



A No-BS Approach To

Looking Great Naked

My View On:

Lifestyle
Training
Diet
and More

FORGET ABOUT
Clean Eating

No More :

Obsession
Neurosis
Anxiety

**Live Freely
Be Flexible Enjoy Life**



www.jcdfitness.com

Copyright © 2009 www.jcdfitness.com. Some rights reserved.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License. You are free to copy, distribute and display the work, granted you attribute the work to the author. The work is not to be used for commercial purpose, nor can it be altered, transformed or modified from its original state.

To view a copy of this license, check out <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.

Contact me at jc@jcdfitness.com

Visit my website at www.jcdfitness.com

Disclaimer and Legal Notice

The information in this book is for educational purposes only. None of the information, tips, ideas or methods described is to be taken as medical advice. I am not a doctor. The information I present is based on my experiences and my interpretations of said experiences.

If you have health issues or suspect you might, consult with your doctor before beginning any kind of exercise regimen or new diet.

The author does not accept any responsibilities for damages or liabilities, perceived or real as a result of this information.

Cover design by Buddy from CoversCorp

Cover photo of JC taken by [Emily C. McArthur](#)

Table of Contents

About Me	5
The Problem	7
A Myriad of Mistakes	9
Mistake #1.....	9
Mistake #2.....	9
Mistake #3.....	10
My Saving Grace	11
Saving Grace #1 – Intermittent Fasting.....	11
Saving Grace #2 – Great Coaches, Influences and Mentors	12
Forget About Clean Eating	14
A Deficit is a Deficit	16
Why We Must Be Objective	18
The Importance of Flexibility	20
Worrying About Numbers.....	22
Lifting Heavy Things	25
Newbies (Beginners)	25
Intermediates.....	26
Advanced Trainees.....	27
There Are No Secrets.....	28
Forget About Clean Eating	28
Objectivity	28
Flexibility	28
It's Only a Number	29
Resistance is Vital.....	29
Caloric Deficits	29

About Me

First of all, before you read this short guide, I want you to know a little more about me. As I write this I am 23 years old, currently in college and have been involved in some form of athletics since the age of 8. I began strength training as a result of my involvement in junior high athletics and once I graduated high school I became infatuated with bodybuilding. I created www.jcdfitness.com for two reasons: the first being a place to share my thoughts and speak my mind without censorship. The second reason is because I was sick and tired of seeing so much misinformation floating around the fitness community online. I was tired of reading about the [*exercises for ultimate fat loss*](#) and the [*why you should eat multiple meals per day*](#) articles all over the place. I created JCDFitness for all those who wanted a **No-BS Approach to Looking Great Naked**.

I feel that I should preface this book by saying I am not any different than anyone reading this. I am your average height and build; I am not a genetic freak. I was not a collegiate athlete nor am I someone that spends 10+ hours in the gym every week. I am not a diet or training guru who's only out to get your money and I sure as hell do not wear a lab coat. Everything I have learned about diet, training, bodybuilding, strength training, and nutrition is purely self-taught. **Note:** I am still learning every day and I have no formal degree in exercise science or biology. Everything I have learned is from pure interest in pushing my body's limits and a very vain pursuit to look great with my clothes off (at least I'm honest, right?). I have made many mistakes as you will read in my articles but over time I have developed an approach, a mindset, if you will. I have grasped the importance of objectivity and the importance of setting realistic goals when building the body you long for. With that in mind, I have no secrets to share with you.

Mainly, I wish to share some insight about how I go about this lifestyle. I learned a long time ago that 80% of our results stem from 20% of our work. The first time I saw this in action was during my early athletic years. It's amazing what a great coach can do for an athlete. He or she (coach) makes them (athlete) do all of the right things in short intervals over an extended period of time and before you know it, a decent athlete is developed.

Regarding my current philosophy, I believe that our success should come from doing the minimum amount of work. I am far from advocating laziness but suggesting that when we go to work, it must be efficient and as effective as possible. Thus, when

we spend less time building our bodies, we spend more time on the truly important facets of our lives. I don't know about you but I do not find much joy in being under the bar or sweating during my boring cardio. I do find joy in drinking new flavors of beer with my friends, watching a late night movie with the family and getting to know the foreign exchange students on campus, among many other interesting endeavors I always seem to find myself involved with.

I simply view my fitness pursuits as a constructive and healthy hobby as opposed to an obsession. Strength training, bodybuilding, and any other fitness-related activities should be fun and interesting but they should not consume your life, unless of course it provides for your family and it's what you're passionate about. However, if that is the case, my writing is not for you. My writing is for the average Joe and Jane who wishes to look great naked and be free of the neurosis and anxiety associated with *getting everything right* all the damn time.

The Problem

The average fitness enthusiast usually undergoes a consistent flow of criticism. Coworkers never seem to understand our 5 a.m. training sessions or why we sometimes go on a controlled calorie diet. They cannot fathom our reason for keeping track of our calories on a notepad throughout the day. Some may even ridicule us for being *health conscious* or for watching our weight. It's alright, they don't need to understand.

The problem lies within our own minds, though; forget about what everyone else thinks. In my own experience and with those I have worked with personally, we are typically our own worst enemy. Nothing is ever perfect, nothing is ever good enough. Our minds are flooded with excuses: "I didn't train enough," "I ate too much," "I didn't eat *enough*," "I am not strong enough," "I am not thin enough," "I will never be *like them*," blah, blah, blah. Surely you see what I'm getting at here. In short, our psyche tends to be way off. Objectivity can be found nowhere.

I believe it's safe to assume we seemingly find a way to royally screw ourselves when it comes to making the ~~right~~, most sane decisions regarding our fitness lifestyle. Objectivity gets lost in the mounds of media we succumb to on a daily basis. Our sound judgment flies out the door as soon as we learn about the latest and greatest fad diet. We tend to believe that because the magazine ad reads "lose 10lbs in 2 days without dieting" in bold font on the front cover, 10lbs of body fat will magically be gone in 48 hours. It's a false hope that is making for a bunch of rich publishers and pissed off house wives (among many others).

Despite the unfavorable results and unfulfilled promises, it seems we still run ourselves into the ground, obsess over the minutiae and never seem to get anywhere. Our goals seem so far away and giving up is thought to be inevitable. After a few weeks, our hard work and dedication tends to plummet, we go back to our old habits and the cycle repeats again in another few months once we've forgotten about the past screw-ups.

Why does this happen? What is *wrong* with us? Why can't we fix this issue? Are we destined to be on this rollercoaster forever? The problem lies within our approach. If our judgment is clouded by mainstream filth on a consistent basis, we have no way to make sound decisions or filter out the bullshit. We must first have the fundamentals in

place; then we must put the pieces together logically and make sense of the data. This is where I hope to shed some light on how I have struggled, what I've learned as a result of my mistakes, and how I continually go through life without the constant neurosis and anxiety I used to experience and have witnessed many other fitness enthusiasts experience.

A Myriad of Mistakes

If you've read my [article](#) on how I went from newbie to intermediate trainee, you know that I have been at this strength training/bodybuilding thing for some time. I guess it's safe to say I started at the age of about 13-14 years. It's hard to believe one could be doing something for close to 10 years and still make all the mistakes that I have. Initially, I was just fine because I was 13 and under the supervision of a handful of coaches. Fast forward through high school and I was under the supervision of many great coaches. I was actually the strongest, fastest and in the best shape I had ever been in my entire life.

Mistake #1

Once it was all over, the graduation party commenced; I retired from 10 + years of athletics and picked up my first bodybuilding magazine. Oh what a mistake that was! I will never forget the day I thumbed through that fine piece of garbage. I knew exactly what I wanted to look like and how I was going to get there. I knew that through hard work, dedication, and by consuming all the supplements advertised in the publication, I was only a few years away from looking like my heroes.

The problem lied in my naivety. I suspect every young guy experiences this at some point, especially if he is interested in altering his body composition through resistance training and a proper diet. We tend to believe something because we see it staring back at us through the media. Our minds accept what we see as gospel no matter how far it may be from the truth.

Mistake #2

I believed what they wanted me to believe. They, in this case, equal the fitness marketers and publishers. I really believed the meatheads on the cover of (insert any of the popular bodybuilding magazines here) were *all natural* and achieved their level of strength and size by hard work alone. I never would've dreamed they were sipping a giant pharmaceutical cocktail. Women are guilty of this as well. They forget that most images of the beautiful models they envy are often heavily edited and sometimes airbrushed before hitting the magazine cover. This creates nothing but frustration and false hope when it comes to pursuing our athletic and aesthetic goals.

Mistake #3

I followed all the shoddy advice I found in magazines, on the internet and even in some books I had recently acquired. My intentions were great, however I was highly misguided. I found myself lifting 5-6 days per week just like my favorite bodybuilders were doing. I was eating 6-8 times per day, just like they were. My ideas about food began to change regarding what was healthy and unhealthy. I started counting every single calorie and the food scale became my most prized possession. I weighed and measured everything.

Let me first say there is **nothing wrong with measuring and keeping track of your intake**. The only time it becomes a *bad* thing is when it consumes you. My obsession had finally gotten the best of me as I remained a hermit for about 6 months. I didn't go out for dinner due to my fear of not being able to weigh and measure each pepperoni on my pizza. When I did go out I just drank water while everyone else enjoyed chips, dip, nachos, fried onions, cheesecake, and beer; you get the picture. I was miserable and people made fun of me. Some of them even resented me for thinking my approach to diet was *superior*. I didn't believe or think I was better than them or *too* good to eat with them; I was simply obsessed with this wacked out bodybuilding mentality.

I was in desperate need of salvation and was well on my way to finding it.

My Saving Grace

As I alluded, I was in desperate need of rescuing. It was the summer of 2007 and I will never forget what I discovered. I was perusing a bodybuilding/strength training forum that I still frequent to this day. It's occupied by hundreds of brilliant minds; however it's probably the harshest and most obscene forum you'll ever experience.

Anyway, since I was new there I was lost in the sea of information. This was actually one of my very first real forum experiences. When I first discovered all the different nutrition and training forums, I mainly lurked and eventually started posting on Ellington Darden's popular HIT board. Someone noticed my questions and posting, so they messaged me privately to let me know of Lyle McDonald's forum; I then signed up a few days later.

Saving Grace #1 – Intermittent Fasting

One of the first threads I came across was by a Swede with the screen name of Work. He was experimenting with an approach that mixed intermittent fasting with bodybuilding and strength training. He first did a few test runs of how it affected body composition in a deficit, then maintenance and eventually did a nice little hypercaloric experiment. When I first read the thread, I thought this guy was out of his ever-loving mind. If you've been around bodybuilding and/or fitness for any amount of time, you know it's a must that you eat six times per day or your metabolism crashes and your muscles fall off. It's just the truth!

Well, I was in for a massive shock. I started emailing him with questions and concerns. He quickly answered them and pointed me back to the thread. I studied that thing like I studied for my ACT's back in high school. I decided that I was tired of this stupid obsession I had with eating all the time, depriving myself of food I enjoyed and the general crappy feelings often associated with this type of obsessive behavior. I needed a change and fast. I will never forget the first night I sat down to a huge steak, potatoes and dessert – that all fit in with my calorie goals for the day. The first time doing this was a real mental struggle but I was determined to change my mind. I had to rid myself of the false beliefs.

One day eventually became a week. One week became one month. The experiment went on for about 3-4 months during a maintenance diet to prove to myself

that meal frequency didn't make a lick of difference regarding body composition. Guess what I discovered; my body composition did not change for better or worse. I had proven to myself that as long as adequate protein, carbohydrate and fats were present, the number of meals during the day became minutiae in the grand scheme. You can read more about my story and how intermittent fasting helped me in my [Meal Frequency Article](#).

I must say thanks to Martin Berkhan (known as Work on the forums) of [Leangains](#) who has helped me tremendously thanks to his innovative intermittent fasting approach.

Saving Grace #2 – Great Coaches, Influences and Mentors

During my journey I've had the pleasure of working with great coaches along the way. While I was getting lost in all the bodybuilding madness, as you might imagine, my training suffered incredibly. I was stuck on the latest and greatest body part splits that were doing nothing for me. I started my search for a great coach, someone who could help me take my physique to the next level. I will admit that I got incredibly lucky on this front. I was up late one night, searching around on bodybuilding.com and I found a guy by the name of Lawrence Hosannah. He quickly kicked my ass into high gear, put me on an upper/lower split and brought me back to the basics. He was the breath of fresh air I so desperately needed. I worked with him for a total of 6 months and he is the one responsible for the condition I was in for the photo shoot I did that summer (you can see one of the photos by checking out my picture at the top right of my website). Read more about my experience with Lawrence [here](#).

When I decided I wanted to learn more about intermittent fasting from the man himself, I set up a consultation with Martin Berkhan. I have actually worked with him multiple times and my most memorable experience was consulting with him whilst on a hypercaloric diet for lean muscle gain. I must say his methods are fantastic and I owe much of my knowledge to having the chance to work with guys like Lawrence and Martin. If either of you are reading this, thank you so much for all you've poured into me. I am forever grateful.

While I have not worked personally with the following people, I must say I consider them great influences in my writing and my approach. [Lyle McDonald](#) is probably the most influential to me simply because he has a way of taking the most complicated stuff and dumbing it down for the average Joe/Jane. His writing style is

incredible and very easy to understand. I also love that he is very blunt and direct. If you've never heard of him, I highly recommend spending some time on his site and checking out his [books](#). Some of my personal favorites are [Ultimate Diet 2.0](#), the [Guide to Flexible Dieting](#) and [The Rapid Fat Loss Handbook](#).

Another person I have much respect for is [Alan Aragon](#). This dude knows just what the hell he is talking about. I personally love his whimsical way of putting a twist on things and I love to read his forum posts (chocolate milk anyone?) as they are chock full of humor. He also likes to tear apart all the bullshit dogma that seems to be spewing forth from personal trainers' mouths everywhere. If you haven't checked out his [research review](#), you are missing out on a ton of great information. Plus it's only \$10 bucks a month; get it.

In the next section, I am going to explain exactly how I go about this whole fitness lifestyle. I don't make any excuses, I don't overcomplicate things, and as you might imagine, I do not go for any bullshit. I hope it will shed some light on how I approach everything fitness related; hopefully my approach will increase your quality of life and help you enjoy your fitness endeavors even more so than ever before.

This section will also cover a few different subjects I know we all struggle with or have struggled with in the past. First, I will cover the dogma known as *clean eating* and then I will cover the importance of objectivity, flexibility and why you shouldn't worry about numbers. Then I will discuss training protocols and what I generally recommend depending on your experience level.

Forget About Clean Eating

Forget About Clean Eating. No, really. I want you to wipe that redundant phrase from your brain. There is no such thing as *clean eating*; it does not exist. First we have to think about where the phrase came from. While I do not believe anyone truly knows the origin, I believe it came about in the realm of bodybuilding, in particular when discussing healthy foods as opposed to unhealthy foods.

If someone were to ask you to give examples of *clean food*, your response may go something like this: oatmeal, whole wheat bread and pasta, chicken breast, lean beef, veggies, eggs, dairy, fruit, etc. If they ask you for some examples of *dirty food* your response probably goes something like this: pizza, burgers, fries, ice cream, chocolate, candy, fast food, any white starch (bread, rice, and pasta), etc.

Now why do we tend to say one type of food is worse than any other? The main difference is caloric density. So called *dirty* foods tend to be denser than *clean* food. Another reason is some of the foods that are labeled whole wheat or whole grain tend to have more micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) and fiber than their refined counterparts; thus being labeled *clean*. Fast food and processed food tend to have more saturated fat and sodium than unprocessed food, however many have this funny idea that given equal calorie balance, *clean* food is partitioned or used by the body better than *dirty food*. That makes me laugh. Keep in mind that I am coming from a body composition standpoint; I am not referring to long-term health in this regard.

The problem is this has never been proven. It's some silly dogma that will not lie in it's grave; I have seen plenty of people get really fat on *clean* bulks and some get really lean eating McDonalds every day. So, what does this say about our theory? Either it's completely wrong, or these people are unique snowflakes. I am going with the former suggestion.

Let's look at just how silly this mentality is. Let's take a *dirty* food for example. What is a pizza made of? It consists of dough (bread), tomato sauce, cheese, meat, veggies and olive oil. Now all of those foods by themselves are probably deemed *clean* by most bodybuilders and fitness enthusiasts, but when you slap them all together to make a nice pizza pie, they immediately call it a cheat meal and pass up on a perfectly great dinner. Doesn't that just sound ludicrous?

Now I know this is probably not what you expected to hear. If you are a little shocked, I understand and it's okay. The main point I want you to focus on is that when looking at the big picture, calories are the main determinant when it comes to weight gained or lost. When I am working with clients and friends who are struggling with this negative mentality of good and bad food, I have them start by **setting their protein intake first**, I make them agree to swallow 3-5 grams of fish oil per day and then I fill in the rest with whatever they want to eat (usually a mix of clean and dirty food). By doing it this way, we allow them to break their habit and discover that as long as protein requirements are met and calories are consistent, there are no ill effects on body composition. It's really that simple.

I feel I must reiterate something. This is for all of the people who make the argument of "what if you have a hypocaloric diet that is nothing but protein and a diet that is nothing but table sugar?" "Will the weight lost be the same and will the ratio of fat mass to lean body mass be the same?" The answer is a big, fat NO. That's exactly why I **set protein intake first** before any other nutrient. There is always someone trying to say that calories do or don't matter. The fact is overall caloric intake matters when looking at weight lost or gained. A caloric surplus always leads to an increase in body mass and a caloric deficit always leads to a decrease in body mass. Now in order to ensure your body composition changes in your favor (retention of lean body mass and the burning of body fat), you must consume a minimum amount of protein. I always say to aim for >1 gram per pound of body weight when you are dieting. So while a dietary deficit is all that's needed to successfully lose weight, if you want most of that weight to be the chub around your waist instead of the hard earned muscles under your winter cushion, a diet higher in protein is going to be most optimal.

Before I go any further I must profess I am not advocating a diet full of greasy burgers and milkshakes. Your diet should definitely include lots of beer and hot wings too (just not every meal). **On a more serious note**, what I am advocating is to not fret about including them (foods you love) in your diet. Of course I believe your diet should include a **daily minimum** of fresh fruit and whole foods such as potatoes, legumes, lean meats and lots of veggies, but we live in a world which is imperfect. We also live in a world that has fast food and some of it actually tastes pretty good. I like to eat it fairly frequently when my energy levels are high and there's no problem with that. If you have a large expenditure and want to eat it, I say eat it. The ideals I want you to grasp are moderation and variety. When I get sick of my routine, daily meals of chicken

breast, bananas and peanut butter, I like to grab a few of my favorite cheeseburgers or head to the local pizza joint down the road. It's nice to eat something different for a change and the only ill effect I may experience is some bloat from the extra sodium I am not used to consuming. That's it though; no sweat, no worries.

I must also note that I do eat fresh fruit every single day and try to eat some veggies with dinner. I firmly believe your diet should be **based upon whole foods first** and then you have the freedom to add the goodies as you desire.

For all of you who doubt me and think I'm absolutely crazy right about now, I have an experiment I want you to try. Take the next month, eat only enough to maintain your weight (your [maintenance intake](#)) and keep strict track of your calories (for experimental purposes). Go to the local grocer and pick up some ice cream, pizza and whatever it is you have been restricting from your diet for however long. Start incorporating these foods into your daily diet and just see what happens. I think you'll be surprised that you will not get fat or lose your abs. You will likely retain some water as many of these foods deemed *unclean* contain more sodium but the water will drop, trust me.

On that note, one more thing I must cover is the dietary deficit.

A Deficit is a Deficit

Regardless of what some of the crazies on the internet might tell you, the only factor that contributes to weight loss or gain is energy balance. In fact, a good primer on this topic is Lyle McDonald's article [The Energy Balance Equation](#).

You have many people all over the internet and many books stating that you must eat a certain food or drink a certain magic potion to achieve that chiseled, toned physique. These people are usually sold to one way of eating or dieting, much like a closed minded religious zealot is sold to their belief. It's not that their way doesn't work, it's just not the only way to get it done; it's not the way I prefer to skin the cat. These people make things a lot more complicated than they need to be. Carbohydrates are not the devil, saturated fat will not halt your fat loss and tomatoes are perfectly fine on a diet. Seriously, there was some talk on a certain forum at one point about how tomatoes are not allowed on a diet. What a joke! Anyway, I am done rambling.

Now to get a bit more specific, the food we eat greatly influences what kind of *weight* we lose. I am not referring to eating only *clean* or *dirty foods* in this sense but

the amount of protein we eat will greatly influence the amount of lean body mass we retain on a diet. Anything and everything you would ever want to know about protein is written in Lyle's book righteously titled [The Protein Book](#).

As a general rule of thumb, the universally accepted amount of protein at energy balance for those engaged in resistance training and those leading an active lifestyle is about 1g per pound or about 2.2g per kilogram of body weight. This is also a good suggestion for those looking to gain lean body mass when eating a caloric excess.

Now protein requirements are directly related to energy balance. The steeper your deficit, the more protein you need. For moderate deficits (-300 to -500 calories), I suggest around 1.2-1.4 grams per pound of body weight. When your deficit is a bit more aggressive (-1000 calories), I would recommend about 1.5-1.6 grams per pound of body weight. If you are utilizing a much bigger deficit (-1500 to -2000 calories), it's smart to go all the way up to 2 grams per pound. Many people will opt for 2 grams per pound when they perform a protein-sparing-modified-fast for [Rapid Fat Loss](#). The reason for this is as you restrict your energy intake, the body starts pulling energy from multiple tissue sources. Energy is going to either come from lean protein (muscle tissue) or from adipose tissue (love handles, belly fat, flabby ass, etc). The way you greatly influence your fat loss to lean body mass loss ratio is by increasing your protein intake. The body in return has no reason to use your muscles for fuel; thus you retain your lean body mass whilst burning the fat off of your portable seat cushion.

Why We Must Be Objective

Objectivity is one of the most important and sought after traits one can possess. For me, objectivity came with time and acquired knowledge. When I was first beginning, I didn't have the mindset or the foundation to be completely objective about my goals or progress. Luckily I had coaches who told me what to do and how to do it; therefore I didn't have much of a choice. Later, when I was on my own, I had to learn how to look at myself and my training the way they (my coaches) did; with an objective eye and mind. This is a lot easier said than done, so bear with me here.

Objectivity is not something you can develop over night. It takes time, but you can learn to be objective with regards to your appearance, training progress, goals, aspirations and overall outlook when it comes to this lifestyle. If you are having a hard time developing objectivity, I highly suggest hiring a coach and learning to see yourself through their eyes. The beauty of having a coach is they do the thinking for you and this often saves you from making irrational decisions based on emotions of what you may falsely perceive about yourself or your progress. A very common example of this is people who think they need to go on a diet when they are clearly in very good shape; they just fail to see themselves objectively or have unrealistic goals.

We must realize we are often our toughest judge and without having an objective eye to watch over and guide us, we tend to shoot ourselves in the foot. Developing an objective mindset will only come once you remove your emotions from your outcome. If you do not allow yourself to get attached to a specific result, you are more likely to make rational decisions and be in a better mindset to make changes when necessary. A great example of this is someone who has a contest 16 weeks out and feels they have to be in absolute perfect shape by the time of the contest, so what do they do? They drop their calories super low to begin with, start with crazy amounts of exercise and run themselves into the ground 8 weeks into their new routine. By the end of the 16 weeks they have lost appreciable amounts of muscle mass; they are usually so drained and worn out that they often come in flat and puffy for the show. It's all because they were sold out to a certain outcome and they completely sabotaged themselves as a result. This is where a coach comes in handy in case you haven't developed the temperance to handle these types of scenarios.

Once you arrive though, it's smooth sailing most of the way. I cannot say I am completely objective about my own training all the time. When I begin getting anxious or start thinking irrationally, I will consult with a few folks I respect to get my head out of the gutter and they always whip me back into the right mental state within a week or so. Accountability is always nice, no matter what endeavor you are embarking on.

The Importance of Flexibility

Let's face it, if you are reading this you are imperfect; you are human. Our daily lives are rarely the same 100% of the time. Sure, they might seem fairly constant, but "stuff" always comes up. Sometimes you miss the bus, catch a cold, fall down the stairs, skip a meeting, yell at your boss or play hooky from school. My point, is that in order to be successful at this diet and training stuff (or anything for that matter), we must allow for some flexibility in our approach. Nothing is going to be perfect all of the time. Nothing is always going to work out exactly the way we planned.

I have met many fitness enthusiasts who had some serious rituals. They worked out, ate and did everything fitness related at the same time, every single day. If you ever noticed their routine being interrupted, they were a nervous wreck. They were often unpleasant to be around and they had this misconception that if one small thing slipped up, all of their efforts were in vain. This may sound silly to you, but to others I'm sure it sounds very familiar.

The fundamental flaws present with this type of thinking are restriction and obsession. The world is not going to end if you don't get to work out today because the job kept you up late. There is always tomorrow. I promise the sun will rise if you decide to eat that jelly doughnut with your coffee tomorrow morning considering you haven't gone off your diet in 4 months.

My approach is about as flexible as one can get. When it comes to a maintenance diet, all I do is set out to eat a certain amount of protein each day, then I fill in the gaps with whatever I have in my kitchen or whatever I feel like eating that day. Now this can be going out to dinner with my girlfriend, eating wings with the guys or meeting up at an all you can eat sushi joint. Of course I do not eat like this all the time as it can get expensive and really hard to account for my intake, but it's not something I abstain from. If I plan to have a big meal at night and don't want to go too far over my maintenance intake, I will eat nothing but protein and veggies during the day up until dinner time. That night, I make sure to eat heartily. The next day I just resume my normal eating and get on with my life. I simply cannot be bothered with worrying about getting it exactly right all the time.

I also utilize this approach in the weight room, although it's a bit more structured. I always focus on progression and have a goal in mind but I do not force the progress. If I plan on pushing a certain amount of weight, arrive at the gym and feel like a flame broiled piece of manure, I will either take it really easy or just wait until the next day to push the envelope. There is no reason for being super rigid on yourself and no reason to stress over petty stuff.

If I am on a fat loss diet and some friends want to go out for beer, I will eat light during the day (like I mentioned above) and then enjoy some food and drinks with them at the party. Now being on a diet, I would obviously be more moderate with my food choices and quantity but I am not going to sit at home by myself because I cannot count calories during the festivities.

The main point is that you have to accept the fact that nothing will be perfect 100% of the time. Do the best with the time and circumstances you are given and make it work for you.

Worrying About Numbers

When I first started on my fitness journey I became obsessed with numbers, whether they be on the scale, weight gain/loss or tracking calories. Everything had to have some kind of order and much of my anxiety revolved around tracking all the numbers; excel was a close companion of mine. The truth is, in the grand scheme, numbers are not all *that* important. Allow me to explain why.

Have you ever been on a fat loss diet and predicted that you would lose 'X' amount of pounds/kg's each week but it didn't pan out like you expected? If so, you are of the majority. Most people will set their intake to around -500 calories per day which should end up with about one pound of fat lost per week. In a perfect world, every Sunday you would step on the scale and magically be one pound lighter. This is not the case though. In my personal experience, weight loss (or gain) is hardly ever linear. It's fairly common to not drop weight for 2-3 weeks only to wake up 2-3 pounds lighter the following day. This happens all the damn time and it's one of the most frustrating issues we face when dieting. This is where people tend to get into trouble. After the first week or so with no weight loss, they will drop calories lower which usually affects their adherence as well as their performance. This is where being objective comes into play. Normally, I won't change any variables until the third week. If weight loss or improved appearance is not evident, then I make adjustments, but no sooner.

So this leads me to the idea of fretting about the exact amount of calories you consume each day. I will say that during certain circumstances it's probably a good idea to watch your calories very closely. This is dependent upon the goal and can vary by individual, but I find it better to shoot for some sort of weekly average. When you think about it, our expenditure can be affected in so many ways that it's impossible to ever ingest the exact amount our bodies need each and every day. This is why putting an exact number on calories to eat at any given time can seem cumbersome and sort of silly at times.

There are three specific instances when I believe one should closely track their intake. The first one is during a fat loss diet. Doing some quick math and getting an idea of how much you need to be eating to achieve a deficit takes about five minutes. Once we have this arbitrary number available we just set our protein intake, set other

nutrients (carbohydrate and fat) and aim to hit that number daily. This part is simple, really.

The second instance is for the [skinny guy who is desperate to gain weight](#) and needs to do some serious eating. The problem is most skinny guys who piss and moan about eating all the time are never eating enough. Therefore, in this case, it's of utter importance they track their calories to ensure they are eating enough each day. Hell, when I get really busy and am running around campus all day long, I know I have to make sure I eat enough to be in a calorie surplus and it's not always easy.

The third instance is the one I believe to be the most important – maintenance. Just think about that word for a minute. Maintenance is this weird, gray area that most fitness folk know very little about. The fact is most of us are either spending our time on a fat loss diet or trying to gain weight that we've never thought too much about a maintenance diet. Like I said, for many this is uncharted territory, so I believe it's important to track calories for a decent amount of time to establish your maintenance intake. Once this is done, you will probably be able to eye-ball your portions and get by without counting. I counted for so long that I can pretty much eat whatever, whenever and maintain fairly easily. I only ever really need to track my calories when I am hypercaloric or shedding some of the winter fluff.

Another number many people worry too much about is [body fat percentages](#). I now only go by the mirror method as most of the formal testing methods can result in an inaccurate reading. Not all of them are *too* far off but they do have their flaws. Plus, in the grand scheme, we are not necessarily after a specific number, we are after a certain look. I believe many get wrapped up in a number because they see a picture of some model with a caption that reads: *Mark gained 20lbs of muscle and dieted down to **5.867594% body fat***. So in their mind they are thinking "I must get to 5.867594% body fat in order to look great like the model." This is so far from the truth and it really affects the way we go about our decision making.

First of all, it's faulty to compare ourselves to others because we are not them and we will never be them. Second, we don't know how much editing the photographer/designer performed. Picking pictures out of magazines is not always the best place to get motivational material. If you are concerned with monitoring body fat, I believe the best methods are the mirror-method and the get-back-into-your-skinny-pants method. The latter is where you judge your progress on body fat loss by the way

your clothes fit over time. When I don't want to use the scale I will pick a pair of pants that are too tight and judge progress by how much better they fit each week.

Here are some numbers we should certainly focus on. If you are into fitness for aesthetic reasons, you should be monitoring your progress in some form or fashion. Usually this equates to added weight on the bar, a faster time, longer duration, etc. In this case it's imperative that you focus on being better than you were the last time you trained. This is where keeping a [logbook](#) comes in handy. These numbers are very important to keep track of because I find it really easy to forget the weight and reps I performed on each exercise from my previous workout. Due to my failing memory, I write everything down in a notebook. This is a key point to gaining strength, building muscle and improving performance.

Now, let's talk about the process of creating that beautiful physique.

Lifting Heavy Things

In this section I will outline some training methods for beginners through intermediate trainees as well as discuss some effective training methods for different goals. This section is heavily focused on resistance training simply because there is no other way to create that Adonis-like physique without it. That is unless you are some genetic freak that naturally holds a hell of a lot of lean body mass and a low body fat percentage. If that is you, you have no business reading this; go bottle up whatever it is you have and sell the crap out of it!

Newbies (Beginners)

In the beginning, God created the barbell. Out of the steel shavings and scraps he created heavy plates to slide on the ends for added resistance. Once he was done, he gave man a copy of [Starting Strength](#) and said to drink your milk and eat your veggies. Then, he said “come back to me when you are bigger, stronger and faster”.

Sorry if my story-telling is lame. I was aiming to make a funny and a point at the same time. My point is, if you didn't get it, that a majority of people starting out could and maybe should start with a program such as Starting Strength. My reasoning for this is because it's a raw, simplified program that focuses solely on strength gains. Another reason that this program is such a good one to start with is because it lays a foundation in the principles of strength training. In short, it just makes sense. Once someone is done with the program they should be proficient in the squat, deadlift, rows, horizontal and vertical press. After the groundwork is laid out, you have a nice foundation to build upon.

Now Starting Strength is not the only beginners program. Just about any low(er) volume full body routine will work. Heck, you don't even have to do full body training. However, you must ensure that whatever training you decide on incorporates the main lifts (the ones I mentioned above) and that your focus is on getting stronger over time. Ideally your training frequency will be that of 3-4 times per week. Of course you can make substitutions for the main movements if you like; such as leg press in place of squats, Romanian deadlifts in place of conventional deadlifts, incline instead of flat bench press, etc. If you do not have access to a gym or a place to perform these lifts but

only have machines, those will work too. The all important factor is to continually get stronger on any given movement.

The beauty of being a newbie is the consistent, linear progress to be had. It's not unheard of for beginners to add weight every workout or 3-4 times per week depending on their training schedule. That is assuming they are training sensibly, eating well and coping with their usual life stressors. At this stage in the game I am not too concerned with training for anything else other than strength, even if you are an aspiring bodybuilder. One must first become proficient with the fundamentals; once you are stronger, then you can make some changes to your routine if the goal is hypertrophy.

Intermediates

An intermediate trainee can usually be classified as someone who has around one year of proper training under their belt and can no longer recover from training heavily three times per week. Their gains start slowing down and for the most part are no longer linear. Sure, there may be a few weeks where they consistently gain strength on a lift or two, but it hardly lasts as it did when they were a beginner. Instead of making progress from workout to workout, their gains will likely be every other workout or a frequency of about once a week. There are no absolutes here, it all depends on many factors but this is the gist of it.

Since an intermediate trainee is considerably stronger than the newbie, their training routine will have to be altered in such a fashion to allow ample recovery between workouts. Pushing yourself near maximal loads every single workout is over unless you want to become miserable, overtrained and prone to injury. If you are adamant about full body work you can opt for something like [Hypertrophy Specific Training](#), Bill Starr's 5x5, The Texas Method or [Lyle's Bulking program](#) for the upper/lower split enthusiasts. These are just a handful of programs that are suitable for the intermediate trainee. The reason they work so well is because the intensities are varied and/or there is a period of light weeks followed by 4-6 weeks of approaching maximal work.

I should also mention that The Texas Method and Bill Starr's 5x5 are pure strength oriented routines. If you want to do something that will promote hypertrophy, you should go with Lyle's routine, another upper/lower split setup or the full body Hypertrophy Specific template. Of course you can use the pure strength templates but be sure to add some assistance work to achieve a bit more volume to promote

hypertrophy. [DC Training](#) is a very effective way to train (for strength and size) when one is approaching the upper intermediate level of development. Dante Trudell (DC) is known for taking guys who think they are at the end of their rope and squeezing some more gains out of them.

As an intermediate trainee, gains in muscle mass and strength come slower than you'd probably like. Like it or not, it's something you must deal with.

Advanced Trainees

This is the place many dread and aspire to reach at the same time. The dreaded feelings come from knowing that you will not likely get much bigger or stronger unless you take drugs. The positive side of aspiring to reach advanced status is that you will look great and perform even better (if you compete in powerlifting, athletics etc). In theory, reaching advanced status from beginning to end can take about 4-5 years according to Lyle McDonald's article "[What's My Genetic Muscular Potential?](#)" Now this is assuming the trainee's approach is ideal from the get-go. We are also assuming no injuries and a stress-free environment (yeah right; that is optimism at its best).

However, the interesting thing is that everyone really has the opportunity to reach this level if they desire to do so. Most won't and that's okay. I am still a few years from being advanced and that is assuming I do not incur any more injuries during the next couple of years.

Now the progression for an advanced trainee is very slow. They are often looking to make gains every 3-4 weeks as opposed to weekly like an intermediate. Many serious bodybuilders or competitive powerlifters will start taking anabolic steroids as they approach the advanced status. They pretty much have to if they intend on competing in widely known competitions.

Training for an advanced person often calls for periods of specialization work in which they focus on a few body parts and/or specific lifts for a certain amount of time. Once the cycle is over, they switch emphasis to another set of lifts for different muscle groups. Progress is slow but still to be had. If you reach this level of development, pat yourself on the back and drink a beer every now and then to celebrate your accomplishment.

There Are No Secrets

If you have gotten this far, you already know my general philosophy on this body re-composition thing. There are absolutely no secrets; none. You'll never find me pushing snake oil or special fixes as a substitute for hard work and dedication. You will never get this from me. I simply do not believe in sugar coating material that people want and need to hear.

Allow me to quickly sum up my **No BS Approach to Looking Great Naked**. This is also for those of you who skimmed through the guide. 😊

Forget About Clean Eating

Your body doesn't know the difference between carbohydrate sources when they come from a bowl of your favorite sugary cereal or a whole grain bagel. The human body will use them the same way regardless of how you feel about *clean* or *dirty* eating. Pizza, cake, cookies, etc. are just a source of energy, albeit a bit denser than foods deemed *clean*. Regardless of the caloric density, remember, it's only a source of energy, end of story. Ideally you will eat plenty of fruits and veggies to cover your bases in terms of micronutrient requirements, but eating some treats daily to keep you sane is in no way problematic.

Objectivity

In order to be successful in the long term, you must be realistic with yourself and learn to take an approach that is objective in nature. Emotional reactions to daily shifts in bodyweight due to glycogen storage or water retention can be detrimental to your success when attempting to alter your body composition. If you become a slave to your emotions, you will get subpar results. If you aren't at this level yet, hire a coach to guide and call the shots for you. You will then become successful and learn more about yourself at the same time.

Flexibility

This is one of the most important ideals you can learn and apply to any area of your life. If you cannot develop the flexibility necessary to adjust to daily shifts in your schedule, success (in anything really) is likely to remain only a fantasy. Remember that it's okay to miss a workout, eat a last minute company luncheon or have some of

grandma Tillie's peanut butter cookies when she surprises you with a fresh product of her afternoon baking extravaganza. It's not the end of the world if you slip up, just write it off and resume your normal activities the following day. Apply the 80/20 rule here; 80% of your results come from 20% of your efforts. 1-2 cookies will not sabotage your hard work.

It's Only a Number

The weight on the scale, your body fat percentage, the grams of fat in your latte; remember they are only numbers. The most important aspect of keeping up with numbers is to ensure that you are headed in the right direction. For instance, if your goal is fat loss and you are steadily losing scale weight each week, you know you are headed in the right direction. You especially know this if you are keeping protein high, incorporating sane amounts of exercise and looking leaner in the mirror. The same idea goes for keeping track of other numbers such as calories and macros, etc. Numbers are present to guide you, not rule you. Who cares if you are 15% body fat if you are really muscular and look damn good? You will likely look better than the skinny guy at 12% due to their lack of muscle. It's all about perspective. A number is only a number.

Resistance is Vital

If you want to look like you lift weights, then you must, um, lift weights. There is no way to magically make your body composition change in a positive manner if resistance training is not happening. So remember, unless you are a genetic anomaly with a freakish amount of muscle mass prior to resistance training, it's time to make some form of training a permanent habit.

Caloric Deficits

There is no magic secret to fat loss. Eat less, move more and lift weights if you want to retain your muscle. There are many fad diets that promise the world but you don't have to get lost in the madness. Just focus on eating whatever you want (whilst maintaining a caloric deficit) with ample amounts of protein and have patience. How about that for a secret?

On that note, thank you for making it to the end of this guide. I really hope you enjoyed it, but more importantly, I hope it makes your fitness pursuits much easier and less complicated. I hope it keeps you from wasting your money on ridiculous supplements and phony advice from those who are only out to make your pocketbook thinner.

If you have any questions, my contact information is on my [website](#) at the very bottom.
Click on the link and you can [email or even call me](#).

JC