

December 2022 – Skyler Tanner – How to Onboard Trainers

Lawrence: Welcome everyone to [HIT Business Membership](#). This is the content for December 2022. We do this every single month. Previously we've had guests like [Dr. Doug McGuff](#), [Luke Carlson](#), [Jeff Tomaszewski](#), [Owen Dockham](#), [John Little](#), [Blair Wilson](#), etc. We get all the best business people and practitioners within high intensity training to share really great insights, content, and solutions in the [Membership](#).

Just to make you aware before we get into today's episode or today's [Membership](#) content we are returning to live Q&As in 2023 which we used to do, but recently we haven't done as many. I stopped doing the live Q&A format because less people were attending live but I've decided to return to it going into next year because I feel there's a lot of added value. And also being able to ask guests in the [Membership](#) questions real time about their business.

Today, I am very fortunate to be joined by [Skyler Tanner](#). Skyler is an exercise physiologist and owner of [Smart Strength](#) in Austin, Texas. Skyler and his team at [Smart Strength](#) focus on helping clients gain strength, boost energy, and improve mobility and balance with evidence-based strength training.

Skyler, it's great to be with you as always.

Skyler: I'm glad we can fit this in before Christmas, man.

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Lawrence: Yeah, me too. I'm really chuffed. Before today's call we were talking about what subjects to focus on, we spoke to some of our colleagues, and I looked at some of the most popular questions. I thought it would be prudent to talk about trainer onboarding and all the aspects that go into that. Something that you've been focused on over the last couple of years and doing successfully. I'm really curious to hear about your process because just before we get started I've spoken about this with the likes of [Discover Strength](#) before. But I am actually curious to hear how you've adopted it because I know that you're a huge fan of their business and you've learned tons from those guys as well as other businesses. I love to hear how you've adapted to some of that and other things you've learned in a smaller business context which might actually be quite valuable to I think a lot of the members.

Let's go from the very beginning. So when it comes to trainer onboarding you've hired the trainer. What's next? So we skip that step.

Skyler: Skip that stuff. That's another discussion that would take a whole time. So we've got the person in, they've signed the paperwork which is also another discussion. You want to make sure you have all your non-competes, non-solicitations, employment memorandums, this is what you do, other duties as assigned. And then, how do you onboard them?

On massive operations like [Discover Strength](#). They have their PT Bachelors and they are ranked up to PT Masters and then PT PhD which is their early

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shadowing period followed by flipping of the shadowing. Throughout that process they also have... One of the things that [Discover Strength](#) does throughout is that they have what they call 'chart buddy' where all of the trainers if they are building a new workout for somebody because they come to the end of their 20 workout period. So if they build a program, an A, B, C, D split, they've got to be on that workout. A client has to be on that workout for 20 workouts, 20 sessions. And then, it's going to change so that the person who writes the workout has a chart buddy that they then say, "Hey, I wrote this workout for this person. Go and check to make sure it has all the criteria that DS expects of a workout." As far as movements or loading patterns or whatever based on...

Lawrence: Some cool ideas.

Skyler: I'll tell you how I adapted to that in a second. The grade of the individual as far as their intensity goes is a 1 to 5 scale. 1 being they are immediately out of cancer rehab or some sort of orthopedic rehabilitation issue. They are not being taken anywhere near failure. They are just consistent loading trying to get a habit of strength training. 2 are those people who rationally understand the need to maintain bone mineral density and can't gin up a lot of intensity. So you're trying to push them but they can't be pushed very hard so you're going to probably focus more on micro loading and progression versus getting all the way to failure. 3 are people who can go to failure volitionally and you throw some minor advanced overload techniques at them. 4 is the

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same, just more so. Harder advanced overload techniques or more, longer at the end of the set. And then 5, the way that Matt and Chris told me when they came here on their clinical rotation. They are trying to make a 5 quit. You are trying to work them so hard that they quit the set, when they almost want to quit the workout. That's what these individuals need to feel they had a good workout. You know the intensity of the person because they have a note for that. You say, "Okay, here's the workout I'm building." Then you send it to your chart buddy. They check everything. They sign off on it. You're good to go.

Backing up to your question. So if the person comes you're probably onboarding them. The first thing that they are doing with us is a variation of that I have built internally using [Google Classroom](#). Here's how we think about a set, here's how we think about the rep, here's how we think about a set, here's how we think about a workout. I'm always telling our trainers, "Where are you taking me? Where are you taking the client?" That should be reflected on how you're coaching the repetition, how you're coaching the set, and how you're coaching the workout, and then the program itself. At no point should a client ask you about where are we going, how many more weeks we have in this program, what's next? What's next is usually you just holding up a mirror to a client and saying, "Well, at the start of this program you are interested in working this a little bit more and you have this sport coming up so we are going to ride this program until that happens – this sporting event. And then, we are going to reassess." That should not be

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something you're thinking about. That's been planned. You know where you're taking them.

I'm teaching our team what that's like. Teaching some of the HIT principles about building full body workouts. And the way we think about our non-negotiable exercises is always changing. In a previous podcast that you did, [the 3-part series with James and Luke](#), Luke talks about how for every 14 days there should be plantar flexion, dorsi flexion, some sort of adduction work, some sort of abduction work, some sort of leg press, leg drive movement, upper body push, upper body pull, or they say vertical anterior torso, vertical posterior torso, horizontal anterior torso, some sort of comprehensive abdominal and trapezius. Now, that's Luke's. That's what Luke thinks is really, really important but you don't have to have it.

I've seen other people and I'm really enjoying [Nick Tumminello's](#) stuff which I think everybody should go and look up. He is not a HIT guy but he is very great. He is an incredible personal trainer and he is very invested in personal training. And he has a line, the first line being, I said this the other day where it was, "PTs want to be strength coaches and strength coaches want to be PTs." For whatever reason the grass is greener on the other side, and you can see this on Instagram where you have a physical therapist who just acts like they are strength coaches. It's as if everything they learned is just terrible stuff and then you have all the strength coaches who have an alphabet soup after their name, and they want to fix people. [Tumminello's](#) point is that in

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many, many instances just getting people exercising like directionally good stuff leads to the same outcome. As I'd say all roads lead to Rome with hypertrophy because of your genes. But if you have non-specific lower back pain no system is better than any other system as long as it's comprehensive and progressive and it doesn't overload the capacity of the client. [Tuminello](#), the way he thinks about it, is a knee dominant movement, a hip dominant movement, isolation movements, or some sort of pushing, pulling, more of a push, pull hinge thing that often strength coaches use.

What matters is that you have a sense of this is our recipe. Here's the way you modify the recipe, but the client should recognize it in any of our workouts. If they ask, "Why are we doing this and this?" There is a secret sauce of [Smart Strength](#) in our case or your business how you do things. What is your way? I can tell you mine if that helps. It's basically a mixture of what DS would do and then what [Smart Strength](#) would do. I would argue that that changes over time because I promise you, at one point, for [Discover Strength](#) comprehensive neck was involved. There is a video of a young [Luke](#) with less beard on Minnesota Morning Television. I say Minnesota Morning because as if it's just a tiny place. For those of you in the United Kingdom it's a very large state. That's Minneapolis-Saint Paul Morning 'Twin Cities'. He is talking about training the neck and doing neck work exclusively and how everybody is neck certified. They don't do that anymore. It's not a requirement anymore. Just because it changes over time it should change over time. It's maybe because your service offering changes or maybe

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because inadvertently who you are training you may be starting off saying here is our avatar and that is your avatar. But for whatever reason your service offering ends up having more people who are less invested in what you think that avatar would be invested in. And they are generating more of your revenue, so you maybe tweak that formula a little bit. I mean, that can change over time.

I have this onboarding - it's videos, it's quizzes, it's readings to get people to a certain point. That's my PT Bachelors. And then, while that's happening there's individuals training with me once a week and they are shadowing. So, it's a 4-part in that first month which you can calm this down to two weeks if you really wanted to. And if you are a bigger operation, two weeks would be easier to do because you have more hands on deck to facilitate this.

The 1st week you are shadowing me, and you are asking questions. The 2nd week you are setting up the equipment and I'm still coaching. You are just going to have to because there is an opportunity to bake in interacting with the equipment in real time. The 3rd week it's a flip. It's that I'm setting up the equipment and you are coaching the workouts. Because most people have never seen a [MedX](#), or an [ARX](#), or whatever. I feel like for us. As you know, Lawrence, it's like there is a muscle memory. But initially you have to think through almost mathematically all the settings. And then the 4th week is when they are training and I'm sitting over here listening and ignoring

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visually. Am I hearing good coaching? Am I hearing here's what to do on this exercise?

Lawrence: So, they have clients on that point?

Skyler: They are training my clients.

Lawrence: Got it.

Skyler: They are training my clients. And then, all that while though throughout that first month I've been doing some background marketing just ginning up with extra availability. This person is coming on board. They are available on this date. So, I am doing consultations with them in toe saying, "This person is going to be your trainer. They have this fantastic experience. They are going to be ready to go on this day." Because we hire people with a degree in Exercise Science. They have the background requisite knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and all of that. We always tell new clients... It's like, "Hey, this individual is [unclear] and they are going to be ready on the next date."

Lawrence: Do you reduce the price for them training with new trainers? Do you do that temporarily or not?

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Skyler: No. Not during the on-ramp period because it is for long term clients. Nobody is pushing for that because it is still supervised.

Lawrence: Yeah, got it. That's great. [Google Classroom](#), I haven't actually used that before. What does that look like?

Skyler: [Google Classroom](#), if you have a [G-Suite](#). I guess they call it a [Google Enterprise](#) account now. You have all the tools within Google where you can build slide decks, you can upload videos, and you can drip content as if it was a classroom. Before you get to this lesson, you have to go through this lesson and do this quiz, this lesson this quiz, this lesson this quiz.

Lawrence: Alright. It's much more bite size and easier to work through. Great. That's perfect.

Skyler: And then what ends up happening is, you can do then as you should be after that initial 90-day follow up or whatever that you should include questions about that part of the on ramp where you're saying, "Hey, now that you've been on the floor, what would have been better about that on ramp?" This is all iterating. It's ready, fire, aim stuff.

Lawrence: It's a working document that's almost evolving. Just a couple of comments. We won't touch on workout design because there is a question about that. But just for members to be aware, I've created our workout design workflow

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and that was inspired by the [series](#) I did with [Luke Carlson](#) and [James Fisher](#). I'll link to that series, which is phenomenal, thanks to those guys, and also my template to help people get started with the workout design component. The quizzes as well. There is a quiz in the [Membership](#) which Billy shared which is a [Body by Science](#) quiz he put together which has been really well received. That's again something that people can use when they are building their [Google Classroom](#) syllabus.

On that note, I think [G-Suite](#) is such a no-brainer for a lot of our colleagues and new startups because it is less than \$10 a month. You get the proper email domains for your website, you get [Google Docs](#), [Google Sheets](#), tools that we all know and love and I use every single day as well as [Google Classroom](#) obviously.

Okay, just to summarize that piece then. When someone is hired basically the first 2-4 weeks is working through [Google Classroom](#) learning about the workout components, how to coach and how to guide a client through their plan.

Skyler: In our case, [Strength Portal](#), like, "how are you tracking the workout"? [Strength Portal](#) is very intuitive and it looks a lot like a [Google Doc](#). It is still something new. Even if [Matt](#) and the team have tried to calm down the features so that it's just the most essential and high use features it is still a new tool. There's a number of instructional videos but I have my own

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because I just know the highest uses that we have which is basically how do you enroll a client in a new template, how do you archive their workouts so that they are not simultaneously moving 27 workouts, how do you copy a week's down, how do you substitute exercise, and all these things you need to learn how to do. Those are included in that. Some of those are included in the sauce. I've built that in the sauce. Not only is it on the on ramp but large center operating procedures document some of those are also included. That sort of thing is part of it as well. We are going to do a lot of software stuff. That's the tool for us that could go back to pen and paper. I've been doing this for 25 years. But [Strength Portal](#) makes on the fly adjustments and things like that so simple. And workout tracking being able to have visuals for clients as they are progressing. It's a tool that we will use. I can't see a reason we would ever abandon it. But you need to learn it. That's all baked into that first chunk of time as well.

Lawrence: Do you mind if I say what you said to me on text about [Strength Portal](#)?

Skyler: Yeah, go on.

Lawrence: It's the best testimonial I've ever heard which I immediately told [Matt](#) about which was, "I could not run my business without [Strength Portal](#)." Which is obviously not entirely because you could revert to pen and paper, but it would be a massive challenge.

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Skyler: Think about all the conversations that you have with Nigel about program design. Nigel's good, right? The thing about your ability to reduce the number of those conversations just because it's the way that the document has been standardized.

Lawrence: Yeah, exactly. It forces you to use a certain...

Skyler: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, but also immediately you can go down. You go, "I know this exercise..." That's one of the things we've done on the on ramp is sort of having a toddler, here are all the [Smart Strength](#) approved exercises that we think are just really good. And for our clientele they tend to be the ones we use the most. That also controls and delineates the possible... If it says cable curl on [Strength Portal](#), we know what type of cable curl it is because we only do three and the other ones have different names. One of the things we often talk about is no surprises. Client needs to know where they are going as they said, "Where are you taking me?" Somebody has an expectation for how things are going to go. You've already surprised them if somebody is covering for you so the workout should not be surprising.

Lawrence: Yeah, I love that.

Skyler: Unless it is in a way they want it to be surprising. I often said I ask a question if we finish early and sometimes they are fire breathers, "What do you want?"

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Something feels like you didn't get enough work. What can we do?" That's a good surprise.

Lawrence: Or like a wildcard workout that some of our colleagues do. They completely change things up. Occasionally I think it's a cool idea. So then obviously you talked about quizzes which I guess is primarily for retention of information. Is that the main goal there?

Skyler: The quiz is more of a pointing function. If somebody goes through your quiz and I'm asking a specific question, they either get it right or not. Hey, it's not to penalize. It's like we should have more conversation around this. But if they see that they didn't get it right then hopefully... And I say this to them, "If you didn't get that right you should go back and find what that is because we think that's important." It's going to be important and you will see why on the floor. Because if you like an adult learning theories, quizzes aren't the way to do it. I get why we have them in an article sense. But my better half with a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction will tell you that for adult learners it is much more about practical hands on and discussion. And so quizzes are almost there to look for holes in the learning flow versus some sort of penalization or rope. Hey, you are just teaching for the test. The test is there to help inform and enrich the conversations and the practical demonstrations.

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Lawrence: Right. Interesting. I forgot to mention how [Strength Portal](#), it's quite funny, with Nigel we are very lucky. Because Nigel could really hit the ground running because he has so much experience. Frankly, we didn't have the resources to really focus on this. I do things I need to focus on or that are more important. Even now it is still not something we focus on in terms of standardizing the recordings as well. For instance, you will find this funny, we use [Google Sheets](#) at the moment. We intend to move to [Strength Portal](#) as soon as it makes sense. We just got other priorities at this time. What we do currently is say we are doing a virtual in a [Google Sheet](#) we'll share with a client. One week I'd be training him and in the next week he would. I look at how he records stuff and how I record stuff. I see how [Strength Portal](#) makes this simpler. Anyway, I'm saying that Nigel is not... I'm saying that he is not as detailed as I am. Whereas, I am really detail oriented. Little things like wall sit, 90, meaning 90 seconds. He'll write 90 secs. And I'm like, "That's redundant. Just write the 90." Little things like that. But obviously, again, not that we don't have membership fees right now in [Strength Portal](#). But how do you import that data to do reports? It's practically impossible, very complicated. With me and Nigel it works fine, just two people. Once it's three and four it just gets super confusing. That's why we need to get it resolved probably next year.

Skyler: Everybody on the team is forced to learn [Strength Portal](#). It means you are playing by [Strength Portal](#)'s rules. It's kind of a forcing function for all of your idiosyncratic behavior to be filtered into the [Strength Portal](#)'s or out by

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moving into a Strength Portal type tool. Other things that end up like early on I did a lot of the exercises. The way it shows up is being time under load versus repetition. Now, those options are always available but it's about how it presents. On [Strength Portal](#), when you have all of your exercises listed it has a dropdown menu. You can open the exercise, expand the note feature, and have different ways of tracking it so repetition, weight, time. The problem is when you build a new exercise you can designate two of those variables as being immediately visible like time and weight, or weight and reps, or even time and weight. If somebody is doing a static, or it can be just time and distance. Because originally it was also strength conditioning so people pushed a prowler for this long. They are not doing it for repetitions. They are doing it for distance. But once you designate it, you can't change it on the fly if it's already been included in another workout because it will mess with the data that's already been tracked. This is important for you.

Now, those features are always there but what happens is if you just try to shorthand you'll see weight and you'll see time and then a number. That number is actually the number of sets you're doing but you can accidentally go, "Oh, that's 12 reps." And then when you open it all of a sudden you have 12 sets listed because that was the set variable not the rep variables. These are the idiosyncratic things that I'm trying to remind everybody about. I think for me the simplest thing is you use weight reps even if you're time under load person and then you just open the thing. You'll see once you...

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Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. Keep it simple. Super difficult software project and they are for our niche. Hence, no one has really done a good job until now it seems. That's fair play to [Matt](#) and his team who's done an incredible job. I'm really excited to use it.

Cool. We talked about, again, the first 2-4 weeks talking about some of those components to carry on that summary training with yourself, shadowing yourself. I like what you said there about how at one point they would be focusing on doing the workout and not the setup and then the next time they will be focusing on the setup of the machines and sort of isolating those aspects.

Skyler: In the beginning it's shadowing, at the end I'm shadowing basically, and in the middle it's somewhat how these machines are set up. Like one or two, "Hey, coach this exercise because you seem comfortable with this. And then I'll sit back and I'll take over the rest of the workout." So they are almost blending.

Lawrence: This is very relevant to me right now because I'm literally going to start honing our process very soon for Q1 next year. This is selfishly very useful for me right now as well. Great, so that's the first four weeks. Is there anything else that's happening during then as well that we should be aware of?

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Skyler: Sure. And the workouts themselves you need to be training this person. You actually need to be bolstering them. I'm typically taking these people through to start smart. The pure [Super Slow](#) phase that we use is our assessment program. During that time it's here's what you're communicating in the first workout, and here's the sheet to remind you of that. Here's why we ask RPE early on. We used to learn what people look like when they are working hard. But they need to feel that. They need to feel what that is like and we're trying to get the client to feel. And then after they go through that period for them, we're going to do 4-6 weeks if you're [Super Slow](#) with this trainer. And then I'm continuing to try to train them once a week for at least another 6 weeks. That's just more pure HIT like controlled repetitions kind of almost being ahead because at the end of the day our workflow is pretty simple. Start people off with a pure [Super Slow](#) program so we can learn about them and assess how hard workers are. After that we have the client check in that we talk about, and you've shared on the [Membership](#) before, then we change the program and we expand it basically. We move from 8 exercises to an A/B split typically with some tweaks and adjustments based on client feedback and more moderate speed of movement. I love [Super Slow](#). I still will revert back to [Super Slow](#).

I know Brian Johnston years ago did some studies on changes in load at different cadences and the difference in using a linear load cell. The difference in forces between a 2-4 and a 10-10 amounted to a kilo in each direction with a 15kg. load. Very minor versus ballistic, which is important,

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was this little as 3kl. and had as much joint force as 30+ kilos. You have this 10x almost change in joint forces. That's dangerous. That's not what we're here for with our clients. But people get in a hissing match on the internet about a kilo on 15kl. or it's probably even less on heavier loads. We're not interested in that. If you are moving slow enough to control the turnaround, gravity is clearly not taking the weight and you're not throwing the weight, you are moving slow enough. You are moving slow enough.

Lawrence: Skyler, forgive me. Just because I'm aware of time and I really do want to get to some of the questions.

Skyler: Go on.

Lawrence: Just alright. No, you're fine. That was actually really interesting. It is something that I did not know. Many of the things you say obviously I don't know. Let's dig into a little bit when you're teaching the workout to your coaches. I think this is actually probably the most important part and maybe we'll spend the rest of the time here. What are the core principles you teach your trainers about how to design programs for optimal retention? This question argues that results plus client enjoyment, so experience is what is going to increase retention. What are those core principles that you're teaching? What are the main things that you want to get across?

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Skyler: Years ago I made an evidence-based workout Venn diagram of what the evidence says works, what the trainer experiences, and what does the client enjoy.

Lawrence: I remember that.

Skyler: That is straight out of evidenced-based medicine, what does the evidence says works, what is the clinician experience.

Lawrence: We can embed it on the [Membership](#) post and that's okay?

Skyler: Yeah.

Lawrence: Cool.

Skyler: And then what is the patient wants to do, right? You as the person with the experience may have a set of exercises you really like, the evidence supports their use as not being dangerous. But if your favorite exercise is not enjoyed by your client, well, use a different one but as long as we can safely and progressively load it over time. There's some evidence that suggests that if individuals self-select exercises they enjoy for a given body part or movement pattern, they tend to get better results. If they like it they will work harder on it.

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Lawrence: But Skyler, clients shouldn't enjoy their workouts. It should be absolutely brutal hell and torture for them.

Skyler: I mean, there's enjoyable hard work, right? Some clients for whatever reason just hate the leg press which is over here. It doesn't feel right or something along those lines. I have one client who doesn't like the leg press but she loves wall sits.

Lawrence: That's so weird.

Skyler: It's so weird. She also likes leg extensions. It's like while you're getting your compound thing over here there is a wall right here. And then she got leg extension on there so it's being covered. Great. I mean, [James Steele](#), he loves wall sits too. But it's as comprehensive as compound leg movement and she is getting her hips on a [Gluteator](#). There is a lot of stuff going on. Great. She progresses. She started off a minute and 20 and now she knew a 3 minute wall sit. There is suffering that enables success or what the client recognizes as an enjoyable effort. That's part of it as well.

Again, it's part of your system and your recipe. You should be preselecting these exercises anyway so you already know on a filtered basis it's not a dumb exercise. This client likes a barbell wall curl but this other client likes a cable curl. Great, fine, doesn't matter. Progress it safely, controlled.

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Lawrence: What else?

Skyler: I definitely like to include for almost everybody tibia and hip flexion work as it turns out which I know are often employed by runners. Tibia ends up being for our client as they are getting older. The foot drops, once that happens then it's a chicken or the egg, they get so weak that they start dragging their feet and thus shorten their gate which makes them less stable. Or their hips get tired which may shorten their gate which makes their tibia not have to work as hard because your foot gets lifted as a reflex through the swing phase when you're walking. If you're not taking as big a step you don't have to sustain lifted feet for as long so that they'll decondition just the repetition so we want to make sure. And actually I shared it with you at some point, I'll ping you on it again, where this physician is in Australia because Australians are really good about integrating exercise physiologists there. They go on about what are the muscles that somebody as they're older will use to get up, and then to stay up, and then to move. It is hip flexors to move and tibia. And that's also balance. A little bit of balance control.

We want everybody to... We encourage our trainers to include hip flexor at some point especially if a client is in the age of 60. And same thing with tibia. When they are younger and they are not running athletes I'm not sure that's as important as long as they are working out and they are doing other...

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Lawrence: If you're incorporating let's say a leg press, you are going to stimulate those to an extent with that exercise, right? What do you think about that?

Skyler: To an extent because you're working as long as, I mean, less so on the calf and ankle, right? I think the arguments can be made that you would be strengthening the tibia but if you're doing plantar flexion that you're maintaining the range of motion that have been necessary for that reflex to get flipped up. But at a certain point where you're managing deconditioning with strength training. The rate of deconditioning over time and we're all going to at some point we're not going to be as strong. We're going to be losing strength. It is osteoporosis, you reach peak bone mineral density about 35. Man, if you're a 60-yr old woman who does strength training you can walk back up that curve of loss but you will never have more bone than you had at 35.

Lawrence: Yup.

Skyler: So it's kind of the same way somebody starts at 70. They are going to gain strength and muscle mass but they will never have more at that age than they had at some point early. There's not enough anabolic hormones there. So when you're younger and you have that kind of on your side maybe it's less important. But I think there's a certain cut off where if somebody is over x age this needs to be included in their program. It is just good insurance and preparatory work.

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Lawrence: Awesome. What else? What are the core principles you think are really important for teaching your trainer's workout design? Maybe some of the more obvious things because that was quite a niched thing.

Skyler: [Luke](#) had said it's very nuanced. [unclear] compound movements whenever possible. I mean, like I said earlier, you're not going to be able to do a rotary torso that is unilateral by definition. Hip flexors are unilateral by definition. I find that some clients... This is one of those [unclear] where I recognize what [Ken](#) and many other HIT people would argue about unilateral loading being problematic because of the way the pelvis gets shifted. But I think that early on when a client is still as weak relative to how strong they will eventually be. Doing some unilateral work to learn what it's like to use a non-dominant limb is as fully possible especially on the leg press where if you have a woman who has never trained or in her 40s, she never lifted weights before, she has no injury history in her back or hips. Using a unilateral leg press to teach her to use her non-dominant limb as fully as possible because you can't hide..., because we are all biased towards our strong side which is typically whatever hand we are right with, is a useful tool in motor learning. We dictate, there is a specificator, if I'm asking you to push as hard as you can with your left leg putting it, start, release, you can only push as hard as you can with your left leg is going to help you to learn how to do that faster and then it back transfers to two legs. As long as it's somebody who is on the younger side and doesn't have an injury history, I don't see a problem with it.

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Lawrence: Okay. Tell me more.

Skyler: Okay, so situations like that prioritizing compound movements working as much muscle as possible and then based on what the client might want filling in with more isolation or rotary form movement. So if the client really wants to feel typically do and feel their arms training. Although I have a lot of women who really like them... As winter comes around they want triceps and shoulders because of the [unclear] or cooler weather so prioritizing and doing maybe some higher repetition work still towards fatigue or failure so they can fill a little bit more pump and burn because you already got the really high quality stuff with your earlier compound movements. Having those near the end of the workout where they are going to remember it. One of the program design pieces that I encourage trainers to do is in spite of us trying to have exercises that clients want to do there are going to be some that we think it's so important that they should do it. Lumbar, I mean, they have no injury reason not to do it but they might not like it. So we want to try to put that exercise in the middle kind of a sandwich you talked about like in the middle of the workout or close to the middle of the workout.

Lawrence: That's so clever. Can you just talk about that for a moment because that was a really clever insight?

Skyler: Okay. Here's the deal. This comes out of [Thinking, Fast and Slow](#), [Daniel Kahneman's](#) book where they talk about two studies where one group had a

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colonoscopy and both groups had colonoscopies without sedation. In one group they camera up the ass, root around, root around, root around, make sure there are no polyps, cancer, whatever, and pull the camera out. Second group root around, root around, root around, you leave the camera for five minutes, just hang out, listen to some music, then pull the camera out. Which groups self-reports sometime later that they would come back a year later and they are likely to have a colonoscopy again? It's the second group even though they were in the colonoscopy longer and the camera was in them longer. The peak discomfort was rooting around. So rooting around, rooting around, rooting around, removal of the camera, that's right up against the end of the experience in your brain. And so that's peak discomfort. The peak experience which was bad is the last thing you'll remember. By having this wash out period in between peak discomfort in the end you don't remember it being as uncomfortable even though you experience the same amount of discomfort.

This goes for positive experiences as well. He summarizes it by saying if you're going to have a 2-week vacation and the second week is going to be exactly the same as the first week, save yourself the money and just have a 1-week vacation. Because you're not going to remember it anymore as fun as the peak experience was the same.

So that idea of if somebody doesn't like something puts it closer to the middle even if they need to do it or you only have one way to do it or two

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ways to do it and they don't like either. And then try to put something they are more interested in closer to the end of the workout. Yes, it may violate Nautilus principles of where we do bigger muscles in the beginning and smaller muscles at the end.

Lawrence: That's just a guide though. Isn't it?

Skyler: It's a guide. Because I've had some clients in the past who do the last thing they want to do, they can work so hard on the leg press. The last thing they want to do is anything else after they're done with it. This is the art piece, putting the legs at the end so they can just sit down, catch their breath, and leave. Similarly, even if it doesn't make sense in the normal flow of the workout doing the exercise they like for a body part that they are interested in

Lawrence: [unclear]

Skyler: Yeah, yeah. Feeling then as a result of that they put it at the end of the workout so the thing they remember is, "I got a really good arm workout. I really want to feel my arms work."

Lawrence: Okay. Hang on. You'd put the worst exercise in the middle and the best exercise last?

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Skyler: Yeah. Or maybe the best exercise is wrong. When I think about what is your 'best' I think about efficacy. In this case it's going to be one they are least interested in.

Lawrence: Preferences.

Skyler: Preferences, right. Something that they are interested in doing at the end of the workout or feeling, "Hey, I want to train my abs more." Well, oftentimes if somebody says that that's easy. We typically put the abs at the end anyway. If somebody says, "Hey, I want to feel my arms more." Well, after abs we're going to do 20 reps curls to fatigue. Something like that where it's a pump, there is a lot of work, and they are going to remember it. Because they've already done a high quality vertical pull or horizontal pull. They've already done the really effective stuff and it's just icing.

Lawrence: Love it. Skyler, this has been amazing. I think one thing I just wanted to say actually just to comment on something that's come up in this conversation is, I won't mention any names, but there are obviously individuals in here who think it's not about the client's enjoyment. It's about delivering an effective workout. Now, good luck with that approach if you ever want to build a successful business and retain your customers because we don't do that. They don't exercise at all. The reality is you can be very safe, deliver great results, and ignore those ideas I think.

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Skyler: It's safe to be dogmatic. It feels safe to build up this very black or white picture and the art over time is understanding the principles that lie underneath that and employing those principles in a way that helps your client get results. Because by definition, they are coming to you as the expert and they are coming on thinking about the stuff outside of here. This is our hobby too. We got into this because we like strength training. It's sort of like if you are a powerlifter and you are forcing people to deadlift even though their bodies have no business deadlifting. There are other things they should be doing. You are letting your hobby and your love of deadlifting.

I asked [Doug Holland](#) who is always deadlifting. How many of his actual clients deadlift? How many clients have the lumbopelvic control to do that? He says like 5. But there are people who if they are in Doug's position they love deadlifting they would make everybody deadlift. Similarly, there are people who they would love going to deep fatigue and all of that. But when you have never trained before everything is a stimulus. When 89% of the population doesn't lift at all just getting them on a direction and an accurate program where it's joint friendly, not joint friendly is the way [Ken](#) describes it. But joint friendly has actual joint forces involved, and tracks muscle and joint function and you progress it over time, it's a huge win. Huge win.

Lawrence: Yeah. I'm just going to wrap up now, Skyler, if that's okay. I know we're on time if you've got a minute. Thank you to everyone. Thank you to all the members for attending and tuning into this one. [unclear] there too. I just

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want to very quickly mention Skyler's business journey is fascinating. I was walking the dog this morning listening to our [podcast](#) back in 2017 we did when you first started. You are literally talking about how you already had a part-time load of clients and you were literally applying for jobs at [Whole Foods](#) or thinking about it. It's so inspirational because I know there's so many members, listeners to my podcast who are in startup mode or having difficulties and they listen to you go through that. Obviously now you've got multiple trainers doing 140 sessions a week, really fantastic business, and that's 5 years passed since when you started which is fantastic. I wanted to mention that and I will link to all those podcasts so people can go through that documentary series which is basically about this at their leisure. Your website is smartstrengthaustin.com. Is that correct?

Skyler: Yeah.

Lawrence: So they can find out about your business there.

Skyler: Our New Year goal is to actually get our website. Get [Blair's](#) guy to do our website because he's such a good job and mine is kind of garbage right now. In the New Year we'll spice it up a little bit.

Lawrence: I mean, I like yours. [Blair's](#) has a really nice website medxpf.com. It's a beautiful website. Just for everyone listening, this is transcribed as well if you prefer to read it. There will be a PDF below the [Membership](#) video. Thank

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you for being a member. Next month we are going to be actually talking to [Blair](#) about how to scale back, see less clients, and work on the business which [Blair](#) has been doing remotely in his beautiful new home.

Skyler: What you need to do is move to a different province.

Lawrence: Yeah. Anyway, that's it, Skyler. You get to your client. But thank you so much and I'll talk to you soon, mate.

Skyler: Fantastic. Thanks, Lawrence.

Lawrence: Take care.

Skyler: Cheers.

Lawrence: Bye: