

AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

My Approach to Lifelong
Fitness After 40

Table Of Contents

Introduction	3
Training Overview	9
Nutrition Overview	34
Lifestyle Practices	38
Conclusion	42
Disclaimer	43



Introduction



I've been training since I was 18 years old, and I've been training clients since I was 19. That means I've spent more than half my life wholeheartedly dedicating myself to mastering the art of achieving and sustaining physical well-being.

I've worked with all types of clients from adolescents all the way up to seniors. At the time of this writing my oldest client Dave is 67 years old. Dave started with me when he was 49, and he is in better shape today than when we first started.

In fact, he's in better shape today than when he was in his twenties, because he was never very physically active in his younger days. Before we met, Dave had never been able to do a chin-up in his life, none the less with 15 kilograms attached to him!

On top of that, in contrast to most people his age, he's NOT taking a single medication. Not for blood pressure, cholesterol, arthritis, or depression...nothing!

I also have other clients that have been physically active their entire lives, that are in the best shape of their lives today in their early to late forties.

Two of my longer-term clients Zainab (41) and Irina (48) recently did a photoshoot to promote their Medical Spa business, and with only minimal prep they rocked up to the shoot looking absolutely stunning, because they maintain that type of shape year around. By the way you can check their website on the following page. They do some amazing things at their clinic.

[Contact Us | The Hebe Medical Spa Fishkill, NY \(thehebespa.com\)](https://thehebespa.com)



Irina and Zainab looking fab in their 40s from their recent photoshoot.

So, from my perspective, age is merely a number – it should never serve as an excuse to relinquish our fitness aspirations. The reality is that we can preserve our fitness and vitality well into our forties, fifties, and beyond. What's even more inspiring is that it doesn't require nearly as much time and effort as you might think.

Most people think that to stay in peak shape year around you need to hit the gym five to six days a week, give up your social life, and deprive yourself of all your favourite foods. But that is probably one of the biggest misconceptions that stops most people from achieving their long-term goals because they either end up burning out and quitting, or they never start in the first place. That type of extreme approach is completely unnecessary and unsustainable.

For the past decade or so I've averaged about four training session per week, and sometimes spent months on end only doing three sessions a week. And my training sessions typically only go for 45 to 60 minutes max. So, we're really talking about three to four hours of hard training a week here.

In addition to that I've been able to maintain single digit body fat averaging between 3000-3500 calories per day and eating out at least a couple of times a week. So, I've hardly felt deprived or restricted with my diet.

Sure, there may have been short stretches where I pushed my training to six days a week, sometimes training twice a day, but that was only for a few weeks at a time when I was prepping for a show or a photoshoot.

Allow me to clarify that my notion of "peak shape" doesn't reflect that of a competitive bodybuilder on stage. I've had my fair share of that experience, and I can attest to the inherent unhealthiness and discomfort of being in such condition.

The pursuit of true health and physical well-being should not align with the extreme leanness of a competitive physique athlete – at least not for the long haul.

In fact, when I was recently prepping for my 40th birthday shoot to celebrate being in peak shape at 40, as I stepped up my training and pulled back my calories a little, there was a point where my body fat dipped below 6%, and I started feeling a bit gaunt and depleted. So, I ended up pushing my calories up a bit to let my body fat get back up closer to 7% where I look a bit fuller and healthier, and generally feel much more robust and energetic.



I was starting to look a bit too depleted for my birthday shoot so I brought my calories up for a few days to fill out and let my body fat come back up a little.

That's because my intention is not to promote the emaciated appearance of a competitive bodybuilder, which is not only unhealthy but also impractical for most people. On top of that, I already get enough comments on social media about being on steroids, which I'd like to distance myself from.

Not that I get offended by such comments. It is in a way a compliment that people see my physique as being worthy of being on steroids. But from a marketing perspective it's not ideal because it turns away many of my target prospects. The reality is, that unless you are planning on competing at the Mr Olympia – you don't need steroids to attain your dream physique..you just need to be patient and consistent because it takes time.

The main reason I did the shoot and wrote this guide (apart from promoting myself as trainer and coach) was to serve as an example and show people that you can indeed get into peak shape without steroids, and maintain it even in your forties and beyond, if you are patient and you take a smart approach like I'm about to show you!

In other words, I wanted to promote something that is attainable and sustainable for most people. I didn't want to present myself in a way that is not representative of I walk around most of the time.

In fact, the picture on the following page was taken a few months after my 40th birthday shoot, and during that time I had been overseas for a month and took a full two weeks off training. As you can see, there's not that much difference from my professional shots.

So, you don't have to settle for looking like poster boy or poster girl just one day of the year..you can look like that everyday!



I also realize that the majority of people that I come in contact with or follow me may never decide to work with me...but many of them still do look up me as a source of inspiration for their fitness goals, so I wanted to create this guide to provide an insight and a blueprint as to how I train and eat to stay in shape. I hope you enjoy reading it and get a lot of value out of it!

Just remember, don't expect miracles or that you are going to look like that overnight...it takes time! That is why you must be patient and you must find an approach that you can stick with over the long haul.

So, without further ado, let's not waste any more time and get straight into it!

Training Overview

I generally break up my annual training plan into four phases as follows:

1. General strength/conditioning
2. Basic Hypertrophy
3. Advanced Hypertrophy
4. Transition

This model has worked really well for me and my clients because each phase gradually builds on from the previous phase which helps prevent burnout and stagnation.

The biggest mistake most people make with their training is lack of progression. This typically occurs either because they are not pushing themselves hard enough to stimulate the necessary adaptations in the body, or they try to push too hard too often and they end up hitting a wall.



This is why the gradual and systematic progression of the training load overtime is key!

It is also equally important to have periods of deloading to dissipate accumulated fatigue and allow the body and muscles to re-sensitize to the training stimulus.

Let's take a quick look at the break down of each phase.

1. General Strength/Conditioning

The purpose of the general strength/conditioning phase is to prepare and prime the body for the later phases to follow.

This phase serves 3 main purposes including:

- **Increasing muscle strength**
- **Increasing tendon stiffness**
- **Improving conditioning**

This prepares the body to be better able to deal with the demands of the later phases by increasing strength, improving work capacity, and conditioning the connective tissues to withstand greater loads.

This phase typically consists of four training sessions per week following an upper/lower split. Sometimes I may also add in an extra day of conditioning.

I started focusing more on conditioning earlier this year as I noticed my VO2 max had steadily declined from 45 to 43 over the past few years. Within only 8-weeks I was able to bring it up to 51, which puts me in the top tier for my age group.

These days my training goals extend beyond just being jacked and shredded. I also want to remain strong, fit, and athletic. Last year I worked on getting my vertical jump back up to 40 inches, to get back to where I was in my prime, when I was playing state league basketball, back in my early twenties.

Feeling strong, fit, and athletic is just as worthy of a goal as looking good. After all, most of us aspire to look good so that we feel better, and being strong, fit, and healthy certainly helps in that regard, especially as we get into our mid to late thirties and our natural athleticism starts to abandon us. But we can certainly extend that into our forties and beyond and improve our quality of life tremendously.

Generally, I will run this phase for 6-8 weeks, spread over two 3-4 week blocks. In the second block there will generally be an increase in volume and intensity. Typically, the number of working sets per muscle group for this phase will range from three to eight sets for resistance exercises and six to 12 sets for conditioning exercises.

My training during the general strength/conditioning phase looks similar to that of an athlete. The reps can range anywhere from 3 to 15 reps per set, and I will typically include a variety of contraction types from explosive to isometric to eccentric. Isometric and eccentric contractions in particular are very good for increasing tendon stiffness, which helps reduce the risk of degenerative tendon conditions. The rest periods will vary from complete to incomplete since I am targeting both strength and conditioning here.



Below is an example of what a general strength/conditioning block might look like.

Day 1 – Lower A

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	Prowler Sprints	6-8	20m	120 secs	
B.	Power Cleans	6	3	120 secs	First 3 sets warm-ups @50%, 70% and 90% of working weight
C.	Barbell Back Squats	5	5	180 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% working weight
D.	Gluteham Raises	4	6-8	120 secs	First set is a warm-up @70-80% of working weight

Day 2 – Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)**Day 3 – Upper A**

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A1.	Close Grip Bench Press	5	5	90 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% working weight
A2.	Bent Over Barbell Rows	5	5	90 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% working weight
B1.	60° Incline Dumbbell Press	4	6-8	75 secs	First set is a warm-up @70-80% of working weight
B2.	Close Grip Chin Ups	4	6-8	75 secs	First set is a warm-up @70-80% of working weight
C2.	Lying Dumbbell Extensions	3	8-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets
C2.	60° Incline Hammer Curls	3	8-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets

Day 4 – Lower B

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	Prowler Sprints	6-8	20m	60 secs	
B.	High Pulls	6	3	120 secs	First 3 sets warm-ups @50%, 70% and 90% of working weight
C.	Barbell Front Squats	5	5	180 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% working weight
D.	Stiff Leg Deadlifts	4	6-8	120 secs	First set is a warm-up @70-80% of working weight

Day 5 – Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)

Day 6 – Upper B

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A1.	Behind the Neck Press	5	5	90 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% working weight
A2.	Wide Grip Pull Ups	5	5	90 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% working weight
B1.	30° Incline Dumbbell Press	4	6-8	75 secs	First set is a warm-up @70-80% of working weight
B2.	Prone Incline Dumbbell Rows	4	6-8	75 secs	First set is a warm-up @70-80% of working weight
C2.	Cable Pressdowns	3	10-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets
C2.	Rope Hammer Curls	3	10-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets

Day 7 – Rest or Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)

Again, bear in mind that this can vary depending on whether I'm focusing more on strength, power, or conditioning. But generally, I will still do a little bit of everything.

2. Basic Hypertrophy

In the basic hypertrophy phase I start ramping up the volume of hypertrophy specific work. If you are not familiar with that term, muscle hypertrophy simply refers to the increase in the size of the muscle fibres. We could also call this the basic building phase if we wanted to.

During the general strength/conditioning phase hypertrophy work is mostly performed at maintenance. In this phase we start to ramp that up. Typically, here I will perform six to 10 sets per muscle group, keeping the rep range mostly between 6 to 12 reps per set.

I will generally use longer rest periods here, usually around 2-3 minutes between sets, because the research is pretty clear now that longer rest periods are superior for muscle growth. Sometimes I may superset antagonist muscle groups, in which case I will cut down the rest periods to 60-90 second between sets, which still allows adequate local recovery to take place.

Now, whether your goal is to build large amounts of muscle or not, there are definitely benefits to be gained for everyone from increasing their muscle mass. Not only will it improve your shape and appearance but will also improve your metabolic health and quality of life, and there is good data that links muscle mass to life span.

On top of that I would like to point out that there's no such thing as 'toning up'. Toning up is simply a function of having sufficiently low body fat and well-developed musculature. So, if you want to improve your body shape you are going to need to build some muscle. Building muscle is a slow process, so you might as well use the most effective modalities.

Now this phase might look a bit different for everyone depending on what your strength/weaknesses are, and what muscle groups you want to prioritize. For me personally, these days I focus mostly on my shoulders and arms, so don't copy my program exactly if those aren't the areas you specifically want to target. Instead use it more as a guide to construct your own program. If you need help with that, feel free to reach out to me.

If you want to maintain a fairly balanced spread across all the muscle groups, you can stick with the upper/lower split.

My two favourite split options during the basic hypertrophy phase are:

Option 1 – 4 days a week

Day 1 – Chest & Biceps

Day 2 – Legs

Day 3 – 30 mins cardio

Day 4 – Shoulders & Triceps

Day 5 – 30 mins cardio

Day 6 – Back

Day 7 – Rest

With this split each muscle group gets one direct hit and one to two indirect hits a week. For muscle groups that I particularly want to emphasise such as the delts and triceps I will usually add a few sets of isolation work at the end of the indirect days.

For example, on chest & biceps day I will usually add in 3-4 sets of lat raises for the middle/posterior delts and 3-4 of triceps extensions at the end. On back day I might also add in some extra sets of lat raises and some triceps work.

Option 2 – 3 days out of 5

Day 1 – Chest & Back

Day 2 – 30 mins cardio

Day 3 – Shoulders & Arms

Day 4 – Legs

Day 5 – 30 mins cardio

Restart cycle.

With this option each muscle group gets one direct and one indirect hit every fifth day. This is a floating schedule which mean that you do not train on the same days each week. You end training five days one week and four days the next. For some people this can be problem if you are unable to train on certain days. For me it's usually not a problem as I am ok with training on different days each week.

However, if you wanted to adapt this to a fixed four or five days a week split you could follow the rotation on the next page.

Week 1

Day 1 – Chest & Back

Day 2 – Legs

Day 3 – 30 mins cardio

Day 4 – Shoulders & Arms

Day 5 – Legs (optional)

Day 6 – Chest & Back

Day 7 – 30 mins cardio

Week 2

Day 1 – Shoulders & Arms

Day 2 – Legs

Day 3 – 30 mins cardio

Day 4 – Chest & Back

Day 5 – Legs (optional)

Day 6 – Shoulders & Arms

Day 7 – 30 mins cardio

As you can see from above, with this option one week chest and back get hit twice while shoulders and arms get hit once. The following week chest and back get hit once while shoulders and arms get hit twice. Then you can hit legs once or twice a week depending on your time availability and how much emphasis you want to place on the legs.

When I'm running the split above, I usually only hit legs once a week since these days' legs are not really a priority for me. But again, don't copy exactly what I do. Take the principles I'm sharing with you and adapt them to your own needs and situation.



Below is an example of a basic hypertrophy cycle:

Day 1 – Chest & Back

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	Dumbbell Bench Press	4	12,10,8,8	120 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% of working weight
B.	45° Incline Barbell Press	3	8-10	120 secs	All sets are working sets
C.	30° Incline Dumbbell Flyes	3	10-12	90 secs	All sets are working sets
D.	Bent Over Barbell Rows	3	10,8,6	120 secs	Add weight each set.
E1.	Lying Dumbbell Pullovers	3	10-12	10 secs	All sets are working sets
E2.	Supinated Grip Pulldowns	3	8-10	120 secs	All sets are working sets
F.	Rope Crunches	3	15-20	60 secs	

Day 2 – Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)**Day 3 – Shoulders & Arms**

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	Seated Barbell Shoulder Press	4	15,10,8,6	120 secs	Add weight each set. First set is warm-up set @50-60% of first working set
B.	Dumbbell Lat Raises	3	8-10	120 secs	All sets are working sets
C.	Bent Over Dumbbell Lat Raises	3	10-12	90 secs	All sets are working sets
D1.	Standing Barbell Curls	3	8-10	60 secs	All sets are working sets
D2.	Decline Dumbbell Extensions	3	12,10,8	60 secs	Add weight each set
E1.	60° Incline Dumbbell Curls	3	8-10	60 secs	All sets are working sets
E2.	Cable Pressdowns	3	10-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets

Day 4 - Legs

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	Barbell Back Squats	8	10,8,5,3,1, 3x8-10	180 secs	The first 5 sets are warm-ups @40%, 60%, 80%, 100%, and 110-115% of working weight
B.	Stiff Leg Deadlifts	4	10,8,8,6	120 secs	First set is a warm-up @70-80% of working weight
C1.	Leg Extensions	3	12-15	60 secs	All sets are working sets
C2.	Lying Leg Curls	3	10-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets
D.	Standing Calf Raises	3	15,12,10	90 secs	Add weight each set
E.	Hanging Leg Raises	3	20	60 secs	

Day 5 - Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)



Typically, I will run this phase for 6-8 weeks, either broken down over two 3-4 week phases each, or a longer 6-8 week cycle using daily or week undulating periodization. With longer cycles you generally need to have more variation within the cycle, or you will hit a wall. That's especially true for more advanced lifters.

3. Advanced Hypertrophy

The advanced hypertrophy phase follows the basic hypertrophy phase. The purpose of this phase is to increase the training stress from the previous phase to stimulate the body to continue adapting.

Generally, this is done by increasing the volume or frequency of your training sessions, but you could also use intensification techniques that increase the amount of stress incurred from each set.

Increasing the amount of stress overtime is necessary because the muscles become more and more resistant to exercise induced stress due to the repeated bouts effect. After a given period of time, typically 4-8 weeks, the workload that was once allowing you to progress and do more reps or add more weight to the bar each workout becomes far less effective.



Typically, during this phase I will ramp my workload up to 8 to 12 working sets per muscle group, and for some of the more complex muscle groups that have multiple compartments such as the deltoids and back I might go as high as 15 sets.

Back in the days when I used to compete in bodybuilding, I would ramp up my training frequency to six days a week during this phase, usually following a 3 on 1 off schedule or even six straight days a week. But these days I've got too many other engagements on to be training six days a week, so I mostly stick to the same schedule as in the basic hypertrophy phase, just with more volume per session.

Below is an example of an advanced hypertrophy cycle.

Day 1 – Chest & Back

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A1.	45° Incline Smith Machine Press	5	20,12,10,8,6	90 secs	First set is a warm-up @50-60% of first working set
A2.	Wide Grip Pull Ups	4	8-10	90 secs	When you get 4x10 add weight
B1.	30° Incline Dumbbell Press	3	10,8,8,6	90 secs	All sets are working sets
B2.	Bent Over Barbell Rows	3	10,8,8,6	90 secs	All sets are working sets
C1.	Dumbbell Flyes	3	10-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets
C2.	Supinated Grip Pulldowns	3	8-10	60 secs	All sets are working sets
C3.	Mid Pulley External Rotations	3	10-12	60 secs	All sets are working sets
D.	Rope Crunches	4	15-20	60 secs	

Day 2 – Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)**Day 3 – Shoulders & Arms**

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	Seated Barbell Shoulder Press	5	15,10,8,8,6	120 secs	First set is a warm-up @50-60% of first working set
B.	Dumbbell Lat Raises	4	12,10,8,8	120 secs	All sets are working sets
C1.	Bent Over Dumbbell Lat Raises	3	10-12	10 secs	All sets are working sets
C2.	Standing Arnold Press	3	8-10	120 secs	All sets are working sets
D1.	Standing Barbell Curls	4	8-10	60 secs	All sets are working sets
D2.	Close Grip Bench Press	4	10,8,8,6	60 secs	All sets are working sets
E1.	45° Incline Dumbbell Curls	3	8-10	10 secs	All sets are working sets

E2. Cable Pressdowns 3 10-12 10 secs All sets are working sets

E3. Reverse Preacher Curls 3 8-10 120 secs All sets are working sets



Day 4 - Legs

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A1.	Machine Hack Squats	5	20,12,10,8,8	90 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% of working weight
A2.	Lying Leg Curls	5	12,10,8,8,8	90 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% of working weight
B1.	Leg Extensions	3	12-15	60 secs	All sets are working sets
B2.	Stiff Leg Deadlifts	3	8-10	60 secs	All sets are working sets
C.	Walking Barbell Lunges	3	8-10	60 secs	Reps are per leg
D1.	Machine Donkey Calf	3	10-12	10 secs	All sets are working sets
D2.	Seated Calf Raises	3	10-12	90 secs	All sets are working sets
E.	Hanging Leg Raises	4	20-25	60 secs	

Day 5 – Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)

I will typically run this phase for 4-8 weeks. If it is longer than four weeks, I will use a weekly or daily undulating set up. The reason that this phase is usually a bit shorter is because by this point quite a bit a fatigue would have built up, and the potential for overtraining is greater. If I'm feeling good, I may extend this phase up to eight weeks, but that is not always the case. A lot of the time my joints may be feeling quite beat up this point as well. If that is the case, I'll move on to the transition phase after about four weeks.

4. Transition

The purpose of the transition phase is to dissipate accumulated fatigue and allow recovery and supercompensation to take place. It also provides an opportunity for the muscles to re-sensitize to exercise induced loading.



Obviously, you cannot continue adding in more work forever – you will eventually hit a point where you will start exceeding your capacity to recover. This is why most people hit a wall with their training and they stop progressing.

Following a transition phase, not only will you feel like a million bucks because you are fresh and well rested, but you can also return to a more modest workload after that and start progressing again.

Have you ever noticed how after taking a week or so off training you get really sore when you hit the gym again? That's because of the muscle re-sensitization effect. The trick though is to build back up slowly, not just rush straight back into and start smashing yourself right away again. That is how you continue to progress over the long term without hitting a plateau. That is why this model works so well - it's worked for me, and it's worked for hundreds of my clients.

Generally, the transition phase will last for two to three weeks. In this phase I will generally scale back to three full body workouts a week, or I'll alternate upper and lower body over three non-consecutive days a week. I will usually perform one exercise per muscle group for two to four sets of 6-15 reps.

I also like performing some explosive work during this phase which may help with the conversion of the hybrid type IIA/IIX fibres to back to pure type IIX fibres. This is one of the mechanisms thought to be responsible for the repeated bouts effect.

The type IIX fibre are our strongest and most powerful muscle fibres. Any type of strength training, particularly high-volume strength training in close proximity to failure causes the pure type IIX fibres to convert to an intermediate type IIA/IIX isoform. This makes these fibres more resistant exercise induced stress, hence why we need to increase the training stress over time.

Detraining and possibly explosive training allows these intermediate fibres to convert back to their original isoform, hence why we become more responsive to the training stimulus again. That is why during the transition phase we have to keep the volume of work low and avoid taking our sets to failure. I will typically leave two to three reps in the tank on every set during this phase.

Below an example of what the transition phase might look like.

Day 1 – Lower

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	Power Clean or Power Snatch	5	3	120 secs	First 2 sets warm-ups @50% and 70-80% working weight
B1.	Front Foot Elevated Split Squats	3	10,8,6	90 secs	Add weight each set
B2.	Gluteham Raises	3	6-8	90 secs	All working sets
C.	Standing Calf Raises	3	15,12,10	120 secs	Add weight each set
D.	Hanging Leg Raises	2	20	60 secs	

Day 2 – Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)

Day 3 – Upper

#	EXERCISE	SETS	REPS	REST	NOTES
A.	45° Incline Dumbbell Press	4	15,10,8,6	120 secs	First set is a warm-up @50-60% of first working set
B.	Wide Grip Pull Ups	3	8-10	120 secs	When you get 3x10 add weight
C.	Dumbbell Lat Raises	3	15,12,10	120 secs	Add weight each set
D.	Lying Dumbbell Extensions	3	12,10,8	120 secs	Add weight each set
E.	60° Incline Hammer Curls	3	8-10	120 secs	All sets are working sets

Day 4 – Cardio (25-30 mins @70% of MHR)**Day 5 – Rest or Restart cycle**

Now, if you wanted to you could take time off the gym completely during this phase and just remain active by playing lots of sport. However, you potentially risk losing a bit of muscle mass in doing that, and afterwards it can be a bit hard to get back into the groove of going to the gym. That's why I still prefer having a structured program during this phase but at a reduced volume and intensity.

I may also implement mini-transition phases through my cycle by deloading on the last week of a training phase. Typically, that would involve reducing the volume by 40-60% and avoiding going within two to three reps of failure. I don't always deload on the last weeks of a phase. It depends on how I'm feeling and how much fatigue I have accumulated. This is a called auto-regulatory deloading.

Nutrition Overview

Whether your goal is to build more muscle, lose body fat, or improve your fitness, your training doesn't need to change that much. There is no such thing as training specifically for fat loss. When it comes to fat loss, that is largely going to come down to your diet.

Sure, certain training interventions may burn a bit more calories which can help augment the energy deficit, but the main purpose of training is to increase strength, build or maintain muscle mass, or to improve fitness, not to burn more calories. That's because exercise is associated with numerous health benefits, irrespective of weight loss.



These days my diet doesn't vary too much because I'm neither trying to gain weight or lose weight. I consume five meals a day (3 meals and 2 shakes) consisting of 600-700 calories each. That puts me at 3000-3500 calories a day which is slightly below my maintenance. This gives me a bit of a buffer since some days I will intentionally or unintentionally go a bit over that.



I usually eat out with my family at least once a week (sometimes twice), and some days I'll just nibble a bit more than others. So, a couple of days a week I am probably getting up to around 4000 calories, which puts my total weekly average at around maintenance.

In terms of macros, I typically aim to hit 40-50 grams of protein, 40-60 grams of carbs, and 20-30 grams of fat per meal. As you can see, that is a fairly well-balanced split across the three macros, with a little bit of wiggle room.

This strategy works really well for me because it allows me to very loosely track my calories. In fact, I don't even measure my portions anymore. Instead, I eyeball my portions because I know that even if I end up going a little over or under for a given meal, it balances out over the course of the week.

Also, I've been doing this for so many years that I've become quite skilled at eyeballing my portions. My internal caloric detector is finely tuned!

Below is an example of what an average day looks like:

Meal 1

2 scoops of whey or plant-based protein, 1 banana or apple, 50g of almonds or cashews

Meal 2

3 whole eggs, 4 slices of bacon or 100g of smoked salmon, 2 slices of toast. ¼ avocado, 1 tomato

Meal 3

200g lean meat, 1 cup of rice or sweet potato, 1 cup of veggies

Meal 4

2 scoops of whey or plant-based protein, 1 banana or apple, 50g of almonds or cashews

Meal 5

200g lean meat, 1 cup of rice or sweet potato, 1 cup of veggies

Now, I'm not advocating that you follow this exact structure or that you try and consume that many calories. In the beginning you may need more structured than that. Intuitive eating is a skill that must be honed.

I'm merely trying to illustrate that you can get to a point where you can stay in peak shape while only loosely tracking your food. This is the point that I think everyone should strive to get to.

In terms of supplements, I tend to keep things fairly basic. My staple supplements consist of the list below:

1. Multivitamin/mineral
2. Fish oil
3. Greens
4. Creatine
5. Magnesium
6. Glycine



The first three supplements on the list I tend to take year around to ensure that I am meeting all my essential nutrient requirements. The last three supplements on the list I tend to cycle on and off. For example, I'll typically take creatine when I'm in a hard training phase like the advanced hypertrophy phase.

Not that creatine needs to be cycled, you could stay on it year around if you wanted. In fact, I have some clients do that because creatine helps support the methylation cycle. Methylation is involved in hundreds of very important reactions in the body including genetic expression, and for people who are undermethylated, creatine helps spare methyl reserves.

Magnesium and glycine I will typically take during periods of high stress, when I am having a hard time winding down at night. Both magnesium and glycine are involved in regulating the stress response and are also responsible for numerous other very important functions in the body.

Glycine in particular, which is a supplement not that many people are familiar with, not only acts as an inhibitory neurotransmitter in the brain like GABA, but it also plays a role in phase II liver detoxification, it increases collagen synthesis, and it helps regulate the methylation cycle. I prefer the powdered form, and I typically take one teaspoon once or twice a day, after training and before bed.

I also take protein powder daily, but I don't even consider that a supplement but more of a food substitute. I try to rotate at least two to three different types of protein powders such as whey, casein, and vegan blend. This not only ensures that you get a more diverse amino acid profile, but it also reduces the chance of developing a food sensitivity.

When you develop a food sensitivity, the body starts to trigger an immune response and a subsequent inflammatory reaction to otherwise healthy foods. This can lead to health issues such as eczema, skin irritations, arthritis, headaches, asthma, IBS, and digestive problems. That is why it is important to vary your food sources.

Lifestyle Practices

This guide wouldn't be complete without sharing with you some of the lifestyle practices which can help support your goals, health, happiness, and overall success and satisfaction in life. There are three practices which I believe are key in that regard. These include meditation, journaling, and finding a hobby that lifts you up and inspires you.



Let's quickly touch on each of these practices and how you can apply them in your life.

1. Meditation

I believe that meditation is single handedly one of the most beneficial practices you can adopt for your overall health, satisfaction, and wellbeing. There is a lot of research showing that mediation can improve mood, reduce depression and anxiety, upregulate health promoting genes, downregulate disease promoting genes, and drastically increase your lifespan (by over a decade!).

Most people have dabbled in meditation, but the reality is that they just don't stick with it long enough do it consistently enough to really experience the benefits. That is why when I work with clients, I spent an entire session educating and selling them on the benefits of meditation. While I really don't have the time to get into here, a great resource you can check out of this is [Dr Joe Dispenza](#). That's what helped me go from a dabbler to a more serious and consistent meditator.

Or, if you just want to take my word for it a face value, start right away by practicing meditation for at least 20 minutes a day. There are plenty of great guided mediations that you can find online, many of them which are free. I recommend starting with guided mediations unless you are an experienced meditator.

2. Journaling

Journaling is another great lifestyle practice that I believe in for two reasons. Firstly, journaling helps you get clear on the daily and weekly actions steps that you need to take in order to be successful in your health, career, finances, and relationships. I usually do my weekly planning on Sunday mornings so that I'm clear on what my key tasks and objectives are for the upcoming week, then I set my agenda for each day that morning or the night before.



It's important to learn to prioritize your weekly tasks and objectives because the reality is that you are likely not going to get around to everything, then you are going to feel like a failure. Set the daily non-negotiable habits that you are willing to commit to and those actions/tasks that you absolutely must

complete. That way you still feel like you are succeeding and everything else on top of that is just a bonus.

The other benefit of journaling is that it allows you to self-reflect and evaluate how successful you were in following through on the tasks and habits that you set out for yourself. This allows you to get a sense of appreciation for what you've accomplished and to identify where you fell short. It is important to have a balanced outlook on things and not exaggerate or minimize your accomplishments. It's easy to fool yourself into thinking that you've done more or less than you actually have.

3. Finding a Hobbie

This last lifestyle practice recommendation might come off as a bit of a surprise to you, but I believe that having a hobby outside of your work and the gym is very important for your overall health and emotional wellbeing.

Many people view going to the gym as their hobby outside of work and their leisure time. That's fine, but if you don't have anything else outside of that it can end up turning into an unhealthy obsession. You don't want to end up being so one dimensional that your entire life just revolves around training and eating. Trust me I've been there, and I wasn't in a good place.

Not only that, but constantly stressing and thinking about your body and the gym can actually derail your progress because it unnecessarily jacks up your cortisol levels. Even as far back as the 1970s, Arnold and the late Vince Gironda said that once your workout is over, you should stop thinking about the gym and get on with the rest of your day. That's why you need something outside of the gym to stimulate you in a positive way.



Having a hobby can provide you with a much-needed break from the rigors of daily life. It allows you to engage in activities that bring you joy, stimulate your creativity, and offer a sense of accomplishment unrelated to your career or physical fitness.

So, whether it's painting, playing a musical instrument, gardening, hiking, or any other activity that sparks your interest, finding a hobby can be a valuable addition to your life. It helps maintain a healthy balance, fosters personal growth, and contributes to your overall well-being.

Conclusion

And there you have it...in a nutshell that's my approach to staying fit and healthy well into your forties and beyond!

As you can see, it's nothing overly complicated. The two main things to note are:

- 1. There is enough flexibility in my plan to stop me from getting burnt out or bored.**
- 2. There is enough structure to prevent me from swaying offtrack.**

I believe sticking the right balance between structure and flexibility is essential for your longevity. That's why I've been able to stay at it for so long, and I don't intend to stop... ever!

Now, that balance might look a little bit different for you, but the respecting the overarching principle is what's most important.

Hopefully, gaining some insight into how I do things has given you a bit of direction and inspiration in your own health and fitness journey, and if you never need any help or guidance with your own training...just send me an email or hit me up on one of my social platforms.

Thanks for taking the time to read this guide and best of luck!

Yours sincerely,

Stefan

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