

February 2022 – Tom Bisson – How to be Successful With Little to No Equipment

Lawrence: Welcome everyone to the second monthly content for [HIT Business Membership](#) in February 2022. I didn't deliver my promise in January so I decided to deliver two pieces of great content with the help of great guests this month to make up for that. We do this every single month. We do content on both business – growing your strength training business, and personal training. We have well-known experts from the high intensity training field like [Dr. Doug McGuff](#), [Luke Carlson](#), [Jeff Tomaszewski](#), [Bill DeSimone](#). We also talk to experts outside of HIT who can bring a lot of wisdom, knowledge, and strategy to what we do in high intensity training.

Today's topic is "What equipment do you need to get started?" with my friend and [HIT Business](#) member, [Tom Bisson](#). Tom was featured on the [podcast](#) way back Episode 282 called [How to Build a \\$20k Per Month One-Man Fitness Business](#) which is an amazing listen and you'll get even more detail on Tom's background and journey with his business. I get a lot of questions about equipment – what equipment do you need to get started, should you get resistance bands, free weights, could you just get away with bodyweight, do you need to get machines. All these kinds of things. We have some content already that addresses these questions but I wanted to do something new; something up-to-date with someone who really has started from scratch, and understand exactly what are the minimum requirements to really get results and build a great business from the beginning.

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We have Tom talk about how he started from nothing and he's very basic equipment in the beginning. I believe, Tom, even now you don't use anything super fancy with the business and you're doing well for yourself. That's really inspiring. I think there is a lot that we can learn from you because you'll be talking, I'm sure, about the psychology that people put so much value and emphasis on machines. They are great. We have [MedX](#). You know I love [MedX](#). I love all these machines but they are not absolutely essential. It's a personal preference as well.

Tom, welcome to the [Membership](#) and thank you for making the time. I'm really grateful.

Tom: You're very welcome and thank you for having me. I'm loving the stuff that you do and I'm glad that I can be here today to share some of these experiences that I've accumulated over these past few years.

Lawrence: Absolutely. Take it away, mate.

Tom: I just want to start off man and just say I did not take the easiest route at all. I would not exactly say that what I did was replicable. In hindsight, I would do things way differently in some ways, but in others, it just taught me greater resilience, but we'll go into that a bit later. The main thing I want to talk about first is just the expectations of the equipment that you need. Most people when they think about the gym equipment they are going to have,

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yes, there is an element of, “If I have this I can help my clients work better and hard, hit muscles in a certain way.” But there is also I need more important attachment to it which is, “If I have this sort of equipment or this kind of setup, it allows me to charge more.” Having that kind of it’s a bit of inner conflict there of like, and this is something that I had, not saying that everyone has this, but this is something that I had to battle with. It was very much like I don’t feel like I’m worth the expensive price tag and so I needed external things such as machines or a facility to say, “Hey, look, I’ve got all of this stuff here”. That way I can charge instead of actually saying I’m the best at what I do and I have the knowledge that can help you get results, and then build up my worth from that.

That’s no one to blame, right. I mean, we see very, very regularly you just got to look at [The Rock Johnson’s](#) Instagram post to see the [Iron Paradise](#) of all these different influencers and fitness people with their fancy equipment. You got the [ARX](#) guys which, I would love an [ARX](#) machine, but realistically it’s just not going to happen right now. That’s probably one of the first things I’ll have to say and really, really drive a point. You do not need fancy equipment at any point in your business to actually be successful at what you do. I think that’s some really, really important point to just take and resonate, and even just think about what is it about this equipment that I want to buy that really makes me feel like it’s worth it. What is the return of investment on this particular piece of equipment? The split from fanboy

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trainer to an actual businessman thinking about that return on investment if that makes sense.

Lawrence: That's awesome. Absolutely.

Tom: Awesome. When I first started, I didn't have a facility. I was training people in the parks so I just found a green field. I didn't have a sales and marketing funnel. I was approaching people in coffee shops, and looked like they might be into fitness, and try to edge the conversation in that direction. I didn't have money for equipment. Starting from no money. I started with less than no money. I was £50 into my overdraft and had to get my first credit card so I could buy the travel fare to the months to and from the place that I could train people. I didn't have this expensive item, I didn't have this array of things to add to my collection. I had to build that up very slowly over time and I had to think about transport. I didn't want to be carrying and lagging around. If you've ever been in London, sometimes you see the trainers with their hiking backpack on and there are kettlebells, dumbbells, and all sorts of things hanging off of them. That's just not what I can do. Yeah, I started very much with bodyweight stuff.

When it comes to getting started, you have no equipment, I'd say the very first principle to build on is how well do you know the exercise principles? That is fundamental regardless of what machine you have. If you don't know the principles, if you don't fully embrace them, and live them, and teach them

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to your clients and help them understand what you're trying to do then it's about what equipment you have. If you don't understand these principles fully, all that equipment will do is just allow you to be a bad coach in comfort style. It's a bit like running shoes for example. There are 200,000 nerve endings in the feet and the bigger the sole of the shoe, the less you feel the ground. It allows people to run badly in comfort. It's exactly the same.

If you are at a stage where you don't have money and you're struggling to figure out what equipment works best for you, then I would say you're actually in a strong place to begin a great foundation really understanding these principles, really testing them out to their fullest. You can get results with people with just body weights or basic things. When you do get equipment, my god, the results are going to go up even more.

Lawrence: Yeah, I totally agree. I love that. It's quite profound hearing you say it even though it's like, yeah, that makes sense. When you talk about exercise principles, I'm curious what your resources you might refer to for people really developing that? Are we talking picking up books like [Body by Science](#) and just really developing principles from that, or watching people like [Drew Baye](#). Obviously, we've got resources in the [Membership](#) about personal training. How would you go about what will be your main resources for really developing a good understanding of those principles?

Tom: I'd say if you are [unclear] to cash there are three books that are up and beyond their value. Number one, [Body by Science](#). I think that is just a staple

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piece of work to get behind. Number two is [John Little's](#) book on [The Time Saver's Workout](#). I really like that. And what I tend to do is I buy a copy of that for my clients. I go for [Body by Science](#) because it's the most scientific side of things. The trainer in me can know about it. [The Time Saver's Guide](#), I buy it for my clients and then we go through it together so they can understand it. We read it together in our coaching calls and we go through it, and help them understand it so then they are learning even more as well. And then I would say the third and final book if you have no equipment, no money for equipment is [Convict Conditioning](#).

Lawrence: I expected that one. Go ahead.

Tom: I know. What you have to understand is when it comes to your clients, most of the time they are going to be beginners. Especially if you're at a point in your training career where you don't have the money or anything for equipment, they are going to be either beginner to intermediate or they would have been good and they have come back to the full circle again.

There are two really important principles to understand. There is strength building and skill-building. What I love about the [Convict Conditioning](#) book is it takes you through the 5 key bodyweight movements like the push-up, pull-up, and it starts everyone back at level 1. That's a really strong selling point. What you can say to your client is, "Hey, look, when you do a normal push-up with your toes off your knees, hands underneath, and you see

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people do them. I want you to know they are doing it often wrong.” That’s level 5. I like to take people back to level 1 and make sure they have the technique they need, make sure they are working the muscles they should be working, and then we build up so you’re even stronger. So when we get to the more advanced stuff, then, you are going to be ready for it. You are not going to be at risk of injury and therefore we can help you build a strong body going forward.

That’s where I really kind of separate it as well because we work in a community where we are against higher volume. It’s all about doing the most effective and efficient things. That’s great if you are doing strength stuff and you need weights. Yes, you can do low reps, those sets, everything. However, when you are trying to teach people skills and that could be the skill of understanding how to load their muscles, that is something that takes repetition and that is something that takes a higher volume. That is how you can slowly start to introduce and build these habits in people and allow them to progress and actually feel like they are achieving even more than if they are doing a full-blown to failure workout. Not to say that you can do a full failure workout with these exercises in general. However, it is always good to hear about those skill points. Does that make sense?

Lawrence: It does. Basically, if you’re taking real beginners, you are spending a lot of time in the beginning. Again, this all assumes we’re working with basically no equipment or very little equipment, bodyweight exercises let’s say, and

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you're helping them hone their skills starting from ground zero with a push-up for instance. Obviously, the members can get a copy of [Convict Conditioning](#) through the details of this. You are not really necessarily looking for failure. Just looking for good form at basic beginner level, working them up, progressing them up to be able to do that for a push-up with flawless form, and what you would say is really good focus in recruiting your target musculature. At which point, you can really I suppose start to increase and high cap the intensity and pursue muscular failure with clients. Do you think that's a better approach in this context?

Tom: In my opinion, absolutely. You have to remember that the reason why machines are the best choice to go forth for most people is because they control the movement. Although there is technique involved, the attention to detail is so much lower. There is very, very little. But when you start going into bodyweight stuff, you have to be ultra-aware because everything is about how you are holding and moving your body. [unclear] We start slow but we finish strong. I do pilates. I have a pilates instructor who teaches me. She was asking me to engage a part of my core. I don't know if you've ever done this. You are landing on your back, lifting your feet off the ground so your knees are at a 90° angle. I have to lift my chest up, do a sit-up but without engaging my hip flexors or using my neck. I was just sitting and I was like, "I understand what you want me to do. I just can't physically comprehend what that looks like or feels like in my body." It was such a humbling experience because most beginners when they start don't know

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these things, even if you ask them to squeeze their chest muscles. I've had clients who are just like, "I think I'm squeezing them. Am I squeezing them?" They don't know if they are even activating these muscles. It is beyond to say, "We are going to start from absolute skill level here and you're going to learn how to work the muscles we actually want to work." And then you point out as well, when you see people doing push-ups oftentimes their hips are sagging into the floor, and then it becomes this weird kind of like a two-step push up where they push up with their shoulders and then the hips join them or vice versa. It becomes this weird Frankenstein kind of movement. It is just a wonderful time for you to say, "Let's take all the fancy stuff out. Let's go back to ancient Greco times." The very first gym owners in the world were [Aristotle](#) and [Plato](#). Let's go back to the roots. You are a Spartan fan yourself. They didn't have all these fancy machines.

Lawrence: At least they have rocks.

Tom: Exactly. Building that mind-muscle connection.

Lawrence: Yeah, sure. I love it. Okay, so let's talk about. I mean, that's great. We're expanding there on exercise principles. That kind of links to what we were talking about before we got started which is you're really into this concept of you're [So Good They Can't Ignore You](#) which is a book by [Cal Newport](#). Well, I haven't read it, but I've heard Cal talk about it a lot. Tom could elaborate if I get this wrong. It is basically about investing in your expertise,

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your service, your product. And that takes care of a lot of your problems. If you focus on that over the money for example, it will probably take care of a lot of your money problems, your marketing problems. Because, frankly, if you're really good at what you do, you're going to get great results and people are going to talk about you. That's kind of linking into what you are saying about getting really good in understanding the exercise principles and coaching them. That's far more important than the equipment which you use.

Moving on from there, let's actually get into the specifics on equipment. You started with nothing in a field, right? So what do you actually have? Do you have any equipment whatsoever?

Tom: I had absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. I started with just full body weight. It was in a field doing very, very basic things. And then from that, after a month, after my first couple of clients, I was able to afford some resistance bands. And then after resistance bands, I was able to invest in a [medicine ball](#). I don't really remember why I got a medicine ball. I think it was a time when it was all the rage. As you know, these things just sort of have their cycle. I felt like, "Oh my god, to be considered a real trainer I need to have a [medicine ball](#)."

Lawrence: It was before you saw the light. I understand that.

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Tom: Yeah, and it's just like at one point it was, "Oh my god, clearly it is kettlebells. Not having kettle bells is holding me back", or whatever the thing is at that time. It was actually looking at what I have available. Lawrence, you'll remember this. I was working out of a football club. It was just a big empty building. There was nothing really there at all and I couldn't have equipment there because the only time I had [TRX](#), I had two [TRX](#), but I can't really leave anything there because one time one got stolen. It's a bit of a keep to the [unclear] I was just like, okay, what can I use around here. Once again, it goes back to this principle. I was using door frames getting people to do rows off of door frames. Or I found a broomstick, and if you have a wide grip and you've got a chair, you get people laying down, get two chairs with a broomstick each side and you can get people to do rows doing that way. Or you can do different levels of push-ups. I was doing groups at that time and I was getting clients to use each other as weights. With one person laying on the floor, they lift their feet up and have their feet on the other person's chest as they are leaning into them. All of these things. It's just about how creative you can become with it. A towel, you could invest in a towel. That is it. Because all you have to do, once again, bring it back to principles. Understanding timed static contractions and really embracing that as a principle, building on that tension, controlling your range of motion, and just building into it.

Lawrence: With a towel, you've got timed static contraction rows, you've got reverse fly, and you've got lateral raises. What else have you got?

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Tom: You've got pull ups, you can do bench press.

Lawrence: How did you bench press? Hang on. Is that where you lay on it, right? You lay on it so you're just grabbing any [unclear]. Yeah, I got it.

Tom: Exactly.

Lawrence: I know [Logan](#), one of the trainers at [Discover Strength](#), knows how to do a lumbar extension. It's a lower back exercise with a towel which I'm not quite sure how to do. But that's another one there as well.

Tom: You can also abductors as well by doing them by wrapping it around your knees just try to open up. Literally, the best gym and the best equipment is going to come from your mind. I mean, I found a small piece of scaffolding pole and that became a keystone piece of equipment for my workouts. I mean, the bar was like this big. It was the closest I've ever come to having a bench press. I cherish this thing. It was ridiculous. I was getting people to do all sorts of things. I was just working on the timed static contractions with it and then just using my own body weight to create a negative force as well, which also teaches you how to be better at spotting someone when it moves up to free weight machines and stuff like that as well.

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Lawrence: I guess it's probably important to say right now we are talking about absolute barebones. This is if you're not in the [Membership](#), if you're at this point, right? Maybe I don't need to say this but I know that a lot of members will be listening to this again. I'm not interested in this. I want machines. That's great. I love machines. Go for it. If you've got the budget, and most do, then go for it. But I love this idea of just reminding everyone that it's not really about the tool, it's about the expertise behind it. But I'd like to, I mean I know you've got other ideas. Tom, if you do that's fine. Bring it to the table. But if we could just progress through. You started there barebones. What's the next level from there?

Tom: Then getting some dumbbells. It was a few dumbbells from there, a few kettlebells. After that I sort of stayed around there for a long time and then it was, okay, cool. I actually had some money to invest in some real equipment and I had space that I could control. And I went for the [Assault Fan Bike](#), a bench. It sounds ridiculous but just having a bench made all the difference.

Lawrence: Oh yeah.

Tom: I've got a frame which basically can be used as a pull-up bar, a dip bar, and it's like a squat rack and bench rack as well. I use those things with the Olympic bar, and then just a lot of bands, resistance bands. They are the key things.

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Lawrence: Is that where you're up to now? Is that the equipment you use currently?

Tom: Absolutely. That's where I'm up to now.

Lawrence: And you have a space that you rent at the moment for that when you do the sessions?

Tom: No. I rented a house that has a garage, and I converted the garage into a gym.

Lawrence: Do you have clients that you train in person here?

Tom: Yes.

Lawrence: Okay. That's all the equipment you have?

Tom: That's all the equipment I have. I was just going to say, one of the big things that I make sure I do is I buy everyone a copy of the book. I think that is the most underutilized piece of equipment that people do. It feels like there are so many trainers who are afraid of sharing this information. They kind of hold them back and they are like, "No, no. This is my secret treasure [unclear]" The more I seem to buy these books and share them with clients, the more they want to stay with me. It's so weird.

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Lawrence: That's so true. That's the same for everything I do. It's like I gave everyone like the [podcast](#) alone will help you grow a successful fitness business without a doubt. There is definitely a lot of stuff inside the [Membership](#), like we are doing right now, that's exclusive. It has the opposite effect like you say. It actually makes people even more invested. It draws more people into and wants to take that even further. Yeah, I completely agree with what you're saying.

I think what's interesting to say at this point is how transparent you want to be. But I think what will be interesting to people is to understand okay, well, you are using that. What kind of price are you charging per session? What is the business model? What kind of revenue are you looking at? Are you able to talk about those things to give people an idea of what's possible at such a basic equipment setup?

Tom: Yeah. I recently had my prices up because my time slots are quickly disappearing so I have two options. I have one option which is one session a week and one online coaching call. I'll make it very clear and say, "When we are in the gym, we are in the gym to work out." There is no talk about nutrition. No talk about life or habits, or your mom's cat. You are in there to work out. The coaching call is where we go on your nutrition, your habits, your lifestyle, what's going on, how are you feeling, all of these things. And then the other one is two sessions a week and one coaching call. I always have the coaching call. I think it's very important. If you are not having a

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coaching call, you are in my opinion missing out big time because it's your one opportunity to really sit with them and teach them what you want them to know. That's what's going to make the biggest impact when they are not in the gym with you. For the first three months, it's £2,000 if you are doing once a week with one coaching call, or £2,500 twice a week with one coaching call.

Lawrence: Twice a week, that's the session, that's the workout, right?

Tom: Yeah, two workouts and one coaching call for £2,500 and once a week one coaching call for £2,000.

Lawrence: I know you don't think about it in this way because you're pricing a result. You are not breaking it down by session, right? But if you were to break it down by session, what would you be charging per session roughly?

Tom: Oh god. £2,000 divided by 24.

Lawrence: £83 per session.

Tom: Yeah.

Lawrence: Okay. So £2,000 for 3 months is the package basically. Is that what you said?

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Tom: Yeah.

Lawrence: Anyway, that's great. That's really high-end. How long is a session?

Tom: Between 20 and 40 minutes.

Lawrence: Excellent.

Tom: They are always asking, "How long is a session?" I'm like I don't know. It all depends. I don't know how long a session is. It depends on your body. If you are completely done in 15-20 minutes, what's the point in you staying beyond that?

Lawrence: Is it one-on-one or is it a group? How does it work? You used to be group-focused didn't you?

Tom: I'm in a small group. I do have a couple of one-on-one clients, so I've got two one-on-one clients. The rest are small groups. I might be taking on a third one among clients, but I have a very big vetting process for that so I don't know. That's often a lot more than the other packages so that it's £2,000 for the groups of three basically.

Lawrence: You are actually generating a lot of income per session because you've got a group in there at that rate, the £2,000 rate.

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Tom: Yeah.

Lawrence: What's the one-on-one rate? Is that a lot higher you say?

Tom: That will be £10,000 for the year.

Lawrence: Okay, alright. Excellent. Fantastic. I love that. Because the other thing as well, for the members watching this, these people are buying. Tom is very busy. And like you said there, he is having to up his prices because he is frankly running out of space. I'm really appreciative of you being transparent because I want to show people what's possible with a little equipment. I'm not saying don't go out and source equipment that you love like [MedX](#) and [Nautilus](#). I love all their stuff. And probably I wouldn't be in this business without it. Actually, that's probably not true. I would be, but I would much rather have the machines because I love the toys. And they do have advantages like they will take the skill out of it like you were saying. It's easier to train someone who doesn't have that kind of motor control where that is such a challenge, right? If you've got somebody who's got poor motor skills and doesn't have good body awareness, you have to have a lot of patience for that. Like you've been saying, just taking them through those real early stages with bodyweight exercise and that kind of thing. That's a whole another skillset I think being able to do that.

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Tom: I mean, look, I want the toys. I will have the toys one day. For me, it's just more an issue of the space that I'm having it in. I remember, I won't mention any names, but it will be an interesting thing if anyone is from this group. But I was a part of the [7-Figure Mastermind](#). [Bedros Keuilian](#), he is the owner of [Fit Body Boot Camp](#), if you've ever heard of him. I was a part of his mastermind and I remember flying out there. We all got together. I'm in the room. I kid you not, at this particular time I was earning the least. The next person above me, in revenue, was so far above me. It was outrageous. I mean, I think they were turning over like 650,000-700,000. That was the next step up. And I was still in the low 6-figures. I'm looking at these people and I'm just thinking, "How?" I mean, it's inspiring. Everyone was peacocking, "Yeah, let me give you advice on how to do this." But when we actually sat down and spoke figures, and they were writing it all on the board. Out of everyone in that room, I was the only one profitable.

Lawrence: I remember you saying. Yeah, amazing.

Tom: The people that were doing 1.2 million in revenue who started their business because they wanted to spend more time with their kids actually are now spending less time with their kids. They are in tears, they are in so much debt because they have leased all of the equipment. I think they worked out that if they don't do 20 [unclear] a month... And that's [unclear] for the year, not [unclear] for the month. [unclear] for the year, they were bankrupt. I'm just like, man, what a weight to have and carry around with you. I take the slower

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route 100%. It means that I don't have the fancy stuff. Maybe that is just what I'm willing to take on as a person. But I would much rather have the cash reserves than actually pay for something full outright and be like, "Okay, cool. Done." This is the next new piece of equipment. It makes you even more logical about, "Okay, why do I really want this piece of equipment?" Does that make sense?

Lawrence: It does. I think some of us obviously have the luxury of going, "I want that piece of equipment. I'm just going to buy it because I want it." That's fine. That's great. It is also, like you say, productive to have filters especially if you are really watching the revenue, watching the cash flow, and understanding what kind of value this machine is going to add to my business. Is it genuinely something that's going to remarkably improve a client's workout? Is it based on client feedback? For example, one of our weaknesses would be that we don't have. And you'd actually probably challenge this because you'd be like, "Lawrence, you don't even need that. You could do that with nothing." But one of our weaknesses would be machines for the lower body. We have a leg press but we'd like a [Gluteator](#), abductor-adductor leg curl. My understanding is that females tend to enjoy more lower body, especially when your studio is upper body-oriented. All our machines are for the most part. For that might be one rationale, right? It is like, okay, in order to attract and retain more affluent female clients which tends to be a pretty hot target market to go for. Busy professional females tend to be, based on survey data I've seen, the market where personal training seems to resonate the most.

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Obviously, there are some nuances to that. And so that could be one rationale, right, “I’m going to acquire these pieces so I can provide more comprehensive leg training for females for example.” That’s one point of view.

Tom: That is a very valid point of view, and to a very specific person, 100%. When I think about it for myself, and that’s all you can ever do. You can only think about, okay, what...

Lawrence: This is a highly subjective conversation. Isn’t it?

Tom: Exactly. Everyone’s clientele is going to be different. For my clients who are female, they don’t want to feel heavy and they want to feel like they are progressing. They want to feel stronger. They don’t want to feel heavy, and they want to feel like they are progressing. As long as you really make it clear what they want. I ask them, “What do you really want? Do you really want a hamstring machine? Or do you want to sit down for 15 minutes with a coffee and go over your nutrition? Or the fun activities you could be doing outside to use your new found strength.” That’s the other thing. Do you know one of the best things I ever did was just take a monthly [Topgolf](#). I stumbled onto the idea that most people love playing golf. I was like, okay, cool. So I booked one month, and every month we play [Topgolf](#) and have a laugh. For them that was amazing because as they are doing it they are thinking, “God, I feel

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so smooth. I feel this. I feel that.” It is the social element. It’s so many other things that come into play.

Lawrence: I like that you are actually getting them to express their newfound strength in that skill which is kind of fun, right? That’s interesting.

Tom: It’s being a dad. That’s all it is. It is being the dad, “Hey son, you are getting stronger. Let’s take those training gloves off and see what you can really do with your bike.” And help them explore these things. Most of these people, especially if you are in your 40s, are so entrenched in their life. They like the idea of doing new things. They just need someone to hold their hand and be like, “Hey, look, I’m going to go and do this. Do you fancy coming along?” I climb a lot. I have the invitations sent to all my clients. Every Wednesday I go for a run, a morning run, just because I enjoy running in the morning sometimes. It has become its own little social club where we finish with a coffee. I’ve got people running with me who hate running, and hate all of that, but they love being able to get out and have a laugh. It’s reminding them that the health and the fitness happens outside of the gym just as much as it does inside. It’s there to enhance your life, not become your life. God, I just have my own wisdom now. I feel so profound.

Lawrence: That’s good. I like it. That was good. That was Tom’s quote of the year.

Tom: Oh god.

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Lawrence: I think this is great because what we are talking about here is one of the other questions I wanted to make sure we address, which is how to be successful with little to no equipment, which is what you've been talking about this whole time. What else is there to that? Magic formula if you will. What else is there to be successful in growing a client base, charging premium prices, with little to no equipment? What else are we missing there that we can spend the last 10 minutes here talking about?

Tom: It is just caring - really, really caring. Whenever I have a client come in, I tell them straight, I'm like, "Look, I want you to understand when you sign up you are not a client. I consider you like family." One of my clients got COVID. She is fine. But I went straight to the store and I bought some bath salts and some 90% dark chocolate, and a delivery voucher, and I dropped it on there. I left it on the doorstep and then obviously stepped away. Those are the things that just speak volume. It's letting them know that they know they are paying a lot. The person I did that for, when she first started, she said, "Look, I'm going to be able to do it in 3 months. I can't afford to keep you." That was 6.5 months ago and she is still with me. I've got people who want to come back but there is just no space for them now. And they are offering to pay me more. Some of them left because they felt like they were paying too much so they went and trained with somebody else. When you are treating someone like family, you are being professional in the workout, you are actually delivering the service, and you are there to deliver. Then you've got

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the coaching calls where you are teaching them and guiding them, and then you do the little nice things. I've got this... I don't know if you can see this. My girlfriend made me this for my birthday. Just the old cards with my name, email, and number.

Lawrence: Nice.

Tom: I sit down once a week. I write, just writing a message to someone. Post it off. It is £30, I don't even know how much stamps are anymore, but something like that.

Lawrence: Do you systematize all of this? Do you block out time like this time or this day I'm going to write handwritten letters. Are you quite organized like that?

Tom: I don't have children so I'm probably a lot freer with my time. I work best when I'm, so Monday and Thursday are my client days. It's when I see all of my clients. The other days are a lot more free. I just say to myself, 2x a week, I have to do it. If that means Sunday night I'm writing them and then posting them off. I'm doing it Sunday night. It's just when I really want to do it.

Lawrence: This really parallels something that [Luke](#) and I talked about. I just love this. It just resonates with me so much. I'm pretty sure of getting it right verbatim. He said, "The most important thing..." And he's like you even saying, you've got to communicate to a client when you're training them if they have to see

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that you care more about their outcome than they do. You care more about them growing more muscle tissue or achieving their goals more than they do. That has to come across in your attitude in your training. I think you get the example of some client training who was training with an individual who was very impressive physically and very good at what they did. But then after a time, they stopped training with that person. Now, I'm definitely paraphrasing and probably getting this wrong but this is the gist of it. Then they started training. I think this was with Luke and [Discover Strength](#). He said, "Why did you stop training with so and so?" They said, you know, "They just stopped caring." They stopped really caring as much. You want to challenge that?

Tom: I do. That's a double-edged sword because I used to be that way. I've got a therapist, right, because it was building up so much. I carried the weight of caring, and when you care about someone's outcome more than they do it [unclear] This is one of the first things I tell them and that is, "You are the hero of this journey." I can't do it for you. I'm just the guide. You are [Luke Skywalker](#). I am [Yoda](#). I will help you as best as I can. I will guide you. I will be there to hold your hand when you need it. But I can't care about your results more than you because otherwise I'm going to ask you to do things that you don't want to do and we'll instantly resist each other. And that's not healthy and then you can carry all this stuff with you. But what I do like is looking at them as a person. Because when people start they already feel shame about themselves. I like to see them as they are and be like, "Listen,

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regardless of how much you weigh, regardless of how much you lift or what you think you can do, I like you for being you.” To quote [Fred Rogers](#)... I love the way he used to sign off in his TV show. When I actually say this to people you can see it in their whole demeanor that they just are so touched and that’s, “I like you for being you. There is no one in the world like you. And I like you, and I like you.” It is something like that. That’s what I say to them, the way I treat them. I’m like, “Okay, cool.” This workout is your workout. I will help you. I can’t push you. I can push you a little bit but someone has to want to be pushed before you can even push them. Does that make sense?

Lawrence: It does. I think just to be clear, just to kind of bring it home, there can’t be a huge disparity in the care level. Because we might be talking past each other here. Because I think if there is a huge disparity there then it’s going to breed resentment. It’s not going to work. But if the client cares, the trainer cares even more. I think that’s what I’m trying to get at. No, I love what you said and I agree. There is one last question I’ve got for you before we wrap up. You’re really into coaching and you are really knowledgeable about how to get the most out of people, how to coach effectively, how to coach habits. What resources or programs have you found the most helpful for developing that for you?

Tom: Oh god, that is huge, broad.

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Lawrence: Maybe again top 3 because I know that there are members who perhaps want to provide that service as well.

Tom: Okay. I say all of this with a touch of love as well. So number one, [Atomic Habits](#). I love [Atomic Habits](#). I think it's great. It's easy to read. It is more enjoyable to read, less dense than some of the others. I also buy a copy of that for my clients as well and we go through it together. It's really, really good. There is another book called [Facing Codependence](#) by [Pia Mellody](#). This is a book when you read it, it's going to trigger some things. I kind of never like to recommend that. If you feel you are in a stable emotional place where you want to read it, absolutely go for it. But it helps you understand codependent relationships and how people will try and form attachments to you, the attachments they currently have, and how it reflects and how they feel as people. That's really important to understand and to build healthy boundaries. Building healthy boundaries is very, very important for that.

And then, a third one, I think I'd lean into I challenge it. Instead of recommending a book I would lean into finding books around boundaries. The better the boundaries, the better you understand boundaries with yourself, with your client, how to teach them to have boundaries. It's going to make such a difference. It's the biggest thing that's lacking in today's society.

Lawrence: How does that manifest itself having boundaries?

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Tom: Having boundaries so you've got healthy boundaries. It's very much that instead of saying it's your fault or blaming somebody else, you are actually able to be like, "Okay, hold on a minute. Is it that person's fault?" Is it that person's fault? It's being more introspective. Instead of being into that shame cycle blaming yourself and attacking yourself, it will actually separate yourself from an event. Actually, what I did in this situation was something that was wrong but that doesn't make me a bad person. Does that make sense?

Lawrence: Yeah, I like that distinction you made there. I was thinking about boundaries as in like you did there when people come for the workout it's like we are not chatting, we are not here to have therapy. We are going to work out.

Tom: Boundaries.

Lawrence: That's still boundaries, right? Okay.

Tom: Boundaries, yeah. It is letting them understand and respect the space. When you come in here, obviously, if you turn up crying, I'm going to ask, "Are you okay?" But other than that you are here to work.

Lawrence: Stop crying. We are working out right now.

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Tom: Yeah, exactly. Just licking their tears and using it as a lubricant to help them with their joints. Yeah, it's like really carving out. It's like, "Hey when you are here, you are here to work." On the coaching call, we are there to talk about this, this, and this, and to reflect on x, y, z. It is just labeling everything and then lets them understand where they stand and what's going on. If they say, oh, you are so mean. That's their reaction to you and has very little to do with you. The same thing for you and them. If you feel yourself getting frustrated with them for not being able to do something, that's you needing to say, "Hey, hold on. You need to chill out a bit here and have a bit more and have boundaries with yourself."

Lawrence: Awesome. Tom, mate, this has been really helpful. Went in directions. I didn't expect it to go in. But important things around mindset and principles and self-worth which underpin a lot of this stuff. I think this is really helpful. I think it's going to be really helpful for members.

Just very quickly. I know you need to. Just want to quickly say to the members that if you want more [Membership](#) podcasts on equipment, there is a really good podcast with [Mike Petrella](#) who owns [STG](#) which is the mecca of fitness machines in Ontario, Canada. We did a podcast in the [Membership](#). We might have done a public one. I'll link all of those resources up in the thread for this. There is also a really good Big 5 comparison matrix PDF which compares [Nautilus](#), [MedX](#), [Pendulum](#), and [Hammer](#) – Big 5, which I did with [Mike Petrella](#) and [Ted Harrison](#) which is amazing. It will really help you compare the differences between those machines if you say

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you are just starting out and you want to get a Big 5 setup like push, pull, vertical, horizontal, and leg press. You can compare the different models. The last thing is there is a resource in the [Membership](#) for sourcing equipment. If you want to find a middle man, people like [Bill Casto](#) to buy equipment who is one of the go-to guys in the U.S. for [Nautilus](#), [MedX](#), etc. Then I'll post details on the thread as well. We'll put whatever websites, tactics, resources, in the thread for this, so check those out to help you buy and source equipment you want.

Tom, I'm going to let you go.

Tom: Alright, man, take care. Thank you.

Lawrence: Thanks so much. I'll talk to you soon.

Tom: Bye-bye.

Lawrence: Cheers. Bye.