

# The Secrets of the Toolkit

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AS I HAVE GIVEN the basics of *Intervention* to my fellow coaches, a few reoccurring themes have emerged as they take back the key points to try them on themselves and their athletes. I refer to these as the secrets, in the same way ‘buy low, sell high’ is a secret.

This list represents a year or so of insights, follow up discussions and breakthroughs.

- ◆ Get stronger in the fundamental human movements.
- ◆ This is the Atkins Diet of lifting—by deliberately being imbalanced for a while in training, you balance the real imbalances.
- ◆ There is no punishment in doing patterns—learning and coming back to patterns is never wrong.

- ♦ It's okay to get gassed from patterns and grind movements.
- ♦ Symmetry workouts are undervalued for their metabolic hit.
- ♦ If you need explosive movements, check patterns, grinds and symmetry. Look at the triads.
- ♦ The 80/10/10 rule is a valuable tool. Spend the bulk of your time on what your goal is all about—throwing, cooking and eating.
- ♦ As you go on this path, make sure it expands you out—think about the spiral.
- ♦ The goal is to keep the goal, the goal! Focus on it, don't get caught up in a bunch of other things.

Remember the toolkit and put the following to memory—

*Most people will be in Quadrant Three, so just because you can do everything, doesn't mean you should. If you're a trainer or coach, learn to push people to Quadrant Three. You may spend your life convincing people they're not elite Special Forces or NFL players.*

### **Get stronger in the fundamental human movements.**

This is so obvious you might miss this important point, so pay attention: Almost universally, getting stronger is going to help you with your goals. Enough is enough when it comes to strength, but most people never even get close to the low-hanging fruit of strength training.

I work with men who gasp at my suggestion to bench bodyweight for 15 since they've never seen anyone that strong. Trust me, there are plenty of strong people on the planet. For fat

loss, getting stronger is like the one-stop shop for turning yourself into a fat-loss machine.

Get in the weightroom and strive to add plates or move the pin down or slide over to a heavier dumbbell. It is the simplest thing I can teach you.

**This is the Atkins Diet of lifting—by deliberately being imbalanced for a while in training, you balance the real imbalances.**

One of the things that made the most sense about the original Atkins Diet was the two-week induction program to completely remove every carbohydrate from the diet. The thinking was this: If I've been imbalanced with carbs, let's swing all the way to the opposite towards fat and protein to achieve that balance. It worked for many in his diet and it works in exercise.

There's a chance that for a few weeks, you will do lots of goblet squats, farmer walking and rolling on the ground. You may ignore some things from the normal way you usually do things. But this imbalance in one direction is going to balance things out. It also happens very quickly.

If you don't have an authentic squat pattern and you ignore your rhomboids, for example, it's going to catch up in sports and in the process of aging. My orthopedic surgeon told me that nothing makes him sadder than when the decision to perform hip replacement is based on being able to relieve oneself. Losing the squat pattern through disuse or disease can be addressed by either the trainer and the surgeon, depending on the severity.

Let's be a bit imbalanced for a few weeks to bring the glaring weaknesses up to some standard.

**There is no punishment in doing patterns—learning and coming back to patterns is never wrong.**

Many people consider the patterns—planks, batwings, HATs, goblet squats, farmer walks and basic rolling—to be beginner moves. True, we should teach these early and often, but advanced trainers often benefit more from the simple stuff than anything fancy I can dream up.

Pattern work can be fat burning. Pattern work can be correctives. Pattern work can make you stronger. Don't consider pattern work to be sinful, punishment, regressive or embarrassing. These moves might be the answer to your issues and questions.

**It's okay to get gassed from pattern and grind movements.**

I'm never sure how to handle people who just want to feel 'worked out.' I like to train people to be and do better. If your sport, or your ego, demands some workouts that curl you over, vomiting into a flower pot, you can get there with patterns and grinds. Front squats followed by a truck push for a mile will get you all you need no matter what your needs are today.

Patterns and grinds are where you want to light things up, not on the Olympic lifts.

**Symmetry workouts are undervalued for their metabolic hit.**

When I travel, I often use the hotel gym to one-arm work. What I find amazing is that symmetry work, like basic correctives, seems to wear me out as much as a tough workout. There is a great conversation going on right now about why this happens, but many fitness experts have been finding their fat-loss clients

get leaner doing corrective work and symmetry movements as opposed to more common movements like treadmills or cycles. It's worth keeping an eye on in the future.

Moreover, as I learned from my multiple wrist surgeries, training a healthy limb seems to spark the rehab in the limb that is in a cast. It is bizarre, but true. My return to normal was half the time of a normal patient according to my doctor and he thinks that my insistence on continuing to train around the injury and sling was a major factor. The body is one piece, one marvelous piece, and perhaps symmetry training reminds us that you may have two limbs, but one heart and one brain. Ideally.

**If an athlete needs explosive movements, check patterns, grinds and symmetry. Look at the triads.**

If.

Don't ignore that 'if.' Throwers, collision athletes and jumpers might need to snatch and clean & jerk. Grandma probably doesn't. Take the time to really search and deal with gaps, asymmetries and poor movement patterns before tossing bodyweight overhead at an Olympic lifting meet. The injuries come fast and hard in the quick lifts.

Spend quality time mastering the push press, the swing and the Litvinov family. For many of us, these three will be enough to break through any physical barriers or limitations. The O lifts changed my career, but I was physically, mentally and emotionally ready for the challenge. I also had months to master the movements before I had to compete in my main sport, too.

You may not have the years it takes to walk up the path to explosive movements in the weightroom.

If you do, get going.

**The 80/10/10 rule is a valuable tool. Spend the bulk of your time on what your goal is all about—throwing, cooking and eating**

Time is the key here. If you have 40 hours a week to spend on your goal, we get to have you in the weightroom for four hours of lifting and four hours of corrective work. My math is fuzzy, but that looks like about eight hours. The rest of the time should be working on your goal.

For fat loss, you would spend 32 hours a week shopping, cooking, measuring, weighing, and proactively dealing with eating and food. If you are a thrower...throw! If you are a hurdler, hurdle! If you are a sprinter, sprint! If you are a jumper, jump!

Now I have given away all my secrets as a track coach too.

**As you go on this path, make sure it expands you out—the spiral.**

There are dozens of authors who have said this better, but here it is: Be wary of getting your goal and discovering it wasn't worth it. Proper goal-setting should include expanding your life in every quadrant. Remember, the word 'fit' comes from the Old Norse word 'to knit.' Your life is your tapestry and it should have a great pictures, rich colors and a tight weave.

As I used to tell my students, "Your life is your message!"

**The goal is to keep the goal, the goal! Focus on it, don't get caught up in a bunch of other things.**

Although this point seems to contradict the previous point, remember this: As Chris Long points out to me all the time, "When you're up to your butt in alligators, it's too late to ask why you drained the swamp."

The best thing a personal trainer, life coach or good friend can do for you is to keep reminding you about your goal.

### **Coach Stevo's Case Three**

The client in this story is an older client who is very aware of Point A, but Point B has changed on him with age. He is seeking a place to aim for, even as he continues diligently marching forward. More importantly, even though he has the knowledge to answer all of the 10 questions, he's lost touch with the five principles of the *Intervention* toolkit and is ill-equipped to deal with the answers. His intervention might be as simple as reacquainting himself with the integrity of his own body.

*Four years ago, when he was training for Mr. Greater-Midvale, he really had things dialed in. Sometimes he goes back and to read his training journals from those days just to look for clues.*

*Foam Roll, Stretch, Dynamic Warmup*

*Back Squat, 5x5*

*Superset—*

*Leg Extension, 10x3*

*Leg Curl, 10x3*

*1 set each to failure*

*Superset—*

*Seated Calf Raise, 10x3*

*Standing Calf Raise, 10x3*

*1 set each to failure*

*That was a good workout. He could never do that workout now, though—too hard on the knees. He mostly sticks to the sliding hip sled for his leg work. Sometimes he*