

[Adam Zickerman on Muscle Hypertrophy vs Strength, Dr Ken Leistner, and the Future of HIT \(#210\)](#)

- Lawrence Neal: 00:02:00 Lawrence Neal here and welcome back to HighIntensityBusiness.com, formerly Corporate Warrior. Today's guests is InForm Fitness founder, Adam Zickerman. Adam is the founder of InForm Fitness Studies and author of the New York Time bestseller Power of 10, the once a week slow motion fitness revolution upon which the company program and philosophy is based. Having started his first gym in a 300-square foot basement in 1997, Adam now spends his time researching, writing and overseeing seven locations, all while remaining active as a personal trainer. Adam holds an undergraduate degree in biochemistry from Binghamton University and was certified in 1995 as a personal trainer with the American College of Sports Medicine. He studied under Ken Hutchins, the architect of slow cadence strength training, [inaudible 00:02:48] level one and two and master Super Slow certifications.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:02:51 Self taught in equipment design, biomechanics and exercise physiology, Adam has written a comprehensive trainer certification course for qualified applicants on the principles of high intensity training in Power of 10 methodology. He's also host of the InForm Fitness podcast, which is a bi-monthly podcast, which I've been enjoying immensely and stealing tactics from. Adam, welcome to the show.
- Adam Zickerman: 00:03:17 Sorry, I didn't mean to laugh in your introduction.

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Lawrence Neal: 00:03:21 No, that's fine. I don't mind. I don't mind a little bit of response as I read out the intro. Great to talk to you again. Great to see you at the conference recently, REC. How you doing?

Adam Zickerman: 00:03:33 I'm doing well, thank you. Still thinking about that REC actually. There's some good stuff going on there.

Lawrence Neal: 00:03:40 What were the main highlights for you?

Adam Zickerman: 00:03:43 Well, I just love listening to James Fisher and Jeremy Loenneke, just to be able to talk and to listen to objective... You know, it's hard to find objective voices in this field so it's very refreshing just to hear somebody that's just in it for the truth or seeking the truth at least. I don't know if we'll ever find the truth but at least trying and it was great to just smash paradigms and thoughts, especially when it came to understanding that muscle... When Jeremy talked, Dr. Loenneke talked about how there is a very weak correlation between muscle hypertrophy and muscle strength. That was mind blowing.

Lawrence Neal: 00:04:37 Just on that, I mean, I've got to be honest with you, I attempted to understand that better in a discussion I had with Thom Tombs and Craig Hubert and Craig Huber, who were also at the conference. We didn't get very far in terms of trying to understand his presentation but what was the key takeaway for you? Was it just that muscle hypertrophy and strength don't

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seem to correlate as much as we think? Or was there more to it than that for you?

Adam Zickerman: 00:05:00 Yeah, that's a big one right there. I mean obviously studies... I actually did an episode on studies with Dr. Peter Attia.

Lawrence Neal: 00:05:11 That was great.

Adam Zickerman: 00:05:13 As you know, then, you have to take these studies with a grain of salt. Did it necessarily change anything? Only to be open minded if nothing else, just to say wow, you know. Let's face it, we all got into strength training, at least I did and I know most people I know that are in this game, we got into it because we wanted to get bigger and stronger, simultaneously and now... What's really interesting is I'm actually not a very big guy, muscularly, but I'm very strong and he was talking about that innate strength is what led to longer lifespan, all-cause mortality and that innate strength, it's not necessarily people that worked out that weights that lived longer. It was actually just people that were strong lived longer. I started thinking about it and at first it was kind of like pouring cold water over me. It was kind of shocking. Then I thought about it. I realized, I think about this a lot without even realizing, I think.

Adam Zickerman: 00:06:19 That is, a lot of people, they get a lot stronger and I'm very strong but I'm not that big and my strength belies my size, quite honestly. I definitely am stronger than I

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look. Turns out, I have a lot of clients like that. I've almost been ignoring that. Then when he brought it up, I was like, "Yeah." This is like a day later, I'm like, "Yeah." I mean, hypertrophy and strength is right under my nose, the fact that you can get stronger and not necessarily get bigger. Then of course, you've got to think about the neurological adaptations and what is causing the strength and what are the mechanisms for strength if it's not hypertrophy and it starts getting kind of interesting but that's where the research is going and hopefully we'll find this out one day, but in any case, I guess the takeaway for my clients, because I'm always thinking about, what am I going to tell my clients about this?

Adam Zickerman: 00:07:12

One thing is to maybe reassure people that aren't necessarily getting bigger that they are getting stronger and that that's possible. It is actually possible to be getting stronger, this is not our imagination, you are truly getting stronger, even though you're not breaking out of your shirts. You're actually still getting stronger and that, especially when you talk about strength and how that's the key to good health, strength, not so much that muscle's size. A matter of fact, hold on a second, I have Loenneke's paper here. In the introduction to his paper, he talked about muscle size and some of the quotes about muscle size in the past, I think I highlighted it. If you bear with me for a second.

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- Lawrence Neal: 00:08:00 Have you moved the camera deliberately to show us the paper?
- Adam Zickerman: 00:08:03 No, I moved that by accident reaching for my paper. Sorry about that. Yeah, hold on a second.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:08:10 It's a nice pair of white jeans you've got there, Adam.
- Adam Zickerman: 00:08:19 Here we go. All right. I'm going to read this. In 1963, 1976 it was written by Moorhouse and Miller that, "It has not been proved that hypertrophy is necessarily a desirable reaction. Some students are of the opinion that it may be simply a byproduct of training. Perhaps a noxious one." I love that.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:08:42 What does that mean, a noxious one?
- Adam Zickerman: 00:08:44 Noxious like, not good.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:08:46 Undesired.
- Adam Zickerman: 00:08:47 Poison. Undesirable.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:08:48 Right.
- Adam Zickerman: 00:08:49 Something that's noxious is not desirable.
- Lawrence Neal: 00:08:54 How funny.
- Adam Zickerman: 00:08:54 This is not new thinking per se. The idea that getting too big... obviously evolutionarily speaking, muscles are metabolically very demanding, so if you're living in a feast and famine type of situations, having more muscle

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mass is only a detriment to you. You have to feed all that muscle. In that case, we've always known muscle to be a little bit too much baggage. I always think about, I was a kid at the time but in the '70s, when they had the gas crunch, all of a sudden, those big engine cars, those muscle cars all of a sudden were left behind for the Honda Civics and the Japanese gas efficient cars because gas was so expensive and rare. It just made me think of these huge guys when all of a sudden food is scarce and expensive, they're like, "Oh, shit, I've got to feed all this muscle now," it's not as easy to downsize muscle as it is maybe just buying a new car.

Adam Zickerman: 00:10:03 It's always been an analogy for me in my brain because I remember being a kid in the backseat of my parents' car waiting for an hour for gas. It was kind of crazy back in the early '70s during that gas crunch. Anyway, muscle is expensive, right? Like I said, it could be noxious. The idea, going back to my clients and muscle hypertrophy being correlated or not correlated with muscle strength, that's my takeaway, telling my clients, "Don't worry about it, you're getting stronger and that's the important thing." Strength is associated with a long life, healthy life, not so much your muscle hypertrophy.

Lawrence Neal: 00:10:43 Doug's presentation when on to talk about how negatively regulated hypertrophy is, just to really hammer home that point.

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Adam Zickerman: 00:10:51 Exactly. Myostatin and things like that, all things that govern our body's ability to build muscle. It's obviously some kind of feedback loop going on to protect us from being too strong, too big, for the same reasons we talked about. Evolutionarily speaking, it's probably more of an advantage not to be too muscular, yet strong.

Lawrence Neal: 00:11:12 Yes, absolutely.

Adam Zickerman: 00:11:13 Some of the strongest guys I know weigh 140 pounds. I used to rock climb on a regular basis and if you ever saw rock climbers, man, they're just all sinew and muscle and strength but not necessarily huge in size and boy oh boy, if you ever tried rock climbing, especially some challenging stuff, I know it's a lot of technique but you've got to be damn strong.

Lawrence Neal: 00:11:43 Absolutely. I was going ask you, in terms of your clientele, have you had someone come in who looks very deconditioned, doesn't look strong at all and doesn't have much muscle mass, so all of the above, and is able to just demonstrate tremendous strength immediately? Have you seen that?

Adam Zickerman: 00:12:04 Yeah. I mean, big, overweight people tend to be also very strong. I have a cousin who's an MD out in Stanford University out in California and I remember years ago, he told me that a lot of patients that he sees, obese patients, happen to have a lot of muscle mass as

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well and I was like, "What?" All these what I thought were deconditioned people being so overweight. Turns out, you have to have a certain amount of strength just to carry all that weight. That's what his analysis was. "Yeah, they got to be strong, Adam, I mean, look how much weight they're carrying." I was like, "Yeah, well, that's a good point actually." Anyway, I paid attention to that more when I work with somebody that apparently is deconditioned and overweight. Then they turn out to be very strong. Now as far as the weight loss is concerned, that's always a big challenge, getting people to lose the weight and as I'm learning, talk about research, fat metabolism is as complex as ever and it's getting more complex as we learn more so who the hell knows about fat loss and what the best way to do that is?

Lawrence Neal: 00:13:24

I've really grown to appreciate why a lot of high intensity personal trainers will just stick with the strength training part and not become or try and become a nutritionist because the more you get into either of these things, the more you realize you don't know or we don't know and it can become very challenging to become very adept at both fields. One thing I just wanted to challenge you on, something you said earlier, which interested me is, you were talking about how people that are very fat need muscle mass and strength in order to carry that around, I actually thought it was the inverse because I remember Dr.

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Doug McGuff saying that he suspected someone who was very over fat to have a large amount of muscle mass and he referred to the, and I don't know if you remember him saying this, because I know you've probably listened to a lot of what he's said. He said about how when he actually looked at the abdominal muscles, they were thin as paper and what he then went on to say is the mechanism might be something to do with internal starvation. I could be misquoting him there.

Lawrence Neal: 00:14:33 But some kind of competition for resources between body fat and muscle because if you have too much body fat, then the signaling in the body is preferentially shuttling nutrients to that rather than muscle tissue. I thought it was the inverse. How do you reconcile that or do you disagree?

Adam Zickerman: 00:14:54 I don't know if I disagree. It's a great discussion, right? I guess off the top of my head as you say that, our body wants to preserve muscle almost above all else, so when people are obese, they are starving internally. They're not getting the nutrients they need. That's why you become diabetic and you have the whole, what do you call it?

Lawrence Neal: 00:15:22 Insulin resistance.

Adam Zickerman: 00:15:25 Insulin resistance but metabolic-

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Lawrence Neal: 00:15:28 Metabolic syndrome.

Adam Zickerman: 00:15:29 Yes, sorry, thank you.

Lawrence Neal: 00:15:30 That's all right.

Adam Zickerman: 00:15:30 Yes. The whole metabolic syndrome thing is kicking in and people are definitely starving internally. They're not getting the nutrients they need. However, I just can't help but think about how amazing the body is at preserving muscle, the most important thing for movement. Even though they're somehow starving, in a sense, because they're not getting the nutrients they need due to insulin resistance and so on, the body seems to still figure out how to preserve muscle mass and keep that strong. I look at some of the fasting data, it's kind of remarkable some of the data I've been looking at lately for people that are fasting, doing the seven day water fast, for example, and they would do a DEXA scan and they didn't see much of a change in muscle mass. A little bit. A little bit but certainly not as much as you'd think for somebody that hasn't eaten in seven days.

Adam Zickerman: 00:16:27 Some of these people that I'm talking about were lean to begin with. You'd think leaner people would definitely lose more muscle mass due to a seven day fast but they're not. The discussion on that was about, the body once again will go to extraordinary length to preserve muscle mass above all else. That's what I'm thinking

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that might be occurring because I have to say, and this is anecdotal of course but we do train a lot of people and we do train a lot of people that are overweight. I would say classically obese and again, they're strong. Now I don't know if that's innate or it's because they're obese or maybe it's in spite of the fact they're obese but I can't deny the fact that I tend to notice that obese people are strong.

Adam Zickerman: 00:17:23 Not that they lose strength when they lose weight necessarily either, because they're strength training with me if they're losing weight but they do seem to be strong, stronger than I would expect for somebody that's grossly overweight.

Lawrence Neal: 00:17:35 That's super interesting. I love talking to people like you because especially at the scale of your business, you've trained thousands of people, probably tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of sessions. I do find that anecdotal data quite interesting, or very interesting. I wanted to move on to talking about Dr. Ken Leistner, who very sadly passed away not too long ago. I know he was obviously a big influence on you and mentor. You shared some really interesting and entertaining stories about training with him back in the day and I wanted to just spend some time talking about Ken. I'm so gutted because when I spoke to you last time, you said, "Have you got him on the show or tried?" And I said I was trying and I had actually

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emailed him, I believe, and sent a few messages and we never actually scheduled anything.

Lawrence Neal: 00:18:32 Obviously I regret that. I guess as a way to make it up, I wanted to address him here, talk about his story a little bit, your experiences with him and then also just invite everyone listening to this, if you have links to content, for instance, Mike Putrell recently republish this great video where Ken is training, which looks like, I believe, his garage, to all sorts of different music and you can just see how... Talking about people who are strong who aren't big. He was incredibly strong for a guy of his size and so I will post the link to that video because it's a great watch but anyone listening, if you've got any resources you would like to send to me that are about Ken, please email Lawrence@HighIntensityBusiness.com and I'll make sure they're in the post. Adam, tell me about some of your fondest memories with Ken.

Adam Zickerman: 00:19:30 Well, his heart is probably the biggest thing. I've just realized, which is kind of when I talk about his heart, that's how he died, he had an aortic split, which I find ironic considering how big a heart he had. I remember first meeting him, he worked with a lot of big guys, a lot of strength guys like power lifters and football players. I mean, he was all about strength and muscle hypertrophy and working out super duper hard. I met him, I was in my early to mid 20s and I was into martial

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arts, big time. That's what prompted me to go see him because I wanted to get stronger for martial arts. When I first met him...

Adam Zickerman: 00:20:24

He's a chiropractor also and he had a chiropractic office on his main floor of his house and then he had his basement gym and I met him, he brought me into his chiropractic office and we're talking and I just remember our first meeting so vividly, it's crazy because it's so long ago. I mean, I'm in my 50s now. It's been a while and he just took so much time to learn about me and very quickly, I wasn't intimidated anymore because when I went down to that basement with all those huge... I mean, I was always the smallest guy. I talked about my strength but it belied my... I'm a small guy for my strength and I thought he was going to judge me on that because he's so used to working with big, strong guys and I was like, "You sure you want to workout with me? You sure you don't mind if I'm working out here?" And he just respected my toughness and the fact I did martial arts and he couldn't care less about my size. All he cared about is your desire and your effort, your discipline. He was very big on that.

Adam Zickerman: 00:21:37

I remember one time... He had a big heart but he also called you out. I mean, he kind of reminded me a little bit of, if you remember, the coach for the New York Giants, Bill Parcells. He had a way of motivating his

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people by putting them down a little bit, teasing, but you knew if he did that, he liked you actually. You know, if he put you down, he liked you but I just remember, I was working out, I was with my trainer and some guy just finished his workout and after his workout, he decided before he left to do a set of chin ups and Dr. Ken saw that and he was like, "Everybody, everybody," and he just quieted the whole place down, got everyone to stop working out and he says, "You see this?" And he's pointed to the guy doing his chin ups and he's like, "There's a guy that obviously didn't work out hard enough because how can he finish his workout and then still be wanting to do a set of chin ups?" He really did not respect that at all. I mean, he wanted you to lay it all out there and he wanted you to empty the tank with your last repetition. The fact that he finished his workout and was able to still workout after that really irked him. He didn't have any problem calling you out like that.

Adam Zickerman: 00:22:55

I just said to myself, "Don't ever, ever slack off in front of this guy." You didn't want to. I mean, I wanted to impress him always. I always wanted to work as hard as I can for him. He was very nice to me and made me feel really good about the fact that I was maybe not one of the biggest guys around but he complemented my strength and my effort and that meant the world to me, not to mention the fact that I really learned what working out hard was all about and that's the jumping

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off point for my career. I didn't know it at the time because I wasn't thinking I'd make a career out of what I do now, back then.

Adam Zickerman: 00:23:36 For me, at that time, I just wanted to be the best martial artist that I can be. I wanted to be as strong as I can be. Who knew that 20 years later, I'd be utilizing what I learned and refining my career based on that experience. It was incredibly. I cried. When I found out he died, I cried. That doesn't usually happen to me.

Lawrence Neal: 00:24:02 I can understand.

Adam Zickerman: 00:24:06 Yeah. He had a very important influence on me. One of my biggest regrets, you talk about regretting not getting in touch for him for getting an interview with him, one of my regrets is that I didn't mention him in the acknowledgements of my book. That was a huge oversight. I don't know how the hell I let that happen.

Lawrence Neal: 00:24:26 Do an update.

Adam Zickerman: 00:24:27 Yeah, here we go, everyone, if you read my book, just know that Ken Leistner had a lot to do with it.

Lawrence Neal: 00:24:36 I'm sure he would understand. That was a real story. I appreciate you sharing that. Now, hopefully I won't be insensitive asking this but there's this thing in high intensity training where everyone's like... Everyone who does hear all strength training, because I know, from what I understand, he wasn't necessarily in the same

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camp as Ken Hutchins. You might want to correct me on that. Everyone wants to think that everyone's immortal in here and we addressed this when I spoke to Ann-Marie Anderson about Greg, because again, how can this happen to someone who does high intensity training and they're healthy? You mentioned he had an aortic split. Do you know if it was genetic? Are you able to talk about that? We don't have to if you feel that's insensitive. I really don't mind.

Adam Zickerman: 00:25:28

I don't know. That's what I heard, was the diagnosis. I have to say, I wonder... When I heard what it was, I had to wonder if it was from all the Valsalva. I mean, how I evolved over time with my strength training, one of the big things was just breathing techniques and that was never discussed during my Leistner days. We worked out really hard. Going to muscle failure wasn't enough. You had to go to muscle failure, then you had to go to muscle failure again, then you had to go to muscle failure again. We're talking about the same muscle group. One routine was what we call 50s. You've got to do 50 squats, 50 compound row and 50 pull down. That was the whole workout.

Adam Zickerman: 00:26:27

You were not allowed out of... it was a Hammer Strength squat machine. An incredible machine. Really brutal and you weren't allowed out until you did your 50th rep, so you can hold your breath, you can do whatever the hell you want, you've just got to get those

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50 reps. Carrying anvils across football fields. Stuff like that. You're holding your breath a lot. Workouts lasted a long time so I'm thinking this chronic year after year after year and he was so damn strong and he lifted so heavy but the straining and the holding of the breath, I wonder. It was about the rep. It was about finishing those 50 reps. I don't know, I just wonder if his heart just went eventually after all those years of that intrathoracic pressure building up and just wearing away at the heart. I don't know if you'll ever be able to find that out.

Adam Zickerman: 00:27:29

I mean, was he born with it? Man, I doubt it because I think it would've happened a lot sooner if he was born with that, given his lifestyle and the way he worked out. I don't know. I don't know what the rest of his heart looked like. I don't know about left ventricular hypertrophy or any of that stuff. I don't want to diagnose but if you're asking me to speculate, it's pure speculation. If anything, it did remind me just to make sure that we are doing the right thing when it comes to proper breathing. That was one of the ways we veered away from each other, based on how I used to work out. I really didn't work out with him or hear about his workouts for the last 10, 15 years.

Lawrence Neal: 00:28:18

As I said, that video that Mike published is extraordinary and it's great motivation for strength training and I'll make sure that's in the post.

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Lawrence Neal: 00:31:20 Do you want to give some... Have you got any, I guess, stories or anecdotes regarding workouts he put you through? You mentioned one there. I'd be interested to hear what other workouts, extreme workouts he put you through.

Adam Zickerman: 00:31:32 Yeah, the 50s, that was a big one. When I came downstairs, again, he did this in his basement, so you walked downstairs, you find out what you're doing. By the way, speaking of Ken, he was involved in every single workout. He worked hard, man. He really cared about his job. He did big write-ups on you, each person. He did follow-ups. He did evaluations and he prepared all the workouts for us. Even though he had a whole staff of trainers, he didn't rely on the trainers to put the protocols together. He did it himself. He looked at all my workouts each week and he put it together and he directed the trainer. I would go downstairs with the trainer. The trainer would look at my chart and so, "Okay, we're doing 50s today." I'm like, "Oh, fuck." That was a tough one. I think I might've mentioned this last time we spoke, which is, if you didn't walk out of Leistner's place puking, you weren't working out hard enough. He'd make you walk out of your place with your bag of puke to throw out on the corner. He wouldn't want you to leave your puke on his premises. You had to walk through his waiting room.

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Adam Zickerman: 00:32:41 When you walked through his waiting room on your way out, people would make sure and check out to see if you're walking out with your bag of puke. It's like a badge of honor. It's kind of weird, cannot be healthy for you. I don't recommend working out until you puke, by the way. Some of the other things that we evolved. Those were the 50s. Then the other thing that I remember so distinctly, and it didn't really matter the exact routine but he was always mixing in intervals between sets. So you do, let's say, leg press and then he'd have you go on what they call an upper body ergometer, a UBE machine. It's basically a bicycle for your upper body. They were really popular back in the day and he had one of those. You do a set of squats and then you go right onto the UBE and do a minute as hard as you can on the UBE. You're already breathing heavy from the squat and now you're on this UBE and now you're really hyperventilating. Then you go into chest press. You'd go a set to failure on chest press and then back on the UBE. Then he'd have you go on a pull down and then back on the UBE. How do you not puke after that?

Adam Zickerman: 00:34:04 I'll never forget that and we loved it. When I look back on it, I don't know if I can get myself to work out like that ever again. I don't know how I did it back then but he motivated you and he made you feel if you didn't, you were less of somebody. Anyway, that was a signature of his, having you go back and forth between

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a strength training routine and then intervals on either a bicycle or a UBE machine, which is like I said, an upper body bicycle.

Lawrence Neal: 00:34:41 It also sounded like, and you mentioned this, I think, in our first episode together, which by the way, if listeners want to learn more about Ken, you talk a fair bit about him then as well and I'll link to that but one of the things you mentioned is how he had an appreciation for the importance of the essentials, multi-joint movements. One workout, as you mentioned there, would simply be maybe three different types of exercises or a handful of exercises to address all the muscles and it didn't sound like he was concerned with much in the way of single joint or smaller exercises, which is interesting. It sounds like he was quite ahead of his time in that respect.

Adam Zickerman: 00:35:18 I think so. I mean, going back to what we were talking about before about the REC, that was what James Fisher was talking about. Not seeing much of a difference between single joint movements versus compound movements. Yeah, I mean, we did the single joint movements with Leistner no doubt about it. I mean he used to have this bar that was, I don't know, it seemed like... I have big hands but this bar that we'd do curls on. I could hardly get my hands around it. You do curls with this really thick bar. He was big into the weird kind of single joint movements as well but yes, I would definitely say, like I said about those 50s, that's

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just three exercise and all compound movements.

There's no doubt that he had a fondness for the compound movements and probably favored them as far as overall strength that anyone's concerned...

Adam Zickerman: 00:36:17

He probably felt there was more of a functional aspect to it as well. He worked with a lot of athletes, so he knew, if you were ever going to be a lineman on a football team, leg press and shoulder press and compound row. He got into those, he started buying those... I don't know if you heard about these. Might be a little bit before your time. Those Ground Base Hammer Strength machines. Hammer Strength came out with something called the Ground Base line. I don't even know if they still have them. They probably don't. It was basically machines that you ran into like a football player to lift weights. It was a crazy concept and he picked up a couple of those things. I avoided them. I had back surgery when I was a kid.

Adam Zickerman: 00:37:10

I said to Dr. Ken that I was going to pass on the Ground Base machines. I didn't think flying into a machine with my shoulders, lifting weights, was a good idea for a guy with my back problems and he, thank God to his credit... because he probably could've talked me into it if he asked me to but he let it go. Again, he was a chiropractor and he knew the surgery that I had. He was crazy but I guess not that crazy.

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Lawrence Neal: 00:37:37 Yeah, just on what you said there about single joint versus multi joint, you did a great podcast, which I will plug now, because I think it's very good, with Dr. Fisher on exactly that. The listeners and people watching this can go over to... What's the website for the podcast? Is it just InFormFitness.com? Or is there a different-

Adam Zickerman: 00:37:58 Yes if you go to the website, on the navigation bar, you have a link to it. Plus, it's on iTunes. If you have a phone that has an icon for podcasts, you can just search for InForm Fitness podcast and it'll pop up.

Lawrence Neal: 00:38:14 How's that going for you, the podcasting? You're doing a great job.

Adam Zickerman: 00:38:17 Thank you. How's it going? I love it. I mean, I did it because... Mine is geared to the end user, not so much the person who likes to geek out on exercise like us and like what your podcast is about. Mine is more for my clients and my clients to share with their friends because their friends don't believe the shit they're doing here. It's more content and more discussions to help them talk to their friends about sensible, evidence-based exercise. It's been great for me. It's been good for my clients but honestly, I enjoy doing it. It gives me the opportunity to do more research and to keep my nose in the books and to talk to some great people and I learn so much doing this. I have to prepare for these things. I usually write an outline. I'll read the book of the person I'm interviewing. If nobody listened, I'd still be

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doing it but we're doing good. I think we've got a couple thousand downloads per episode at this point, which is pretty cool. I didn't expect that yet.

Lawrence Neal: 00:39:28 Yeah, it's great. I really enjoy it. I particularly liked your... I liked a bunch of episodes but I really liked the one with Bill DeSimone. I had caught myself bursting out laughing because you were critiquing another individual and he was just so cut. He was just like, "Is that correct?" And he'd just say, "No." And then give his answer. He just gave some great analogies, which I can't recall now but I'll just encourage the listeners to check out that particular episode but I'm just really curious, what metrics, if any, have you seen improve in your business? Because I'm always encouraging people to consider a podcast in our industry because I believe it's an effective way to help retain your clientele because it's another method to educate them on what you do, as you were saying there, and on why what you do is so important for them. Just curious if you've seen it improve things like retention or maybe other metrics in your business or maybe got more people through the door or what have you.

Adam Zickerman: 00:40:34 You're exposing my weakness now, which is I don't really pay attention to that too much. Now you're talking about the business aspect and the marketing part of all of this. You know, business is good. Business is good. We get a lot of referrals. My clients are

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commenting on the podcast. They like the podcast. They're sharing the podcast. I don't know how to quantify that. I don't know if it's keeping... I'm sure it has some kind of effect on my client retention. I know my clients are really enjoying it and they're learning. I remember when I took a break from it, people were saying, "When's your next one coming out? I miss it" I took a hiatus recently. People are like, "Yeah, I really look forward to those." I don't know, those people would probably be clients anyway but I've got to tell you, they just enjoy the information and there's so much crap out there and so much marketing out there and if you're listening to these podcasts, you're at least keeping your finger on what I think is more of the evidence-based stuff and not so much just the hype and the marketing.

Adam Zickerman: 00:41:50 Again, I'm doing this more to just, whoever wants this information, they can have it and again, for me, it's just fun. It's fun to talk into a microphone and ask these questions and explore and like I said, if no one listened and I didn't get any client retention out of it, I'd still do it.

Lawrence Neal: 00:42:12 I think that's great. I think the fact that you're thinking about things like retention and referrals as being almost like a nice byproduct, which you didn't really plan for and that you just enjoy doing this, you enjoy the impact

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it's having on your clients, I think that's cool. I think that's so cool.

Adam Zickerman: 00:42:30

It's how I started the business. I mean, nothing's changed in 20 years in that respect. I always felt, just do the right thing and give good information, then the business will take care of itself. Listen, I've tried all the marketing stuff. I've tried the advertising. I've tried the local advertising. I mean, we do a lot of community work. I mean, I'm involved in my community but that's because I just like being involved in my community. Again, my business growth is just natural consequences of me being part of my community and wanting to talk to people about this and teach people and I guess that's the most authentic way of doing it. People criticize all of us people in this weird niche of high intensity training. I think we're always being criticized for...

Adam Zickerman: 00:43:23

Or they point to the fact that nobody's actually franchised this like Peloton or Orangetheory that it's a reflection on the workout itself. It might be a reflection of the workout itself like just too hard for the average person to do. I don't know. Or to get their head around. I'm not sure. Or I don't know if it's because we just do a really shitty job marketing it or both. The fact that one of us hasn't become the next Orangetheory, I certainly don't think that's a reflection on the efficacy of the workout. Especially again when you look at all the

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research. I mean, again, depends what we're talking about. 20 minutes once a week, Super Slow, I think that's probably what a lot of people... I mean I wrote the book that talked about it basically like that. That's not how I look at the overall high intensity exercise industry anymore. There's lots of things that people are doing out there that seem interesting and seem to work that aren't necessarily doing a 10/10 protocol on Super Slow [inaudible 00:44:42] equipment once or twice a week.

Adam Zickerman: 00:44:46

Still people are getting into good shape and they're strong. We don't have all the answers. We're certainly not just sticking to that script. The framework that we work within is a lot more flexible than you might imagine after reading, let's say, Ken Hutchins or something like that.

Lawrence Neal: 00:45:13

No and I respect that. You touched on it in our first episode. In fact with your InForm Fitness podcast with Simon Shawcross, you talked about how you do high intensity interval training occasionally with people and stuff like that. One of the things you said to me in our first interview, you mentioned Doctor Richard Feynman, the famous physicist. You said something really interesting that he said, which is, he was challenged about "Are we in the scientific age now?" and he's like, "Well not really because how many people actually think scientifically and think objectively?" I think it's

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suffice to say that we're still in a place where for the most part people don't think scientifically or objectively when it comes to exercise, which is a bit of a shame. Tell me, are you optimistic about the future? Do you think that we're trending towards high intensity strength training or something familiar to that more and more in society? What do you see happening?

Adam Zickerman: 00:46:15 Oh boy. I don't know. I mean I mentioned Orangetheory right? They still put signs on their windows that talk about how many calories they're burning in an hour and stuff like that and they're the newest thing that's taking storm. By all accounts, it seems like they're a very successful franchise. So if you use that as a snapshot of how people are thinking about exercise, I guess we're not that much closer than we were when I brought that up originally about Richard Feynman.

Lawrence Neal: 00:46:46 Better than aerobics though right? Maybe? We're moving towards higher intensity and intensive interval training?

Adam Zickerman: 00:46:56 True yeah, so I think that is happening. It's true. I think we have maybe moved the needle a little bit. Maybe a little bit. But the needle's moving yeah. I don't know if it's going to be where I want it to be in my lifetime but that's why I do this podcast, exactly. That's why people like you and Dr. Attia now has his podcasts, which are fantastic.

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Lawrence Neal: 00:47:22 That's great.

Adam Zickerman: 00:47:25 If nothing else, James Fisher and Jeremy... We were talking about at the beginning of this thing about how Jeremy, he was talking about how, might not even be a connection between hypertrophy and strength or a weak connection at least. Just accepting that possibility is moving the needle and breaking paradigms and ways of thinking. I just love that. It's amazing the kind of vitriol that I see by somebody just even... by the mere fact of suggesting something like that towards each other when you see these Facebook threads. I never get involved in them but I do read them. I'm a voyeur in that respect. I just can't imagine how these people have all this time to retort like this. That's a whole other discussion. I do see things changing. I do. Thanks to you and thanks to a lot of people that are just sticking it out. This is not easy. Speaking of Facebook threads, I saw one former high intensity training guy jump onto a thread just completely excoriating us for even choosing this as a career. Because how much money can you make and these people-

Lawrence Neal: 00:48:50 Very sad.

Adam Zickerman: 00:48:54 Kind of putting down our vocations as a career choice because in this person's opinion, we aren't going to make a lot of money, we aren't going to get rich from this or we don't understand that these people that are

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hiring us just look at us as kind of workout caddies and don't have much respect for us. I'm like wow, I'm sorry you had that experience. I felt bad for that person. It certainly didn't shake my resolve for what I do for a living. Far from it. It made me think about it a little bit and, not that I had to think too much about it because I'm very confident in what I do for a living. I have no second thoughts about what I chose as a career. Getting rich is the least of it. I don't know. What was I saying? Where were we going with this?

Lawrence Neal: 00:49:45 No, no, I'm pleased you brought that up because I'm sure people are interested in your thoughts about maybe that comment. I think I know the one you're referring to. I guess we were just talking about the way things are trending in here. I was going to say to you, I don't know how much you pay attention to Europe and other HIT organizations around the world. I think it's really exciting because I talk to people like Patrik Meier, who's the COO of Kieser Training and I think they're the largest high intensity based organization in the world now. They have well over 100 franchises and I think it's like 40 studios that they own. They just use MedX equipment and they've got their own R&D lab and they actually have manufactured their own machines, which sadly I do not believe are available to the wider market but they're unbelievable. They're still growing fast. Then you've got the likes of Fit20, who are also doing a franchise model in Europe at the moment.

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Lawrence Neal: 00:50:54 They have 120 franchises but they are more focused on one-on-one, 20 minute workouts, whereas Kieser is slightly different in terms... It's more like a monthly membership where you have some one-on-one at the beginning but then you're kind of self supervised. Hopefully I'm getting that right. So slightly different models but they're both doing really, really well. They've both spent a lot of time really working on their systems and processes so that everything is repeatable and the operation at each studio operates where it should. I just think, and I'm looking forward to doing more work with both of those organizations in the future, because I think there is so much that we can all learn, even yourself Adam. Even though InForm is a great success. And also the smaller studios out there. Those that have dreams and goals to be maybe like InForm Fitness one day or maybe just want to have one studio but just run it as a really nice business and enjoy that experience and enjoy owning that business and not having it run you, so to speak. So I'm very optimistic as you can tell. I feel very privileged to be in the position to do this.

Adam Zickerman: 00:52:08 Yeah, I'm familiar with those two companies. I'm familiar with those two companies as well and kudos to them yeah, they're doing a great job. I mean I've spoken to some of the people over there at Kieser. Yeah, because I want to see if there's a way of getting the equipment, which you, of course already said is not

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possible right now. Nonetheless, they have the formula down for sure. It's great to see. Even the United States I mean Luke Carlson's doing a great job and to his credit, he's acting so selflessly in a way. I mean obviously it comes back to him but the fact that he's just putting out all this information and putting all the time into these conferences to get us all together to talk and he's trying to support all of our businesses, I commend him for that. I commend him a lot for that because it's not easy. I'm sure he catches a lot of flak for it.

Lawrence Neal: 00:53:07 Oh yeah, tremendous amount.

Adam Zickerman: 00:53:09 For what he does and the amount of work. So yeah, that's why I am positive. We'll probably catch up to Europe eventually, I hope. That would be great.

Lawrence Neal: 00:53:19 Well I mean obviously you've got The Perfect Workout and probably a handful of other organizations I've not mentioned, [inaudible 00:53:25] Fitness who are doing very well. So yeah I mean, yeah, I suspect it will certainly catch up.

Adam Zickerman: 00:53:32 On the other hand, I talk to marketing people all the time and they're trying to pitch business to me and their clients. You know, I'm in New York City so we have some of these big time marketing companies, high end marketing companies that work with all these major brands. They come to me and say, "You can do this.

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You can become a major brand if you did this, this." They're giving me all these ideas and thoughts on it. They're like, "Nobody knows about this." So we can talk about the Kiesers and the Fit20s and InForm Fitnesses and Luke Carlson, Discover Strength and like you said, The Perfect Workout. The thing is, nobody still knows about it right? Nobody talks about what we do the way they talk about Pilates. What we do isn't a noun yet you know?

Lawrence Neal: 00:54:25 That's right.

Adam Zickerman: 00:54:27 It's still an adjective. It's a type of strength training. It's a description of a type of strength training. It's not, like I said, a noun. It's not a name of a protocol yet. So people aren't talking about what we do the way they talk about Pilates or Peloton, which has been frustrating.

Lawrence Neal: 00:54:54 Maybe we'll get bored when it becomes really popular and won't want to do it anymore.

Adam Zickerman: 00:54:56 I don't know. It's hard to just wrap this up into a little sound bite to explain what we do. It's more complicated than that. It's not a lifestyle. You know, everything else is a lifestyle. Exercise is about what you feel is good for you and what's right for you. Until we get out of that mindset, I don't know how to wrap this up, you know, into a soundbite that makes people realize that this is what I should be doing. Although

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again, it's happening slowly but surely. It's hard. It's hard when you get into marketing. I don't even know what the answer is. I mean, I don't know. I mean, again, people think that I'm anti-cardio. I hate that. People almost come to me sometimes like they're at a confessional, "Adam." "Yeah." "I have to tell you something." "What?" "I ran yesterday."

Adam Zickerman: 00:56:01

It's like I'm waiting for them to tell me they slept with my wife and all they have to tell me is that, "Oh you just ran yesterday? Thank God I thought you slept with my wife, okay I can handle this. This I can, you know." It's like, "No big deal man. No big deal. Good, you ran." I mean, "You're anti-cardio." No I'm not anti-cardio. I'm anti over-training. I'm anti-injury. You know, I look at exercise... I mean I don't care if you exercise every day. I mean, loosely using the word exercise at this point but, you know, if you want to do your... Do your bout of high intensity exercise. Do your 20 minutes, four/four protocol, I don't care. Simple movements, compound movements. Just work your ass off, do it safely. Work out really hard and just do that a couple of times a week and then whatever you do in between, you know, just do the moderate thing. So to me it's not about cardio versus anaerobic. It's more about modulating intensity right?

Adam Zickerman: 00:56:56

You do a couple of really intense workouts a week. I don't really give a shit what tool you use quite honestly,

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and you do some activity the rest of the week, play a sport, go jogging, walk your dogs, jog with your dogs. You know, see how you feel in the long run and make sure you're not... Understand the risk you're taking based on the choices you're making. I mean if you want to take up kickboxing and boxing, understand you're going to probably hurt your elbow or your wrist or something if you're hitting the heavy bag. So, I don't know. I mean I can help somebody navigate what the best recreational pursuits to do in between their high intensity workouts but that's what I'm about. It's not that I'm anti anything other than anti getting hurt.

Adam Zickerman: 00:57:40

You know, Dr. Attia and Dr. McGuff also, they talk about health span versus life span. You know, when Jeremy was talking about all-cause mortality and whether people that are strong, they live longer. That's all well and good but I'm more concerned about, what good is living the last 10 years of your life if you're kind of basically on a dialysis machine or you're constantly having to shoot yourself up with insulin and you have to have hip replacement and knee surgeries and stents and all the medical interventions just to keep you alive? I mean to me, that might improve your length of life but what's your health span like? What's your quality of health? You know that's more important to me so when people are talking to me about exercise and lifestyle and what they should be doing, we can thank Ken Hutchins for this. We talk about high intensity training

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as the exercise or some version of it as exercise versus recreation, which I'm all for. Recreation definitely has an exercise effect, right?

Adam Zickerman: 00:58:48 But we're not really necessarily defining it as pure exercise, which is I think, smart. But people should be active. People should live their lives. I mean one of my mottos and taglines is, you know, exercise your need to live the life you want. I know people that really, they need to do something every single day. You know, great, do it. You know, just don't get hurt and let's not over train and we have no problems.

Lawrence Neal: 00:59:17 For sure. Yeah. Well said. Adam I want to be respectful of your time. What's the best way for... This is just to find out more about you and what you're up to.

Adam Zickerman: 00:59:29 Well we've talked about it. I guess one of the best things is my podcast and my website. You know, InFormFitness.com is my website. I have blogs on there and all kinds of good information. Then the podcast of course, the InForm Fitness podcast. Anywhere podcasts are found.

Lawrence Neal: 00:59:49 I highly recommend it. I'm really enjoying it myself and assuming we do get this video to work, this podcast is brought to you by MedX Precision Fitness. I don't know if you can see that.

Adam Zickerman: 01:00:00 That's cool.

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- Lawrence Neal: 01:00:02 I figured if we can get this video thing to work I might start wearing all these t-shirts that I get at conferences from friends of mine. So this is, Blair Wilson gave me this from MedX Precision Fitness in Toronto.
- Adam Zickerman: 01:00:12 Nice guy. [inaudible 01:00:13] for the first time. Really nice guy. Hi Blair, if you're listening.
- Lawrence Neal: 01:00:19 So yeah I'm going to start... Assuming I get this video to work I'll start wearing a different t-shirt. Because I want to play more of a role and hopefully I've already done some of this to an extent in terms of promoting all of you guys and whether that's through just simply, you know, people that are really into HIT who travel, who might be local in your area and using your facility, or whether they travel and use it when they travel, or whether it's simply a case of my website gaining more traction and then the ranking of that helping everyone else's search engine ranking. You know, however it comes about. For everyone listening, to find the blog post for this episode, all the resources obviously, as I said before, if you've got anything regarding Dr. Ken Leistner, please do send that to me at Lawrence@HighIntensityBusiness.com.
- Lawrence Neal: 01:01:09 All of those resources will be at HighIntensityBusiness.com/Adam-Zickerman. For all episodes please go to HighIntensityBusiness.com/podcast and until next time, thank you very much for listening.

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