



HIT Workout Design Masterclass — Luke Carlson (February 2025)

Lawrence Neal: ...and welcome everyone. This is the February 2025 masterclass. We do this every month, and previous guests include – obviously, Luke's done many – features Jeff Tomaszewski, Pete Cerqua, Dr. Doug McGuff, Dr. James Fisher, and so on. We tend to do... we try to alternate business with training and application.

Obviously, today there's going to be some overlap, and we don't always alternate, but we tend to cover both those topics in these Masterclasses, just to help you get better at the craft, sharpen the saw, but also get better at every aspect of running and growing your high-intensity training business.

Today's expert is [Discover Strength](#) founder and CEO [Luke Carlson](#), who many of you know very well. And the way today is going to go, we're going to do like a mini-podcast to start with. But the goal for this call is to get to Q&A as quickly as you possibly can, because I know you guys got questions, and I'm keen to really just give you the floor as quick as possible.

But what I'm going to do in this Q&A is just really double-click on a few aspects of the world-class workout experience, which Luke and I discussed on a podcast recently. There were some follow-up questions, some nuance, and I want to zoom in on those and then do that for 10 or 15 minutes, and then we'll just get straight into Q&A.

So, Luke, welcome. Thank you so much for making the time today. Great to see you.

Luke Carlson: Thanks for having me. It's good to be here.

Lawrence Neal: So, we were on a [podcast together recently talking about the workout is the marketing](#), right? And just we need to be reminded more than we need to be taught, right?

And what I think we'll be banging this drum many times into the future. Just really reiterating the importance of being world-class at the workout and always trying to improve at that and the



customer experience. And there were obviously some questions that came out of that. And one of those was with some, there's some clients maybe the context is that one doesn't have enough time to train a client or has less time, or maybe they're just a client who doesn't seem to get, shall we say, *crushed aerobically* from the workout, they perhaps finish the experience feeling underwhelmed and like maybe they haven't got the value. I haven't got enough of a quote-unquote *cardiovascular stimulus*. Does that make sense? And if so, how do you go about making a client like that?

Really get that kind of feeling after the workout that they're just, they've got that cardiovascular stimulus they feel crushed after experience. Does that make sense?

Luke Carlson: Yeah, I think so. I'm going to clarify it, but I just have to say this before we get started because this topic is so awesome.

I was listening to a speaker give a 2.5-hour workshop on Tuesday, one of the best presentations I've ever heard. And his quote in that presentation was, "The most important marketing that is occurring is the experience your staff are giving in the brick and mortar," right? Or via the phone or wherever it is, and that's just such an important reminder and he could care less about strength training or fitness — he's talking about every conceivable business, and he set up this trip over the truth exercise where he is talking about our experiences with different brands and so forth, and I went on a rant about how I had this really bad experience at a Marriott hotel and I stay at a Marriott hotel literally every week and I love the Marriott and what this person did and everything I was saying was about my experience with that person.

So, forget the tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars Marriott is spending on marketing. That one person was really shaping my perception of that brand. And so that's why this topic is so important. This is the marketing, right? This is more powerful than *the marketing*. And I know that's not what you asked, but I just am so excited about that because it's fresh in my mind on Tuesday and it's all I've been thinking about.



It's generally all I think about, but I'm just reminded of it that much more. So that's a great starting point.

So, you're saying when someone feels like they are *not* aerobically crushed or they *are* aerobically crushed ...

Lawrence Neal: ... they are not, and they would like to be.

Luke Carlson: Yeah. So, I would say in your listeners, everyone that's on this probably knows most of these *go-tos*, but limiting the time between exercises would be the most important making sure that there's enough compound movements in the workout as a whole, making sure we're doing some pre-exhaust... I think those are the basics. We can generally get a client there.

And then I still think you got to remind the client that we're getting cardiovascular adaptation, even if you don't feel like you're aerobically fatigued, they don't care about that. I think what this client really wants is they want to walk out the door feeling like they're just destroyed. And part of that being destroyed is heart rate elevated and "I'm exhausted."

I still think we can remind them that, "Hey, we're still improving The pliability of your artery, your ability of the artery to expand or contract as blood moves through it, we're having these central adaptations and these peripheral adaptations, even if you don't feel like you're gasping for breath during the workout," I would do about 5 to 10 percent of that reminder and then I would make sure that I'm taking minimal rest in between exercises.

Getting some compound movements in there and pushing to failure and well beyond failure. And there's a very tiny percentage of clients that won't get to that point. I think one of the keys there is if I've ever seen a client not getting there, it is largely, first of all, it's generally a female.

And that female is definitely very intense, but it's at the end of the set, if we're focused on slow speed of movement at the end of the set, that is just not what our coaching should be. It's you



got to try to explode to that weight as aggressively as possible. And so if we really put forth great effort and forget a 10-second concentric at the end of the set, which is exactly what we should be doing, I think we're going to get more of that metabolic, cardiovascular, aerobic response, and we're going to give that crushed feeling to the client.

Lawrence Neal: Great answer. One more question and we'll go straight to Q&A, I think — what do you think about... what's the updated Luke Carlson Discover Strength view on workout design? How are you thinking about workout design for new clients?

Luke Carlson: For a new client? Yeah, for our new clients, we do the same workouts for every single new client.

And I'm just going to give you a glimpse of what it is. It's leg extension: 10 seconds up, 10 seconds down; five reps as a goal. It's leg curl 10 seconds up, 10 seconds down, or 10 second concentric, 10 second eccentric' It's a leg press at a 2-4 pace, goal is 12 reps. It's a tibia and anterior tibialis exercise, and then it's manual resistance for the posterior deltoid.

So, where I'm going with this is we're showing some slow speed of movement right from the beginning because we want to create a habit right away that this is what slow really means, what it looks. Like we find that if you're going that slow, a couple, 10, 10s in there, it makes your 2-4 reps that much better.

And then we want to show off our skills as the exercise physiologist, as the practitioner, we want to include some manual resistance right away. So, we don't wait. to showcase these things. We want to have some of the slow speed of movements, the different types of protocols, and we want manual resistance right from the beginning.



Everyone's using the same routine one and routine two, and they're doing that just for a limited number of workouts. Five times on routine one, five times on routine two, and then we custom designed their workout after that.

Now, the only exception to that is if they have some type of joint pain, some orthopedic issue where they can't do one of those exercises I just mentioned, we'll change it up, but there's just certain things we really want them to experience early on and things we want to showcase early on, like manual resistance triceps would be one of them. And then, after that we have autonomy and how we design those workouts.

So that's for a brand new clients and it gets way more interesting after clients been with us for a little bit of time. I just love looking at how our exercise physiologists program different things. I just... so much creativity. And I think that's exciting for the exercise physiologist. I think it's exciting for the client.

I think the second the client thinks that we stopped caring about the programming, they're less interested in their workout and. I am still relentlessly looking for a routine that will produce better results. I just don't think we should ever tell a client that it's pretty much all the same, all roads lead to Rome — you're never going to hear me say that to a client because I fundamentally don't believe that. I believe that we can program in a way that's going to make the workout a little bit better.

Lawrence Neal: And just to zoom in on the first workout they have. which you do five, five times A, five times B. It sounds can you just tell us the full workout? How many exercises? How long it lasts?

Luke Carlson: Yeah, one workout's, 10 exercises, one's 11. So, I picked up on, on that first workout. The upper body was manual resistance, rear deltoid. I got to remember all of it here.



There's a chest press in there. There's a pullover... I'm going to get this wrong. There's a bicep curl.

The other extra, the other workout for upper body is... has a shrug in there. It has a pec fly in there. The pec fly workout has the manual resistance triceps, so we're not doing a compound chest, but we're getting the manual resistance tricep. The workout that has the single joint back, the pullover has a single joint bicep in it, so we're covering that, but it's just four exercises for the upper body.

On one of them, and it's five exercises for the upper body on the other. And the reason is one of those workouts is doing abs and low back at the end, both on in all of us are MedX machine and the other one's doing torso rotation. So that's how they're starting their midsection and the other leg routine.

Let me get to that as a different leg press, right? So, most of our locations have a MedX leg press and then an [Imagine Strength](#) leg press or a MedX like press and a Hammer Strength leg press. Okay. Cool. You're doing both the different presses the other day. You're doing it. You're doing a different setting on a leg press, a different leg press. It's a 1 by 12 protocol, 2 seconds up, 4 seconds down. Then they're doing adductor/abductor and they're doing calf. So that's what the two like workouts look like. And there's some 10-10 over here as well.

We also have some negative accentuated... to us, negative accentuated means 2 seconds in on a pec fly, 10 seconds out. So, we're doing that right off the bat in those first workouts as well.

And let me tell you, there's nothing magical about those first workouts. We are just trying to display manual resistance, different speeds of movement, single joint, multi joint, I just feel like it would be totally irresponsible if we didn't have pullover in there because pullover is a magical exercise and no one's done it, so we want to showcase that right away as well.



Lawrence Neal: And final question before we go to Q&A, it's really interesting to me that you have 10 exercises and 11 exercises, respectively, Because with new people, sometimes they can take a little bit longer because you're doing more instruction, more perhaps pre exercise instruction, that kind of thing.

Do you find, how do you keep that tight? Because it's in 30 minutes, right? So, it's quite a lot, especially in a busy studio.

Luke Carlson: Yeah, it's 30 minutes and you may see that the first time someone does a routine. that they don't get to one of the exercises. Maybe they didn't get to manual resistance tricep.

Okay, maybe they didn't get to their single-joint bicep. Maybe they got to ab, and we didn't do low back or we did low back and we didn't do ab. So maybe they're missing one exercise. But after that first routine, and even generally during that first routine, we can get everything done.

And that's why I always think for me, it's just a good reminder to think about math: If you're doing 10 exercises. Your time under tension is probably not going to be over two minutes.

You have 20 minutes of time under tension. You have 10 minutes of moving between exercises. Just as I even say it out loud, it's a good reminder. How could I not get done in 30 minutes, right? How could I not get done in 30 minutes? How much am I talking in between sets? What is going on? And one of the things that will go on is maybe we spend too much time under tension on an exercise. We just can't spend four minutes on an exercise. So, if we're doing a 1 by 12 and someone's at 13 or 14 reps, we don't have to wait until they get to 23 reps.

We can make the weight heavier. We can do a few heavy negatives at the end. We can do a super heavy static hold. We can get into that point of fatigue. And one of the things that our clients will tell us, and not just clients, we had a trainee, someone that was in town from the east coast here to purchase a franchise.



And we always take them through a workout during their visit. We have dinner, spend the day with them, and take them through a workout. And this person has trained at a SuperSlow facility quite a bit. He's like, "I just love what your people did is if the weight was too light, they found a way to really expedite that fatigue at the end of the set and meet me where I was at."

And of course, we have to do that if we're going to finish in 30 minutes.

Lawrence Neal: Thank you so much. Okay, so hopefully those seed questions have stimulated questions from the participants. Guys, it's up, it is up to you. Either you can raise your hand, and I'll unmute you and you can talk to Luke, 'cause what I find is sometimes you might need to ask a question, then another one to clarify. Maybe Luke wanted to clarify with you.

So, Moh, I'm gonna go to you first. So you should be on now. Moh, can you hear me Okay? Just need to unmute. There you go.

Moh Koutouby: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

Lawrence Neal: Yep.

Moh Koutouby: Nice to talk to you and see you.

As far as the first workout goes, my question is now when you have somebody that's untrained and they and you start them, of course, you want to showcase what you can do, but you don't want to hurt them. I'm not saying injure them but train them so hard that they're sore for a week afterwards.

So, there's like a balance there. How do you find that balance between showcasing what you do, what you can do and not get them like turned off from being destroyed like totally?



Luke Carlson: Yeah, Moh, what a wonderful question. To me, I think the main thing that turns somebody off is if they're metabolically destroyed during that workout.

If they have to lay down on their back and elevate their feet after eight exercises and I've done that with a client, too many times to count, I feel like I did a horrible job here. This should not have happened. I am not as concerned about if they're sore afterwards. So, if they go through the workout and they're not metabolically destroyed and they're walking out of the studio smiling and they're incredibly sore the next two days, I actually perceive that as a very good thing because that soreness reminds them, "Whoa, this is something different than I've ever done. It is a different stimulus. It makes sense that I just paid for that." From my experience, clients are not scared away by that soreness. They think that's valuable. They're like, "Okay, I've worked out before and I've definitely never experienced anything like that. This is what I'm paying for."

And we always remind them, "You're going to be sore tomorrow, and the soreness you have is going to be greater than the soreness you have in subsequent workouts. We're going to push you harder in subsequent workouts, but you're going to have less soreness." So, we've reminded them they're going to be sore. They are sore, and I think that eases any angst they have over, "Is this what it's always going to be like? Is this a bad thing that I'm this sore?" What we don't want is just metabolic exhaustion. Where they can barely crawl out of the facility.

Because... a couple of things: that kind of feels scary for them. And then the other thing is it's almost a little bit embarrassing. They're like, "I'm laying on my back with my feet elevated. What's going on? Do I even belong here?" I think we screwed that up.

And so Moh, how do you accomplish all that? It's just three words: It's "read and respond".

So, it's every single rep of every single set paying attention to where that client is at. And then you got to know, "Hey, if I push this person too hard on assisted chin ups, if I push this person too hard on leg press, they're going to be laying in the ground for exercises from now."



And so it kind of sneaks, and everybody on the call knows this, it sneaks up on them. And as much as we know this, I've been doing this for 24 years and I still think, "Oh, shoot, I got a little excited on leg press and push them too hard. Cause they're ready in that moment. They did three more exercises and now they want to lay on the floor, I shouldn't have done that. I should have backed down like press just a little bit."

There's ways that we can finish a set that elicits a lot of fiber recruitment, that doesn't just totally metabolically exhaust someone. A great example is leg press – they've done 12 reps. They're nowhere near the point of failure, make the weight very heavy and have them do a very heavy 20 second negative that will elicit significant fiber recruitment and soreness the next day, but it's not going to metabolically exhaust them.

So, eccentric work is just not as metabolically exhausting, where if I had them just grind out rep after rep and they ended up doing 19 reps or 22 reps, that's going to set them up for metabolic devastation later in the workout.

Moh Koutouby: Do you take them through failure in the first workout?

Luke Carlson: I'm going to say that we get very close to failure on every exercise, but it really depends on the comfort level of the client. And that just goes to *read and respond*.

We're trying to get them to the point of failure. I think, the failure is truly, actually a continuum, it's not dichotomous, their ability to get to true failure is just going to improve, by their 10th workout relative to that 1st workout, but they're definitely at the point where form is breaking down and they can barely move it anymore, for sure.

And like I said, if it's too light, and we achieve a goal, they might not reach positive or concentric muscle failure in the classic sense, but you've done leg extension, we've gone 10 up, 10 down.



You've done 5 reps. I know you can do 3 more. I'm just going to load you up with a heavy weight and have you do a very heavy 20-second negative or 30-second negative.

So, we finished that set quick quicker. We have significant fiber recruitment, but you didn't reach concentric failure in a sense. You're cooked. We got significant recruitment, but to answer your specific question, it's not *truly* failure.

Moh Koutouby: Okay. So not to be afraid of pushing the clients at first to like positive failure, then I'm going to later or anything like that.

Luke Carlson: Yeah, so that's again, it's reading and responding as you go through the workout and if you have some single-joint movements in there, I think they're going to be less likely to be laying on the floor at the end of the workout, which is what we don't want. But I still think we can push them pretty hard.

And I think if we don't push them hard right from the beginning, they just don't see a value proposition and they think, "I could do this on my own." I just go back to that over and over. A client can't walk out of there thinking, "I could do that on my own." And it doesn't matter how nice the equipment is it doesn't matter how intelligent you sound.

If they get the perception that they could do that on their own when they leave, then I don't think we did it right. They have to walk out of there and be like, "Oh, okay. That's... I need this guy next to me, I need this woman next to me to elicit that type of fatigue."

Moh Koutouby: Thank you.

Lawrence Neal: Moh, thank you so much. Great questions. What wonderful questions. Okay. Ben, your turn. Ben, you're on, you just need to unmute.



Benjamin Fisher: I just unmuted myself. Oh, did I not...? Okay...

Lawrence Neal: Yeah, you're good. We can hear you now.

Benjamin Fisher: Can you hear me, Luke?

Luke Carlson: Perfectly, Ben.

Benjamin Fisher: Quick question on your initial consult: Do you charge? How long is it? And because I have sometimes people that are just chatting, and I decide at that moment if I want them as a client or not, because I think they're going to tell me how to do the job instead of me doing it the other way. So, what do you do? You sit down or...? Give me an idea.

Luke Carlson: 45 minutes long and we don't charge for it. And this is the only thing that we do that's free and we're providing value and I think this is probably important from a marketing standpoint. Like, how do you get people to actually come in the door? I think you have to offer something. I hate offering discounts, founder packages, things like that. For us, it's always been a free introductory workout.

And then you could also probably connect this to the idea of creating provide value first. Before I've even spent money with you, you've already provided value. The best way that I know of providing value is actually taking someone through a workout.

So, everyone does this differently. But for us, we don't call it a consultation — we don't like the idea of consultation; we like the idea of a workout. The thing that I'm best equipped at providing is a workout, we're not very good at providing consultation. And so why would you our perspective is why would you want to do a consultation?

So, it's always a workout and it's not ten, eleven exercises; It's six to seven exercises in that first workout, but we want them to feel the difference of high-intensity resistance training, and then



that should really sell them. Of course, at the end of that, we're still asking them to become a client, and if we're really attuned, we're listening to them the entire time, and the things that they talk about, we're trying to speak directly to those things.

Let me just make a mention of a best practice here: the problem with high-intensity training is it is so damn good for everything. It is the best way to add lean muscle tissue, to get strong, to improve bone mineral density, to improve cardiovascular health, to prevent cardiovascular disease, to improve cognitive function, to improve academic performance in school aged children — it is a miracle.

But you cannot share all those things with a client during the introductory workout because they won't believe you. You have to listen to them and understand. What sounds like it's the most important thing for them and then just speak to that.

And I don't even mean like a cliched goal, like I have the 50th class reunion coming up. Okay, let's just speak to that. I don't even mean that. You have to sense when the client comes in, have they been to nine other boutique studios and tried a little different types of training and they're going to make their buying decision based on how hard you push them, how knowledgeable you are, and what the actual methodology is, then you better go there, right? Versus they're walking in the door because they're smart enough where they know they should exercise, but they're scared to death to do it anywhere. Then your whole focus goes to, "I just want you to feel comfortable here, right?" And you're not going to try to *overtake*, you're just trying to create this comfortable atmosphere where they feel incredibly safe, where they don't, they feel like they belong.

So, to me, that's all about listening to where the client's at, but it's not saying, what are your goals? And they say, "My goal is to lose fat," and you only speak to that. There's a time for that it's but it's really trying to ascertain by listening to them. What are they in there for? And then speaking to that.



We just can't speak to all of the benefits and it's hard not to I think we can trickle those benefits over the course of their time as a client but not during the free introductory workout. [The] free introductory workout is what's the weed that they're pointing to in the ground and you have to position yourself as the solution to whatever that weed or that one problem is.

Benjamin Fisher: Do you have an intake form that you use in the initial where you're... you see all their preexisting conditions? What are their goals? And... I put as a scale of 1 to 10, how important and sometimes somebody answers a 3 and I go, why are you here? And they go, "Oh, I didn't understand the question." So, then it's changed to a 9.

One other quick question: I found that when my clients don't get to exhaustion and I see it, I asked him to go instead of intensely put the weight on, I have them crawl, in any exercise — literally barely moving it. So, I give them an idea of what the 10th workout might feel because that's so intense with no momentum. They go, "Oh, that's what this is." I don't know if you do that or done it?

Luke Carlson: Yeah, there's a ton of different things we can do at the end of the set to really intensify the sets and I love something like that as well.

If they're doing 2 seconds up, 4 seconds down on a lateral raise, I love on the last rep saying, "Hey, in this last rep, let's go 10 seconds up, 20-second hold in the isometric hold in the contracted position, and then let's go 10 seconds..." something like that. I love that.

We ask just a few questions and we ask them, they don't fill it out ahead of time. We say, "What are your goals?" So, we're asking why are they there? And then we say, "Talk to me about injury history. What's bothering you from an orthopedic standpoint?" We want to capture all those things as well.



So, we are asking those questions, and we're just jotting them down rather than them filling it out ahead of time. And then with the goal piece, I think you... have to there's a skill involved in get into the layer of what the real goal is.

I have this opinion that most clients don't know what their goal is. They automatically, especially if it's a boomer, which is so many of our clientele, boomers automatically say they're trying to lose weight. Twenty, thirty-year-olds don't care about weight loss. Societally, it's just not a big deal. People over 60s, like there's a stigma around being overweight and they think that exercise facilities equal weight loss and so they all want to lose weight.

They say they want to lose weight because *they've been conditioned to say that*. But I think we got to dig a little bit deeper and understand do they actually want to lose weight.

The other thing I, this is a pet peeve of mine for 20 years when people say, "My goal is to be able to do one pull-up," and I thought that can't... you're not going to spend \$400 a month here to be able to do a pull-up, that's a dumb goal – I would not word it that way – but I want to understand, "I want to do a pull-up," and we talk about, "Do you want to change your physiology? Do you actually want to get in great shape?" And a pull up would be an indication of that because the actual goal of doing a pull-up is a pretty silly outcome goal. I don't want to call their goals silly, but who cares if you can actually do a pull-up.

Benjamin Fisher: Thank you very much. You've answered every question. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Lawrence Neal: Perfect. So, typed question here for you Luke, related to weight loss... From Logan: related to the first topic discussed are 2 intense workouts per week enough to really move the needle on weight loss? I encourage clients to increase daily activity and do low intensity cardio... but they often do not do this reliably.



What's your take on that, Luke?

Luke Carlson: Yeah, we've just try to not talk about weight loss in general. We teach people that there's two big drivers to fat loss from an exercise standpoint. It's an acute response. You take a strength training workout, and if it's intense and you go to failure, you're going to burn between 5% and 9% more calories for the next three days.

It's not a panacea of calorie expenditure, but it's more calorie expenditure than we see from aerobic exercise of any kind. So that's acute and it never goes away. It's not novel. So, if we strength-train twice per week, we're always going to be burning 5% to 9% more calories for the three days following those workouts.

Significant research suggests that if we train to failure, we burn twice as many calories as if we don't go to failure. Here's what's fascinating: everybody wants to burn calories from their exercise. Almost no one trains to failure. So, failure is linked to calorie expenditure. I think it's worth reminding a client of that. That's all acute.

Chronic is, "can we add lean muscle tissue to our body?" I know everybody in this call knows this. If we add muscle tissue to our body, we're a more efficient calorie burner all the time.

Now we talk about things like that, but there's significant research to support this: [a] wonderful study, 2015, 2016 Harvard study. 52,000 men over a 12-year period where they looked at abdominal fat storage – that's where men tend to store their fat and that's one of the five diagnostic criterion for metabolic syndrome – men who had a larger dose of strength training – meaning they strength trained more often and did less cardio, less yoga, less all the other stuff that they could do – experienced less increases in abdominal fat.

Why? When you strength train your upper body and your legs hard, you add muscle to your body, you burn more calories all the time, you're less likely to store the calories as fat. We all know



about that. I just don't think it's powerful enough to tell people this is driving fat loss, but we have no evidence, like, we have crap evidence to say that doing aerobic exercise helps us burn calories or lose weight.

In fact, we know that after you do about of low level of intensity cardio aerobic exercise, your EEPA, your energy expenditure, so your calorie expenditure due to physical activity decreases for the next 23 hours in that day. That is coming from a person who is obsessed with cardiovascular exercise. I have a Stairmaster Step Mill in my bedroom. I'm going to run 22 miles on the treadmill tomorrow morning. I ran five miles of intervals this morning. I freaking love cardio. It's just not effective for burning calories or losing weight.

So, we tell our clients that. And we are a step away from telling a client, if you want to lose weight, you should be on a GLP-1 drug and you should be strength training, because we know GLP-1 drugs work and we have not seen any negative side effects.

That's outside of my area of expertise but I heard Scott Galloway say this quote, and I don't know if I disagree with him... I don't think I do, "GLP-1 drugs represent a larger, more significant technological advantage and are going to have a larger impact on the world than AI."

And for Scott Galloway to say that, that is a significant quote. GLP-1 drugs work. And I think they are setting the stage for the importance of the work we all do as strength training practitioners.

I think we might look back 25 years from now and look at this exact time period and say, if you had a strength training business, the advent of GLP-1 drugs turned everybody with a strength training business into a millionaire, right?

We might be sitting on the single greatest opportunistic, business time period that we could ever live through.

Lawrence Neal: Wow. Profound.



Luke Carlson: This is now recorded, so If I'm dead wrong on that in 10 years, we're not going to go back and point out.

Lawrence Neal: Absolutely. It's recorded! So, guys, let's continue your questions and let's try and keep it about the workout, about the customer experience, but not that yours wasn't; it was obviously related, but I just want to make sure that we are creating something that is focused on that particular topic. Jeremy, I'm going to allow you to talk. So, Jeremy, the floor is yours.

Jeremy Amin: Hey, can you hear me?

Luke Carlson: Yes.

Jeremy Amin: Excellent. Hey, Luke, thank you very much for this. With regards to clients exhibiting anxiety and fear responses pushing towards failure... One of my clients, she pretty much on every single movement, she gets to a point where she begins to get into the typical fight or flight behaviors. How would you, as a coach, bring someone back from that so they can focus more on getting to failure?

Luke Carlson: Yeah, you're asking a really intelligent question and the way you worded it actually illustrates how just spot on you are on this — it's, "How do you coach this?"

So, this is *throw physiology out the door*. This is like reading Body by Science is just not going to help you where you just grinding until you're at the point of failure.

The short answer here is tell the client exactly what is coming and then do what you said you're going to do.

So, for a client that's experiencing that type of anxiety on a leg press, for example I'm going to say we're doing 10 reps and we're stopping at 10 reps or we're doing 10 reps, you're going to set it down. I'm going to make it heavier and we'll do 3 heavy negatives. And 3 heavy negatives is so



much mentally easier to do than grind out the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th rep. I think just very clear endpoints of what's going to happen is the key in that situation.

So we're doing 8, we're stopping. We're doing 10, we're doing a 30 second hold. We're doing 8 and then we're doing 3 heavy negatives. I think you just got to let them know what's coming. And that might be shy of the point of failure, but I think eventually you're going to get to the point where when they know what's coming, they're like, "Okay, I can handle that up to this point."

It's that fear of the unknown. That just, I think, takes the anxiety and absolutely spikes it. And I think that's true. If someone has this kind of anxious response, but I think that's true of almost every client.

There's just not a client on earth. It's not on the 13th rep of press that's not thinking if there's a speech balloon above their head, "What in the F is coming up next?" "Tell me what's going to happen." And I think letting them know elicits more intensity.

So, for your example, letting them know reduces anxiety, but letting them know actually elicits more intensity.

Sometimes if it's just go till you can't go anymore, they're like, "Oh, then I'm going to shut it down at 14, and I'm going to mentally fake failure."

Where if you know you have to get to a number... I did a workout last night, I'll make this super quick. Last workout in our original Plymouth location. It closes tonight. We're moving that location. So I had to get together with one of our longest-time EPs and do a workout. The last time we did this exact workout, February 24th, 2014. So, I used all the same weights, same order of exercise. The routine comes from Mike Gittleson, longtime strength coach for University of Michigan.



leg extension, 12 reps; immediately to leg curl, 12 reps; immediately to MedX leg press for 20 reps; immediately back to leg extension where the weight is cut down and you're aiming for 8 reps; immediately back to leg press for 12 reps.

Let me tell you, we only went to failure on the first leg extension. The leg curl and then the second leg extension and it was just one forced rep and that's it. We stopped at 20 reps on leg press. We stopped at 12 reps on leg press. And I know it's going to be brutally hard because we've recorded the workout so many times. I picked up on the same weights that I was using, 11 years ago, almost to the day. And it was brutally tough.

But let me tell you, I worked harder because I knew the end point was 20 reps. Where if Rick had said – that's was who was training me – “Hey, go till you can't go anymore,” I would have mentally shut it down at 15 reps, but knowing I got to get to 20 and I can stop at 20 and my goal is just to keep as perfect a form as possible as 20. That's valuable.

I know, Jeremy, that wasn't your real question; your real question was the anxiety, and that's where I think we just got to let people know what's what end points are going to be.

Lawrence Neal: Nice one, Jeremy. Just conscious of time and there's a lot more questions here. So I'm going to move on to the next person.

Hey, Kyra.

Kyra Seiler: Hi, can you guys hear me?

Luke Carlson: Perfectly.

Kyra Seiler: Okay, perfect. So, I'm going to give you a little bit of background around this client of mine. He is currently stage four brain cancer, and he is changing his outlook on life and really excited to do strength training, eat properly, et cetera, but he has a... basically, his whole attitude



is... It's like he doesn't really care about form anymore. He just cares about getting to the end point, getting to failure and moving on to the next exercise.

So, he starts off very well, very good timing, breathing, full range-of-motion. And as he gets to the end of literally every single exercise, he starts throwing the weight around, arching his spine. And you just look at what his tendons and ligaments are doing, and I'm just screaming for him.

So, I've tried endless amounts to try and educate him on why we don't want to do that for long-term safety and to protect in the integrity of his joints. But he... it's not going through to him, what I'm saying.

So, I guess how would you go about this, Luke?

Luke Carlson: Yeah, Kyra, thanks for the really good question.

We have a... just coincidentally, a stage four brain cancer client at one of our locations, and it's just connecting with them on Monday. So, congratulations on working with a client in that specific position.

So, the first thing I would say is, this is the general answer, is your job is to take that client wherever they're at and do the best you can with that client, right?

And so, it might not be, if Lawrence and I were to walk in and watch you train them, we wouldn't, that's not like Kyra is showing us what ideal utopic high-intensity training looks like, but that's not really the goal. The goal is to take them more from wherever they are and get the best out of them.

And it's going to frustrate you, and it would frustrate the heck out of me that they're not doing it the way they're supposed to be doing it. But you have to understand as a professional, you are getting them to do this, literally 200% better than they would do it if they were on their own.



That's number one.

And you may say that's just a cop out answer. I still think that answer matters. My second answer is try to use your verbiage in a way. where everything you say, all the teaching you use is not general teaching; it's teaching about *him*.

So, I love this concept that 95 percent of what we say as a trainer *should be about the client*.

And mistakenly, people hear that as, “the client should be doing 95 percent of the talking” — that's not true. We *can* talk, but we should never say, “Slow speed of movements are better for your joints.” We should say, if the client's name is Lawrence, he's sitting on leg extension, I'm going to walk up to him and point to his knee and just touch his knee and say, “Lawrence, I'm just thinking about your knee. And I just know that if you can, for a little bit, if you can at the top of the range of motion, resist that little bounce, your knee is going to respond.”

So that's my mediocre example of just making it Lawrence's knee, Lawrence's elbow. Okay. “What I think would work best for you Lawrence is this,” rather than, “The research shows that if you move slow, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.”

And Kyra, you're, I know you're experienced in doing this. You're probably already doing that. I'm reminded of that. I can do that so much more instead of just, “This is what a paper says,” or “this is what the concept is,” Make it about Lawrence's *body*, Lawrence's *shoulder*, Lawrence's *fiber*, Lawrence's *whatever* — literally use the name and touch them and say, “I think this is what's happening in your body right now.” And I want to find a way to make that, just change a little bit.

And none of us are above that. When one of our exercise physiologists trains me and talks about my muscle, my joint, my whatever, I pay attention that much more. It's just this human response.

So those are my two... the first one you can think is a cop-out; I think it matters. The second one is technically how I would actually do it.



Kyra Seiler: Okay. Thank you.

Lawrence Neal: Thank you, Kyra. Okay. Steve,

Steve Berthiaume: Great. So, I have a client who seems unable to or unwilling to exert herself. I know because we're doing manual resistance exercises and I can feel that she's not pushing and, you know, her mouth is closed the entire time. And she'll go until I'll hear a little "uh," and then, "I'm done." And a couple times I've tried to push her harder that, harder than that resulted in a headache. And so I'm at a loss as to what to do with this client.

Luke Carlson: Yeah, my first answer again is going to be pretty similar to my answer with Kyra, is you got to get more out of this person than she would be getting if she was training with somebody else, or if she wasn't training at all.

I can picture some of my all-time favorite clients — their intensity is so low, I wish they would push harder. And I have to remind myself: they wouldn't be doing this at all if they weren't here. And anybody, any other trainer, I tell myself, it was working with them wouldn't be able to get even this much, quality muscular tension out of them.

Steve, I'm not saying you should settle, but I think you're probably getting more fiber recruitment out of her than you realize. And then I would still try this approach with her where you're giving her end points and you're trying to get her to that end point. And actually, for this client, I would use less manual resistance and I would use some dumbbells or some body weight, or even in your case, I would use the Bowflex because I think it's just too easy to not put forth effort on manual resistance, right?

I can just stop pushing if I want to at any given second, where if I have a dumbbell in my hand and you're saying you gotta get to 10 reps, just try to get to 10 reps, there's just generally going



to be more muscular tension there. I think manual resistance is a better tool for people who are really intense.

And for all of the practitioners on this call that have used a lot of manual resistance, when you train someone that's intense, if we all trained each other, man, people will battle on manual resistance and you can be 3, 4 reps into it and just absolutely spent. And it's a great tool.

So maybe a teeny bit less manual resistance with this individual and giving them set end points. And then the reminder, Steve, that you're still getting more. valuable kind of muscular tension than 98% of practitioners could get out of her.

Steve Berthiaume: Thank you very much.

Lawrence Neal: Any other questions, Steve, or anyone else? Please raise a hand. Should've let you have more time there, Jeremy, shouldn't I?

But if anyone has any other questions, just raise a hand or put it in the Q&A box. We've still got another 15 minutes here. And whilst I wait, I have... Okay, all right. Here we go... Jeremy, Just give me a second here. Oh, TJ, sorry. I know you were waiting earlier... there you go. TJ, it's yours.

TJ Milam: Oh, hey, thanks for taking my question, Luke. So, I'm getting 4 machines. That's all I'm really allowed to have in this space. I'm getting in a small business building, 830 square feet, perfect size, on the 2nd floor. I'm getting from Imagine, I'm getting a leg press, leg extension, chest press, and seated row, which I'm super excited about, but I'm going to get a flat bench...

Luke Carlson: Awesome machines.

TJ Milam: Oh, yeah, I can't... I cannot wait. And then I think I'm going to get an upright seat bench because frankly, I'm just so tired of adjusting a bench up and down.



I'd like to just save time in my back a little bit on that. But I'm thinking of adding some bands on the wall. Obviously some manual resistance hip adduction, abduction, timed static contraction. Is there anything else? And probably some dumbbells to maybe up to 30, 35 pounds, not, I don't need to go too heavy, I don't think, because my crowd is likely going to be. 50-plus for sure, 60-plus definitely. But any other ideas for any other resistance?

Luke Carlson: I agree with you on dumbbell because the dumbbell exercise that they actually would be the strongest on is probably dumbbell supine chest press, but you got the Imagine chest press. So, you can do that more often than you use the dumbbell chest press.

So, I think you get a lot of versatility with the dumbbells, with different bicep curls, a tricep extension if you wanted. Incline press a shoulder press. You could do a single arm dumbbell row as well. You have an Imagine row, which is amazing.

I would think about some type of wall mounted door mounted chin-up. And then some type of step or block. So, a number of your clients can do like a negative-only chin-up. I just think it's a wonderful exercise and I think clients love it.

So, when we build a new location, we built a lot of locations over the last year and we're building a location soon that's going to be a little smaller than our normal locations. And so, for the first time, like ever, we have to cut out a few machines. And when I think we always buy the following back machines, we buy a pull-down. So sometimes it's Imagine Strength. Sometimes it's MedX, Sometimes it's actually Hammer Strength.

So, pull down, row, which is usually Imagine Strength or MedX, pull over... you get that idea. And then an assisted chin-up dip station. So those are the four ways that we train the back. Generally, if I have to cut any of those, we would never cut the chin dip because clients love being able to do chin-up so much.



And you might think it's not as versatile. Everybody can do seated row. Literally everybody can, but they all can't do chin-up, but such a high percentage of them can do chin-up and they just love to be able to do chin-up. That I think it's something that we always try to keep in the mix. So, I think a door-mounted some type of chin dip stand and I like chin-ups more than dips, but I like dips as well... would be a very cost effective way for you to add significant value.

I like that. And then I've recently over the last year – and I got this from [Skyler Tanner](#) – love the products called Shoulder Horn, and it just wraps over your shoulders and it's a great way to do external rotation. And if your target market is a 50-up client, there's some wonderful data from the orthopedic research that something like 60% of adults over 50 have at least a partial tear in their *supraspinatus infraspinatus*... probably not Terry's, but one of the external rotators, and so we love that exercise.

It's only a few bucks, and they hold on to a very light weight and do this exercise. And I think that client feels like, “Wow, you're paying attention to something like my rotator cuff?” So, I think that's a really affordable addition also, but you're just in a really great spot with what you currently have.

TJ Milam: Great! Thanks so much.

Lawrence Neal: Okay. Thank you.

Okay. Jeremy.

Jeremy Amin: Hello again. Can you hear me?

Luke Carlson: Perfectly.



Jeremy Amin: Great. Have you noticed, Luke, any particular, let's say, magical ordering of exercises that tends to work best for the majority of people? Or is it more individual than we would like to think?

Lawrence Neal: Great question.

Luke Carlson: That is such a great question. My short answer is *no*, but I think that the order of exercise definitely changes the workout.

And I don't think long term you're gonna produce different results. And if you went leg press and then you went to leg curl and then you went to leg extension. Now if you go hard on leg press, that leg extension weight is going to be much, much lighter versus if you go all out.

One week ago I was in Florida, at Jim Flanagan's house and the workout, he took me through the only leg routine, only leg work was absolutely all out in the leg extension. This is an old Nautilus leg extension. I did 19 reps on it and then we rushed right away to the Avenger leg press in a squat position. That just changes that exercise, right? When your quads are that pre fatigued going into leg press, I just think there's so much value in doing that, but I don't know if it produces different results. I feel like it makes the workout entirely different.

We had a previous, panelist here or attendee say they have four machines. To me, I think about those four machines it's like endless variations of how you do them. And one of the examples that individual has like extension and like press doing like extension first into like press versus like press into like extension is such a different experience and they're awesome experiences, and I think it's worth it to progress on both of them.

So, I don't think it makes a difference but in terms of results; I think it makes a significant difference in that workout experience. I think we should include all of them.



And that's why I think if you have four machines or if you have 24 machines, 24 machines suddenly starts to feel like 424 machines because you progress differently and you change the order of exercises and you do things like really intense abduction and then rush that into a leg press. That's just a totally different experience, right?

You do leg press and you come off of leg press into a single-leg split squat, what an unbelievable experience! I think those sequences are awesome and valuable and fun. That's my long-winded answer to that question.

I just think it's endlessly fun, Jeremy, to play with those and change those things around.

And yeah that's my answer.

Lawrence Neal: Awesome.

Jeremy Amin: Yeah, it definitely is. All good!

Lawrence Neal: Go ahead, Jeremy. Sorry.

Luke Carlson: ...that we truly honor with a client is if they ask, and this is 5 percent of our clients ask, they want to do legs first or they want to do upper body first, we're going to honor that. And then we will honor if they say they want to do midsection first.

So, a lot of our clients will say, "I always want to do abs first," And... I say "a lot of our clients," it's 5%, maybe 10% of our clients will say that, and then we'll do that. Otherwise, we don't care about the order of exercise with the exception of when the workout's designed, we always keep the order the same within a segment of the body.

So, if Lawrence walks in for his workout, we're always doing his leg exercises in that same order in his upper body in that same order. But if his first upper body is shrug and his second is pullover



and someone's on the pullover machine, we're going to go over and do tibia, and then we'll come back to pullover.

So the upper body order is always the same. We can jump out of it and move to a leg exercise as long as we're in the appropriate order there. The idea there is, if I'm doing pec fly and chest press in my upper body workout, I don't want to flip up, "Did I do pec fly first or chest press first?" And that's more for recording purposes, right? Like I want to see, "Are we progressing?" Is it because we change the order of exercise, et cetera.

Jeremy Amin: Yeah, that's a really good bit that you added at the end. I work in a commercial gym and when it's busy, it's like a zoo. So, I can't really have clients do the same order every single time. Although if we, if it's a longer session, then we can wait a minute until I can jump in with them on whatever machine.

So, it's good to know that I can tell them, "Hey, it's cool. We didn't need to do the same order every single time you're going to get. The outcome that we want anyway."

Luke Carlson: You can do that, Jeremy, or you can just create some rules around. We're going to keep the order the same within legs and with an upper body, but if the upper body machine is taken, we'll jump to legs or we'll jump to a midsection.

And even in a really busy commercial gym, you can largely move through the workout and not have the order impacted in a way that's going to impact how many reps they get with a given weight, for the most part.

Jeremy Amin: Yeah, that makes perfect sense.

Yeah, we're coming up on time, all good.



Lawrence Neal: Thank you, Jeremy. Appreciate it. Okay. So, we're trying to do 2 more here. Potentially, Morgan... has lost her voice, so she's written her question here: I'd love to hear some of the most effective set extenders to increase intensity when running group workouts.

Luke Carlson: Ooh, God, what a great question.

So, the beauty of this is you can't always physically be next to the client in a group workout. So, the classic assisted rep can't maybe work because you're across the room while the client's over there. So, I'll give two or three that we love.

One is a breakdown set.

So, Lawrence is on shoulder press. He reaches the point of total failure. I can quickly get over to him and reduce the weight a little bit and then have him go to failure again and then he's done. Classic breakdown set. Super easy to administer.

We never have the client break it down themselves; we do it for them, but I can pop over there quickly and then be away from him rather than have to be with him for multiple forced reps or assisted reps. Breakdown sets, number one.

Number two is a rest-pause.

So, we use a 20 second rest-pause. So, this is Lawrence going to all-out failure on incline press and we remind him repeatedly across the room, "Lawrence, I want you to go absolutely all out. Fight for one more inch. Okay, now set it down. You're on the clock for 20 seconds." And I'm timing his 20-second rest and I'm giving a countdown. "Lawrence, we're going again in five, four..." and then he starts, and he goes all out to failure again. So, we'll sometimes rest-pause to a number, or we'll do just one rest-pause.



So, one rest-pause would be, he fails 11 reps, rest for 20 seconds, goes until he can't go anymore, which is probably 2 reps, maybe 3 reps, or we'll say, "Hey, we're going to keep rest-pausing until you eventually get to 15 reps."

If he fails at 9, then he grinds out 3 more. Then he grinds out 2 more. Then he grinds out 1 more with multiple 20-second [rests].

The beauty there is that as the trainer, you can bounce around the room and be with other clients while he's still getting that done.

The key to a rest-pause or a breakdown set is you have to tell the client what you're doing and you have to make it seem like you were planful.

It's not like, "Oh shoot, I'm not by you. Just chill for 20 seconds, right?" It's gotta seem like a plan. And by the way, it is a plan. Like rest-pause is a technique that we use and it's a great technique, but you gotta make sure it isn't like, "Oh, I'm sorry, I wasn't near you when you failed. Just hang out for a little bit and then start again." It's gotta be like, "Oh, you're gonna love this. We got this cooked up for you. It's a rest-pause." That's number two.

And then number three, we love a heavy static hold or a very long negative.

So, this is almost always 30 seconds. It can be 20 seconds, but the beauty of this is you can walk away from the client.

So, Lawrence is on a MedX lateral raise. He's at all-out failure, okay. He's using a hundred pounds. I'm going to run over to him, I'm going to change it to 40 pounds, and I'm going to have him come up and hold right here for 30 seconds. That is so incredibly brutal, and then I can walk away from him completely, right?



I can give him some feedback from across the room to maintain that position. What's the worst case scenario? If you can only hold it for 24 seconds and it comes down great, he's done. Okay. But that 30 seconds allows him to continue to do really valuable muscular work while we're across the room.

Those are my three favorites and they're my favorites because I don't have to be next to Lawrence to actually do them.

Now, an example of one that you have to be with Lawrence is Lawrence does MedX lateral raise to failure. And then when he's done, I have him stand up off the machine and we do four more manual resistant reps to get everything out of him.

Well, that's great, but that's really occupying me while the other, clients on the floor are not getting my attention.

Lawrence Neal: Great answer. Luke. Okay. So probably final question here. Moh, I'm just going to let you talk. There you go.

Moh Koutouby: Luke, what's the two or three major *no-nos* that you guys don't do in a workout?

Luke Carlson: Yeah. So is this really from a workout design standpoint or as we're facilitating the workout, we want to stay away from these things...?

Moh Koutouby: Workout design, and I'll start with that...

Luke Carlson: Yeah, so, we don't do two pulls in a row, we don't do two pushes in a row. So, we're not going to go incline press into shoulder press. We're always going to use a push-pull format, and we're not going to do two pulls in a row.



The only time we do two pulls in a row is if we look at the second pull as an advanced overload technique.

So, we might do seated row to failure and then finish you off by rushing to chin-ups and doing four negative only chin-ups. But really, even though that's two different exercises, we're looking at it as one exercise.

So, we don't do two pushes in a row. We don't do two pulls in a row. And that would be, the true for the case for legs as well. We're not doing two leg presses in a row. We're going to go leg press and then we're going to go curl and adductor. And if we do another multi-joint leg movement, it's going to be, there's going to be some space in between.

So, I think that's one thing that we do not do. The other ones might be silly. We're not going to do anything with momentum. We're like, we're just not gonna swing anything. We're not gonna do a kettlebell swing. We're not gonna do an Olympic lift of any kind. So, anything that involves momentum, we're not gonna do.

We're not gonna do anything that tries to mimic anything in that we do in everyday life in sport and in activity of daily living. So, we're just not gonna do anything that's quote unquote *functional* because, of course, it's all functional. If a muscle contracts, it's creating movement and therefore it's creating function.

From a nuanced design, what else do we not do? I don't love single joint biceps immediately followed by a pulling movement for a weaker client. Because I just think they're getting so little out of it. By the time they get to that bicep exercise right after they did a row, their forearms and their biceps are already fatigued. And I feel like if they could use 40 pounds on a given machine, they're using like 20 pounds and they're burning and they're probably not getting much in terms of recruitment. So, I don't like a single joint bicep right after a pulling movement, but the push pull-format is probably the main thing.



Moh Koutouby: Okay. What about delivery for you or your trainer?

Luke Carlson: Yeah, delivery? So, a couple things here just really quick: We never lean against a machine. So as a trainer in our posture, you got to stand like you should not be leaning up against a machine. And sometimes that naturally happens. You got to make eye contact. You got to be locked into your client in terms of where you're looking. You can't have a beverage on the floor. You can't sip a coffee while you're on the floor. We want to have hands in pockets for very limited periods of time. If your hands in your pocket, it's 10 seconds. Arms shouldn't be crossed for an extended period of time. So, body language and posture are some of the keys on the floor.

Lawrence Neal: Perfect.

Moh Koutouby: Thank you.

Lawrence Neal: Sorry, Moh. Awesome. All right. Great question. Thank you, Luke, this has been amazing. Thank you to everyone.

And very quickly before we wrap, Luke, I know you probably need to go straight away. Guys, I just want to make you all aware, there's a really good podcast series. I'll put a post together with all this as well. Great podcast series I did with Luke and Dr. James Fisher. About all the aspects we've discussed today regarding workout, design, movement, speed intensity, the whole workout experience, and it was like a three- or four-part podcast series, very popular and I'll create [a post about that](#).

I encourage all of you, if you can, and if Luke permits it to visit a DS and actually see them in action, watch how they do many one-on-ones and small groups all at the same time. It's amazing to watch, and obviously you can see everything that Luke is saying happening and obviously pay for a session while you're there would make more sense.



And lastly, Luke has been so generous over the years that we have a lot of the SOPs that he has described today inside the community, workout design — there's a whole standard operating procedure on how you design a workout based on what Luke has shared on the podcast and inside the membership over time, and there's much more.

And so please use that. Please use the search to find what you need or DM me if you can't find it. But if you want actual SOPs related to what Luke spoke about today then a lot of it, a lot of it is here. Luke, thank you so much. This has been enormously valuable. I found it so interesting. I'm sure the members have too.

And guys, I haven't got the March masterclass confirmed yet, but it will be amazing. And I'll let you know when that is arranged and inform you all and have a great rest of your week. And Luke, thanks so much. Have a great day and we'll talk soon.