

# Enhanced Neural Drive

Researched and Composed by Jacob Wilson, BSc. (Hons), MSc. CSCS

## Introduction

Before hypertrophy training was my primary focus, I worked out for speed and explosion. Essentially the goal was to run faster, explode quicker out of the hole, and hit harder. I was fortunate enough to train under a plyometric program at Ather Sports, which was founded and created by the great speed training coach, Dr. Chu. While bodybuilding, and explosive training are two different activities, clearly separate in approach, and style, you will find, that when applied properly, many of the same techniques can greatly enhance your ability to add muscle! Perhaps by leaps and bounds! With that in mind, I would like to analyze an infamous nervous system technique from both a hypertrophy standpoint and a speed enhancing standpoint.

---

## Basis of Technique

Doctor Donald A. Chu, once made a statement that has stuck in my head, ever since hearing it.

*" If the muscular system is the computer, the nervous system is the software. The nervous system triggers a muscle's response to a stimulus, telling it what to do and when to do it(1). "*

While that statement may sound simple, it is really quite revolutionary. In that it teaches us to view our bodies as complex machines. Machines that compensate, adapt, and most importantly machines that can be manipulated for the goal at hand! If you want to perform a certain way, just stick in the right software and presto, instant action.

## The Technique Explained

This method of training has actually been used by numerous trainers for a long time. It is used with several variations. The most popular is associated mainly with Romanian and Hungarian lifters who implement it into their strength routines. And Coach Dragomir Cioroslan is credited for introducing it to the United States. Although again, several trainers such as Dr. Chu, have used variations of this theme for quite a while now. Again, the most famous method of using this is called the mixed neural drive/hypertrophy program. And Charles Poliquin, names it simply the 1,6 training principle.

Essentially the goal is to excite your nervous system, before your normal sets so that you end out recruiting more muscle fibers, and become stronger and more explosive in a matter of minutes!

Lets say for example that you could military press 135 pounds for 6 total repetitions. In order to apply this method, you would perform a one rep maximum set with of course a weight that you could only lift for one repetition. Therefore if your one rep max was 170 pounds you would perform one set with it. After which you would rest about 3-5 total minutes. By performing this heavy set your nervous system is now extremely excited and prepared for another taxing bout. Instead of exposing it to 170 however, you will expose it to 140 to 145 total pounds. You will find that you will be able to still get 6 reps, even though you upped the weight by 10 pounds! A 10 pound gain in one workout is nothing to sneeze at! That could conceivably take you a month to reach a goal like that, and you will have accomplished it in 3 minutes.

As far as an overall program, Coach Dragomir Cioroslan would have an athlete do something like this:

Set One: 170 pounds with a military press for one repetition

Set Two: 135 pounds with a military press for six repetitions

Set Three: 175 pounds with a military press for one repetition

Set Four: 140 pounds with a military press for six repetitions

Set Five: 175 ½ pounds with a military press for one repetition

Set Six: 145 pounds with a military press for six repetitions

You can see why Charles Poliquin has deemed this the 1, 6 principle(1 ). As you can see, it actually improves your nervous system's efficiency as the sets go up.

### **Variations of This Theme**

The above program is a basic strength, semi hypertrophy program. You could apply it to any exercise, be it squats, bench presses, dead lifts etc. However, for the bodybuilder it can be manipulated quite a few ways. Here are my suggestions for this:

1. Balls To The Wall - Rather than wave upwards, sticking with only six repetitions, go balls to the wall and attempt to go further than this. Its simple. If you can normally bench press 225 for 6 repetitions, and your one rep maximum is 280, then begin with one set of 280 pounds. Recover for 3-5 minutes, and then lift 225 till failure. You will find that you can actually get 7-10 repetitions! This is the " why wait principle! " After this you would continue with your normal routine.
2. Balls To The Wall Two - This is exactly the same as the above method, except that you would work with either 230 or 235 immediately after the one rep maximum.
3. Use Of Higher Repetitions - After lifting a one rep maximum, a lighter weight with 6 repetitions will feel much lighter, and you'll have a tremendous amount more explosive power. However, this is a higher repetition sport. 6 repetitions is a minimum, but you can also apply this technique to lighter weights. Say, to something you could normally only lift 8 repetitions with. You could

- A. Attempt to go up in weight and get the same number of repetitions
- B. Stay with the same weight and try to drive out 9-12 repetitions. It can work fantastically!

Again, try varying your reps. You might even perform a one repetition set, followed by a weight light enough to normally rep out 12 repetitions, or even lighter.

4. Re-Rev It Man - If you begin your routine normally, with a weight you can get 6 repetitions with( or a bit higher ), you would normally go down in production the second set, in either your ability to drive the weight, control the weight, or match your previous repetitions. This trick can actually work to keep your strength up within the routine. It would look like this:

Set One: 300 pounds on the squat for 6 repetitions( again say this the maximum number that you can perform ).

Set Two: One rep maximum to excite your nervous system

Set Three: 6 repetitions again at 300. The method should allow you to maintain your strength or even increase it.

5. Neural Strip Sets - Of all the above methods, I would have to say that my absolute favorite is the neural strip set method. Remember, your goal in this sport is to create as much hypertrophy as possible, in as many muscle fibers as possible! Therefore you would begin by performing the same one rep maximum. Then perform a six repetition set( again you can vary this) to failure, followed by a strip set of 8 to 10 repetitions, followed by another optional strip set. Essentially this became a " super strip set " because your nervous system was able to recruit more muscle fibers than it would have been able to. You might rest for 5-10 minutes and repeat.

This nervous system trick, or hardcore software that you will insert into your massive frame will do a number of things. It will enhance progressive resistance / strength which is a staple in bodybuilding circles( although again, different from say power lifting, because the repetitions are higher ). It will allow you to stimulate growth in muscle fibers, that would have otherwise not been stimulated which again, is what hypertrophy training is all about. However, as you will soon find out, there's more than meets the eye, than even this!

### **Enhanced Speed, Explosion and More on Muscle Mass**

I believe that by now, each of you reading this has heard of plyometrics. We will get more in depth on this subject in the future, but in short plyometrics are quick, explosive movements designed to enhance your speed, or strength levels. Essentially all hopping, skipping, jumping movements can be labeled as plyometrics. The key in doing them, is to limit as much time in contact with the ground, or surface as possible. Therefore, if I were to stand on a chair, step off of it, and immediately jump straight up I would have performed a plyometric movement. And my goal, would have clearly been to:

- A. Explode off the ground as powerfully as possible

B. Eliminate as much time as possible on the ground. As this would take advantage of the stretch reflex. For a further explanation on elastic energy read the second muscle fiber article in the anatomy section.

Again, this trains the body to be more explosive. By properly implementing a plyometric program you would be faster, and quicker. However, the systems for these programs have evolved over the years. And when I trained under Dr. Chu's system he was one of the first to implement plyo combined with weights almost simultaneously. Here is what he has to say on the subject:

*Many athletes are married to tradition in the weight room, believing that the only training that should be performed there is weight training. Although they may concede that a small area for stretching is permissible, the weight room is sacred ground meant for squats bench presses, and curls. Weight rooms are for weights, that's why they're called weight rooms. Despite their narrow-minded philosophy, these athletes enjoy good results from their training.*

*Athletes who are more open-minded use a combination of resistance training and plyometrics over the course of their weekly schedule. Some even break tradition and perform plyometrics in the weight room! These athletes enjoy better results from their training. Finally, there are athletes who combine weight training and plyometrics into the same workout session, using plyos not as a warm-up performed early in the workout, which is usually the case, but performing them between sets or even as part of a weight training set. If a workout calls for four sets of squats, they'll perform depth squats or repeat standing long jumps between sets. These athletes perform complex training, and they enjoy the best results from their training. - Donald A. Chu ( 2 )*

What's important to understand is that he was referring to the athlete looking for more speed and explosion. I will first discuss this, and also how that can be applied to bodybuilding.

Think of it this way. If you were to sprint as explosively as possible you could run to a spot at a certain speed. This is comparative to how many repetitions you could perform on say a six repetition set. But, if you excited your nervous system, you would actually end out being more explosive and run quicker than you previously could! Dr. Chu calls this specificity. In other words if you want to compete at higher speeds you need to train at higher speeds! By performing a one rep maximum on say the squat. Resting five minutes and then performing a plyometric movement you will be able to perform it at a much higher level, and flow with the law of specificity!

Lets say that you were a football player and wanted the ability to push someone harder, and with more explosion off the line. You would choose an explosive plyometric exercise that mimicked this. The two that come to mind are clap pushups and medicine ball passes. You would again, perform a maximum repetition on your bench press, and follow this up with 10 explosive clap pushups. I also call this the James Brunson method, because he used to be my trainer. He would have me perform clap pushups in between sets, and it noticeably improved my shoving ability, which can come in handy in many areas! It also improved my bench press. A sample program would look like this:

Set One: One Rep Maximum on Bench Press

Set Two: 6-10 explosive clap pushups

Repeat twice, for a total of 3 cycles.

Consequently clap pushups are tremendous fast twitch type IIB( the largest muscle fiber in our bodies) builders! If you want to change up your routine, try starting off with the above cycle. Then simply finish your normal chest routine. You will not only increase your bench press, but also build quite a bit of muscle! Its an excellent shocking method! I have implemented clap pushups in bodybuilding for quite some time now, and I can tell you, they are an excellent muscle builder, when used as a shocking method. A routine might look like:

1. The above 6 sets
2. parallel dips for 3 sets
3. incline dumbbell bench presses 3 sets
4. flat dumbbell flys 3 sets

That is just a sample, but you get the point. It is again twofold:

1. Speed is subject to the law of specificity. Which is to say, if you want to be faster, practice faster! Plyometrics are meant to mimic this faster speed. And they become chiefly effective when the nervous system has been excited, with the above training protocol
2. The plyometric set above can also be applied to bodybuilding. Replace your first exercise with the above training method and you will tap into fast twitch muscle fibers, that are not used to being tapped into. This equals more growth!

## Final Words

Make sure and switch things up with this technique. You may use it for one set in a routine, or more. The key, as with any principle, is to use it wisely. Knowing our readers there will be countless variations made with this method in weight rooms across the world! Enjoy your gains, and keep it hardcore!

Yours In Sport

Jacob Wilson [jwilson@abcbodybuilding.com](mailto:jwilson@abcbodybuilding.com)  
President Abodybuilding / Beyond Failure Magazine

## References

1. The Poliquin Principles - By Charles Poliquin

2. Jumping Into Plyometrics - With Dr. Chu
3. Ather Sports Experiences

© ABC Bodybuilding Company. All rights reserved. [Disclaimer](#)