

## X-Ray Vision Part Two

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

### Introduction

There are times in this life, in which we all need a kick in the pants. Many of us have the ability to do this ourselves, while others must surround themselves with people who are willing to do it for them. I needed a jump start last month, of that I am 100 percent sure. So I dug and scavenged in my rather large bag of tricks and found a saying that pierced deep down inside of me. To many this saying might appear simple, but I find it not only thriving and vibrant, but uncannily true. Words can have that effect you know. Like energy held between the bonds of a molecule, the written or spoken word can send forth a shocking explosion!

With that said, I ended out pasting taping and tacking this phrase all around my house. Yes, simple, yet very effective. It goes like this: " You Reap, What You Sow. " How can this phrase pack such a punch you say? It opens one's eyes to the reality of the situation. If you do not plant the seed, be it hard work, blood, sweat, tears, torture sessions in the rack, long hours at the grind stone, you cannot reap the harvest. That harvest is of course an increase in knowledge, enhanced muscularity, sharpened mental capabilities, and a heightened sense of reality.

We have just entered what is perhaps the most mysterious, and vital aspect of this great sport. Your mental powers, your ability to expand your awareness, and a clear understanding of why this will catapult every area of your training regimen. Much of this will be discussed today, along with other physical attributes. What I would like you to do, is grab a pen, or a pencil, because class is in session!

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### Ability To Mentally Control Your Autonomic Nervous System

I am going to ask you to perform a series of tasks and you will see if you can complete each of them. Ready? Ok, flex your biceps. Now extend at the knee joint. Your doing great, lets try something else. Dilate your pupils .005 centimeters, now increase your heart rate, and when you are done with that release some fatty acids into your blood stream for direct use.

What do you mean you couldn't carry out any of those instructions? The question is why. You could flex your biceps because they are a part of the nervous system that utilizes somatic efferent neurons which are under your voluntary control. However, cardiac muscle, smooth muscle( eyes, intestines ) are controlled by our Autonomic nervous system. Kind of sounds like automatic eh? It is not in our control. And I

think in a sense we are all thankful for this. After all, if your heart was your responsibility to contract continually, and you fell asleep, well, you get the hint...

There are two divisions of the autonomic nervous system, the parasympathetic and the sympathetic division. We are concerned with the latter, because though we cannot directly control it, we can direct its course of action, via our mental abilities.

You know this more familiarly as the fight or flight system! There is a song by Creed that I believe also describes it well. The name of it is, " There is a Beast Inside Us All. " And the moral of the song is that we should embrace it. I tend to agree. If we can control the beast, then we can, in a sense have a super hero ability. When it is time to be intellectual like David Banner, then so be it. But when it is time to train, we need the fearless beast inside of us to be released!

First I would like to break down what exactly this fight or flight system does for us in the weight room.

- 1.** It noticeably increases our heart and breathing rate – This temporary adaptation delivers a greater blood, and oxygen supply to our skeletal muscles. Which is the main focus of our training in the first place.
- 2.** It dilates our pupils - That simply refers to widening them. In essence it increases your vision, by letting more light in. I believe this is vital, in that our focus, and coordination are in direct correlation to our vision. By the way, this is why your eyes get so wide when you get pissed off!
- 3.** Cold Skin – Ever wonder why your skin gets cold during flight or fight situations? This is due to the fact that blood is being directed away from the skin and to more important organs such as the brain, for again sharper and heightened coordination, and quick thinking ability. I have always said that it enhanced the instinctive side of our brain. The main effect you will experience here will be a heightened alertness. Yes, you'll be a bit jumpy, but you will be able to harness that in the weight room, undoubtedly!
- 4.** Air Tubes In Lungs Dilate – Again, this dilation increases uptake of Oxygen. This does countless things. For one, oxygen uptake by the body's cells increases, and the

liver releases more sugar into the blood to provide more energy for our muscle cells! Furthermore, it stimulates fat breakdown, and increases our overall metabolic rate! Doesn't get much better than that!

In summary, you will have increased alertness, increased strength, focus, fat burning ability, and I believe a higher capacity to endure pain! The question now is how to influence the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system.

### **Going Inside Yourself**

While growing up, my Old Man made a statement to me that stuck, and stuck firmly in my mind. As I have discussed he is a fire fighter. He said, that he could release adrenaline with a thought, that is how explicit his control was over the autonomic nervous system. When I confronted him, as to what his secret was, he stated it was as simple as going inside yourself, and connecting the switch. Almost like turning a light on. You should have that ability if your goal is to reach your peak potential.

The key is pure mental control. You must view the gym, as not simply a room full of dumbbells, but as Old School stated a war zone. You need to implant firmly into your mind that when you enter, all hell will break loose. Pain will be experienced, new challenges faced, and a competition between you, your fears, and the massive weights will await you every time in full vigor.

If you can expand yourself in this fashion, then the mere thought of the weight room will force the body to switch to it's sympathetic powers!

### **Your workouts determine how body will react**

I will get into this further, but the body remembers vividly the experiences it faces. If your workouts are wimpy, then how can the mind connect war, with training? I will delve deeper into this in fear training.

### **The Pre-Workout Ritual**

Your pre-workout preparation is an extremely unique and powerful weapon. It is within this time zone, that you can either release the beast, or hold onto the David Banner, or Peter Parker in you. What you need to do is come up with a minimum of 10 strategies for siking yourself up. Normally I prepare 45 minutes before show time. I might begin by reading a motivating article about a warrior bodybuilder, followed by a quick viewing of pumping iron. However, the last 10-15 minutes is usually spent in deep provocative thought. Going inside myself, focusing on the reality, or what I force my body to "perceive" as reality.

You might need to create a situation that has more pressure. Place yourself on a timeline, enter a contest, or even compete against yourself for a three month cycle. If there is music that turns on the beast, then save it only for pre-workout prep. Do not waste it! This time is key for training. You read all the attributes that the sympathetic nervous system gives us, and that cannot be underestimated. Again, I suggest writing down several strategies, and finding which ones work best.

### **Evaluating Yourself**

This is spot on simple. Can you turn on the beast when you need to? On the sheet I would suggest percentage wise rating yourself on a scale of one to ten. If you are poor in this area, then build up this weapon of warfare, it is simply to potent!

### **Development Of Your Minds Eye**

" I believe that I can put an inch on my biceps by just visualizing it. "

Tom Platz

A very powerful statement indeed. But is there truth to it? I believe there is a tremendous amount. The power of our minds are without question, and the more we use them the better they get. As advanced as we are, it is a wonder that we are not further along considering the extreme ability of our brains. Notice what I said though. The more we use our brains the better they get. Certainly this is a concept that has been proven time and time again, why not channel that toward our goals in physique building?

## **Incentive Based System**

There are several steps to reaching your goals. The first is to sit down and actually write them down on a piece of paper, or better yet your word processor. I guarantee they will immediately become clearer after going through this process. Begin by writing down your ultimate goals, and follow it up, by writing your more immediate short-term ones. For you that might be:

Overall Goal: To Be Mr. Universe or To be 200 pounds and shredded. It will most definitely differ for everyone.

Short Term Goal: You may be 190 pounds and 13 percent body fat, and your short term goal could be to get down to 6 percent body fat.

Once this is accomplished, you will have a clear mindset as to where you are headed. And the more extreme the goal, the more extreme your mindset must be! What I like about this simple one two method, is that our overall plans give us maximum incentive, they allow us to focus on a massive prize. Where as short term goals are the steps that keep us jazzed and propelled toward finalities. If all I were to do, was focus on the overall goal, my incentive would be tarnished, as that would seemingly take forever, and perhaps force me to hastily make decisions. The short term goals however, allow you and I to breathe in a sense of accomplishment!

Speaking of which, you need to lace the incentive system. When you reach a short term goal, plan something special to reward yourself. That may be a weak off, in which you stop and smell the roses, or suck in all the tremendous things you have accomplished thus far. The mind must be fed, and gratified. You have to stimulate it, in a positive manner, or it will not continually back your efforts.

## **Lay It Out On The Line**

After you have accomplished the previous steps, you need to use the logical, organized side of your brain, and devise a plan to reach your short and long term journeys. Write out a tentative training split, what your goals are dietary and supplementary wise. Set marks for how many hours a night you will sleep, and how

many naps in the day you are going to take. Make a check list, and hold yourself accountable to it. We tend to set our goals, and then wonder off. And while this sport is an extremely creative one, we need organization, or as Old School would say, a battle plan.

### **Developing Your Minds Eye**

If you look at a picture of our brains, you will see that we have two hemispheres. The right and left respectively. These are referred to often as not only separate in appearance, but also in function. The reality is, that it is much more complex than this, but there certainly is some truth to the matter. Most of you know the right hemisphere as the creative, free thinking aspect of our brains, and the left as the more logical, structured zone.

Using this analogy, you would have used most of your left hemisphere for the above action, because it was centered around structure. The following exercise however will force you to delve into your more creative, artistic side. What I am discussing is extremely vital to your success, not only as a bodybuilder, but as a thinker. In order to expand your awareness, you must have the capability of using both your logical, and artistic hemispheres.

Most of our brains are, semi oval shaped. It was said however, that Einstein's brain was very flat in comparison to others. Many great philosophers have theorized that this was due to his ability to utilize both hemispheres in unison. In essence they believe that his brain's functions adapted so as to better combine distinctive functions if you will. After all, there is no way a genius like that, could envision the scientific breakthroughs he did, without allowing his thought patters to expand away from hardcore structure. And yet he also had to harness this information in a very logical, scientific manner. Was he born with a brain like that, or was it developed through his mixed pattern, or technique of thought? I have always found that interesting.

If he could break the barriers he broke with such a technique, then you can certainly break the physique barrier.

Before continuing there is one more main purpose, aside from the infinite boundaries you can reach through collective use of modalities. And that is to self program yourself for success. A fantastic analogy would be when you program your vcr to tape a specific program. First, as you did above, you decide what program you want

to record, secondly however, you must complete the programming process. This is what self visualization or developing your minds eye can do for you.

It will literally program your body to function, live, eat and breathe for the sole purpose set for it, which in this case is a championship physique. The goal, is to inch by inch, set the brain to function in such a way, that it no longer thinks, or wishes that it can reach a certain goal, but has already attained that goal, and seen it through before it had already happened. I truly believe that this is the key to success, not only in this great sport, but in life in general.

### **Keys To Visualization**

“ What is real? How do you define real? If you are talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste, and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain. “

Morpheus – The Matrix

That is a fascinating statement to say the least. And it is also a very applicable one. When visualizing, the goal is to create your body, in your mind, before it actually has reached the state being viewed. What most people do not understand however, in this process, is that the more real it becomes, the firmer your mind will grasp it as reality, and not something off in the distant future. When this grasping has taken place, then you will be literally programmed for success, and your mind will not accept anything less than that!

With that said, it is important to realize that we have five senses( actually more but 5 mainly discussed ), and each one needs to be viewed in our minds eye. The more in depth these senses appear in your vision of yourself, the closer to reality it will become. It is not enough to simply create your body and view it, for that is only taking advantage of the sense of sight, and disregards our sense of taste, smell, touch, and hearing. You must re-create these for yourself.

**Step One:** The first key to this process is your environment. It must be one suited for in depth programming. This is not a game, it is a serious aspect of your development! My greatest advice is to simply carry out visualization before you go to sleep at night, before you take a nap during the day, and preferably before you

train. But a minimum of twice a day. Simply get comfortable in your bed, lay back, close your eyes and begin to create a mental picture of your ultimate physique! Envision yourself with the arms, quads, and back that you desire. See yourself flexing in the mirror, as your lats expand in an uncanny fashion. Perform a shake and bake and tense your quadriceps, as each and every head becomes clear and visible. This is how you develop the sense of sight.

**Step Two:** In order to develop the sense of touch, you may envision yourself grasping huge poundages in the weight room. Or you may perform barbell curls, while staring at your huge biceps in the mirror.

**Step Three:** The weight room has a distinct smell, you may imagine that, or you might create the aroma given off by oil as you prepare for a contest backstage.

**Step Four:** The sense of hearing is an easy one. This could be the clanging of weights, or the crowd going wild during your posing routine! Get into it!

**Step Five:** The sense of taste can be difficult. You might imagine a pre-contest meal, or envision a hard meal finished during a bulk. This way, when you reach this stage, you will understand the importance of the situation.

As you continue to practice this technique, you will find that your ability to create a physique in your mind's eye, a real physique which involves each sense, will become easier and easier. And the more often this is performed, the deeper it will be programmed into your sub-conscious. It is genius when you think about it, but it is also a necessity. Which means if you are planning on being a champion, you will make it a huge part of your regimen.

I'd like to add one comment. Our rooms, or the environment in which we sleep are extremely important. You cannot have an unmade bed, with clothes and garbage everywhere and expect to get serious, mind boggling work in. I suggest creating a soothing environment to do this. Always have your bed made and comfortable. The more soothing your environment, the greater the results of this will be.

#### **The Placebo effect**

Of all the subjects discussed, I believe this has one of the most negative tones to it. We lay so many occurrences off to being simply placebo effects, with no positive benefits whatsoever. It is my belief however that anything that causes us to perform at a heightened level is of tremendous use.

Essentially this effect comes into play, when we use a technique that gives us improvement, but which cannot be classified fundamentally as being responsible for that improvement. For example, say you wore a certain T-shirt for the first time in the gym, and had the best workout of your lifetime. The placebo effect would lie within you connecting the t-shirt to your heightened ability in the gym.

Rather than sloughing this off, I suggest continuing to use it to your benefit. Take Robbie Robinson for example. He had to have the right clothes for every workout, and connected his attire to his great training sessions. With that said, I believe that no one in the history of the sport can match his symmetry and proportion. He is as close to what the Greeks envisioned as perfection, as anyone could ever get. No one, has ever reached the proportions, and sheer sculpted insanity that he had.

In the same token I do not think that you should get over wrapped into the placebo effect, but it is good to use every trick of the trade we can get our hands on. Make a list of things that have enhanced your training, and use them to boost your performance. You see, many of these can relieve mental stress, and anxiety, while others can just plain fire you up! The relief of stress can enhance muscle growth tremendously, and has been proven in countless medical studies to be a fact. While the opposite also holds true. My real point is that I want you to grasp the reality of what connections have improved you as an overall athlete. Many times we allow these to slip through the cracks. If they are written down, then they can certainly help in this extremely brutal sport!

### **Proprioception – The Development of Complete Muscular Control**

The human body is a wondrous creation is it not? The more and more it is studied, the more appreciation scientists have for it. The senses discussed above are ones most are all familiar with, but the one that is least discussed, and which I find most intriguing is the vital sense of proprioception.

Our nervous/computer system is extremely complex, uncannily efficient, and programmed for endless actions, many of which we are aware of, and many of which we are not aware of. Let me ask you a question. The last time you walked, did you

have to look at your feet in order to make it to your pre-determined destination? The answer is no correct. This is due, to your highly proficient sense of proprioception. In laymen's terms this can be defined as:

**" The sense, or senses that allow us to detect exactly where our bodies are in space. "**

Have you ever seen a person have to stare at their feet while walking? Unfortunately, a side effect of diabetes is a deterioration in this extreme sense. And you will frequently see people forced to do this. We take for granted the extreme complexities of our bodies, but they are there, and this is certainly one of them.

Your goal, as an athlete needs to be to take full advantage and sharpen this sense. Use it to your advantage. Bodybuilding is no different then basketball, football, hockey, martial arts or any other sport, in that you need to develop uncannily efficient muscular control! When I was into martial arts I performed countless kicks, blocks, and strikes everyday. I needed to develop muscular control for the actions I was trying to improve. The more punches I threw, the greater my ability to move, and strike became, because my sense of where my body was in space was enhanced while performing the action.

During hockey, I stick handled everyday. Take a normal person, give them a stick and a puck and see how uncoordinated they look with it. Its horrible. The same goes for a person who has never dribbled a basketball, or doesn't do it often. In essence, athletes in other sports stress muscular control for their activity. Why is this not stressed more in our sport?

If you do not endlessly focus, and work on developing a mind muscle connection with your biceps, then you will never develop them to their full potential. What needs to happen, is that you need to develop your sense of proprioception, or what we like to call, the mind muscle connection, to the point, in which you can get a sense of where each and every muscle group in your body is at any given moment. To where you can literally be one with each individual head of your quadriceps, be able to delineate from your rhomboids, teres minor, and trapezius.

Just as an advanced basketball player can use muscle control to do endless feats with his tool of trade, you will be able to further isolate, bombard, and ultimately develop every single muscle in your body. Here are a list of benefits you will reap:

- 1.** A greater ability to develop individual muscle groups. For example, during compound movements, we tend to rely on several overdeveloped muscle groups. This can take away from the body part you actually want worked. An enhanced mind muscle connection, can correct this problem.
  
- 2.** Imbalances are a leading cause of injury, and also disproportion. An athlete with superior muscle control will be able to avoid these imbalances for several reasons. Mainly due to the fact, that his connection is so great, that he or she can detect the imbalance almost immediately, and easily correct it with their minds.
  
- 3.** Heightened strength – Our ability to control, and drive massive poundage's, is very much contingent on using all of our muscle groups involved in unison, and to their full potential. Heightened muscle control, will allow this.
  
- 4.** Enhanced Separation and Symmetry – Again, if you have a strong mind muscle connection with each group in your body, then the process of sculpting will be much more proficient. As bodybuilders we need to be able to critique ourselves. The greats constantly do so. They look for weak points and then exploit them in the gym.

Step one is identification. Step two however is isolation. If you cannot perform step two, due to a lack of mind muscle connection( which is perhaps the reason for the weakness in the first place ) then step one is rendered useless. I see so many people with lagging body parts, think they can correct them with just basic attacks. Perhaps they have a lagging chest, and believe that adding weight to their bench will enhance it. While progressive resistance is vital, they may end up packing most of the mass on their triceps and delts, as before. This will be due to their lack of muscle control. Overload is vital, but the question is, what are you overloading, and do you have control over the situation?

- 5.** Posing – The ability to open ones body up is extremely difficult to master. The benefits of muscle control in this area are obvious.

I can go on and on, but you get the point. The question now is what type of muscle control do you currently have, and how can you improve it.

### Techniques For Developing Muscular Control

The overwhelming point made is this: In hockey if you do not develop superior control over the puck, then when game time comes you will not be able to handle it, unless by uncommon luck, which again is uncommon. The same holds true in bodybuilding. If you do not develop control, in your ability to flex, adduct, extend, and or circumduct a particular muscle group then come game time ( weight training ) you will not be able to harness your energy into fully developing it. You will be at the mercy of the weight. In essence it will dictate to you, rather than you dictating to it.

As a brief description, the goal is two fold. You will want to improve your proprioception capabilities, and also improve your mental awareness. Which is to say, that you will literally want to develop the capability of placing your mind directly into the muscle being worked, so that you and it become one for that vital moment in time. I am speaking of the innate ability to literally be able to sense each muscle fiber in the area being worked, its hydration level, what type of fuel it is running off( or what fuel it is using to make atp, i.e. glucose, is it recycling atp, is it in the presence of oxygen, or utilizing fat ). While that may seem insane, you have to come to grips with the fact that you have entered an insane sport. The realization that you are battling a machine with tremendous capabilities. It is perhaps the ultimate challenge! Essentially this sport goes beyond genetics, and enters the realm of who wants it more. Who has the guts, and drive, and ultimately who is willing to make every little detail work for him!

**Step One:** This is visualization, which was covered above. When creating your body in your mind, you want to work on actually feeling the muscles contract just as in the steps below.

**Step Three:** Alas, as most athletes know, control over modalities comes with a three word phrase: Repetition, repetition, repetition...The best way to feel every fiber contract, to sense what certain movements do, and develop the mind muscle connection, is to pose for countless hours on end! Or, simply accumulate those hours through endless days of practice. The art of posing is unique to each individual. I would practice posing in front of the mirror, and away from the mirror( to get used to feeling the muscle, rather than see it in the mirror ).

I suggest getting a good mirror in your house, and then placing it in the most quiet, or undisturbed room in your house( Showdown, of course your kitchen will do! ). Once you have set yourself up, the games begin! The key in posing is two-fold. First I like to concentrate on certain areas of my body. You might begin by flexing your arms. Play around with different positions, and see how it effects the muscle

group being used. Which pose emphasizes the peak more on your biceps, and which emphasizes the long head in your triceps? That is something that flat out takes experimentation. You should get to a point in which you know exactly what each pose will do. Then experiment with the deltoids, anteriorly, medially, and posteriorly. Following this, flex your abs, then focus on your thighs, hamstrings, calves etc. Personally I focus on a different body part a day. Monday may be biceps, and triceps, Tuesday may be delts, etc. etc.

That is phase one of posing. Phase two is to flex and tense the whole body. This is where you utilize compound flexes. Like the most muscular, and others. The point here, is to flex and tense the whole body in unison. The trick however, on both is to make the mind muscle connection. Whatever muscle that is being emphasized is the one which needs the direct connection. Try and transplant your brain, into the muscle being flexed! As if it were the only body part you had. Believe me, the more you practice this, the more realistic that will become! Then, when flexing and tensing the whole body, focus still on that muscle group. This will give you the skill, of singling out your biceps on barbell curls, or close grip pull-ups, etc.

The posing routine can be as little as 10 minutes, to as long as 30, depending on how much work you need. One of the extreme benefits of posing, is its uncanny ability to assist an athlete in staying leaner on a bulk or enhancing the fat burning process on a cut. You see, this type of activity keeps your body in a pure fat burning zone. The intensity is to the point in which the human body relies almost purely on fat stores to fuel itself. This means that through posing, you can maintain all of your glycogen stores, and spare your muscle at the same time. Even on a bulk, you can perform this, because you will only do yourself good. I usually wake up, brush my teethe, and pose for 10-30 minutes, on an almost daily basis. Its exhilarating, wakes the joints up, brings fresh blood to your muscles, and burns almost 100 percent fat! It doesn't get any better than that! You might also set yourself up a specific CD, which gets your mind sharp and focused for the task at hand. Essentially it is a time to admire your hard work, but also allows you to completely critique each of your weak points.

**Step Three:** At this point, the key is application. You will take your ability gained through hours of flexing, and posing and transport it in the gym. When lifting, attempt to make a severe mind muscle connection with the target body part. Arnold said that he was able to place himself into his biceps, and imagine that they would expand and literally fill the entire gym! With your newly developed control, this will become a reality in your training sessions as well!

You know what to do, the question now is will you step up and apply it. It all comes down to how much you want it, and what you are willing to do to get it...

**Shredding / Filtering System / Honing Powers**

There are two basic forms of focus. The first is one's ability to key in on a specific moment( in this case in the weight room ). No better illustration exists then the following:

*" When the going gets tough, it is always the mind that fails first, not the body. The best example of this I can think of occurred one day when Franco and I were doing Squats in the old Gold's Gym. Franco got under 500 pounds, squatted down, and couldn't get back up. We grabbed the bar and helped him et it back on the rack Five hundred pounds for even one rep was apparently just too much for him that day.*

*Just then four or five Italian-American kids from New York came in. " Wow," they said, " there's Franco! Hey Franco!" They were great fans, and were looking forward to watching him work out-only Franco had just failed in a lift and it seemed probable that he would miss it again on the next try.*

*I took Franco aside and told him, " Franco, these guys think you're the king( note: the man is a king! ). You can't get under five hundred pounds again and fail." All of a sudden his face changed. He looked at me with big eyes, realizing he was on the spot. Then he went out onto the street and spent a while psyching himself up, taking deep breaths and concentrating on the lift.*

*He stalked back into the gym, grabbed the bar, and, instead of the six reps he was supposed to do with 500 pounds, he did eight! Then he walked away coolly, as if it were nothing.*

*Obviously Franco's muscles didn't get any stronger in those few minutes between sets, his tendons didn't get bigger, what did change was his mind, his drive and motivation, his desire for the goal. It was impossible to overlook how important the mind was in making the body do what he wanted.*

**--- Arnold Schwarzenegger – Seven Time Mr. Olympia**

I cannot add to or subtract from that statement! Columbo demonstrated the ability to turn on his game face and focus on the immediate task at hand. The tools he used are threefold.

**A.** His ability to utilize his autonomic nervous system

**B.** The ability to use spot on motivation and transfer it to the task at hand. Obviously we are not going to face a situation like Franco did on a daily basis. This means that spot on visualization will again come in handy. When tired or not focused, visualize the situation as being greater than it appears. Imagine this set, or workout as being the very one that gives you the edge in your bodybuilding career! And of course, you can self-create this situation with an outstanding workout partner. A concept that cannot be downplayed!

**C.** Overall Clarity of The Mind( developed through filtration ) – Discussed Shortly

The second form of focus is in my opinion the most vital. It is centered around not allowing negative thoughts to penetrate our minds on a daily basis. The reasons for this span endlessly, but we will key in on two main points.

**1.** Negative Thoughts lead to Negative Emotions – Negative Emotions Lead To Increased Stress Levels.

Stress levels increase cortisol levels, slow the metabolic rate, and have been shown to lead to countless medical disorders. An athlete in this sport cannot be plagued by something as destructive as this!

**2.** Negative Thoughts take the mind away from your goals, ability to train at full capacity, the visualization process and can in many situations de-program you completely( I have seen this occur all too frequently )! This is where your filtering system comes into play. It is the indispensable ingredient to completely dominating your environment!

Have you ever noticed how selective cats can be? They have the innate ability to hear what they want to hear, and pay attention to what they feel is worthy of their

attention. Your filtering system should be developed similarly. I am not telling you to ignore family and friends, what I am saying however is that you must be able to block out negative thoughts, and cling to more positive ones. You cannot allow the sun to go down on a depressing moment.

Way too many bodybuilders emotional levels sway from one day to the next. If they are flat, then the day is over! If someone made a negative comment towards them, then they are depressed for a week. You need to base your feelings on your dedication. If you gave it your all today, then allowing negative thoughts to penetrate is completely counter productive to your goals.

As an athlete your filtering system should be insanely developed. You should reach a stage in which you can clear your mind at any moment, and completely dispense it of all unproductive thought patterns.

**Rule of Thumb** - The more dedicated you are, and the higher you want to go in this sport, the denser your filtering system will have to be. It is that plain and simple. I suggest developing it to a high level, and then adjust it accordingly to match your aspirations. The point is, that you should reach a stage, in which nothing emotionally reaches a point in which it can no longer be controlled ( with obvious, exceptions, but these are rarities ).

Once this is developed then nothing can hinder you from reaching what you have set out to accomplish.

**Note:** This advice expands beyond the iron arena and into every area of your life and career.

### **Ability To Unlearn**

Many of you must be saying, " Did I read that right? "

The answer is yes. Your ability to unlearn can truly become one of your greatest assets! When it all boils down to it, we are explorers. Everyday of our lives we attempt( or should ) to gain as much knowledge as possible.

The Problem? In order to gain knowledge we must face, and digest countless materials. In this process, even the best of us gather information that can be extremely counter productive to our advancement. The way I see it, there are two separate aspects that an athlete can immediately pick out, and correct if need be:

**A. Habitual Behavior** - We are habit forming creatures. After training for years, exercises and form in countless areas becomes instinctive, or automatic, rather than thought out. While this has a tremendous upside, it unfortunately carries a downside. Here are a list of some of the most common negative habits one can find himself getting into.

1. **Leaning** - This means that during either one, or many of your exercises you tend to lean on one side of your body. Take the squat for example. Many athletes will go slightly, or tremendously lower on one side of the lift than the other. This is due to their feeling more comfortable with their right leg's( or vice versa ) strength as apposed to their lefts.
2. **Overuse of Momentum** – While bodybuilding is reliant on progressive resistance, the resistance must be placed on the target muscle, or on any muscle at all for that matter. If you over swing on biceps curls, or bounce on all your bench presses, then chances are, the only thing you will work is your ego. Use momentum wisely, but do not make it a habit to lift in this manner.
3. **Ignoring Weaknesses** – A very common habit is to strengthen our strengths while ignoring our weaknesses. Take the unsymmetrical build found in many hypertrophy athletes today. The famous quote is: " I have a great upper body, but I cannot get my legs to grow. " Most likely it is because they continue to place poor effort into their leg training. Even things out, and break this habit if you have it.
4. **Never Looking Over The Edge!** - With the evils of over training being preached left and right today, it seems many bodybuilders are terrified of facing the edge. Listen, we as hypertrophy athletes must live on the edge,

that is the edge of over training. If you go to a cliff and look down, you aren't going to die, but you'll get a hell of a thrill! That's the principle, train as hard as possible, and push the limits as much as you can without falling off the cliff. If you do not go to the edge, you will never know how far you could have pushed yourself, and will never reap optimal gains!

5. Terrible Sleeping Patterns - Z-Factor, nuff said!

6. Poor Meal Spacing - You should be self programmed to eat every 2-3 hours. Waiting four to 5 hours on a daily basis is not acceptable for the serious bodybuilder.

**B.** Situational, and Educational – Obviously there are several things you have learned over your bodybuilding career that are erroneous. Once you spot them, simply unlearn them. Furthermore there are many situational techniques that we have learned that are subtractive. This was explained above. Many bodybuilders are emotional wrecks. You may have unwittingly taught yourself to go off your rocker every time someone makes a negative statement about your physique, or for that matter every time a human being disagrees with you. This leads to stress, which is our mortal enemy! To recap my advice is to develop a filtering system in order to handle negative situations, and learn how to handle disagreements. I see so many people lose their tempers over training ideologies. Simply have an open mind. See the glass as half empty, rather than half full. I would say the habit most need to break is seeing the glass as half empty. Ronnie Coleman made an excellent statement in the 2001 Mr. Olympia Contest. When other competitors were whining, he stated that he had worked almost two decades for his physique, and had many rough roads. But not once did he cry. In conclusion he said simply,

“ One person doesn't like the apples, or they don't like the oranges. So the moral of the story is, why complain! “

It seems simple, but it is extremely true. An example of this, is found in advice giving and receiving. I remember speaking to Victor Munez, who I believe is perhaps the number one trainer in the world in regards to bodybuilding and he said that he

could learn from anyone. Even beginners! Charles Poliquin made the same statement. Coleman in his Olympia prep for 99, stated that he attempted to learn from amateurs, right along with pros. The point is that we build up the bad habit of looking down on others because we somehow feel superior to them? An ego is the worst learned habit we can have! Why? Unless you are Mr. Olympia there is always someone better than you. And even if you are Mr. Olympia, there are people with more knowledge than you. That is why a humble athlete such as Ronnie Coleman, as incredible as he is, can continue to blow the field away! Take a lesson from a champ and lose the ego when it comes to gaining knowledge!

**Note:** An ego can be healthy as long as it doesn't interfere with progress. And anytime you pass up a situation in which you could have gained something, even from what you think is an unlikely source, you have made a mistake. In logic circles, this is known as the fallacy of dismissal. Ask any Logician, and they will explain to you, that this is one of the largest fallacies committed in the world today. Remember, it is those with a mind willing to expand in any situation that take our society to the next level. Blowing off potential gains, is essentially an unwise move. It is for this reason, that I make a concerted effort to treat each other( meaning members on the forums ) with the utmost respect. By discouraging free thought, and creativity, we discourage the very thing that leads to advancements!

With that being said, the summary to this section is purely based on analysis. Look deep into yourself, see what is hurting you, and unlearn it! We as human beings tend to hold tight to bad habits. However, we as athletes must rise above the norm, if the goal is to be abnormal( or freaky, freaky big, massive, however you want to put it ).

#### **Skill level, and ability to use environment**

Have you ever watched a sporting event and said in regards to a superstar, " Damn! That guys got mad skills! "

Of course you have! That's one of the reasons why we watch athletics. To see human beings performing at levels that are in the realm of insanity! What we also notice is that the superstars are the ones who have these unnatural skill levels. Putting two and two together we can certainly surmise the following

Skill level – Superstar, hmm... Develop Mad Skills = Become a superstar?

Perhaps that is the case, or am I oversimplifying things? Regardless, it follows that they are definitely connected, despite the sport, be it football, baseball, or bodybuilding( yes you heard that right ). What I am simply saying is that you need to have the ability to perform countless exercises, and utilize endless techniques. That is skill. What is perfection? Your ability to execute these techniques at the precise moments they are needed( a different story entirely, perhaps that only experience can yield ).

My suggestion is then to challenge yourself to learn new exercises. Tweak different techniques, improve your arsenal. Develop, mad skillz!

### **Use Of Environment and Environment Itself**

Danny Padilla, the Giant killer began his career with little more than a few rusty weights, and a pipe in his basement. Why do I mention a pipe? Because he freaking used it to perform pull-ups for years! I find that many of the greatest bodybuilders began with simple tools in their garage and made the best out of their situation. Through limited circumstances, they became open and creative! Which meant that exceptional circumstances ( i.e. better equipment ) took a insane skill level and boosted them to an even higher platform.

The point is, that you need to survey your environment. Whatever gym you have should be mapped out as if it were a battle field! Become familiar with each of your tools. Take the adductor machines for example. Most athletes never make their way over to it, and yet the adductor Magnus is one of the hugest muscles in the medial thigh compartment( actually in the entire body for that matter )! They have literally limited unfathomable growth in their lower body. How many more tools are neglected? Survey, the situation. Gain knowledge, and do not neglect the power of any movement or exercise. Seriously evaluate yourself in the above two areas, and honestly assess, whether you have true skill, and have taken the time to exploit every aspect of your gym, or do you have very little in either of these areas. If the answer is entangled with the latter, then you will be surprised at how advanced you will become( hypertrophy wise that is ) when you progress in these areas!

### **Conclusion**

Be willing to expand your mind beyond your current level of awareness. Dare to challenge your habits, set boundaries, and even your very essence. Or do you even have the drive to do so( a question we all need to ask ourselves at some point in time )?

Yours In Sport

Jacob Wilson [jwilson@abcbodybuilding.com](mailto:jwilson@abcbodybuilding.com)

President Abcbodybuilding / Beyond Failure Magazine