



## **Tim Ryan – The Assumed vs Real Objective of Exercise, How to Coach Form, Head and Neck Position, and Breathing – The High Intensity Training Fundamentals Series - Part 6**

Lawrence: Lawrence Neal here. Welcome back to [High Intensity Business](#), the podcast where we discuss high intensity strength training and provide you with the tools, tactics, and strategies to help you grow your strength training business. This is episode 363. The topic of this episode is the high intensity training fundamentals series with [Tim Ryan](#). This is Part 6. Tim is a Master Super Slow instructor and owner of [Strong Life Personal Training](#) in Barrington, Illinois.

If you prefer to read you can download the transcript for this podcast over at [highintensitybusiness.com](#). Just search for episode 363. There is a button on the post to download the transcript.

Sorry, I did this a little bit in the wrong order. You can contact Tim to learn about his services to studio owners and personal trainers including workshops, mentoring, and seminars by going to his website [stronglifetraining.com](#) or emailing Tim to [info@stronglifetraining.com](mailto:info@stronglifetraining.com).

Tim, welcome back to the podcast.

Tim: Thank you, Lawrence.

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Lawrence: Great to be with you and I'm excited to continue the series. We agreed to just wrap up the point we were focused on towards the end of the last part which was the determination of optimal weight load and resistance level. Would you like to just wrap this one up? Let's give a little summary of that before we move on.

Tim: Just briefly to get through this. We spent a lot of time talking about the time underload and determining the right weight load and how repetitions may be factor into that. I think the only thing I want to say is just to bring us to the point that when we're training, we want to make sure that we are using enough load that we're bringing about the simulation that we are after. We've got to create that high level of muscle tension. We've got to bring about that deep state of fatigue. There's got to be some significant hard work involved. That is where this idea of using the proper weight load becomes so important. Because without the proper weight load you are just basically not going to be training at a high enough level and using enough stimulation to get at those factors that we need.

We spent a lot of time on that. I think what happens and what I've seen over and over again particularly even more so with the [Super Slow](#) crowd is trainers become so fixated at wanting the client to have such ultra-perfect form and technique that they will oftentimes put the weight load too light,

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not high enough level load, in order to get the client to conform. And then you run the risk of maybe you get better conformance with the technique and the form and those types of details, but then you end up with not a high enough weight load, and you have the client going on and on for an excessive time under load. In other words, I've seen [Super Slow](#) trainers having their clients in the exercise performing for 3-4 minutes time under load. They are doing that because they put the weight so light so that the client behaves themselves with regard to form and technique. But now they've shot themselves in the foot because now they don't have enough load [unclear] excessive time underload, too many repetitions, etcetera that point of muscle failure in achieving that. They want to upper load on the person and be bringing about a state of momentary muscle failure within the proper time frame.

At any rate, without going in and rehashing all those details, I just mentioned that the difficulty is getting the client to behave themselves or getting them to conform to the proper technique and things like that. This is where the problem comes in because clients tend to commit a lot of discrepancies in form. Those discrepancies can be quite vast. I always say I am surprised at what clients will come up with in order to basically cheat. They will create various form discrepancies and do things incorrectly in order to essentially

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lift weight. It seems an endless supply of what people will invent in order to help themselves [unclear]

There's many, many reasons for this. One, proper exercise, it is hard work, it is uncomfortable, it results in a lot of different physiological symptoms where it is causing discomfort. So whether that is muscle burning, muscle ache, whether it is just the high level of tension and strain going on with the muscles, whether it is the elevated heart rate, the elevated breathing rate. All these different physiological symptoms that are occurring. People don't like that so they seek ways to try to avoid it. You also have a situation where clients will just, just that feeling of that heavy load on their muscles and then performing a repetition, particularly a very slow repetition, where they've got to sustain that contraction and endure that high level of tension or that muscle straining for not only a long duration repetition but for the course of an entire set of the exercise for whether it is a minute, or minute and a half, or what have you.

What I'm getting at here with these discrepancies, and I'll go through some of the more common ones. Basically, all of these discrepancy of removing tension from the muscle relieving themselves of this uncomfortable feelings or perhaps just trying to make the exercise easier in the sense of getting the weight to move and getting the repetition to conclude, I think one of the

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biggest things that occurs is what we would classify as off/on-ing. What this simply means is that a client tries to remove the load, or reduce the load, or the tension from the muscles by a series of starting and stopping sort of pushing against the load and then backing off momentarily to release some of the tension, and then pushing again and backing off and alternating their effort. So rather than maintaining a constant sustained effort and constant sustained muscle contraction, it is a series of placing and removing tension or briefly not pushing as hard as they could and throttling their tension and their effort.

Lawrence: Is that what results in that jerky movement, right?

Tim: Yeah. Basically, you can have a situation where this idea of off/on-ing is going to encompass other interrelated things such as segmentation. Think of off/on-ing as just not maintaining a constant sustained contraction or constant sustained level of effort. It is an ununiformed application of their effort. It could result in being somewhat imperceptible in terms of the external view of somebody watching them perform the exercise. It doesn't necessarily need to involve movement. I mean, you can be off/on-ing when you are at the point of close to failure. You can push and release, and push and release and you may not see the weight doing anything differently, but internally they are contracting and then releasing that tension.

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When I referred to segmentation a minute ago, segmentation is a form of off/on-ing where there is movement occurring but the movement is unsmooth. I often compare this by analogy, if you have a clock or a watch where the second hand... There are different types of second hands where some of them are very smooth and continuous. Just a very slow moving continuous second hand. Versus some snap to each second where it is sort of a segmented movement where it momentarily pauses and then snaps to the next second, and then pauses and snaps to the next second. Segmentation is that pausing and snapping, pausing and snapping, stop and go type of movement.

Lawrence: It is a great metaphor. I mean, describing what you are looking for in a client what you just said earlier.

Tim: Yeah. Keep in mind what we desire is a continuous, smooth, uniformed movement. So it is essentially a constant movement, uniform in motion, not a series of starts and stops and starts and stops. Not a series of pressing and releasing or pressing and releasing, but keeping that uniformity and that smoothness. Those are things that tend to happen a lot with people because I think again it is a matter of them feeling that tension. They are feeling that their muscles are straining. They seek to relieve themselves of that so they

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modulate their effort and back off momentarily in order to give themselves a little bit of a respite. Keep in mind that even though the weight may still be in the air, even though there may be some loads still on their muscles, the series of adjusting their effort and momentarily pausing or whatnot, this does relieve some amount of tension from the muscle and some amount of straining to where they will be partially introducing the load or the stimulus on there.

Another thing that occurs, another typical discrepancy is something we call ratcheting. Again, by way of analogy, think of a tool which is called a ratchet where you've got a socket and a ratchet and you crank the ratchet and it moves and turns the bolt or whatever, and then you backtrack and throw the other direction to reset the ratchet and then you do it again. You're in this back and forth motion where there is forward motion and then momentarily falling back a little bit and then reengaging the motion again. Similar to segmentation but almost pushing, backsliding a little bit, pushing again, backsliding a little bit. Or even combining this where you're pushing, stopping momentarily, and adjusting their body position. They will adjust their shoulders or they will twist and squirm a little. You again have this disjointed movement where it is unsmooth. It is not uniform. It is not continuous. But it is a series of pushing and then falling back and pushing and maybe twisting, or hunching.

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Lawrence: I'm just curious. I know this might digress a little bit but I think it is important to talk about these little things as we go through. When someone does that, I see that a lot on the [MedX Leg Press](#), people pushing out and then when they are in that almost lock out position, they start adjusting their hips and their body. And I see that. I'm curious what cues do you use to stop people from doing that? What do you say or what do you do? Maybe it is a set up thing.

Tim: Well, first, you just give them a slap upside in the head and tell them to knock it off.

Lawrence: Yeah, just rock them. Yeah, that's great.

Tim: No. That's what you would like to do. I mean, it is difficult because... Keep in mind some of these come back to teaching them the process in the first place. You've got to set the stage. You've got to explain what your expectations are. You've got to describe what you are after with particularly not just the overall form and body position types of things, but the idea of this consistent, smooth, uninterrupted, uniform type of motion is what you're after.

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One of the things I'm doing is as I'm coaching them I am reminding them of these things. If they are doing it correctly, giving them that positive reinforcement, complimenting them and letting them know that I'm pleased with their performance. If I see them get a little squirrely or something, the first thing I'll do is explain, "Okay, settle down. You are getting a little quick with that", or "You're not maintaining the smoothness. You are jabbing at it", or "I don't want to see those starts and stops and things like that." Specifically towards your question there on the leg press where they get out there and they start fidgeting or something like that.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's it.

Tim: Again, I'll say, "Don't get into that. Don't sit there and pause at that position. You are not going to pause and straight-legged position or near the straight-legged position." But particularly, if I see them twisting their hips or jostling their position a little bit, just obviously address that immediately with them. Normally, that will be corrected. And I'll get very proactive so if I see them do that on a rep or two and I make the corrections to it and they still don't seem to be complying, I'll be very ready on that next rep right as they are nearing that position is to immediately remind them, "Okay, now you are not going to pause out there. You're not going to wiggle and twist. Make sure that you immediately just smoothly turn that around and make that

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transition. No need to adjust your hips and things like that.” Hopefully, by making those comments and being proactive and being ready to make the correction or remind them of what you are after, most people will comply and take care of that.

If by chance they are not complying and you are still seeing those problems, and they still just keep doing it. Sometimes you wonder, “Am I talking? Did they hear my voice?” Something like that. One of the things that tends to happen I think with people is in the heat of the moment when they are under the duress or the stress of the exercise and when they are in this uncomfortable stage, I don’t know, maybe they aren’t hearing you. Maybe they are just so focused on what they are doing or they are so intent on the feelings that they are experiencing that maybe they are not paying as much attention or hearing you the way you may think.

Sometimes it takes a pause in the exercise to reset. I guess depending on the level of severity of the discrepancy and how perhaps dangerous I think it is. I may stop a person and tell them to set the weight down and say... Literally just unload from the exercise and then have a moment or two of conversation about what’s been going on and how important it is not to do that. And then, perhaps after, re engage the exercise. Another thing that you might do, again depending on the exercise, with that leg press is that okay

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when you get your legs out there and you are out at that extended position near the straight kneed position, maybe just tell them, “Okay, let’s stop and hold it right here. Just take a deep breath. Settle down a little. You are okay. Get yourself set and when you are focused and little more relaxed just take a deep breath and now slowly proceed from there.” Just break the cycle of that and get them to settle down a little bit. You can do that too with something like the leg extension when they extend up and they are at that straight kneed position. If they are getting a little panicky, if they are misbehaving in some way just say, “Okay, let’s just pause right here. Hold the weight right there. Completely stop. Hold it. Take a deep breath. Relax. Let’s start to focus now and re-engage.”

Lawrence: I’d say on the leg extension they are going to be way more uncomfortable at that fully extended position than they will be on the [MedX Leg Press](#) at the end, right?

Tim: Right.

Lawrence: But I hear what you’re saying. I think that’s a great piece of advice. One thing. I just want to underscore one of the things you said which is if you noticed it and then you correct it, let’s say specifically with regards to the wiggling of the hips for instance on the leg press, and then you noticed they don’t do

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it the next time around then providing that positive specific feedback and saying, “Great job of keeping your hips still.” Something along those lines. That’s then going to reinforce their behavior as they get closer to failure. So that’s the key. I just wanted to highlight that because I think that’s an important part of human behavior. Isn’t it? We have to reinforce the things that people are doing well so that when they are really approaching fatigue they continue to do these things well.

Tim: Yeah, I think that positive reinforcement is very good. When you see somebody do exactly what you are expecting of them or asking of them, giving that positive reinforcement I think goes a long way to obviously giving the person that confidence. But also just that positive reinforcement, positive feedback, is going to make them want to do that to continue to please you if you will. So that’s very important.

Sometimes I’ll say, “Oh, now that was an excellent repetition. You did that exactly right”, “Very good turn around there. You keep it smooth. Let’s use that as a pattern now. Put that right into this next rep and do that exact same thing.”

Lawrence: For everyone listening, this transfers really well to your spouse. If you want them to do something more, then say thank you and show that you

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appreciate it. It actually works really, really well. Because I think we take a lot of that stuff for granted when our spouse does something for us that is nice. And for your employees and your team. If your team does something well, recognize it and/or reward it. This stuff is common sense but I think we often forget to do it.

Tim: Yeah. And this is just basic human nature. You've heard the old saying that you attract more bees with honey or whatever. Just this idea that you're going to get better reactions out of people a lot of times with that positive reinforcement then with negativity and criticism.

Obviously, there are times that you need to make corrections and you need to make people aware that they've done something incorrectly or poorly. The value of this positive reinforcement is very important. I think it goes a long way to getting not only better compliance but getting people more happy with the whole process.

Lawrence: Definitely. Okay.

Tim: You've got those kinds of things. We've also got sometimes what you have is something that we call falling through. That would be something, again, going back to this leg press idea. Because in something like the leg press,

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as your legs are extending out and as you're getting closer to that straight-kneed position, you are gaining a tremendous leverage advantage. If you plot out the strength curve of this exercise... I mean, you're weaker in the bottom when your knees are up into your chest, then you are much stronger as you get pushed out there and your knees are straighter.

Now, the machine is designed to give you more load with the resistance curve. Give you more load as you are extending, but even with that, the rate at which you are gaining an advantage and leverage and so forth on that exercise still makes it somewhat easier out there in the more straight-kneed position than it does at the bottom of the movement where you are trying to get out and push your legs out from the beginning.

One of the things that tends to happen is people will be slower with their movement during the first half of the rep. And then, as they start to feel that load sort of feel easier to move that may rush the second half of the movement. You are seeing somebody moving very slow and smooth and then rushing to the end of it. Okay. Sometimes the reverse happens on the negative where they are very slow as they are turning around and spending a lot of time out there near the straight leg position. And then as they start to lower the weight and their knees get closer into their chest they will rush to the bottom. Essentially, they are not maintaining constant, uniform speed.

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Half the rep is slow and then they rush to the end of the repetition. So that's what we call falling through. Sometimes you can get this with the chest press or the first half of uniform movement where they are keeping an even application of their efforts and even application of the movement.

Another one, and this is a big issue that comes up is really overall sort of an improper breathing technique. But a more specific concern is something that we call [Valsalva](#). [Valsalva](#) is the act of holding your breath but forcing air through a closed airway at the same time. Typically, [Valsalva](#) would be the breath holding but the grunting, groaning, straining that you hear going on. They are not opening up their airway and having a free flow and exchange of air. They are bearing down grunting and straining and forcing a little bit of air through a closed airway. What this is doing is it's placing a lot of strain on the vascular system on the heart. Because what is going on is that they are building up a lot of internal pressure with this and that internal pressure is causing a rise in blood pressure. Issues such as that kind of interfere with the circulation through the heart and it is not obviously giving you a good supply of oxygen through the exercise. It is very common because what people want to do is as soon as something becomes hard, they immediately instinctively hold their breath, grunt, strain, and do these kinds of things. It is really difficult to break.

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Lawrence: I'm just curious. Has that ever manifested itself in? Have you heard in your own experience or other colleagues that it has ever manifested in like an acute trauma of any kind, or dangerous situation, or maybe it has manifested itself later on like after the event? Obviously, I am aware that it increases blood pressure but I am just curious. Has it ever actually manifested in like a disastrous scenario that you are aware of?

Tim: In terms of a disaster scenario, I was once told by someone that... I don't know if they had heard of this or if it literally happened to them and one of their clients. But somebody did this and actually had a stroke or something in one of the exercises that they were really groaning, straining, creating all of this pressure. Maybe not a stroke but rupture an aneurysm or something like that. I've heard of that just kind of hearsay.

But I would say what I've definitely seen happen is this breath holding, grunting, straining [Valsalva](#) type of effect triggering an exercise induced headache. I don't know if you've ever experienced that with people. What brings on that headache and they get this pounding a lot of times up the back of their neck and the back of their head and it triggers that. I've definitely seen them do that.

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Even on the less dangerous side it does interfere with your ability to perform at your highest level. Because if you are not getting a good exchange of oxygen, you're not going to be able to continue the exercise at your optimal level.

Lawrence: I prematurely end the exercise as well as produce other undesirable behaviors around form discrepancies I know that come with that. Typically, their form is going to fall apart in terms of using more body English as they do the [Valsalva](#) as well.

Tim: Certainly I think a lot of this stuff is all interrelated. I could say any number of things could happen. It all comes down to basically people trying to... I would say two categories. One would be they are trying to come up with ways of making the exercise easier. Or they are trying to come up with ways of simply completing the repetition. Whether it's this off/on-ing, or segmentation, ratcheting, these kinds of things.

Lawrence: They are just survival instincts. Aren't they?

Tim: Yeah. It is just shifting their position, controlling their body, pushing for a moment and then backing off to get a little relief, and things like that, and just doing things unsmoothly. All in an effort to just complete the repetition

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or lift the weight. Basically in mind too, I've been naming these various discrepancies that we see. But overall too is that we want the person performing the exercise as with the intended muscle groups. We want the person maintaining the proper body position and engaging the muscles that we're targeting and not substituting and shifting to other muscle groups. You also have a lot of discrepancies that are related to whether it is shrugging the shoulders or rolling the shoulders forward and hunching, whether it is shifting, twisting, squirming, doing different things. They are also just trying to shift the load to other muscle groups when the target muscle is getting fatigued. They are going to try to shift to having something else to help them. So you get all kinds of different body contortions, and shifting around, and fidgeting, and doing things of that nature where not only are they not smooth and not maintaining that constant tension before motion but they are also trying to shift the load off the target muscle. Again, they may be successfully making the weight move or successfully completing a repetition. I probably shouldn't say it successfully. But they are completing the repetition but they are not doing it in the way that would be most advantageous for the targeted muscle group.

Ultimately, there's any number of things that somebody could do. It is a matter of the person trying to make it easier, trying to complete a repetition at any cost, or trying to remove the discomfort from what they are feeling

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and give themselves some relief. Ultimately, what all of this comes down to, there is a common theme or there is a common reason why all these things occur. What it comes down to is a confusion on the part of the client between what the actual real objective is of the exercise versus what they assume the objective to be. What I mean by this is that oftentimes the client assumes that the objective of the exercise is to complete a certain amount of repetitions or to essentially lift the weight. They focus more externally on just making the machine go, or making the weight move, or as I say completing the repetition, or basically being able to reach a goal of a certain amount of repetition.

It certainly happens a lot if the trainers define how many repetitions should be performed or somebody has in mind that I should do 10 repetitions on this exercise or something. What they are doing is they are trying to survive and complete those 10 repetitions at whatever cost. The idea is focused on that external goal of completing the repetition rather than the actual, what I would call the real objective, is we are trying to essentially stimulate that muscle. We are trying to bring about a level of muscle fatigue. We are trying to achieve a deep inroad and fatigue of that muscle, creating that high level of muscle tension that is straining within the muscle fibers and ultimately bringing that muscle to the point where its strength is temporarily depleted and they reach that point of momentary muscle failure. If you think about it,

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if you successfully achieve the real objective. In other words, if you successfully maintain that high level of tension on the muscle. You keep it isolated to the target muscle. You maintain smoothness and uniformity of motion. You are using the proper weight load. You are doing all these things, maintaining the isolation on the target muscle and successfully, progressively weakening and depleting that muscle strength and ultimately bringing you to the point of muscle failure. That real objective that I described literally prevents their assumed objective. Now, if you fatigue your muscles and bring yourself to failure, you can't complete the repetition. All those things that I just described makes it harder to complete a repetition.

You can see where this is at odds. If they are thinking that the goal or the objective is to complete the repetition or lift the weight, then all the things I really want them to do are going to be sacrificed. And you have this constant competition between what the real objective is and what their assumed objective. Look at this another way, if they successfully achieve their assumed objective, it prevents the real objective. Either way you view it, the real objective prevents their assumed objective or if they are successful in reaching their assumed objective it is preventing the real objective.

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With this confusion, you can see where if a client thinks that the goal is to lift the weight or complete the repetition then however means they were able to do that and they keep going...

Lawrence: Will you just pause on this for a second because I like where you are going with this and I understand. I'm just wondering and I'm curious how you manage this in your studio. But is there a way of using both to your advantage? For instance, if I take myself - my own workouts, I like to know my assumed objective because I find it motivational and encouraging. I will not break my form to achieve that. Maybe I'm an outlier as many of us in high intensity training we're not like our clients, right?

Tim: Yeah.

Lawrence: But I also think there is a place, you just got to make sure you articulate it appropriately and effectively where you can say to your client, "Look, you can describe the assumed and real objective." You can explain that, "We are trying to weaken you and you are going to succeed by failing." Which is an oxymoron and kind of confusing. And that's difficult to explain. It definitely is. But at the same time you can say, "Look, you got this many last time. Let's try and get this but with the best form you can actually manage." But it is difficult to help the client reconcile those things. I know I sort of interrupted

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you mid-flow. But I'm curious. How do you use both of these and motivate the client if indeed you do it at all? Maybe you didn't even talk about reps or goals in that sense with clients or time under load goals.

Tim: Certainly you can explain to them what the real objective is. What you are after.

Lawrence: I think that's really important.

Tim: Yeah, explaining what is the purpose of the exercise. This doesn't necessarily occur all in one session or whatever. But as you are going through this, as you are taking a new client and you are teaching them, and you are going through this whole process, and having them perform exercises and you are giving them the instruction and teaching them what their to-do, in that process there will be also a discussion of framing what the expectation is, what that real objective is. Explaining to them the things that they should be focused on and what success means in this context. That's part of it.

I think another thing that helps this is focusing more on the time under load as the reference point rather than achieving a certain amount of repetitions. If a person thinks that they are supposed to achieve whatever your repetition

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range is, even going back to this notion of the original [Nautilus](#) protocol of performing 8-12 repetitions per exercise. If you are focused on a certain amount of repetitions, I think that automatically leads to the client having that in their head that they are supposed to get that many repetitions. And then of course if they are in an exercise and they are feeling the fatigue setting in, they start to get more panicked that they are not going to reach the goal whatever that is. If you are at 6 repetitions and you got it in your head you need to get at least 8 but that fatigue is setting in, and you are getting more and more desperate to achieve those repetitions, I think that automatically triggers people to get sloppy just to get the rep.

Oftentimes I find just focusing on the time underload is better. I often say to people too, like if I see him getting sloppy. I even had people say things like, they are getting sloppy and I make the correction and they will say, "Well, if I do it your way I won't get the rep." And I say, "Well, I'm not asking you to get the rep. I'm asking you to just focus on your effort and focus on the real objective. I don't care if you get the rep." Sometimes people will try to... One of the discrepancies is to try to speed up and use momentum to complete the rep. I've told people, I'll say, "You can't cheat the clock." In other words, the time under load is the time under load. You can squirm and cheat and try to use momentum and do all that. You might complete the rep but you're still going to be on this machine the same length of time. If we are trying to

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achieve momentary failure and you keep doing things that fork that, you're not going to complete the exercise sooner. You are not going to get out of the exercise sooner because the time is the time. You're going to be on this machine for 90 seconds thereabout. So whether you get 5 repetitions or 8 repetitions or whether you do sloppy or not sloppy, you are not getting off the machine any sooner.

I think definitely setting the expectations, teaching them in the beginning what the proper form is, what the objective is of the exercise, getting them to focus on those things. Ultimately, you can really trace back every single discrepancy as being a confusion between what they assume the objective is and what the real objective is. I think it comes down to two things: they are trying to complete the rep, they are trying to just lift the weight, and they are also trying to avoid the discomfort which, again, is another thing that can't be avoided. But if you exercise properly, and if you properly engage the muscles and fatigue, and ultimately reach the state of momentary failure point in the exercise, that's going to be uncomfortable. There is no way around it. I mean, the muscles ache, the muscles burn, you feel that tension, that strain on the muscles, your heart rate is elevated, your breathing rate is elevated, your body temperature is increasing. These are all just physiological symptoms that are going to occur. You can't exercise successfully and avoid those things. Sometimes it may be just this whole

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confusion going on and this desire to complete the rep or desire to get the load off their muscles.

Part of it too is you've got to get the client to understand that this is going to be hard work. This is going to be somewhat uncomfortable. But keep in mind it is not harming you. It is a momentary thing. As soon as you complete the exercise and you unload, set the weight down, that those feelings immediately go away. You just have to talk the person through it. Obviously some people are just not going to have the ability to do this as well as others. There's going to be people that can tolerate the discomfort better than others. Some of it comes with time as a person becomes more experienced. Because when you've never done this before and you consider that if you've got a client that's never really done any kind of serious hard work like this and never experienced these symptoms that are going on, it is maybe alarming. It is kind of a strange feeling to them.

I once had a client, it was a woman. She had been with me for a couple of months or something like that. She was in the leg press and going along on the leg press and everything was fine, the form seemed fine, she was performing well. And about halfway through the set, she suddenly set the weight down. I said, "What is wrong? Why are you stopping?" She grabs her chest and her heart and she goes, "Tim, my heart rate is raising. I'm really

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breathing heavily and my heart is rising. I feel like my heart is beating out of my chest.” I said, “Yeah.”

Lawrence: Go figure.

Tim: And she goes, “No, Tim, I’m serious. I really feel like my heart rate is way up there.” I said, “Well, that is completely normal. I don’t think anything unusual is going on. As it should provide those muscles with what they need. There is really nothing unusual going on here.” But in her mind that was such a foreign feeling and as I talked to her I discovered that she had really never done any kind of serious exercise. I mean, the most exercise that she has ever done is go for a walk or something like that or maybe do a bike ride or those kinds of things.

Lawrence: Had it taken a few months for her to experience that because only now she was using a weight challenging enough that she was really starting to feel all that musculature being recruited and fatigued, and the cardiovascular ones?

Tim: Yeah. She had gradually progressed to that level where she was at a much more challenging level and it was finally engaging her at that higher level and bringing about those feelings. As I said, as I talked to her, I just realized

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that she had never really experienced this before. In her mind, this was such a foreign feeling and it alarmed her as if something was wrong. I don't know. She thought she was going to have a heart attack or something like that. But if you think about that, somebody that has experience and somebody that has done heavy exercise over the course of their lifetime, or even just engaged in sports and athletic activities, it doesn't have to necessarily be heavy weight training or something, but just somebody that is used to higher level exertions and the physiological feelings and reactions that go on with that, that person is going to perceive the hard work of exercise differently than someone that has very little experience with it. That's another thing that we have to be aware of with people.

People's perception of what is going on can be very different. Some people even with a relatively low level of work, those physiological symptoms maybe so foreign to them and so alarming to them that they think they are being tortured.

Lawrence: Especially if they are very deconditioned as well, right, where it's going to be more exacerbated. I just want to underscore this. It's a really good point. I think that's why, again, it goes back to probably the idea as part of the series where we talked a little bit about the consultation and just making sure you develop a really good understanding of someone's exercise history and their

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background so that you can meet them where they are and prepare to educate them as to what this experience is going to be like and how it is different. And then to layer on top of that, is to use this teaching focus that you and I have probably have spoken about. I have definitely mentioned it on tons of other podcasts where every session or at least weekly with each client you are delivering a short teaching focus.

One of those teaching focuses could be the assumed and real objective that we talked about today and a myriad of other things. But this is not taken for granted that clients are just going to start to know this stuff just through doing. I think you've got to tackle both. You've got to educate during the set and then also hopefully have some time to just talk to them and deliver a teaching focus or something like that where you are educating them every single week on this method of exercise because it is complicated. There is so much to it and we take it all for granted. I'm not saying you are taking it for granted, Tim. But you've been in this industry so long that you take a lot of these concepts to just so normal to you. Whereas, to a lot of our clients they are so alien. That's why it is so important I think to explain this stuff.

Tim: It is very critical that you are providing an education. I've been listening to your series with [Al Coleman](#). Obviously, he's made some very good points about setting the expectations with the client and explaining to them what

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you are looking for and what the objective is and that kind of stuff, and getting them to focus on that. There is definitely a need to provide that education and provide the framework and convey to the persons if they understand not only that real objective is but what the expectation is for their form, their technique, the way they are holding their body, the way they are positioning themselves in the exercise, where the focus should be. All of those things are very important. But then as we discussed here today too during the set, during the exercise, when you see some of those things successfully taking place, giving that positive reinforcement and explaining to them, giving them that feedback, “That was very good.” You are very pleased with that, “That’s exactly what I was looking for. I really like that last rep. That’s what I want to see on each rep.”

But also I think what is missing a lot too is that we need to have this understanding of where that client may be and understanding their experience level and those kinds of things. But oftentimes I think because we are so experienced with this and because we are, like you mentioned earlier, the outliers, we are into this thing and we like this and we’ve got experience with it. We are more willing to push ourselves and we are more accustomed to these uncomfortable feelings and symptoms that are going on. We oftentimes tend to forget that the person we are training is maybe nowhere near that kind of level. Doesn’t have the same experiences. Doesn’t

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have the same perception of things and can be alarmed or even frightened by some of these feelings. And when they start to feel them they think something is wrong or they think this is crazy. And being able to recognize those things and not only provide good positive feedback but also we are needed to take a moment to explain it and even empathize with them.

I'll oftentimes empathize, you know, somebody gets done with a set of leg presses. Somebody that's really working hard and really crushes it. They get down. They unload. I back them out of the state and they will sit there. You can tell that they need a moment or two to compose themselves before they get up out of the seat. Oftentimes I'll say to them, "That's brutal. Isn't it? This exercise is just brutal. Isn't it?" And I'll just say, "Yeah, I just did my work out earlier today and I did the leg press. I know exactly what you're feeling right now. This is rough so just take a minute and catch your breath a bit and compose yourself. I'll meet you at the next exercise." Even just that empathy that they are not feeling anything unusual. They are not doing anything that I don't myself do and experience myself. And just having that empathy and having them realized that Tim suffers the same way on these exercises I just did. I think that can help a lot.

Lawrence: Definitely. Are we good on the form discrepancies? Do you want to move on to the proper head and neck position?

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Tim: Yeah.

Lawrence: Cool.

Tim: I think obviously this falls into... All of this, the discrepancies, the assumed vs real objective, but even the head and neck position, that's part of proper form, maintaining the proper head and neck position. What we are trying to do with this is we are trying to maintain a safe sort of neutral position of the head and neck. So that, one, we are not placing undue stress on those finer structures, the vertebrae, and things of that nature, but we are also not unnecessarily stressing and straining the neck muscles and things of that nature. Part of this is going to be the importance of maintaining a neutral position so that muscles that aren't supposed to be tense and engaged stay somewhat relaxed. We are also maintaining a position and a posture that we are not placing stress on structures that we don't want to place stress on. But even going back to this idea of the headache that can sometimes develop in people. This is also related to maintaining the proper head and neck position and keeping those muscles relaxed and those structures unstressed.

When we talk about the neutral head and neck position, one way of thinking about this is that your head should not be extended back. It shouldn't be

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hanging down forward. You shouldn't be twisting your head side to side, hanging your head, and doing things like that. Probably the most illustrative way of understanding it is that you should try to maintain what we call a fist distance between your chin and your chest. Keep in mind that in various exercises your torso and your spine may be in different positions. Some exercises you are reclined. Some exercises make you more upright. Something like the pullover exercise there is somewhat of a movement of the torso and flexing forward as you are performing the exercise. In something like the torso rotation or the rotary torso exercise, your entire torso is rotating and moving. If you think about this idea of a fist distance between your chin and your chest, wherever your torso goes the head still maintains that same relationship. If you are extending your body back like in a lumbar extension machine, you still maintain the same relationship of the fist distance from chin to chest. If you are flexing forward like in an abdominal exercise, your head comes forward to the same degree that your torso is flexing forward. In a rotary torso, what a lot of times people will do is they want to rotate their torso but they want to keep their head looking straight ahead. In other words, as their torso turns, their head twists. It twists at a different degree than their torso is rotating. You want to always maintain that neutral alignment down the center of your chest but also no extension of the head, no flexion forward of the head, keeping that neutral fist distance between those two things.

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As a person performs the exercise, as I say, if the body is moving, if it's an exercise where the body is moving and the torso is moving, that head should follow in the same relationship. If it's an exercise where the torso is stationary and stable, their head should remain stationary and stable. What's critical is that a person like a lot of times what people will do on certain exercises, particularly on exercises where the head is against the pad. So the back pad of the exercise and their head is on the back pad. Sometimes people will want to push their head back into the pad and with force push their head back against the pad and start to tense their head and neck muscles, and do things like that and putting all of that pressure, that pushing with their head against the pad. Particularly with this issue of the headache, doing that and creating that pressure and putting that strain and tension on those neck muscles like that, particularly combined with holding your breath, that's one of the things that start to trigger this exercise induced headache.

In some cases, I will place a neck roll behind their head and neck to support the head and neck and give them a comfortable, almost like a pillow to rest their head against. Other times when that is not appropriate, I will tell them to maintain a straight ahead posture. Find a spot across the room to just keep your eyesight on so that it maintains that constant head position and things like that.

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Particularly, where you got to watch it is doing a lumbar extension or a low back torso extension type of exercise. Because as their torso moves back, oftentimes they want to let their head flap back. They will extend their heads. What's nice on the [MedX Medical Lumbar Extension](#) is that it's got a built-in little head pad that keeps your head in that neutral position. Even if you try to push with your head, you can't really change that neutral position because when you push on the head pad, it pushes back on the back pad and it stabilizes against that. That's letting you maintain that proper head and neck position.

Lawrence: Of all the form discrepancies though I found neutral head to be the easiest one to coach. When someone starts to make a mistake with the head position, when you correct it, in my experience everyone seems to be able to do that on all the machines. I guess just to summarize some of this. I know you've got more to say on it. The reason the listeners want to avoid it with their clients not for themselves is mostly due to increased risk of injury in terms of the structure of the neck, the skeleton and the musculature around the neck, but then also this increased likelihood of an exercise induced headache. Those are the main things, right?

Tim: Yeah, right.

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Lawrence: Because you always get people tempted. Do you get this where... I noticed this actually. This is something that does take a little bit more focus to get the client to stop looking at the weight stack on the lumbar. They want to look at it. I explain to them, I will do that and you will intuitively gauge the range of motion the more you use it. And also in the squat position on the [MedX Leg Press](#). You want to keep your head back on the pad on that one, right? I mean, this is obviously different but it is still a head position thing. They want to curl the head away from the pad and look at the weight stack. That's another thing where you constantly coach.

Tim: A lot of times this is just somebody inadvertently kind of doing an instinctual thing that they want to watch something like that. But I agree with you. It is fairly easy to correct where you just make that comment and tell them to correct, and a lot of times they'll do that. Or to say something like you just said where you don't need to turn and look at the weight stack just focus on that. Yeah, it is fairly easy to correct.

Sometimes what I'll do too if they keep moving their head around or something like that, you make the verbal corrections. If they keep doing it, sometimes I'll just touch the back of their head and say, "Just keep this still. Don't need to move that." Just a light touch on the back of their head just to give them that little reminder, just keep your head still kind of a thing.

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Sometimes too you get sometimes a reaction again to the work and the discomfort where they are struggling to complete a repetition or something. And then instinctually their head moves or they throw their head back or something like that and things of that nature. It is fairly easy to correct. You not only teach them to proper position but give them those pointers and reminders and usually it corrects itself pretty quickly.

Lawrence: Yeah, okay. Any more to say on that? Or can we move on to breathing?

Tim: Yeah, I think that's probably all we need to say there.

Lawrence: Okay.

Tim: With the breathing, keep in mind with the breathing you are trying to accomplish a couple of different things. One would be if you're trying to provide proper air exchange, proper oxygen exchange. You are trying to give your body the oxygen that it needs and the free flow of air through the lungs and through the airways so that there are not any encumbrances and that you are sort of in a way fueling the body with that it needs to perform the work. I've often pointed out to people, somebody that's doing a lot of breath holding and not breathing properly, I'll say, "What do you think would happen if you try to go out jogging and simultaneously hold your breath while you're

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jogging?” You obviously would not get very far. You would very quickly just exhaust yourself and have to stop because you don’t have any oxygen. And I tell them, “Well, that same thing applies here is that you’re not going to be able to perform at your best and get a good set and truly get the maximum out of your body if you are holding your breath and you are not breathing and your body is not getting the oxygen that it needs.”

The other thing that tends to happen is, and you can try this, if you just simply sit in a chair calm and relaxed but you sit there and you hold your breath, after a certain amount of time you start to feel very anxious and panicked. As your body is deprived of that oxygen it causes this panic or this anxiety because your body recognizes that this is not good and that you’re not getting what it needs. I think improper breathing technique too can be a contributing factor to a person getting panicked in the exercise and getting stressed and having this anxiety of the whole process that’s going on. When you breathe freely, it will cause you to relax a little more and relieve some of that anxiety. And then of course with the breathing, we are also trying to avoid those problems that I talked about with [Valsalva](#). We don’t want to be causing that elevated blood pressure response. We don’t want to be causing that interference of the circulation through the heart, and that stress and strain on the heart, and things like that.

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What should be happening for the proper breathing technique is there should be this continuous free flow of air. It is not something that you can do particularly at the higher levels of exertion. It is not something that you can do with your mouth closed. You are not going to get enough oxygen if your mouth is closed and your lips are pierced and you are trying to breathe through your nose only which is not enough flow of air to properly give you the amount of oxygen that you need.

The proper breathing technique would be to keep your mouth open, let your jaw hang, and breathe freely through an open mouth and allow yourself to continually breathe as needed. During the first repetition or two you're going to have a slower rate of breathing that you are at the end of the set. It should be something where you are just letting that jaw hang open, breathing freely through an open mouth, and breathing as you need and as demanded by the intensity of the exercise. There should be no breath holding. There is no need to synchronize breathing. You used to hear in the old days that you exhale as you lift the weight and inhale as you lower it. That may be fine if you are doing a 1-second repetition, pressing it up in one and lowering in one. You could put one breath in each direction. But particularly with the slower movement speeds, you are not going to take one long 10-second breath out as you lift and one 10-second inhalation as you come down, or even a 5-second breath or something and 5-second breath on the way down.

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There is going to be the need for multiple breaths per repetition. It is going to be something where you are continually breathing and you are just letting that exchange occur, inhaling, exhaling, and keeping that free flow of oxygen. And then of course it is just going to ramp up and more rapidly when the intensity increases and as you progress through the set. The main thing I tell people is that, number one, don't hold your breath. Number two, don't worry about synchronizing the breathing with the repetition scheme. Just breathe freely. Keep your mouth open. Breathe as much as you need to. Let that oxygen flow freely and breathe as needed. Another thing that comes into play here is that there are going to be those points during a repetition particularly as you are struggling to complete a repetition where that instinct is to hold your breath. You want to counteract that by not only keeping in mind everything we just discussed, but sometimes you almost have to pant your way through those rough spots or those sticking points. Or pant your way through that desire to hold your breath. I'd much rather see somebody do that little panting get through that rather than hold their breath and strain and [Valsalva](#).

I think most people if they are taught and if they are reminded, again, this is something that a client may do repeatedly but I usually see a pretty quick response if I say to somebody, "Stop holding your breath. Open your mouth and breathe." They will do that for several seconds and then...

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Lawrence: Are we talking about panting? Is that the same as forced hyperventilation I think is what [Doug](#) would have called it in [Body by Science](#). Is it two the same thing?

Tim: Yeah.

Lawrence: Just for the listeners, let me see if I get this right. I'm just going to demonstrate this. At the start of the exercise you are probably like [breathe] or maybe [unclear] you would be that kind of rate, right? Maybe slightly faster than normal. And then at the end you're like [panting]. So that would be the panting?

Tim: Yeah.

Lawrence: Okay.

Tim: In the panting like that, like you just did, that may just occur for a couple of seconds as you work through a difficult phase. And then as you complete the rep it returns to a more...

Lawrence: That negative back to normal.

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Tim: Yeah, normal breathing. Oftentimes especially people uninitiated to this high intensity training concept, they are oftentimes confused or startled by the proper breathing technique. Again, think of somebody in a typical gym doing just regular training and fast reps and stuff, there's people grunting, groaning, straining. Or there's just people doing one breath as they lift the weight and one breathe as they bring the weight down. For people to see somebody training in a high intensity fashion with relatively slow repetitions and doing this heavy breathing, and this occasional pants, and as you say forced hyperventilation to work through those sticking points or what have you. That seems rather strange.

Lawrence: That is so far, isn't it, to me, those people.

Tim: In fact, I just recently, one of my YouTube videos. I have a couple of videos of myself working out and doing an exercise. A person made a comment and they go, "That's a great machine. Great set there. But I could do without all the hyperventilation." I don't know. I can't remember if I responded. I think I just ignored the person.

Lawrence: That's usually the best thing to do.

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Tim: Right. The thing is it's not hyperventilation. Hyperventilation is breathing more than you need. But if you are working at this high level of intensity and the demands upon your body and the muscles are through the roof, that oxygen is needed. You are not over breathing. You are breathing in a manner that is consistent with what your body requires at that intensity level and that level of physiological stress. It is not hyperventilating but I think this comment came from a person that clearly had never trained like this before and is probably used to doing faster repetitions and not as much breathing. Or maybe they are holding their breath and they are grunting and straining.

Lawrence: They are using a ton of momentum and they are not loading their muscles. It's nowhere near as challenging. It's the whole unison of things that causes them to not exhibit the same breathing. Just one comment on this which is something I found quite powerful is... There is a lot of talk right now about high intensity training and mindfulness. You got books coming out and people talking about this. Again, it is one of those things where we all, those of us who have been in this for some time, we've used high intensity training as a form of meditation. I certainly do because I don't meditate outside of that currently.

What I was talking to [Skyler Tanner](#) about is this idea of actually reviewing the way I breathe and being more conscious of it during the exercise. I've

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got to a point now where I think what I was doing was breathing too vigorously too soon. What I've learned to do a little bit better is really control it. I mean that's just by focusing on it more. At the start of the exercise I'm barely breathing. I'm breathing at a normal, regular rhythm. And then halfway through maybe it is getting a bit more vigorous. But I'm not getting into that panting until much later on. I think I was prematurely doing that and it was actually reducing my exercise performance. This is something I've really settled into lately is really focusing on the breath, focusing on breathing. Actually making that a focal point during my workouts and getting more of a meditative benefit from training, which is kind of cool, and a better performance.

Tim: I think this is probably a good point to tie all of this together and wrap up on is that what you want to create is a situation where you are very mindful, where you are very focused on what you're doing. Because number one, all the details of what we are trying to accomplish and all the avoidance of all of these discrepancies, it takes a lot of concentration. You need to be paying attention to what you're doing. You need to be as focused as possible and just internalize that focus and effort and concentrate on everything that you're doing.

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But also this idea of somebody getting panicked. If a person is in a panic and they are getting desperate, they are trying to commit all these discrepancies, and they are inducing a lot of this anxiety upon themselves, and they are getting stressed out over this whole process, and they are interpreting it as a negative experience. All of these are fueling the bad behavior and the discrepancies. So the more that you can relax, concentrate, breathe freely, don't react to the exercise. Somebody training correctly, it can oftentimes not appear to be as hard as it really is. If somebody is really focused and in control of themselves and concentrating, and getting into this very mindful state in doing that, they are not going to be reacting to the discomfort.

Lawrence: Alleviates it, yeah.

Tim: Yeah. You are not going to get all these moaning, groaning, grunting. You are not going to get this panicked response going on. You are going to get a very controlled focused effort by somebody who is not reacting to all the discomfort. That is important to not only be able to do everything correctly but also to keep yourself composed in channeling your effort where they should be and not getting panicked, stressed, and anxiety filled by the process.

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Lawrence: Yeah, love it. Aware of time, so if we wrap it up there, Tim. And we can obviously pick up in the next part. Thank you so much again for doing this. This has been an excellent podcast. Tim, just briefly, let the listeners know where they can find you and how they can get in touch with you about your other services.

Tim: Any services starting with just questions about things we've talked about, or if somebody is looking for some continuing education for themselves or for their staff, or any type of seminars, workshops on equipment, even equipment related services... I do a lot of equipment retrofitting and refurbishing services as well. Anything like that that people are interested in, you can visit my facility's website at [stronglifetraining.com](http://stronglifetraining.com). There's ways to contact me either by phone numbers, email, or just a contact form. Email is [info@stronglifetraining.com](mailto:info@stronglifetraining.com). I think the easiest thing is you go to the website and there's multiple ways of contacting me through that.

Lawrence: Thank you, Tim. For everyone listening, to find the blog post for this episode and the blog post for this entire series, and to download the PDF transcript, please go to [highintensitybusiness.com](http://highintensitybusiness.com). Click the 'Podcast' button in the menu and search for episode 363. Until next time. Thank you very much for listening.