





Going Now-Here

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How long will your strength be relative to the world?

How soon will the reps become repetitive, just a cycle to uphold?

Create for creation's sake. No Ambitions. No Goals.

There's a case for calisthenics: Experience the **body** and it'll merge with the **soul**.

The Case For Calisthenics

Calisthenics has been around ever since we've had bodies. The use of our bodies to exert energy is not new. The specific time allotting for "training" is what is new. As an early human, there was no need to reserve a time of day to burn off calories. Calories were not abundant, so intentionally burning them off wasn't a good idea. Today, we can buy our energy without getting up, and because we don't have to directly work for our food, we have to balance the readily available energy with workouts.

Working out is a recent phenomenon. This is what makes calisthenics practice "natural." Calisthenics requires only movement, the lifter and the lifted are the same.

A few things that make calisthenics training so attractive:

Accessibility

The minimal use of equipment means calisthenics can be practiced almost everywhere, anytime. **The basics are:** A pull-up bar, parallel bars, and the ground. Extras like rings and ropes can enhance training, but they aren't part of the core equipment.

Higher accessibility means more opportunities to train. If the effort to get to the place of a workout is minimized, the chances of going are maximized. If the natural environment can be used as a gym, then one is always a few moments away from being at their place of workout.

Sustainability

There is nothing revolutionary about calisthenics, and that's what makes it sustainable. There are no promises for overnight results, it's a lifelong journey. There are no expensive systems to try out, it cannot be contained in a book or program. No one has a monopoly over the practice, it's an open system that grows with each individual, without a single entity having total authority. With calisthenics, everything is subject to change. The methods for effective self-expression through bodyweight exercise cannot be frozen in writing.

Here lies the sustainability of calisthenics. Everyone who practices calisthenics has the potential to be an innovator, an inventor. Through creative expression one is driven to progress in the practice, and there is little effort put into "working out." **The basic strength exercises** aren't boring because they have a purpose. They **are a means to build strength for creative expression.** The work is fueled by the imagination. The drive to create something new is what brings calisthenics athletes back to the training grounds.

Sustainability means the practice can continue with little to no equipment, finances, or external resources. Once the fundamentals of calisthenics are instilled in an individual, he/she becomes a self-sustaining vehicle for the progression of the practice. **Learn the basics and all is available.**

Infinity

Calisthenics training is timeless because of the creative aspect of it. The whole practice is against structure, against any standardization. Creativity is unique down to the individual. Any attempt to standardize creative calisthenics for competitions or certifications is an attempt to compact infinity.

Individuals have the ability to create in two fundamental ways: Altering and Combining. We can alter and/or combine what already exists. All new things come about in this way, they are built on the past, but are not limited by it. Creative calisthenics is an unpredictable, evolving practice. There are no rules, only recommendations that insure safety and efficient progress.

Social Aspect

Social interaction is a necessary aspect for personal growth in calisthenics. It makes learning a new move quicker, as others who have found the way to do it right

have also found many ways of doing it wrong. Through interaction, hidden gems for progress are uncovered. Seemingly impossible roadblocks can be overcome with some extra insight from others. This is the way calisthenics evolves, and why communities naturally form around movement. The social group serves as a benefit to the individual, and in turn the individual is empowered with skills to bring in more variety into the group.

Creative calisthenics, when practiced socially, tends to feel like a celebration instead of organized exercise. As individuals pick up each other's moves and techniques, the group will begin to develop a certain common style. The goal is to go against this common style, by being inclusive of all who want to practice calisthenics, and by each individual striving to create new things. Doing this keeps the group flowing and progressing towards the new.

This booklet is focused on the individual's progress in calisthenics, both physical and spiritual.

Awareness

I want to talk about awareness and its link to physical activity. This link is not unique to creative calisthenics, yet it is the greatest driving force behind its appeal. **Why do we come back to the bar?** What is it about the activity of putting ourselves in dangerous and new situations that makes it "addictive"?

Creative Expression, Physical Fitness, Adrenaline, all these things come to mind - but the most fundamental aspect is: **consciousness**. Creative Calisthenics requires us to be at the present, to be aware of our surroundings, and to be conscious of our movements.

Being In The Moment

Whenever we attempt something new, we are pulled into the present. The new demands presence. If the mind becomes active it lingers into the past or future. The mind is never in the present. Trying new movements in creative calisthenics forces us to be without thinking. The split moment where the mind lingers has enough power to disturb our energy flow. Most injuries are caused by unconscious acts.

Being Conscious

This sport teaches us to be conscious at all times. To be conscious about our environment and of ourselves. In movement, **the contents of our minds do not matter.** This is the greatest equalizer. All philosophies, dogmas, pasts and futures are irrelevant.

If we fall asleep while we move, we fall, we misstep, we miss that crucial turn of the neck that a 360° muscle-up requires. We go into a dreamlike state, become the subjects of our state instead of being in control. This is why we need to be conscious. The conscious state learned from creative calisthenics spills over when we are not working out. This is the greatest benefit, the spillover of consciousness into our daily lives.

The World Is Your Gym

This motto has a greater meaning than just working out wherever. Discovering that "The World Is Your Gym" brings environmental attentiveness. One begins to find pullup bars disguised as hand rails, dip bars disguised as bar stools. Finding hidden exercise equipment means one has consciously identified that there is rail, that there is a post. It sounds childish, but many people go through their day without noticing what goes on around them. It may begin with wanting to do tricks everywhere you go, but it can evolve into full alertness and observation.

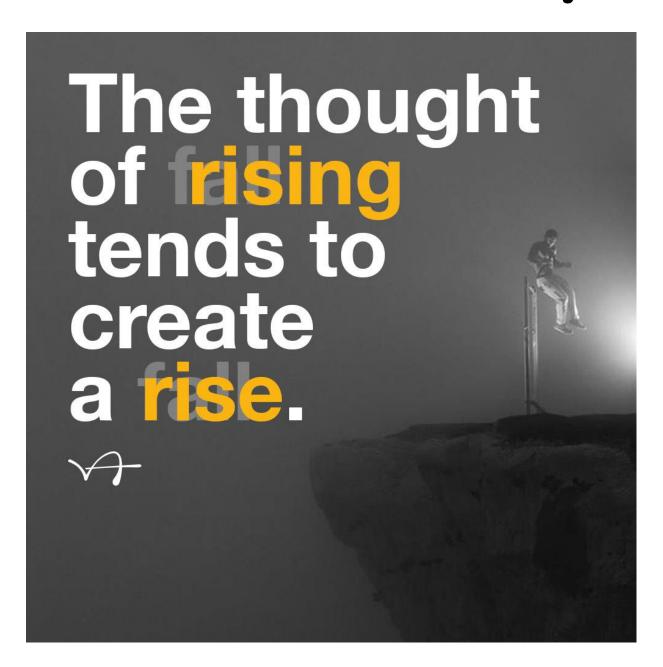
The Path to Meditative Calisthenics

Yoga, Zen practice, and many martial arts aim to achieve awareness. Yoga does it mechanically and scientifically, it puts your body in awkward and new positions and forces you to be aware of your every limb, every muscle. Zen practice does it holistically, through observation and the loss of self. Most martial arts fall into a hybrid system of yoga and Zen. The martial artist becomes aware of the body through practicing movement, and becomes aware of the environment through observing an opponent. This is why it feels like a hybrid, martial arts has Yoga and Zen elements.

I believe creative calisthenics has both elements as well. Calisthenics practice is a dance between the athlete and the bar environment - and when the observer becomes totally engulfed in the sport, a certain calmness carries over. This calmness is called awareness.

With continued practice, the need for supplements, unnatural diets, ego, and ill-hearted competitions goes away. These things do not help us to become more aware, they are irrelevant. There is also no reason to speak out against the irrelevant. When the Light is absent, all that we are against naturally begin to creep back into existence. Only the good can outdo the harmful.

Lesson 1: Positivity



Creativity

The two words in **Creative Calisthenics** are inseparable. Take one away from the other and the whole system breaks down. Here's the obvious one: Creative [Blank]. We have taken the body away, there is no more exercise. The subtle one is: [Blank] Calisthenics. We still have bodyweight exercise, but the whole beauty of the practice has been compromised.

Tricks Are For Kids

There's a common saying "tricks are for kids" and it is uttered by ones who pretend that being grown is cool, that being repetitive should be your goal. Sure, **strength is more fundamental than tricks – but it's nothing without expression.** Tricks are a form of expression, and expression keeps one feeling young.

There is a lingering group of people involved in calisthenics that have all together dropped the creative, and they frown upon anyone who tries to be expressive. For them strength is all there is. Bigger, Badder, more reps, more weight. These folks are in the business of the mundane, and are actively trying to convince others that their fantasy worlds are ideal. Expression is ideal, and to be constantly strong is to be weak. Physical strength is a means to an end, it is driven by the creative. Without the creative, strength becomes a chore. It becomes work.

The Fit Accountant

Without strength there are no tricks, but without tricks the

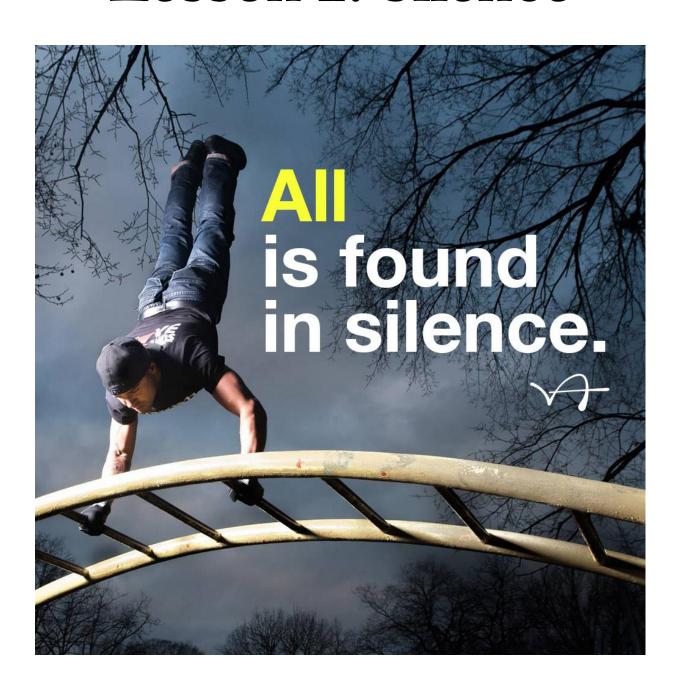
strength decays. It fights itself, it tries to outdo itself. Here lies the stress of uncreative calisthenics. The only goal is more. More reps, more weight. To constantly push yourself to do more of the same thing is unfair to your potential. This type of attitude is seen not just at the playground, but at the workplace. We compete to fill out more sheets, work longer hours. We exhaust ourselves without ever thinking to get creative and make the whole thing a game. Reps are repetitive, cyclical. And if your whole goal with exercise is to go in circles, you will constantly find yourself where you began. Your dreams will consist of doing more repetitions. You begin to deal with numbers. An accountant has been born. You were working out, but you became a mathematician.

The Drive

Forget willpower, it is not necessary. Forget pushing yourself to go to the park or gym to exercise. If you embrace the creative, it will drive you to the park. Your body will itch until you exercise, until you invest your energy in expression. It has to do with how you use your energy. Will it be to repeat yourself? Or to express yourself? Again, the strength is needed and vital, but it should not be your focus. Not why you get up every morning.

If you embrace this realm of creativity, the endlessness of its nature, all will be easy. Exercise will at last be easy. Preworkouts will be replaced with nothing, because nothing external is needed to be motivated to progress. Goals of doing more will inspire you, not stress you out. Your goals will be to do more with your body, not to do more of the same that you have done yesterday.

Lesson 2: Silence



An Athlete's Guide To Creativity

This sport is driven by creativity. Yet creation is irrational. It draws from the unknown, and it is technically un-teachable. It cannot be passed down in a plug-n-play box, nor confined in a manual. Any such guide will be limited to the creativity of the writer, and once something is created - it is no longer available to be discovered. It's in the past. So how can we ignite creativity? **From within.**

The Past Written in Stone

The past is available online. Traces of the created are everywhere. It's great to read up on history and reflect on what has been done, but you can only catch up with history, not move forward. Figuring out what has already been done is great. You can avoid wasting energy in reinventing the wheel. **This understanding is the prerequisite, the homework to be done - but it is not where the fun lies.**

You can learn from books, from others, from your personal trainer, but **others can only give you what is already known**. The unknown is un-givable. Teachers can only give the tools for discovering the unknown, not the unknown itself. The rest is up to you.

The New Move Lifetime

In the creative calisthenics culture, there seems to be a lifetime

for a move to be considered "fresh", "cool". Freshness is democratic, and majority rules. Can 10% of athletes do the move? It's fresh. Can more than 50% of athletes do the move? Not so fresh. In this way the boundaries constantly grow. New moves spread like wildfire via the internet, and the whole sport advances in an accelerating fashion. Stand still today and you miss out on 2 new moves. Stand still yet again tomorrow, you miss 4 more. If we think about always being caught up to the present, we miss out on the whole creative process. We are chasing. Chasing what has already been done. And what has been done is in the past, so we unknowingly chase the past. In art, you do not need to study all of art history AND recreate every piece to start creating. This approach is insanity and can only freeze you with indecision. So why do that with creative exercise? You don't have to. You do not have to be able to perform all known moves to advance the sport.

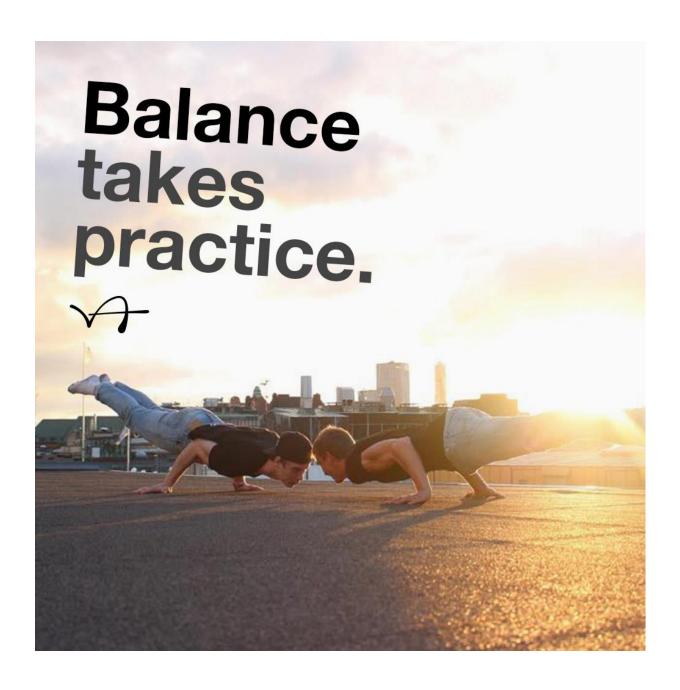
The Catch Up Game (And How To Bypass It)

To find out how to create new things, we have to discover how new things come into existence. In the world of calisthenics, there are two fundamental approaches to creation:

Branching, and Linking. Branching is like evolution, growth upon a tree. Branches grow higher through tiny variations in their direction. Through little mutations here and there. Linking is the sequential combination of branched progressions. It is the combining of evolved and evolving moves in a chain.

Creation is not a scientific type of process, yet there are laws that govern it. It is a natural product of imagining something into existence through a technical medium. When done with complete awareness, creation can seem effortless.

Lesson 3: Balance



Branching

Creation is a gradual progression. It has a base from where all things come from. Creative Calisthenics is no different. The fundamental moves are the most important and should be practiced for strength purposes, yet the joy of the sport lies in the discovery of the unknown.

The Tree of Knowledge

There is a tree of calisthenics moves, and it's something I reference when teaching move progressions. But the tree is old. The tree is the known, and **the known is always in the past**. I can chart and document all the known moves in calisthenics, but the second it is published it will be outdated.

Once this tree of all moves has been mastered, the fun stops. Where will you go now? How will you grow? You'll have to wait until a new version of the book comes out. An external dependence for growth has developed. **Doing what others have done can put us in a trap.** Without a creativity we become dependent on another being to create for us to consume. It's a consensual outsourcing of creativity. Yet creating is the joyful practice we're after.

The Method

Branching is one method all athletes in creative calisthenics use to come up with new moves. It's not a scientific method with steps, you don't need pen and paper. Just awareness. After this

paragraph close your eyes and think about doing a pull-up. Let your mind wander and don't worry about what you are physically capable of doing. Let your mind wander and imagine different variations of a pull-up. It can be something you've seen someone else do, or something you wish to do.

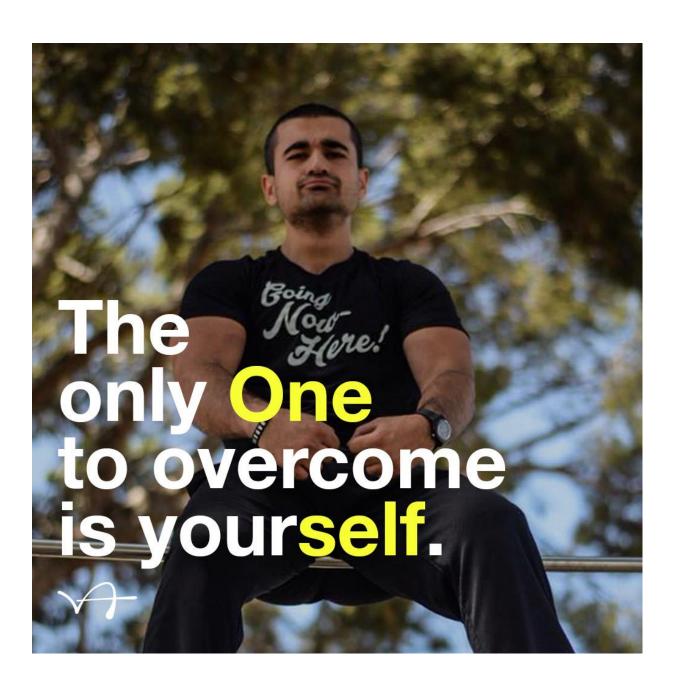
I can't tell what you came up with but we can use what is already known as an example. If the pull-up is the trunk of our tree, every variation on it is a branch. What's a variation that is the closest to the regular pullup? **Grip width.** There's the close grip, regular grip, and wide grip. These are subjective terms that only mean something when in relation to each other, but they're small variations. They are branches from the single trunk.

Connected Fossils

No one ever creates by jumping forward into a complete unknown. There is always a tiny connection, a bridge between the new and the old. If there wasn't a connection, the new thing would be unlike anything you had ever seen. That's the supernatural. The unknown does not exist in the supernatural because nature is infinite on its own. It is naturally super.

All moves are progressions, and one does not need to know all the moves in existence to start creating. A tree doesn't work that way. There *is* such a thing as the highest branch, but the new can always bud from the side.

Lesson 4: Self



Linking

Linking is the process of combining moves to create a set. You have a list of calisthenics moves in your repertoire. Everyone does. No matter your fitness level. You have a body, therefore you have physical ability. The process of linking involves being aware of what you can do and when you can do them.

The What

Your bag of tricks are moves you can do comfortably alone. Take the time to perfect each individual move before trying combinations. Hesitation comes from unfamiliarity, and for linking we want to minimize hesitation. If an individual move is a hit or miss when performed alone, the chance of the whole combination working is low.

Let's say you have 3 basic moves on the high bar, and you can pull them off nearly all the time:

The Muscle Up
The Bar Hop
The Pullover

You have three moves available for a set, but what you choose to do first will determine the smoothness and "wow" factor of your set.

The When

Timing is everything in calisthenics. We are doing physical exercise and therefore dealing with the laws of physics.

The most important physical law to recognize and work with is inertia. The **law of inertia** states that "an object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force."

This is a major deal in creating smooth sets. **Smoothness is efficiency.** Efficiency is using the least amount of energy to complete the same combination of moves. Your body wants to keep going in the same direction and speed once in motion, so we can take advantage by not going against inertia.

With a high bar repertoire that includes **The Muscle Up**, **The Bar Hop**, and **The Pullover**, there are 6 possible sets you can form by reordering when the moves are performed (not including impossible sets such as performing the bar hop before doing a muscle up or pullover.) These are called "Permutations." The more moves in your bag of tricks, the more permutations there will be.

Can you think of the best way to link these 3 moves? When I say best I mean using the least amount of energy by noting against momentum. **Taking it easy has a great side effect:** your moves seem effortless.

Keep in mind there is no right or wrong way of combining these moves, but you will find that one way will be easier than others.

Let's take 2 possible sets for example:

- 1) Pullover, Bar Hop, Muscle Up
- 2) Muscle Up, Bar Hop, Pullover

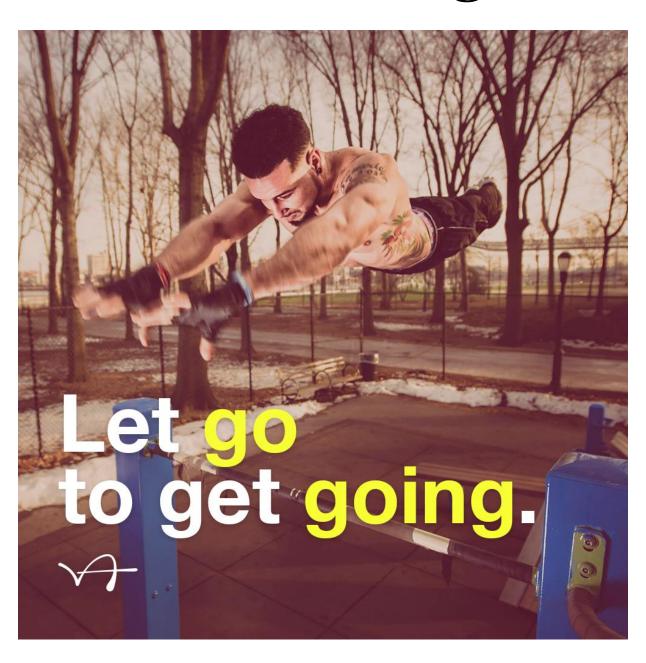
If you can already do these moves you can easily pinpoint which one flows smoother.

The first set works fine, but after the pullover I will need to stop and reverse the direction my body is spinning to perform the bar hop. Then after the bar hop I will need to reset again for the muscle up.

The second set takes less effort. From the muscle up I can pop my hips up without hesitation to the bar hop, then because my legs are already flying forward, I can keep my elbows bent and go into a pullover without resetting.

The order of the moves has a great effect on smoothness. More advanced moves will demand greater energy and concentration to perform, and being efficient will be that much more important.

Lesson 5: Flight



Branching + Linking: A proven method

When branching and linking are combined, creative opportunities present themselves. All new things that you can create have to come from what you already can do. A move that looks wildly new actually came from small progressions from the old. It mutated little by little in the creator's mind until it finally took a completely different form.

All that makes creating difficult has been conditioned in you – it has to be unlearned because you are already capable of creating without effort. **All that is required is awareness.**

How do you become aware of what you can do? Easiest way: write them down! Make a list of all the calisthenics moves or tricks that you can do. Study them. This is your repertoire. With this list you can branch and link.

To Branch

Branching involves picking one move and developing it further. This is the practice of **evolving a single skill**. Forget all about combinations and all other moves, they are irrelevant at the moment of branching. Pretend that this one move is the only thing you can do. How can you make it different? For example: a dip can be transformed into a jumping dip, a clapping dip, a 180 degree dip, a double clap dip, etc. Once the new move is created from mutation, you can add it to your repertoire.

To Link

Linking is an extremely fun process. It involves connecting.

What was once a disjointed list of moves can come together into a flowing stream of movement. It is fairly easy, once learned, to perform a single move and take a break. It takes much more focus to string moves together. Each move must be performed with patience and care, without thinking ahead. If you get ahead of yourself in a linked set of moves, you mess up the move you are currently doing. This forces you to stay in the moment, to be aware of your momentum, and to focus on one move at a time.

Branching is development - Linking is expression

Lesson 6: Creation



Finding Energy To Workout

A majority of the fitness industry is obsessed with doing the impossible. We are told that no matter what, we need to motivate ourselves to exercise, to push through a workout even if we don't want to, to force ourselves to get up and move. **Sluggishness is shunned and drained moods ignored.** Laziness is a by-product of the things we do during the day, and it's okay. It's okay to be lazy, but there's a way to recharge our batteries with simple actions in order to not get drained.

The Conservation Law

Pushing yourself to workout is not stressful or unsustainable, it's impossible. Motivation is an induced phenomena. This induction process of getting motivated obeys a fundamental law of physics: the conservation of energy. Simply stated, energy cannot be created nor destroyed, only exchanged. Energy flows through you. This is why one day you might go workout without a thought, and on other days it feels nearly impossible to move one limb to get off the couch.

5% Battery Remaining

You might be able to get away with a forced workout here and there, but do it for a week straight and it's nearly guaranteed to leave you drained. Moving takes energy, we all know that, but there are two categories of energy we deal with: **Mechanical and Non-Mechanical**.

The Mechanical can be explained by science, can be tracked, analyzed, and studied to oblivion. For example: We intake calories from food sources, then expel them during a workout, through movement, or by simply being alive and ticking. A calorie is just a unit of measurement for energy. The food calorie (kCal) is calibrated by the energy required to raise one kilogram of water by one degree Celsius (at one atmospheric pressure.) Do a search for the best calorie intake/output program and you'll be bombarded with a million people saying a million different things. **It's noise.** This paragraph was probably a boring read too.

There's another type of energy that is not yet understood by science. This is the non-mechanical. It is tough to call it "spiritual" because it might be physical, and it might be that we just don't have concrete laws to describe it yet. This type of energy is the one that makes you feel motivated when it's there, and makes you feel drained with it's not. It has nothing to do with Calories, fat, glucose, or anything your doctor can diagnose. It's not about food intake. It's about the absence of **positive** energy sources. It's about positivity intake.

So you can mechanically, on paper, be in tip top shape with your energy intake and output - but if you don't feed that second, non-mechanical type of energy, you'll find yourself constantly drained.

Lesson 7: Energy



The Basic Energy Source

Where do we get our energy? An impractical answer is: existence. Since this topic is outside of the scope of this booklet, I will touch upon a couple of things that can give you energy while you work out.

Discovery

Learning from external sources can be great, but the **purest** way of learning is through discovery. When the learner experiences firsthand, it becomes embedded within that being. Calisthenics involves experimentation with your body. Laws of physics can be learned in the playground in a few minutes when traditional schooling may take weeks of agendas. Creative calisthenics involves learning by doing, and by doing you are bound to discover.

Sharing

Sharing seems to break the laws of energy. It takes effort to communicate, yet we can get energized from sharing. It is because **communication is an investment**. The input is the effort needed to share, the output is the energy gotten from being understood.

Naturally, if we speak without meaning, without expression – communication becomes a bad investment. If we share without ego and with an aim to connect with others, communication becomes a source of bottomless energy.

If we don't share, we are more prone to accumulation. Accumulation is the opposite of Assimilation. Accumulating is the sense of having millions of disjointed thoughts and ideas in your head – all fighting to decide which one gets to govern you. Assimilation is when all these thoughts spill into each other, producing silence.

Energy flows through you, this means it is not yours to keep or protect. Expend it, give it away. If you feel you have found something valuable, share it. There is no shortage of discoverable things in existence. Holding onto what you stumble upon might give you power, but it inhibits you from experiencing the new. You will be a powerful person who can no longer grow.

Energy is gained through discovery and sharing.

In discovery, the learner and the teacher are one. If the person embraces change, then discovery is an easy way of gaining energy. If the person discovers yet denies what they have found, there will be no growing.

Sharing is more complex because it requires clear communication from the teacher, and an open mind from the learner. Since the teacher and learner are not one, communication must be simple and efficient. Any bit of irrelevant or subjective information can compromise what is being shared. Speaking purely is the responsibility of the speaker.

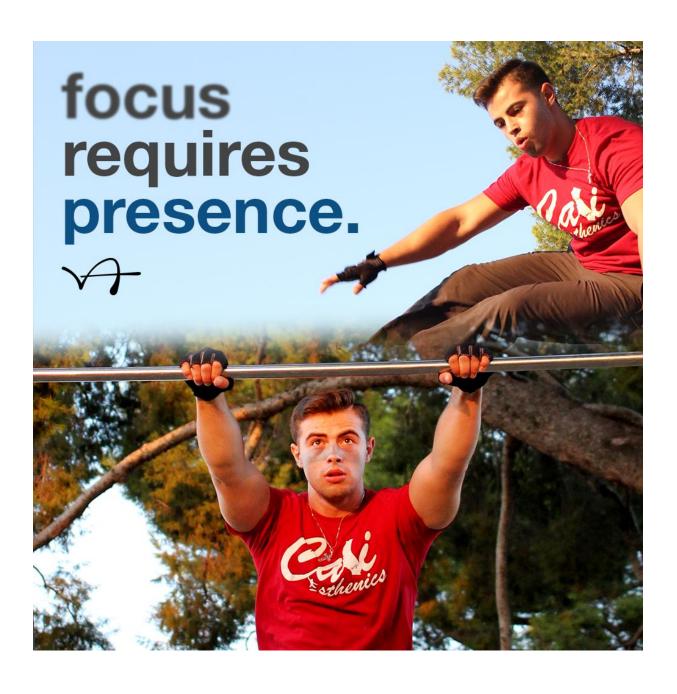
Physics has a definition for work being done. If I use force in order to pull you closer and you don't move, I do negative work. You might be resisting, or I might not be pulling hard enough, either way I am doing negative work. My work is negative because I've spent energy yet we haven't gotten closer. Positive work is when my pull-force is enough to move you in my direction, even partially.

Nature constantly pulls us closer to it as a whole. If we relax into nature, we can float from one lesson to another. This is

why many people gain energy from nature - hiking, camping, and other outdoor activities. Nature gives energy without an address, it is unconditional love. Its communicative skills are pure, uncontaminated by a self. It talks to everyone in the same language. The same energy can be gained from others, but requires communication. Un-silence is only a translation of what we discover in silence, which is why it takes more grace and openness to learn from others. People are like the middleman. We experience nature, we interpret it, and then communicate it to others.

Do not push yourself. Allow your life-energy to come and go and you'll move without effort.

Lesson 8: Focus



From Sofa to Habit. To Out of Habit.

When you initially begin exercise, you will want to develop a habit. This is natural. You want to keep doing what is good for you, so you try to find ways to force or "hack" your brain into doing what you want. Science has proven that new habits can be systematically created, replaced, or dropped. Habits are essentially mental triggers, but you don't have to study the science or find ways to trick yourself – because habits are bad. Even the good ones. A program is a program, no matter the end result.

The unconscious habit

It doesn't matter if you're smoking cigarettes or working out, if you do it without awareness, it is mechanical. Habits are unmemorable and you are not a machine!

It is difficult to remember anything done out of habit. That's why the first *something* is more memorable than the rest. A smoker will remember his first cigarette, but not the countless many that follow. **The first is always done consciously.** It is something new, it pulls you into the present and requires attention. That curiosity must be preserved, even in exercise.

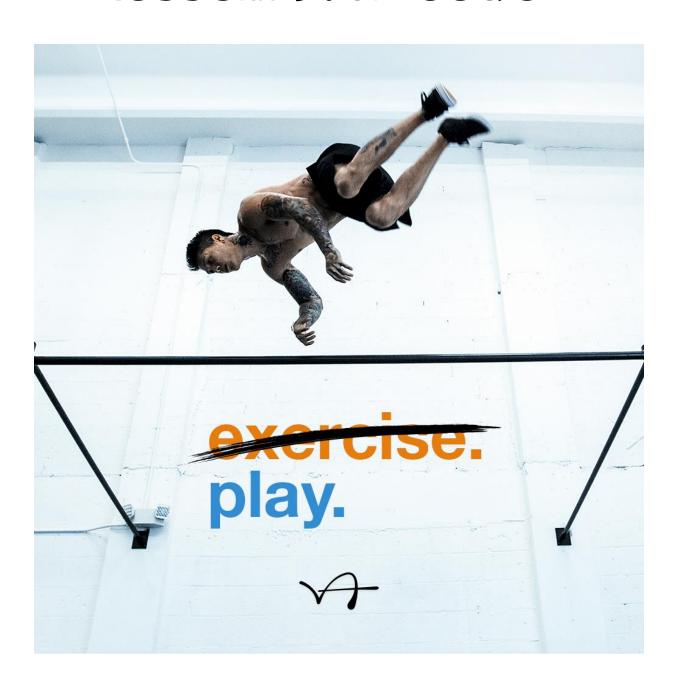
Be more intuitive with exercise. This means dropping all schedules, all workout plans. You have the rest of your life to live an active lifestyle. There is no rush. Energy flows through you in an unpredictable matter, and it dictates your every intuitive move. If you have scheduled a "rest day" for today but you just can't stop moving – then move! Schedules are made by the mind,

but you are moved by your heart. Drop the schedules and you'll drop the conflict between heart and mind. With the conflict gone, the guilt of not working out when you're "supposed to" also disappears.

The intuitive drive to move and be fit is already inside you. It's not something to be bought at the store. The intuition is covered up in impositions and conditions. These are burdens that have been passed down to you by society. Fitness has become stressful. You'll see posters of incredibly fit people in motion with the tagline "NO EXCUSES," "JUST DO IT" – they scream at you, make you feel shameful for not moving, not being perfectly ripped. This isn't a global conspiracy, it is just that every individual who accepts these conditions as truth passes them onto others out of insecurity. Dust them off and you'll be able to express yourself physically.

Your strength will come and go. Your ability will come and go. Your intuition, creativity, and playfulness can last for a lifetime because they will always be within – accessible instantly when the unnecessary is dropped.

Lesson 9: Freedom



Going Now-Here

There is no end goal to the calisthenics journey. There will never be a point where you are fully satisfied – and that's okay. Mastering your bodyweight is a journey, not something that can be done in totality. You're going nowhere – so just enjoy now, here. Going now-here will slow your pace, reduce the chances of injury, and allow your full creativity to bloom. This is your adventure, and it only takes place now, here.

Learn from everyone, don't follow anyone, and have fun!





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1: Positivity

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3: Balance

Athletes: <u>Douglas Ekermark</u> & <u>Joel</u>

Ingemyr

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4: Self

Athlete <u>Hovhannes Mkhitaryan</u> Photographer: <u>Andrew Senteno</u> 5: Flight

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6: Creation

Athlete: Keaton Luis

7: Energy

Athlete: Melissa Jane

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8: Focus

Athlete: Ando Zetlyan

9: Freedom

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