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1 - Draper here... Muscle and Strength -- The Only Way to Fly

The questions we ask, the unknowns we face and the curiosity, wonder and inquiry that baffle our minds could fill the space between Earth and the shrinking planet, Pluto (I'm gonna miss Pluto). And I'm only talking about building muscle. What, good heavens, makes the process so difficult, heady and mysterious? There ya go again, three more questions to clutter our limited space and ability to reason.

The answers are not in the brain matter alone; they're in the heart of the matter -- your instincts - the place between what you think and what you know. And the answers are in action, for without action, the answers are mute.

More instinct and less brain and lots of action, that's what I always say. My dad wanted me to go to college; I went to the gym. My mom wanted me make something big of myself; I bulked up. I had a plan: work out, eat and play dumb. Inner wisdom resides in the least intelligent creatures and offers its insight in natural action. I find that comforting.

However, recommending you apply your basic instincts, like dogs, cats or gorillas, doesn't suggest you curl up in the corner and scratch your fleas, or rub your back on the leg of the girl behind the juice bar and purr -- feed me -- or swing by one arm from the gym's overhead light fixtures. Get serious. We've got work to do, muscle to build, fat to lose and a mind to expand. Coconut delts don't grow on trees and veins don't appear like snakes on a plane. And where do you suppose muscular definition comes from, the dictionary? Ha. You're one of those who pedal to the all-you-can-eat smorgasbord to build mass, and plan to get shredded, ripped and cut when you fall off your bike on the way home.

Bodybuilders are a scream! You need brains, instincts and action, bombers.

Instinctive training, or training by intuition or gut feeling, can be applied by anyone with a brain who has accomplished the training basics. This means any person, male or female, who is awake and aware, familiar with the essential resistance exercises and has practiced them sufficiently to know what muscles they engage, and their nuances of action.

Some folks never get it; they and the iron remain separate. There is no affinity, no relationship, no communication, no understanding of, with or for the inert hunky stuff. Instinctive training is not for them. They need order, a defined routine, thoughtful change, prescribed sets and reps, starting and stopping points, occasional handholding and lots of affirmation. What they really need are hard work and eyes that see, a body that senses, the boldness to risk and a leap of faith.

We all have brains. Resources are endless and it's up to you to choose the direction to go -- up, down, sideways, backward or forward -- any of which can become entwined and tangled.

Separate the good from the bad, the garbage from the hype, the poop from the scoop. Learn a little, practice a lot and grow strong; you've been doing it since you were born. Don't stop now; don't make life any more complicated.

Are there advantages to instinct-guided training? How does one recognize instincts and, thus, apply them; where do they come from, can they be trusted? How do we differentiate between intuition, whim, guesswork, randomness and laziness? This naturally hidden and purposely concealed characteristic cannot necessarily be called up; it must be prodded, nudged and stirred up. And though instinct cannot be fully revealed, we can catch a glimpse of its mysterious workings.

Do not confuse instinct with whim; they are not the same. Instincts are inner knowledge; whims are external emotion. Instincts direct us forward; whims lead us into trouble. Instincts behave like warriors wearing armor; whims, like loons, run around naked. The whimsical look in the mirror and see a face with crossed eyes, a protruding tongue and wagging fingers stuck in ears. The intuitive waste no time with mirrors, images and silly expressions; they see and feel and perceive and act for goodness sake.

"The Bomber's beginning to sound like a stiff," said the Hulk to the Oak.

I heard that. It has been suggested that I lighten up, and I cannot deny the wisdom of the words. Therefore, I agree hardcore musclebuilders are allowed to be whimsical, even presidents and kings should visit the fanciful place. Whimsy is necessary to remove the sharp edges of reality, the stiffness in the spine, the scales from our eyes. I estimate one goofy workout every six weeks for the driven musclebuilder should suffice to loosen the chains. Of course, it can be argued that driven lifters don't want loose chains. That's a matter of probing and deep discussion for another time. I'll add it to my calendar.

Let's see, where was I? I'll have to go back and read what I've already written, and that can be a tedious, confusing and time-consuming task. I'll then weave some imagined facts together with fiction and hyperbole to complete this week's provocative article.

Ah, yes, it's coming to me slowly, but surely... questions about instincts, what, where and why. Questions that don't have clear and direct answers are best understood through examples, metaphors and short stories. Got a minute to spare?

I was standing in the middle of the gym, The Weight Room Santa Cruz, wondering what I was doing there. This happens frequently and Laree has fastened a name tag around my neck with a little bell and our home phone number. It works. Anyway, it was leg day and I noticed I'd rather sit than squat, perhaps recline on the incline, hang by the thumbs from the chinning bar or stick my head in a vise -- anything but the rack. The thought of the bar on my back was crushing and cheerless. Time for a personal confrontation: Am I being a wimp, is it too much trouble and pain and strain, or is there a legitimate reason not to squat today -- overtraining, exhaustion, a subtle injury, paralysis, a whispering from the seventh dimension?

My review included two quick assessments: One, a glance at the workouts recently completed and immediately ahead in order to consider current workloads, and, two, the question, how will I regard myself if I modify my workout -- an intelligent lifter or a gutless loser? Did I say gutless loser? I think hard at this point in the revealing one-on-one, self-to-self confrontation. What to do?

Allowing no room for the gutless loser, I quickly drop my gym bag in its designated corner, grab my gear, which includes knee wraps and a thick, leather weightlifting belt, and zoom over to the squat rack before anyone else is stricken with the horrifying gutless-loser syndrome. I affix the Top Squat, throw a pair of hefty wheels on the bar and hang my belt from its narrow steel girth. Done! Such an arrangement of paraphernalia makes a strong statement that this bar and rack are being used, and it gives me a few minutes to get my unwilling limbs and the body to which they are attached awakened and warmed up. A few sets of extensions, curls, leg presses and calves do the trick.

My pea brain (my ego) reacts to the gutless-loser insinuation. My knowledge of training (when threatened, squat) prompts action; my instincts (gut feelings) are revving in high gear. Nothing like guilt and the threat of being viewed as a spineless twerp to arouse the inner conscious mind and jolt the system into action. As I proceed to squat, I make the proper modifications to meet my needs for the day. True intuition is spontaneous.

I set a bench in the center of the squat rack, straddle it and assume my normal 18-to-24-inch wide, slightly toed-out foot position. I proceed to squat to the height of the bench, touch and go. The presence of the bench and the moderate limitation it provides add nuance to my squatting and prevent me from going low, saving the hips and knees from deep-squat overload. Within the first set I realize the alteration was all that was necessary to remove the fright and ugliness from a favorite, most-productive and fulfilling exercise. Instincts, improvisation, commonsense, a stray from the norm, a minor risk, an ounce of daring and, voila -- another super workout, one more challenge met, a needed lesson learned and further confirmation of confidence.

Five sets of eight reps with a moderate weight and I'm bolstered, stimulated, inspired and energized. Perhaps I'll work the wings before I call it a day.

Some say it's not how high you fly, it's the take-off and landing that count. Others say, higher and higher! I say brains, instincts and action (hope, guts, madness), plus wings and air -- the only way to fly.

Go... God's strength... Dave

2 - Laree here, taking over with online news

Let's see, what did Dave chatter about today? Instincts, whimsical workouts. Squatting, the Top Squat and bench or box squats. Let's see if I can find you some related links.

Well, what do you know? These are easy ones, no test at all.

This is Dave's initial discussion of instinctive training, which I'll have to cross-link with today's expansion on the subject.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Instinctive-Training>

For a refresher on Dave's Top Squat invention, this page describes it in words and video -- Dave in action under the device.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Top-Squat>

Louie Simmons from Westside Barbell put attention on Peanuts West's original version of rickety box squats. Here's his explanation, as told to Powerlifting USA.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Box-Squats>

Labor Day week is absolutely a good time for a well-earned goofy workout. Here are a few of Dave's favorite suggestions, offering up his wild ways.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Slumpbusters>

Have a terrific end-of-summer holiday, and know that it's not really the end of sunshine... yet.

Laree

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Pearl/Draper seminar DVD:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Pearl-Draper-DVD>

IronOnline forum:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Forum>

IronOnline health and fitness database:

<http://www.healthandfitnesswiki.com>

Dave's Bomber Blend whey protein powder:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Bomber>

Dave's Top Squat:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=TopSquat>

Dave's thick bar handles:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=ThickBarHandles>

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