

Lawrence Neal: Lawrence Neal here, welcome back to highintensitybusiness.com. Today's guest is Joe Cirulli. Joe is the founder and CEO of Gainesville Health and Fitness, also known as GHF. Joe has led life focused on two things, helping people become healthy and building an inspiring, thriving company culture. Never wavering in his visional efforts despite adversity from working for companies that went bankrupt to living on his last 12 cents in his car, Joe's quest has always been to inspire human potential.

Lawrence Neal: At 24, he started Gainesville Health and Fitness with only \$1700. Today, GHF is one of the most well-known and respected health clubs in the entire world. Joe owns three clubs currently with more than 27,000 members, a 28,000 square foot club in heart of Gainesville, a 25,000 square foot club in the Tioga Town Center, and a 14,000 square foot women-only center in Fawn Brook Village.

Lawrence Neal: 2018 marked the 40th year of business for GHF. Congratulations. Joe also shares ownership of two rehabilitation centers, Request Physical Therapy and Request Physical Therapy at Tioga with North Florida Regional Medical Center. He employs over 400 people among his Gainesville Health and Fitness centers, and Request Physical Therapy locations.

Lawrence Neal: Joe, welcome to the show.

Joe Cirulli: Yeah, thank you. I think that one center is 80,000. I don't know if that was listed as 28,000, but the main center's 80,000 square feet.

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Lawrence Neal: Oh, yeah, it was 78,000 I said, I think. Yeah. Okay, thanks for the correction.

Lawrence Neal: Good. Thank you for doing this. I've been excited to talk to you for a while now. A lot of people've really been excited about you coming on the show, and in preparation for this, I was watching some of your previous podcasts and interviews on YouTube, and your talk, My Last 12 Cents, is so inspiring. The amount of challenges you faced as a young man, trying to build your business, the amount of failures you had and mistakes and things you had to overcome, is unbelievable.

Lawrence Neal: My first question to you really is, I will point the listeners to that speech you gave, because I don't want to necessarily repeat the entire thing here, because I think it'd be good to talk about some new stuff, but I think it's amazing, so I encourage people to watch that, and I'll link to it in the show notes for this in the blog.

Lawrence Neal: I'm just really curious, do you think if it weren't for all the hardship you went through, and you went through some serious challenges, that you would be as successful as you are now?

Joe Cirulli: First of all I never look at success as a place you get to it. I always look at it as a course that you're on. The answer to the question is, I don't know. The things that occurred were just that things that occurred. Where I was very fortunate was, there was nothing else I wanted to do, so it wasn't like there was this other alternative that, if this doesn't work, I'll go to that, because there was no second place for me.

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Joe Cirulli: By that, I'm just saying, there was no choice. The thing that helped me so much was I never stopped reading. I never stop listening to tapes on how our mind worked and how I could convince myself that I could work through anything that I was facing at any time. I read a lot, and I would read about people who went through the most miserable of times, and how they made their way through it. I'd look at it, I says, man, I've just got a temporary problem.

Joe Cirulli: Every time a company went out of business, I looked at it like, I know a years' worth of stuff that I didn't know a year ago, and if I just quit now, if there was an alternative, I said I would lose what I already gained. Then I would look at it after the second loan went bankrupt, then the third one went bankrupt, and the fourth one went bankrupt. Just on and on. I just kept saying, I've learned so much, why would I want to lose it? Because I've always seen people who would, every year and a half or two years, they changed jobs. They'd get a completely different job. I'd look at it and say, how could you ever become great in anything, if you just keep shifting all the time?

Joe Cirulli: I looked at it as an advantage that I had, not a disadvantage that I had.

Lawrence Neal: You mentioned you didn't have any other option, but in a way you did, right? Because your other option would've been "a normal job," but had you already started reading all this stuff, a lot of the positive attitudes stuff, positive psychology that you've talked about, prior to coming to that realization? Or was that just already innate for you? That kind of mentality of, there is no plan B.

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Joe Cirulli: The first thing is, there was just total luck in me even being aware that there were books out there that could really help focus the way you think and understand the potential that you have. When I say it was just luck, I opened up the drawer one day and there was this book in there, and it was called The Power of Positive Thinking. I read it, and it just captivated me because, see, I always had a mindset of what life was supposed to be like, based upon the life that I grew up with. I thought that's what it was, until I read that book and thought, wow, there could be so much more. You just have to think of so much more.

Joe Cirulli: That was the beginning of it. Then when I went through challenging times, I thought, maybe I better go find another book, and I'd go find another book. It just always happened to be the right book at the right time. However, all that works, that works. That was the thing that just kept me going, no matter what situation I was going through, I kept reading new books on how to think, and then I started listening to tapes all the time in my car, just to have some great philosophers talk about life and human potential and all. Those were the things that that just kept me going the whole time.

Joe Cirulli: Yeah, was I offered other jobs, of course. But when I say there was no second choice, there was absolutely nothing else that I wanted to do. This has been a focal point of my life since I was a little kid. I just realized it all came together when I started seeing what the health club industry was, and then realizing that the reason why all those clubs went out of business, was not because there was anything wrong with what you did inside of fitness center, it was just

the people that I worked for. Their supreme focus was on just sales and money.

Joe Cirulli: I realized that if you took care of the people, the sales and the money would eventually take care of itself. It's always proved true for me. Always.

Lawrence Neal: One of the things you mentioned earlier was, you read about people who had gone through worse things than you, which gave you the motivation and inspiration to overcome your current challenge. A book that comes to mind would be, because I have had a similar experience. The book for me would be Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. You read that and you're like, I've got it easy.

Lawrence Neal: I'm just curious, what stories or books, what were the specific ones where you were like, that's way worse than my situation?

Joe Cirulli: The truth of the matter is, in most of the books I read at that time, you would read about people who went through really, really difficult times. I think one of the books when I was going through a real difficult time, when I actually thought about quitting for about five minutes, then I realized, I asked myself the question, what am I going to do?

Joe Cirulli: The book that I found on the shelf was called, after I read The Power of Positive Thinking was, The Amazing Results of Positive Thinking. That book, when I started reading it, it was just story after story after story of people who went through the most miserable times, and I'd read it and say, I don't have a problem. That guy had

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a problem. I just ... a problem with my attitude. I just need to change the way I think.

Joe Cirulli: I did. Even though I hated where I was at, I didn't like living in the town I was living in, nothing. My life consisted of working all day, working out at night, going back to the Holiday Inn, going to sleep, getting up in the morning, come back to work, day after day after day. Obviously, that's not exactly the way I wanted to live my life, but I didn't even like where I was living at.

Joe Cirulli: I let myself get down because of it. That book made me real realize, man, just change the way you think. I just convinced myself I liked where I was, and everything was good because everything was good. It was just a place I didn't want to be, but I knew I wouldn't be there the rest of my life.

Joe Cirulli: [crosstalk] many stories.

Lawrence Neal: That's awesome. Makes me think of, I remember reading a story about Thomas Edison when his, I believe his factory burned down. He had no insurance, because I didn't think that the, apparently the material with which they built the factory wasn't supposed to be flammable or something like that. He lost his entire business, and he let it get him down for maybe an hour or so. Then he got his family outside to watch the fireworks, to enjoy the blazing inferno. Then he went, I think over the next few weeks, he rebuilt, or months, he rebuilt the factory and had the most profitable year ever. Which ...

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Joe Cirulli: Yeah, for sure. That's always the way that it works. You just got to, just think about things. You just got to think about things differently, when you're going through those challenging times. Think about it, he developed the phonograph. He was deaf. I don't know if you knew that or not. If you go down to Fort Myers where his home is, you'll see his original phonograph, and you know what you'll see all over the phonograph? Teeth marks, because he had to bite it so he could hear the music vibrating through the bones in his ear.

Joe Cirulli: People have challenges. As I've said a million times, the most important thing you got in your life is your health. If you got your health, you can overcome anything. If you don't overcome your health, I promise you the most important thing in your life will be your health. Stay healthy, and as I said, you have opportunities to do anything that you just decide you want to do.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I feel obviously personal training business is a challenging business. Any business is challenging, but I almost feel like in this industry, it's almost like a rite of passage to have hard times, because you learn so much, and it teaches you what you can overcome. You build courage in overcoming these obstacles, and you get more and more, that resilience just grows over time.

Lawrence Neal: One of the stories you told during your My Last 12 Cents talk, which I just loved that talk and I really encourage people to go and check that out. I'll keep saying it during this podcast, because I think it's so valuable. One of the things you said, you talked about how you, at one stage you had a location, but you were right up against it in

terms of financing it. You were having builders in, building stuff in it. Whilst that was all going on, you were trying to get members.

Lawrence Neal: I just thought to myself, how the hell could you convince people to join when it sounds like you had a building site going on at the same time, if I've understood that correctly. Can you take us back there and talk about how you were able to convince people to join when it doesn't sound like you really had much of a gym at the time?

Joe Cirulli: It's funny because so many of those clubs went bankrupt in the town I'm currently in. When people first joined, their concern was, you're going to go bankrupt, because all the health clubs went bankrupt. This is how I'd actually sell you a membership, Lawrence, I'd say, okay, look, the way we'll set it up is your dues are X amount of dollars a month. Now, there's no initial payment that you have to make, and your dues won't start for 30 days from today. That way, if we go out of business, you're already ahead of the game.

Joe Cirulli: That's how I'd have to sell them a membership. Because think about it, I'm going to give you the next 30 days, you're not even paying for it. If I go bankrupt the next 30 days, you worked out and haven't paid anything.

Joe Cirulli: I was always a month behind, so you never had to feel concerned about losing your money. I would never ask people to pay cash. That's just the way it was. I knew that I wasn't going to go out. I knew I wasn't going to go out of business. When you said about Thomas Edison being depressed for an hour, I was once depressed

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for three hours, and then at the end of three hours, I realized I was never going to get anywhere being depressed. I stayed up all night thinking and working and planning, and then the next day, went through and made the changes that I came up with the night before. Then was able to work my way through it.

Lawrence Neal: In the same ... Sorry, go on. Joe. What were you going to say?

Joe Cirulli: Oh no, go ahead.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. In the same presentation, you talked about goal setting, and you talked about how you had goals, I want to earn 100 grand by X, and all these things. It sounded like you realized that they weren't necessarily realistic goals, and so you cut them down in order to make them a little bit more achievable. That really resonated with me, if I've understood that correctly, because I found for myself, if I set goals that are too crazy, I find it very demotivating when I get close and realize, there's no way that's possible.

Lawrence Neal: By actually making it a stretch goal, not easily attainable but not impossible, something that's actually realistic, it's far more motivational. I'd like to just hear what would your advice to guys and girls in high-intensity training business who are setting goals for their business, what sort of advice would you give on that?

Joe Cirulli: First of all, I don't know if it's just for those people, but it's for people who are living a life. They can decide where they want their life to go. Actually, when I put together my list when I was 21, it was after I had read the book, Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill,

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which just inspired me. That's when I started making out my list. Now, actually, I would not say they weren't stretch goals, because they were. The difference with them, I think there was only one thing on there where I put a timeframe, and it was the one you brought up. I mean to own my own health club in Gainesville, Florida, so no one's going to tell me where I'm going to live.

Joe Cirulli: I didn't know when that would ever happen, to make it respected in the Gainesville community because as I said, so many went bankrupt. I didn't know when that would happen. I put down to become a pilot, travel all over the world, travel all over America, to buy a home on the ocean, in the mountains and build my parents a home. I put all these things on there, but I didn't have timeframes. I said the only thing I put on there was the fourth or fifth thing on that list, was to make \$100,000 by the time when I was 25. Now, you've got to understand, this was right after I had been living in my car. That was a pretty good goal.

Joe Cirulli: That particular thing is what made me realize I could do anything. I'll explain to you what I meant by that. I started my own health club when I was a 24 and a half. I started with the \$1700. I advertised like crazy. I hired all these people to build the place. I didn't have no money to pay any of them, but somehow each week, I got enough money in from people who were looking at wanting a membership when it was open, that I was able to keep everybody going.

Joe Cirulli: The day that I turned 26 years old, I had exactly \$100,000 in my savings account. Now, understand it went from \$1700 to \$100,000. When I saw that number, I can tell you what went through my head.

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I said, it's amazing. I said, it wasn't 99, it wasn't 101, it was the exact number I wrote down.

Joe Cirulli: When I saw that, I said, I can do anything. I can do anything I put my mind to, because see, I always believed in everything I read, because they were the masters. I always believed in what I read. I think that just even showed me more. Having a health club was the number one thing on the list. That was a time "sensitive" thing on my list. I'll tell you, it's not like I had total confidence, because when I was 21, I made about \$10,000. When I was 22, I made about \$10,500. When I was 23 I made 11,000, but I was still reading my list. When I was 23, I put a line through 100,000 and I put 60,000. I didn't know how I was going to do that either.

Joe Cirulli: Then that next year, I read the book Laws of Success, which was also by Napoleon Hill. I realized when I was done, that I had just copped out. Everything said, you're just supposed to believe it. I actually put a line back through 60,000 and put 100,000, not having a clue how I would do it. When I saw that it happened, that's all I needed to see. That was 100%. Just do whatever you believe you can do, and just keep moving forward. I always have.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. So inspiring. Was it 100,000, not even with 100,000, 10 cents, it was spot on 100,000?

Joe Cirulli: 100,000 in the bank.

Lawrence Neal: It's quite, quite strange that that happened.

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Lawrence Neal: I guess I wanted to shift gears slightly, on the business front is, you've built this awesome business, this health club and now, one, I guess, main health club and then two smaller health clubs, which is still significant. A lot of people listening to this run small hit studios. Maybe 1500, 2000 square feet, that kind of thing. Maybe they've got one, maybe they've got several and they're looking to open multiple locations. I'd love to hear your view on, what's the difference in running an organization like yours, or some of the key differences, versus running a typical high-intensity studio in your opinion?

Joe Cirulli: I think I have a little bit of experience in kind of all of it. In my clubs, we offer personal training. In my main center, we have about a 5000 square foot area for personal training. In my smaller club, that's about 1000 feet. The main thing with that is, and with us, obviously we're dealing with members getting involved in personal training.

Joe Cirulli: The big issue is obviously marketing to the members, to make them aware. The other part of it is that the trainers are also responsible for marketing. Before that even occurs, you've got to make sure you got the right trainers, because you're not going to grow it if you don't have the right people. Now, you have to backtrack even more. That is, what's your hiring process. Now, I'm going to take even before your hiring process, before you can come together and build a strong hiring process, you have to know who you are.

Joe Cirulli: You have to know what are the values that you believe in, what is the culture that's inside your organization. As I said, you got to keep going backward and backward and backward. Probably one of the

most important things that we ever did was we actually, I thought it would take about eight hours, to define our vision, and our mission, and our core values, and our core purpose, and our culture, and even talk about what the future was going to be for the company. Just like I did it for myself. It was interesting, because I knew the things inside my own head, but one day I just asked myself a question. I said, I know these are inside my head, but does everybody else understand what it's all about? Do they understand it by osmosis? Or, should I maybe get a solid group of eight people and go sit down and let's talk about it?

Joe Cirulli: I took eight people away. We sat down and started going through everything. Now, I thought it would take eight hours. It took six months of constantly working on it, and working on it, working on it. What was great, what was so helpful to me was, if you know who Jim Collins is, Jim Collins, the author from Good to Great and Great By Choice. It was funny, back in 1998, I read an article in the Harvard Business Review, it was called Building Your Company's Vision. I read it, and it talked about all these things. As I went through and I kept saying, I know that, I know that, I understand that, I understand that. That's when I finished. I said, I understand it. I wonder if everybody in my company understands it. That's what led to the discussions. The discussions got very, very deep.

Joe Cirulli: When I say six months, every week, the eight of us kept working on it, working on it, and working on it. Now, back then, I only had 200 employees. What I did was, once we finished everything, I said, this isn't going to do any good if it's only us eight that believe it. I said,

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let's have two meetings. We arranged two meetings of 100 people each, broke them up into 10 groups of 10. We had them dissect everything that we had come up with, we got their thoughts, their ideas, and then we made little corrections. We had a meeting again with the second group, and then when I say perfected it, we got down to, this is who we are as a company.

Joe Cirulli: Now, once that was all defined, then we said, now let's design our hiring process, so we find the people who fit inside of our organization. That led into the redesign of our whole hiring process. That's probably the biggest thing that we did.

Joe Cirulli: Now, the reason I bring up Jim Collins is, when I was reading the book, Good to Great, I go, boy, I recognize that name. I went back through and I realized he had written that article in the Harvard Business Review, because I didn't pay attention to the name until six years later, seven years later. That was probably the beginning point.

Joe Cirulli: Now, once obviously we had that set up, we started getting the right people, always. I always had good people. I'm very fortunate. I have people with me who've been with me 30, 35, 40 years. I don't know how many companies have people who've been with them that long, and they all work hard, and they all still believe in the same things that got us going originally.

Joe Cirulli: I'm very, very fortunate in that area. In the development of the personal training, the most critical thing obviously is, after you get the right people, is marketing what you do, and learning everything

you can about marketing, learning everything you can about how to tell the story, about what it is you do. That's critical. Now, not only do I have the personal training centers, but I have two boutique studios, and it's high-intensity training. I'm in Gainesville, Florida, I have one down by Clearwater, Florida, which is about three hours from Gainesville, and one in Tampa, that's about two and a half hours. All we do is high-intensity strength training in those locations. We use very specialized equipment. We don't use the traditional equipment.

Joe Cirulli: The whole program is built upon research that we did back in 2012, with Ellington Darden, I'm sure you know, Ellington Darden. We've written I think 18 books so far, out of the center, all of them built upon the premise of high-intensity training, building muscle to lose body fat. With the research we did on the machines that we're currently using. The amazing thing is in two thirds the amount of time, and two thirds the number of workouts, we get 50% greater results. It's all built around negative training.

Joe Cirulli: It's a process. Just once again to backtrack a little bit, what got me going, to even try that concept of high-intensity training and developing a program instead of just advertising pretty much we can do anything with you as a personal trainer, it was a very, very specific program about building muscle to lose body fat. As a matter of fact, the tagline on it is, the name of it's called X-Force Body, and the tagline is Leaner, Stronger, Healthier.

Joe Cirulli: With Ellington, back in 2012, we did the research on the machines, we followed the same type meal plans that we had followed before,

and as I said, got these dramatic, dramatic results. Now we're going to ... I'll backtrack a little bit before that. In 2011, I read a book called The New Rules of Retail. It talked about the challenges health clubs were going to have, with all the ... It was talking about the challenges department stores were having, with all the boutique studios that were being developed. When I looked at that, I said, man, we're going to have the same challenges ourselves, which led to a major renovation of our clubs, took six years to finish.

Lawrence Neal: What kinds of challenges are you alluding to?

Joe Cirulli: What I was looking at was all the boutique studios that were being developed, that can take members away. Just like even in personal training, there's lots of studios that are around that could take away customers from personal training. There could be a CrossFit studio that takes your people away. There could be all kinds of things.

Joe Cirulli: My goal as a fitness center was to prepare for that. Because when they talked about the department stores, they were talking about the Lululemons and all these other stores that were being developed, that were taking their customers away. With us, it led to us really revamping and building onto all the different areas of the club, so that we have cycling areas, personal training areas, X-Force areas, tribe areas, Pilate areas, CrossFit areas.

Joe Cirulli: What I tried to do is this, a look at, first of all, if we're going to lose any customers, let's lose them to us. Let's lose them to something else that we offer. What I'm getting to is like with the personal training, is they've got to constantly reinvent themselves. They can't

just be the same thing, now and that they were 10 years from now, they need to look at what kind of specialties that they can develop inside of their centers. Those are the kinds of things we look at-

Lawrence Neal: Just on that, I wanted to challenge you on that, because if you look at, and maybe I've misunderstood this, so correct me if I'm wrong, but if you look at Discover Strength, Luke's made a, and I know you and Luke know each other pretty well. Luke's made obviously a mission to focus on strength training, focus on being evidence-based, and has not really decided to add any ... Not anything too different to that, in his portfolio. They've got, what, five locations now. You look at The Perfect Workout, another example who just stick to super-so strength training, you have almost 70 locations.

Lawrence Neal: Surely, are you saying that you reckon that those organizations would need to provide more variety in order to grow or survive in the long-term? Is that what you're saying or do you think ... Yeah.

Joe Cirulli: Let me explain it maybe a little bit.

Lawrence Neal: Sure.

Joe Cirulli: If you have a set program that you brand, and you say we're the best in the world at doing this, and you get that brand out there, and you can market it and push it, I'd say go with it, because I'm going to tell you, my boutique studios that are 3000 square feet, we market a program built around high-intensity strength training. That's all that we do. Inside the fitness center, there's such a variety of members who need different things, so that you may have

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members who have Parkinson's disease, you may have members who are so inflexible, it's affecting them.

Joe Cirulli: We developed the different programs for that. What Luke has done, and he's done a great job, is he has branded himself as that center. Exactly the same, we're doing the X-Force centers, we're branding it built around a program of fat loss, built around strength training. I'm not adding anything. That's what I'm not trying to do. It depends on the type "membership" you have, if you're inside a club. If you're outside of club, the most important thing you have to do is make sure you're not the same as every other personal training center in town. There has to be something about you that makes you remarkable that nobody else has.

Joe Cirulli: That's the challenge, is figuring out what it is.

Lawrence Neal: Got It. Okay. I wanted to talk to you a little bit more about high-intensity training, specifically. I think this is a nice segue to do that. You've been into it for forever. Talk to me about your relationship with high-intensity training. When did it start for you?

Joe Cirulli: It's funny, back in 1979, I started hearing this stuff about Nautilus, and I was hearing more and more about Nautilus. I had trained on free weights my whole life. I had two buddies that I trained with. We would train for three hours a night, five to six days a week. I thought, let me go learn, at least let me be open to learning. I set an appointment to go down to Nautilus, and there were three of us and there were, I remember, there were nine other guys. They start talking about strength training.

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Joe Cirulli: As I'm listening to it, I'm realizing, I'm saying, I never thought about that before. I never thought about the point of taking a muscle to a point of failure. If you don't take it to a point of failure, why does the muscle have to grow anyway? You can already do it. It just was making sense to me. One of my buddies who actually competed, he said, "Hey, listen, if your stuff is so good, why don't you take me through a workout?"

Joe Cirulli: I said to Eric, I said, "Eric, I wouldn't be so cocky if I were you." Anyway, a little while later, he said it again, and they go, "We'll get somebody. Sure, go ahead and change your clothes and come on back." That's when, I don't if you know Jim Flanagan, but that's when Jim Flanagan, who worked there, he came out, and they took Erick through a workout.

Joe Cirulli: I had never seen anything like it. I'd never seen anything like it in my life, and it was high-intensity. After the fourth machine, he was on the ground. He couldn't even stand up. I remember looking and going, I need to get these machines. I need to get these machines.

Joe Cirulli: Anyway, I ended up getting seven machines that represented about nine or 10 exercises, because some of the machines back then were compound. I got them pretty quick, because somebody's order fell through or whatever. I got the machines two weeks later, and I set them up in the high-intensity order. Eric and I started training on them, and it took me a month before I could get to the end and stand up. When I did, I remember, I called Jim Flanagan, said, "Hey Jim, I want to come down there. You mind taking me through a workout?"

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Joe Cirulli: He said, "No, come on down." I went down there, and he took me through a high-intensity workout. But see, I already worked my way through it, so I could take it all. I think he got me to 16 machines, because he kept trying to put me down, and at the end he goes, "That's good enough." I made it no problems. I was still standing up. The irony to it was, 30 minutes later, I was taking a shower and I turned the water on. It hit me in the head. All I remember was hitting the back wall and hitting the ground. I had a delayed effect, from it.

Joe Cirulli: When I first opened, that's all I really was high-intensity training. I didn't have all the things that in our centers, that we have today. People have a hard time believing this, but there was a starting point, I had instructors lined up all the way down the line. People would wait two hours before they got to the starting point. Then I expanded. I added another line, we got it down to about an hour and 15 minutes. Then I expanded again, and we got it down to about 45 minutes. I kept adding lines to it, so that we could keep getting the people through faster and faster.

Joe Cirulli: That was the beginning of it. My clubs in the beginning, that's all high-intensity training, and we still do it. We still have it set up the same way. The only difference is now, inside our clubs, we have lots of things to offer. That's why we could grow to where it's just a little under 28,000 members. That's how we could do it, because we offer group training, group exercise. We have pools, basketball courts, everything. I still have the circuits set up the same way, I had the circuits back then, because there's so many people who don't understand how to train. I think it's important that we teach them.

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Joe Cirulli: Now on the circuits in the club, it's not one-on-one. We have instructors that work with a bunch of different people. X-Force, it's all one-on-one, all one-on-one high-intensity like you imagine. High-intensity strength training, which I still believe in, and I still do.

Lawrence Neal: Awesome. Yeah, I'm going to ask some questions about that in a moment. I'm just very curious, do you ever ... I appreciate the rationale for expanding your services as you have, I think. Do you ever feel in conflict, because I'm sure like anyone who's in high-intensity training, you know that hit so beneficial and is ... There's so many other "exercise protocols" that have no place. Do you ever feel in conflict with offering this array of services when it might not be necessary for improving someone's health? Or, do you disagree with that, or how do you feel about that?

Joe Cirulli: No, not at all. Look it, I still train that same way, believe in it 100%. When you start getting thousands and thousands of people a day, coming into the center, it's not always the same. Most people, when they have access to everything, do not train as hard as they possibly can. The difference is this, that if I want to be able to help a variety of people who prefer doing a variety of things, it gives me the opportunity to do that, while I still can stick with my core beliefs, while I can still train people that I help and work out with me, through that entire program, through all of the high-intensity training.

Joe Cirulli: Once again, you got a lot of people ... We have tons of people who are 60, 70, 80, some 90 years old, the pool works for them. All the

pool exercise has worked for them, and then the goal is to get them to work hard in the pool with the different classes that we have.

Joe Cirulli: I've just come to understand, there's just different types of people. Everybody's not like me. Everybody's not going to get there, and just, when I can't do the next one, I'm going to try to do the next one anyway. It doesn't matter. If I tried to do that to everybody, that's just a member of the center, I would terrify them, if they ever came back. Most people that I train will never come back and say, would you do it again?

Joe Cirulli: That's what the difference is. We can do it for those that want to do it, but still offer array of services for people who aren't into that exactly.

Lawrence Neal: Do you ever find, I'm very curious about whether you use these other services, because their people are more interested in them initially, as almost like a gateway drug for high-intensity training. Do you get a percentage of people who come for swimming or come for CrossFit or come for fill in the blank, and then, you upsell or cross-sell them into that? Does that happen?

Joe Cirulli: Yeah. The answer's yes, and the word is, you just keep educating. You just keep educating. You send them information. You just keep making them aware of the benefits of strength training. Because do I know that's the most important thing? Absolutely. No, absolutely. Do I know that most people when they get older, their biggest problems aren't heart issue and lung issue and other ... Biggest

problem is orthopedic issues. People have a hard time standing up. People have a hard time not falling when they're walking.

Joe Cirulli: I get to use that entire concept with my boutique centers. Because as we talked earlier, that's all that we do in there. Once again, I wouldn't have opened the boutique centers if I didn't 100% believe in that. With the growth of the facilities, we offer all kinds of programming in the center. There's a number of people who come in that over time, you can say, it'd probably be beneficial for you to start doing the strength training.

Joe Cirulli: Lawrence, I'm sure you know this too, that the biggest part of the population is not into that much pain. Where we can take it, and we're looking for those people who are willing to give 30 minutes to become the best that they can become, were great. There's probably not too many personal training studios that have 28,000 members, because that's not what you're looking for. At my X-Force centers where that's what we do, 200. That's all we want in that program is 200 people, working out each week. That's twice a week for ... Most of the workouts take 20 minutes, not 30 minutes.

Joe Cirulli: It depends on which audience I'm working with. Health club, it's more general. Those programs, very, very specific, because we tell them, we tell them that when the introductory session, when we say, listen, come and learn about it before you ... Some people kind of, "I want to sign up and get into your program." Say, you can't yet, you have to go through the presentation, so you understand what it is, and what we're expecting out of you. Because if you're not

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willing to give it everything you got, it ain't going to work like it should work.

Joe Cirulli: Totally believe in that. Totally believe in it.

Lawrence Neal: Awesome. I would be told off if I didn't ask this question on behalf of Luke. He said that Wayne Westcott trained you or trained with you, and he said that you're the strongest pound-for-pound person he's ever seen, and said you train incredibly hard. I'd love to hear about your current workouts at the moment.

Joe Cirulli: The current workouts are basically using the X-Force equipment. If you're not familiar with that, Arthur Jones always talked about negative training, back from the '70s. He tried to develop machinery for doing it, and he could do it with the computer, but he didn't like that at all. He never really moved on with that. He developed, you may or may not be familiar with the lineup, Omni machines, where you could work your upper body by using your lower body to lift the weights, and your upper body to lower the weights.

Joe Cirulli: Obviously, you could do training with people where you have two guys lift the weight for you and you lower the weight. With the X-Force equipment, you both lift it and lower it. If you lift 100 pounds, you lower 140 pounds, and it's a weight stack and it happens instantaneously by the weight stack flipping. That's how we train, my buddies and I, that's how we do it.

Joe Cirulli: We still do it. I said, high-intensity fashion, still go until you can't go anymore. I train twice a week. That's pretty much how we do it. I'll

do cardio, couple times a week. I walk 14 or 15,000 steps a day. I don't ever want to put on fat on my body. I just want to stay as strong as I can possibly stay. That's always been the goal. Strength is very, very important to me. I don't know how a person, especially a guy, cannot go through life being as strong as he can be. I don't know where you get the confidence. What happens? If something happens, do you think?, oh no, I can't deal with it. I can't physically deal with it.

Joe Cirulli: There is just ... To me, strength is confidence. Knowing that I can deal with any situation that I'm facing, that I'm not concerned with how big you are or whatever you are, because I know that I could surprise you, once I get involved. I don't have to. It rarely, rarely happens, but there have been situations where I'd be standing right in front of somebody, and I remember one time, three big guys, I had them all around me, explain how they were leaving the gym, and they all just got up and they all left the gym.

Joe Cirulli: I think the word that I just used is the most important one. That is, strength equals confidence. The stronger you are, more confident you have in yourself, to be able to handle all kinds of situations. I've always believed that, and believe it now.

Lawrence Neal: Absolutely. You talked briefly there about Arthur Jones. I understand you had a pretty close relationship with him at one point. Can you talk about that?

Joe Cirulli: I had a relationship with him, a great relationship with him for a long time. I think probably, the funny thing was, there was a conference

at West Point, and it was right after I bought my Nautilus equipment, and Jim Flanagan had told me about it. I said, I want to go. I wanted to see West Point, I wanted to see what their conference was like. Now, I didn't know Arthur Jones. I had never met Arthur Jones at that point. All I ever heard about him was, Arthur is crazy. That's all I ever heard.

Joe Cirulli: I was standing there and Arthur was standing there, and these two guys were next to me, and they asked Arthur a question. I watched Arthur explain the answer for the next hour, and I'm watching him and I'm going, now I see what people think he's crazy, because he has so much intensity, because he was intense when he was explaining this to these guys. That was my first meeting, ever really, with Arthur.

Joe Cirulli: What happened after that was kind of funny. I got a call from CBS, which is one of the big television networks, and they had a show called Good Morning America, and they called me up and they told me they were doing a story on Arthur, and they were wondering if they could come into my gym. I said, of course. Arthur came in with CBS. Now, this is the first time I really had a chance to talk "one-on-one" with Arthur. Arthur could care less about CBS videotaping him. He never stood still.

Joe Cirulli: He taught me everything about the human body, and strength training, and equipment, and design, and form equals function, or function designs form, everything. For five solid hours. I remember it was on a, I think it was on a Wednesday, because he said to me, he goes, "What are you doing tomorrow night?" I said, "What do you

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need?" He goes, "I have to go up to Montreal. I was just wondering if you want to go." I said, "Sure." He goes, "You got anybody you want to take?" I said, "Yes."

Joe Cirulli: Now, here's the irony. On Sunday, I had taken my girlfriend at that time to EPCOT, and we watched this whole thing in the Canadian Pavilion. It was Oh, Canada. It showed this beautiful flight going over Montreal in a plane at night, and they called Montreal the City of Lights. I remember I said to her, "God, it's so beautiful. We should go there sometime." Now, this is Wednesday.

Joe Cirulli: On Thursday, we're flying over Montreal, the exact thing that we saw [inaudible 00:45:01]. That's where I even got a better opportunity, not only to get to know Arthur, but to get to know a lot of the guys from Nautilus. It was funny, because Nautilus was a very closed, closed business, but they knew they could trust me. I got right into the inner ... When I say the inner circle, I mean Arthur could speak freely to me about anything, and he knew that it wasn't going to go anywhere else. I had the opportunity to work with them all through the design of what were called the Nautilus tensiometers, which is where he had gone for 287 days, for about eight hours a day, teaching doctors all over America about these new strength training tools.

Joe Cirulli: At the end, he realized his tools weren't as perfect as he was saying that they had to be. I know he was so distraught at that point, a distributor from Texas was in town, and asked Arthur if he wanted to sell it. He said yes, and he sold Nautilus. Everybody thought he was out of the business. I knew he only needed time to recover.

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Joe Cirulli: One day I was out flying, and I decided I was going to go land in Arthur's backyard. He has a runway in his backyard. I didn't know if Arthur would shoot me out of the sky or what, but I'm radioing in to see if anybody could hear me. This is no exaggeration. A jet fighter took off from the runway and came up right next to me. I radioed and he goes, "Who are you looking for?" I said, "I'm looking to see if Arthur's down there." He goes, "Who is this?" I said, "It's Joe Cirulli." He goes, "Oh, Joe, it's Chuck." He goes, "Yeah, he's down there."

Joe Cirulli: I went down there and landed, and I went to the door and knocked on the door. Arthur comes at the door, he goes, "Come on in." Remember, I hadn't seen him for six months. We went to his kitchen table. We sat there, and Arthur talked to me for the next nine hours. When he was done, he said, "Joe, I figured out how to make one, but nobody's tested on it yet." I went over to the Quonset hut that he had, where they had the machine and the engineer, and I became the first test subject for all the MedX, the medical machines.

Joe Cirulli: That was the beginning of MedX. Like I said, I'd been with him a long time. I was fortunately ... When Arthur sold MedX, and he was an old man, I went to see him at his house, and I would talk with him. I said to him, I said, "Arthur, I just to thank you for everything that you've taught me, for everything I've learned from you, all the different ways it's helped me and all." I remember he looked at me, he goes, "You're the only one who ever listened." I said, "That's not

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true. A lot of people all over the world have listened to [crosstalk 00:47:43]"

Joe Cirulli: Yeah, I had a great period of time with him.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. That's so interesting. That's nuts though. His own staff could fly fighter planes?

Joe Cirulli: Oh yeah. They could fly anything. You remember, he had three 707s. He took off, he had two pilots-

Lawrence Neal: I didn't know that.

Joe Cirulli: He had two pilots going all over America, picking up doctors, therapists, chiropractors, everybody coming into his ranch, every day-

Lawrence Neal: And wildlife at one point as well, right?

Joe Cirulli: Kind of. He had 800 crocodiles and alligators. He had 100 African elephants. He had a gorilla. He had rhinos. He had everything, snakes, everything. Yeah, he lived in Africa for a long time. He loved that world.

Joe Cirulli: One of his planes was a cargo plane, and he had a couple of his pilots take off, they flew to Africa and they picked up ... I was there when they came back with the first 63 baby elephants. Then they went back again and got 27 more. They were all on his ranch.

Lawrence Neal: Very interesting man indeed. I wanted to just jump back into business for a moment. Currently, there's quite a fast-growing

sector of what you call smart gyms, gyms that are using machines like ARX and other high-tech gadgets, if you will, to biohack the human body. I'm just curious, I don't ... Again, I could be wrong. I don't know if Gainesville has that kind of equipment yet, but what is your thoughts about those types of facilities, and that type of tech? Are you skeptical, do you think it's interesting and that you might introduce it? Do you know the kind of thing I'm talking about?

Joe Cirulli: Be a little more specific. I know a few, not all of them.

Lawrence Neal: Sure. Yeah. Obviously you've got ARX, which is ... Are you familiar with the ARX machine? Yes? Which is I guess, adaptive resistance and motorized resistance, similar to I guess what the gravity weight, gravity machines produce in terms of stimulus.

Joe Cirulli: [crosstalk] but I know what it is.

Lawrence Neal: Right, okay.

Joe Cirulli: When you do the tests, it measures your strength curve, and the designs to work to go, which is kind of against the whole concept of a cam, right? When Arthur first started developing the cams, a lot of people don't know this, but, how do you figure out the most perfect cam? When you're first starting, you know that people who have been lifting weights, their strength curve, it's different, depending upon how you've been lifting. Most strength curves start out real low, then you go up to this peak point, and then you drop back down again.

Joe Cirulli: That may be what you are, but the question is, is that what you should be? Now, how do you figure out how to design a proper cam, to be able to adjust the strength curve? In the beginning, Arthur went into old age homes, and he would isometrically test all these old people. The reason why is, they were just going to show what that lever arm, how strength changed through the full range of motion, based upon no strength training.

Joe Cirulli: That was the beginning of trying to figure out what a curve should look like. Now, when he got to the point of building medical machines, there, all of us guys had been training, and there was another way that Arthur came up with designing a curve. I'll give you an example of the low back machine, because he didn't know what the curve, the cam should be on the medical back machine. There's only one way to find out. You build a machine that has a certain proportion from flexion through extension, because you're going to be weaker in extension, no matter what.

Joe Cirulli: There were a group of us who'd been training for a long time, and we all tested on it, we all had different kind of curves. One was five times stronger, one was seven times stronger in flexion than extension. We had all these different things. The question is, what is the right one?

Joe Cirulli: What Arthur would do, is he had a cam that had a two-to-one ratio. We'd train on that two-to-one ratio. Guess what happened? We all got a two-to-one ratio. Then Arthur said, let's change it to 1.8-to-one, so we did that. Then he said, let's change it to 1.6-to-one, and we got that. Then he goes, let's go to 1.4-to-one, and not

everybody got there, but some did. They developed that relationship. Arthur said, that's the right relationships.

Joe Cirulli: If you look at the importance of a cam, it's to vary your strength at both flexion, extension, because typically, people are going to be the strongest at the mid-point. That doesn't mean you should only be strongest in the mid-point. The question is, how do you adjust both ends to what they should be? That's where he was a master of developing that.

Joe Cirulli: I've never been a big fan of following what your existing curve is, because you can raise the curve, but you still have that same relationship at the flexion point and the extension point. That's my own personal feeling, and obviously people who use that type of equipment to measure it, it works for them. I understand a little bit deeper maybe than most.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, I think you probably do, certainly do. Yeah, no, I respect your opinion. I'm just curious though, you've got, as you was sort of alluding to there, you've got ... I don't want to ... I could talk about specific tech. There's a machine called a Vasper machine, which is like high-intensity interval training, but it does some other, there's some other mechanism in play with that machine. There's cryotherapy, where people are put in these chambers and subjected to cold temperature and all of that. Then there's a bunch of other technologies which I need to learn more about.

Lawrence Neal: There's a growing sector of what they call biohacking, smart gyms, that are investing in these technologies, infrared sauna's another

one. They might have an ARX for example, which is for stimulating the muscular system. The majority of the other technologies are focused on recovery. It seems to be a growing sector in fitness. There seems to be a lot of interest in it. Part of that is because people are getting obsessed with this quantified self movement, being able to see readouts on iPhones and Apple Watches, of their health metrics.

Lawrence Neal: Do you think you'll be looking into that for your own business in the future, or if you're not already?

Joe Cirulli: Let me give you some examples-

Lawrence Neal: Sure.

Joe Cirulli: [crosstalk] use. We just brought in the compression gear, the pants and the shoulders and the hips. Does it work? I don't know, but I tried it. It actually feels pretty good. Like I said, I think there's going to be a number of things that will work. I'm not trying to be ... I'm not skeptical of that at all. I also understand, as you get younger and younger, the technology becomes more important, maybe more important than actually what occurs, because of the technology. It makes it cooler. You've got those type of opportunities.

Joe Cirulli: Part of these things are recovery. There's a whole room that we have in the club that's about 1100 square feet, and we call it chill. We have eight hydromassage tables that are in there, so that people who just want to relax and get away from it all for 10 minutes at a time, they can do 10 minutes or 20 minutes to 30 minutes, but it's

their choice. That, I think those kinds of things are good, simply because you see everybody running around sprinting around, not just in the gym, but in life.

Joe Cirulli: We try to develop something that would give people the opportunity to get away from that. When it comes to recovery, in our pool area, we have a 55 degree cold quench. I'm not saying that's high-tech, but it's very, very cold.

Joe Cirulli: When I look at the whole realm of physical fitness and life, recovery does become an important part of it. I'm sure there's more and more mechanisms that will be developed to help people recover. I'm sure there will be. If you look and see all the different virtual classes that are going on, when you see the use of technology in some of the "higher," when I say higher, intensity, cardiovascular training-type things, that's always going to keep growing. What catches on over time, we'll all find out.

Joe Cirulli: Like I said, I'm not against it. I'm into learning. I'm not rigid, like this is the only thing. We'll just keep investigating and seeing what cool opportunities are out there.

Lawrence Neal: Do you think that's a problem in high-intensity training? Because you've got obviously a lot of people who are like, this is the only way, and they're not necessarily open to these other things. Do you think that's a problem?

Joe Cirulli: Once again, when you talk to me, you're kind of talking to two different people. One is the gym and all the things we offer. The

other is the X-Force center, where it's extremely focused on what we're doing. I have both. I have both extremes. Like I said, my X-Force center are never going to have 28,000 people, because we don't need 28,000 people. We can only manage 200, give them high-quality.

Joe Cirulli: Like I said, I try not to be in the gym, so rigid about everything. I'll show you. Like I said, a lot of people ... I'll show them how to do something right, and they'll go, "Wow, you're right," because what I'll tell them is, "Do you mind if I show you how to make this a lot more miserable than you're making it on yourself?" Then I'll show him and they'll say, "Wow, you're right, that is a lot more miserable."

Joe Cirulli: I will always have my beliefs, but I also try to stay open-minded, that not everybody believes in exactly the same things that I believe in.

Lawrence Neal: Yeah. That's so interesting. It's hard sometimes to hear it. If you're a real high-intensity training enthusiast, you want people to enjoy that torture.

Joe Cirulli: Yeah. I know. I know, I wish everybody did. Everybody doesn't, but I wish everybody did.

Lawrence Neal: Joe, I want to be respectful of your time. We've already run over and I really appreciate you taking the time out your day. I just wanted to ask one final question before I got your contact details and such. Any parting advice? Any parting wisdom you want to give the high-intensity training business owners that are listening to this?

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Joe Cirulli: I think, you're saying the owners, the high-intensity owners?

Lawrence Neal: Yeah.

Joe Cirulli: Yeah. This is the one thing I learned about business. You got to treat it always like a newborn baby, and you've got to give it all your time and attention. I've also learned you can never ... You brought up the word in the beginning, successful. You can never think you're successful, because you can look successful. You can find people who look very successful, who are not successful, they're going in the wrong direction. I can remember when I lived in my car, I said, I know that everybody else, I look like a bum. I said, but I'm not a bum, because the other side of success, is you know where you're going.

Joe Cirulli: When the dreams are much bigger than where you are at that moment in time, to me, that's the definition of successful. Then you keep working on doing all the things that it takes to get there. As people who own businesses know, that means that there's going to be times when you wake up at 2:30 in the morning, because you got an issue that you're wrestling with, and you could get frustrated with the fact that you can't sleep, because you're wrestling with this issue.

Joe Cirulli: One of the things I've learned through the years, happens to me too. I'd wake up with an issue, and I just learned, just lay here, just relax, because it's only going to be a matter of time before you figure out the answer. I've learned over and over, I could have major business issues occurring. I'd be waking up at 2:30 in the morning,

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I'd stay awake the rest of the night, and then all of a sudden, maybe three weeks later, I would wake up at 2:30 in the morning and I knew the answer to what I can do.

Joe Cirulli: It's something that like I said, if you're new in business and you're wrestling with these, you can get all frustrated and angry. I've just learned, just accept it, and your brain will figure it out over time.

Lawrence Neal: I love that. What is the best way for people to find out more about you, Joe?

Joe Cirulli: If you go to our website, it's ghfc.com. My email address is joe.cirulli, C-I-R-U-L-L-I, @ghfc.com. That's the easiest way.

Lawrence Neal: Awesome. Good stuff. Obviously, all of that will be in the show notes, if you didn't catch that. To find the show notes or the blog post for this episode, please go to highintensitybusiness.com/joe, J-O-E. Full episodes, please go to highintensitybusiness.com/podcast.

Lawrence Neal: Until next time, thank you very much for listening.