

# THE ELEMENTS OF FITNESS

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## (MOST) PERSONAL TRAINERS SUCK

*This is a reprint from 2009. I still believe in these words today. I also believe our team at Elemental are among the best trainers in the country, and aren't on the "suck" list.*

Personal training is an industry rife with under-qualified and over-proud professionals. And even calling them "professionals" is often a bit of a stretch. The vast majority of personal trainers are completely self-educated and have only studied enough to pass a basic certification exam. This is roughly as much study as it takes to learn to play "Chopsticks" on the piano. In fact, it's vastly more difficult to become certified to do manicures, so...buyer beware.

When you hire a trainer, you're making a sizable in-

vestment in your fitness, and you should get a good return. You should be taught exercises and told what your plan is and what results to expect. And don't be fooled: anything works for a little while, so even a really bad trainer might make you a little stronger and a little skinnier in the short run.

You should ask questions of your trainer, and expect straight answers. I don't care how many letters a trainer has after his name, "Because I said so" is not a good answer. Exercise is a confusing realm



YES, THOSE ARE 2 POUND WEIGHTS, AND YES, HE'S SPOTTING HER. SO SHE DOESN'T GET HURT.

and a trainer should study it. Trainers don't need to answer medical questions, ther-

Continued on p. 4

## THE STAT:

# 1

Number of people responsible for your crappy eating habits.

## QUICK NOTES

**Hybrid Training** is back on Mondays. This uber-effective class is now offered three times a week. Since we feel this is the ultimate one-stop workout format, you'll be seeing a lot more of it.

Congratulations to Elemental Athletes **Casey Dean** and **Lonnie Adams** on their great success the last weekend of July at the Race the River Triathlon in Coeur D'Alene. Casey took first overall for women, beating even the elites. Lonnie took 5th overall.

**Kettlebell Fundamentals** will be offered Saturday, August 25th in a 2-hour class, from 9-11am. This is a full course in the basics of kettlebell training, and will include warm-ups, workout design, and a complete kettlebell workout. This class is free and open to the public.

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## 8 THINGS YOU SHOULD EAT (A LOT)

**1. Sweet Potatoes** - These are one of the best vegetables you can eat. They're loaded with carotenoids, vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. As bad as white potatoes are, sweet potatoes are good. You should attempt to replace ALL of your white potato eating with these.

**2. Fish** - The best thing about fish, besides the smell, and cleaning up after cooking it, is that it is a very lean meat rich in omega-3 fats. You need these. Eat fish more than once a week.

**3. Broccoli** - Broccoli has lots of vitamin C, carotenoids, and folic acid. Plus, it's delicious. And, if they'd had it in Nazareth 2000-odd years ago, you can be it'd have been in the Bible.

**4. Nuts** - Nuts are high in fat. If you're still watching your fat intake, wake up and realize it's not dietary fat that makes your pants tight. The fats in nuts are good for you, and these babies are high in protein, too.

**5. Eggs** - The cholesterol fears most people have with eggs are

pretty overblown, and in fact many scientists believe that saturated fats and trans fats have a greater impact than does dietary cholesterol in raising blood cholesterol. Eggs have a little over 200 mg of cholesterol in their yolks, but are high in Omega-3 fats. One a day is a good start.

**6. Crispbreads** - These are wholegrain rye crackers, the best known being Wasa, and are loaded with fiber. They're pretty dry, though, so watch how much frosting you put on them, or you'll defeat the purpose.

**7. Plain Greek Yogurt** - Flavored yogurt, including Vanilla, low-fat, and all the whipped ones, almost belongs on the "never" list. This stuff is no more than ice cream with some acidophilus in it. Plain Greek yogurt, though, is low in carbohydrates, high in protein, and isn't so bad if you can get past the need for everything you eat to taste like candy.

**8. Bell Peppers** - These guys are really high in vitamins and

are one of the best single sources for antioxidants. They can be added to almost any meal, so start adding.

### 8 things Never to Eat

1. Donuts
2. Frozen Pizza
3. Alfredo Sauce
4. Smoothies
5. Soft Drinks
6. Sugared Gum
7. Fast food Burritos
8. Flavored Coffee Drinks

I didn't write specifics on the things you shouldn't eat, and I had a hard time stopping at 8. The general rule is that these foods are high in carbohydrate, many of them are liquid, so they digest quickly, and many are packed with empty calories.

In line with our "practicing change" efforts, you should slowly add the good foods into your diet, and consider the glaring weak links in your nutrition as you do so.

THE BEST THING ABOUT FISH, BESIDES THE SMELL AND CLEANING UP AFTER COOKING IT, IS THAT IT IS A VERY LEAN MEAT RICH IN OMEGA-3 FATS.

## GET KENYAN WITH YOUR RUNNING

If you're a one-speed runner, you might not be getting all you could out of the sport. For one thing, the more time we spend running at any given speed, the more efficient we become at that speed. In running, efficiency means fewer calories burned...so if you're trying to lose weight

listen up.

A popular method of training with top-level East African runners is the 3-speed workout. Start off the first third or a run at an easy jog. For the next third, ratchet the speed up a notch, to a medium-hard, but sustainable pace.

The last third of the workout should be at maximum steady-state pace. This is the fastest pace you can go for the whole planned time.

Getting good at three speeds, and especially running fast at the end of a workout, is going to do wonders for your speed, and for your waistline.



## PRACTICING CHANGE

Change is everything when it comes to making yourself happier. It sounds like a cliché, but it's true: If you don't like the way things are going, change the way things are going.

I know I belabor this point a bit, but being effective at changing habits is a critical skill for improvement in health, fitness, and almost everything else you're not totally satisfied with.

The problem with changing is trying to change too much. Nothing against how awesome you are, but here's the truth: almost nobody can sustain big changes all at

once. How many people do you know that have successfully changed major habits "cold turkey?" How many times have you pulled it off?

You don't suck, you just aren't *good* at change yet. That's why it takes practice. How to practice? Here's a 3-step system that will get you going on the road to successful change, no matter what you're trying to do.

1. Change only one thing. You've heard the statistics on trying to do too much at once...pick too many things, and you're guaranteed to fail. Pick one. Make it clear and

measurable and something you will do every day for the next 2 weeks.

2. Make it easy. Make it something that feels so easy it's silly. Exercise 5 minutes a day. Drink 4 glasses of water. You have to make sure there is no way you won't get it done.
3. Write it down. Make a chart. Do a video. Keep track of it however you like, but keep track.

Spend two weeks kicking the hell out of this habit. After succeeding, celebrate, and move on to something just a tad harder.

## FAT LOSS PITFALLS #4 - JUST DESERTS BY STEVE BECHTEL

Years ago, during a difficult point in my life, a friend sent me a postcard. You know, like in the mail. On it he wrote "What is fair? What do you deserve?"

I read it and thought about it and eventually pinned it to my wall. At the time I received it, I really felt my life was *unfair*, and that I *deserved* better.

Any time we are working hard on something, we expect a payoff. Go to work, get some money. Build a house, get a place to live. Nice, clean, direct, and noticeable results.

With fitness and fat loss, it works a little more slowly,

and is therefore a bit maddening.

Because we surround ourselves with so many direct result situations, we feel cheated when the pounds don't just melt away.

To make it worse, when we work particularly hard, we often do our best to sabotage the results. You know the scenario: work out hard—grab a beer, and some ice cream, and another beer. How hard did you really work?

Any exercise has the potential to increase your appetite. For this reason, we feel it is critical to keep a detailed

nutrition log when trying to lose weight.

With this tool, you can avoid bumps in intake associated with increases in appetite, or with the feeling you've deserved to eat poorly.

Maybe there was a time you could get away with eating a crappy diet. That was then, as they say.

Don't get sucked into feeling that you deserve the binge. The one time I'll support eating crap food is if your abs are wearing six little holes in the front of all your shirts. Otherwise, stick to the mission.

WE FEEL  
CHEATED WHEN  
THE POUNDS  
DON'T JUST  
MELT AWAY...





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WE CHANGE LIVES.

*“If there is no personal  
confrontation, there is no  
progress.”  
- James Loehr*

## Metabolic Workout of the Month

Here’s an easy one. OK, maybe not easy, but simple. It’s a good one to do outside, ideally in a park or on a trail. Start with an easy jog of 1 minute, then do 30 seconds of squats. Jog another minute, then do 30 seconds of push-ups. Continue this sequence for 20 rounds, or 30 minutes of total activity.

Feel free to substitute any form of exercise in the “strength” portions of the workout; push-ups and squats are simply a suggestion. I also really like sprints... especially when you’re running where there are people watching you. Dropping down for push-ups can cause panic! The best way to make this work is to get yourself an interval timer and set it to beep at your switch times. Watching a regular stopwatch will drive you nuts.

## ACTION TRIGGERS (CONTINUED FROM P.1)

apy questions, or injury questions, but they should know exercise. Likewise, doctors and therapists shouldn’t be expected to know the ins and outs of getting fit. Your trainer should be able to explain: bioenergetic pathways, fat-loss metabolism, isolation versus integration, how to get big, how to get skinny, muscular versus anaerobic endurance, why the “fat-burning zone” is a load of crap, how to do a power clean, the difference between short and long intervals (hint: it’s not just duration), strength training versus bodybuilding, the thermogenic effect of digestion, and any other exercise question you might have. A trainer should also be able to

explain why she is having you do single-leg half-squats while holding a medicine ball on the BOSU. It better be a damn good answer, too. Any trainer who withholds information probably doesn’t have that information. If your trainer fundamentally changes his training philosophy each week after watching “Biggest Loser,” you might consider changing him. Beware a trainer that recommends fad diet books or exercise programs; training can and should be individualized. And most importantly, if you feel like the training isn’t working, it’s not. Training works like gangbusters if it’s done right. The tough part is you have to do the work.

But wait—here’s the really cool thing: If you get a good trainer and a good plan, you have the keys to success. The hard thing is finding the right person. Don’t assume that because the huge new gym is a big, clean, multi-million-dollar facility that the staff is a bunch of fitness experts. You’re often just as likely to find a good trainer at the gym in an old warehouse downtown. Think of your coach or trainer as a GPS device: some of them are cheap and hard to understand, some of them are expensive and get you exactly where you want to go, and none are worth a damn if you don’t pay attention to what they tell you.



Another one. 3 pound weights this time. I feel like I’m taking crazy pills.