

Lawrence Neal: Skyler, welcome back to The Membership.

Skyler Tanner: Yeah, absolutely. I'm happy to be here.

Lawrence Neal: It's good to be talking, and good to have you back on the 1st January, 2019. I'm very grateful to be able to have your time on New Year's Day. It only kind of occurred to me today that, "Oh, Skyler and I are talking on New Year's Day. I feel quite privileged."

Skyler Tanner: I'll run that one by my wife and let her know that she should feel privileged to talk to me [inaudible 00:00:26].

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, exactly. So yeah, this is a quite exciting topic. For a while now, and I've had people, listeners of the podcast, members, talk to me about the challenges they have explaining high intensity training to new clients, or at least explaining the benefits, and getting clients to really buy into it, and ultimately selling them on the benefits, and the value, and obviously retaining clients over the long-term. I've always found that you're very good at articulating the value and benefits of high intensity training without really talking about high intensity training. To be frank, a lot of our clients really don't care about that very much.

Skyler Tanner: No.

Lawrence Neal: The other thing as well, is I think people in here do get stuck in the echo chamber. It's easy to think just because we all love it and we're obsessed with it, that our clients feel the same way when they don't, most of the time. Obviously, by

talking to clients about it, and talking to them about it in the HIT terminology that we do can often achieve the opposite, and sometimes alienate them.

Skyler Tanner: Right.

Lawrence Neal: Again, you do this so well, so I'd love to hear ... If we just start off by talking about ... I guess the best way to do this would be to talk about your ... the first part of your consultation with a new client, and how you introduced high intensity training to people who don't know about it.

Skyler Tanner: Sure, sure. What I'll do for you, is I have a slide deck that I take people through every time they show up at my door. By this point, they've already done online intake of medical health history and informed consent. We've kind of chatted back and forth. I have a few email templates that I use to systematize my communications in those very early stages. Systematize my communications in those early stages, and so that I just ... It's just that consistency.

Skyler Tanner: It's where your clients are asking certain questions. I'm kind of steering them back to the point of, "Everything's going to be answered once you're in the front door." Most of my leads are warm leads. It's pretty rare that I ever have somebody who's just looked and found me on the internet, and are just randomly peppering me for more questions.

Skyler Tanner: Or if they have, like I have a consultation that I'm trying to set up here. She's just like, "I don't know how I haven't found this sooner." But she's a clinical counselor, so I think some of

that kind of shared clinical language is already compelling to her, so we'll call her not a hot lead, but a warm lead.

Skyler Tanner: Most people, they've been a referral, and for that whole referral process, you could probably just go to any one of the [Discover Strength](#) talks that you've given, because I'm doing basically what they ... some version of what they do, as far as striking when the iron's hot. When I'm educating them, asking for referrals, and then doing membership drives and things of that nature. Once they're in the door, I've got the slide deck, and some of the key points ... I'll send you a couple of images from that-

Lawrence Neal: Thank you.

Skyler Tanner: ... that I think are helpful for when I'm explaining ... I'll send over the most relevant ones. It's just a keynote. I'm not doing anything magical here. I don't have some crazy expensive ... You could even do this on [Google Docs](#), and that would be perfect.

Skyler Tanner: Okay, so one of the things when I sit these people down, I have some idea of what they want already, but I always throw up a slide. I always want to make sure I find out exactly a little bit about them, I have some idea of their health history from the medical intake, and then I pepper them a little bit of lifestyle stuff, but this is also the ... This is just a very basic level. I literally say, "Tell me about you? What are your goals, your feelings, your current lifestyle, and past experience with exercise?" I'm just trying to create

a little rapport, trying to understand exactly what they're looking for out of this.

Skyler Tanner: Then I say, "Okay, that's fantastic. One of the things that we're so focused on," and I've got it on the screen, "is we focus on helping clients become 50 to 100% stronger in less than one year's time." This serves two reasons. Number one, it's a big number, and I also point out that it takes time. I'll be saying, "50 to 100% stronger in a year." That might not be as compelling as like, "Lose 30 pounds in 12 weeks. Lose 30 pounds in 12 weeks." But it's something like, "What ends up happening, is the fitness industry is full of shiny objects. Instead, I'm telling you, 'This takes time, but if you've built it and it takes time, that means it's real, and it doesn't go away overnight.'"

Skyler Tanner: "There's no fitness interest." You've heard me say this before, but this is a point where I go, "There's no fitness interest. Part of what we're building here is something that is going to last, but as it turns out, you have to do some version of what got you to where you are to keep you where you are." That's part of the relationship and the coaching, and I'll get into that a little bit more later.

Skyler Tanner: The first thing I then point out after that, is I then go into our differences a little bit, which if they've read the website, they have an idea of ... I talk about, "We're different in three main ways. We practice evidence-based resistance training, and what I mean by that is ..." And I get into it a little bit more here in a second. I say, "Evidence-based resistance

training, we understand how the body works, and I'll talk a little bit more about that in a second. The second is that experienced, educated instructors," and I say, "I have a master's degree in exercise science, and anybody I hire will have a degree related to exercise, because you're a professional. Your ... should be as well.

Skyler Tanner: I was a hobbyist once, and I get it, I understand that there are people who don't necessarily have a degree who could be good at this stuff, but everybody who I hire will have a degree and be just as professional and interested in getting better at their job, and delivering the best possible service for you as our client as I am."

Skyler Tanner: Then finally, I talk about efficient workouts. I say, "22 minutes twice a week, twice as strong. That 22 minutes is an average. There's 30 minute sessions. Some people, they're done in 15. They've come in with some understanding of [Body By Science](#). They have a feeling of ... they feel worked out by that point, and other people, they ... because either their work capacity is low, they have poor kinesthetic awareness, they need the full 30 minutes to really drive home that feeling of having extracted as much value from that time as possible."

Skyler Tanner: I'm not judging that, but I also say, "Twice a week is based on the literature. That's the most frequency you can train to maximize the outcome of strength. The reason we focus on strength," as I tell people, and I go to my next slide, "is as I say, strength is the currency we live our life by. We never

look at something and go, 'You know, I want to be able to do that thing, but I need three quarters of an inch more on my thigh before I can do it.' We go, 'No, no, no, no. I need to be stronger. Stronger, stronger, stronger.' That's why it's Smart Strength, right?"

Skyler Tanner: So I start talking about the safety. I say, "The only way you're going to build strength in the long-term is to make sure you don't hurt yourself. We know how the body functions. There's approximately 42 discrete, big mechanical articulations in the human body, and you can get the number of possible movements to satisfy that down even lower." If we start off how the body functions, muscle and joint function as base principles, then we go, "Okay, well can we load that safely? Where can't we load that safely?"

Skyler Tanner: So I tell them, I say, "If you didn't come from a sport background, you trained in accordance with muscle and joint function, and that's what we do here. The importance of that," and I have a follow up slide, which is, "What happens is people kind of get hurt if they're weak through aging, or if they're exercising too vigorously and poor muscle and joint position, and they get hurt, and then they go to a rehab. Rehab in America will only get you back up to the same relative risk that you had before you got hurt. Insurance will not cover building capacity over just not being in pain. Pain is the arbiter. But that doesn't mean that just because you don't hurt ..."

Skyler Tanner: In fact, one of the things I regularly tell clients based on, again, based on the evidence of the recovery of ... Let's say you end up with tendonitis, or a partial tear, or something. When you're rebuilding that from that injury, the Collagen Matrix that's being built is like a poor crosshatch, and it takes time to align those fibers so that they're stronger, so that they get back to almost the same strength as you had prior to the injury. But it stops hurting long before you're to that point, so just because you don't hurt doesn't mean you're not still at risk, or that you're free to return to this type of force, or the type of activities that originally hurt you.

Skyler Tanner: The reason why we put such a premium on safety is because we don't want you to potentially hurt yourself trying to get healthy. You don't want to hurt yourself anywhere, but you accept the risks of like, "I'm going for a run at Town Lake," or, "I'm cycling on this crazy path." Those are things that you might hurt yourself on, but you accept that to have that enjoyment in your life.

Skyler Tanner: On this graph, I show this injury curve, and I go, "We want to rebuild that strength that you had when you were much younger and then above and beyond that, so that you can do whatever you would rather be doing away from here." So that's point one, safe.

Skyler Tanner: Then I go onto efficient. Now I talk about the volume and frequency versus the intensity model, you know, this sort of ... lower intensity of exercise requires more volume and

frequency, whereas higher intensity exercise requires less volume and frequency. You can't sprint a mile. You can't run 26 miles as fast as you run one mile. People intuitively get that, especially with this graph.

Skyler Tanner: I say, "We create intensity with controlling fatigue. Intensity's kind of en vogue right now. You have Orange theory Fitness, you have CrossFit. Having a high intensity workout does not mean you're convulsing on the ground in a puddle of vomit next to you unable to control your limbs." That's kind of the idea that some people have when we say intensity, but in our case, intensity is largely about how can we quickly and safely recruit all of the available muscle tissue you have in a movement, and then get to the point where you cannot do the repetition in good form, and then start recovering?

Speaker 3: Hi, Daddy.

Skyler Tanner: Because that's the stimulus. That's the stimulus. We're trying to create a demand on the muscle, and then you get out and recover, and that's when it's rebuilt. You can do that by training a lot at a low intensity, but you don't have time. That's why you're here. That's why my 22 minutes twice a week is so compelling to you.

Skyler Tanner: I tell all of my clients, "That is the value add," because for a lot of people, if they didn't have this, they wouldn't find the time to strength train. I get it, I understand it. We're using that intensity to maximize your time spent in the gym here, but we can do it safely, and we can do it in a way that you

can ... that can meet you where you're at. Intensity is not an objective variable.

Skyler Tanner: It matters very much where you're coming from, where you're strong, where you're weak, and your personality. We're going to push you. We're going to help you get to that point where you can work hard, and create that demand that you're going to get stronger from, because otherwise you're just wasting your time.

Skyler Tanner: It's really, really important, because at this point, I have on my screen the difference between ... it's an FMRI of a ... excuse me, an MRI of a thigh of a 74-year-old sedentary man, and a 70-year-old triathlete. I go, "And so the reason why we focus on intensity is because time, but also because of recovery over our life, and it's pretty clear now that over our life, the thing that ... We don't lose muscle just because we're getting older, we lose muscle and strength by extension, because we're becoming less and less active.

Skyler Tanner: You can see here, these two are both the same age, but one guy has a lot more muscle and a lot more bone, and the other looks like the worst ham you've ever had." From there, I say, "Look. Look, I appreciate that we tend to see in our culture that people are weakening, or that they're starting to look a little bit worse, but this triathlete is strong, fit, and capable. Now, their skin looks worse, because the Collagen Matrix degrades with age, and it's not about drinking more collagen protein.

Skyler Tanner: I haven't figured out how to fix the Collagen Matrix, because if I had, I would be swimming in money, and I wouldn't be here having this consultation. L'Oréal hasn't figured it out. Estée Lauder hasn't figured it out. All those creams, and bone broth, and all of that. Nobody's figured out how to fix the Collagen Matrix, so while the skin looks saggy and worse, the muscle tissue that lives underneath is strong, it's capable, and it's present."

Skyler Tanner: If you then make that comparison to the second image I have here is of a compared to a 40 something year old triathlete, I go, "You see similar amounts of muscle mass, and the 70-year-old guy's actually leaner, which is pretty cool. Then finally, it's effective. When we talk about something being effective, it makes it sound monolithic, or vacuous, but really, when we talk about something effective, we're talking about evidence-based resistance training, and it's a confluence. It's the overlap of three components.

Skyler Tanner: It's what the research says works," which when you say that, it makes it sound like it's a flowchart, like, "Oh, Lawrence is this age, and he has this training background." We just run through a flowchart and we end up with a conclusion. All the evidence can tell us, all the research can tell us is, "X works under Y conditions given Z constraints." It just gives us a menu.

Skyler Tanner: What it does, is it constrains the menu for us, though. It's not like you have infinite choices now, just like when we're talking about how the body functions. There aren't an

infinite number of exercises. If you look at how the body functions, and kind of where the sensitive spots are, where the ligaments are bound, or there's some sort of impingement, you can sloop off a lot of exercises that would be aggressively loading in those positions.

Skyler Tanner: We still have a lot to work with, and a lot of different exercises we can use. Similarly, the research just tells us where the hard barriers are. Doing X beyond this point isn't going to be more effective. It's like, "Okay, well we still have a wide range that we can work with there," and that's where the trainer experience comes in to kind of decipher that and create the application.

Skyler Tanner: But client preference also matters, because if I have an A+ solution for you, and you just don't like it for some reason, it doesn't feel good in your body, or you just can't get on board psychologically, then we're going to go to the B+ solution, because you have to do some version of this until you die in order to maintain the benefits.

Skyler Tanner: It's like a diet, you've got to do some version of the thing that got you there to keep you there, and it's the same thing with this. So that process of creating a relationship over the course of time, and figuring out how to tweak the exercises, and based on your goals and changes in goals, that is how we do it.

Skyler Tanner: Finally, we wrap that all up in what we call the [Smart Strength System](#). Everybody who starts with me starts off with our

eight to 12 week on-ramp we call Start Smart, because alliteration is awesome, and S is great for alliteration.

Speaker 3: Hi.

Skyler Tanner: From there, after that, that's a known quantity. You will go through the same program as any of my other clients go through, and from there, then we start to personalize your workout.

Skyler Tanner: The Start Smart starts off with a strength assessment, and then we gradually build up the intensity and familiarity with our base protocol. After the on-ramp, then we start asking some questions around how to personalize your workout. We're checking in on if your goals ... what your goals are. Is it building strength, adding lean tissue, improving blood glucose control, bone marrow density, improving physical function, or physical capability?

Skyler Tanner: Then the coaching and the support is the key. I mean, the evidence is clear that you can find some facsimile of a non-terrible workout on Google, if you Google, "the perfect workout," but what you won't do is actually do it, because the evidence is clear. You can have progress over 12 to 16 weeks with supervision. You know it works, you've seen it works, but then left to your own devices, you'll stagnate and regress.

Skyler Tanner: The coaching, and the relationship, and me being here, and my expertise, is what's going to continue to move you and progress you towards where you want to go, and then after

that quarterly, we will check in on your strengths, we will check in on your goals, if you haven't already brought me a new goal. One of the things that ends up happening, is I have my hand stop saying, "It's March, let's check in on your goals."

Skyler Tanner: Inevitably, if somebody has something they want to do, "Hey, we want to hike Machu Picchu in May," and they're telling me in February, well, then I'll make an adjustment. If they haven't brought me that, then we will check in on that in a quarterly fashion. After that, refine and revisit your goals, and if you like where you're going, great, awesome, and if you're not, then we'll tweak and go from there.

Skyler Tanner: The point here is the coaching. The coaching is the key. The relationship and the coaching is the key over the long-term. Then after that point, I sort of go, "Now we're going to go into ..." I field any questions, and then we go into the sample workout.

Lawrence Neal: Cool, then that was excellent, and I love that ending part there about you selling the value of personal training, which is pretty important, obviously.

Skyler Tanner: But also that it's not ... The thing I'm trying to show is there's a ... I've got all this experience, but even then, here's a template that I operate from. There's a system, there's a method behind decisions that are being made based on evidence, but also based on the rate of improvement. Clients will then, "Well, why quarterly?"

Skyler Tanner: I go, "Because eventually what ends up happening is your progress slows down, so quarterly could turn to six months depending on where you are, or sort of ad hoc, especially with the isometric mid-thigh pull, where somebody is ... the strength starts to slow down. It might be once every six months, once a quarter, or once every six months, once a year." Or they might not even care, because I have one client, she came in recently, and she was talking about how she just wanted to be in her body. She likes yoga, she wanted to get stronger for yoga, and kind of ... she cared about that strength assessment as an objective measure.

Skyler Tanner: But then during the second assessment, she goes, "Oh, I made that improvement. That's pretty cool, but you know what? My butt has been lifted, and my triceps are sticking out," so the vanity is compelling. "Yeah, I feel stronger, I feel this stuff, but I'm looking different. I don't need that number to tell me that." I go, "Great, awesome."

Skyler Tanner: Then I always point back, I go, "I tell you 22 minutes twice a week, twice as strong. I'm putting my money where my mouth is with this assessment. Even if you don't care about it, I care that you know that I care." That's why this is important, because it's so ... It has such a high ... It has broad ecological validity.

Skyler Tanner: And then I've got one client, she's a lawyer, she laughs. She's like, "And my trainer is using \$5 words," and I go, "It's true. This is why you pay me good money." Whereas this is across my client spectrum, that strongly predicts strength,

function, and power. If I do no other assessment, this can tell me that you, the organism, are getting stronger, especially because we're not practicing it, so you know that that strength is real, it is in you. It's not just because you've been doing this thing and gotten good at it. I'm not training you to do the test.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. There's obviously more on that as well in your other Members podcast called [Inside Smart Strength](#), where you talk more about that test, as well as other things in your business too.

Skyler Tanner: Yup.

Lawrence Neal: I want to go into start diving into some of the FAQs that you get, because I love to hear how you objection handle or answer some of those questions. One thing I wanted to ask you first, is what's quite interesting to me, is I remember the day where I came to the epiphany that optimal health and body composition ... I say optimal, you know, obviously we're always marginally improving, but I think you know what I mean ... can be achieved within one or two years or training and eating a healthy diet.

Lawrence Neal: I think that is still ... I feel like again, about the echo chamber, I feel like that's still something that not a lot of people really understand. When I say to people who are just starting this training, and are starting to improve their diet and things like that, when I say to them that, "You're probably going to start hitting your genetic ceiling in terms

of your optimal body composition or body type within this timeframe," it's quite weird for them to hear that.

Lawrence Neal: Do you still find that with your clients, like when you explain that, or if you do, that they're kind of like, "Oh," maybe in their mind it would take them whatever, 10 years to achieve the level of health they desire?

Skyler Tanner: Well, remember, there's the health element, and then there's kind of the vanity element. They certainly have some overlap, but they're not 100% tied. At some point, you've added ... Let's say you've drastically increased the ... It's a little bit like athleticism, right? At some point, you can add strength and function just in a general sense, and it will make you more athletic, but at some point you have to. You have to try to become more athletic, and you're given discipline, and that could actually ... It's like when you talk to ... Why am I forgetting his name? The coach at Florida State.

Lawrence Neal: [Mike Bradley](#), yeah.

Skyler Tanner: Mike Bradley, thank you. It's like Bradley was talking about, like a lot of what he's doing is trying to improve the ability of the muscles to tolerate load, and that's what I largely talk about, and that's my focus in my manual, that I go, "We're in the load management business really with clients."

Skyler Tanner: The reason why we focus on strength is because regardless of whether or not putting load on the limb is going to make you bigger than just getting the fatigue, or whatever, I think

that's important conceptually for us, but I think what clients are compelled by load. They're compelled by that, and the ability of that muscle just to tolerate loading. I mean, that's in the literature too, right?

Skyler Tanner: That was one of the points that [Stu Phillips](#) makes again and again, is that yeah, you get the same hypertrophy getting with fatigue at 30% as 80%, but the 80% people are stronger than one rep max. They have demonstrated an increased capacity to tolerate load, because they work closer to the test. They work closer to that bigger number. Now, 30% did improve, obviously, but not as much as 80%.

Skyler Tanner: We're in the load management business, and one of the things I talk about with these clients is getting stronger is a directionally accurate assessment of anything you want. A stronger muscle is probably more insulin sensitive. A stronger muscle is probably a little bit larger. A stronger muscle makes you more injury resistant.

Skyler Tanner: To what degree, I can't tell you exactly. Some people, they start working out, their blood sugar ... their blood pressure drops like a rock, their blood sugar lines right up, and then for other my clients who fit the same framework, I got to pull out all of the big guns to get changes in insulin sensitivity, even if they're on medication.

Skyler Tanner: That's part of how I also talk about this with clients going back to the consultation. I was like, "The safety scenario is we know how the body functions, and this is why surgeries

are 90 to 95% routine, because we know where the bicep tendon is. Bend your arm, we know how that works. There's going to be a little bit of variance, obviously, but not orders of magnitude. Your bicep doesn't bend your arm backwards. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, and that's why I start off with this template, so I can learn the more nuances around you, the person in front of me, that extra 5% that you can't tell me about yourself."

Skyler Tanner: Then if clients ask, "How much stronger ... Am I just maintaining now?" I often get that question. I'm like, "Well, we have to continue to try to get stronger. We have to continue to try to get better, otherwise we're going to get weaker. But yeah, I mean, after the first year or two, you're about as strong as you can be without re-orienting your life around that as a single point goal."

Skyler Tanner: Then I say, "But then, did you come to me just to get stronger moving some weighted discs around, or did you get stronger so you could do all of those things in your life that you would rather be doing better and more?" The answer is the latter. That's why you came here. You didn't come here to get good at lifting weights, you came here so that you could live a robust, active life right up until you croak.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, yeah. That's obviously what I was more referring to is the latter, but I appreciate what you're saying about there's always trade-offs pursuing these different feats.

Skyler Tanner: There are no solutions, there are only trade-offs.

Lawrence Neal: Right, right. I want to ask, because I know the number of members, number of listeners of the podcast, sometimes unsure of how to address certain questions they get from clients, even if for instance, maybe they do understand science, or maybe they don't understand science, but as they should, because quite often if you can't ... I believe you can't explain something simply to someone, then you probably don't really understand it.

Lawrence Neal: There might be some homework that they have to do in terms of actually making sure that they understand the science and the biology behind certain things in order to then be able to articulate in a way that the client can understand. For example, someone says ... I mean, you can tell me about some of the frequent questions you get, but one of the common ones I get is about cardiovascular health, about that side of things. You must get clients say to you like, "Oh, well this is strength training. How am I going to exercise my cardiovascular system?"

Skyler Tanner: Sure. I'm in the fortunate position to say, "Well, my master's degree was in clinical cardiac rehabilitation, so I can tell you all about this." But that's just almost like a little bit of a ... I'm speaking from a position of authority, so you can trust ... there's already a little bit of a buy-in, but you don't need that in order to follow up with what I tell them, which is, "The thing is, is we think about cardiovascular health, and it implies it's all central, it's all the heart muscle, but a full 50% or more of the adaptations that we can get to improve

cardiovascular health is in the muscle tissues in the periphery.

Skyler Tanner: The reason for that is that your heart delivers oxygen, blood, to working tissue. If your muscles are better at extracting oxygen from a given amount of blood, then the heart does not have to deliver as much blood in order to support the working muscle. That makes it more efficient. Your heart rate is lower, your stroke volume is better. These things happen all without much in the way of changing your heart muscle. By strengthening your muscles and making them better at ... making them stronger and able to work more efficiently, we make life easier on the heart."

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. Well said. Do you get any follow up questions on that, or is that usually at that point are they like, "Uh huh, okay, I understand?"

Skyler Tanner: No, I mean, occasionally the follow up question will be like, "Huh," because, you know, so I thought, "I got to do my cardio [inaudible 00:28:28]." I go, "There's really only two levers you can pull. There's the heart muscle, that's what we call the central component of the cardiovascular system, and then there's the peripheral." People have this [inaudible 00:28:41] in their head of, "I got to get my heart rate up."

Skyler Tanner: The reason the feeling of you should get your heart rate up is because ... Oh, the tag on question is they don't ... if they're wearing a heart rate monitor, they don't see their heart rate go up exceptionally high, because I'm not trying to just destroy these people in the carpet time, right? They go, "You

know, I'm breathing real heavy, but my heart rate isn't up really high." That's often a tag on, or it's a later question that relates to the first.

Skyler Tanner: I say, "Yeah, that's really interesting, because we think about getting your heart rate up." I go, "Well, I can get your heart rate up. Do you have a deadline at work? Do you want to get stressed about that? We can get your heart rate up, but that's not going to give you any exercise benefit whatsoever, or we can inject a little bit of dobutamine, which is a ... it's a chemical stress test.

Skyler Tanner: It's like an exercise analog for people who might be high risk. You don't want them passing out on a treadmill. It will take your heart rate up to your physiological max. But I can give you dobutamine three days a week and sit you in a chair, and you won't get better. You won't get more healthy. You'll just be stressing your heart. So that stress on the heart, that heart rate going up, has to be in service of delivering the oxygen and blood to the working muscle.

Skyler Tanner: We should see over time the heart rate for a given effort come down as the muscles get stronger and better at pulling oxygen out of the blood." This is like exercise physiology 101 stuff, but for some reason, it's not ... they log that fact away for a test, and they don't realize that the ... how compelling it could be.

Skyler Tanner: No, sincerely, how compelling that could be to a client, where they're like, "What about getting my heart rate up?" I'm like, "Well, $a-vO_2$ diff. This is in the vO_2 max equation." I

don't tell them that, but if I was explaining it to somebody who kind of was, "Well, you got to get your cardio." I'm like, "Well, yeah, I want you to do things that raise your heart rate, I just don't want you to live under the erroneous assumption that the biomarker is the raising of the heart rate, but rather the raising of the heart rate in an activity is all about delivering the oxygen and blood to the working muscle.

Skyler Tanner: The muscle is better, fitter, more capable than you operate at a lower heart rate. That doesn't mean that you need to then try to jack your heart rate up again, I mean, unless your activity is running, where you're trying to go faster, so you're going to see this consistently high heart rate for a given performance." So clients are typically on board. They understand, and it's like, "Oh, when my muscles are stronger, my life is easier on my heart." I go, "Yeah."

Skyler Tanner: That efficiency, that ability to pull oxygen out of the blood more efficiently is the main thing that your resistance training is going to deliver to improve cardiac function. Then all that stuff you're going to do away from the gym that you're going to do more intense, you're not going to try and make it count. You're just going to end up having more fun doing it longer, that sort of thing. That's going to give you some more of the tag along central benefits of just sustaining a higher heart rate for longer, because it's easier now, because your muscles are more efficient.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, that's really well said. There's some great analogies there, too, that I think the members can definitely use. A couple more. What about if they ask, and this is examples from my own life, and what I hear from members, what about if they ask things like, "Oh, do I need to stretch?" Or, "I feel like I need to stretch." How do you respond to something like that?

Skyler Tanner: I mean, I say, "Look, there's no evidence to suggest that stretching before the workout is going to reduce rate of injury, but that doesn't also mean ... unless you're stretching for like three minutes, it's also not going to increase your risk of injury. If you were previously tight in an area, you will probably as you get stronger, get a little bit more loose, a little bit more capable of increasing that range of motion voluntarily, because you're now stronger, but also because your brain sees that that muscle is stronger, and it's not ... Oftentimes a weak muscle is a tight muscle, because your brain is tightening the whole area down because it cannot rise to meet exterior demands on the fly."

Skyler Tanner: If the analogy ... I stole this one from Bryce, is it's like a frail old lady walking a Great Dane. Because there's not a lot of strength in the tank, she would be white knuckling the whole time, very, very tight because if the dog darts, she couldn't just increase her strength and meet that demand in real-time. So sort of living at the limit, or another way to put it is like if anybody ...

Skyler Tanner: I go, "Have you ever had a broken bone?" They go, "Okay ..."
If they say, "Yes," I go, "When you got out of that cast, was the muscle tight?" They go, "Extremely." I go, "It's because it atrophied so much that your body just clamped down trying to keep anything from happening. Strengthening, paradoxically, can increase the perception of looseness or suppleness in the tissue. If you want to do more stretching, by all means. That's not a problem."

Skyler Tanner: I even have some clients where they come in, and this is one of those long-term things, and they want to improve some portion of a range of motion. This is kind of like, "Okay, well, if you're having a good workout and we get through things quickly, then I can do some partner assisted PNF stretching," which is number one, basically a loaded eccentric, so there is some strength benefit, but two, also within, at least in America within the ... we're staying in our lane.

Skyler Tanner: I can help stretch people. That doesn't veer into manual therapy or rehab. I'm not using that stretching to treat a joint issue. I can stretch them if they want to try and improve their range of motion. I do that with some of my exceptionally tight clients, because I know number one, it's a loaded negative, but number two, they will not do anything else. If not for me, they would not do any exercise whatsoever.

Skyler Tanner: Even a PNF session, five minutes of PNF stretching at the end of a workout once a week, these people would get the range of motion. They don't become a ballerina, but all of a sudden

they go like, "Oh, I'm more flexible now." That's enough for them.

Skyler Tanner: Now, if I had a MedX stretcher, I would just put them on the MedX stretcher at the end, like the stretch machine that MedX made. I would totally say, "I want you to get on and do the split stretch. Here was your degrees last time, and then when you feel like you're relaxed, climb off the thing." That's what I would do. I think that's how Owen uses his stretcher at Live Oak, kind of the same way, puts the people on at the end as kind of a cool down, and it gives them their stretching without monopolizing the session.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. No, I didn't know that even existed. That sounds like a nice luxury to have.

Skyler Tanner: It's part of the MedX core line, that was the ab machine, the neck machine, the lumbar and the rotary torso, and then the fourth was the stretcher. It was a really cool unit.

Lawrence Neal: Must have missed that one. I'll have to check that one out. Okay, so before I ask any more, what's the most frequent questions you get after you do your consultation? What are you most often fielding after that point from clients? Give some that are particularly ... even you perhaps found challenging at first, if any.

Skyler Tanner: Sure. One of the things that we can often make assumptions of is just because somebody has a clinical background that's medicinal, that they will understand everything that we're saying on first blush. Not because they're not stupid, but

because the more specialized you become in medicine, the more it becomes about that specialization. Some of that foundational anatomy and physiology by necessity has been forgotten, or it's been superseded into a very narrow way.

Skyler Tanner: It's like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. This is the foundation of that thing that I do on a daily basis, but I don't need to know the foundation anymore, because clinically I know these outcomes if I'm focusing on like this variable, which is intentionally very general and broad." I'm just laying the framework.

Skyler Tanner: One of the thing I ended up having to do is actually for my clients who are physicians, this stuff in my mind should sell itself, but that's not always the case. Having to actually be a little bit more deliberate with them. They have this background, but just saying the words doesn't always turn the light bulb on, so I've had to work with clients on that. "Well, what about this?" I'm like, "Well, X, Y, and Z." "Oh, okay."

Skyler Tanner: So there's a little bit more of a dialog there. That's part of that being that educated expert, is the ability to have that discussion. Clients who push back in that way asking those questions, they tend to be really bought in, because you can have that discussion. It's selling without selling, because it's just continuing to have opportunities to display your expertise.

Lawrence Neal: Yes. Yeah, exactly.

Skyler Tanner: Let me think of some other things. Yeah, right? I don't get a lot of questions about functional training, but when I do, typically I sort of go, "Oh, well, what do you mean by functional?" Oftentimes they sort of, "This is functional because it serves a function." "Well, that makes it functional."

Skyler Tanner: You know, it's this sort of circular ... Like "Okay, well, you know. Okay, well." I say, "Well, you can define functional in a lot of ways. Something could be movement specific. A jump shot, or a free throw is functional because it looks similar to a three pointer. A jump shot is a jump shot. But also strengthening the triceps, which is the prime mover for a jump shot." Well, that and really the legs, but you know what I mean. "Strengthening the triceps is part of that chain that will improve your strength and your range of accuracy for a jump shot." Et cetera, et cetera.

Skyler Tanner: What often ends up happening, is people will define function as these crazy PT drills, and some of those might be, especially if somebody is ... their software needs to be updated, right? They've had an injury that imparted some sort of neural injury. These people's injuries is a function of a poor motor pattern, so PT is going to be 1,000 repetitions of something that looks so easy to try to retrain the body to move in a certain way, or to create an awareness of the muscles that should be engaged.

Skyler Tanner: If you go from A to B in a movement, you can't let ... I'll just use the leg press as an example ... you are going to use the

glutes. You can't not use the glutes moving through hip extension, but if you become aware of your glutes and the behavior that intensifies that awareness, you can change the emphasis of the movement experientially. You can get it out of your knees a little bit more, you can get it in your hamstrings and your hips a little bit more. Things we take for granted because we have good kinesthetic awareness.

Skyler Tanner: There's a lot of coaching and these quote unquote, "activation drills" that PTs sometimes carry on about, is largely about creating a beacon in the body for people who just can't close their eyes and feel their hamstring. Can't close their eyes and feel what their lower back is up to. Can't close their eyes and feel what their pinky toe is up to.

Skyler Tanner: Their body kind of ends at their neck, and everything below their neck just sort of gathers nutrition for their brain. That's kind of the extent of their body. Some of these things, some of these quote unquote, "functional drills," they're largely about trying to create a beacon in the body for these people to go, "Oh, okay, I can feel that now." "Okay, while you still have that feeling, do this." And then they'll do that, and I'm like, "Oh, now I feel that." I go, "Awesome." Then you can just keep doing the thing you would rather be doing.

Skyler Tanner: This is that 5% I was talking about earlier. This is if you most ... because of every body functions basically the same way. The coaching and the relationship is the important variable. You don't have to be a magician and just fancy complexity for the sake of complexity, but 5 to 10% of the

time, you're going to be using that understanding to improve the client experience so that the feeling that they get from the workout continues to excite and delight them over time.

Lawrence Neal: That was really well said. I really like what you said, actually, when you were talking about the case of the physician, who can in some cases be quite difficult, especially if they are particularly ... what's the word? I suppose arrogant about their sphere of knowledge, and you put it really well, and that they've specialized in a certain area. Chances are that some of those other foundational elements have kind of fell by the wayside or didn't get developed in some cases.

Skyler Tanner: Let me give you a great example. I have a client of mine who's a neurosurgeon, and he's very, very good at what he does, and so on one hand, I had to explain to him, where he talked about how when he was an undergrad, he loved doing behind the neck overhead presses. He just loved it. I was like, "Yeah, the reason those felt to you, the feeling you were getting was so compelling is because your supraspinatus was just jammed against your AC joint. You really felt it."

Skyler Tanner: He kind of sat there and he thought about it, and I sort of put him in a position, like, "Yeah, this position, the humerus is sort of jammed up here, and that ..." He's like, "Well, I never hurt myself, but I guess you're right." I'm like, "Yeah, exactly." Even though this guy had anatomy, physiology, all of this stuff through medical school, he then spent seven years

learning to be a neurosurgeon. That's how long the residency is.

Skyler Tanner: A lot of that stuff is ... it's in there, but it's not the front of his mind. This guy just like ... tiny, tiny little centimeter ablations in somebody's brain keeping them from dying of a stroke, right? That's his sphere of knowledge.

Skyler Tanner: I said to him on the rotary torso, I was like, "We're not here to total fatigue, we'll go to technical fatigue on this." He kind of shot back at me a little bit. We have a good relationship. He goes, "Technical fatigue. What do you mean by that? That has a very specific meaning in my line of work." I said, "Fair enough. When you can no longer do it without your form breaking down, versus when you can no longer do it because you are incapable of producing the force." He said, "Okay."

Skyler Tanner: That is an example right there of both ways. For a lot of our general clients we can be a little bit more general with the language, but we have to be ready to get more specific. It's not wrong to say like, "Well, here's what I know up to the point of. If you want more, I know who I can talk to and find out."

Lawrence Neal: Yeah.

Skyler Tanner: Because this isn't going to effect your workout right now.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. No, this is great. It's obviously as you said there, it's about showing empathy and understanding. It's just a

wonderful opportunity to grow. I mean, once you as a trainer get these types of objections from these very smart people, it only makes you better. The other side is an opportunity to express your expertise when it actually might not serve you to always, or certainly even in most cases, talk in technical language to a lot of your clients.

Lawrence Neal: If people want more on this, I did a really good podcast with Marcelo who runs Intense Health in Australia, and he told a really funny story about a ... I want to say some sort of foot surgeon, or some sort of surgical specialist who was like the top in the world in his particular field, or one of the top. He was very hard to deal with at the beginning, and Marcelo was giving him the general pitch during the consultation, and he just looked at Marcelo and said, "Cut the crap. I don't need any of this kind of salesy health and fitness jargon." He says, "Just tell it to me straight." Marcelo just looked at him and said, "Well, you're fat."

Lawrence Neal: I'm not advocating that people necessarily say that, but by telling the truth, and in that particular context at that time, and Marcelo clearly has a way about doing that, works very, very well. Actually, that client was like in that moment, developed a lot of respect for him, and they're still a client to this day and apparently getting great results, which is great to hear.

Skyler Tanner: Right, right. Doug Holland has a story about that where somebody was doing a pullover, and they're like, "Hey, did

you change the cam on that?" He goes, "No, you've lost 30 pounds, so your stomach's not in the way." You know?

Lawrence Neal: That's brilliant.

Skyler Tanner: I mean, that works too, where somebody who's had ... I have a great client now. I have a client this past year, she's lost I want to say close to 30 pounds. She's been training with me a really long time. She was diabetic, like Type 2 diabetic, and she actually fits the ... What Ted Naiman talks about is people have a low body fat threshold, because compared to some people, I mean, 30 pounds isn't ... She's small, but she wasn't like morbidly obese, right?

Skyler Tanner: But she was full blown Type 2 diabetic, and now she's not, whereas some people gain 150 pounds and they're just kind of pre-diabetic, because they can just continue to push fat into the cells, and deal with these changes in blood glucose. Ted Damon will just talk, talk, talk like a robot all about this stuff.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I'll link to that. Yeah.

Skyler Tanner: Go ahead and link to that. She was talking about how hard the leg press felt. I was like, "Well, when you had a bit more of a stomach, and you had more fat on your legs, fat doesn't compress. That's why skinny guys win the eating contests."

Skyler Tanner: Typically, power lifters will train a weight class above where they compete so they can get some of this compression and rebound element around the joint and around their stomach

to act as a springboard to handling more load. They hope to carry some percentage of that when they diet down.

Skyler Tanner: It's like, "Well, yeah, things are harder for you now, because now you're having to rely 100% on muscular capacity rather than some of this compressive recoil from the body fat you had." I wouldn't start off with that. That's part of a long relationship, and she's also ... her husband's a physician, so she's like, "Go as technical as you want, Sky." "Oh, all right."

Lawrence Neal: What's really interesting, is during this entire conversation, you've never really mentioned high intensity training at all, which I just want to point out.

Skyler Tanner: Nope, I just talked about the benefits of strength, I talked about the safety and the efficacy, and I talked about intensity as the most controllable variable.

Lawrence Neal: I noticed you do something very similar to Discover Strength, which I think is key, possibly the most important part of your entire consultation, which is that very first question is how do you feel? What are your goals? What are you looking to achieve? Like really making it about them, and finding out what their aims are right from the outset, which is again, it's something that DS to in their process. Is there anything-

Skyler Tanner: Yeah, because-

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, sorry. Go on.

Skyler Tanner: Yeah, yeah, here's a great example. When I walk people in and initially do the consultation, I go, "Look around the

room. Barbells, dumbbells, machines, functional wiggle sticks, bands." Go, "All of these are just merely tools. You've seen some version in a normal gym."

Skyler Tanner: What makes ours unique is their low friction profiles, especially the slows we're going to move to start. I want the machine to get out of the way as best it can, but also it's very adjustable, three half grades. My shortest client is five foot, and my tallest client is six foot eight, and they all fit on the same equipment.

Skyler Tanner: Now, all of these are tools. Even though I'm going to be starting off on machines, depending on your goals and depending on how something feels, we might use a barbell, a dumbbell, a band, doesn't ... body weight, because nobody would ask a carpenter, "Screwdriver, good or bad?" It's a tool. What are you trying to do with it? These are all just tools, and we're going to use them when they're most efficacious to help you in your goal, or towards your goal.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. No, well said. Before we wrap this one up, Skyler, are there any points ... I'd be interested to know what you think about in terms of the mistakes you see or you hear from other high intensity practitioners in the way they communicate with clients, and try and explain high intensity training?

Skyler Tanner: Yeah. Well, I said it really, like, "Don't talk about Arthur Jones. Don't talk about Ken Hutchins. Don't talk about Darden. Nobody cares. Literally nobody cares." When I talk about Super Slow, some clients come to me and they kind of

know about it, but largely it's about ... I use Westcott's study. The reason why I start off with Pure Super Slow, because [inaudible 00:49:11] also gets strength faster.

Skyler Tanner: Then in the long-term, whether or not they go that slow doesn't matter to me, because as long as they're getting the fatigue, they're getting most of whatever they want. So I sell it like that rather than osteoporosis studies, this and that. Unless somebody has osteoporosis, and like, "Oh, this has been demonstrated to have good outcomes with osteoporosis."

Skyler Tanner: I'm always talking about the tool and the result. The tool and the result. Nobody cares about the history. I always point out and I say, "Look, I can show you. I can tell you exactly why we're doing what we're doing on evidence-based. I can go and get that for you if you really want it." Most people don't. They just don't care. [crosstalk 00:49:53].

Lawrence Neal: Which saves you work and time, right?

Skyler Tanner: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right, right. Look, here's the other thing too I see a lot of HIT practitioners. They feel that they are beholden to these people who came before us, and so look, here's the thing. If you are starting a business, you're long past the apprentice stage. You are now at least a journeyman. This idea of apprentice journeyman master is a client of mine, he brought it to me, and it was great.

Skyler Tanner: It was like at some point, you have to stop. The student becomes the teacher. You have to stop being beholden to

those mentors as masters, that you have to take the knowledge that they've given you, and then go and do your own thing.

Skyler Tanner: This year I've not been on ... I've talked to you on Messenger, but I've not been on Facebook. It's been the best possible thing, because as it turns out, I mean, you obviously have an internet business, but my presence on the internet is small. I've not gotten any clients from Instagram, like one client from Facebook. Obviously none from Twitter, and yet my business continues to grow, and grow, and grow, and we're hiring, and I've got a big waiting list, et cetera.

Skyler Tanner: All that time, I've not been beholden to anybody but my clients, because at the end of the day, they're paying my mortgage, they're paying the business loan, and satisfying and delighting them continues to be the goal, and I do that through a framework of evidence-based resistance training, which includes a high intensity foundation, but if I can safely, based on the ergonomics, biomechanics, based on some rehab literature, do something with a client within the window that they are training with me, and it flies in the face of the orthodox religion of Super Slow, I'm going to do it.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah.

Skyler Tanner: Because they're not hurting, they're progressing, they're doing, they're putting in the high quality work where it is most appropriate, and getting the result.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, and it's also important to say, "This is by no means a way of you saying that you don't respect or admire any of that. I mean, you've come from that, and have enormous admiration for Arthur Jones, and the colleagues you mention, Ken Hutchins, Ellington Darden.

Skyler Tanner: Sure, absolutely. Yup.

Lawrence Neal: If anything, you're as passionate about that as anyone else, but you've also recognized that it might not be that useful in a business domain when you're talking to clients.

Skyler Tanner: Right.

Lawrence Neal: There are obviously some exceptions to that. There are people that are interested in that too, or like a lot of trainers and HIT entrepreneurs, they get so passionate about this stuff. They want to learn everything about it. That occasionally happens too, and then they start business.

Skyler Tanner: Yeah, yeah. So for every perfect position there's a perfect bias. I make my bias clear. I don't think people should be getting hurt, even if it sacrifices the rate of improvement and the performance that they could achieve. I mean, my card's on the table. It's in the name, it's in the consultation.

Skyler Tanner: Others might think I am cavalier, that they're even more ... their idea of exercise, and I get it, because I was there too, where it was like, "Let's take it the ground, how few exercises can I do?" I'm much looser about that than I used to be. If a client's having a really good workout, and they finish

early because they were just having a great workout, let's have some variety, let's do something else.

Skyler Tanner: Let's fill the remainder of your time, and let's do some drop sets. Let's do some 30/30/30. Let's do some stage reps, something like that, which if you were orthodox, it's like, "This workout is finished. We must start the recovery now. Now, now, now, now." That's a good example, and that's all just value [crosstalk 00:53:37] for these people.

Lawrence Neal: Absolutely. A final question I had, which is somewhat related to this, is some people ... this is something I've heard from a few people, and also some of the struggle with myself is pushing clients hard during training. Some would argue, "Well, look, they're doing this for a long time. If they're pushing as hard as they can, it's not to failure. That's much better than doing nothing at all, or doing something very, very low intensity."

Lawrence Neal: Have you got any thoughts on how do you push past the failure? Are there some clients that you find personally you can't? What are your thoughts around that, and how do you get the most, I guess, out of your clients in that respect?

Skyler Tanner: I'll be as brief as possible, because I definitely need to wrap this up, which is generally out of the initial on-ramp, I use a pass/fail system. In other words, if somebody is training with me, generally speaking, I want them reaching fatigue within a minute and a half to two minutes. Some people trend longer than that, some trend shorter, but the vast majority of people that fits.

Skyler Tanner: If they go over two minutes, then I typically add something on top. They didn't reach fatigue within that window, so then I'll have them do a static hold, or a force rep, or something like that. If they are just getting a fatigue within a minute and a half and two minutes, then that's enough. I'm not piling on.

Skyler Tanner: If somebody is just ... they are challenged to push that hard, that's where your static holds, that's where you're coaching comes into play, because ... Well, Fisher talks about this, James Fisher. He says, "You know, we know that it's getting really, really close to fatigue ... getting really, really close to muscular failure is enough. The problem is is nobody's very good at determining where that [inaudible 00:55:27] or demarcation is, so that's why we go to fatigue."

Skyler Tanner: You can do that in a lot of ways. If somebody, they're starting to bog down, and they might be able to do one more, two more, very rarely have I ever had anybody say when I asked them about could the workouts be more intense or less intense, say, "Less intense." Most people, their behavior as a near fatigue I think can sometimes dissuade trainers from pushing them a little bit harder.

Skyler Tanner: This is the experience, this is where the static holds or things of that nature come in handy in sort of creating that overload, or getting a little bit more time and attention when you can have them sustain a position that they can't sustain anymore, and they're starting to drop it. That's fatigue. That's how I treat it.

Skyler Tanner: Getting to fatigue, getting near fatigue on a regular basis, I mean, at least with my clients, I've seen it as being good enough. I don't really do any deep inroad. It's not like they're ... very rarely. Some clients, they've got the control, so they're pushing. I'm like, "Five, keep going. Four, three, two," but normally it's a, "Push. Keep squeezing, squeezing, squeezing, and set it down." It's like a one to two second of effort at the very end, and that hasn't just reduced the result by any stretch. It's hard enough.

Lawrence Neal: Awesome. Skyler, best way for the members to find out more about you and get in touch?

Skyler Tanner: smartstrengthaustin.com, all one word.

Lawrence Neal: I love it, awesome. I'll put that in the show notes as well. Skyler, thank you so much for joining me today, I really, really appreciate it.

Skyler Tanner: Absolutely, Lawrence, any time.