something that we don't really consider. And a lot of these studies and, and one of the ones that I saw recently, a big meta-analysis, looking at the amount of volume to get in, were recommending 60 to 90 seconds between sets, but you had to do more volume over the week. You gotta do more sets.

JAY FERRUGGIA: So, which is less efficient.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. But you can come into it with a mindset of like, I have less time in the gym, so I need to move faster. Right? And so you can have that mindset, but also you could be like, I have to do less sets if I'm taking more time in between sets.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So it's just a different way of looking at it. Either way you can get it efficient, kind of much shorter workout than what we've been programmed to think about. And I know you've done this, you've seen this, you see guys that are in there for two hours.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, like literally it is been many times over the years I go to the gym and somebody's already in their workout and I finish my workout and they're still going.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, and they're just like, and and you know, usually some, you know, sometimes like a older, you know. And they're just like, you know, I just got my first hour in. Yeah. You know, about to get into the hour two, you know?

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Just like, you know, more power to you man. Yeah. You know, so it's just, again, it's changing our mindset because also, and this isn't to take away something else which is important, which is the joy.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Part of it too.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Totally.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Because this, this individual, this is a big part of his enjoyment being there at the gym. And so what we're talking about, by the way, we're talking about efficiency and getting in the best shape of your life and transforming your body. And so one of the takeaways now is again, having less, less sets. Right. So let's actually, can you detail, like, explain a little bit more for us what we mean by, by volume? Like what does that mean?

JAY FERRUGGIA: I mean, the easiest way is just, just the number of sets you're doing for a body part or a muscle group. And then you asked before about junk volume. So that would be what I would describe as junk volume would be any, for the most part, any sets, 15 reps and above, that's really junk volume. Now guys are our age, 50, 60 might say, well I can't do the exercise unless I do 15 to 20 or my joints kill. If that's truly the case, then yes, true, you should do that many reps. But I would say to that person, Hey, let's try to find a similar movement that fits you well. It doesn't hurt your knees or your elbows or whatever.

If you can do that safely, then we can bring the reps down to a more productive rep range that doesn't cause as much fatigue, right? Some people just be like, oh, I can't squat unless I do 30 reps. I'll like, yeah, okay, but maybe let's play around. There's some machines, maybe there's a different variation of a squat that you can do. You'd have to be really banged up not to be able to do something in an eight, eight to 12 range. So it would be things over 15 reps I would call junk volume. For the most part. There's always exceptions. Sets that are further than two reps from failure, I would consider junk volume. 'cause then you're just not stimulating any gains really.

It's, it's kind of a warmup set. And then excess warmups are things that I think are junk volume too. Even fitness pros and influencers don't know this. When I train together, I'm like, how do you not know how to warm up properly? Nobody knows how to warm up properly the way the way I think you should warm up, which reduces a lot of fatigue. So most people will go in and they'll do, let's say they're, let's just say they're gonna bench press, right? They'll do 10 or 12 reps, put on all way to 10 or 12 reps, put 'em all right, and keep getting up until they're working weight, they're top weight or whatever. What I would advise most people to do is go in first set, maybe do eight to 10, but you wanna do the least amount.

You're only trying to prepare yourself for the work sets. So then I might do five to eight, then I might do three reps, and then 1, 1, 1 now late. Now, if you're moving, let's say from your first pressing exercise, if you're moving to a second pressing exercise, you're already warmed up. But most people will do that again, 10, 10, 10. It's like that's not doing anything. It's just causing fatigue. It's a complete waste of time. So then what I would do is if we're gonna, the second exercise, I might literally just do one to three reps. Just they, you can call 'em feeder sets, just feeling it out, whatever. Just kind of train your nervous system for a slightly different move.

Like, if you're doing an incline press, then do a flat press. So a lot of people just waste time and do junk volume with, with, uh, their warmup sets. Like if I'm on a machine that's select eyes with the pin, right? I'll do, I'll sit there and do all my, instead of doing 10, I'll do five. Move the pin down three, move the pin down two, move the pin down. One, do the pin down. 1, 1, 1, because I'm pretty strong. So I might be doing the stack on that, but I'm not gonna do a set of 10 walk around, do another set of 10. I'll just get the entire warmup done and maybe do 15 reps going all the way down the stack in 30 seconds. Then I'll rest two or three minutes before I start my work set.

So that's what I mean by people warming up incorrectly. It's just creating fatigue. And then what that does too is your main set, your money set, that you're actually going to stimulate hypertrophy with. The weight's gonna be so much less because you created all that fatigue and just wasted all that energy, you know? And especially again, if you're over 40, 50 or whatever, you don't have the energy that you had when you were 20, you know?

SHAWN STEVENSON: So I want to ask you about this as well, when it comes to the splits that we're doing, right? You mentioned full body every other day. Obviously there's a lot of ways to, a lot of paths to the goal.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you mentioned, you know, we can get all of those, uh, sets in the volume on a certain body part in one day. Right. And that's one of the kind of standard things is like national chest day.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Leg day and just split it up. But I don't think you get the touch points to keep that really good hypertrophy and, and, and your nervous system kind of trained. Without having those touch points more frequently. Right. And that's just something that I found out. It took me so long to get that. 'cause I would, I'd go to the gym and obliterate my legs.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Be sore for five days and then, you know, two days off and then I'm back to blowing my legs up again.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yep.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But what about a split right where we do. The kind of classic split where we got a push day, pull day, legs, maybe a rest day or just repeat. What about a framework like that?

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah. Like you mentioned, there's so many, and what you said before was true. So personal preference and enjoyment does weigh into that. Like you might say on paper, Hey, a once a week split is no good, but if you love it, then it's great. Right? Yeah. So, so that, that's something to really consider. The other thing I would say is most of the time I start people with more frequency, right? Like I said, like full body. The next split would be upper, lower. You could do, we, we tend to be married to more traditional splits, like full body, upper, lower push pull legs. But I split things up in, in ways that I've never seen before. That just kind of makes sense to me based on what I was talking about before, like individual body parts recovery. So at the end of a, let's say a pull.

I might, if someone wants to do a four day body part split, right? Like it, let's say they're gonna push pull legs, arms. Now I wanna get more than once a week frequency. So on the, at the end of the pull day, maybe we'll add in some leg extensions. So now in addition to that leg day, they're getting a second time on legs, but they're not obliterating the legs. Right? And then the, on the arm day. We're hitting some dips or closed grips, and now we're getting chest a second time. And then the leg day, maybe we'll throw in a row at the end, so we're back a second time. So you could still do a traditional bodybuilding split, but increase the frequency. And then again, that's individual, you know, maybe what's your, what's your priority?

If it's shoulders, maybe we'll add more frequency for shoulders back. Same, you know, same thing. But I, I tend to stick with really upper, lower, or, or, or, or full body most of the time for most people. And then, but you could even do things like push, pull legs and for whatever reason, most people think you could only do push pull legs once a week. Meaning Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or six days a week, Monday through Saturday. But you can do it. The way I like to do it is push, pull, off, legs, off, repeat, so then it's once every five days. Or you could do two on one off. So push, pull off, legs, push and then continue to do that way. So it's more frequency. What you can also do is, let's say you decide I wanna bring up my biceps.

Normally you'd only do curls on the pull day, but I throw those rules out. So you might do push ,pull, off. Now we do biceps first on leg day 'cause it's your priority. So we get them on the pull day indirectly with all the rows and the pull downs, and we get them directly fresh at the beginning of the leg day. And you could do that with other body parts that are weak too. You know, just prioritize 'em where you wanna put 'em. So there, there's a lot of ways, non-traditional ways to do splits that I think are really effective. And then again, it's just like we assess how does the person feel? How much fatigue are you getting, how much soreness are you getting? And what are your results like? And how much are you enjoying it, you know?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Now you also mentioned, and this is awesome by the way, and you also mentioned. How far we want to go in that set. Right. You mentioned after getting past generally 15 reps, and again, this, there's, there's situations for that. Yeah. You know,

maybe you want to train endurance in some kind of way, you know, to be able to do a bunch of muscle up. You know, you, I don't know, you doing a movie with Tom Cruise or something. You need to do some wild stuff, but in general, again, if we're looking at what's most effective, we're not getting that high in our rep range, but how far do we want to go? And so my question is, do we want to go to a place where we are at complete muscle failure? Right. So how, how, how do we know that our set is the right number of reps?

JAY FERRUGGIA: Right. So to produce hypertrophy, to elicit hypertrophy, you want to have really high levels of intramuscular force production. You wanna be recruiting those fast twitch fibers. So you do that with heavy loads generally in a five to eight, five to 10 range. And then you want to be close to failure. Now, how do you know what failure is? You have to train to failure on a lot of things for a while, and then you know what it is. 'cause there's been studies and just real world experience where people think they're at failure and they're actually five to seven reps from failure.

So it's like that was a complete, that was a warmup set. That was a complete waste of time. And even myself, I've done that and after training for 30 years, like sometimes if I'm just by myself, I'll be like, I, I think I have a pretty good gauge of what one rep in reserve is. And I'm like, I don't know, maybe. And then I'll get an extra three reps sometimes like, geez. You know, so you really, sometimes you have to push the failure. I don't recommend doing it all the time, that's why. But I do like lower volume. One of the benefits of lower volume is you can train harder and I like to train hard. If I had to leave a bunch of reps in the tank, it would just not be enjoyable for me whatsoever.

So, lower volume, I tend to train, I tend to work with a lot of type A guys. That's always been that way for 30 years. Competitive athletes now, WWE guys, and then just guys our age who are just type A hustlers, right? So they want to train hard. So then again, volume should be lower because you can't train super hard and do a ton of sets, right? You're just gonna be burnt out all the time. So get to know what failure feels like on all the exercises you're doing, and then leave about one to two reps in the tank, generally, one in the tank for the most part. There's a, there is a significant difference, like let's say you do 12 sets. If you did those 12 sets to failure.

And then next week you did those 12 sets, but you left one rep in the tank. You'll feel the difference in terms of fatigue throughout the week and also your progressive overload, which is the fundamental main rule we wanna be following to, to make any progress, is you'll get significantly better gains, right? So each week that you hit that particular workout, you'll go up more and more and faster than if you hit failure on every set.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Okay. Now what about the variety of exercises, right? If we're talking about, let's just talk about back. We're training our back, you know, with a lot of trainers. You know, it's, it's a mindset of like, I gotta keep my client interested. You know, I gotta keep mixing it up.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So what is your perspective on the variety of exercises and how frequently you're changing the exercise you're doing?

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah, I, so I, I used to do that where I would try to entertain clients years ago, but I found that what's entertaining is actually making progress and getting stronger and seeing numbers go up. I like that more. My clients like that more. So I think too much variety is no good. And so we started talking about fatigue. Too much variety causes too much fatigue 'cause if I go in, let's say my workouts, five exercises. If I've been doing those five exercises for weeks in, in a row, I don't have the CNS demands of having to learn and the coordination demands of having to learn that new movement. Even if it's a movement you've been doing for 20 years, it's still, when you do it for the first time in, let's say six to eight weeks. You're kind of adapting, figuring things out. So it's more nervous. It's more CNS fatigue if I go in and do five different movements all the time. Just for variety. Like the old..

SHAWN STEVENSON: Central nervous system?

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yes. Yep. And so it's just more demanding, so you're gonna increase more fatigue, and then it's really hard to track progressive overload and progressive overload.

You know, some people could argue, oh, you don't have to go up every workout and you don't, but it's the only legit measure we have to know, is your programming good? Is it working? Because if you're going up in weight, that's black and white. We know. If you're just like, oh, I feel good. I'm getting a pump. It's like, yeah, but that's abstract. That doesn't tell us anything. But if you're able to press 100 today, then you go up to 102 and a half, and then 105, and we see it going up, and then it plateaus.

Then it goes up, okay, now we know it's working. Then we can, we can say like, Hey man, let's pull out one set here. Let's stop one rep. Short of failure here. Then it becomes like a science experiment versus just guesswork. We're just throwing things against the wall and hoping they work. You know?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Now with this said, which exercises are best? Now, I know this is tough. All right, but maybe this is even a little selfish. All right, so let's, let's talk about training legs.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Okay.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And the reason this matters, thank goodness there's been like a paradigm shift in, in training legs. All right? There's been a lot of lollipop people walking around. You know, where leg day has been skipped many a time.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so, but there's so much metabolic benefit performance. Mm-hmm. Uh, power. There's so many remarkable and, and vital reasons to train your legs. So I want to ask you if I had to like life or death, three best leg exercises. Alright. And for I know, and again, keep in mind as well, this can be of course for everybody, but specifically for people who are over 40.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Okay.

SHAWN STEVENSON: What do you think?

JAY FERRUGGIA: I would say some type of knee flexion, so that could be some type of leg curl.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But what, what are the three best? Okay. I don't want a, some type. Okay. What's the best?

JAY FERRUGGIA: Oh, we, we just wanna build the biggest legs we can without wrecking your joints with feeling good?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yes.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Okay. So a seated leg curl.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Okay.

JAY FERRUGGIA: I personally like a glued ham raise. For variety and because you just feel good like your knees, hips, and back feel great. It's a body weight exercise, but it's really hard to do. Most division one athletes can't even do one rep. So if we're just going picking one, I'm picking a really well designed seated leg curl. The reason a seated is better than a lying in a standing is because the seated trains the lengthen position. See if I'm here and my leg straight out, it's training from a stretch position, which generally, if you're looking at exercises and ranking them in a hypertrophy perspective, you wanna train the stretch position in the midrange. The shortened position doesn't really matter that much. That's why I like a leg extension's just icing on the cake. So I'm gonna go seated leg curl, some type of squat variation. Now this is where we, I, it's hard to pick one because everybody's so different.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

JAY FERRUGGIA: What kills your knees? My knees might feel great. Someone else is like, eh. So it's gonna be some type of squat. If I had to pick one, I would say generally most people can do a safety bar squat, especially if we add a little heel wedge. 'cause most people don't have the ankle mobility to do it perfectly. So if I had to pick one, that would be it. A safety bar squat with either a 10 or 15 degree wedge.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Safety bar. What is that?

JAY FERRUGGIA: The safety bar is the bar with the pad and the sh the shoulder thing that comes here. So what that..

SHAWN STEVENSON: So it's a, it's a back squat bar, but it has a piece in the front.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Exactly. So you can have your, the benefit is really for shoulder health is if you get older and you're tighter, sometimes it's hard. You don't have the external rotation to get back here and then all of a sudden. You're kind of hurting your shoulders on leg day, which makes no sense.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right.

JAY FERRUGGIA: So then you go press the next day, you're like, why are my shoulders stiff from leg day? Right. It doesn't make sense. So, and it does, you tend to be able to stay upright a little bit more. There's, there's some things, some benefits. So a seated leg curl, a safety bar, squat with heels elevated. And then some, you gotta do some type of single leg thing. So that's, if I had to just pick one. Of course there's all different split squat variations. There's walking lunges. I would go with a rear foot elevated split squat. Those would be, those would be the three.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Isn't there another name for that?

JAY FERRUGGIA: Bulgarian split squat.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The Bulgarian split squat. Yes.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. The last time I trained with Luca. You know, we did that as well. And there's so many different variation of that too. You know, it obviously can do a weighted Yeah. You could, you know, uh do one hand with the weight.

JAY FERRUGGIA: Yeah. One hand here, one hand here. Two hands. Safety bar, regular bar. I mean, there's a million ways to do it. If for the purpose of this exercise that you're challenging me on had to do one, I would have it with stability 'cause we're looking at hypertrophy. So without stability, you're gonna have less force production, less intermuscular force production. So if I, if I'm having to balance now, if I hold that dumbbell in one hand on my rear leg and I hold onto the upright of the power rack, I'm gonna get a greater hypertrophy stimulus outta that. If you're an athlete and you're just charge training stability and whatever, fine.

But if we're just looking at hypertrophy, I'm gonna grab on and in anytime I increase the stability of an exercise, it's better for hypertrophy. Now that doesn't mean you just do machines, 'cause then you walk around like Frankenstein, but you know, you prioritize some things.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Got a quick break coming up. We'll be right back.

This episode is brought to you by the incredible team at Organifi and their phenomenal superfood blends. Not only does their bestselling green juice blend have the most powerful green superfoods, it also has a therapeutic amount of ashwagandha. A double-blind, randomized placebo controlled trial published in the Journal of Psychological Medicine had test subjects with a history of chronic stress to consume ashwagandha or a placebo.

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SHAWN STEVENSON: We've got one more expert in store for you in this summer's not over fitness compilation and this is gonna be a good one. Our next expert has another 30 years of experience in this field. He's a bestselling author and he's part of one of the biggest fitness podcasts on Planet Earth. I'm talking about the one and only Sal Di Stefano. And in this segment he's gonna be talking about sometimes the brutal honesty about why cardio is ineffective for fat loss if we're looking for fat loss and their body transformation. Cardio is probably not gonna be the place that our attention needs to be pointed.

He's gonna be talking about why weight loss plateaus happen in the first place and what we can do to circumvent that. And lastly, he's gonna be sharing his secret sauce when it comes to the ideal frequency for training specific muscle groups. Enjoy this segment with the one and only Sal Di Stefano.

SAL DI STEFANO: So I do want to start off by being very clear 'cause I don't wanna send the wrong message. So, cardiovascular activity or exercise is good for you All activity done properly and apply it appropriately is gonna improve your health. The challenge or the problem is when people make cardiovascular activity the cornerstone of a fat loss routine. So they don't go into it saying, I just wanna improve my health and gain more stamina. They say, I'm gonna lose 30 pounds. Let me pick this form of exercise and make this the cornerstone of my routine. And it's just, it's, it's a terribly, ineffective, form of exercise for that, for a few different reasons. I think first though, we need to start with why that's typically chosen as the frontline form of exercise.

'cause if you talk to the average person and you say, Hey, what's the best form of exercise for fat loss? They're probably gonna pick a form of cardio, right? They'll say running or cycling or swimming, or something along those lines. And it really goes back to this, which there's,

there's truth to this, but it's just oversimplification to this model of weight loss that we've understood for decades now, right? And the model is that you need to burn more calories than you take in, or put differently, take in less calories than you burn, and you create that energy imbalance and then that's how you lose weight, which is true. It's much more complex than that. But there's truth to that. So then what they've done, and we won't talk about the food part yet, we can talk about that later.

Let's look at the calorie burn part, right? When they say, okay, we need to burn more calories, what they did is they looked at all forms of activity, and they've ranked them in terms of how many calories you burn while you do them. So this is how people will typically rank the value of different forms of exercise. They'll say, how many calories does that burn in an hour? That's more effective than that one over there because it burns more calories. And that's wrong because it ignores the real, most important factor to consider with exercise, which is, how does this form of exercise get my body to adapt? And then what does that mean?

Because that's, that's what we really wanna focus on. So why should we not look at calories burned while we exercise? Well, number one, it's not a lot. So even if you did an hour of cardio every single day, vigorously, average person's gonna burn maybe 250 to 300 calories doing that. By the way, those cardio machines at the gym will lie to you. So you'll do a. Elliptical and it'll tell you burn 800 calories. They, they make those numbers up. Yes. I think to get people to buy those machines, average person 250 to 300 calories, and it's a very manual way of doing so. It takes a lot of work. I'm dedicating an hour of strenuous activity to burn this 250 to 300 calories.

But that's not it. That's not all. That form of exercise induces adaptations in the body that eventually get my body to learn how to burn less calories. So initially I'm burning more calories by doing that. But because the, that form of exercise requires little strength, it really doesn't require much strength to do long distance jogging or cycling or swimming or an elliptical. It does require a lot of stamina and because it is calorie, I guess, intensive for the time being done, your body adapts to try to become better at it or more efficient at it. So, to use an analogy, it would be like owning a very advanced AI car. That adapted to your driving

habits. So imagine if you own this car and you drove 350 miles every day at 40 miles an hour, right?

How would this car adapt? Well, it would become a one cylinder engine would burn very, very little gasoline, or become battery operated, become very efficient with energy, right? And so this is what your body ends up doing. You end up pairing muscle down in order to become more efficient and have better capacity for the stamina, require less energy to do these types of activities. So over time, what you see is you'll initially see a weight loss, then the body adapts to become better. And then you get this real strong plateau. And by the way, that initial weight loss and studies will show this. A nice chunk of that comes from muscle. Now you're not burning the muscle, your body's just adapting and pairing the muscle down.

So you end up with a slower metabolism, which is why when people do that, they initially lose weight, they plateau. And then to continue losing weight, they have to do more cardio. Or cut their calories even more and that that road leads to something that's just not sustainable. You know, I'm, I'm eating 1600 calories, 1500 calories or less a day. I'm doing an hour of cardio, five or six days a week. I've only lost 15 of the 30 pounds I wanna lose. This is not sustainable for most people. So instead what we need to do is we need to look at exercise and say, which form of exercise induces the adaptations that will make my body wanna burn more calories on its own? It doesn't require me to go and try and move, which one's going to end up with or help me end up with a sustainable body where I can maintain this with less work and stay leaner easier. And the answer to that is it's strength training, resistance training. It's by far the most effective form of exercise for fat loss.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And what you're saying is incredibly logical. You know, we're looking at adaptation. What type of adaptation for our, for our bodies, for our metabolism, for our hormones. Are we really looking to create? But this isn't regularly talked about?

SAL DI STEFANO: No.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's more, and I love this, you just literally brought it up, which is we're looking specifically at calories burned doing the thing.

SAL DI STEFANO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Versus when we are doing resistance training and not having that hyper-focused kind of tunnel vision on that one thing. Looking at the metabolic changes, which we're gonna talk about, but I wanna lean into this a little bit more because essentially when you talked about that adaptation when doing a lot of cardio, you're creating a body that gets very good at doing a lot of cardio.

SAL DI STEFANO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So let's extrapolate that a little bit more.

SAL DI STEFANO: Yeah. You know, there was a study that was done that I remember when I first saw, really confirmed what those of us in the gym and fitness industry have known for a long time. I, I've been in gyms professionally for over two decades and we would refer to members who would come in and jump on the StairMaster and the treadmill day in and day out as cardio bunnies. And very typical, they would, kind of skinny, you know, excuse the term skinny fat, right? They would lose a lot of muscle, body fat percentage would be kind of high, and they'd be kind of stuck in this kind of plateau. And sometimes they'd come and talk to me as a gym manager, why isn't this working?

What's going on? I'm coming in every single day. And we saw that all the time. Well, there was a study that was done on a modern hunter gatherer tribe called the hadza. Okay? So the, they live the way that humans probably lived, you know, hundreds of thousands of years ago. Okay? So no modern technology, no modern agriculture. They hunt their food, they gather, very active in comparison to the average western couch potato. Okay? And scientists went down there and with some really sophisticated testing, were able to test their metabolisms. How many calories are these hadza tribes, people burning every single day. Now the results were remarkable.

What they found was that these steady tribes, people burned generally the same amount of calories, uh, calories as the average Western couch potato.

So at first you think to yourself, how's this possible? They're moving all the time. I mean, the way you hunt as a hunter gatherer is you stalk your prey, you throw something at it, you injure it, and then you run after it for, you know, 10 miles to the till. It gets exhausted and then you bring it back. It's like, how are they burning as many calories as, you know, John who sits on his couch and watches TV and has a desk job. But if you really think about it, it makes perfect sense. If our bodies didn't adapt to become more efficient with that type of activity, there's no way humans would've survived.

It's very hard to come across calories in nature. You know, if we were burning 8,000 calories a day because we were running after prey and gathering food, we, we just, we wouldn't have made it. Yeah. So that type of activity teaches our bodies to become very, very efficient. There's also studies done on contestants from The Biggest Loser. I dunno if you're familiar with that show. Yeah, so this show, by the way, any trainer who's been a trainer for a long period of time, that show is like the bane of, of fitness. You watch it and she's like, man, they do everything wrong. But they beat these people up. They have 'em run like crazy. They use weights like cardio.

So they make 'em do circuits and they restrict their cavities. They lose tons and tons of weight. And then afterwards there was a study that followed them and it found that, uh, well, weight gain was quite common and those that were able to maintain the weight loss were eating something like 1300 calories a day and active all the time. That's unsustainable for most people, especially when you consider modern life where food is everywhere. It's easily accessible. It's, you know, very challenge, you know, getting an hour of exercise every day. You know, for people like me, I'm a fitness fanatic. It's hard to keep me outta the gym, but the average person, if we can convince the average person to work out twice a week consistently, we've done a phenomenal job and we're probably not gonna get much more than that.

So it's just an unsustainable approach. And so those adaptations. Lend themselves well to the activity that you're trying to do. You become more efficient with calories, you burn less while you're doing it. Your body pairs muscle down. It organizes its hormones in a way to do so, and you become a more efficient calorie storing machine in contrast to strength training in which you don't burn a ton of calories while you strength train. But the adaptations, the muscle

building process, even just the signaling of building muscle. You don't even have to build a ton of muscle just telling your body, we need more muscle and feeding your body appropriately, your, your body becomes less efficient with calories. You see yourself, your metabolism start to actually speed up.

And the result of that, which I experienced time and time again as a trainer, is I'd get clients to lose weight over time at the end of their, you know, "weight loss journey". Or when we hit their goal, they're eating more than they did when they started. Now that's, that's sustainable, you know, um, imagine if I could snap my fingers and make everybody be able to burn, you know, 800 more calories a day. I would solve a lot of the obesity epidemic just from doing that. So, so that's, yeah. That's, that's the big focus of that particular form of exercise and why it's, why it's failed. Why, why? It just doesn't work for so many people.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Wow. That's powerful. And the thing is too, number one, what, what I really admire about you is we have this clinical data. Yes. Check. But you also have this real world experience in working with all these people and being able to see this firsthand and we cannot negate this. Like, it's one of the most important things in the human experience. You know, this quote, anecdotal data, like you see this firsthand and say something that's so counter, kind of counterintuitive in how we're trained. Somebody's eating more calories at the end, they've reached their weight loss goals and they're actually being able to eat more. Like that doesn't make sense.

SAL DI STEFANO: Right.

SHAWN STEVENSON: 'Cause again, if you see the suffering that people have.

SAL DI STEFANO: Yes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Had to undertake doing the biggest loser where they have to maintain. This incredibly low amount of like that, that should be relegated to like an 8-year-old.

SAL DI STEFANO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. For the rest of their life and keep exercising their face off in order to maintain that weight loss.

SAL DI STEFANO: Yeah. You know, you talked about, you mentioned clinical data. You know, the studies now finally are supporting what I'm saying. There's a lot of studies now.

SHAWN STEVENSON: A lot now.

SAL DI STEFANO: But if you go back when I started in fitness over two decades ago, there were none on strength training. All the studies that were done on exercise to look at the benefits of exercise on health and fat loss and cognitive function, were all cardiovascular based. Part of that is because it's probably, it's, it's a lot easier to get a hamster run on a hamster wheel than it is to get a hamster to lift weights. So animal studies are easy with cardio.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

SAL DI STEFANO: It's also, you need to know a little bit about strength training to study strength training with subjects versus hey, let's just have people run, or cycle and then we'll look at the effects. So all the studies done, you know, two decades ago were done on athletic performance. So strength training, great for explosive power, great for strength, you know, good for football players or baseball players, but we didn't have any that studied strength training for cognitive function, blood lipids, fat loss, heart health, but we have 'em now. And the data now is very clear. Strength training is the most effective form of exercise for pure fat loss. So when I say fat loss, by the way, I'm not talking about weight loss 'cause you could lose 20 pounds, half of it can be muscle and you end up just being a smaller, slower metabolism. Same flabbiness version of yourself, right?

Resistance training leads to pure fat loss and in most cases you get some muscle gain with that, which we could talk about. Some people are afraid of that. They think, oh, if I gain muscle, I'm gonna look bulky and big. Not true.

You just much more sculpted and have a better shape to your body. Studies on heart health show that strength training is at least as beneficial as cardiovascular exercise for heart health. Now, of course, the best combination, again, I wanna be be clear, the best forms or way to work out if you have the time and you are dedicated is to combine a lot of different forms of exercise. But we're talking head to head and we're, I'm also talking to again, the average person that's probably only gonna do a couple days a week of exercise consistently.

Right. Cognitive function, here's where it gets really interesting. There was a study out of Sydney, Australia that looked at strength training and Alzheimer's, and it was the only, this is one of the only times we've ever seen a non-medical intervention stop, slow down and stop the progression of the beta amyloid plaques, that lead to, or at least contribute to the symptoms of Alzheimer's. How is that possible? Probably, and this is a really interesting point here, probably because one of the most effective ways to improve insulin sensitivity is to simply build muscle and Alzheimer's and dementia. Some researchers will even refer to as type three diabetes. You'll see that it's, there's something connected there where, and this is why when you put people on Alzheimer's, on a ketogenic diet, you tend to see some improvements because there's a dysfunction there with utilizing glucose for energy.

So you improve insulin sensitivity, you tend to improve, cognitive function well, you gain a little bit of muscle and you see tremendous improvements in insulin sensitivity. There's, there's studies on severely obese individuals where they don't even have 'em lose weight. They just have 'em gain a little bit of muscle. And you see these great improvements in blood sugar and in insulin. Muscle is very insulin sensitive. It's also one of the ways we store glycogen, which is made from carbohydrate. So you got your liver that stores glycogen, and then you got your muscle. So you get more muscle, you have more ability to store becomes more sensitive to it.

Insulin's a very anabolic hormone. It actually contributes to muscle growth if you do it right. So, and there's, again, there's so much more. But we now finally have studies coming out that are showing, like, wait a minute. One of my favorites is the strength studies that show how a simple strength test, like a grip test, that simple test right there, will predict all cause mortality better than almost any other single metric. So like you could compare it to

cholesterol or blood pressure or other metrics. And a grip test is more accurate in terms of all cause mortality. So strength is very important for longevity. Muscle is very protective. And thankfully now we're having the studies and, you know, i, I named the book the Resistance Training Revolution. I think the revolution's gonna happen anyway. I think we're already starting to move in that direction 'cause the data now is finally starting to confirm what those of us in fitness have seen for, for decades now.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Awesome. Awesome. So a little bit more advanced question that adaptation, you know, just say somebody skilled, they've already, you know, they, they've practiced. They've got that under their belt and you know, maybe they're, you know, lifting certain muscle groups in a, in a day. How, how many times should they be targeting that particular muscle group? So for example, if it is chest and shoulders.

SAL DI STEFANO: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Should we be going, you know, twice a week or maybe following week or longer? What does that look like?

SAL DI STEFANO: So, they've done a lot of studies on this, and the ideal frequency of training body parts is probably around three. Okay? So each body part you wanna train about three days a week. Now, how, how can you do this? There's a lot of different ways to do this. You could do a body part split where you're training three body parts on this day, three body parts on that day, another three. And then over the course of a week, you've done everything three times. I personally have seen by far the most success, not just with myself, but with the people I've trained by just training full body. So you go to the gym two days a week, three days a week, just train your whole body. Start with the larger body parts.

So legs, then go to back and chest, shoulders, arms, and then maybe finish with your core. But that'll do, that'll do everything for you. I also like full body workouts because the, when you send a muscle building signal, most of it is localized. So if I out my bicep, most of the muscle building signal goes to my bicep, but there's also a systemic effect that happens. So like there's really cool studies where someone will have an arm that's incapacitated and then

they'll work out the other arm and they actually lose less muscle from the arm that's incapacitated, right? Because it's this kind of systemic effect. Whole body workouts send this really nice systemic muscle building effect for people.

So I've just seen better results with full body workouts with most people. The people that benefit from the body part splits are typically so advanced that the amount of training that they would have to do with a full body workout would just make the workout inconvenient. It would be two and a half hour workout because they do so much per area, in which case it makes sense to split the body up, but most people, full body.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Great. Great. So, so there this paradigm of having the leg day, once a week.

SAL DI STEFANO: Wow.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's not gonna be ideal.

SAL DI STEFANO: No. What you, when you, you send the muscle building signal, we know that when they've done this in studies, we see the muscle building signal rise very quickly, peak, and then drop very quickly after about 48 to 72 hours, even if you're still recovering, remember the adaptation signal is different, right? So even if you're still sore, that muscle protein synthesis signal peaks and then drops. So you probably want to hit the same body part at least three or four days later, not a whole week later, in which case you'll, you'll get some missile muscle building effect, but you'll miss out on quite a bit.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Thank you so much for tuning in this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. Apply, apply, apply. I know you got a variety of different insights and tips. But most importantly, just take something and put it into practice for yourself, utilizing the knowledge of these incredible experts we're talking about. These are historical people, alright? They know a thing or 3000 and they've really given you some of their best insights. This isn't complex. It really boils down to practicality and most importantly, just getting in there and testing. Using that end of one experiment to find out what works best for you.

Applying some of these insights, getting that physical feedback. But I'm telling you, chances are you apply a couple of these strategies, you're gonna see an incredible transformation in your physical fitness. If you enjoyed this, please share it out with your friends and family. You could share it on social media. You can send this directly from the podcast app that you're listening on to somebody that you care about. Share the fitness inspiration. We got some incredible 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 the [model health show.com](http://modelhealthshow.com). That's where you can find all of the show notes.

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