

The 5-3-1 Lifetime Athlete System



You are, or certainly can be...a Lifetime Athlete. And becoming a Lifetime Athlete is as easy as 5-3-1. Start with the 5 foundational components of **Lifelong Health** (food, movement, sleep, ergonomics, and awareness). Then add the 3 essential elements of **Peak Performance** (training, recovery, and mindset). That's how you become -- and remain -- a **Lifetime Athlete**. This guide will explain that process.

The 5 Foundational Components of Lifelong Health

The 5 foundational components of Lifelong Health form the basis of how you establish a well-functioning body, mind, and spirit. What you eat, how you move and sleep, the way you function at work and in your personal environment, your awareness of your unique traits and preferences as well as the needs and characteristics of those around you...all matter. They are of equal importance and are both interdependent and interrelated. We'll take a look at each of those categories and go over some important principles in each area that will help you to maximize your health.

Food

Foods are the building blocks for growth, maintenance, and repair of our bodies. They also provide the fuel we use to store, create, and even recycle energy. The pursuit of food, its consumption, and its significance are critical aspects of human existence. Let's take a "science meets common sense" approach to food.

- **What *Not* to Eat:** Before you can even consider what you might want to ingest for optimal health, you need to "get a few things off the table" (and out of your pantry and body). Reducing, or eliminating, your consumption of highly processed, overly packaged, food-like substances will do wonders for your health and metabolism. In particular, there are three things to put on your "No" list.

- **Industrial Seed Oils:** These are the so-called “vegetable” oils which include canola, corn, cottonseed, safflower, soybean, sunflower oils, grapeseed, rice bran, sesame, and peanut oil. These oils are typically manufactured under high heat and pressure, generally contain caustic agents such as bleach, are excessively high in Omega-6 fatty acids, prone to oxidation, and often hydrogenated. They rampantly promote inflammation and metabolic dysregulation in your body. Seed oil consumption is strongly linked to poor health and accelerated aging. And these oils are a key ingredient in most processed and fast “food.”
- **Refined Sugars:** I’ll be the first to tell you that a little sugar here and there won’t hurt most people, because a healthy metabolism -- especially in an athlete -- can take it up and utilize it as a fuel source. But the high, chronic levels we have in modern society are just too taxing on metabolic health and are strongly related to the current obesity and diabetes pandemic. Fructose sometimes gets a bad rap, but when it’s packaged in natural fruit, it’s generally not problematic in even more than moderate quantities. It’s the refined stuff, as in table sugar (sucrose) or high fructose corn syrup, with which you need to be very careful.
- **Processed Grains:** This is a subject where “it depends” and a number of “if-then” statements need to be considered. If grains, and also many legumes, are prepared using the traditions that ancient humans have always used to make them more digestible and bioavailable (soaking, sprouting, fermenting, slow-cooking)...they can potentially be included in a healthy diet. However, there is substantial scientific evidence to support the position that most humans have at least some sensitivity to the antinutrients (plant defense mechanisms such as lectins and phytates) found in grains. They can promote “carb addiction,” impair nutrient absorption, and dysregulate blood sugar levels. Keep in mind, most things ground into light-colored powders are generally considered to be drugs. Less is definitely more here.
- **The Earth-Based Diet (EBD):** Now we can talk about what you should eat to properly feed and fuel your inner beast. It’s the Earth-Based Diet! The EBD relies upon a set of simple criteria that ensures you are checking most of the ideal nutrition boxes. It emphasizes general principles but still leaves you plenty of room for your own interpretation and application. As opposed to being entirely plant-based, or completely animal-based, the EBD is earth-based, just like your ancestral biology. Let’s examine the major characteristics of the EBD.
 - **Minimally processed** - Food that has not undergone too many transformations from its natural state. It looks like food in the way that fish, broccoli, or eggs represent their planetary origins.
 - **Simple packaging** - It doesn’t require a box or space-age container (think of meat and produce) and if it even has an ingredient list that’s only a couple of items (like cheese containing only milk, salt, and enzymes).
 - **Whole** - As in not too far removed from how it exists in nature.
 - **Fresh** - Food that has a shelf life and will spoil. It’s not a chemistry project that will last forever.

- **Local and seasonal** whenever possible - Food that takes advantage of regional production, minimizes shipping, and aligns with our genetics regarding seasonal availability.
- **Organic** (free of hormones, antibiotics, pesticides, and herbicides) - To the extent that this is accessible and affordable.
- **Grass-fed and finished, free-range and cage-free** - Animal products that represent respectful and ethical practices.
- **Environmentally sustainable** - Food sourced and produced in a manner that avoids negative repercussions to the planet.
- **Nutritious** - The most nutrient-dense, bioavailable food for building magnificent human beasts.
- **Delicious** - Enjoyable, palate-pleasing food that nourishes us on every level.
- **Quality** - It almost always matters, with just about everything, and this is especially true concerning food. When much of what we eat hits most of that EBD criteria, we can be assured of quality nutrition that enriches our lives in meaning, experience, and health.
- **Dining:** This is a ritual of great tradition throughout human existence, and you should strive to preserve this in your relationship with food. Eating should be a celebration of life, and it is good fortune that is meant to be shared. Food goes beyond mere sustenance, and dining in a joyous, communal, and festive manner (at least some of the time) should be your goal. This isn't to suggest we should eat to excess or practice gluttony, but that we should hold appreciation and even reverence toward food.
- **Calories/Macronutrients/Micronutrients:** On the more calculated side of eating, giving consideration to these constituents can provide great benefit in the pursuit of health.
 - **Calories** represent the energy value of food. While it is true that nutrition and body composition involve more than the concept of calories in/calories out, it's often useful to have a ballpark figure for your total daily caloric intake. Knowing roughly the amount of energy you need to consume when you are highly active (or not), and the amount required to maintain your ideal weight, is helpful.
 - **Macronutrients**, or macros, are the carbohydrate, fat, and protein molecules that your food contains. It is quite valuable to know approximately what percentage of each of the three macros your diet includes. This can aid you in selecting foods you like that can help you to hit the macro ratios that keep you looking and feeling your best.
 - **Micronutrients**, or micros, are the vitamins, minerals, and other beneficial compounds contained within your food. While a well-designed EBD usually covers most of the bases and prevents the large majority of deficiencies, there is a place for supplementation. This is especially true in the athletic individual (YOU). Sometimes you may need a little more of a particular micro, and working with your healthcare provider in this capacity can be quite effective. Analyzing data from tests of blood, saliva, urine, skin, DNA, and correlating this with your symptoms or goals is occasionally indicated.
 - **Vitamin S** is sunlight. It's that important. As modern humans we need to be cognizant of the need for sun, and work hard to get it. It's not just beneficial, it's

essential. I put it in the Food category because we have to consciously nourish ourselves with it.

- **Individualization:** If anyone tells you that he and only he (or she) knows the one perfect diet for all humans...run -- for your life! It's simply not true that one specific diet or meal plan works for every human beast. You have to experiment and personalize your own diet and this is dependent on your age, gender, goals, preferences, lifestyle, activity levels, genetics, and many other factors. Always keep an open mind, free of bias but with a little skepticism, to test and explore what foods work best for your unique needs. What works for you might not work best for me...and so on. Do your best to stay objective and not overly emotional about your diet. Dogma, doctrine, and name-calling seem to be prevalent in the food world. As Lifetime Athletes, we can do better than that.
- **Dynamic:** Food intake needs to be done in anticipation of or in response to your ever-evolving existence on planet earth. Dietary needs change all the time in relation to stress, seasons, training levels, growth, injury, and age...just to name a few. Exactly what you eat, how much, and when, should shift seamlessly as your requirements change.
- **Intuitive:** Eating should be intuitive. Some experts will disagree with this statement, but if we put it into the proper context, I think everyone can reach consensus. If you are a healthy person who is consuming an EBD, and are free of the dysregulated metabolism, appetite, and cravings that an unhealthy and junk-eating person probably has, you can trust your inner sensations regarding hunger, food type, and satiety. The human is a brilliant beast and this stuff is evolutionarily hard-wired into your system. Trust your gut (and brain)!

Movement

Movement is essential for human health. Our cells, tissues, and systems absolutely demand it for proper function and vitality. The questions of "how much?" and "what kind?" of movement is necessary are often a great source of frustration for many. Let's use an evidence-based approach to movement.

- **Movement** can be loosely defined as anything we do when we are not stationary. At The Lifetime Athlete, I use the Movement Umbrella model, in which Movement is the Umbrella under which resides General Daily Activity (GDA) and Exercise.
- **General Daily Activity** incorporates all the movement we do each day that is not "official" exercise. GDA is synonymous with Activities of Daily Living (ADL's) and includes everything from brushing your teeth, mopping the floor, casual walking, and even fidgeting. It's also known as Non-Exercise Activity-induced Thermogenesis, or NEAT.
- **GDA** fulfills a necessary role in our movement requirements because it helps to maintain optimal circulatory and metabolic function. Frequent, random movement throughout the day minimizes circulatory stasis, or stagnation. This enhances the delivery of nutrients

and the disposal of waste products that are generated by the myriad cellular functions carried out by our bodies. We are genetically designed to be active, mobile creatures.

- Getting about **1.5 hours of GDA per day**, with slightly more being potentially better, is the recommendation I make for every human...every day. This is a non-negotiable prescription for health and it is supported by data from activity trackers and the study of modern hunter-gatherer populations. GDA needs to be performed every day, thus the name. You can't do nothing all week and then stockpile your quota with a 10-hour stroll on Sunday. The human body doesn't function optimally when treated in that manner.
- GDA is also most beneficial when it is **randomly applied** in 5 to 15-minute sessions throughout the day. This actually has greater long-term circulatory benefits than a one-hour walk at lunch bracketed by 7 hours of sitting on either side. Simply take an activity break whenever the opportunity presents itself. Most of your activity doesn't have to be vigorous, although some of it certainly can be.
- Lifetime Athletes need to get in their **GDA in addition to their exercise and training** routines. GDA actually helps you to flush out your tissues, reduce stiffness, recover faster, and stay healthy.
- Next up is the other category under the Movement Umbrella...**Exercise**. This is the type of movement which has specific benefits that we generally can't obtain from GDA alone. That's because Exercise allows us to develop and maintain specific functional capacities, or outputs...like aerobic fitness, mobility, and strength. Being active alone does most of what you need for baseline health. But it doesn't always guarantee that you will be the most versatile, durable, and functional human beast possible. When you use exercise strategically, the odds are quite good in that respect. And if you take things up a notch, and turn your exercise into **TRAINING**, it becomes purpose-driven, more meaningful, and ultimately most successful. We'll talk more about Training in the Peak Performance section of this document.
- Summing up Movement for lifelong health, we are made to stay active and you should strive to get about **10 hours of GDA** each week. A worthy investment indeed.

Sleep

Sleep, or vitamin Zzz if you will, is the change maker, and the force multiplier in wellness. Without ideal amounts and quality of sleep...diet and exercise just won't "take," and health suffers mightily. Here are some of the things we emphasize with sleep at TLA:

- Sleep is the strategic time each night when you **reset, rebuild, and recover**. Tissues are repaired, memory and motor programs are solidified, the brain is cleared of waste products, and cells are regenerated. Our metabolisms are regulated and we burn fat for fuel.
- Even **one night of poor sleep results in deprivation** which is well documented to impair cognitive ability, reaction time, energy, strength, speed, endurance, appetite, metabolism, and mood.

- **Humans are diurnal mammals** and our sleep patterns and circadian rhythms are integrally linked with the sun.
- **Sleep happens in recurring cycles** lasting up to 90 minutes each, with most of us requiring 5-6 cycles nightly for a total of 7.5-9.0 hours.
- **Sleep has multiple stages** including rapid eye movement (REM) and non-rapid eye movement (NREM - which is divided into stages 1-3, with stage 3 considered “deep sleep”).
- Good sleep habits -- often termed **sleep hygiene** -- are simple, easy, and highly effective. Some examples include sleeping in a cool (62-66 degrees), dark room and diminishing evening blue light exposure by using blue-light blocking glasses, minimizing screen use after dark, and dimming lights (halogen or incandescent preferred over fluorescent and LED). At TLA, I recommend over a dozen sleep hygiene techniques with every client to 10x your time between the sheets.
- You should practice the **celebration of sleep** and also the strategic use of napping for optimal wellness. Old adages such as “I’ll sleep when I’m dead (no, you’ll just be dead sooner)” and “I’ll burn the candle at both ends (and burn yourself out faster)” die hard in our society, but not with Lifetime Athletes.

Ergonomics

Originally viewed as the study of work and its effects on our bodies and beings, the definition of ergonomics at TLA is expanded to represent the total optimization of our personal environments.

- It’s the **setup of our workstations** in both our jobs and our hobbies. Optimal design and fit of our offices and workshops to our bodies, and our minds, is critical. Avoid awkward positions and allow for efficient use of energy.
- Ergonomics also includes your **posture**. When the human skeleton is optimally aligned, it is extremely durable and tolerant of gravity and other daily forces.
- Your **habits and behaviors** are very important. The chunking of focused work, the use of frequent breaks and activity, and position changes (such as a sit-to-stand desk option) are helpful in making work more productive and comfortable.
- **Light management** is another component in ergonomics. Not only do we want well-lit areas for safety and the reduction of eyestrain, we also can use light, both natural and artificial, to boost energy while at work. You want early outside sunlight exposure into your eyes every day to reset your circadian clock. Mid-day sun (within limits) on the skin is critical for vitamin D synthesis and myriad metabolic pathways. Sleep is enhanced when evening lighting is dim and from incandescent or halogen sources. Screen filters and blue blocker glasses can be useful in the evening.
- **Electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure** should be reduced or eliminated in as many cases as possible. Excessive, or even moderate amounts of EMF can contribute to fatigue, metabolic slowdown, and accelerated aging.

- **Environmental toxins**, whether they be heavy metals, air pollution, fragrances in personal care or cleaning products, or additives in food, don't do us any wellness favors and we encourage reduction or elimination wherever possible.
- While you can think of ergonomics as a primary component of workplace wellness (and it is), what we are really shooting for is to make the things we do in everyday life **additive -- not just break-even, and certainly not detractive -- to our health**. Make your jobs and hobbies, and your personal environment, work *for* your health, not against it.

Awareness

Awareness is defined as *knowledge or perception of a situation or fact; the state of having concern about and well-informed interest in a particular situation or condition*. Awareness in the context of lifelong health is the understanding of how various factors affect our well-being, attitudes, and productivity. It pertains to our inner knowledge of self, of those around us, and of the world in general.

- **Self-knowledge**, in terms of personality, tendencies, preferences, and habits can help us to set up our days for more of flow state.
 - I often say "Only the salmon should swim upstream," and we humans do best in this modern world when our actions and interactions are less of a fight. When our lifestyle fits our inner beings, we have less breakdown. Creating **flow states** can take many forms but can be as simple as doing a few things every day that give you joy, and minimizing situations and interactions that seem to extract a disproportionate amount of your energy. Here are some specific examples:
 - If you are an outgoing, or extraverted person, making sure you get some energizing interaction with others every day can be helpful.
 - Conversely, if you deem yourself to be more inwardly focused or introverted, finding periods of calmness and solitude in your day can be desirable.
 - If you really crave organization and thrive in a structured manner, use lists and schedules to give you a sense of completion and satisfaction.
 - And if you love being spontaneous and not feeling confined, try to have some unscheduled periods of time that allow you to be flexible.
 - **Achieving stress balance** -- in which we have neither too much nor too little stress -- can be a phenomenal enhancer to our metabolisms, moods, sleep, and health. Stress impacts our health in a Goldilocks fashion, in which finding that "just right" amount keeps life interesting and stimulating...but not boring or overwhelming. Optimizing stress is an artful dance and sometimes a juggling act, but you can probably identify your sweet spot. When you feel under-activated, do some things that excite you. And when you are pegging the "too much" point on

the stress balance meter...slow down, focus on your breathing, and get into a meditative state in any way that works for you.

- Practicing **mindfulness** and living in the moment has been proven to enhance productivity and contentment. Where you are, who you are with, and what you are doing NOW is what's most important. Do and be that one thing without distraction. Avoid multitasking whenever possible. It's been shown to be ineffective from a productivity standpoint and it also has negative health ramifications.
- Regarding awareness of others, knowing some of those same things we mentioned above about those with whom we live and work creates an opportunity for more **harmonious coexistence**. It's great to ask yourself "Who can I help or serve today?" Knowing what another person needs or prefers can make it easier for you to avoid injecting unnecessary stress into his/her life. You can help them to have more joy and flow. Communication and compromise are easier when you understand where a person is coming from and vice versa. We humans are social beings. Even if you don't consider yourself very outgoing, some human connection is essential to your health and well-being.
- And ultimately, regarding the world at large -- no matter how esoteric or quixotic this may sound -- seeking awareness of how we can all **make the world a better place** should be our mission. Try to contribute as much as you achieve. Living a life of meaning, sharing with and supporting others, and practicing gratitude...is a cornerstone of lifelong health.

Putting It All Together For Health

I'm sure you can appreciate how, as I mentioned earlier, the 5 components of lifelong health are interrelated and interdependent. They interact in a compounding fashion to naturally facilitate health. When all 5 areas are at your personally ideal levels (or nearly so), you are going to feel fantastic. And, if one component is temporarily suboptimal, good "scores" in the other categories will to some degree offset the negative effect. This will minimize the dragging down of your health from the insufficient area while you address that issue. For example, if your movement isn't quite where it needs to be, but your sleep and nutrition are dialed in, your health won't take the dive it would if all three were in the tank. Or...let's say your ergonomics were not so good but you were really doing well with movement and awareness, you'd be less prone to breakdown while you fix the stuff at work. But ultimately, getting all 5 components to the point that works best for you will give you amazing and long-lasting health. And don't let "perfect" get in the way of "good enough." Life is a dynamic experience, and you'll discover just what you need as you experiment with these factors.

The 3 Essential Elements of Peak Performance

The 3 essential elements of Peak Performance allow you to take your healthy body and brain, and get the most output, enjoyment, satisfaction, and success...not just in sports and fitness -- but in all of LIFE. Peak Performance is of course being athletic, but it also means you are crushing it in your career, your relationships, and your happiness. Achieving your full potential in all of your life endeavors gives you the highest quality of life and the greatest ability to not just achieve goals and attain satisfaction, but to contribute to the world and to serve others to the highest degree.

Training

Training is the art of taking exercise to the ultimate level, and getting maximum results.

- First of all, let's get right back to the topic of purposeful exercise, which is TRAINING, that we discussed earlier. There are **5 different classifications of Training**, and each does something unique and valuable for human health. They are Aerobic, Agility, Resistance, High-Intensity, and Sprinting. I'll provide a brief description of each category below.
 - **Aerobic Exercise, or Low-Intensity Steady-state Training (LIST)** improves cardiorespiratory fitness, endurance, and circulatory health. It has also been shown by research to aid in brain function and growth. Any mode such as brisk walking, hiking, jogging, cycling, swimming, rowing -- and many others -- is equally effective. 150 minutes per week, divided into several sessions, is recommended.
 - **Agility Training, (AT)**, combines the traits of mobility, stability, reactivity, and fluidity. It includes things like stretching, balance work, postural enhancement, trunk stabilization, and movement optimization training (drills, footwork, tumbling, etc.). We derive great benefit from doing 20-40 minutes of this exercise per week, as a part of every workout. This keeps us supple and well-aligned.
 - **Resistance Training (RT)**, also termed strength training, can be performed with bodyweight, bands and tubing, free weights, machines, and other devices. This exercise helps us to build and maintain muscle, bone, and connective tissue, in addition to being related to decreased fall risk, higher quality of life, and longevity. As little as 30 minutes per week spread across two sessions can provide immense benefits.
 - **High-Intensity Training (HIT)**, emphasizing repetitions with rest intervals, in its many variations, allows us to efficiently train our higher output capacities. HIT also enables us to develop improved metabolic function, such as glucose control. A short workout of 10-15 minutes which intersperses high effort bouts with active

rest periods is all that's needed, and doing as much as 75 minutes total per week is recommended if you prefer to replace some of your LIST with HIT.

- **Sprint Training (ST)**, or maximum velocity extended-rest training, preserves youthful vitality and improves hormonal regulation. Sprint training can aid reflexes and righting reactions as well. This can be performed via running by those for whom it is appropriate and desired. But it can also be done safely and just as easily in the pool, on the bike, or with an elliptical or rowing machine. As little as 1 minute under load, broken into 5-10 second efforts (but with generous rests between each effort) is all that's needed on a weekly basis.
- **How you combine the types of exercise into your own training week is really up to you.** The suggested types and times we went over are consistent with the recommendations put forth by the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Medical Association, and the [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#). Whether you work out on your own, with friends, in a group fitness class, or in an organized sport, just try to get some of all the components that contribute to optimal human health. You can exercise for 30 minutes 6 days per week, or for 1 hour on 3 non-consecutive days. However you slice it, the minimum effective dosage (MED) for exercise is about 3 hours per week. When you really start to enjoy your training and see those amazing results, you end up doing more than this amount, looking forward to it, and not even caring about hitting the time goals.
- Training is not a generic exercise routine. It is **personalized** and is designed to meet your specific needs. The secret to getting outstanding results lies in matching up your training with your body type, conditioning level, and goals. You are a magnificent human beast and training is all about aligning with the nature of the (your) beast.
- Successful training relies upon creating an **effective training PROGRAM**, which combines science and wisdom to extract adaptation and excellence from your beast. Great programs include the following:
 - **A PLAN** designed around:
 - What's the goal? Do you have a challenging, reasonable, and clearly defined objective? Is it specific enough? For example, saying "I'd like to run faster" is perhaps less clear than saying "I want to break 22 minutes in the 5k."
 - Where are you at right now? What's your current performance status or conditioning level? Is a pre-test appropriate?
 - What are the training requirements for my goal, in general? What are the types of training that are indicated? Are there markers or key performance indicators (KPI's) I can use?
 - What are your unique needs? Work with your coach or trainer, analyze your movement patterns, strengths, and weaknesses and determine what needs to be addressed to give you the greatest shot at succeeding.
 - What's the timeline? OK...you are here now, and you want to get to the goal performance level in what time frame...or by what date?

- Now set up your seasons, cycles, or training blocks. Divide the timeline into realistic periods of emphasis. There are many examples but I'll flesh out one standard of seasonal training periodization.
 - Off-Season: General conditioning and increased volume.
 - Pre-Season: Specific conditioning and increased intensity.
 - In-Season: Tapering, peaking, goal pursuit or competition.
 - Post-Season: Casual exercise and recuperation.
- **Execute**
 - Conduct training in a moderately consistent, but flexible manner. Accommodate the ups and downs of schedules, weather, and life. Get in most of your workouts most of the time and you'll create the wins.
 - Adjust and modify workouts in the moment to capture high energy or to respect fatigue and avoid injury, illness, or breakdown. As opposed to training only for health using the minimum effective dosage (MED) of exercise...training for peak performance requires reaching for the maximum absorbable dosage (MAD) on an occasional to frequent basis. You want to seek as much stimulus as you can adapt to and benefit from but stay short of your overtraining limit. This is quite the dance and good coaching is invaluable in this regard.
 - Periodically check in with a KPI to test your progress.
- **Track**
 - Keep a training log to store and track key workout data. This can be a notebook, a spreadsheet, or a software-based application.
 - Record proposed workouts, actual training performed, responses and perceptions, and information regarding pre-workout energy or readiness levels as well as post-workout recovery markers.
 - Time, distance, heart rate, sets, reps, weights, rest periods, HRV data, sleep tracking information, etc.
 - Use technology as much as you want. Wearable devices can give you objective data and eliminate guesswork. However, try to develop the ability to associate and correlate what your device says with how you feel. Your innate sense, or what I call instinctive wisdom, is programmed to tell you how you are doing with uncanny accuracy. Just like your eating can become intuitive, your training can become instinctive. And you can match up hard data from your logs with your own judgement.
- **Adjust**
 - Use the data from your training log to determine if you are progressing
 - What areas are doing well and where are you lagging? Which workouts seem most effective? What type of training do you like the best?
 - Adjust the training plan and workouts to fit your assessment.
 - Sculpt the workouts and the spacing between them (easy filler days) to better fit the patterns you are identifying.

- Expect progress to be upwardly trending but not necessarily linear. There are bound to be ups and downs and it's important to keep your eyes on the big picture.
 - **Evaluate**
 - How would you frame your outcome? Are you happy with your results? Why or why not?
 - What important things did you learn about yourself? Did you find that you had gifts or preferences you didn't realize were there?
 - What would you have done differently?
 - How would you use this training experience to strategize and create an even more effective training plan moving forward toward the next goal?
- Training gives greater meaning to the process and supports your identity as a Lifetime Athlete. Instead of just randomly going through the motions of generic exercise, you are engaged in a **purpose-driven** path to excellence. Training has been proven to improve consistency, satisfaction, and results. This is true no matter what level you're at or what goal you are pursuing. The mere act of saying "I'm training for..." (whether you say it only to yourself or to others) places a value on your exercise, making it tangible and worthwhile to the greatest degree.

Recovery

Recovery is not just the passage of time -- it's a comprehensive process. Recovery is active engagement in the practices that enhance both the absorption of training workload and the attainment of the optimal state of readiness for peak performance.

- Recovery is an **ongoing process** but in particular it spans the gap between higher workload sessions or "changemaker" workouts. A changemaker workout is one that has significant duration or intensity to stimulate adaptation in your body. This is a stressor that you manipulate but it requires that you allow for adequate recovery prior to attempting the next session of that type.
- While your health-promoting focus on **GDA, sleep, and food** is always present, athletic recovery places even more strategic emphasis on these practices. Placing a few short walks into your day will help you remove the metabolic waste products of training more efficiently. You'll prioritize sleep to an even greater degree, appreciating its almost magical effects. And nutrition to fuel your training as well as rapidly replenish your body will become essential.
- **Recovery training** is extremely valuable. While it's the changemaker sessions that truly advance fitness and competency, it's the "filler" training that helps you consolidate your gains. Workouts that are easy, light, brief, and mobility-oriented are fantastic for nourishing your body with circulation, allowing you to practice key movement patterns, and maintaining conditioning between larger, more challenging sessions. The exact shape of these sessions, how many, and how long they last will become clear over time

as you and your coach work with your data and instincts. If you are sore, stiff, or tired..it's probably not the day to hammer or kill it. Having the confidence to wait to go hard until the right time (when your body is ready) is an attribute of a Lifetime Athlete. Coast, cruise, and float until you are ready to crush. This is the secret to success and longevity and it is what every long-lasting elite champion does.

- Recovery is more than just eating and sleeping well, and training conservatively. It involves **creating the environment** or conditions that allow your body to rebound at its optimal rate. To put this mildly, you probably can't do too much to accelerate recovery, but you can certainly do a lot of things to impede it. Said differently, you want to do everything you can to let your body repair and grow itself, and not put a bunch of obstacles in the way of that process. Good recovery employs tactical applications with heat, cold, compression, tissue work, and parasympathetic stimulation, among others. I'll flesh this out for you.
 - **Heat therapy** can take on many forms. You can apply a heating pad or pack to an area that may need a little more mobility and circulation. A tight or stiff spot, particularly one that is not injured and inflamed, will respond very well to heat therapy. This is especially true if it precedes activity or light exercise. You can relax and vasodilate your body with a hot bath or shower. And you can improve detoxification and cardiovascular health with sauna, steam room, or hot tub usage.
 - **Cold therapy** has been in the news a lot and there is some controversy regarding its application. Just to put things straight here, if you have an acute injury, ice in the first few hours/days is probably justified. In such a case you want to calm down inflammation and minimize swelling. Beyond that, cryotherapy or cold water immersion can help to blunt overall inflammation and upregulate immune function. But if you are not in a hurry, skipping these things can facilitate greater adaptations to training. It just depends on how physically stressed your body is, and how quickly you want it to rebound. If you are not in a rush to get to the next training session or competition and you want maximum adaptations, skip the cold tank. But if you are trashed and/or you need to hit a workout or event in the next day or two (for whatever reason *you* deem appropriate), take the plunge.
 - **Compression** is a valuable tool that is supportive to metabolism and circulation, primarily through the augmentation of venous and lymphatic return. The use of compression sleeves, garments, and particularly socks, both during and after workouts, has been shown to assist recovery. One of the easiest and most effective applications is to wear compression socks post-training and lie down for 30 minutes with your legs slightly elevated.
 - **Tissue work**, whether from a practitioner in various forms of massage and manipulation, or self-applied via the use of foam rollers and other implements, can be useful as a recovery aid. This treatment can relax and desensitize the body, as well as improve circulation and reduce tissue restrictions.
 - **Parasympathetic nervous system activation** is basically any practice that inhibits the sympathetic, fight or flight system and facilitates the parasympathetic, rest and digest drive within your body. Any of the methods mentioned above can

have this effect, but the addition of dedicated breath work and the attainment of meditative states is incredibly beneficial. You can pursue this effect any way you prefer but getting the body into a calm, relaxed state between “revved up “ training sessions takes the brakes off the repair and rejuvenation mechanisms.

Mindset

Mindset is an established set of attitudes, and a central, identifying philosophy. In Lifetime Athlete terms, mindset is the worldview that carries the optimally trained and recovered individual to peak performances.

- A primary ingredient in the peak performing mindset is **positive self-talk**. This cannot be understated. Thoughts and words are proven to beget actions and feelings. Avoiding negative, defeating views and focusing on an optimistic (but still reasonable) attitude and self-image is critical. Don't tell yourself “I can't, I'll try, I might, I won't and I'm not.” Use “I do, I will, I can, I am” instead. Whether your goal is to create your win at an exercise, lift, workout, relationship, work project, or competition...believe to achieve. It's not corny...it's proven by research to work. One more thing...always keep the elements of play and joy in your thoughts and actions.
- A **flexible** mindset is just as important as a positive one. Just like when you are executing your training with a flexible approach, you can't let your overall thinking get too rigid. Trying to force life into a non-bending, only-one-way path for how you complete the journey is highly likely to decrease your chances for ultimate success. As opposed to getting frustrated when deadlines, schedules, meals, and even minor injuries show up at unplanned or inopportune occasions, let go of the angst and work around these things. You are going to be presented with a few lemons, that's just life. Find a way to make lemonade, and assure yourself that you'll get where you want to be even if your course needs to deviate slightly from time to time.
- **Realistic** thinking is the opposite of a mindset filled with delusion and denial. While you are being positive and flexible, you also want to be pragmatic. What this really means for all of us is we occasionally have to adjust our goals and programs to address the real data and experience we are amassing. Sometimes things can be going so well that you have to upregulate your goals and programming. That does happen on occasion. But more often, events can conspire to necessitate the downregulation of the process. Say you get the flu, have a family crisis, suffer a significant injury, or any other unfortunate scenario. Being realistic about the need for adjustment and not delusional is key to getting beyond the frustration. Make peace, accept, and reframe so that your mental and physical health is preserved. Don't totally give up, just reorganize. Keep a purposeful focus which has been shown to facilitate neural plasticity. The new goal is the NOW goal and it's just as good as the old one.
- Every Lifetime Athlete needs to have a **team-oriented mindset**. This is worth explaining. No matter how solitary a person you may be, and regardless of whether you pursue an individual sport or goal, you are still a human. Human beings are social

animals. This is part of our ancestral biology. We benefit, to varying degrees of course, from interaction and engagement with others and this is particularly true around the pursuit of peak performance. This need goes beyond the concept of being on a sports team. Surround yourself with people who believe in you, support you, and genuinely want you to succeed. And be that very same person for them. The mindset that embodies the question “who can help me achieve my goal and how can I help them to do the same?” is the winning one. It’s the mindset of The Lifetime Athlete. “We” really is bigger than “I.” And use your team to enjoy a healthy dose of competition, challenging yourself and others to be better.

Becoming and Remaining a Lifetime Athlete

And that is how the 5-3-1 Lifetime Athlete System works. Establish Lifelong Health with the 5 foundational components. Add in the 3 essential elements of Peak Performance. And then become the 1 person that you deserve to be -- A Lifetime Athlete! You define what being an athlete means for you. You don’t have to play sports or compete to be athletic. You just have to pursue, embrace, and enjoy becoming your best you and maxing out your potential. Your genes are programmed for this to happen. And you can do it. Use these principles and suggestions in your own way. Hit that sports goal you’ve always dreamed about. Take your fitness to the next level. Go to the playground with your grandkids and be awesome. Have the energy to do more at work. Feel great about yourself and your relationships. Be a Lifetime Athlete!

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information. I hope you find it helpful in your quest for health, peak performance, and lifetime athletics. I wish you the best in all your endeavors.

John Zombro

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