BINARY STRENGTH

COMPLETE DIET GUIDE FOR MEN

BY JON ZHAO – ENGINEER HACKING & DEMOCRATIZING FITNESS

This guide works for any body type, genetics, and target body fat %

Kept updated, always FREE, downloadable at **jonzhao.com**
Feed into an AI project (ChatGPT, Claude, etc) and create your own free coach

Source: **Jonathan's YouTube Channel**
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Complete Diet Guide:
Nutrition, Metabolism, Psychology, Lifestyle Design

Preface

Every word in this guide is first written to my son Andes, so he can grow up inspired to do due diligence and critically think about every aspect of life as he goes on his own journey. I want him to be free, unchained, and not caged in by misinformation in this world caused by human egos and ignorance. I want him to learn how to unplug from the Matrix each time he's pulled in.

Many popular fitness influencers, including ones I enjoy watching, have serious eating disorders, body dysmorphia, addiction to harmful enhancements, and other issues that they rarely talk about. One guy I followed passed away recently from undereating and overexercising in a rush to get shredded. Fitness should be enhancing our mental health. If it's not, it's best to stop and figure out what's wrong.

Please treat this guide as my own opinions. It's part of my evolving essay on life, Binary Strength.

I'm also writing this for my male friends and co-workers who deserve more than to be confused and misled by misinformation or too much information designed to monetize their attention.

This guide also applies to females, but it's most accurate for male readers since that's the only gender I studied thoroughly. This guide is also written to myself as I process and heal after a very painful divorce. It's the reason I got into fitness to begin with, a positive outlet for expressing strong emotions. Now that this guide is done, I can finally move on and start dating again, to hope again. The odds are stacked against me, but Binary Strength is about breaking limits. I'm not sure why, but something deep inside pulled and guided me to finish this guide.

I believe all men deserve to know how to reach their peak genetic potential. Then it's up to them to decide if they want to or not. I'm not here to say everyone should have visible abs. That's why this guide will work for *any* body fat % targeted. That said, as a man, I believe the #1 most important product to invest in is yourself. It is a worthy goal to become the best version of ourselves: physically, mentally, and spiritually. No one will ever care about you as much as yourself. You are responsible for your own happiness.

By being at your peak physically, mentally, and spiritually, I believe you will undoubtedly be the first choice to someone out there and thus instinctively adopt an abundance mentality across all aspects of life. By this point, you would have also become a man that women who match you deserve, no longer an insecure child. This is effective in existing relationships too, saving years of compound stress.

This level of being also makes you extremely resilient to negativity, tragedies, loss, and suffering that we all face in life. You will no longer experience fear that cripples you. When you feel afraid, you will lean into it with courage because you have complete confidence in your true strength and its Source.

This guide will always be free to download at www.jonzhao.com as my self-expression to counter every negative experience in my life with 10X positivity back. If you're reading this and you're a man, I wrote this for you. If you found the guide useful, share it with another man so they can get value as well.

~ Jonathan Zhao, April 2022

Introduction

This guide contains all critical elements of **Dieting: Nutrition, Metabolism, Psychology, and Lifestyle Design** to transform any male human body to become lean and muscular. It works for any body type, genetic profile, and fat-loss goal, including reaching 10% body fat and below. I'm still learning, so expect updates periodically, including corrections made along the journey. Strength training is not covered since it's already in the Binary Strength - Complete Functional Workout Guide.

I've structured this guide to treat developing your peak performance self as a product:

1. Nutrition and Metabolism Mastery to Lose Body fat **(done)**
2. Psychology Needed to Reach Peak State for the First Time **(done)**
3. Lifestyle Design to Reach Peak State and Maintain Forever **(done)**
4. Psychology Needed to Stay Lean Forever **(WIP)**

The most important thing is taking massive action to start, build momentum, and create a flywheel for yourself. This is why I left psychology to later. Your psychology will naturally change in the process. What I'll share in #2-3 above will just help accelerate your progress. #1 is most important.

This guide is intentionally long. You likely have a good education and good career. When you wanted to make more money, you likely invested significant effort. You probably didn't get to where you are today in life by following a short guide. Getting to 10% body fat is easier than earning your first million and the key is applying the exact same mentality used for your own career or business to your fitness goals.

You can translate an existing win to a new win tailored to yourself. If you remember to apply this each step of the way, I'm confident you'll reach your fitness goals and surprise yourself in the process.

Getting to 10% body fat or lower is not impressive. People into fitness can do it. But, doing it as a mid-30s regular guy with a desk job, without spending hours working out every day, without working in the fitness industry, is rare. This is what I want to share with you. I achieve this by prioritizing spirituality first. I'll explain more later.

I'm not going to reference any sources throughout the guide but I'd say 90% is distilled information from applying Paul Revelia's videos on his YouTube channel, the coach I trust the most.

If you have questions or feedback, leave a comment on the latest video on my channel. If you know me in real life, send me a DM and I'd be happy to discuss with you directly. I don't use social media but I'm on LinkedIn if you want to connect directly, but please mention Binary Strength otherwise I likely won't accept your invite.

Please note: there are Amazon Affiliate links in this guide. I haven't seen any workout and diet guides on the internet this detailed being given away for free so I decided to create them. I derive no joy from selling fitness info so all guides I produce will always be free. If you happen to buy the same products that I use myself through links in this guide, Amazon gives me a credit to use for all my purchases and I'd be grateful, kind of like buying me a coffee online if you found info I share with you useful.

When I receive affiliate commissions, it tells me that a man read my guides and is on their way to peak state. I don't need to know who that man is to feel joy from knowing that I made a difference in his life. It tells me that a man out there got value and is waking up to become their true form. Thank you.

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Nutrition and Metabolism Mastery to Lose Body fat

The 10000 ft view of getting a lean and muscular physique

This section presents a concise view of everything you need to do to build a lean and muscular physique. It applies regardless of what level of leanness you're targeting.

I will explain the rationale behind everything because you must understand each "why" behind each "how" to truly internalize the knowledge so you can apply everything properly.

This is compiled from the latest and greatest in modern bodybuilding and nutritional science combined with decades of experience from world class coaches and my own experience.

Outcome: a lean and muscular physique

The 2 most important high-level goals:

1. High enough muscle mass
2. Low enough body fat % to reveal muscle definition

When you see a man and think he's "ripped" or "shredded", it's because the above two goals were met.

The first goal of **high enough muscle mass** is already covered in the Binary Strength Complete Functional Workout Guide, which specifically creates a functional physique. You can reach this goal via whatever training method that you enjoy. My guide simply demonstrates that calisthenic is sufficient which I used from March 2020 to March 2022. Now that Covid is pretty well managed where I am, I'm back in the gym for the mental benefits of sensing other humans nearby. I'm now training using a hybrid of compound movements with weights and calisthenics in the gym.

We will focus this diet guide on the second goal: **low body fat % to reveal muscle definition.** Low body fat % makes the most difference visually. People will dramatically overestimate your muscle mass when body fat % is low and dramatically underestimate your muscle mass when body fat % is high.

Body Fat % in Detail

The single most important thing to remember when it comes to body fat % is that the number itself is only useful as a relative guide to ourselves to compare our own body changes and not an absolute standard. This is because two people can appear the same visually even though their body fat % varies significantly. How body genetics determine how we look at different body fat %s.

The second most important thing to remember when it comes to dieting is that the vast majority of people will severely underestimate how much body fat they have. I've made this mistake before and know that most will make this mistake, lying to ourselves.

We'll think we're close to 12% bodyfat just because we can see clearly defined abs. I have defined abs at 20% bodyfat when flexing under good lighting. If I lie to myself that "I'm probably at around 12-14% body fat", I would be less motivated to diet when the reality is that I'm at 22% bodyfat.

Jeff Nippard has the best visualized study on this if you search on YouTube. Below are screenshots from his videos showing what different men and women look like across a spectrum of body fat %s:

A lot of people have significant muscle mass due to the popularity of gym culture these days, but very few look truly shredded because their body fat % is too high.

If you achieve a low body fat %, you don't need a lot of muscle to appear shredded.

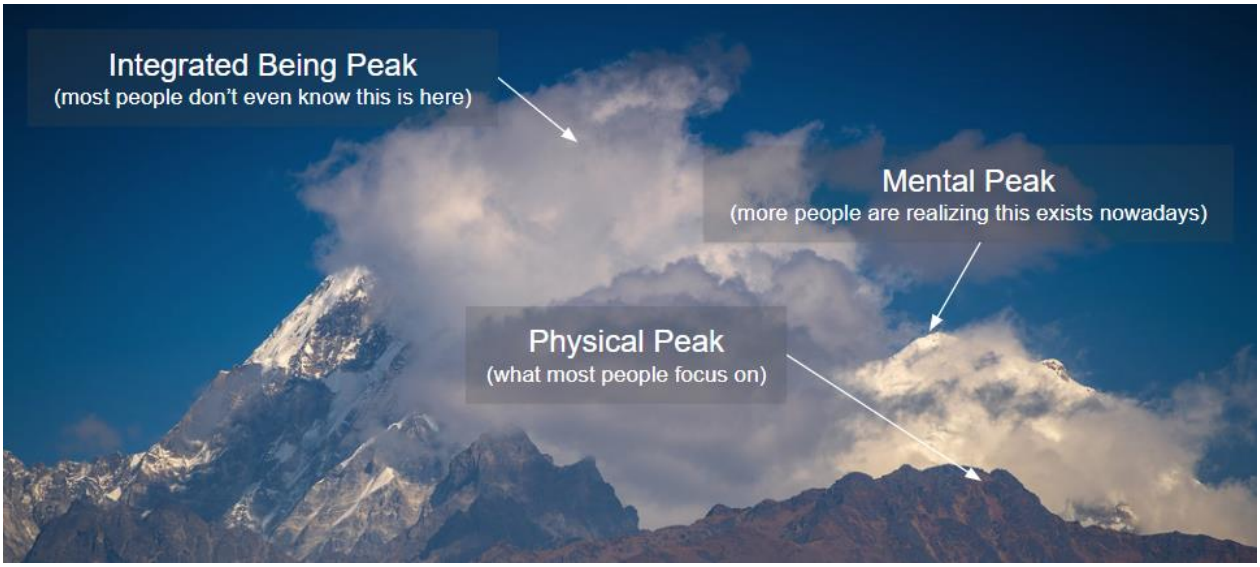
Personally, I noticed that when you walk around at 8-9% body fat, random people often start conversations with you, especially in the summer. It doesn't happen much until a certain level where it seems like a massive step function change. I believe this is probably due to some human instincts that rapidly process a few traits that come out at low body fat %s, even with clothes on: posture, jaw line,

facial feature changes from high testosterone, vascularity of veins, especially forearms, deeper voice, general aura of confidence in your own skin. You will get a lot of free stuff from random people. These are moments where you need to decide what to do. For your own sake, I hope you don't become a narcissistic gym bro. I believe **becoming fit just for approval is the lowest level of fitness.** It's a good starting point but not your true potential.

Approval by others is often the primary goal of why men pursue a lean and muscular physique. Ironically, it is one of the most counterproductive reasons that hold men back from reaching their peak physique. This is because the reason is usually too shallow to cause consistent behavioral change needed, especially among regular working men with full time careers. You need something more.

To me, being insecure is among the worse traits a man can have and something I consciously work on myself. I do this by developing confidence to tackle any challenge in life. This is why **I must advocate against dieting only to look better because it's not developing inner strength**. It pains me to see men who are already 10% body fat still caring about what others think of them.

That is not true freedom.



It's fine to start a fitness transformation journey for the purpose of looking better (physical) or feeling less insecure (mental), but if that's all you gained on your journey then I believe you would've missed your biggest opportunity. You can go even further beyond (insert SSJ3 theme).

I didn't write this guide for people who work in or are already very involved in the fitness industry. They can reach 12%, 10%, or even lower body fat %s because their lives revolve around it. Mine doesn't.

I wrote this for the everyday working man. Among these men, going from 30% body fat to 15% is very achievable and is much easier than going from 15% to 10%. Getting to 10% and below is for a special breed: warriors. These are often people with something deep to prove to themselves. Men who choose to maintain sub 10% body fat year-round, who aren't doing it for bodybuilding competitions, are the 1% of the 1%. These are men who have mastered self-discipline, often with a burning desire to be the best version of themselves. At this state, you will access new experiences in life that's unknown to most, unseen, and very fulfilling. Even regular experiences are enhanced because you would have peak physical, mental, and spiritual vigor. You can decide for yourself what your target state is.

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." ~ Hebrews 12:11 (NIV)

You can achieve *any* target body fat % by optimizing these 6 focus goals simultaneously:

1. Be in a caloric deficit and adhere to macros
2. Get feedback regularly
3. Master your metabolism by delaying plateaus and breaking through them
4. Minimize muscle loss
5. Maximize non-exercise activities

Without gifted genetics, it usually takes a long time to reach 12% body fat or below, especially when you have a full-time job outside of the fitness industry. This brings us to an important goal often overlooked:

6. Recover well

Optimizing for the 6th goal supercharges your body's responsiveness to change. I discovered how to do this by accident. My thesis is one that not everyone will agree with but it would be a disservice to the world to keep this for myself, which is to prioritize your spiritual wellbeing as #1.

I believe that fundamentality fitness and human transformations of body and self is connected to the concept of our own existence and meaning in life. When fitness is only about what human eyes can see and what the mind can understand, in the physical realm only, it's superficial to me and the greatest missed opportunity.

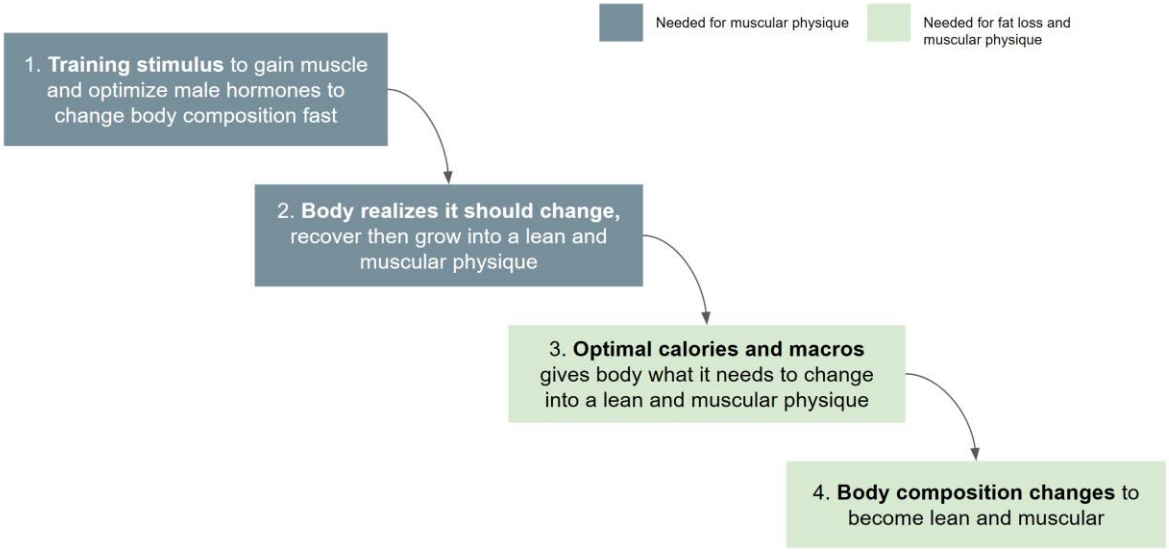
Now let's dive into each goal in detail.

Focus Goal 1: Be in a caloric deficit and adhere to macros

Principle: workouts and what types of food you eat don't change body composition, calories and macros do

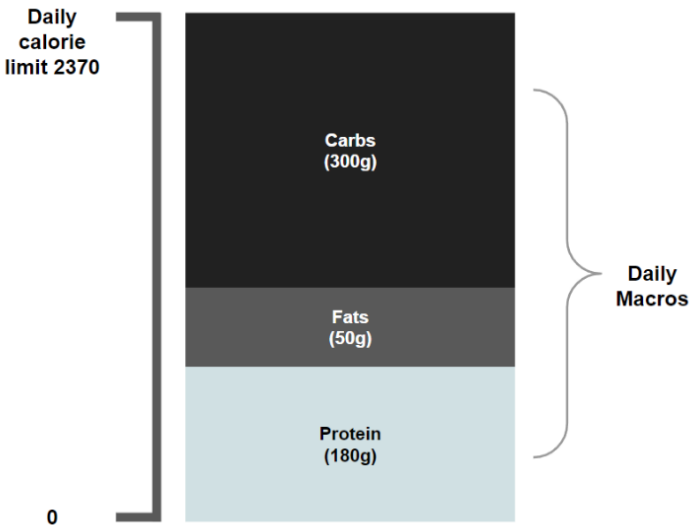
Working out is just the stimulus. You need it to build muscle. More muscle means you can consume more calories without putting on fat. Working out with heavy resistance training, not cardio, also suppresses appetite, which is counterintuitive but true. Cardio will increase appetite.

But it's not a critical part of losing fat, calories and macros are.



(how I view the 4 high levels steps in body transformations)

Macros is short for macronutrients, which are carbohydrates, fats, proteins. **By controlling the amount of these three macros you eat daily, results are guaranteed**. You measure these macros in grams (g). For example: 300g carbs, 50g fat, 180g protein. 1 gram of carbs or protein is 4 calories. 1 gram of fat is **9 calories**, more than 2X calorically dense as carbs and protein and the easiest to overeat.



For easier comprehension, when I say macros in this guide, I mean the both the amount and ratio. Since you probably haven't instinctively associated macros to calories yet, I'll often also say "calories and macros".

What you eat does matter but not nearly as much as you think. You can eat pizza and be shredded if you followed the right calories and macros. Benefits of eating healthy food will be discussed later.

Eating the wrong calories and macros will make you fat or even obese over time.

Eating the right calories and macros will make you shredded over time.

Think of macros like a balanced investment portfolio except unlike the financial markets, the body is a lot more predictable within a short window of time.

Super-important, scientifically proven truths you must remember, even if it's different than what fake gurus and influencers online say:

1. Carbs – **absolutely critical for fat-loss**, only turns into fat when you're in a caloric surplus. Spikes insulin, but it's required to transfer nutrients around the body efficiently. Insulin is only a problem when you're in a massive caloric surplus or insulin resistant.
2. Fats – least helpful for fat-loss, easiest to turn into fat, can turn into fat even if you're not in a caloric surplus.
3. Protein – necessary for muscle growth and all body functions, most important for fat-loss.

Principle: you cannot defy the law of thermodynamics

Energy cannot be created or destroyed. We can measure energy from food as calories. We can also measure energy our body uses as calories.

This means if you eat more calories than calories you use, that has to go somewhere, and most of it will go to fat cells that your body stores as reserve energy.

This is often referred to as **Calories In Calories Out (CICO).** It's not the complete story but a huge part of it. CICO + Hormones + other aspects of the body are all critical elements controlling fat-loss. We'll dive into more on this later in the guide.

Don't believe in the BS online about how fasting allows you to eat a lot more and still lose weight. Fasting has benefits but not nearly as much as you think for fat-loss. It does help produce growth hormones but the impact is minor vs simply being in a caloric deficit, which also increases growth hormones. **Whenever people fast and lose fat it's largely because of being in a caloric deficit.**

To be in a caloric deficit with **the most optimal macros for a lean and muscular physique**, this is what you need to do:

1. Go to a TDEE calculator like tdeecalculator.net and calculate your macros.
    - Whatever you estimate your activity level to be, choose 1 level below that because you will overestimate your activity level. It's better to underestimate. If you're off by a little, you'll learn how to adjust as you go.
    - Use the calculator to determine your max daily caloric intake for maintenance, ignore everything else. Maintenance calories mean if you eat that much every day, your weight wouldn't increase nor decrease.
2. Download MyFitnessPal on your phone www.myfitnesspal.com and click on set goals.
3. Set your calories to the maintenance level calculated in step 1 minus 500 calories.
    - 500 caloric deficit is recommended by experienced coaches because cutting more has a high chance of causing you to not adhere to the diet and binge eat. Anything less is too little to cause the body to change fast.
4. Set protein to 1g / lb of your current weight.
    - For example, if you're 180lb, set your daily protein intake to 180g.
    - If you're close to 12% body fat (can see abs when not flexing but not super well defined), set your daily protein intake to 1g / lb of your target weight instead of current weight.
5. Set fat to 0.25 – 0.4g / lb of your current weight but do not drop below 40g.
    - Going below 40g fat / day as a male has serious negative impacts to hormones that will be counterproductive to fat-loss.

    - Use higher range if you use oil in cooking instead of cooking sprays like Pam since it will be very hard to keep fats close to 40g / day if you use oil in your food.
    - Fat is the easiest macronutrient to directly turn into body fat, especially when consumed with carbs. Whenever you eat carbs, insulin increases and opens up cells to absorb whatever you eat, which is a good thing.
    - If you're in a caloric deficit, even if you consume a lot of fat like on a keto diet, you will lose fat, but this is simply not the scientifically proven fastest way to lose fat.
6. Put the rest into carbs, which is needed for optimal body functions, building and keeping muscle, and using fat for energy. Fat-loss happens best when the body has carbs. I'll explain later why low carb is not a good idea.
7. Get a food scale like this one on Amazon and commit to weighing your food, at least for 2 weeks to build awareness of where calories come from. Ideally you continue to do it.
8. Track everything you put into your body that has calories, no excuses. This includes oils or butter used in food, condiments like ketchup etc. If you ate out and you can't find the dishes you ate in MyFitnessPal, estimate the best you can but still input something.

If you don't want to track food, you can still lose fat and probably reach 15% body fat no problem but I'm 99% sure you cannot reach peak state simply because hidden calories are everywhere and people are generally not conscious enough of every single time they consume calories. Tracking food helps you get used to a sense of how many calories are in all the foods out there. It's similar to budget management. When you see a piece of cake that you know is at least 800 calories, you would ask yourself, can I afford to eat this cake today and is it worth the cost of 800 calories? The answer might be yes. But at least you're conscious of it.

You can definitely lose fat and be fitter if you don't track food, but you will never be shredded and ripped unless you've tracked food for so long that it's instinctive to you and you don't even need to track to adhere to macros. I'm not this good yet simply because when I stop tracking, it becomes much harder to practice self-control. I would lose the gamified budget management mentality. I also personally enjoy fitting macros every day. It's a game I get to play each day with tangible results in a fast feedback cycle. Pretty awesome. This is why I believe engineers or anyone technical should be able to lose fat more easily than the average person, as long as they have discipline.

That said, obviously there will be days or meals where I don't track, especially when eating socially. The key is not being dogmatic but informed so you can make practical choices.

Principle: maintenance calories change and need to be updated (probably the most important principle in this guide)

Maintenance calories is not static. It's dynamic. As you lose weight, your maintenance calories will change due to metabolic adaptations so you have to recalculate maintenance regularly after each significant weight loss milestone. Therefore, you must also adjust your macros as your weight changes using the same method above to determine how much protein, fats, and carbs you should set.

After using the TDEE calculator once in the beginning, **all subsequent calculation of maintenance calories must come from *real* data, specifically daily weight and calories eaten data.**

Technically maintenance is constantly in flux but it's not practical to try to be super accurate in knowing what true maintenance is all the time. That's why a 14-day lookback window is good enough.

You calculate maintenance periodically by:

1. Assuming you tracked **all** food intake daily, sum all calories you consumed in the last 14 days (good window to account for daily variances), call this **Total Calories Eaten**

2. Assuming you weighed yourself daily, calculate how many lbs of weight was lost in the last 14 days, take this and multiply by 3500 calories / lb of fat, call this **Net Calories from Fat-loss**
3. Your new daily maintenance caloric intake is (**Total Calories Eaten** + **Net Calories from Fat-loss**) / 14

This means if you ate at this new daily maintenance caloric intake each day, your weight shouldn't change much. If you tracked accurately, this process is proven and indisputable. There might be slight weight loss or gain but even accounting for water retention fluctuations, any delta would be due to inaccuracies in tracking since it's not possible to be perfect in tracking. The entire concept of CICO and counting calories is about close estimations to reality.

The above method doesn't factor in the different activity levels throughout the 14 days but that's why we use a long enough time window to adjust for small variances that should average out. It's good enough to use unless you had abnormal activity level in those 14 days.

Did you notice that the TDEE calculator did not have any inputs about genetics or body type (mesomorph, ectomorph, endomorph)? Genetics do matter for fat-loss but not in the way that most people believe. We'll touch on this later in the guide.

Controlling Appetite

Putting a daily upper limit on caloric intake is about one single thing: **appetite suppression**. Imagine if you rarely wanted to eat and would have to consciously try to eat. Obviously, you would become shredded pretty easily over time, provided that you don't undereat severely and still strength train and optimize all the focus goals in this guide. Genetics do matter in fat-loss but not in the way you think. **One of the things genetics play a major role in is predisposition to have bigger or smaller appetites.** This is why often men with skinny body types find it hard to become very muscular because they actually find it difficult to eat enough food to gain muscle. Men who tend to be overweight do not have this difficulty.

Step 1. Minimize sugar

Sugar, in all its forms, including the many names it shows up as in process foods, is your number one enemy preventing you from becoming your peak physical form.

Aside from all the health problems and diseases sugar causes, the biggest problem is that it's addictive in the brain and gut (your second brain). The more sugar you consume, the more you want to eat it or just eat food in general. I have almost 0 sugar intake during weekdays. I use Stevia or sugar free syrup sometimes to sweeten things like Greek yogurt. Artificial sweeteners, which are also included in protein shakes, are not nearly as harmful as sugar, despite the sugar industry's effort to make people believe it is.

Step 2. Minimize or avoid binge eating

Principle: binge eating is both psychological and physical

Do not decrease calories too much too fast. Always be aware of your current maintenance calories and try to not eat below 500 less than maintenance each day. This is the best prevention to binge eating. Binge eating is becoming a social norm, especially for those who are trying to lose weight. Here's why:

1. Today's culture heavily influences us to consume more than we produce. Binge eating happens when you psychologically feel deprived and want to consume. Experienced monks or anyone living a minimally consumption-oriented life don't binge eat.

2. Today's fitness industry often influences people to cut calories way too damn low and too fast. Binge eating happens when your body physically actually needs to binge. Most people don't realize this.

This is the definitive book on the subject: Brain over Binge. You don't have to be bulimic or suffer from eating disorders to get massive value from this. It's also an entertaining story.

If you can avoid or minimize binge eating, you will dramatically accelerate your fitness progress and maximize your chance of reaching your fitness goals.

Step 3. Try to avoid cardio if you can, especially high intensity cardio

Principle: your body doesn't care about your fat-loss goals and just wants to heal itself each time you exert energy

Cardio will almost always consume some muscle, regardless of intensity. The higher the intensity the higher chance of muscle loss. Cardio will also require recovery, consuming the same recovery capacity you have in a week for strength training recovery.

Cardio increases appetite for the day you perform it and days afterwards. This is one of the main reasons why people into fitness who exercise a lot are finding it hard to build muscle and lose fat. The increase in appetite vs calories burned from cardio is not a good ratio. The number of calories you burn is almost always much less than the number of calories you need to eat to deal with the appetite increase, therefore putting you into a caloric surplus (gain fat), or at best, maintenance (no fat-loss).

I suggest limiting cardio only to activities that truly make you happy regardless of fitness goals.

Step 4. Strength train with compound movements that are extremely challenging to you

Strength training at extremely high intensity is one of the best ways to suppress appetite. This isn't intuitive but it's how the body works. Compound movements challenge the entire body's central nervous system in a way that makes fat-loss much easier. This is one of the reasons why elite level calisthenics is easy to use as the training method to remain ripped year-round.

Step 5. Use appetite suppressants

I just drink 2 cups of coffee and make sure to get enough fiber every day (30g+). There are more ways such as tea, ginger, lemon or lime juice, apple cider vinegar, etc.

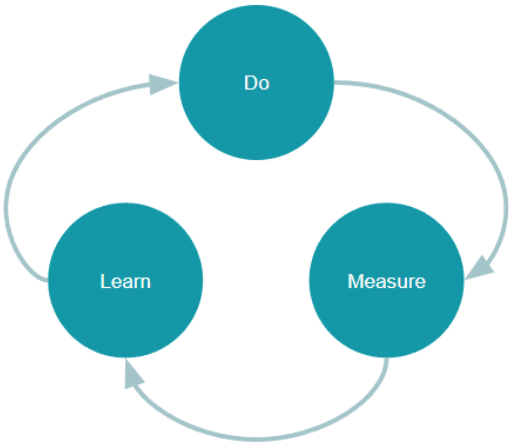
Step 6. Every time you feel hungry, drink a lot of water first

I consider this one of the most important habits you need to master during a caloric deficit.

When your body is in a caloric deficit, it uses significantly more water than normal because of complex processes taking place that will lead to fat-loss. **When the body lacks water, besides feeling thirsty, you'll often also feel hungry.** This is one of the most important biological feedback loops that was discovered recently: you think you're hungry but you're actually thirsty. This happens more frequently in a day than you realize.

Always drink a lot of water every time you feel hungry first. It's the first defense against making poor choices that lead to not being within that day's calories and macros goals.

Focus Goal 2: Get feedback regularly



What isn't measured cannot be managed.

You must measure to know if you should stay the course or make changes.

Weigh yourself daily in the morning right after getting up, before getting dressed. **Do not react daily if your weight goes up or down** because daily fluctuations are normal since 60% of the body is water.

Compare each day's weight with your weight from the same day of week but a week earlier. For example, if today is Monday, then compare to last Monday.

The more fat you have the faster you'll lose it, the less fat you have the slower you'll lose it.

Body fat %	Healthy rate of fat-loss / week to minimize muscle loss
More than 12%	0.5-1% of your bodyweight
10-12%	0.25 - 0.5% of your bodyweight
10% or less	0 - 0.25% of your bodyweight

See if you're losing weight at the healthy pace above, if so, keep doing what you're doing.

Unless you are obese, if you're losing more than 1% of your bodyweight / week (except initial water weight early in a diet phase), then you're losing muscle almost guaranteed, which counters one of the focus goals: **Minimize Muscle Loss**. You would have to slow your weight loss down by reducing activities or increasing calories. How much depends on how well you know your body, so you will need to experiment and re-measure. For example, increase daily calorie intake by 100-200 calories, keep everything else the same. Keep this consistent for 7 days, reassess.

An exception to this is if you lost a large % of bodyweight in a week like 2%, but your weight stayed the same for more than a week prior and you were adhering to calories and macros properly. This is because sometimes this happens: you're in a caloric deficit but you hit a fat-loss plateau for 1-2 weeks, where your weight stayed the same and your body fat % didn't seem to change. Then you broke through the plateau (this guide shows you how) one day and suddenly that week you lose 2% of your bodyweight. Coaches I follow all observed this phenomenon. I experience it myself frequently, no one really knows why this happens.

If you are strength training to signal to your body that you need to preserve and build muscle, it's the best thing we can do to safely assume that the vast majority of weight lost is from fat. There's no definitive way of knowing otherwise.

Unless you are already at, below, or close to 12% body fat, if you're losing less than 0.5% of your bodyweight / week, then:

- You can lose fat at a faster rate without losing muscle.

- You can speed up your fat-loss by increasing activities or reducing calories. How much depends on how well you know your body, so you will need to experiment and re-measure. For example, reduce daily calorie intake by another 100-200 calories, keep everything else the same. Keep this consistent for 7 days, reassess.
- You can also increase activities or add low impact low intensity cardio that's easy to recover from and doesn't impede your strength training recovery.

Take pictures or visually inspect yourself in the mirror regularly since the scale is only one signal. For example, often a lot of fat is lost on your back, hamstrings, butt, or places that isn't easily viewable in front of a mirror. You can also use a measuring tape or generally assess how your clothes are fitting.

Sometimes the scale says you're losing weight but you don't notice it. This might also be because a surprising amount of fat is not visible and surrounds your organs. This is called visceral fat (see image from Harvard Health to the left).

A lot of people do not look that fat but have a high amount of visceral fat from a poor diet which puts them at much higher risk of health issues and diseases.

The key is **not making a judgement day to day**, but always comparing progress from about 7 days ago (week-to-week delta) because:

1. It can take the body several days to produce measurable changes
2. The scale is very sensitive to water weight fluctuations since 70% of your body is water

The best thing to do is **don't focus on the end goal** and instead **trust the do > measure > learn iteration process and be patient with a long-term mindset**

Weighing ourselves daily and taking progress photos weekly is a **must-have during intentional fat loss phases to stay consistent and not fall off track.**

This is mainly because as humans, we are very bad at noticing small differences in our body image if we look in the mirror day by day. I've experienced this myself. This is how a man could have over 30% body fat and severely underestimate their body fat percentage and have a distorted view of themselves.

There are periods where I weigh 175 lbs. and thought like I look the same as when I weigh 165 lbs. It's only when I start taking photos in the mirror and comparing them to photos I took at 165 lbs. do I realize the massive difference. Then I'm able to wake up and stop lying to myself. So this is why I'm sharing with you that progress photos are a must-have to:

1. wake up and shock ourselves into action
2. stay grounded in reality constantly
3. track progress beyond the scale to stay driven

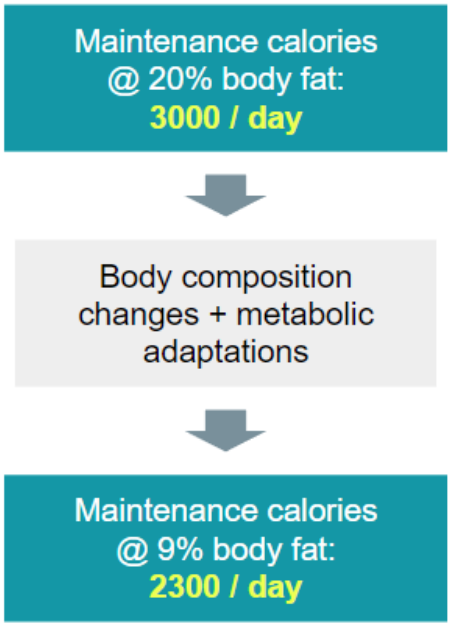
Thankfully, our eyes are exceptionally good at noticing even small differences of body images when shown side-by-side. This is why having an album of weekly progress photos for each fat loss journey or phase is very helpful. For example, I have an album right now called "Fat loss 2026", because I'm executing a 6-month diet phase from 175lbs down to 160lbs (~8% bodyfat for me).

Every time that I had a highly successful and rapid fat loss phase, it was always paired with an album of progress photos that I look at daily. This is critical fuel to stay driven.

Focus Goal 3: Master your metabolism by delaying plateaus and breaking through them

You're now at the most advanced part of this diet guide. This contains information that is usually found only in paid guides and programs.

Principle: fat-loss plateaus are guaranteed



Even if you're doing all the right things, fat-loss plateaus will happen because the human body adapts. Your metabolism will slow and get used to operating on less calories.

Calories In Calories Out (CICO) is often presented in a one-dimensional format and doesn't account for metabolic adaptation. CICO is true in principle. In the end it's about calories you ate and drank vs calories used, but here's the catch, which we talked about earlier as a principle: **maintenance calories change as we lose body fat and as our body gets used to lower calories.**

This is one of the most important keys for fat-loss that hugely impacts everything built on top of it, which I'll explain below.

Principle: people's genetically predetermined metabolisms don't differ that much

Scientists studied large populations of people with different physiques and body fat %s and found that actually genetically predetermined basal metabolic rate as defined by science almost does not differ. The variance was 10% max. This means that **people who seemingly can eat a lot and not gain weight are simply burning more calories from physical activities or they're eating less than those with higher body fat %s when measured long term.** This is a revolutionary finding.

People overestimate the impact of what can be achieved in a week, but underestimate what can be achieved in 52 weeks. If you observed a fit man for a day eating insane amount of food, your mind has a cognitive bias to assume it's due to gifted genes. If you observed an overweight man for a day and saw he only ate a piece of fruit that day and gained 0.5 lb the next day, you might assume he has bad genes. Humans tend to believe what you see is all there is, one of the main cognitive biases explained in "Thinking Fast and Slow" by Daniel Kahneman. Most of reality is unseen.

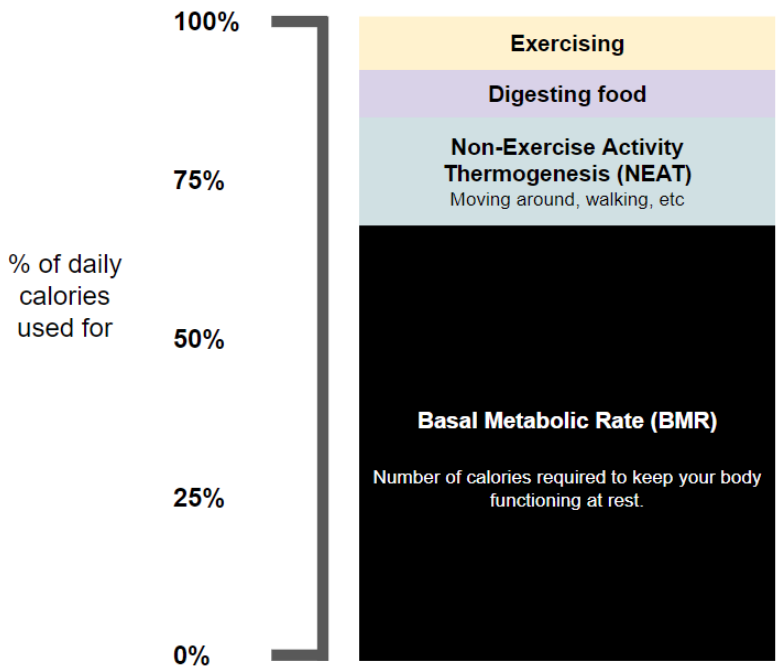
Genetics do impact the following:

1. Order fat appears on your body and order they come off
2. Parts of your body that fat storage is concentrated in (fat distribution)
3. Parts of your body that fat is extremely difficult to come off of (stubborn areas)
4. Behaviors that cause more eating or less eating (strong brain neuropathways)
5. Hormones that trigger muscle growth
6. Hormones that trigger fat-loss
7. Hormones that trigger hunger (more eating)
8. Hormones that trigger satiety (less eating)
9. Muscle insertion (how muscles appear on your body, e.g. 4-10 packs on abs, 6 is most common)

10. Bone structure and size (frame for muscles to build on)
11. Height

Genetics do matter but it's not an excuse since **it's a guarantee that calories, macros, and optimal recovery will change your body via the law of thermodynamics and biology of the human body.**

Once you've understood all the levers truly within your control, you will be extremely aware and attuned with your own genetics and each factor listed above unique to yourself. This is a worthy part of understanding who you truly are since your physical body is a big component of it. This can only be learned by consistent practice over time.



This diagram is an accurate view of factors contributing to fat-loss and the impact of their contributions.

Principle: within a 24-hour window, the vast majority of fat-loss DOES NOT happen in the hours you spend consciously exercising, whether it's strength training or cardio (unless you're doing hours of cardio like marathons), it happens in the hours you're not exercising.

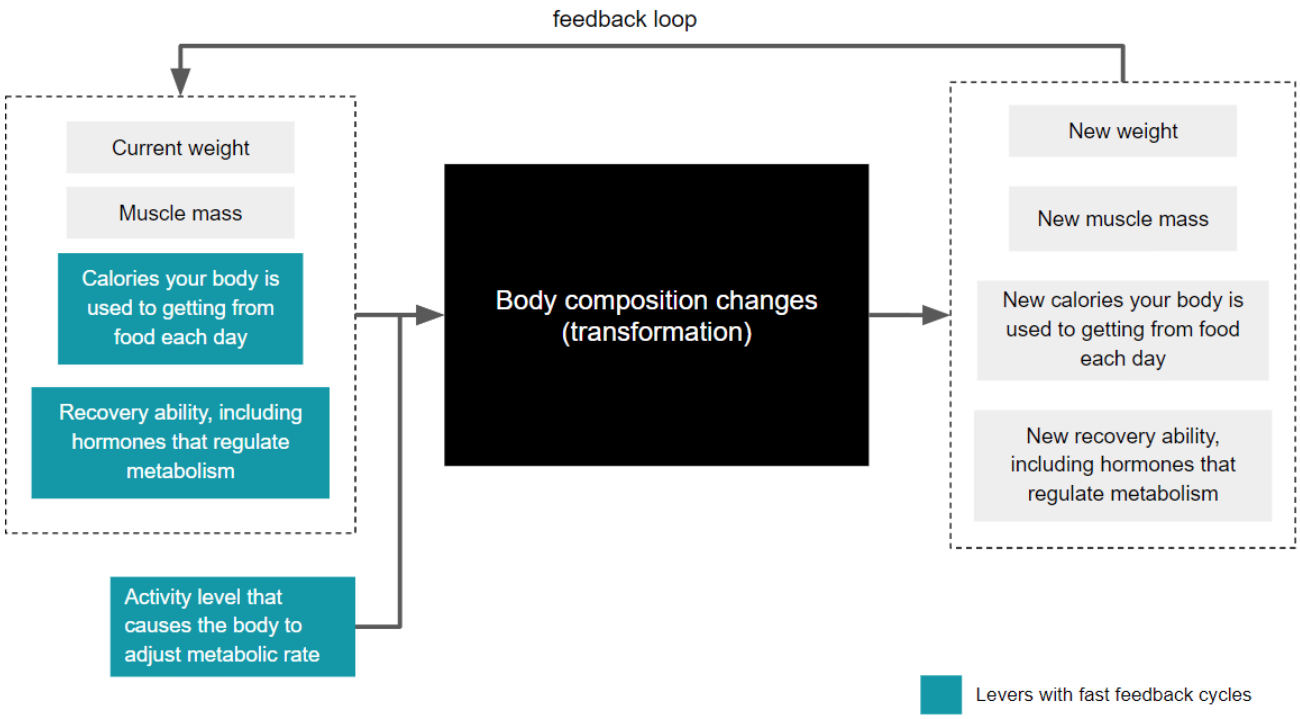
From countless observations, people into fitness and most people at the gym are all seriously over-exercising.

Often friends and coworkers think I have gifted genetics. I don't. I simply minimize mistakes and time wasted.

To get the highest return on our investment, we want to maximize the amount of calories used by regular bodily functions each day. This is what I will call metabolism because it's easier for the general population to understand, although it doesn't fit the strict scientific definition of metabolism.

For sake of simplicity, we will view metabolism as a black box that represents your body's caloric needs to function each day excluding calories used from conscious exercise.

Your metabolism naturally decreases as your weight drops. We cannot control this. But there are levers we *can* control. The following will change your diet game forever if you understand and apply everything correctly.



(body transformation as a system)

There are 2 factors that impact metabolism but I don't consider levers because they don't have fast feedback cycles. These are:

1. Current weight
2. Muscle mass

The good news is there are 3 other factors that impact metabolism with fast feedback cycles that I treat and use regularly as levers:

3. Calories your body is used to getting from food each day
4. Activity level that causes the body to adjust metabolic rate
5. Hormones that regulate metabolism

You can hit a fat-loss plateau due to all three levers above. Now let's dive into each in detail.

Plateau reason 1: plateaus from calories

Fat-loss plateaus will happen when your body got used to the calories you're eating.

<u>Calories need to be lower</u>

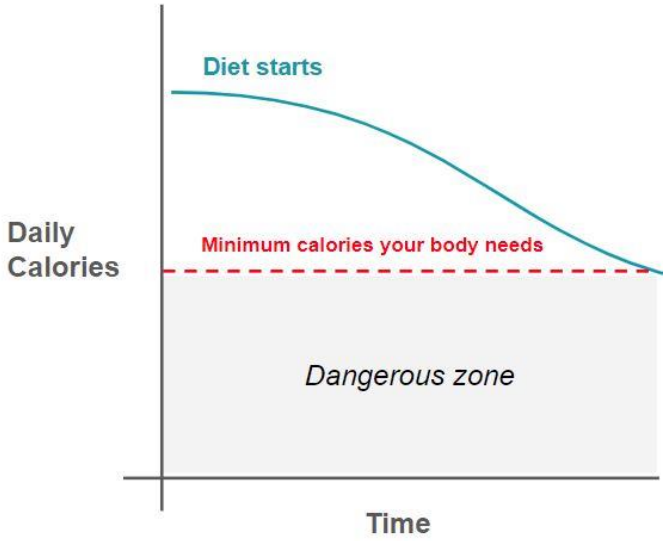
When you hit a plateau, cutting daily calories by another 100 is useful to shock the body into responding again. For example, drop from 2500 / day to 2400 / day.

However, **this should be used as a last resort to break through plateaus.** Think of it like a game where you have a limited amount of "cutting calories by 100" charged up powers to use.

<u>Cutting calories too low too fast</u>

To delay the unavoidable plateaus, **we must be eating the highest daily calories while still being in a caloric deficit with a healthy rate of fat-loss.** This is because the body adapts to lower daily calories. If you cut from a maintenance of 3000 down to 2000 suddenly, you will

definitely lose fat but once you hit the next plateau, what will you do? You would only be able to afford cutting 100 calories a few times before hitting a lower bound in how low you can reduce calories. This limits how long your effective diet window is and thus makes you lose less fat than you could've in the same time.



Eating too few calories and starving yourself is extremely unhealthy. When the body doesn't get enough food intake, it starts to go into an extreme self-preservation mode. You also wouldn't be getting the bare minimum micronutrients you need from food.

When you lack micronutrients, often electrolyte levels are too low, such as magnesium, potassium, and sodium. This causes you to feel weak and have less energy, maybe even headaches. Even if you supplement, it's not as effective as absorbing them from food.

Principle: each time you eat is an opportunity to enrich your body with nutrients to improve your physical and mental well-being

We want to be eating the maximum we can during a fat-loss phase. Therefore, you should cut calories at max 500 below maintenance to start. When you hit a plateau, assuming you tried everything else to break through the plateau, cut another 100 calories from your daily limit to shock the body into losing fat again, adhere to macros for 1-2 weeks and see if things change.

Example: maintenance is 2500 calories

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Daily calories	2000	2000	2000	1900	1900	1900	1900	1800
Lost weight at end of week?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes

Some people's bodies are highly reactive, some are not. You have to test, but the principle is universal. **You should be losing weight at the highest calories you can afford while still being in a deficit.**

<u>Eat more to lose more</u>

Often when you've been in a caloric deficit and losing fat, you'll hit a point where it's actually more productive to eat more and increase calories.

If you find it difficult to adhere to calorie goals, take a diet break for 2 weeks, where you would eat at maintenance and stop trying to lose fat during the diet break. During those 2 weeks, still track, so you know what your maintenance is after the diet break ends. Then when you start cutting again, start at maintenance minus 500. Diet breaks help you physically and mentally continue dieting.

Signs of calories being too low include:

- Headaches
- Fast heart beats
- Weak voice
- Shorter breaths
- General weakness and soreness in body that makes non-exercise activities like moving around and walking much harder than you remembered
- Taking longer to recover from strength training workouts than you remembered
- Insomnia, either cannot sleep or waking up early (provided it's not due to too much caffeine or stress and anxiety or other factors)
- Legs feel heavy
- Desire to eat a lot of food or thinking about food in ways that you didn't before

If your calories are too low, you might experience a combination of the above.

If you've been eating extremely low calories for a prolonged period of time (anything less than your maintenance calculated from Focus Goal 1: Be in caloric deficit and adhere to Macros minus 500 for 2 or more months), your metabolism is probably damaged. A refeed and reverse dieting will help heal your metabolism.

What is a refeed

A refeed is a day where you spike carb intake while keeping fat and protein the same as the macros you're adhering to. High amount of carbs will spike your insulin levels, which is needed for fat-loss. Be careful listening to influencers online pointing to insulin as a problem. It's not. The problem is when you eat way too many calories (especially processed foods low in fiber) consistently that causes insulin resistance. Insulin itself is literally one of the most important hormones for fat-loss. Bodybuilders sometimes inject insulin, which I'm against.

Spiking insulin is needed for healthy thyroid function, specifically for conversion of T4 to T3 thyroid hormones. The thyroid gland produces critical hormones that regulate the body's metabolic rate, and controls heart, muscle, brain, bone, and digestive functions.

I treat refeed days like a controlled cheat day. It must still be tracked unless you want to risk ruining days or weeks of effort. Generally, on a refeed day you will increase fat too since rarely can you find foods that don't have fat. That said, fat should be no higher than 100g and you can lower your protein to make more room for carbs, but no lower than 100g of protein. To know how many calories you can consume on a refeed day takes experimentation but a good starting point is your maintenance plus 500 calories, which should be very enjoyable, especially if you strategically fast until large meals. I would also recommend you maximize the opportunity of the refeed day by strength training harder and longer (no need to exceed 60 min) the day after because you will have a lot of stored up energy to use.

The leaner you become, the more often you need refeeds. At 12% I needed 1 weekly refeed. At 10% and lower I needed double consecutive refeeds which I use Saturday and Sundays for. This is the secret to remaining lean using a positive feedback loop that is very enjoyable. The most optimal system I developed for myself achieved 2000 calories / day on weekdays, 4000 on Saturdays and 3000 on Sundays and I was well < 10% with no cardio, 4 x 45 min workouts per week, and I was still in a caloric deficit and losing more fat. I had to stop because I was getting too cold from lacking body fat in the winter. Any lower would've been a path towards unhealthy.

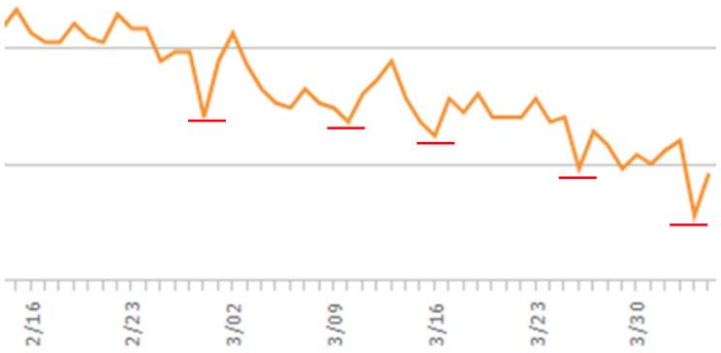
Once you have achieved 10% body fat, you literally need to try to not be fit anymore. I explain why this happens in detail near the end of this guide.

After a refeed day, for the next week, you should go back to eating at the macros you set right before the refeed and see if anything changes.

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6
Daily calories	3000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Refeed day?	yes	no	no	no	no	no

You will likely gain some weight after the refeed day due to water retention, food digested etc., but don't stress about this. What's important is monitoring your weight in the next 5-7 days and see if you broke through the plateau and went lower than your weight the morning of the refeed.

If you're familiar with stock charts, **we are looking for lower lows.**

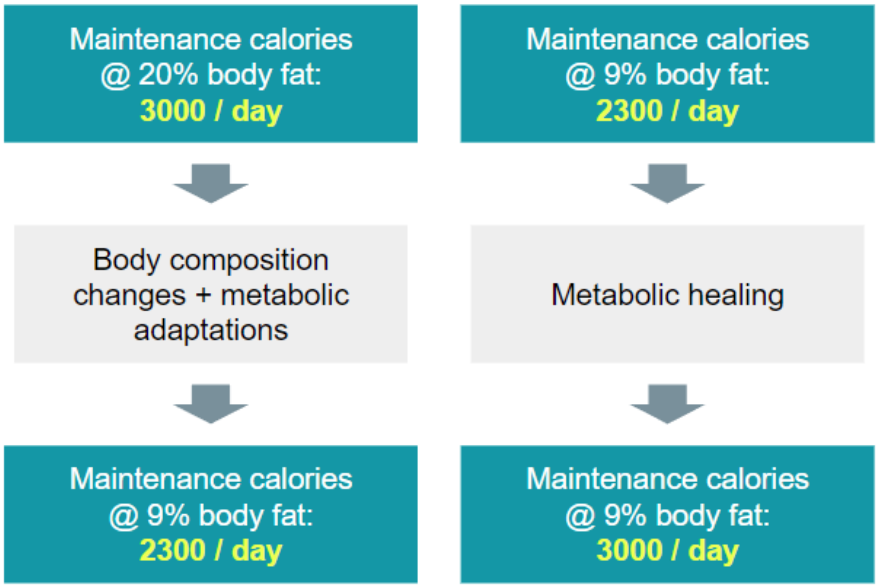


(example of my daily weight while in a deficit in Spring 2022)

Reverse dieting

If a refeed did not kickstart fat-loss again, as in your weight doesn't drop to a new lower low 5-7 days after the refeed, even though you feel you're in a deficit during that week and you don't feel you can eat any less, then you should try reverse dieting to methodically heal your metabolism over a period longer than just 1-2 refeed days.

Principle: when you slowly increase calories, your body adapts and you gradually increase your true maintenance calories



(this is how you eat insane amount of food to lose fat)

You would increase daily calories by 100, keep it consistent for a week, assessing each week to see if fat-loss kickstarts again or if weight stays the same. Keep trying to increase daily calories by 100 per week until you start gaining weight. It's actually safer to do 50 calories at a time but most people find 100 easier to manage.

For example, assuming that fat-loss plateau is reached even at 1500 calories (due to following some low-calorie fad diet that got short term temporary results) where maintenance should've been 2500 according to a TDEE calculator (usually quite accurate), this means your true maintenance is close to 1500. Reverse dieting would look like this:

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Daily calories	1500	1600	1700	1800	1900	2000	2100	2200
Reverse diet week?	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Gained weight at end of week?	no	no	no	no	no	no	Yes (necessary to heal metabolism)	no

In the above example, if you didn't reverse diet and just bumped calories from 1500 to 2000 immediately, you will most likely gain fat because your body is still used to getting 1500 / day.

I've guided men who literally ate 1300-1500 calories per day and stopped losing fat whereas they should actually be eating 2300 and still losing fat. This is insane and a sad byproduct of the fitness industry causing people to undereat and overtrain.

If you're gaining weight (measured in a 7-day window) instead of no change, then you must be in a caloric surplus. You will need to figure out what this means. Either your maintenance became abnormally low or you're consuming a lot of calories that you haven't tracked. It's almost always because of hidden calories or you might not be truly honest with yourself or aware enough. For example, activity level might have changed.

If you're 100% certain you're honest with yourself and you truly are tracking all calories you consume, and you find that fat-loss is stalled even though you are well below the maintenance you calculated, then you absolutely need to reverse diet by slowly eating more. **You might also have to accept gaining some fat to heal your metabolism so you can lose fat more effectively again and go even lower than your last plateau weight.** Sometimes you need to take one step back to go two steps forward. This is what professional coaches work with their clients on because the vast majority of people do not understand this concept and will often stubbornly refuse to accept it without coaching.

Principle: fat-loss will never be linear for a prolonged period of time

Eat more to lose fat? This is counterintuitive because the mass media only talks about cutting calories to lose fat. You would be surprised at how many people who are into fitness are undereating, this is especially true when you consume a lot of vegetables and fiber because when you track them in an app, unless your app has a function to filter out fiber from carbs and calories, you will see a number that's much higher than your actual daily caloric intake. For example, if you eat a lot of vegetables, the tracker might say 2000 calories but your body actually only got 1800 calories of real energy or less.

From my experience many people who are really into fitness are undereating because they don't realize they can eat more to lose fat more effectively.

To minimize unintentional fat gain, after each diet phase, **when you end the diet and start going into maintenance, you should increase calories gradually by reverse dieting out of the caloric deficit into maintenance.** Often people immediately increase calories after they end a cutting phase but this is wasting the room you had to maximize your maintenance calories had you just slowly added calories.

For example:

> Scenario 1: immediately go from 1900 to 2400 calories / day, now your maintenance is around 2400
>
> Scenario 2: reverse diet from 1900 to 2000 calories / day, then add 100 increments at a time slowly. You might be able to end your maintenance at 2600.

Plateau reason 2: plateaus from hormone imbalances

Need to eat more fat

Hormone levels make a big difference to fat-loss, not to mention mood, sleep, and general physical and mental wellbeing, which all-together also impact fat-loss.

Calories being too low causes hormone imbalances. Aside from that, another likely reason for hormone imbalance is fat intake being too low. As a man, you should not go below 40 grams of fat per day. Any lower will cause hormones to be out of balance.

For a woman, it's 30 grams of fat per day minimum.

Need to reduce stress

Minimizing stress automatically helps with fat-loss. This is beyond stress eating. Even if you don't eat more, stress causes your body to not want to break down fat cells.

Optimizing for Focus Goal 6: Recover well will help with this.

Plateau reason 3: plateaus from activity level

Too inactive

If your activity level dropped, two things will happen that impede fat-loss:

1. Your body uses less energy than you previously anticipated
2. Your metabolism slows

You need to reduce calories to account for these.

Too active

When your activity level consistently exceeds your body's recovery ability for too long, your body will want to shut down to protect itself. This impedes your fat-loss goals.

Use common sense to assess if you're over-exercising, only you would know. If you are, see the Focus Goal 6: Recover well**.**

Focus Goal 4: Minimize muscle loss

The more muscle mass you have, the more energy your body needs to keep you alive each day, therefore you can afford to eat more because your maintenance calories increased. Being able to eat more is an excellent thing because of the principle mentioned earlier in the guide, worth repeating:

Principle: each time you eat is an opportunity to enrich your body with nutrients to improve your physical and mental well-being

Since this guide is not about muscle building, I'm going to assume you are already doing strength training consistently each week to build muscle, possibly using Binary Strength Complete Functional Workout Guide or whatever training style you enjoy.

When you lose fat, you will lose a little bit of muscle because your body is in a state of caloric deficit, meaning it needs to get more energy than from the food you consume. It has nowhere else to get it from except from breaking down your own cells, including both fat and muscle cells.

We want the vast majority to come from fat cells. Otherwise, you will just look and be weaker.

During a caloric deficit, the only way to optimize for minimum breakdown of muscle cells and maximum breakdown of fat cells is to:

1. Strength train to force your body to want to keep the muscles you have and ideally build more.
2. Eat enough protein (ideal amount already outlined in Focus Goal 1: Be in a caloric deficit and adhere to macros) to fuel muscle repair and growth since muscle breakdown will happen and we can't predict exactly when.
3. If you use a lot of energy doing cardio, like long bike rides, you will almost certainly breakdown muscle. You can minimize the amount of muscle loss by frequently consuming easy to digest carbs throughout your cardio sessions. Try anything high on the glycemic index like fruits or even processed carbs like candy.
4. Do not exceed losing more than 1% body fat per week. E.g. If you're 200lbs, aside from initial water weight lost during the first week of your cut, each week's weight cause should not be more than 2lbs. More details are in the section above on getting feedback regularly.

It's possible to be in a caloric deficit, losing fat each week, and actually still gain more muscle at the same time. This is called **body re-composition**. Genetics will determine how well you can re-comp. The only way to know is to just consistently strength train, follow the right macros, and be in a caloric deficit for a few months and see what happens. If you got stronger, are able to do more reps or more difficult exercises with higher intensity, it means you gained muscle. If you achieved that and you also appear leaner due to lower body fat, it means you successfully re-comped.

I rely on re-comp throughout the year.

Focus Goal 5: Maximize non-exercise activities

When you think someone has an easy time being at a low body fat % even when their exercise levels are the same as yours, similar height, and they eat nearly identical types of food and volume of food as you (maybe even more), you might be tempted to think they're born that way and attribute it to genetics.

The reality is usually because of two reasons:

1. Your daily activity levels are much lower than theirs

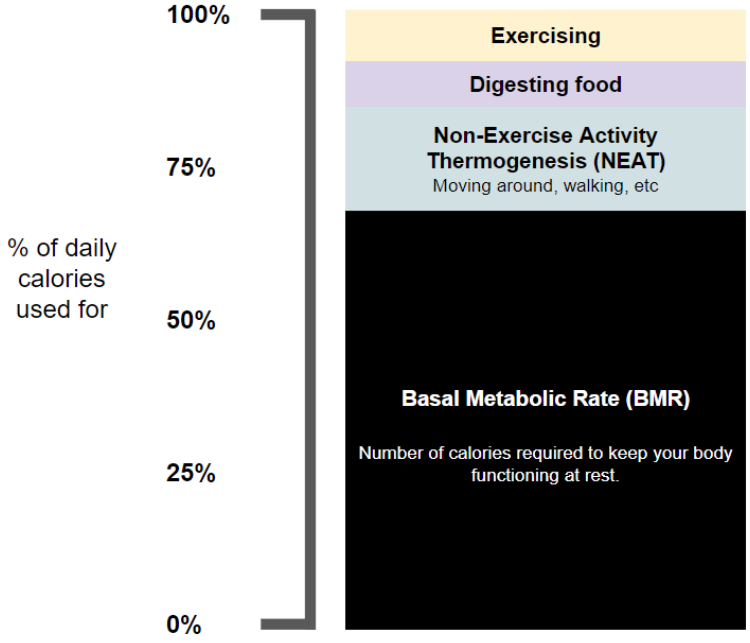
2. Your regular bodily functions are severely hindered somehow causing your body to not use energy when it should

The second reason makes the most difference and is key to how I stay shredded, this is covered in the next focus goal. This section will only focus on the first reason.

<u>What is NEAT</u>

NEAT is Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis. This is energy you use when you're moving around but not consciously exercising. Daily activity levels make a much larger difference than modern humans realize. This is largely due to humans forgetting what life was like before the technological revolution.

The more active you are, the more energy you consume. Specific foods or exercises don't burn fat. You do.



Principle: the only thing that burns fat is your body

Our bodies were not meant to be working in front of a computer all day.

This is why I almost always walk 30-60 minutes per day. Aside from the mental benefits, it helps expend more energy, helps with digestion, and best of all speeds up recovery from exercises you performed in prior days due to increased blood flow and movement that your body was designed for. If I can't walk outside, I'll replace it with casual indoor cycling or walking pad.

Even when strength training, in between sets, I walk around instead of staying stationary.

NEAT activities should be low impact to prevent them from affecting the recovery you need from your actual exercises, whether it's strength training or cardio. This leads into the final focus goal.

Focus Goal 6: Recover well

Principle: your body doesn't change when you exercise, it changes when it recovers

A host of complex processes take place during recovery, including various cellular repair, breaking down of fat cells, and generation of muscle cells.

Aside from good nutrition, you can also implement hot and cold therapy

It's possible to do all the right things, exercise, eat well, but for some reason your body just won't respond and refuses to change. This can happen in many ways:

1. Physically drained
2. Mentally stressed out
3. Spiritually unwell / disconnected

Overtraining – too much stress on body

Signs of over-training are basically the same as undereating, which includes:

- Headaches
- Fast heart beats
- Weak voice
- Shorter breaths
- General weakness and soreness in body that makes non-exercise activities like moving around and walking much harder than you remembered
- Taking longer to recover from strength training workouts than you remembered
- Insomnia, either cannot sleep or waking up early (provided it's not due to too much caffeine or stress and anxiety or other factors)
- Legs feel heavy

If you think you are over-training, you probably need a de-load week, where you're still active but just less active. You can reduce the intensity and/or duration of your exercises by 50% for that week and re-assess. You might need two weeks. You have to test it out.

Mentally drained – too much stress on mind

Minimizing stress automatically helps with fat-loss. This is beyond stress eating. Even if you don't eat more under stress, stress causes your body to not want to break down fat cells. You need to find your own methods to reduce stress that work for you but it cannot be neglected if you want to optimize fat-loss.

Fight or flight responses affect your hormones, especially HGH (Human Growth Hormones).

HGH plays a major role in your body composition by regulating your metabolism, how effectively you burn fat, and how you recover from workouts to build and retain muscle. Increasing HGH makes a dramatic difference to how fast you see results for body transformations.

HGH is naturally increased when you:

- strength train at high intensity
- reduce body fat
- minimize sugar
- sleep well

The one thing that HGH is most boosted by is **high quality sleep,** especially if you can sleep by 10pm (studies show HGH production is highest from 10pm-12am). Sleep is when the vast majority of hormone production happen, not only limited to HGH, it includes testosterone, thyroid hormones regulating metabolism, energy, mood, and more. Sleep is when a lot of fat-loss happens. **Optimizing sleep is by far one of the easiest ways to lose fat.**

Here's a golden nugget that helps break through plateaus: if you are not asleep by 11pm, do everything you can to sleep before 11pm for a week. I recommend using melatonin pills. You might break through a fat-loss plateau during or right after that week. You might also find you suddenly need less sleep than before. You maximize your resting metabolic rate when you're in tune with your own personal circadian rhythm, which generally means sleeping much earlier than people are used to. There is a reason why waking up very early gives you a special alertness that lasts throughout the day. Great book on this entire topic by one of the world's leading authorities on sleep: Why We Sleep.

Spiritually unwell / disconnected – too detached from spiritual source

In the beginning of the guide, I mentioned to **treat everything as my own opinions.** Please read the following with that in mind.

When we're spiritually well, our bodies respond, recover, and just function better overall. This allows our bodies to change much faster and more easily given that we signal it to change via stimulus and support the change via nourishment. We feel truly alive, conscious, and connected to all existence. We feel like we really love life even when circumstances are objectively terrible.

I wrote this guide with spiritual elements derived from my own experiences that I cannot deny, all of which isn't new and already well written about by spiritual teachers throughout thousands of years.

I believe the form our body is taking in this very moment is just a reflection of our true being as of right now. This being is changeable. The closer we are spiritually to our true potential, which is measured by the distance we are from the source of all existence, the more easily our physical body can transform to its ultimate form, provided that we give it the signal to transform and the nourishment to transmute physical matter.

I believe the reason why we see ourselves in the mirror and don't love what we see sometimes is often because we don't feel it represents who we truly are. But sometimes, we don't even know who we truly are. Our mind creates an ego, a sense of self, that's extremely disconnected from the true self, which very few humans can see because most people don't know that we are not our body nor our mind, we have a spirit that is moldable too just like our bodies and mind.

Not everyone's true self manifests into the body of a warrior. That said, if you do have an instinct that you should look like a warrior, then I believe you should keep pursuing this.

I believe unless we have genetic predisposition to mental illnesses, spiritual well-being (or complete lack of spirituality) is associated to anxiety, depression, and other classified mental illnesses in DSM manuals (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). Emotions felt from those states are not us. We are our spirit. We can separate who we are from what we're experiencing. Over time we can learn to say "I'm experiencing grief" instead of "I'm sad". For parents, this is the same concept of why it's always better to say a child is being naughty vs being a "bad boy". No child is a bad child. Most adults are just larger children. Despite our deep flaws, no adult is a bad person.

When we've awoken and gained true consciousness, we not only have mastery over suffering but our body also reacts so optimally that reaching peak physical form isn't that difficult. When we lose this consciousness, become under stress and live in the past or future, and no longer live in the only place

that life happens in, now, our body stops responding optimally. We will find that the fat won't come off and muscle won't build as easily, even though we're doing everything right.

The way I achieve a lean and muscular physique without extreme effort is by optimizing for my spiritual well-being first. I had a hypothesis that this would be the easiest way after dropping 15 pounds in 15 days, 1 pound a day for 15 days straight by eating significantly more and sleeping better immediately after I left a highly toxic relationship that was killing my spirit. I didn't exercise during those 15 days.

Throughout the past 5 years, this hypothesis has been validated to be true in my own life multiple times because with everything else being almost exactly identical (I track everything I eat and have a consistent routine), as long as my spiritual connection to the source of life is affected, my body changes negatively, even when I eat well and exercise, and do exactly the same things as I did before. Personally, I found that the clearest sign of being spiritually well is massive increase in creativity because I believe true creativity with original thought originates from the source of all life.

I am absolutely certain that you can get the same benefits I did if you took all of this seriously.

Now let's talk about **the single most destructive and dangerous thing killing the spirit of the vast majority of men today: pornography use.** Even from a secular non-spiritual point of view, simply by using the latest indisputable scientific evidence, porn needs to be seen as a hard-drug like heroin or cocaine. The best book so far on this is Your Brain on Porn, which contains results from studies that didn't exist 15 years ago. Porn is even more destructive than hard physical drugs because of how easily accessible it is. I believe every single man should read this book or listen to the audio version. You owe it to yourself to be informed and not kept a slave by the porn industry like a slave to drug cartels. They don't care if you never reach your true potential because of consuming their products.

This means that **pornography is dangerous.** It's now the single thing I fear the most because I've experienced its impact to my body, mind, spirit, and most importantly I know how much better life feels without it. Life is *so* much better than this drug. You can only really know if you don't use it.

You may think a little porn can't hurt. However, like hard-drugs, porn is often used when there's a trigger such as something that happened in a day where we didn't like how we felt. These could be emotional states like: bored, stressed, tired, angry, afraid, anxious, lonely, rejected, shameful, discouraged, etc. It's used as a soothing mechanism. Nowadays it's actually rarely ever used to relieve true sexual tension, even though many would use that as an excuse to justify usage. This way of using porn short-circuits our brain and kills brain matter, literally shrinking our brain. Even a single use has serious impacts to our ability to function optimally the next day since even small changes in brain matter lead to huge noticeable changes in our ability to focus, speak clearly, store and recall memories, learn, move, and feel emotions.

Ancient wisdom about this: *"The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace." ~ Romans 8:6*

If you keep using porn, it's extremely difficult to get even half the benefits of prior goals mentioned in this guide. **Quitting or minimizing porn use is the fastest way to change your physique, mind, and spirit.** You must decide for yourself how to approach this, but here's a very moving TEDx talk on the topic. You may think you're not addicted so just ignore the word "addiction" if you don't like it and imagine you're using meth, cocaine, or heroin. Now think about all the people you've seen or heard of that recovered from hard drug addiction. Every single one of them had major life improvements. Even not using it for 3 days will make you feel a difference if you're observant enough. If you're serious about discovering your true potential to find out how life is actually supposed to feel like, then I challenge you to stop using porn for 3, then 5, then 7, then 30 days and beyond. Check these out these community websites: Your Brain on Porn, BrainBuddyApp (I use this myself to gamify and track progress), NoFap.

Bodybuilders were actually a large part of the earliest community of men on the internet who discovered how dangerous porn-use was and the crazy benefits you get when you don't use it. The link between building a lean and muscular physique and porn use is so strong that the information is finally spreading organically. However, I believe there are too many forces at play to ever make it a mainstream truth. I consider myself very lucky to have discovered this and I hope you can take this seriously, apply it, and reap the benefits to reach your true form.

If you're serious about exploring your own spirit more, I recommend these:

Book	Comment
There is A God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind	Requires serious interest in exploring the existence of a God.
The Bible Project YouTube Channel	I personally reached the same conclusion as Jordan B. Peterson: this is the best thing we got as a blueprint to human life. A masterpiece that transcends space and time if you obey.
The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language	I suggest only reading this if you truly believe the two most important things to life is 1) finding out if absolute truth exists or not 2) facing the fear of your own inevitable death. You cannot know how to truly live if you don't face your own death boldly. You'll need to attend a church to learn best. See this great video on the dark truth of Megachurches and be aware that genuine churches are rarely in the spotlight. This is my church now. The three largest world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam all share similar roots. This deserves investigation and due diligence. You owe it to yourself.

I've invested significant effort, time, energy to studying different faiths and the general topic of spirituality, but I only included the recommendations above because I don't want you to be led astray.

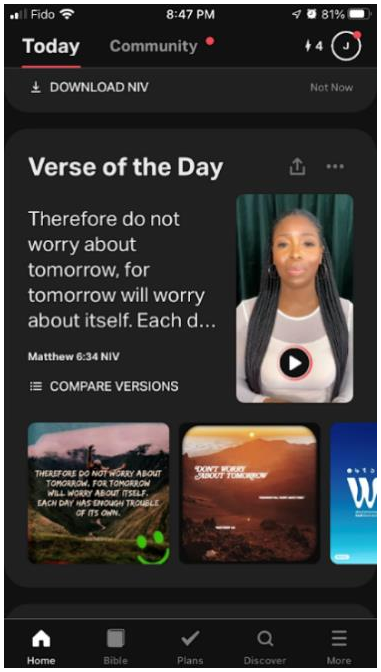
I write these guides to save men time and minimize confusions.

There are many books out there that sound right, like "Think Like a Monk" by Jay Shetty, or "The Power of Now" by Eckhart Tolle. You can read them if you want. I did. But be very careful because darkness never speaks loudly. It whispers. It never seems obviously wrong. It always seems right. That's their true power, masters of manipulation and deception, far beyond what any human can understand on their own, a perfected craft. It's not humans alone trying to keep us asleep.

Seek truth with objectivity but guard your mind and use hacks to accelerate learning, for example the best hack I use is: **look closely at how the authors live/lived, not their words.**

Never trust people's words, trust their actions. Because actions reveal true intentions of the heart.

Once you've established that someone is trustworthy, based on their actions, then you can trust their words with higher confidence, but never stop observing their actions because people can change due to our nature as fundamentally flawed entities.



When my spirit is supercharged, I've experienced a few times where I literally wake up in cold and dark mornings of winter and feel confused because it smells and feels like a mix of spring or summer.

The most important part of my morning is going through a verse of day using the free Bible app by YouVersion while enjoying the first cup of coffee, thinking, and then praying. Regardless of how chaotic the world or life is every day, the peace of a dialogue with God in the quietness of morning cannot be explained, surpassing understanding.

Personally, I believe the God written about in the Bible *is* God after due diligence from these dimensions: logic, history, scientific discoveries, unexplainable alignment to history and science in the Bible that shouldn't be possible, and my own spiritual experiences. Regardless of which faith I studied, I see a clear pattern: **the ultimate form of life is selfless service** founded on unconditional love. It's when people reject, invalidate, and wish the worst for you, but you're willing to die for them. In this flawed world, even parents cannot practice unconditional love most of the time. But this spiritual level is worth pursuing.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

~ 1st Corinthians 13:13

In our time, we're taught to look up to men who made great impact in terms of innovation and wealth generation. The one thing that most people don't realize is often these men have accomplished incredible things due to their drive that originates from deep insecurities. Some of them do admit this. There aren't that many tech CEOs with strong character who truly want to make a positive impact to humanity. This is why there are only a handful of CEOs I'd work for. To me, life's too short to be working for anyone I don't align with. No amount of money is worth the trade off to me.

Like Nassim Nicholas Taleb, author of Skin in the Game, I also believe that things and people that stand the test of time deserve our utmost respect and are worth studying. I believe the greatest of men are those who were known for selfless service and sacrifice. Who are they?

Putting it all together: example protocol

This is just for your own reference. If you understood this guide, you should be able to create a v0.1 diet protocol to lose fat for yourself and adjust as you go. It's more important to take action and get started than trying to aim for a perfect start.

Example profile

- Male, 35, 180cm, 200 lbs
- Tech worker with sedentary job but with some awareness of health and fitness
- Works out 2 times / week
- Does cardio 2 times / week for the purpose of losing fat
- Used tdeecalculator.net to calculate calories and macros for dieting down
    - assume maintenance is 2300 calories / day (calculator said 2520 but we likely overestimate our activity level)
    - set initial fat-loss calories to 2300 – 500 calories / day = 1800 calories / day

Protocol to peak physical state

try {

- *Stop all cardio unless you really enjoy the activity regardless of fat-loss goals*
- *Start strength training consistently at extremely high intensity by following a routine, either using Binary Strength Complete Functional Training Workout Guide or other ways. Maximize volume of work that fits your schedule, lifestyle, and body's recovery capability.*
- *Start simultaneous execution (Focus Goal #1-6)*

} catch (error e) {

switch (e) {

case (feel hungry and want to eat)

Drink 1-2 cups of water first, wait, see if hunger subsides. If you cannot take it anymore, consider eating but must adhere to macros of the day.

case (fat-loss plateau reached)

Break plateau using this section of guide.

case (you over-ate significantly one day)

Treat that day as a refeed day and skip your next planned refeed day. Stop any negative self-talk and immediately go back to adhering to macros the next day. ***Do not cut calories below the previously set macros before over-eating to compensate for your guilt.*** *Ideally you don't feel guilty, accept your own actions, take accountability,* ***do not repeat it again that week****, focus on productive next steps. This prevents further over-eating that will inevitably occur when calories are too low.*

Case (you over-ate significantly multiple days in a week)

On the next no over-eating day, fast and drink lots of water. Postpone eating as long as possible and eat the minimal amount of food where you still feel ok. Focus on protein and carbs, minimal fat, because likely your over-eating days gave your body enough fat that it needs for a while. Repeat for # days equal to the number of days you over-ate.

}

}

Example 4-month (16 weeks) realistic view of what it might look like

Week	1	2	3	4
True maintenance (unknowable in advance)	2300	2300	2300	2300
Daily calories	1800	1800	1800	1800
Activity level change	Started strength training routine	-	-	-
Weight compared to last week	-5 (-3 from initial water weight loss)	-1.5	-1.5	+1 (gained weight from mentally breaking and over eating then realized body adapted to strength training. Need to eat more otherwise too hungry.

Week	5	6	7	8
True maintenance (unknowable in advance)	2500	2500	2400	2300
Daily calories	2000	2000	2000	2000
Activity level change	-	-	-	-
Weight compared to last week	-1	-1	-0.8	-0.6

Week	9	10	11	12
True maintenance (unknowable in advance)	2250	2000	2000	2150 (metabolism healed from refeed)
Daily calories	2000	2000	1900	1900
Activity level change	-	-	-	-
Weight compared to last week	-0.5	0 (plateaued)	-0.5 (plateau broken via methods such as refeed day)	-0.5

Week	13	14	15	16
True maintenance (unknowable in advance)	2300 (metabolism healed from refeed)	2300	2300	2300
Daily calories	1900	1900	1900	1900
Activity level change	-	-	-	-
Weight compared to last week	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8	-0.8

In the above example, 15.1 lbs was lost in 2 months, which you can be certain came almost exclusively from fat. This is very good. The sample profile started at 200 and is now down to 184.9. This is much better than a sudden 20 lb drop where significant muscle is also lost, along with greater water loss. Losing weight too quickly is dangerous and unhealthy.

In the end, the weight itself isn't nearly as important as mastery over body composition to the point where you know exactly what to do to sculpt whatever body composition you'd like whenever you like.

You would repeat the exact same process to go from 184.9 to 170, but expect that to take 2-3x as long as going from 200 – 184.9 because you'll hit plateaus faster and spend time breaking through them.

For example, we ended at a true maintenance of 2300. As you progress, this will drop to 2000 again but faster than last time. You'll have to repeat the same process. You might even take entire diet breaks for 2-4 weeks at a time to eat at maintenance and make sure your weight does not change during that period. This helps you physically (delay plateaus due to metabolic adaptation) and psychologically continue dieting down.

This is the exact protocol you would repeat that works for dropping to any body fat %.

Going lower than 8% puts the body under too much stress that in my opinion isn't healthy and has no real benefit. You would use the same processes described in this guide. Here's a great video about how to do it.

How it should feel

Principle: you should not be constantly dieting (be in a caloric deficit) for the entire year

Throughout the year, you should be alternating between phases of dieting, maintenance, or even surplus (gain weight consciously).

If you kept trying to diet all the time then you would damage your metabolism as described earlier in the guide. This is a very common mistake people into fitness are making.

Here's what my 2022 looks like:

Months	**Phase**
Jan, Feb	Surplus
Mar, Apr, May, Jun	Diet (with diet breaks)
July, Aug, Sept	Maintain
Oct, Nov	Diet
Dec	Maintain / surplus

When dieting you will feel physically weaker at times but it actually gives you tremendous mental alertness and energy. This is because being in a caloric deficit has similar mental benefits as fasting. You would become a lot more aware and conscious because you already have to apply that mindset about calorie intake.

Advanced: Losing the Last 5-10 lbs When Already Lean With Visible Abs

This section is for the small % of us who already have visible abs, likely around 10-12% bodyfat or lower, but want to lose the final 5-10 lbs to look truly shredded. This is one of the most misunderstood stages of dieting because the same approach that worked to get from 20% bodyfat to 12% bodyfat can stop working when we try to go from 12% to 8-10%.

This is where a lot of men, including myself, can get tricked by the body. We assume because we have more discipline than before, the answer must be to eat less, train harder, add more cardio, or force progress faster. This works when we still have a lot of bodyfat to lose because the body has plenty of stored energy and the deficit is easier to create. But when we are already lean, the body becomes much more sensitive to stress, recovery, sleep, carbs, hormones, digestion, water retention, and non-exercise activity.

Principle: the leaner we get, the more recovery matters

When we already have visible abs, fat loss becomes less about trying harder and more about controlling variables better. We still need to be in a caloric deficit because we cannot defy the law of thermodynamics, but the size of the deficit needs to be smaller, more precise, and easier to recover from. Otherwise the body adapts too hard and too fast.

The body does not care about our goal of looking shredded. The body wants to keep us alive. When we diet for too long, eat too little, train too hard, sleep poorly, or create too much stress, the body will try to protect itself by reducing energy expenditure. We might still do our workouts, but outside of the workouts, we may move less without realizing. Walking feels slower. Normal activities feel harder. We sit more. We fidget less. We take fewer random trips around the house. We rest longer. We become more efficient at surviving on lower calories.

This is why simply eating less does not always create faster fat loss at this stage.

If we reduce calories by 300, but our body reduces activity and training output by 300, then we did not create a bigger deficit. We just became a lower output version of ourselves.

This is one of the most important ideas to understand when trying to get shredded. We do not want to become a smaller, flatter, weaker, more tired version of ourselves. We want to preserve muscle, keep training performance as high as possible, keep daily output predictable, and slowly remove the final layer of fat.

Principle: the last 5-10 lbs should be lost slowly

As mentioned earlier in this guide, the less bodyfat we have, the slower weight loss should be if we want to minimize muscle loss.

Bodyfat %: More than 12%
Healthy rate of fat loss / week to minimize muscle loss: 0.5-1% of bodyweight

Bodyfat %: 10-12%
Healthy rate of fat loss / week to minimize muscle loss: 0.25-0.5% of bodyweight

Bodyfat %: 10% or less
Healthy rate of fat loss / week to minimize muscle loss: 0-0.25% of bodyweight

This means if we weigh 170 lbs and already have visible abs, losing 0.5 lb per week is already good progress. If we are close to or below 10% bodyfat, even the scale barely moving can still be progress, especially if the waist is tightening, pictures look better, veins are more visible, and performance is maintained.

Most people do not have the patience for this. This is why most people never get truly shredded naturally. The information is not complicated. The hard part is staying calm when progress slows down.

Common mistake: trying to diet all year

If we have been under-eating for months and the scale has not moved, we should not automatically assume we need to eat less. This is especially true if we feel too tired, training performance is worse, pumps are gone, sleep is worse, libido is lower, normal walking feels harder, or we look flat and watery.

That is usually not a discipline problem.

That is usually a recovery and metabolic adaptation problem.

There is a difference between being in a productive deficit and being in a stressed-out state where the body is trying to shut down output. A productive deficit should feel challenging but still controllable. We might feel a bit more tired than maintenance, but we should still be able to train, walk, think, sleep, and live normally. If even normal life feels harder, we probably pushed too far.

This is why we should not be constantly dieting for the entire year. We should alternate between dieting, maintenance, and sometimes surplus depending on the goal. If we try to diet all the time, we may damage our metabolism and psychology around food. This is a common mistake among people into fitness because they become afraid of gaining fat.

Maintenance phase for the already lean person

If we have dieted for 8-12+ weeks and the scale has not moved for multiple weeks, especially if we are already lean, the best next move is often not to cut lower. The best next move is often to spend 2-4 weeks at maintenance.

This is not giving up.

This is not bulking.

This is not losing discipline.

This is a planned diet break to let the body recover so the next fat loss phase works again.

The goal during this phase is to eat at true maintenance and make sure bodyweight does not change much over a 2-4 week period. This helps physically by delaying or reversing some metabolic adaptation, and psychologically by allowing us to continue dieting later without feeling like life is only restriction.

For someone who has been in diet stress for months, I would use the full 4 weeks. For someone who only feels slightly fatigued, 2 weeks might be enough. If unsure, use 4 weeks because the downside is small if we control calories properly, and the upside is that training, sleep, hormones, and output may improve.

How to set maintenance during this phase

The best method is still the same as earlier in this guide: use real calorie and bodyweight data from the last 14 days to estimate current maintenance.

However, if our calories were extremely low and weight did not move for a long time, we should be careful about immediately jumping too high because the body may have adapted to low calories. This is where reverse dieting can be useful.

There are 2 scenarios:

Scenario 1: We are only mildly diet fatigued

If calories are not extremely low and we do not feel destroyed, go directly to estimated maintenance and hold there for 2-4 weeks.

Scenario 2: We are severely diet fatigued

If calories are very low, weight has not moved, walking feels hard, training performance is bad, and we are afraid to eat more, reverse diet by increasing daily calories by 100 per week until we reach a maintenance level where bodyweight is mostly stable and we feel better.

For example, if fat loss has stalled at 1900 calories, we might increase to 2000 for a week, then 2100, then 2200, and keep assessing bodyweight using a 7-day average. If bodyweight does not meaningfully increase, this means the body is adapting upward and we are likely increasing true maintenance. This is a good thing.

What to expect when increasing calories

We may gain scale weight quickly after increasing calories, especially if the increase comes mostly from carbs. This is not automatically fat gain. Carbs refill glycogen. Glycogen holds water. More food also means more food volume in the digestive system.

This is why daily scale changes should not control our emotions.

If we increase calories and gain 2-5 lbs quickly in the first week, but the waist does not increase much and muscles look fuller, that is probably glycogen, water, and food volume, not fat. The mistake is panicking, cutting calories again, and never letting the body recover.

During a good maintenance phase, the body should gradually feel more alive. Training should feel better. Pumps should improve. Sleep should improve. Mood should improve. Libido should improve. Walking should feel easier. The body should feel warmer. Hunger should feel less chaotic. This is the body coming back online.

If all of these improve and weight stabilizes, the maintenance phase is working.

How consistent should calories be during maintenance?

Weekly calories matter most for weight change, but daily consistency matters more when we are already lean because we are not only managing fat loss math. We are also managing stress, hunger, training performance, sleep, digestion, water retention, and non-exercise activity.

This means we should not have a pattern where some days are extremely low calories and other days are extremely high calories, even if the weekly average looks correct.

For example, if maintenance is 2700 calories, this is not ideal:

Day 1: 1700
Day 2: 3700
Day 3: 1800
Day 4: 3600
Day 5: 1900

Day 6: 4000
Day 7: 1900

The weekly average might look fine, but the body may still experience repeated low energy stress signals, followed by high food volume and water swings. This makes feedback harder to interpret. We might not know if we are gaining fat, holding water, digesting more food, reacting to sodium, or simply recovering glycogen.

A better approach is using a controlled range.

For example, if maintenance is 2700 calories:

Lower day: 2500-2600
Higher day: 2800-3000
Average: around 2700

This gives flexibility without chaos.

The goal is not to be perfect. The goal is to keep enough structure that the body can stabilize and we can read feedback properly.

Macros during maintenance

Protein should stay consistent at around 0.8-1.1g / lb of bodyweight or target bodyweight.

Fat should not go too low. As mentioned earlier in the guide, men should not go below 40g fat per day because it can negatively affect hormones. At this stage, most men should likely be higher than 40g, usually around 0.3-0.4g / lb of bodyweight depending on total calories, food preferences, and digestion.

The rest should go into carbs.

Carbs are extremely useful at this stage because they support training performance, refill glycogen, improve pumps, improve mood, and make the body look fuller. This is why low carb is usually not the best strategy for a lean man trying to look shredded while preserving muscle. Low carb can make the scale drop quickly, but much of that is water and glycogen. We might look smaller and flatter, not better.

Example for a 170 lb man during maintenance:

Calories: 2600-2800
Protein: 170-185g
Fat: 60-75g
Carbs: the rest

If using 2700 calories:

Protein: 180g = 720 calories
Fat: 65g = 585 calories
Carbs: about 350g = 1400 calories
Total: about 2705 calories

Steps during maintenance and cutting

Steps matter because they make activity predictable.

If we do not control steps, then our activity can fall without us noticing. This is one of the easiest ways to accidentally erase the deficit. We think we are eating less, but the body quietly makes us move less.

During the maintenance phase, keep steps stable, around 8,000-10,000 per day for most people.

During the cutting phase, keep steps stable, around 10,000-12,000 per day for most people.

This does not mean we need to become cardio addicts. The only cardio optimal for most people trying to maximize fat loss while preserving recovery is walking. Walking burns calories, helps digestion, improves mental state, and does not usually interfere with strength training recovery.

The key is not doing one heroic 20,000 step day and then 3,000 steps the next day.

The key is consistency.

Restarting the cut after maintenance

After 2-4 weeks of maintenance, restart the cut only after the body feels responsive again.

Good signs:

- Weight has stabilized using 7-day averages
- Waist did not meaningfully increase
- Training performance improved
- Pumps are better
- Sleep improved
- Hunger is more controllable
- Walking feels normal again
- Mood is stable
- Libido is better
- Muscles look fuller instead of flat

Once these are true, restart the cut with a smaller deficit than before.

Use around 10-20% below true maintenance.

For most already lean men, this usually means a 300-500 calorie deficit, not a massive 800-1200 calorie deficit.

For example, if maintenance is 2700, start cutting at around 2200-2400 depending on activity level, recovery, and how aggressive we want to be. If already very lean and the goal is to preserve muscle, I would usually start closer to 2400 than 2200.

Then assess for 1-2 weeks before changing anything.

Do not change calories every day based on emotion.

Trust the process.

Weigh daily.Compare 7-day averages.

Check waist. Check mirror. Check performance. Check sleep.

Then adjust.

If weight is not moving after 1-2 weeks and we feel good, reduce calories by 100 or add 1000-2000 steps per day.

If weight is dropping too quickly, increase calories by 100-200.

If weight is not moving but we feel terrible, do not automatically reduce calories. We may need a refeed, a deload, more sleep, more carbs, or more time at maintenance.

Using refeeds at this stage

A refeed works best when we are already lean and actually depleted. This is why refeeds are more useful around 10-12% bodyfat or lower than they are for someone with much more bodyfat.

A refeed is not a cheat day.

A refeed is a controlled higher calorie day, usually mostly from carbs, with fat controlled and protein still sufficient.

The purpose is to refill glycogen, improve training performance, reduce diet fatigue, and possibly help break through a plateau.

Simple refeed method:

• Increase calories to maintenance or slightly above maintenance for 1 day
• Add most calories from carbs
• Keep fat controlled
• Keep protein sufficient
• Train hard that day or the next day
• Go back to cutting macros the next day

After a refeed, weight may increase from water and food volume. Do not panic. Monitor the next 5-7 days and look for a new lower low compared to the weight before the refeed.

If no new lower low happens, and we still feel diet fatigued, then a single refeed may not be enough. We may need reverse dieting or a full 2-4 week diet break.

Debugging the final 5-10 lbs

If already lean and stuck, debug in this order:

1. Are calories being tracked accurately?

Hidden fats, sauces, oils, bites, social meals, protein bars, nut butters, cooking oil, and “healthy snacks” can easily erase a small deficit. This matters more when we are already lean because the deficit is smaller.

2. Is bodyweight being assessed properly?

Daily weight is noisy. Use 7-day averages. Compare week to week. Also use waist, pictures, clothes, and performance.

3. Are steps stable?

If steps dropped, maintenance dropped. Fix steps before cutting calories harder.

4. Is training performance dropping?

If strength and pumps are collapsing, we may be losing the signal to preserve muscle. Add carbs around training, reduce junk volume, or deload.

5. Are we sleeping well?

Poor sleep can cause hunger, water retention, worse recovery, worse training, and worse decision making.

6. Are we too stressed?

Life stress counts. Work stress counts. Relationship stress counts. Single father stress counts. The body does not care whether stress came from work, training, dieting, or emotions. Stress is stress.

7. Are fats too low?

If fats are too low for too long, hormones can be affected. Do not go below 40g fat per day as a man, and most men should not stay near the minimum when trying to recover.

8. Are carbs too low?

If carbs are too low, we may look flat and train poorly. This can make us think we are not lean enough when the real issue is that muscles are empty.

9. Have we been dieting too long?

If yes, take the diet break. Eating at maintenance for 2-4 weeks can be the highest ROI move.

10. Are we chasing a level of leanness that is not worth the cost?

Going lower than 8% bodyfat puts the body under a lot of stress and in my opinion has no real benefit unless there is a specific short term reason like a photoshoot or competition. Most men will look and feel incredible around 8-12% if they have enough muscle.

Final protocol for the last 5-10 lbs

If we already have visible abs and want to get shredded:

1. Confirm true maintenance using 14 days of calorie and bodyweight data

Do not guess if data exists.

2. If dieted hard for 8-12+ weeks and stalled, do 2-4 weeks at maintenance

Use 4 weeks if diet stress has been high for months.

3. Keep calories consistent

Use a controlled daily range instead of extreme low days and extreme high days.

4. Keep protein high

0.8-1.1g / lb bodyweight or target bodyweight.

5. Keep fat high enough

Do not go below 40g per day as a man. Most lean men should likely be around 0.3-0.4g / lb.

6. Put the rest into carbs

Carbs are extremely useful for training performance, glycogen, pumps, and preserving muscle while cutting.

7. Keep steps stable

Maintenance phase: 8,000-10,000 per day.

Cutting phase: 10,000-12,000 per day.

8. Restart the cut with only a 10-20% deficit

Do not crash diet the final layer.

9. Aim for slow loss

10-12% bodyfat: 0.25-0.5% bodyweight per week.

10% or less: 0-0.25% bodyweight per week.

10. Use refeeds intelligently

Use controlled high carb days, not cheat days.

11. Deload when needed

If walking feels hard and training is declining, recovery is probably the bottleneck.

12. Stop when the cost exceeds the benefit

The goal is mastery, not body dysmorphia.

The final 5-10 lbs is where fitness becomes less about knowing what to do and more about having the patience to do it properly. Most men can suffer. Fewer men can stay precise. Even fewer can stay calm when the scale stops moving and the mirror sends mixed signals.

This is why this stage is advanced.

We need to be disciplined enough to cut, but also mature enough to stop cutting when the body needs maintenance.

That is real mastery.

Debugging guide

<u>You hit a weight loss plateau</u>

Assuming you're doing all the right things from the 5 focus goals, but you suddenly reached a point where your weight isn't changing and you don't know why. Here's how to debug:

1. You should reduce your calories

   When you're in a caloric deficit, you should feel a bit more tired than before dieting because your body doesn't have the energy it needs. If you're feeling great and full of energy in a fat-loss phase aiming for caloric deficit, then your calories can be lower. Cut 100 from your daily calories and keep this for 1-2 weeks and re-assess to see if you lose weight again.

2. You should increase your calories

   If you're feeling too tired that even walking seems difficult, where your legs are heavy, feel lightheaded, chances are you need a refeed. Do a refeed day by increasing calories by 500 from maintenance for a day, filling it mostly with carbs, keeping fats below 100g and protein above 100g. The next day, go back to dieting following your macros.

   If your weight is still dropping at a healthy rate where muscle is preserved, just keep doing what you're doing. Don't make changes.

Body fat %	Healthy rate of fat-loss / week to minimize muscle loss
More than 12%	0.5-1% of your bodyweight
10-12%	0.25 - 0.5% of your bodyweight
10% or less	0 - 0.25% of your bodyweight

If you're dropping faster than the healthy rate, you have to increase calories by a bit. You can do the math to figure out how much to increase calories by to hit the target of a healthy rate.

For example, if you weigh 200 lbs and lost 3lbs last week, you should increase calories this week by 3500 (calories per 1 pound of fat) to make sure this week's fat-loss is around 2lb (1% bodyweight) max. Hence increasing daily calories by 3500 / 7 = 500.

An exception to this is when this happens: you're in a caloric deficit but your weight stayed the same and your body fat % didn't seem to change for 2-3 weeks, then suddenly after breaking through that plateau one day, that week you lose 2% of your bodyweight. This is normal.

3. You can't recover properly to lose fat

You might be over-training. Keep everything the same, but reduce intensity and duration of all exercises you're doing by 50% for 1 week and re-assess to see if you lose weight again.

<u>You're constipated</u>

When dieting, you might experience constipation due to:

1. Not enough fiber
    - MyFitnessPal or other trackers can tell you how many grams of fiber you eat in a day. It's recommended to have 40g of fiber / day for men.
2. Too much fiber
    - www.healthline.com/health/food-nutrition/too-much-fiber#fiber-sources
3. Too much protein
    - Protein is harder to digest. You don't need more than 1g / lb of bodyweight in protein.
4. Carbs or fats are too low
    - Carbs and fats help with digestion. Consider increasing carbs and fats but still adhering to macros in Focus Goal 1: Be in a caloric deficit and adhere to macros

When you're very lean, say 12% or below, you will definitely experience constipation from time to time. It's a commonly accepted byproduct of being very lean.

<u>You have insomnia</u>

This is normal especially starting around 12% body fat. Things you can try:

1. You could be lacking carbs in the evening. Carbs help with sleep. Try eating more carbs in the evening while adhering to your daily macros.
2. Try melatonin.

Bonus for fun: photoshoot protocol

Do the following 1 week before shoot, assume shoot is Saturday:

Carb Manipulation to Reduce Water Weight

1. Keep protein the same as usual
2. Sat (first day of protocol) and Sun: drop carbs to 25% of your normal intake e.g. 75g / day if you normally ate 300g / day
3. Mon and Tues: drop carbs by another 10g / day
4. Friday: carb load, close to 300% of your regular carb intake, e.g. eat 800g carbs if you normally ate 300g / day – this helps make sure your muscles look fuller

- When you feel bloated, stop, but if you feel you can go higher, do it
- Start with fruit to replenish liver glycogen, then candy to replenish muscle glycogen, then complex carbs after

Water intake

- Increase water intake dramatically during the protocol
- On Friday only drink when thirsty

Glycogen depletion workouts

- Full body high intensity workouts every day
- High reps (15-20 / set)
- Minimal rest times between sets (30-60 sec)
- These workouts are purely to empty glycogen so you should avoid muscle failure. Don’t push to 100% capacity, just do 80%

Day of Shoot

- Day of shoot don't drink water
- Right before shoot, have something with carbs, fat, and sodium like chocolate bar
- Do some pump up sets before shoot

Beyond the Focus Goals

Fad Diets

Ignorance is ok. Dishonesty is not. It's fine to sell but not when knowingly causing harm.

Myth	Claim	Reality
Single macro nutrient group restricted diets like Keto, low carb, carnivore.	Cutting out carbs causes more fat-loss vs eating carbs, even if calories are kept the same.	The body and brain's primary fuel source is carbs. At the time of writing, the topic of Ketones is the main scam running successfully. **There is no scientific evidence that high levels of ketones enhance fat-loss.** High ketone levels are used for therapeutic purposes. These types of diets tend to create strong cravings and overeating. This is counterproductive to fat-loss long term despite any initial water weight loss. Every gram of carb you eat stores about 3-4 grams of water. You can definitely lose some additional water weight by not eating carbs, just not fat. **Any fat-loss is caused by being in a caloric deficit.**
Time restricted diets like intermittent fasting, One Meal a Day (OMAD).	Limiting eating windows causes more fat-loss vs eating spaced out meals even if calories are kept the same.	Fasting does help people control appetite but **any fat-loss is caused by being in a caloric deficit.** Fasting does not contribute significantly to fat-loss processes. Your body is constantly adding and using body fat throughout the day. You can rarely know when to time anything to affect it. Going long periods without protein also makes you miss out on muscle protein synthesis opportunities to build muscle throughout the day. You would be wasting a lot of your strength training efforts since the body can only process 30-60 grams of protein per meal.

Fad diets tend to lead to diet failure because it's hard to adhere to long term as part of your lifestyle, especially when you have a family. Cutting out carbs is worse because the moment you eat carbs again your body will store it and crave more. There will always be fad diets, myths, and scams. Often, they're recycled from the past because the same well-tested scams can be repeated on newer generations, as long as enough time has passed for the previous generation's realization of the scam to fade.

There will be people who seem nice, soft spoken, genuine, even "doctors", but underneath they're either ignorant or liars. They are either consciously or subconsciously taking advantage of human cognitive biases and preying on two of several fundamental human flaws:

1. People tend to believe what they want to hear
2. People tend to be lazy (System 1 Thinking from Daniel Kahneman's "Thinking, Fast and Slow")

The only way to defeat the constant presence of false narratives and our own flaws is to wake up, become conscious, and develop stronger critical thinking skills to view things from first principles.

Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting is a useful tool but not a magic bullet.

Fasting is one of the most misunderstood topics in fitness. It's been around for thousands of years, yet somehow modern fitness influencers talk about it like it's a new invention. Almost every religion and spiritual tradition in history practiced fasting, not to get six-pack abs, but to strengthen the spirit. Somewhere along the way, the fitness industry got a hold of it and turned it into a shortcut for fat-loss. That's when things started getting messy.

Let's set the record straight. Fasting does not cause fat-loss.

Being in a caloric deficit causes fat-loss. That's it.

You can fast and gain fat. You can eat six meals a day and lose fat. Fasting only helps you eat less. But when you use fasting to skip breakfast and then overeat later because you "earned it," that's just binging on a delay.

Now, is intermittent fasting useful? Absolutely. But not because of what most people say.

I use fasting as a psychological and spiritual tool, not as a diet. It teaches me control. It builds my ability to delay gratification. It sharpens my awareness of when I'm actually hungry vs just bored or emotional. That's it. When you no longer eat just because it's noon, or because someone brought donuts to the office, or because you had a bad day, that's when you win back your sovereignty. You become conscious. And consciousness is the most powerful asset in fat-loss and in life

Here's what fasting won't do:

- It won't "hack" your metabolism
- It won't trigger magical fat-burning hormones in any meaningful way
- It won't compensate for poor sleep, poor food choices, or binge eating

But here's what it can do:

- Help you feel truly hungry again—something most people haven't felt in years
- Create mental clarity and emotional distance from food
- Teach you that you won't die just because your stomach growls

I treat intermittent fasting like a tool in the toolbox and use it when it helps me stay in a deficit, and when I want to train discipline. Don't fall for the hype that it's somehow better than other methods of eating. It's not. It's just simpler for some people.

If you're going to use fasting, it should be your conscious choice, not a punishment or quick fix.

Fasting without conscious effort to train for self-control is just starvation.

Fasting for self-control becomes a spiritual weapon.

Don't use it to escape discipline.

Use it to build it.

When Intermittent Fasting Backfires

A lot of people use intermittent fasting not as a tool but as a shield to avoid the real work: learning how to eat with discipline.

I see it all the time.

They say they're doing OMAD (One Meal a Day), they think they're in a deficit, they think they're being strict. But what they're really doing is skipping breakfast and lunch, then binge eating 3,000+ calories in a single meal.

That's not discipline. That's prolonged indulgence disguised as structure.

They think they're avoiding calories. What they're avoiding is accountability.

Never do this.

The science is clear:

When calories are the same, fasting has no measurable advantage for fat-loss.

Even worse, if someone under-eats for too long, their body fights back and they get:

- Increased hunger hormones (ghrelin spikes)
- Slower metabolism due to chronic underfeeding
- Binge eating urges that feel uncontrollable

The tighter they restrict, the harder their body snaps back, not just physiologically but psychologically.

They're not weak. They're just running the wrong playbook.

This is why I never recommend fasting for anyone who don't already know how to manage calories and macros. We must first build nutritional awareness before trying to reduce our eating window.

Fasting should amplify our self-control, not be a workaround for the lack of it.

The number one sign fasting is backfiring:

You keep losing control during eating hours.

That's not fasting. That's starvation-binge cycling. It will wreck your relationship with food and create a dysfunctional loop where you feel like you're always "on plan" during the day and always "off plan" at night.

Fasting is optional. Adherence is not.

Once you've mastered your caloric intake, understood your macros, and learned to track with full awareness, then sure, try fasting to simplify things.

But until then? It's much better for you to focus on building the system first.

Track every calorie. Hit your protein. Keep your fats reasonable. Hit your deficit. That's the real skill.

Fasting is just a tool. We shouldn't use it to hide from ourselves. We use it to meet ourselves.

Food choices

What you enjoy eating is very personal so only you can determine details of a diet that works for you that optimizes for all the goals in this guide. This is why this guide has no recipes.

Remember, macros change bodies. This means it doesn't matter what food you eat, if your macros are set properly in Focus Goal 1: Be in caloric deficit and adhere to Macros you can eat anything and lose fat. There are no good or bad foods in terms of fat gain or fat-loss. Any time you hear about good or

bad foods for fat-loss, it's either a lie or at minimum deceptive and preying on your flaw of wanting to believe in simple explanations.

Your body will process any food in the same way to transform them into various types of chemicals your body uses. However, obviously there are differences between food choices. I won't go into the health impacts since you need to make your own decisions on what you consider healthy or not healthy. I will only talk about their impact to fat-loss.

Food choice	Impact to fat-loss
Processed food, especially sugar.	Easier to overeat via negative feedback loops: • Get physically hungrier more easily because sugar levels are less stable • Worse mood due to unhealthy gut bacteria produced by eating sugar, leading to psychological overeating • Sugar is a drug, therefore there is an addiction cycle that is difficult to get out of once started • Processed foods are also hard to track accurately because the labels disclosing calories and macros have huge variances that are acceptable by FDA
Eating out at places *without* accurate macros disclosed, such as restaurants.	No idea how to track calories. You will need to estimate or just accept the inaccuracy that day.
Eating out at places with accurate macros disclosed, such as McDonalds.	Extremely accurate macros you can look up and insert into your daily food log such as "20 McNuggets".
Cooking complex dishes.	Massive hassle to track macros.
Creating recipes that you love and standardizing them.	Can easily add recipes to your tracker like MyFitnessPal and track macros.
Eating natural foods that appear in nature.	Extremely easy to adhere to macros because they're usually comprised of either mainly single macros like: carbs (sweet potatoes), fats (oil), protein (chicken breast, lean fish), or 2 macros max: carbs + fat (nuts), fat + protein (dark meat, red meat, eggs), carb + protein (beans) You can easily select foods to add a single macro without messing up another macro throughout the day.
High volume foods low in calories but very filling, often high in fiber.	Easier to adhere to macros because you're full and don't want to eat more.

Vegetables	Great nutrients and fiber to help you physically and mentally when dieting. Better gut bacteria. Better mood. Significantly easier appetite control.
Fruits	Eating fruits high in sugar like grapes, mango, ripe bananas etc. is not too far from eating sugar. They're easy to overeat since they are calorically dense. Eating low calorie nutrient dense fruits like berries and melons is easiest for fat-loss. Fruits are far less important than vegetables but has similar benefits. People often get fat because of eating too many calories from fruits thinking that it's healthy.

When dieting, the key is you must always eat what you enjoy or at least do not dislike. If you eat anything you dislike, you will not be able to adhere to macros long term. Dieting should feel hard but not that hard. Life is too short to waste away eating anything you dislike.

How I personally eat

How we eat will change as we age and as our mindset changes. In the last year or so, many people in my social circle of family, friends, and co-workers got cancer. These are not just people in old age. They are 30 to 60 year-olds. How I eat now is already different from the time I started Binary Strength.

Nowadays, 90-95% of the time I'm eating high quality natural minimally processed foods. 5-10% of the time, usually on weekends, I'll eat foods that most likely will cause diabetes and cancer when overeaten. Hence, I don't overeat them. Surprisingly I'm saving a lot of money by eating this way. It's incredible how much more unnatural foods cost. Their price / volume ratio is too damn high.

Assuming you care about longevity and health, I believe what's most important is ensuring your body can heal itself. We can't control or take on the powerful food industry and their desire for profit and growth, but we *can* control our own choices. I choose to optimize for defense because the body has incredible self-healing abilities that we just need to maintain.

By now it's clear that minimizing stress, being physically, mentally, spiritually well, and eating plant-based foods from the earth is what forms the optimal defense against diseases that lead to pre-mature death and illnesses like cancer. Enough robust studies have already been shared widely on this like the China Study. I might become vegan or vegetarian one day, but for now, I still enjoy eating meat too much to give it up completely. I don't eat red meat though, simply because they don't taste special to me compared to chicken or fish. I don't miss them but I'll eat them socially.

Timing of food intake

Timing of meals is a concept that is founded on the human cognitive flaw of wanting control and believing we can tell the future. Our brains are constantly trying to predict. Just like how people like to believe they are good at timing the financial market. There is something very flawed in the human mind at the root of these feedback loops that never end.

This is why the topic of timing food continuously gets attention. The truth is **your body is constantly storing fat and burning fat.** You can't time it. What matters are the same principles and focus goals mentioned in this guide. That said, timing of meals does affect a key factor for fat-loss: **appetite**.

You have to find a way to time your meals that allow you to easily optimize for Focus Goal 1: Be in caloric deficit and adhere to Macros. Everyone's appetite is different. You have to test it out for yourself. For example, my appetite is best controlled throughout the day when I eat something every 4 hours or so and when my breakfast is small.

Hidden calories

Cooking oil

Cooking oil need to be used very consciously because you can easily consume literally **hundreds of calories** if you're not measuring meticulously. I'm too lazy so I don't cook with oil, only Pam.

Liquid calories

Many beverages have calories, such as beer. Even if they're low-calorie drinks, they can easily add up if you don't track. I'm too lazy to track this so I don't drink calories. I'll have a beer at the beach though.

Diet sodas do not cause cancer more easily than regular sodas. There are plenty of studies on this. Sugar industry wants you to believe otherwise. There aren't that many easily accessible substances on earth that cause cancer more easily than sugar. I enjoy diet soda as it helps suppress appetite.

Sugar

Sugar is a drug and it's everywhere. I don't have sugar in my home. I treat it as a drug that I use consciously from time to time.

Fatty foods like avocado that actually have very little benefit

Avocados are nearly pure fat. Enough studies show that it's not good for you. The cartels that ultimately benefit from you buying avocados fund plenty of marketing and research promoting avocados. Almost all avocados are owned by drug cartels if you trace the money.

Portions

If you diligently tracked calories and weighed your food even for a week you will realize how much you're overeating. A portion of 15g of peanut butter is about 100 calories but most people do not have the visual memory to know what 15g of peanut butter looks like. They can easily add an extra 100 calories that they didn't realize. Compound this throughout the day, week, months, and that's how fat is stored up from excess calories. Ever wonder how in the world can someone actually become 30+% body fat? This is how.

Processed food labels

FDA allows a large degree of inaccuracy on food labels for calories and macros. If you're frequently eating the same packaged foods every time, inaccuracies will just even out. Otherwise, something that says it's only 500 calories could be 6-800 in reality. Compounded over multiple items in a day, this can mean you think you're in a deficit but you're just maintaining (no fat-loss), or even gaining fat.

Adjusting calories when activity level increases

I believe the fastest way to lean down is to minimize cardio simply because it helps make your life so much easier. You'll have a more consistent routine and know how much you should eat consistently.

The moment you introduce cardio, you have to adjust to make sure:

1. You're not losing too much muscle mass – guaranteed to happen when activity level increases
2. Your metabolism isn't damaged from eating less than you should
3. You're still in a caloric deficit and not eating more than you should

You will never be able to perfectly calculate how many calories your cardio sessions used. No tracker or calculator is accurate, unless you're monitored in a professional lab. This is especially true for outdoor casual activities like biking, etc.

The easiest rule to follow when you do cardio is to just **eat the minimal amount of food to feel ok.**

It doesn't matter what macros these extra calories are but just keep in mind:

- Carbs is always the best choice to fuel the body
- Fat turns into fat most easily
- More than 1g / bodyweight of protein will turn into carbs and be used by the body like carbs

Supplements

I take supplements to aid muscle recovery and rebuild as well as physical and mental well-being.

I take creatine and electrolytes 30 – 60 minutes before workouts so it's processed in the bloodstream. I've tested periods without creatine and electrolytes and for me they make a big difference both in muscle recovery and muscle appearance. Creatine specifically causes muscles to be fuller. Electrolytes ensure your body has all the necessary minerals to perform.

I no longer take BCAAs because there's little scientific nor self-tested evidence of any effect. Almost all BCAAs sold nowadays are mostly electrolytes and extremely high doses of B vitamins. Electrolytes and B vitamins will absolutely will help you feel more energy for a good workout but it has nothing to do with BCAAs. You can get them separately if you want. B vitamins at high doses are used by energy drinks like 5-Hour Energy Drink to produce abnormal energy. I don't recommend this because the long-term damage, especially to nerves, are not well-studied.

What I do recommend and take myself:

- Creatine Monohydrate – better muscle performance and faster recovery
- Electrolytes - I only trust BioSteel
- Protein powder - personally I go with a proven brand Optimum Nutrition Gold Standard. I stay away from influencer productions simply because I know how easy it is to create and sell a product without adhering to high quality standards. Plus they charge outrageous prices to fund influencer lifestyles. I'd prefer to donate my money to those poor in material and have needs.
- Collagen Peptides - Hydrolyzed Type 1 & 3 Collagen - noticeable help for joints recovery
- Multi-vitamin, Vitamin C, Vitamin D3, Vitamin B complex and B12 (I also supplement via nutritional yeast, which tastes like cheese), Zinc, Magnesium-L-Threonate, Magnesium Glycinate, Magnesium Taurate, Omega 3 fish oil

Why does it get easier as you become more fit?

Hormones and Setpoint

Hunger and satiety hormones are produced in a way that's proportional to body fat %.

Principle: the less body fat you have, the easier it is to feel full and less frequently you'll experience hunger

These are controlled by gut hormones: leptin, ghrelin, and peptide YY (PYY). Gut health is extremely important since it's our second brain and it communicates with the brain in our heads.

Our gut ranks #2 in the number of nerve cells, outdone only by the brain in our heads. Scientists refer to the second brain as the enteric nervous system (ENS), which is two thin layers of more than 100 million nerve cells lining your gastrointestinal tract from esophagus to rectum.

Research and experience show that there are setpoints, which is the body fat % your body wants to be in. You're born with a setpoint but it can be changed. How easy it is to change it depends on how long you've spent being at certain body fat %s.

Principle: the longer you spend being at a body fat % the harder it is to change your setpoint

This is why people who have been obese for a long time can lose fat but they will almost never be ripped no matter how hard they try. Extreme outliers exist but they are exceptionally rare. This is why almost all the biggest fat-loss transformations in popular media have rebounded. **It's actually less about habit changes and more about biology.** Fighting biology is an uphill battle so you better start now if you want to change your setpoint. No hormone is bad. They just need to be mastered.

This is a great medical video on how hormone feedbacks work for fat-loss: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKjOfR8vcas. It's just science.

Here's a breakdown of hormones as it relates to getting lean.

Insulin

Function:

- Produced by pancreas after eating foods to process nutrients into cells, not just fat cells, also muscle cells.

Feedback loops:

- Produced most when eating carbs.
- If you keep overeating, especially sugar, carbs (which breaks down to sugar), your body will become insulin resistant, which leads to more fat gain when eating the same number of calories compared to if you were not insulin resistant.

What to do to optimize for fat-loss:

- Eat carbs together with fiber and a good mix of fat and protein. Minimize eating simple carbs, especially sugary food and drinks.
- Strength training, especially very difficult movements, are great for improving insulin sensitivity and preventing insulin resistance.

Leptin

Function:

- Communicates from fat cell to brain to signal if there's enough fat cells in the body or not. It gives the brain approval to let your body use fat for fuel or store fat on body.

Feedback loops:

- Leptin is directly proportional to body fat %.
- As you diet and your body fat % decreases, leptin will decrease.
- If your brain thinks leptin is too low (doesn't necessarily mean it is low, just poor signals), brain thinks body lacks fat so it stores fat instead of losing fat and you will hit a plateau.
- As you eat more, leptin will increase. If your body produces too much leptin, it leads to leptin resistance, where the brain cannot recognize it anymore and it's ignored so the body thinks there's not enough fat and you need to store more fat, leading to fat gain.
- Leptin responds very well to glucose but not fat intake. Eating fat hinders leptin changes.

What to do to optimize for fat-loss:

- Reduce body fat by being in a caloric deficit.
- During a cut (sustained caloric deficit phase), use high carb refeed days aka ***controlled*** cheat days (calorie spikes by eating more), with max 100g fat that day to keep losing fat.

Ghrelin

Function:

- Produced by the gut to signal body needs to eat. Also known as the hunger hormone.

Feedback loops

- Increases when you haven't eaten in some time, especially as stomach empties.
- Decreases when you eat, especially as stomach expands.

What to do to optimize for fat-loss:

- Drink a lot of water.
- Eat high fiber foods.
- Eat high-volume low-calorie foods during a cut. Eat things with flavor that you enjoy. Uses low calorie sauces etc.

Peptide YY (PYY)

Function:

- Produced by the gut to signal food intake satiety to the brain.
- Amount of PYY is proportional to calorie intake. It also responds most to protein intake.

Feedback loops:

- As body fat decreases PYY behaves more optimally and signals satiety more accurately. The more body fat you have, the less accurate PYY signaling is so it's more difficult to feel satisfied.

What to do to optimize for fat-loss:

- Reduce body fat by being in a caloric deficit.
- Eating more protein during a cut is often not for muscle building, it's simply to manage hunger while staying in a caloric deficit.

Refeed frequency goes up

The lower your body fat %, the more frequently you need to refeed or have diet breaks

Combined with the previous point about how the lower your body fat % is, the easier it is to control appetite, this means you can be in a healthy caloric deficit Monday to Friday, and then enjoy double refeed days Saturday and Sundays every week. These refeeds are much higher than maintenance, and because you're so lean and your body is so optimal already, you will actually find it hard to eat the volume of food needed to hit calorie goals on weekend refeed days. You end each week very satisfied. This is only productive when you're below or near 10% body fat. Don't use this as an excuse to eat more just because you want to. If you're not at 12% body fat or lower, refeed days aren't needed.

This is my infinite feedback loop of how to be 10% body fat or lower year-round.

If you want to be in this state, I believe it's worth the effort to achieve 10% body fat, just once. Even if you have to pay a coach thousands of dollars, it's probably worth it considering how much you spend on other less important things. My #1 coaching recommendation: prophysique.com (price undisclosed but word is $600+ / month). I'm not paid to endorse him. He doesn't even know me. He's the only person I trust by default in the fitness industry. I do not personally train people but I'm happy to discuss and answer questions the best I can, just contact me.

Body Adaptations: Muscle Mass and Memory, Recovery

As mentioned earlier, the more muscle you have, the higher your maintenance calories are, so you can enjoy eating more without gaining fat.

A huge benefit of having more muscle is that they have memory. Once built, even if you lose some (continuously happens throughout the year), when you train the muscle again, it takes less time to build back than before. This is why it really pays to build your muscle mass to a certain point, at least once.

Your central nervous system also has memory so you will never really forget how to perform moves optimally. You also recover faster the fitter you get (to a certain point). Recovery only becomes harder at extremely low body fat %s that most people won't need to achieve, e.g. <8%.

Mastery of Dieting

By now you should've realized that once you've applied and experienced transforming your body at will, you won't forget it. You can do it anytime because you would be so attuned to your body and your genetics that you know what levers to pull to cause changes you want. You can tailor optimal ways of eating and training that perfectly matches your lifestyle.

Maybe you want to be shredded in the summer months (say 8-10%) and a bit heavier (say 12-15% body fat) in winter months so you're less cold and can enjoy more holiday gatherings with calorically dense foods that you won't track. This is what I do now. Or maybe you want to be shredded in the winter for some reason, which I've also done in the winter of 2020 because it was the first winter after Covid and I knew I needed to be at my mental and spiritual peak to handle it so I prepared leading up to it. It became among the most fulfilling times of my life, filled with days of bliss despite tons of objectively terrible things happening in my life, beyond Covid lockdowns, at that time.

Psychology Needed to Reach Peak State for the First Time

Take massive ownership

Step 1. Do not complain about anything in life. Stop complaining if you currently are.

If you have more body fat than you want, it's your responsibility.

If you have less muscle than you want, it's your responsibility.

While we all have different standards of beauty and different fitness goals, there is also objective truth. There is such a thing as overweight or underweight (rarely ever seen in first world countries now). This current culture of no body shaming and everyone's beautiful and we should accept everyone for who they are is a tragedy. It's victim mentality that breeds incompetence and lack of accountability. And people wonder why they're unhappy.

You cannot be happy and well without taking massive ownership and becoming accountable for literally every single thing in your life.

Don't think like a victim. Only losers think like victims.

This means do not blame your genetics. Do not blame the food industry for making food taste so good that you can't stop eating. Do not blame your love for certain food or beverages. Do not blame lack of time, your demanding job, your spouse, your kids, your environment.

Do not blame yourself. Know the difference between blaming and holding people accountable.

Hold yourself accountable 100% for all things in your life regardless of circumstances. No one will ever care about you more than yourself.

You always have a choice. No one put a gun to your head to force you to eat anything, be with anyone, be anywhere, do anything.

Therefore, there is only one thing left to do: take responsibility for everything. Accept your current state is your responsibility, define a future vision state for yourself, identify the gap, and come up with an action plan to bridge the gap, then execute with discipline.

The current culture breeds weak men who look weak, talk weak, feel weak, are weak. Then they complain when women don't accept them for who they are. The fact that something as disturbing as OnlyFans exist in today's world is a tragedy.

The western society is degrading at a rapid pace because of something that is extremely obvious after you see it. The western society transitioned from one that tolerated the belief of absolute truths to one that doesn't. When the social norm is to not tolerate the belief in absolute truth, and that it's only acceptable to believe that everything is relative, what happens? Accountability disappears. This single reason explains a multitude of problems in society today. If you're interested, you should research historical texts to find exactly when did this start happening and what caused it? Who was involved?

It would be a shame for the west to fall. Even if it makes a small difference, you as a man, can fight the fall, by deciding what your values are, how you behave, and what you believe in.

Step 2. Realize that it is you who cause changes

Foods don't change you. Exercises don't change you. You change you.

There is only one thing that burns fat: your body.

There is only one thing that actually builds muscle: your body.

You're the only one capable of letting your body do that by controlling it with your mind and spirit.

Do not think anything is the solution to losing fat and building muscle: methods, foods, anything. Fundamentally it comes down to you.

Realize this: unless you are actually disabled or have a severe genetic mutation, getting muscular and lean is actually straight forward, but it's not for the weak-minded who make excuses. It's actually a straight path forward but each time loser mentality arises it knocks you back several steps.

If you're reading this, then I don't believe you are a loser so don't think like one.

Now the question is, do you actually want to reach your true physical potential as a man, muscular and lean? If you don't, then you should stop here and close this guide.

Maybe you want to just enjoy life and have more comfort. That's ok, if and only if that's truly what the real you deep within yourself desires, not the one making excuses to justify the real motivations driving your actions.

Maybe you'd rather pursue your intellectual potential, or spiritual potential, earning potential, etc. It's perfectly fine to say you're not interested.

Binary Strength is about achieving your physical potential in a way that also gives you a taste of your true mental and spiritual potential.

If you study men's bodies biologically, you will find that everything about it was designed to be lean and muscular. People in modern society have just become so out of tune with themselves that this isn't as obvious as it should be. It's possible to reach this peak physical state without becoming your true self by relying on a coach, but to me that's missed opportunity. When you've obtained self-mastery, became your own coach, and reached your peak state on your own, at least once, you would've already become who you were born to be, your true self.

Play the game, but don't play God

Losing fat, building muscle, achieving your own ideal physique in general can be seen as a game. It boggles my mind how smart people who have created great businesses or developed incredible careers fail to see how fitness is literally just another game very similar to games they've already mastered.

The fastest way to transform your body is to take a game you already did very well in (career, investing, business, etc.), and apply the exact same mentality you used to succeed in that game to fitness as a new game you're starting.

To me, this game is like my work, product management.

From my experience, creating any product from 0 to 1 is generally always harder than going from 1 to n simply because the number of unknowns involved when creating something from nothing. If you've never reached or gotten close to your peak physical state before, you have a lot to learn about yourself and how your body, mind, and spirit works. Every single person is unique, different genetics, life experiences, vices, personalities, psychologies etc. All of these can work in your favor or limit you in your fitness journey.

You must first recognize this: asking someone questions like "What should I do to reach my goal? What exercises should I do? How many reps should I do? What should I eat? When should I eat? How much should I eat?" makes you very vulnerable to being tricked, where content creators online will get your attention, keep you confused, and make you addicted to more information. They will profit from monetizing your attention. You will be caught in an infinite re-enforcing loop where you keep going back to them because you're asking the same kind of questions.

These questions should be asked to yourself.

Then you need to do the hard work to answer these questions specifically for yourself, at that time, in the circumstances you're in.

The only other person besides yourself who these questions should be directed to is a coach who is committed to having **skin in *your* game** and who already knows you very well. I say this because at any given time **everyone is at a different level**. It's incredible how this is somehow not a thing. I have no idea why in this current day and age, where humans have the intelligence to develop self-driving cars, people still compare themselves to anyone but themselves. They compare themselves among many dimensions, physical looks, money, status. Each time they do it, they never walk away feeling more positive, yet they keep doing it. This is why social media apps are meaningless to me in their current state. I believe one of the reasons why I can experience major setbacks in life and still come back strong is because I am always only competing with myself. I consciously do not compare myself to anyone else because it doesn't enhance any positive feedback loop in my life and has plenty of negative effects that grieve my spirit.

Pause and ask yourself, would you ask someone "how do I become rich?" or "how do I make more money?", "what should I invest in?". If you're a professional like me, I'm going to guess you wouldn't ask these questions because you're smart enough to realize that unless someone knows you very deeply, at best their answer would be vague. If you provided specific goals, then that's a bit better, like "what should I invest in if I wanted to do xyz, I'm willing to accept A, but not B".

What's the TLDR to reach 10%, or even 5% body fat? Burn more calories than you consume, maximize fat burning efficiency, minimize setbacks.

How do you get $1 million, $5 million, $10+ million? Make more money than you spend, maximize money making efficiency, minimize setbacks.

It's really that simple.

But wait, why isn't everyone super ripped and wealthy?

Because humans are fundamentally flawed beings with major cognitive biases, self-destructive tendencies, and mental patterns that makes the "minimize setbacks" part extremely difficult.

In Money: Master the Game by Tony Robbins, we hear literal gold from Ray Dalio and several giants. Yet the vast majority of investors do not take their advice of investing passively and in a way that logically manages risk through diversification of asset classes.

Making risky investments and believing you have a strong sense of what the future will be like is just one of many examples of trying to play God, something humans fundamentally all want to do for their own lives. When your investments are making money, you tend to over-attribute it to your choice of investments vs the bull market carrying you.

Trying to time fat burning as if you have any idea of what is actually happening in your body at any given time is like trying to time the market. When fat-loss goes well, you over-attribute it to your choice of timing vs the fact that you happened to burn more calories than you consumed.

If you pause, observe your thoughts for a day, you will laugh at the number of times you try to exercise a sense of Godly control. This generally comes from the human desire to know what's the "best", "ideal", "optimal" for xyz. This is why clickbait titles get the highest click through rate.

This is simply a flaw in human beings.

Humans have become so full of ourselves that we don't naturally default to believing we could be wrong, which we actually are most of the time. Elon Musk puts it well: "Always assume you're wrong. Your job is to be less wrong."

My disappointment in how humans behave is why I consciously decided to stop making easy automated money from internet marketing. Something deeply disturbed my soul when I saw how easy it was to take advantage of humans. It didn't align with my values. Money should be a byproduct of value created. This is why all fitness content I produce will always remain free. This is my self-expression of distaste of anything that purposely misleads. Even if it makes a small difference, it's meaningful to me. I need to fight the stupidity of lies and negativity in my own life mostly generated from my ex-spouse and what I witness in the world, out of principle.

Do not try to play God. This means STOP looking for the optimal in anything. Instead, study systems and how components in systems behave. Know the levers controlling outcomes you desire, then trust the process. Unless you have medical conditions and severe handicaps holding you back, I believe it's impossible to not reach your fitness goal and stay there if you did this. Trying to play God in fitness will set you back in two major ways:

1) more procrastination, learning without action

2) overcomplicating things, causing undesired results like fat gain or muscle loss, which negatively affects consistency due to confusion, decreased willpower, and lower motivation

Recognize that there is money in BS. Online content ranking algorithms all incentivize BS and has very limited controls to counter it. As time progresses, the ratio of truth to BS trends towards zero. For example, just because some gentle looking doctor sounds really believable and calm when he talks about intermittent fasting doesn't mean he should be believed.

Recommended readings: "Thinking Fast and Slow" by Daniel Kahneman, "Skin in the Game" by Nassim Nicholas Taleb.

Trust the Process

Reaching your true form requires faith. You must believe.

Applied faith is a firm belief in our objective or purpose backed by a strong prayer. Make an expression of gratitude for your blessings while praying for the help of God. Applied faith is a mental attitude that we must develop and maintain before taking complete possession of our minds. ~ Napoleon Hill

Belief and faith are beyond the mind. It is exercised by your spirit. When you take action because of some faith, you are using power from your spirit. When you don't act because you're not "sure" and you want to be sure, this is how you fail because you're still being controlled by your own mind, which is fundamentally flawed and believes it's God and has the capacity to be God, all knowing, which it cannot.

If you're like most people, you won't take action unless you trust that the outcome your action produces is predictably good. People who don't fall under this trap are those who bias towards action first. However, these people are becoming fewer and fewer in society as we consciously develop thought processes that are great for work like engineering and medicine but completely fails when applied to other areas of life like fitness, business creation, etc.

There is a massive "fear of failure" psychology in people today that I consciously killed from myself to start businesses years ago. It proved useful for fitness. You cannot have fear of failure when starting a fitness transformation because you need to do first before aiming precisely. **Aim in a general direction, take massive action, refine as you go.** This isn't rocket science where things need to be precise before taking action. Worst case? You wasted some time and didn't get "optimal" efficiency. Who cares.

You do need some initial trust that your actions will produce results. This requires patience, which is limited since you will give your plan some defined window of time before you stop trusting the current path and want to pivot. This is a problem since human attention span and patience levels are on a general decline. Clickbait culture of unrealistic expectations like "how I lost 10lbs in a week" makes the problem even worse. This is why people exercise and eat in a new routine for a period of time then fall off track and stop being consistent.

Losing 10lbs in a week is possible. Losing 40 lbs of fat in 4 months is also possible. I did it. But it's certainly rare and not the norm.

As mentioned in the section above, you can't know all the exact details of the human body: how fat is burned, how muscles are built, how to precisely control hormones etc. That said, you *can* definitely know enough about systems such that you can cause predictable results. Then you simply need to trust the process. I understand this is a big ask for anyone who hasn't already reached their peak state at least once and mastered their own body and mind to know who they truly are and how their body and mind works.

Remember, this section is about the psychology needed to reach your ideal state for *the first time.* After you've done this once, you don't need to build this initial trust anymore because your own experience is living proof and serves as the new foundational trust in the process you'll have forever.

Completely new psychologies are involved to maintain peak physique that we'll get to later.

For now, it's super important to find someone you trust to learn from on a weekly, and ideally, daily basis. Find someone who reached or exceeded a level you want to reach and produces tons of high-

quality genuine fitness content online. I don't know about you but I can't trust a doctor talking about intermittent fasting and benefits to muscle growth when he looks like he would be in a coma from a single punch from me. I recommend immersing yourself in YouTube channels that produce regular genuine content. I don't produce nearly enough videos to be considered. I recommend Paul Revelia's channel and Mario Tomic's channel to start.

If you can't do this on your own, and it's worth it to you, then I suggest you hire a coach. I lost 40lbs of fat and put on 10lbs of muscle in 4 months when I worked with a coach twice a week and immersed myself with quality content online. I increased my activity level, tracked and set the right macros, and added workout days to the week beyond days with my trainer. That was in early 2019, when I first began my divorce process, which was and still is my edge that fuels me. Hiring a trainer was one of the first things I did after separation because I knew that no matter what, I *must* invest in myself and not feel like or be a loser. It would've been too easy to adopt a victim mindset. I don't care about winning but I am not a victim, I will not lose.

If you don't have some kind of strong pain in your life driving a desire to change, then find some other extremely strong emotion to associate your initial transformation to. Without it, it's very difficult to achieve your goal since there will be countless times when you're presented with a choice to take action A which moves you closer to your fitness goal and action B which moves you further away but is more comfortable and easy. Remember, choices compound.

Initial body transformations require obsessive immersion. Some may call this immersion useful for "motivation", but really, it's about trust at the core. **If you truly believed, and you truly desired it, motivation to take action is a byproduct that is guaranteed to follow.** Similarly, doubt, the inverse of trust, directly reduces your motivation to take action. When you consume content, be conscious and stay away from the stupidity of the internet where influencers are fighting each other publicly, casting doubt on each other on purpose. These make great topics to create video content on and monetize since negativity and drama holds attention unlike anything else. Often this is combined with clickbait titles to get more views. Sometimes the drama was seeded on purpose collaboratively even though it doesn't seem that way. This is a modern marketing technique on YouTube that financially benefits content creators involved. Don't play their game, focus on playing your own.

Lifestyle Design to Reach Peak State and Maintain Forever

Three main groups of actions for body transformations

There are only three main groups of actions for body transformations:

1. How you eat – eat less calories than you use weekly (daily fluctuations don't matter as much and isn't actionable as feedback)
2. How you exercise – build more muscle and move more
3. How you rest – give your body the time it needs to recover

We will create a flywheel using routines and feedback loops to address all of these three.

Create a flywheel using routines and feedback loops

If you lived a life where you repeatedly made the better choice that transforms your body, you'd reach your end goal state. You just need to do that the vast majority of the time.

Often our psychology goes like **"if I was in better shape, I'd feel better".** This is actually a self-defeating mindset because you're probably months away from being at the "better shape" you envision, and by that logic, you're not allowing yourself to feel better and are making an excuse to not feel better for months. There is no way to sustain habit changes and new actions you need to take if you think like this. You must never think using this logic.

It's true that you will definitely feel better when you're in better shape, but the problem is when you don't feel great and energized, it makes taking action and making the right choices super hard. You need something that automates you taking action to move you to your goal.

You need to create a flywheel such that when it gets to a critical mass, it becomes extremely difficult to stop because the momentum is positively re-enforcing more action and movement, which then keeps the momentum and continuously produces results in a sustainable manner.

That said, you do need to massive take action to kick off the flywheel first.

Think like this: *"**if I make choices and take actions that I really believe will help transform my body, then I'm one step closer to my goal and I'll see results soon, which I know will motivate me to continue until I'm at my goal state."***

Here's where routines and feedback loops come in. You need to design the right routine with positive feedback loops uniquely tailored for your life such that you face the least amount of physical and mental resistance to take actions you need to take**. You cannot have any type of negative feedback loops that create pain for you when you take the actions you must take to transform your body.** Humans are wired to avoid pain, avoid risk, and stay exactly where we are by default. You can always rationalize and BS yourself to make the wrong choice so you need **routines that are positively re-enforced using feedback loops**.

Examples of negative feedback loops:

- You make a better choice on what you eat but someone you live with makes you feel guilty or stressed because of your choice
- You change the way you eat in a way that is biologically causing your body to binge, such as cutting calories too low, or cutting out single macronutrient groups such as carbs out almost completely
- Every time you work out you feel guilty because someone you live with is doing something that doesn't encourage your behavior
- Every time you work out you need to spend significant time doing something you don't enjoy such as driving through bad traffic
- Every time you work out you feel guilty or stressed about something else that you need to do, like taking care of your kids

The only way to sustainably transform your body, maintain it, and do it again easily anytime (if you've fallen off track), is to **create a system where you truly feel positive when you make the right choices moving you closer to your goal state**. This means:

- **Never eat anything you don't enjoy**
- **Never do any workouts you don't enjoy**
- **Never eat or work out in such a way that makes you too tired to continue the process or do it properly with correct form**

You need to figure out the detailed tactics to achieve the above that apply specifically to you but here are some elements below.

Optimize your physical environment

Your surroundings significantly influence your eating behavior. The foods in your home and the layout of your kitchen or pantry can either help or hinder your ability to stay lean.

To stay in control, you must consciously design your environment to reduce temptation and friction. This can be done across a spectrum—from completely eliminating sweets, sugar, and junk food from your home, to simply placing them in hard-to-reach locations. For example, hide snacks in the basement, behind a closet door, so accessing them requires effort.

Personally, I don't keep any unhealthy snacks at home. If I ever want to indulge, I buy them just-in-time, not ahead of time. I also don't keep sugar at home because I never need it.

Above all, prioritize optimizing your fridge. What's inside it has the biggest influence on your daily food choices and long-term success.

Automate eating food you enjoy

The simplest and most effective strategy for hitting your fat-loss goals is meal prepping.

If you're deciding what to eat for every meal, every day, you're introducing unnecessary decision fatigue and inconsistency. That makes it nearly impossible to track macros reliably—especially if you're aiming for sub-10% body fat.

Instead, automate your meals. Cook in bulk, prep your meals in advance, and weigh your food. This not only simplifies your routine but ensures you're always eating within your targets.

Even if you're not aiming for ultra-low body fat, you'll still benefit from prepping foods you genuinely enjoy. Rotate a few go-to meals, but make sure every item you eat is something you love. Personally, I

eat the same breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks every day—and never get tired of it—because I only eat what I enjoy.

Consistency becomes easy when you remove thinking from the equation.

Catch or prevent triggers from causing major setbacks

As you lean down, avoiding setbacks becomes one of the most critical parts of staying on track. The biggest setbacks typically come from binge eating or episodes where you lose control and overconsume.

When this happens, forgive yourself quickly—but never ignore it. You must reflect on the situation and identify the triggers that led to the setback. Write them down. Understand them. This is non-negotiable if your goal is to reach 15%, 12%, 10%, or sub-10% body fat.

Setbacks are especially dangerous because they undo progress faster than you think. Occasionally slipping up is fine—it happens. But repeated binges will erase weeks of discipline and sabotage your momentum.

Understand this: the modern food industry profits off your addiction. Most processed foods are engineered to be hyper-palatable and addictive. Their business model depends on your lack of self-control.

That’s why you need to stop playing their game and start playing your own. If you're already overweight, chances are you're addicted to food in some way. So treat it like an addiction. Manage it deliberately. Set up your environment, habits, and mental systems to avoid temptation altogether.

Personally, I don’t keep sugar at home. It’s not because I’m stronger than anyone else—it’s because I don’t want to fight unnecessary battles. Sugar is one of the most addictive substances on the planet. If it’s not in the house, it’s not a problem.

Leverage deadlines and timeboxes

Humans naturally expand effort to fill whatever time they’re given—this is called Parkinson’s Law: "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion".

That’s why having real or artificial deadlines is one of the most effective tools for creating urgency and accelerating fat-loss.

Apply this same principle from your work life to your fitness journey. Set clear deadlines—then write them down and put them somewhere visible, like a whiteboard in your home. Make sure you see it multiple times a day.

Deadlines could be anything meaningful to you: a beach day, a birthday, a vacation, or even just a personal challenge. For example, I got to ~9% body fat before a cruise with my son—not because anyone expected me to, but simply to push myself and stand out in a world where most people aren’t lean.

Whether real or made up, deadlines give your cut a defined timebox to operate within. That makes it easier to stay focused, stay accountable, and push through the hard days with purpose.

Leverage human validations

This one is simple, but powerful. Even though your main goal should *never* be to get lean just for validation, let’s be honest—validation feels good. It always will. And instead of pretending it doesn’t matter, it’s more productive to use it strategically.

As you get leaner, you *will* receive more validation—from both men and women. In fact, you'll probably get more validation from men than women. But you'll get attention from both, and you'll notice it.

Now, here's the warning: I've been through the other side of this. When you're getting constant attention, it can be tempting to act on every instinct. Don't do that. That path leads to consequences you'll regret. I've lived it myself.

Here's the better path:

1. **Pursue your transformation for *yourself***—to become the best version of the man you're meant to be.
2. **Recognize that validation is a useful psychological tool.** It gives momentum and emotional fuel, especially when your willpower is low.
3. **Expose yourself to purposeful moments of validation**—not constantly, but intentionally. For example, going to the gym, attending events, or showing up confidently in social settings.
4. **Never act impulsively on that validation.** You're not a dog chasing scraps—you're the one in control.

Over time, you'll build a positive cycle. You'll receive validation—but you'll no longer *need* it. It becomes a tool in your hand, not a leash around your neck. Instead of being a slave to validation like 99% of men are—you become the master of it and make validation a servant to your growth.

<u>Leverage exposure therapy to train will power and brain decision pathways</u>

This is similar to leveraging validation—but it's entirely focused on food. The idea is simple: don't hide from temptation. Expose yourself to it on purpose.

When you avoid foods like pizza, ice cream, and chips, you give them power. But when you face them without giving in, *you* reclaim that power.

For example, when I go grocery shopping, I intentionally walk down the aisles filled with foods that used to tempt me. I don't avoid them—I stare them down. And as I do, I consciously go through the mental reps of *not* choosing them. I let my brain practice higher-level decision-making in real time.

That's how you literally rewire your neural pathways. You train your mind to make new choices, not based on instinct or craving, but on the man you're becoming. Do this enough times, and you'll build a willpower engine so strong that staying lean feels automatic.

<u>Leverage surplus phases to increase body fat on purpose</u>

After reaching desired leanness and gaining experience in the craft of body fat recomposition, eventually it becomes healthier physically and mentally to have deliberate phases of surplus calories.

For example, my 2025 and 2026 generally looks like this:

Months	**Goal per day**
Jan, Feb	Caloric deficit *without* diet breaks
Mar, Apr, May, Jun	Caloric deficit with refeed days and diet break weeks
July, Aug, Sept	Maintain
Oct, Nov	Surplus
Dec	Mix days of caloric deficit and surplus

When I have periods of deliberate body-fat gain, the physical and psychological break is useful for the following reasons:

1. Reset male hormones.

2. Helps me remember how it feels with more body fat and motivates me to go back to my ideal body fat % soon. I spend so much time in an ultra-lean state throughout the year that it's already my steady-state. Anything not that state doesn't feel right.

3. Helps me eat more inclusively with family and friends during the fall and winter season filled with holiday gatherings, festive vibes, and weather changes that requires body fat to stay warm.

4. Body improvement changes feel good and I love the craft of reducing body fat. The outcome of reaching my goal body fat % is good but the journey is so much better. I love tracking daily and watching the progress weekly. Without extra body fat to lose, I wouldn't be able to have the amazing experience of cutting body fat yearly.

5. Each dieting phase is an opportunity to harness spiritual energy. I go completely into the zone psychologically and spiritually, and become exceptionally creative, sharp, and driven, which I enjoy channeling to do good work professionally.

Examples

I'll share some of my own examples to help you visualize what this looks like.

I design my life so I can reach my goals by leveraging paths of lowest resistance whenever there's an opportunity to do that. Fitness to me is just a subset of overall growth and good stewardship of my body, mind, and spirit as a human being.

I never experience the state of boredom and I rarely ever experience the states: depressed, anxious, stressed because I actively minimize time spent in those states. Being in those states is an indication that your spirit is being deprived and your body will reveal it, which produces emotions, the physical manifestation of your spirit's state.

From my mistakes, I've decided to never date for fun and have casual sexual relationships ever again. Doing this for only half a year rewired my brain's dopamine circuitry so severely that it caused a mental crash that lasted 2 years. I completely did not respect sex's original design and paid the consequences.

In addition, I made "never watch porn again" as my number one goal, exactly like this TED talk, is the single most important thing I do to prevent depression and anxiety as a man. The talk's title is "Escaping Porn Addiction" but the reality is, if you watch porn even once a week habitually, you're addicted to the single most dangerous drug ever known to men. I pay for the Brainbuddy app monthly because to me it is necessary, a non-negotiable.

Prioritizing my spiritual well-being is how I can easily put on muscle or lose fat extremely fast. Speed builds automatic momentum. You can brute force and do it with pure physical reactions, but you'll need to invest significantly more time. This is what the vast majority of people in today's society are doing, thus they believe it requires a lifestyle of constantly being in the gym to be ripped. For 99% of days I'm in the gym, my workouts are 45 minutes and this has always been the case.

Leaving a toxic abusive marriage was also a catalyst for me. Of course, I didn't choose to divorce just to get fit but it did kick off the journey for me. I lost 15 lbs in 15 days by eating more and sleeping more without any exercise immediately after I left the relationship. For all the years I was married, I was often in fight or flight mode, living a worldly life, with a lot of conflict in my relationship, constantly walking on eggshells. Life's too short to waste away precious time like that. I'm almost certain I would develop terminal illness in my 40s if I stayed in the relationship. In fact, I was considering critical health issuance when I was married because I instinctively felt there's a sizable chance I might die in my 40s.

When I had a lot of stressors in my life, even though I ate very little, caloric deficit was way harder to achieve for multiple reasons. My body couldn't function properly. It wanted to hold onto body fat. The same activity I would do now would burn less calories back then even if all variables like intensity and duration were the same. Appetite was also much harder to manage so I would stress eat. That said, eating a lot isn't necessarily a problem since when you're well, you can eat a huge amount of food and have no changes in body composition.

Nowadays, I wake up and sleep at the same time every day, including weekends, to anchor the body's clock. The first thing I do in the morning is make coffee, stretch for 5 minutes, write what I'm feeling grateful for that morning, then I go on my Bible app (I use YouVersion) and go through the verse and devotional of the day. Sometimes I follow this up by reading a physical Bible to hear more. It's called the Living Word for a reason, it's profound and unexplainable why it speaks live, in-context, transcending time. Then I would pray a bit and get on with the day. Sometimes it means going to the gym, other times it's dropping my son off at school, or other times it's going to a café to read a book or write. These morning actions cause me to subconsciously feel a sense of moving forward because they help me grow and keep me motivated automatically to do anything. They are nurturing.

Then I start the working hours of my full-time job and the motivation from my morning activities automatically carries through so I'm already highly energized. The energy is sustained throughout the entire work day because I minimize activities that decrease energy. I don't multitask anything and single task with extreme intensity. I take breaks and think about nothing. I believe the mind need periods of time throughout the waking hours where it can relax and flow. For me this is best achieved walking outside where creativity often happens automatically. This is expanded more in Creativity Inc by Edwin Catmull and Amy Wallace.

I work from home so I need to consciously counter the inactivity by making sure I get some walking outdoors when the weather is good. The walks are positively re-enforcing because I enjoy the dynamic change of scenery as I walk and savor the quiet time to think and reflect. If the weather isn't good, I replace the walks with steady state cardio on the spin bike while listening to a podcast or audiobook. I place that spin bike in a very visible place, not in the basement so I subconsciously am forced to realize it's there.

I never run because I don't enjoy it. Instead, I mountain bike to enjoy dynamic scenery and I freestyle rollerblade to enjoy the progression in my slalom or aggressive tricks skills. I focus mostly on calisthenics and try to progress in mastering more and more difficult skills. I practice boxing because it's my favorite combat sport to watch. I generally do activities that involve developing skills because I enjoy the sense of accomplishment when I unlock new skills from my own effort. I do not care about end results. I enjoy the process naturally.

I don't cook anything that takes too long because I derive zero joy from cooking. I make sure I season my food really well so they always taste amazing by using various spices I like. I use low calorie sauces to enhance food such as mustard, ketchup with no added sugar, siracha sauce, Frank's hot sauce, low calory BBQ sauce from G Hughes, Stevia, sugar free maple syrup, low fat whipped cream, etc. Sugar

should be treated as a drug and is proven to cause cancer much more easily than sweeteners so I don't have sugar in my home.

I consciously try to not be hungry for too long to avoid bad eating choices when hungry. Anything that produces hunger is a negative feedback loop. You don't need to feel guilty about making poor eating choices when hungry, it's just a natural biological reaction.

You need to figure out how to minimize times when you're hungry.

Some people suppress appetite by intermittent fasting, coffee, controlled portions of dark chocolate, etc.

Personally, this works for me:

- high fiber real food, minimal processed food
- foods that have the highest satiety to calorie ratio: protein (chicken breast, tilapia, basa), sweet potatoes, potatoes, jasmine rice etc

When I'm working during the day, I don't think about food much. I avoid inactivity and focus on doing things, whether it's for productive or relaxation reasons. I have a light breakfast, large lunch, then I'll have a pre-workout snack, dinner, and a very satisfying snack before bed that makes me not want to eat anything else, for me this currently means Quaker chocolate rice cakes with no sugar added peanut butter. I find this combination takes so long to chew and swallow that by the time I'm done two rice cakes with 15g peanut butter on each cake, I really don't feel like eating anymore.

These are just examples that work for me. No one knows you better than you know yourself. Ultimately you need to put in the work to assess and create a flywheel that works for yourself, tweak it as you go, and optimize it until it works well for you. Take action and start designing your own flywheel.

Psychology Needed Stay Lean Forever

I believe that the primary reason a man is not able to stay lean very naturally today is because he has some level of food addiction. This may sound harsh but logically, if we weren't addicted and had strong impulse control, and we already know the most critical aspects of dieting, which is to simply eat less calories, then we would all be fit and reach our fitness goals easily.

So why do we eat in a calorie surplus repeatedly and put on body fat or have trouble easily losing it?

If we look back in history, we'll see that besides the ultra-wealthy and royalty, most of human civilization recorded men eating just enough, not excess, because we didn't have easy access to delicious food.

Today even those living at the poverty line can easily buy high calorie highly appetizing food for cheap that will easily put them in a surplus and gain body fat. This is why you'll see people who can't even afford basic life needs like food still be overweight. Many homeless people are overweight.

To make this matter worse, men's brains are heavily sexualized today. Sexualization has the exact same effects on eating food as it does on sexual behavior. Food and sex are strongly linked.

Many will claim that this is male biology, but if we look that history, we'll clearly see that it was deliberate programming by forces behind the sex and porn industry and general pop culture and media's desire to make easy money by selling sex. This affects our ability to diet because as modern science finally discovered, there is a strong link between sexual pleasure and the pleasure we get from eating highly appetizing food. This is ancient biblical knowledge recorded thousands of years ago as the concept of "mastering our flesh" and why fasting was the primary tool given to us by God to fight sexual temptations.

At some point, it was common knowledge that food and sex are strongly linked, and that mastering one allows you to master the other. I've tasted what mastering this feels like and its power is unlike anything you can imagine. I hope you can experience the same to know what this feels like.

My belief is that the most powerful method to train our psychology to stay lean forever is by practicing not just dieting for vanity, but for the deeper, related purpose of master our sexuality as men.

We achieve this mastery by first desexualizing our minds from the modern hypersexualized world around us that clouds our eyes and judgement, robs us of our destiny, and keeps us chained away from obtaining true freedom.

Just because we have easy access to something pleasurable does not mean we should indulge in it.

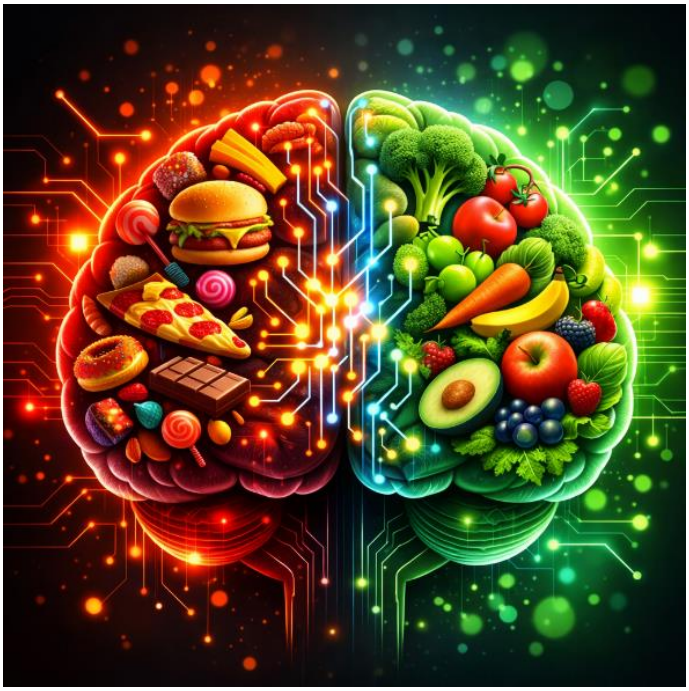
Just because we want to do something that feels good does not mean that we should do it.

We must unlearn society's unspoken narrative of "if it feels good, it must be right".

Instead, as men, we must truly do what is truly right.

True freedom is the ability to have many choices while choosing consciously with self-control that only the truly strong possess.

Using Desexualization Techniques to Beat Food Addiction



Modern diets bombard us with hyper-palatable snacks, “food porn” on social media and constant opportunities to snack. These stimuli hijack the same dopamine reward system that sexual content manipulates.

Many people pursing “desexualizing the brain” realize that quitting porn and masturbation unlocks discipline and focus. The underlying idea (regaining control over overstimulated reward circuits) is just as relevant to food addiction.

Below is a guide that uses the same language and techniques to help us regain control of our diet.

Why Food Addiction Mirrors Porn Addiction

When comparing dopamine spikes of natural rewards from unnatural stimulus, we see that porn causes dopamine spikes that are 250% higher than natural rewards, nicotine is 200% higher and food can often be 100% higher.

When dopamine spikes repeatedly, the brain down-regulates its receptors. Repeated surges blunt dopamine receptors and make everyday activities less pleasurable. The result is tolerance and compulsive behavior. We need more sugar or more extreme content to get the same pleasure.

Scientific evidence now recognizes sugar addiction as a real phenomenon. University of Virginia health experts explain that sugar triggers a strong dopamine response. Repeated consumption leads to cravings and withdrawal, meeting several criteria for substance use disorder. Harvard’s Nutrition Source adds that hyper-palatable foods (high in sugar, fat or salt) activate the brain’s reward regions and release dopamine. Repeated consumption disrupts hormones that signal fullness, causing tolerance and cravings.

Like addictive substances, these foods share the same dopamine pathways, making it hard to quit.

Here's a system that applies techniques from desexualization to eating and it is ***extremely*** effective.

Step 1 - Stop Watching Porn → Eliminate Hyper-Palatable Foods

Watching porn fries your brain. Don’t believe the notion that “it’s healthy, it’s natural, it’s not something we should be worried about”. It needs to be eliminated if you care about yourself.

Sugar and processed fats deliver unnatural dopamine hits that dull your receptors and leave you craving more. Treat these foods like porn: they offer cheap pleasure but erode your self-control.

Commitment to abstinence from them, at least for a significant period, gives your brain a chance to reset. Replacing processed foods with whole foods lowers baseline dopamine spikes so your brain can again find pleasure in real achievements and nourishing meals.

Step 2 - Stop Pleasuring Yourself → Stop "Pleasure Eating"

Masturbation gives the brain a dopamine surge without true love, similarly, "pleasure eating" (mindless snacking, emotional eating or using food as entertainment) provides a cheap hit without meeting true hunger.

Sugar addiction manifests in cravings, tolerance and withdrawal. After each hit there is a crash, leading to fatigue and more cravings.

Consciously resist the urge to self-soothe with food. Plan meals, eat mindfully and savor each bite. When cravings strike, use strategies that the Harvard Nutrition Source recommends for unlearning cravings: distraction, going for a walk, or drinking water.

Step 3 - Find Your Purpose and True Identity

Addiction isn't about perversion. It's about lack of purpose.

When you don't have a north star, you fill the void with porn or food. In addiction research, a strong sense of purpose predicts lower relapse rates. A study on cocaine-dependent adults found that a higher purpose in life significantly reduced relapse to drug or alcohol use and the number of days of use six months after treatment. Purpose provides alternative reinforcement and coping resources.

For food addiction, set compelling goals: a fitness milestone, a personal project, a career mission. When your energy is directed toward something meaningful, cheap dopamine hits from sugar lose their appeal. You simply see them as your enemy that's holding you back. You start to dislike them.

You and I are not losers, so why eat like one?

Step 4 - Eliminate Triggers

Addiction researchers note that dopamine spikes are triggered **more by <u>cues</u> than by rewards**, and reducing cues can weaken conditioned responses.

Just like how avoiding "soft-porn" on social media and purposely training algorithms by downvoting sexual content is helpful to avoid sexual temptations, removing food triggers is key. Cravings are often cued by environment and emotion.

Harvard nutrition experts note that environmental cues like social-media posts, cooking shows or the mere sight and smell of food can trigger cravings. A 2022 review notes that external factors (positive or negative events, advertisements, specific locations) and internal factors (dietary restriction, impulsivity, emotions) can spark food cravings.

What we can do:

- Scrub our feeds of cooking reels, mukbangs and decadent desserts. Train algorithms to show fitness inspiration instead.
- Clean our environment. Remove sweets and processed snacks from the home and office. If it's not there, we can't impulsively eat it.
- Most importantly, identify emotional triggers. Notice when stress, boredom or loneliness make us crave food. Have a concrete replacement plan that will be executed as soon as cravings for food arise so we don't need to think about it. We pause, ride the emotions, and execute the plan immediately. That plan might include things like journaling, reading, connecting with friends, taking a walk, anything that's healthy.

Step 5 - Dopamine Detox

Just like how desexualization isn't about never having sex again but to rediscover the true design of sex, a detox isn't just about fully abstaining. It's about rediscovering natural dopamine sources and enjoying food the way our bodies were made to.

Abstaining from overstimulating foods allows dopamine receptors to reset. Even a short 1-2 week "sugar fast" can reduce activity in reward centers. This should be done in combination with exercise since exercise reduces cravings for sugar and help build positive routines. Activities like strength training, hiking, dancing or martial arts deliver real dopamine while improving your body.

Step 6 - Stop Chasing Women → Stop Chasing Food

Stop chasing the next taste sensation. Food marketers bombard you with new flavors, limited-edition snacks and "food porn" on social media. Each pursuit is another distraction. Build your life around training, meaningful work and relationships, food becomes fuel, not entertainment.

Adopt the mindset of an athlete: plan your meals around nutrient density, not novelty. Over time, your taste buds reset and you derive more satisfaction from wholesome foods.

Putting It Into Practice

Desexualization techniques are about reclaiming our mental bandwidth. When we remove overstimulation, our brain's reward circuitry resets and we regain focus, creativity and energy.

Food addiction responds to the same approach:

Desexualization concept	Diet application
Stop watching porn	Eliminate ultra-processed, high-sugar/high-fat foods. These items deliver unnatural dopamine surges that blunt receptors.
Stop pleasuring yourself	Resist mindless snacking. Avoid using food for entertainment or emotional comfort.
Find purpose	Set meaningful goals (fitness, career, business, creative, relationships) to serve as alternative reinforcers.
Eliminate triggers	Remove food cues (social-media food content, snacks at home) and address emotional triggers.
Dopamine detox	Try periodic sugar/junk food fasts or intermittent fasting. Do physical exercise regularly, which forces the body to reset reward circuits.
Stop chasing women	Stop chasing novel taste sensations. Treat food as fuel as the primary purpose, and treat taste as secondary.

Desexualizing our brain isn't about suppressing desire, it's about taking back control of our attention.

Food addiction, like porn addiction, is fueled by exaggerated dopamine signals and environmental cues. By applying the same six strategies, removing hyper-stimulating inputs, resisting cheap dopamine hits, finding purpose, eliminating triggers, resetting our brain through detox, and focusing on self-improvement, we can retrain our brain to seek fulfilment from health, fitness and purpose.

Over time, our cravings diminish and we reclaim the discipline needed to achieve our goals for fitness and more.

Final Word

Unlike amassing wealth, you cannot get lucky or use any ungenuine methods to become shredded. If you achieve it once, you know you did something that very few people on the planet can do.

In the past, only warriors would be lean and muscular. Then as humans became more civilized, warriors were replaced by athletes. In the modern age, one of the greatest social trends is that everyone wants to look like an athlete. But the problem is the intense focus on aesthetics only. Most people just want results their eyes can see.

The real prize in my opinion is obtaining the soul of a warrior. Everything else, including a lean and muscular physique happens naturally as a byproduct.

I challenge you to become more, for the worthy reason of becoming a stronger man, not for fleeing superficial reasons that objectify our dignity because:

“Our bodies will decay, but true strength will always remain.” ~ me

Words are always meaningless without action because actions reveal our true intentions. Strong men have character. One of the most important characters is integrity, to be trustworthy. If you’re a man of your word, and you say anything suggesting you want to be 10% body fat, **then you must take action.**

I believe men should not say anything future looking about their intentions unless they’re already in the process or will definitively back it up with action. Men who talk too much lose the weight of their words. I was like this years ago until I woke up.

Men are only becoming weaker, hiding behind screens, talking too much, complaining about being hurt, hurting others on purpose, and having no accountability. **A lack of accountability leads to victim mentality, which leads to suffering and mental stress because it is the weakest form of being.**

Social media isn’t the problem, it simply made it easier to become weaker.

“Do not pray for an easy life. Pray for the strength to endure a difficult one.” ~ Bruce Lee

Science and technology are great, but there is great value in studying history. Find out who suffered incredible injustices but didn’t complain. Who were objectively victims but never thought of themselves as victims? Understanding these people will make you stronger.

I believe you can master your body and reveal your ultimate form that already lies deep within you, waiting to be unlocked.

I wish you live a meaningful life and discover…your true potential.

Onwards, my friend.

~ Jonathan Zhao, April 2022