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Pillars of Power



The way of the modern love warrior traveller.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
GLOSSARY	2
THE BATTLEFIELD	4
MOVEMENT COMPETENCY	22
BODY COMPOSITION	43
RELAXED MUSCLES WHEN AT REST	55
NATURAL SPINAL CURVATURE & STRONG SKELETAL STRUCTURE	62
EFFICIENT DIGESTION AND ELIMINATION	68
NORMAL BREATHING	72
EXCELLENT SLEEP PATTERNS	84
RELAXED, FOCUSED MIND AND THE ABILITY TO HOLD ATTENTION	89
GOOD CIRCULATION AND ENERGY BALANCE	102
POSITIVE, DREAM AFFIRMATIVE OUTLOOK ON LIFE	108
NOTES ON LEADERSHIP	118
CONTINUATION	119
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	121
RESOURCES AND REFERENCES	122

GLOSSARY

LOVE WARRIOR TRAVELLER - The modern human who follows their own path with heart. They are separate from the frenzies so common today and play the long game. They follow the most direct path, and avoid shortcuts.

PERSONAL POWER - Non-directional, non-zero-sum. All humans have personal power, it is our task to re-discover, cultivate and be able to express this personal power.

ENVIRONMENT - The direct and indirect surroundings we create for ourselves.

ADAPTABILITY - The ability to adapt, change, recovery from a stimulus or new challenge.

IMPECCABILITY - To do your absolute best, on an ongoing basis.

URGENCY - To follow the most direct route, without misleading shortcuts.

NECESSITY - The requirement for the action to be taken. Often an inner knowing, or self-created.

ATTENTION - To “attend” to an object or situation with focus and energy. To be able to “hold” this in the focal point of the mind.

CULTURE - The only driving force for mass change in the world. It is the people around us, their narratives, their fears, their beliefs. It is us.

ENERGY - “Energy Generation” - to understand our ability to play an active role in our personal energy through how we live.

“ENERGY FORCES” - tools or situations we engage in that can influence our energy.

IN-FLOWS - “Incoming” energy, or Yin energy. This helps to revitalise the warrior.

OUT-FLOWS - “Outgoing” energy, or Yang energy. This is (in its active form) an expression of our potential, but can also be our undoing when out of balance or unconscious.

CONTEXT - The fabric of the reality of a particular person or warrior.

“SEEING” - To see with greater awareness. A non-trivial understanding of a more accurate nature of reality.

MOVEMENT - In this case “movement” refers to a specific “practice” that is consciously done to uphold or improve the overall physical “movement” ability of the individual.

If you don't have time to read this book, here is what it says:

To create a powerful impact with your work, in your life and with your tribe, demands that you self lead.

This is now true if you are an employee, run your own business or have retired.

The paths laid out by the general education and media system and the food and exercise industries are a mess.

The first step of self leadership, is energy generation - how we eat, move and live, plus our actions and habits. Self leadership includes not "knowing" the paths of energy generation intellectually, rather it is to "feel" and understand them.

In the past, the steps we have taken in the food, health and physical "fitness" industry, have largely ignored energy generation.

More, faster, better and cheaper. But without awareness, we have dissipation.

Collectively, we have been dissipating energy en masse, we have been creating a conflict - the fitness industry, the dieting, the combinations of the demands of society and work stress, aren't working.

We are living a little "longer," but as a culture, our physical and mental health is suffering.

We are more connected in breadth, but less connected in depth.

The path of the love warrior traveller is the path of courage. It is a dismantling of the reliance on many of these systems. It is both a deep questioning, and a return to our needs as a human. It is to return to our centre and the return to our source of personal power that we all have within.

It is to write our own path.

To cultivate energy first and foremost, and then to create intention with what we do.

To meet fear, head on. To move, to connect with others, to express. To be an active participant in our own life.

Through the Pillars of Power, we dive into some of the first steps for the love warrior traveller - this is a primer on energy generation and re-discovering our personal power.

This is a starting point. From here, the warrior can partake in the modern landscape as a "high performer" with ease, but continue to cultivate energy and vitality - a must to create long term impact.

If you enjoy any part of this resource, please email it to any other warriors that you know.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Warrior Lives On.

The landscape for the modern love warrior traveller is fraught with difficulty.

In one sense, we have a fabric of technology that provides a greater platform to connect and contribute than ever before.

On the other hand, so much information, and a media culture that is filled with fear and comparison has left many warriors with dissonance, fear and frustration.

We are no longer in an age that is scarce of information, rather, we have moved into an age that is crippled by information harvesting, or “skimming” - experts emerge from every field, eager to sell or pass on information, jump on trends or “influence” the masses.

The independent love warrior traveller then, must also become a navigator, as she learns to make her way with empathy, ease and grace in the modern market and environment.

For Impact

The warrior traveller journey often deepens once the warrior decides to try and create more impact in their work.

They often feel an urge to reach more people, to create something. To seek out their potential.

Prior to that, there is less *necessity* and no *urgency*. To the non-warrior, there is plenty of time.

When he realises that his work in the world is a necessity - he finds a sudden source of urgency.

Yet he wants to remain present.

To remain present in his relationships and in his human experience.

This coming together is the training grounds of the warrior

He begins to look deeper at the culture, at the activities he engages in.

He wants to cultivate energy not just dissipate.

Ultimately, the questioning, the effort to *see* things at a deeper level means the warrior is on a path towards freedom in the mind.

Freedom to express his personal power to its fullest, and from love.

Freedom to lead, to create and to share and he wants to feel great in the process.

From Pain

The second entry point into the path of the warrior traveller is from pain.

It is from following other paths of conflict, or creating imbalances, for too long.

Pain can surface in the physical world of course, but also in other areas and provides a gate for entry into a higher state of awareness and a place for change.

Personal Power and the Modern Landscape

The modern landscape is set up to rob us of our personal power.
We are trained to become a “cog,” a smaller part of the bigger system.
This begins with schooling, then never stops.

So, is it possible?

Is it possible to fully re-discover and cultivate our personal power in the context of a modern, urban lifestyle?

To lead ourselves and possibly even our *tribe*?

The first thing we know is that we must prioritise personal “energy” - our *vitality*.

The warrior must learn to become her own power source, to generate her own energy.

While there are many common pathways to attempt to maintain vitality, such as the health and fitness “industry,” we are generally coming up short
As a culture, both physical and mental health states are declining, despite more training, more food and social engagement options becoming available.

When we look at health, according to recent statistics, “74.5 percent of men aged 18 and over are overweight or obese in Australia, and so are 60 percent of women.”¹

Why?

Of course, physically, we are not so active.

Our more sedentary lifestyle certainly does not help, but the way of the warrior is always to consider the whole.

It turns out, there are a few other areas we can consider - the context of how we live - our environment, our lack of light and also lack of true darkness. Our sleep, our stress levels and our physiological load.

The Stress of it All

Over 60 years ago, Hans Selyé coined the term “stress” as the “non-specific response of the body to any demand for change.”

This was after Selyé noticed “General Adaptive Syndrome” - a number of different responses of the body to any number of demands placed on it.

Selyé found that “stress” can induce hormonal autonomic responses and, over time, can cause ulcers, high blood pressure, arteriosclerosis, arthritis, kidney disease and allergic reactions.²

In the modern developed world, our “opportunity” has increased dramatically, yet the “load” or demand on the system also has increased.

In materials science, when the load causes an actual “change” in the system, it is known as “strain.” Often times, we are now living in a state of low-level “stress,” or “strain.”

What does this mean?

It means that *without even knowing it*, the physiological “load” that we put on our system on a day to day basis is now very high.

Of course, as Selyé wrote, this can be non-specific: this could be coming from a number of different sources.

For example, the nature of our work or home environment plus the declining quality of our food chain are all big factors.

The chronically elevated stress hormones cause changes in our mental and physical health. Mentally, we are dealing with a significant amount of both anxiety and depression,

“Around 4.8 million Australians (20 percent) had a mental or behavioural condition in 2017-18, including depression and/or anxiety or substance abuse.”³

And physically, the elevated cortisol re-programs the metabolism.

Part of the stress may also be our clear level of disconnection as a culture.

We are spending more time than ever in a less connected life.

In 2016, RU OK ran a survey with 1000 adults and found that in Australia, they spent an average of 46 hours per week looking at a screen, but just six hours with family and friends. Half of the group spent two hours or less with family and friends.⁵

When we look at these, we can see that the path of the warrior is now one that is not limited to the physical or nutritional domains.

Yes the modern warrior trains the physical body, but also cares for the mental-emotional body. She is constantly becoming more aware and intimate with her own habits, patterns and environment - all of which are now playing a critical role in her wellbeing.

What about Connection?

We are spending a lot more time online. A lot.

In Jan 2018, a report by We Are Social found that Australians spend 5 hours and 34 minutes daily online.⁷

The majority of that time - 1 hours and 39 minutes - is spent on social media.

- 500,000 people *join* twitter every single day.
- Facebook users install 20 million apps every day, most of them are taking us *away* from real world connection.

In fact, the vast majority of Australians *never* are separated from their phones.

What is the nature of this connection?

Is more better?

Are we happier, more productive and more creative as a result of this?

How do we choose to navigate this breadth of connection to facilitate our dream affirmative life?

No Longer a Holistic “View”

In the past twenty years, a “holistic” approach to health has been fairly popular.

The understanding is that we should eat well, drink good water, move our bodies and maybe practice some meditation.

We *know* this, but in reality it is rarely implemented - we pay lip-service to it.

As a culture, both the *necessity* and *urgency* are lacking.

However, the current landscape is showing us that to progress down the path of the modern warrior, we no longer have this “alternative” view, or “holistic” view as *an* option.

It is *the only* option. To take responsibility for our health, wellness and happiness is the path of the modern love warrior traveller. To embrace the whole.

This complete view and the realisation that we need to address the entire chain, is what differentiates the warrior.

The path is not dependent on social status, wealth, background, ethnicity, geographical location, or any other factor.

If you have the ability to read this document, you have the choice to follow the path of the warrior traveller.

The path of leading yourself down the road of energy generation, impeccability, connection and contribution.

Striving for Greatness

Fitness, work capacity, performance.

As a culture, when did the infatuation with high performance “fitness” or intense exercise arise?
Is this something new?

Traditionally, we used movement and breathing practices, dance, martial arts and social engagements to generate energy, or to “cultivate” life force. This helped to improve health, vitality and connection.

Then, there was a shift to “output.”

While athletic performance had always been explored, the concept of physical “fitness” in the broader culture was non-existent.

Instead, we simply led an active lifestyle.

With greater technological advances and the start of the industrial and educational revolution, we collectively began to focus on “output,” on performance.

We broke barriers, we pushed limits.

It is fun.

From 5 years old, many of us have become machines that have been encouraged to “perform.”

When we take this approach and extrapolate it out over a few decades, we can quickly see that our basic needs as a warrior - as a human, of nourishment, connection, skill development, happiness, play, movement and love or belonging can be compromised as we accelerate down the path of performance and productivity.

Rounding it Out

When we are looking at this concept of “performance” we can tell if the path has merit by changing the time domain.

In typical “fitness” and exercise regimes, we look at work capacity over a time domain of 20 minutes to say 2 hours.

However, when we increase the time domain from an hour, a day, a week or a year to decades, we see that to create long term “performance” and vitality means adopt a holistic, human approach.

Many methods will pay lip-service to functionality and sustainability. However often there is such temptation to create short term stimulus, that this goes by the wayside. Furthermore, without direct intention on all of the different Pillars of Power, it’s very easy to overdo or underdo the amount of stimulus or “load.”

This also means that *energy generation* through the right amount and type of movement, nutrition and other lifestyle factors is critical.

It means energy cultivation, self-leadership and it means the long game.

"Performance" is a hot Topic

In the modern athletic brand and apparel landscape, sports supplement brands, shoe companies, “compression” companies... they all now have “performance” covered.

When we consider the warrior, the modern human wanting to live a strong, connected life of vitality, we can ask:

“For whom are we performing?”

For many, this question is ignored. Rather, we engage in one sprint after another.

A 90 day plan for performance, or to “level up” the output, with little attention to the *input*

We soon see, that a sprint is nothing if we are exhausted at the end.

If we find ourselves exhausted, in a frenzy.

Today, what we are seeing more than anything, is exhaustion. Physical, mental, emotional and energetic - literally a depletion of the ability to produce energy at the metabolic level.

Eventually comes the realisation that the long game is the only one worth playing.

Perhaps the sprint, the short term fix and the “high performance now” lanes are not the most helpful.

“Vitality”

This is the abundance, the connection, the vibrancy and the love.

Performance without vitality is a sports car, or a computer processor, it is missing the “human.”

When we think of the realm of vitality itself, “performance” has little meaning.

Vitality is a non-competitive domain. There is no judge or prize over there.

The Merging of the Two

The coming together of the two is the modern warrior approach, the human approach.

To do our best in having consistent, high level output in our work, plenty of potential in our physical bodies and yet greater connection, energy, compassion and love as a human.

Society has been over-conditioned on the performance side of the coin.

The industrial squeeze.

This leads to lethargy, burnout, anxiety and disconnection.

We need to revisit the basics of vitality in order to thrive.

One Source of the Problem

As we spend more and more time online (5h 34m per day, on average), we are shifting our *attention* from what is real, factual and present, to a curated and biased reality.

This creates a flawed *perception*.

Of course, our own narrative or world view is already influencing how we *see* things.

But now, our perception is also run through the lens of the *false ideal*. The online world.

In the *false ideal* - we have another incomplete picture.

In this world,

The “athlete,” the “entrepreneur,” the artist, the guru are there, they are present, but we only see their “shadow self,” or the “curated self.”

The nature of the universe is switched with the nature of *curation*.

Some people will say that they don’t “curate” this presence - that this online existence is the real, “authentic” deal. But we must remember, to choose just one image, photo or caption out of two possible options is to curate, to shift perception.

It is to “market,” or to “signal.”

To send a specific message to the broader culture.

This in itself is not a problem, it is maybe even an evolution of the mechanisms that already exist in the mind, but catalysed by technology and the network effect.

The stickiness arises when we lose awareness and “forget” that now:

A majority of our time is spent looking at a false representation of reality through a belief system that is also incomplete.

We can see it's pretty easy for many people to feel fear, frustration or anxiety .

We are spending more time with this looking-glass, but we aren't any happier as a culture.

Now, as this is coupled with the industrial revolution, the corporate revolution, the quest for growth and performance, we find ourselves with a bonfire.

False signals, false perceptions, false realities and a constant need to perform.

What are These Ideals? Really?

When we look closer at some of the models which we are striving for, we find a little more.

For example, in the “fitness industry,” with movement, with strength, we are often presented with the “athlete.”

The high performer, the alpha of the physical domain.

But what does it take?

In reality, the athlete is the peak of competition, the peak of specialisation and dedication to their craft.

Yet to compete - with each other, with ourselves, is to divide.

For there to be a winner, there must be a loser.

In the athletes world, it is me against them. Not just against other athletes, but if we are not careful, even our other circles, not in the sport, may seem to be potentially compromising our journey to greatness.

If you are winning, someone is losing - who are you against?

Yes there is physical performance for a time, in some domain, but there is also anguish, stress and difficulty.

So what do we do?

Can we cultivate physical capacity as a human for vitality?

For the enjoyment of what life has to offer and without comparison and the conflict of desire and frustration?

Can we use our physical practice as a tool to energise, to play, to connect and to love?

Clearing Reality

To find a more real, more stable and more nurturing existence, perhaps the first step is to realise the false nature of our current perception of reality.

“*Maya*” - the dream, the illusion - where things appear to be present, but are not what they seem. Ultimately the root of the disconnect, the lack of energy, the frustration.

When we take a step back, we can see that sometimes the ideals that we see as important are not as critical or even real as we thought.

After we notice this, we occasionally can experience a “let-go” - we get to expand our options with our movement, our lifestyle to cultivate true energy, implement effective habits with clarity and foster connection.

We get to head in the direction we want to go as an individual.

This approach certainly will not put us as high up on the pedestal in a specific sport, but in the context of a full life of connection in relationships, of work and commitments we have made, in many cases we can create deeper vitality and performance across more areas.

What if through letting go of the frenzy, we get to follow our own path?

What if we can cultivate energy, become our own power source?

Could we use this energy as a tool for greater impact and presence?

The Machine

In the athletic performance circles, to be called a “machine” is a compliment.

It means high work output, with a hint of equanimity, even when the going gets tough.

There is a ruthlessness.

Generally, this is in line with how we have mechanised our approach to “fitness,” health and training.

We have swapped the natural ebb and flow of rhythms for a linear output.

While we are forced to recognise natural rhythms (such as seasonality) in some countries, through indoor training, warmer clothes and special lighting, we now largely ignore these natural energetic ebbs and flows.

As individuals, we also have rhythms and cycles.

When we ignore rhythms, we veer away from what it means to be human.

No other animal consciously will choose sub-optimal times to stress its own system, yet we often do - whether it's the night shift job that pays well, or the way we choose to train.

“To ignore rhythms (both universal, and our own), means to ignore energy generation - our number one skill-set and attribute for long term impact.”

The Seasonality Trap (Energy Generation)

When we consider our energy, which is really being produced at the cellular level, we need to consider light, fuel and carbon dioxide (breathing).

Every year, we see a huge shift in natural light exposure and temperature variations.

Darkness (a stressor) dominates some locations in winter months, while those same locations have an abundance of sunlight in summer.

No secret then - we feel better in summer as the metabolism is supported and we produce more energy and many people often feel down in winter.

We know this intellectually, and we know steps we can take to reduce external stressors in winter (changing how we eat, move and work), so why does it catch a lot of us out, year after year?

The recency bias is when people more prominently emphasise recent events and observations than those in the more distant past.

But energy production doesn't suffer from cognitive biases.

So on one hand we have a set of habits and patterns that “acclimatise” to the abundant summer months, then on the other hand we have a body that responds to changes in the environment within a day or so.

The behavioural lag is in conflict with the fast response of the physiology. The mind gets stuck in summer and the physiology hits the wall of winter!

If we move energy generation to the top of the list of priorities, then we can respond to environmental changes a little quicker. We can quickly dial in our food, our movement and our work habits to reflect our available resources.*

*If you are exercising and “living” in the same way year round, you are ignoring one of the most dominant over-arching cycles in nature. This is leaving a huge amount of potential for wellbeing, health and happiness on the table.

The Balance of Energies - “The Two Forces.”

“Great results, can be achieved with small forces.” - Sun Tzu, The Art of War

In essence, to *see* the importance of creating growth in a number of areas rather than just driving hard in one direction, is an act of courage.

Going further and further down one path - one set of forces or outputs - in the short term, is the easier road.

To specialise in your craft, your training is not so difficult if we completely ignore other areas. Or, to work only on a career and not address our health is also easy.

Yet to follow the path of the love warrior traveller, we need deep understanding and courage to look at all areas.

We need to practice overcoming the fear of missing out, in order to allow balance.

This allows us to pause, to generate energy and to navigate.

From this pause, we can create a sound platform and foundation across other areas of life.

From here, we can learn to ground ourselves and use this as a lever towards living a life of happiness.

We can begin with the idea of *energy*.

The warrior knows two types of energies. In fact, let’s call them *Forces* because of their directional nature.

The Forces: “Inflows” and “Outflows”

An “inflow” energy is a cultivation. It is a yin energy.
This is a force which helps us restore and *increase* vitality.
Because it is an inflow, it’s kind of like filling our car up with fuel.
Typically, the car needs to “stop” before we can fill it up.

Creating Inflow energy usually (not always) requires us to slow down, or pause.

If there is a scarcity of inflow energy, we can find:

- Weight gain (through elevated stress and compromised metabolism)
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Frustration
- Failure to complete tasks and projects
- Dissonance with your connections or partner
- Poor digestion
- Poor sleep
- Poor athletic or physical performance
- Low immunity
- Low libido

There are many sources of energy, but the most easily accessible ones for the warrior traveller are:

Inflows

- Sunlight
- The right types and amount of movement
- Food
- Breath
- Sleep
- Deep rest

If there is *too much* inflow energy and not enough outflow, or energy expression, then we can also create an imbalance. This can sometimes be seen as:

- Oversleeping
- Low motivation
- Low energy
- Lethargy
- Weight gain

Outflows

The Outflow energies are either “expressions” of our capabilities as a human, or often, *the shadow versions of these expressions*: passive energy leakages. They often are described by a word that ends in “-ing” - doing, watching, reading, speaking, shopping.

There are many sources of outflowing energy, but some of the most common and relevant for the modern love warrior (including *shadow* versions) are:

- Working/over-working
- Screens, blue light, social media
- Distraction, indecision, task switching
- Busy or stressed emotions or mind - relationships, work, financial
- Physical exercise (too much or the wrong type of training)
- Travel: driving, flying, time zone shifts
- Toxic, stressed or depleted foods
- Environmental stressors, radiation, EMF, pollution, noise pollution
- Alcohol and any drugs that can disrupt sleep-wake cycles

While this type of energy balancing is well known intellectually, it is the *observance* and *practice* of regulating these in a artful way that distinguishes the warrior traveller from everyone else in today's climate.

The difficulties of navigating this energetic landscape are significant, as there are many traps!

For example, to create *less* emotional stress due to our financial situation, we often spend *more* time at work, seated, at a screen. This decreases our ability to *see* enough light from the sun and also compromises our posture, impacting our *breath*.

As we get busier, we have less time to prepare good food, so we buy what seems to be *healthy*, but in fact are *slowing* the metabolism down through stressed, low impact foods. We eat while we work, the digestive process is compromised by less chewing and a busy, stressed mind.

This creates a new energetic stress, which exacerbates our situation and compounds *on top* of the original financial stress!

Many of these traps test the warrior traveller and one of the main ways we navigate them is to understand that our ability to “generate energy” at a physical, physiological and mental-emotional level is of the highest importance.

While each of these energies, or forces is small on its own, we need to remember it is the chronic or frequent exposure or imbalance that creates difficulty.

Once you commit to the journey of creating balance, you become your own power source.

Energy Generation is the first part of self leadership.

Deep Rest

To rest requires courage. To stop. To pause.

Many people want to feel energised all day, alert and productive.

But often, there is confusion between high quality, sustainable “energy” and short term “excitation.”

Long term, sustainable energy brings a sense of wellbeing. Excitation can often come with the elevation of “mobilising” hormones - adrenaline and cortisol and can be brought about with overuse of stimulants, under-eating or over working (as well as through other means!)

A stressed state then can be sneaky. It can feel like an alert, energised state. In fact, it can be addictive!

What we know is, our resources are limited. So if you are constantly running, constantly “doing,” it can often be a sign of a more chronic state of excitation.

On the contrary, developing the courage to pause the ordinary flow of events in our day and cultivate deep rest can help foster sustainable, long term energy.

How do We “Generate” Energy?

One way to *create* is to not dissipate.
This means it is to rest, or to pause.

But to stop, you might be missing something! You might be missing your opportunity to improve, to get better, to keep up! Your 1% improvement for the day.

So often, even when people try to stop, this subconscious fear leads them to maintaining the *continuity of doing*.

If you watch: when you stop, do you maintain the continuity of doing? Of everyday events?

A set method and procedure? A fidget, a pattern? A device?
To truly pause, to learn to cultivate inner silence, or to just witness, is to introduce an element that doesn't belong in the “planned” whole.
It's an interruption in the societal flow. It's almost a rebellious act.
This is to rest. To go against the flow of doing.

This resistance to rest is important for the warrior to see.
In modern society and cities, it is often with us, it is conditioned in the mind.
This results in constant stimulation, for fear of stopping. This fear of “missing out,” has led to a flat line in energy and performance that we often see today.

When we look, we see there is often no full rest. No down-regulation. And at the top end, people complain of not having the attention, energy and productivity that they want either. Work environments, social media, and 24/7 accessibility to devices has moved us to the middle of the bell curve - no down-regulation, no upregulation. The ends of the energy spectrum cut off.

Constantly on the go!
Of course, we can see it in the breath. When we find ourselves in this state, our breathing often becomes compromised - showing us signs of our chronic, low level stress.

This subtle resistance has converted many warriors into frustrated cogs in the system. Into drones who feel required to keep up.
But, when we make a stand and see that a lot of it self-inflicted, we can find relief through habit development and awareness.

Stopping Energy “Leakages” - Impeccability and Attention

In modern times, one of the main ways the warrior loses energy is through succumbing to the powers of distraction.

Distraction, is not only an energetic drain in itself, but also creates for many an impassable barrier to fully seeing out their journey.

- *In 2018, The average office worker checks her email 30-40 times per hour⁶*
- *The average attention span is now 5 seconds. 10 Years ago, it was 12 minutes*.*

Distraction, is the negative form of *impeccability*, which is “intentionally doing our very best” in a continually evolving fashion.

When we study the brain, we find that *attention based tasks*, also help to shut down a key part of our brain that is associated with the “wandering mind.”

A wandering mind is an unhappy mind - so it is clear that to “train” attention is often very helpful.

**this was a study done by Microsoft. It was aimed at advertisers and is an incomplete picture. However, it is still worth considering.*

As attention wanes, there is also an energetic cost.

To continually give into distraction, is to invite resistance that stops us from moving forward.

Lack of attention is a roadblock.

As we task switch, we are split and our energy dissipates.

Attention - The Limited Commodity?

Attention is a limited commodity: it is of a high value.

Commercially, we see this in social media. As a user, our *attention* is the product.

This means our attention is *sold* to businesses in the form of advertisements.

Individually, the ability to focus on one task is (it seems) becoming increasingly rare.

Whether this is when you meet with someone to connect, in training for a physical pursuit, or in creating your gift to the world.

Even in physical training, which demands attention, it is common for people to remain distant from the activity. Not *fully* immersed.

Bring the phone, the social media...

However, we know attention is also a powerful tool in the learning process.

It makes connection *possible*, allows us to develop skills and maintain direction.

The ability to hold attention, to maintain our *intent*, becomes a critical, transferable skill for the warrior to pursue future endeavours.

Before we try to get "good" at something, it is worthwhile making sure we have cultivated the ability to hold attention.

The warrior realises three things:

Firstly, attention can be trained. In a way, it is a skill. We can consciously change the activity levels in different parts of our brain. Meditation, for example, has been shown to decrease activity in the "default mode" network (DMN), which is linked to the "wandering mind."

In some cultures, specific "ways of learning" are used at a young age to cultivate wide and deep attention.

Secondly, we can consciously limit distractions, so that it is easier to return to the task at hand. Checking email, for example, is literally drawing many warriors in, away from what we are doing through a simple dopamine response.

This creates a form of "resistance," as Steven Pressfield would call it, in *The War of Art*.

There are tools. We can "block" these leakages through simply deciding how we are going to choose to engage with them, then creating habits around effective use to ensure that our other tasks maintain priority.

Leaving the phone at home when you go on a date is a great example of this. It simply makes life easier. It is easier to connect.

Thirdly, the warrior realises that if they are distracted, checking their phone, "not present," and someone else *is* present, then it is super clear!

This means that we now have to answer the question: If we aren't going to make a conscious choice to hold attention and develop this skill, are we OK with everyone around us *seeing* this? Is this the personal history we want to create?

Are we OK that we aren't giving our attention to the skill, or task, or our work, that we know we value so highly?



1



Movement Competency



MOVEMENT COMPETENCY

Strength, mobility, skill, coordination, balance and endurance that is in line with the needs of the individual, not society.

“No man has the right to be an amateur in the matter of physical training. It is a shame for a man to grow old without seeing the beauty and strength of which his body is capable.” - Socrates

The warrior engages in physical exercise and training not for the needs and pressures of society, but to thrive as a human. To work to live free from skeletal pain and to engage in the adventures that life has to offer.

The Context of Why We Train

There are many reasons people exercise, but today there is one *main* reason people get started with movement, or training.

Typically, it is to change.

To lose weight, to get stronger, leaner, faster. The motivational drive.

Often, a dissatisfaction with where we currently are.

That's a powerful driver and it can be a great way to start the journey.

At some point though, the warrior may reach a crossroads. Maybe it is after we've pursued something for a while, or we've “chased” a few different sports, and yet we have gotten that same fleeting feeling...

Do we just keep going?

Well, we know that to move, exercise, or “train” is a healthy, worthwhile endeavour. So, maybe it's about the “context.”

The “why.”

Eventually, the warrior may discover a different way of looking at exercise.

A crossroads.

On the other side of the crossroads is a shift to a new way of looking at “training” itself.

The Way of the Love Warrior Traveller

This is from love.

To train, move, or exercise for the experiential connection with our body, with the movement and with the never-ending learning process.

To "train" for a stronger, more vibrant platform to connect from and to love from.

To "exercise" as a way of floating through existence. A way of learning the different mind states of frustration, fear and overcoming difficulties.

To "move" in a way that nourishes and *supports* your body, mind and soul with the *intention* and *context* of love.

The thing is, if you do choose to shift your context, you may notice a few things:

1. You can instantly drop the need to compete with others and yourself. This allows you to tune into your body at a deeper level and listen to what it truly wants and needs at any time.

2. You are free to choose a *way* of training that has a "path with heart."

There are a lot of ways of "training." How do we know what to do? With some, if you look at the 5 year journey of the "training" method, you'll simply be a little bit better at doing the same circuit in 45 minutes.

Look deeper. Is there *heart* in what you choose to do, including your training?

The path with heart has a journey - ups, downs, developments, growth and learning.

3. You can finally *enjoy* the process. There is no more "good or bad" there is no more "it should be like this."

Of course we work in a direction, we practice, but we also embrace exactly where we are at right now as the best place for us.

We can celebrate that, then practice in the way that is aligned with the journey.

4. You'll get results. Your physiology responds to an abundant state.

Our underlying physiology knows *absolutely* what the driver is for us to take action.

If it is fear, it shuts down. If it is love, and we allow abundance, it opens up to change.

5. You have found sustainability in the long game. Because this approach is adaptable to your *actual* needs, you've finally found a way of looking at training or movement that can last you a lifetime.

The context of why you "train" is as important as the context of why you do anything.

Having a context of love rather than of fear makes a big difference.

It's not an easy flip, it can be scary to "let go" and this is not for everyone, but you'll know if this resonates with you.

What you "do" doesn't necessarily change, but the why and how you do it can pivot entirely.

Start at any Age (and at any level)

Each warrior is on their own path that they in turn, must learn to navigate and discover.

This means that they can start at any time.

In fact, this is not fully true, as the warrior realises that truly, they can only start *now*.

Age is irrelevant, as the warrior realises the urgency that exists to cultivate the strength and vitality to meet their own needs. We can start at age 18, or at 88.

The drive to live a life with vitality and presence while they create impact in their work.

This means that at first, the warrior may need to overcome some fear to begin. Some resistance.

The movements, the practice, the showing up, will be foreign to begin with.

Like many of the tasks in the love warrior's life, there will be difficulties.

However, to start is to embrace these early (yet never-ending) challenges.

To start is to be ok with not "looking good."

So, the warrior is in fact, age-less.

They have embraced the nature of life, the flow of the universe, the journey itself.

Because of this, their new inner fire drives them to seek and create conditions to develop or maintain their physicality in their own context at any stage of their life.

If they create a family, they also realise that their movement capacity can be a tool.

It is a foundational tool for them to engage in life, to cultivate deeper connections, to share experiences and the movement itself is in fact part of the very fabric of life.

The Warrior Need Not Excel in One Field

It is the ability to fly into freedom - to be able to adapt to any environment and situation, that the warrior looks for.

This is the opposite of specialisation.

While each warrior may have certain gifts, or skill sets that they feel are more readily available, they also embrace diversity.

A party of warriors then, resembles a great sports team - everyone is a completely unique individual. Inevitably a diverse group of varying talents.

In a great team, each team member is a warrior. Each brings and cultivates her own particular skills, but they can all run together.

They all adapt to the changing landscape of the game, together.

Each warrior still recognises the nature of the game as a whole and enjoys the ability to participate in a multitude of tasks, projects and adventures.

For this reason, the warrior seeks out challenges, games and tasks that stretch her skill-sets.

To specialise in only one confined way of training leaves the warrior pinned down and it is too easy to be trapped or exposed by a new set of conditions or a new environment.

The Warrior isn't Pinned to One Environment.

To develop a sound physical development practice is to develop adaptability.

This means that we create a body and mind that is capable of doing all of the things we love!

For example, what good is it to only run marathons if we need flexibility and strength-to-weight ratio to play with our kids on the jungle gym.

What help is having a 200kg back squat, if you haven't created the range of motion, speed, or balance to try out surfing or climbing with your partner?

As soon as we become attached to a particular way of training, we can start to discover the limitations of the practice.

We become "pinned" down.

If the warrior's practice is broad and incorporates a wide range of strength, coordination, mobility and skills, then even after we develop in it for a decade, we will notice few limitations.

If, however, the practice itself is limited, eventually we often start to see tightness (tension) or injuries pop up as a result of the gaps that the training isn't hitting.

Today though, we have an abundance of options.

Whether it is CrossFit, gymnastics strength training, "movement" or bodyweight strength, these fairly popular and available ways of "training" have dramatically improved the number of available options and they all include elements of complex skill development, range of motion and strength in different planes.

The warrior becomes like a chameleon, she might practice or train in one area, but she can feel at home in many different environments.

The Warrior Seeks Authentic Environments

The warrior understands the natural order of the universe and uses this to help cultivate personal energy.

To "run" is also to run on open beaches, trails or tracks.

To "swim" is to learn to face the currents of the open ocean or a river if need be.

To "balance" is to do so on rails, rocky paths, or ledges outside of the gym walls.

Because of this, the warrior knows not to make the mistake of over-emphasising "false environments."

While there might be an increase in aerobic capacity available through running on a treadmill under fluorescent lights at the gym, the environment is not authentic. Where possible, she will take any available option to get outside to a more real environment.

Ultimately, the neuroception - or subconscious perception of the environment - plays an integral role in how we adapt to the stimulus.

To perceive a natural, authentic environment is beneficial to the warrior traveller.

The warrior seeks a natural environment where possible.

The Warrior is a Chameleon, at home in any arena

This is the ultimate in adaptability. The warrior moves with ease and grace.

He may be older, but moves like a cat.

He has a spring in his step, a vitality, an energy and plenty of strength.

He can run with grandkids and you also see him climbing on the low trees down at the park.

He can lift weights or cycle with his peers, but also feels happy in a mobility class.

This is the way of the warrior traveller.

To have the physical and emotional ability to be able to move into and out of any situation.

Is your training empowering you to adapt to different situations?

The Warrior Trains in a Party of Warriors

Sometimes, the warrior moves alone.

But often, she joins a party of like-minded warriors to cultivate a completely different environment.

She uses these opportunities as a springboard to understand new skills, to *see* different ways of practicing.

To recognise from where she has come - her progress - and what lies ahead.

Today, there are hundreds of different types of gyms and training groups.

With whom would you like to engage?

The Warrior Appreciates a Variety of Teachers

Despite exploring a diverse practice the love warrior traveller knows of “masters” in many domains.

These masters are different from the warriors. They have excelled in a particular path from early on.

Rather than travelling through the universe and adapting to different environments, the “master” sticks to one main domain.

There is a connection between the warrior and the master.

The warrior understands the work and consistency that the master has applied, and,

The master appreciates the warrior’s attention to basics and thirst for knowledge in different fields.

Because of this, a partnership is often formed.

The master becomes the teacher, for a time, before the warrior eventually must return to travelling ways.

This could be workshops, retreats, seeking out new coaches and new educational resources.

She Trains with Context

The warrior often maintains a job, has a family, a partner or a friendship group.

While sometimes it feels as though the training is an “escape” or release from some of the daily pressures,

The warrior understands that the physical development is not only as temporary as our time here on earth, but that it’s a gift that she chooses to give to her current and future self.

To overdo the training itself at the expense of maintaining healthy relationships, a happy existence or at the cost of the other pillars of power, is to veer off of the path.

Healthy training is a pillar of energy generation, of self leadership. Self leadership is our launch pad into ability to connect and contribute in relationships and tribes!

The Warrior Uses Training for Energy Generation, not Depletion

She moves for today, she moves for tomorrow.

Consistency trumps intensity.

The closer we can move the needle towards an “active” lifestyle (consistent movement, broken up by rest, throughout the day) the better, as we find diverse movement becomes therapeutic for the body as compared to only acute or heavy sessions.

This means that the warrior is there for the stimulus, the “workout,” but is aware of form, is aware of energy.

She cultivates her *impeccability* in the movement patterns she practices and considers each session a part of the longer journey.

This allows her to use her practice to live pain free and as a tool to steadily increase her *personal power*.

If the warrior notices feedback signals from the body or mind of signs of significant stress, he adjusts his training accordingly.

While many people think that a hard workout at the gym is a stress reliever, the warrior understands that training actually increases physiological load on an acute time-frame.

This means that the workout itself is usually perceived as a stress load, so the warrior is attentive to signs of a net imbalance of yin and yang forces on the system.

If stressors are maybe a little higher, or the resources are a little low, then often we see signs of imbalance: poor sleep, low immunity, poor mood, changes in breath patterns - the other Pillars of Power are impacted.

On these days, which inevitably come as part of life, the warrior might trade their harder session for a restorative practice, do a “work in” session, and emphasise food, light exposure and other recovery practices.

The warrior doesn’t over-extend, their training is adaptive. They ruthlessly focus on energy generation and once the training is done, this means tools for recovery and down-regulation.

Adaptive Training - Doug Hepburn

Doug Hepburn was one of the strongest people around before the anabolic steroid wave hit the strength training world.

He was born in 1926 and held records in various presses (including a 500lb bench press). He also had an extremely simple approach to training and was a strong believer in recovery principles to get results:

1. *Training frequency will fluctuate depending on what's going on in your life.* When stress is low-to-moderate, frequency can go up (up to 6 times per week according to Doug). When stress is higher, frequency needs to be reduced to 2-3 times per week.
2. *Relax the mind through "mental training."* This highlighted Doug's focus on a relaxation program to help the recovery process and improve strength. Doug knew that we get stronger after we train, not during. Having a post-workout meal or shake is only the start of the recovery process.

Doug trained simply, with the big compound movements that were effective for strength development. He recovered well and was patient. He also got exceptionally strong.

In today's environment, it's easy to get extremely caught up in complexity and the new shiny approach to training that opens up down the street.

However, whether it's in our physical practice or otherwise, all we really need to remember is to do the basics well, explore the fringes of our skill-sets (so more things become "basic") and comfort levels and then keep showing up to do the work.

"Move every day." - Rod Cooper, The Movement Collective

Cultivating “Strength”

Alongside mobility and coordination, the acquisition of strength and in particular *relative* strength can dramatically improve quality of life for the warrior.

The ability to squat, lunge, throw, rotate, jump, push, pull, run, swim and more with ease in diverse conditions is helpful for broader functionality. Of course, we also have different contexts and considerations for each individual.

So, when we look at strength and “training” itself from the warriors perspective, we ask three questions:

1. Who is it for?
2. What is it for?
3. What is the change or impact we want to make?

These three questions help us to make sure we are in line with the context of the individual (or ourselves) and helps us to pick suitable movement patterns at any point in time.

Before we continue though, here are a few other reasons why you want to be developing strength:

Lean Muscle Mass and Longevity

Discussing lean muscle mass always brings the risk of being dismissed by modern sub-groups in some movement cultures. However, lean muscle mass is anabolic - or “pro-metabolic”. This means it burns fat when at *rest* and generates heat. This is great news for longevity. It is pro-life.

“It’s the massive muscle, at rest, which will burn fat calories and leave the protein for your functioning tissues and sugar to sustain the brain and immune system.” - Dr. Ray Peat.

Srikanthan et al, 2014, demonstrated that muscle mass relative to body height has independent predictive ability for all-cause mortality in older adults (over 65). The results showed that total mortality was significantly lower in the fourth (highest) quartile of muscle mass compared to the first.⁹

In short, lean muscle mass may help you live longer, helps with strength development and helps us burn fat while at rest. This is something worth considering.

Staying Strong, Capable and Useful

As we age, our hormonal systems shift.

Our tolerance to all stressors *decreases* and from here, we can become more “catabolic” - we can literally start to burn up our own muscle at a lower threshold, leading to frailty.

At a point, the relative difficulties that we find simply moving around, climbing stairs, keeping up with our kids etc, can stem from simply getting weaker - not having the potential to generate the force that we need to complete the task at hand.

Or, we can generate the force, but the relative “effort” goes way up. This in turn elevates the heart rate and perceived effort.

So often, the increase in perceived “exertion” that we might feel as a lack of “fitness,” when looking at simple movement patterns, can really be a lack in strength, coordination or range of motion. In essence, our ability to “move” drops, so each movement starts to feel harder.

Alongside coordination, strength, then in a way becomes a biological currency that we can carry with us through life. Something we can turn to, to find the potential that we need in order to execute the task at hand.

(of course, balance, timing, mobility and accuracy all must work with strength. To prioritise only one in reality would be limiting, yet strength remains the “actuator.”)

You Don't Need to Over-Do it!

Like anything in the western culture, we have micro-markets, subcultures and die-hard fans of all sorts of different activities or attributes.

Strength is no different.

However, for the love-warrior traveller, strength and movement play an integral role in the broader *fabric* of life.

To move, to create and generate strength is abundant, yet to specialise and go overboard can be detrimental to other pillars of power.

Is your training getting you down? Is the recovery process reducing vitality rather than increasing it?

What is the right amount of exercise or training for you?

Strength Training

There are numerous benefits to training with resistance, or increasing lean muscle mass through strength training.

Lean muscle mass is in itself metabolic and passively burns body fat, even as you read this!

However, there are a few guidelines to work with to ensure that the stress or "load" of the training is manageable and that the results are long term and aligned with energy generation.

- Maintaining a lid on both average and maximal exertion. Training shouldn't feel like it is dangerous, too intense, too strenuous, or like it is pushing you to the limit. Remember, the goal is to create a sustainable and repeatable practice that is pro-health.

Of course, many will disagree, but my general approach to this is: if I'm having to twist my face up into extremes to complete or attempt a movement, it's too hard and I should lighten the load and double check that the movement quality is where I want it to be.

- We need to have adequate rest to "recover" from the stimulus. Most of the plateaus I see are from people under too much physiological load (stress) in broader life, then trying to add high frequency training. Sleep, energy, mood and sex drive should be generally good. These are all signs of the state of the system and can be seen in all of the Pillars of Power.
- We need adequate food. There is a scarcity mindset that is common in the fitness world. It's generally an increase in training accompanied by a decrease in food quantity or some sort of "clean eating" attempt. Food choices and quality is absolutely important, but often we are seeing a body with too few resources relative to the demands.

I've seen countless men and women who are regularly training, yet skipping meals and hardly eating anything when we start to look at food logs. This can mean they have managed to run their metabolism down slow enough such that they are in survival mode, with a small amount of food. The goal really, is pro-metabolic food, regular food frequency for most, to help support a healthy metabolism.

“Even in rich cultures, protein deficiency, inappropriate exercise, and emotional tension will contribute to premature aging of the individual, and damage to the offspring.” - Dr. Ray Peat

Long term success in training comes from patience and remaining just that little bit removed. Thinking in a 5-10 year timeframe is helpful.

This helps us to see things how they really are and keep things in check. Are all the boxes being ticked for us to succeed?

Are you providing the “resources” to really help you get the most from your training?

Some Tools

“Controlled Strength” is movement without acceleration, momentum, assistance or gravity.

When we perform controlled strength patterns, we are sending parasympathetic dominant messages to the nervous system.

This means that our “neuroception,” or our “perception of the environment” is one of abundance, or safety, or “adaptation.”

When we start to “accelerate” loads, use momentum or external forces to propel movements or get us into position, we bring a sudden loading onto the structure.

It’s not that we “can’t” manage or handle this load, but for the majority of the population (who are already chronically stressed, or “sympathetic dominant”), there is a diminishing return and an added risk.

Do you incorporate “controlled” strength movements? Or are they uncontrolled?

The Professionals vs. The Amateurs

“Controlled strength” movements may sound great in theory, but what about in sports?

When we look at weightlifting, gymnastics, sprinters, we can easily see that there is acceleration involved.

The movements are immense!

Yes, but, when we zoom in at any point in time over the course of the athletic development for these athletes, we find that at the top level, they are generally *training* with control, they maintain awareness.

If you watch Lu Xiajun (from China, a top olympic weightlifter) perform the snatch at any weight from an empty barbell all the way up to his near maximal loads, then you see supreme control.

The “controlled” element of the movement is *part of the athletic development* for professional athletes.

When we contrast this to beginners or many amateurs who engage in the “fitness industry” who are typically more concerned with lifting more weight or go faster, then we start to see where the breakdown comes in.

Momentum, swinging without control or using gravity or external loads to “force” positions can be a fast way to end up on the sidelines.

Again, we end up going back to societal conditioning, the race to perform *now* and the fear of missing out.

What would it look like if we went at our own pace from the start to develop controlled movement? How might this change our outcome?

Some Important Patterns

Standing up, moving ourselves around and navigating the ever-changing landscape:

Spinal flexion, rotation, extension

Squat, hinge, lunge or step-up pattern

Pullup, Chin-up/asymmetric (one-arm, or rope) "pulling"

Overhead/horizontal press (handstand presses)

"Straight arm" press and pulling.

Throwing, rotating, catching, balancing, rhythm.

These are just a few of the "bang for your buck" strength and movement patterns we can work on.

As you can see, most of these patterns are built on what Paul Chek would call a "Primal Movement Pattern" - they are patterns that we use in a normal, diverse life of movement and varied tasks.

In line with this, we can start with the controlled movement and coordination of our own bodies before the controlled movement and coordination of an external load.

Also, for each of these patterns, no matter where the warrior is when they begin, there are "scaling" options available (this means "easier" or simpler options), as the context will be different for each person.

This means that a party of warriors is able to work or train *together* despite a range of differences in movement or strength capabilities.

Are the patterns you are currently training diverse and actually helping in broader life?

Pro Athletes - Making it Look Easy

In my Breathe to Perform workshops, I talk about "neuroception" - how we can alter our subconscious "perception" of our environment and our actions.

When I have worked or trained alongside professional athletes, the one word that I keep coming back to when I see them operate is "composure."

The high-level professional does the easy task impeccably well, and the difficult task easily.

This doesn't mean they aren't trying, or aren't "outputting," but rather they have learned to complete the task with "ease and grace."

Even with a simple task, the beginner will have a more difficult time *and* send a message to their physiology of "difficulty."

How do we send these messages?

Well, the mind is constantly in communication with the body, and vice-versa. All of this can be happening without our knowing - on it's own accord! We can then bring conscious attention to these routes of communication - called "bridges" which span from the conscious to the subconscious mind and body.

One way to send a message of "ease and grace" or parasympathetic dominant information is through "conscious relaxation" of these bridges:

1. We relax the face, jaw and neck as much as possible, rather than straining
2. We relax the eyes, the gaze, allowing ourselves to blink, rather than straining our eyes
3. We relax from the hips to the toes rather than tensing
4. We relax the pelvic floor and diaphragm
5. We relax the shoulders, forearms and hands, rather than holding tension and elevating the shoulders
6. We relax the breath and come to a natural breathing pattern, using the nose to both inhale and exhale, rather than the mouth.

When we hold tension, mouth breathe, strain, we are sending stress signals to our system - letting it "know" that the environment is stressful, or that we need to be "mobilised."

When we have relaxed composure, we outline an abundant situation, where our physiology is ready to adapt and perform.

This applies not only to movements, but to any situation.

*Of course, when the task/movement requires a certain level of tension in certain areas, we must prioritise that for safety. This goes for all of the areas.

[For more on "bridges to the subconscious", see the work of Simon Borg-Olivier, who was the main motivation for this piece.]

Superior Patterns and Choices

To squat, lunge, hinge at the hip with great coordination and strength provides higher value than to sit on the leg extension machine, or any isolation machine.

It doesn't mean that sitting on a leg extension machine is "bad," it simply means that the primal movement patterns are of a higher *order*. If we can do these, we get great transferability to our broader life, *plus* we can jump onto any machine we want if that is ever the case, and it is no problem. This is the concept of "complexity."

The higher the movement complexity, generally speaking, the more we are "learning" and we can use this movement knowledge to transfer into other tasks.

"The hippocampus is expanded by opportunity and learning and shrunk by stress." - Dr. Ray Peat

Main take-away? Primal movement patterns come first within the context of the individual, complexity is important and look to continually challenge your edges of abilities.

Low Volume Training?

I have been advocating an approach to low volume training for a number of years.

This is the idea that we can apply a small stimulus and still send messaging to the physiology that it's worth adapting to this little dose.

There are a number of upsides:

- Hormonal optimisation/less stress. Training is stressful. If we can keep sessions short and punchy, it's potentially easier to remain more anabolic and refrain from driving cortisol through the roof through heavy training load
- Time efficient. Get in, get the work done, get out.
- Minimalism. Short, clean, fun sessions.

For low volume training to work, we need to look at the whole equation. We are sending a subtler message to the physiology, yet still asking for change.

This means that we need a system *that is more open to change*.

How do we create this?

Adaptation comes easier when we allow a state of abundance:

1. Enough food and rest to down-regulate the stress and *adapt* to the stimulus
2. Healthy environments. An enriched environment of a great community, enough light and even fresh air can help create a favourable *neuroception*. A subconscious “knowing” that we are in an abundant state and ready to change or grow in response to the stimulus.
3. Enough general movement or activity. Usually with low volume training we find it helps to have a base of general strength and resilience. Low volume “training,” but high volume movement (a generally active, robust lifestyle) is effective. This also means that accessory work, mobility work and out of alignment type of work could all help us. This ensures that despite low main movement training loads, we still have great general strength and resilience.

Personally, I’m a huge fan of low volume “training” and yet higher volume movement, or an active lifestyle.

To me, any targeted training volume *over and above* the minimum effective dose just doesn’t make sense. It becomes a stressor that we don’t need.

The caveat? We need to focus on adaptation - meeting the demands of the training, including the above points and also the ability to down-regulate the nervous system to further help recovery.

Are you looking at the “other side of the coin?” How are you addressing your recovery?

Useful “Movement.”

“Parkour” is the act of overcoming physical problems.

Moving from A to B, unassisted, in often a complex urban environment, with dexterity, with speed.

When these are blended together, it is a dance with fear, with awareness, with strategy and with patience and practice.

But it is your own dance, with your body, at your level, in an environment that is relevant to you.

It could be navigating a curb, railway tracks, or scaling a building.

Parkour is one form of a transferable, useful movement practice. There are many.

With mindfulness and attention, these practices can be a great way to assist in energy generation to live a vital, impactful life.

Useful movement is transferable. It might be “practiced” in a gym setting, but it’s also a lever to problem solve, to live and to love in a broader setting.

“To be strong, to be useful.”

To be strong is interesting, sometimes notable. But to be useful is to have energy generation and vitality, to lean into discomfort, to be ready physically, mentally and emotionally.

To be ready to connect and contribute, to the people, places and environment that we choose.

Not for just a 45 or 60 minute class, not for a 3 hour race, but for life.

Mobility and Flexibility

The warrior seeks to move with freedom and with grace: we need range of motion in line with the needs of the individual’s wants and needs, not those of society.

“You don’t have to tie yourself in knots” - Paul Chek

Ask the questions

When we consider improving our flexibility or mobility, again we can look at three helpful questions: Who, What, “I”?

1. Who is it for?
2. What is it for?
3. What is the “Impact” you want to create - in life?

When we look at flexibility, there are a ton of options. It can be daunting. Yet the main questions remain:

Who is the person we are looking at (what is their context)
What do they want to get out of it?
What’s the end outcome or impact we want?

This allows us to see that again, we usually don’t need to go to extreme measures, despite what we might see on social media.

To maintain mobility in life, live pain free and happy, we certainly need some level of mobility and flexibility, but for most it’s not likely that doing the full splits will significantly help.

Then again, it might for a few (..context)

Again, we can circle back around to our *own* journey. Where are we going and what tools do we need to help us to get there?

Life’s demands

Still, the warrior sees that there are certain movement patterns and ranges in motion that are generally very helpful and transferable.

Consider a few ideas (not all):

1. Spinal flexion, bending forward with relative ease, hands at or on the ground with knees straight and no pain
2. Some natural extension in the spine or the ability to extend. For many, this is a problematic pattern due to restricted range in the spine as a whole (in particular the thoracic spine) and any efforts to extend can lead to pain. If this is the case often specific work around the shoulders, spine and hips is needed.
3. Spinal rotation, side flexion and movement in general
4. Ability to rest in squat or lunge patterns - ankles and hips need the required ranges
5. Ability to transfer weight onto the hands - adequate wrist extension and health for loading
6. Ability to hang from a variety of objects
7. Healthy range of motion in the shoulder joint, including awareness and range of scapula (shoulder blade) positions.

Question: Can the active strength movements we discussed take you to a place that you want to be in your flexibility?

More on Active Movements

Active movements are when we have intent behind each small part of the movement.

We actually control the entire sequence from our own intent, without using another arm to help a stretch, without using gravity to accelerate or load the movement and without using momentum as either assistance or as load.

Often in modern exercise, there is assistance through a movement with momentum, gravity or external force.

Practices such as Tai Chi or Qi Gong are often entirely active movement based.

Often we get caught up in progressing with our run times, our weight lifted or calories burned, but if we solely focus on this, then we miss out on the higher levels of awareness on offer with controlled, or active movements.

When we have control through the entire range of the movement and aren't assisted, we can have *intent* through the full range as well. We are able to "tell" our underlying physiology that our activity is not a stressor. They are slower movements.

Usually it is in active movements that we can integrate the breath, or the intention of the mind. These both can help to deliver a positive message to the physiology, by limiting the response of the sympathetic nervous system (subtle breath and or controlled movement with positive intent)

Active movements could be used in a warmup, a cool down, or as the whole practice itself.

To be “Mobile” is to not be “Fixed.” The warrior seeks to avoid long term fixed positions.

“The average adult spends 50 to 70 percent of their time sitting”⁸

The warrior doesn't spend her life sitting.

Sitting causes a huge shift and restriction in the musculoskeletal system and even our blood flow. There is a net “shortening” of the anterior chain of the body (hip flexors, trunk flexors, shoulders, chest) and usually a weakening of the posterior (or “back side”) of the body (hamstrings, mid back, upper back).

In short, if unchecked it can create catastrophic changes to our posture and health.

While the work we choose to do for the people we seek to service may require time spent at a desk, the warrior recognises the need to be aware or often shift this habit if she wants to cultivate a strong, healthy and mobile body.

Skill, Coordination, Balance, Depth Perception

In line with or above the needs of the individual.

It is important to regularly apply challenges to the brain (and mind-body connection) to build new neural networks and maintain accuracy and agility. Furthermore, this allows us to use our strength and mobility to a greater extent.

The upside of integrating skill and coordination work is that there is less physiological load (“stress”) on the system and a deep level of learning. The tools also transfer to everything else that we do.

It also can be open ended, boundless and rule-less. If you can imagine it, it might be worth a try. This is less about the “what” - the exact task - there is no guide-book here - and more about the “why.”

We are challenging ourselves, developing skill sets and building new neural networks, patterns, awareness, confidence and more.

Creating a party of warrior travellers is often the easiest way to implement games and skill development, and can provide a challenging atmosphere that is not available alone.

Is there a local group that runs movement classes, dance classes and more that can challenge more than just strength or fitness?

Putting It Together [We Are All Individuals.]

We have touched on a lot of powerful primal movement patterns for strength and movement development. However, we need to remember that of course, as warriors, we are all uniquely individual.

Ultimately, the work that one warrior might engage in to develop movement competency may look remarkably different to that of another.

Previous injuries, differences in skeletal geometries, or even previous imbalances created from sports or activities can all play a role in creating our “context” and determining suitable types of training for a given moment in time.

We also can have different wants and needs as individuals!

*We are all individuals and our training should have an individual element to it.
Does your gym, trainer or coach modify or adjust the work to suit your needs?
If you train in a group, are your needs being met?*

A Note on Responsive Training

Responsive training is to “respond” or modify training loads or intensities relative to changes in the warrior’s physiology, lifestyle and environment.

As physiological load or “stress” ebbs and flows in broader life, we see an opportunity to adjust training loads accordingly.

One example of this is using a *seasonal* approach to training - as the darkness of Winter comes into play and the body is less responsive to the stimulus, we can reduce the training load.

Then, as Summer rolls back around, we can usually increase load somewhat.

Other aspects that will affect the ability to “train” include:

1. Work load, work hours, work deadlines
2. Physical load at work
3. Financial, environmental stressors
4. Relationship stressors
5. Trauma, falls, accidents
6. Changes in sleep patterns or poor quality sleep (see the Sleep Pillar)
7. Compromised immunity

“Working In”

Practicing movement can be a way to express, explore, learn and develop physicality.

However, it can also be a way to restore, rejuvenate and replenish.

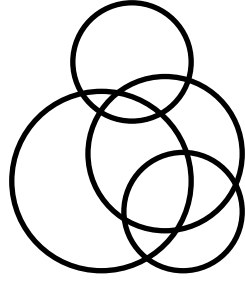
This is what Paul Chek refers to as “working-in.”

“Working in” exercises have existed since the beginning - they do not raise the heart rate.

They are controlled movements and can include Tai Chi, Qigong and others.

While helping to restore balance to the body and mind, these types of practices also still develop movement proficiency, skill and coordination.

“Exercise is optional, movement is essential.” - Vik Hawksley, Anatomy in Motion



2



Body Composition



BODY COMPOSITION

Body composition in line with needs of the individual, not society.

The warrior chooses to learn to love and appreciate their body regardless of how it “looks.” They also understand that if they choose, awareness, action and habits can often help them to cultivate a healthy body composition to assist in both longevity and agility in movement and in life.

To care for, and love your body, to nourish your body and to cultivate wellness and physical potential with your body is both rewarding and healthful.

In terms of body composition, what we do know is that lean muscle is anabolic in nature, which helps to maintain a strong metabolism - a sign of health in both humans but also other animals.

We also know that obesity can have a huge number of health concerns associated with it including, but not limited to:³

- All-causes of death (mortality)
- High blood pressure (Hypertension)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (a breakdown of cartilage and bone within a joint)
- Sleep apnea and breathing problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast, colon, kidney, gallbladder, and liver)
- Low quality of life
- Mental illness such as clinical depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders
- Body pain and difficulty with physical functioning

“74.5 percent of men aged 18 and over are overweight or obese in Australia, and so are 60 percent of women.”⁴

The Pitfalls of “Dieting”

On the surface, the human seems like a simple organism.

This unfortunate and incorrect assumption stems from a “mechanistic” way of thinking about the mind and body and the result is an approach to dieting which is usually flawed.

Often, people will attempt to shift body composition through simply not eating, skipping meals (known as “fasting”), cutting entire food macronutrient groups, or other forms of deprivation.

While these can involve more serious psychological factors as well, often they are simply an oversimplification of physiology combined with societal pressures.

When we deprive the body of nourishment and the energetic resources it needs, we not only induce stress, but also compromise vitality through a slowing of the metabolic rate.

This means that to actually change body composition in a healthful manner, requires patience and attention to move slowly and maintain energy, health and balance.

Because each individual is unique, there is no way we can apply a standardised model here.

However, what we do know is that if we are looking to change our body composition, we *must create health first*. If the metabolic health and energy production is compromised at a cellular level, to diet, restrict or try to directly change body composition can often cause more issues.

Cultivating healthy cellular metabolism (and thus a key component in body composition) is to cultivate energy production as a whole. This is addressed directly later, but also is of course linked to most of the Pillars of Power!

Only when we *see* our lives as a whole and understand that our physical representation can in part reflect not just our environment, but our habits and imprints from our mental-emotional pattern, can we create long term changes.

Slow and Steady

If we rapidly cut or decrease (or increase!) the available energy to the system, we are at odds with nature.

The body has “adapted” to one way of living and now we try to force a rapid shift in an alternate direction. This change creates tension and often stress.

It is possible to survive in this state, but *thriving* is difficult.

The warrior can choose to set a plan around healthy movement and eating that are focused on maintaining metabolic health and energy. This is implemented slowly.

A sound plan, an accountability partner and a reward system in place for reaching landmarks can be great tools to support habit shifts.

Losing Weight

"So, how do I "lose weight" If I shouldn't do fasting, the keto, or low-carb diets?... Plus you say don't do endurance sports or really intense training..

What do I do?"

These are common questions. To really explore them means to have *realised* the battlefield that is the modern fitness industry, rife with conflict, mis-information and vitality traps.

As always, for the warrior, the first thing to consider is that we must come from abundance. We must prioritise energy production and metabolism.

We know that our muscle mass, when at rest, prefers fat for fuel. We also know that elevated cortisol, or stress hormones, are counterproductive to losing excess body fat.

Therefore, we can use three **main** drivers to improve body composition sustainably:

1. **Increase lean muscle mass.** This involves some form of resistance training. We can use metrics to make sure we aren't doing too much and stressing our system out, but resistance training is the only real way to increase muscle mass. This helps to burn body fat when at rest.

This can include bodyweight for resistance or loading.

2. **We can use food choices and food frequency to down-regulate our autonomic nervous system.** Food frequency and food choices can help to balance blood sugar and stress. We understand first and foremost our energetic needs - We are after *metabolic* foods, avoiding foods that slow the metabolic rate*. Often, maintaining a regular food frequency helps to stabilise blood sugar and manage stress effectively.

"By 1950, then, it was established that unsaturated fats suppress the metabolic rate... Over the next few decades, the exact mechanisms of that metabolic damage were studied. Unsaturated fats damage the mitochondria, partly by suppressing the respiratory enzyme, and partly by causing generalized oxidative damage. The more unsaturated the oils are, the more specifically they suppress tissue response to thyroid hormone, and transport of the hormone on the thyroid transport protein." - Dr. Ray Peat

3. **We can use breathwork to down regulate the autonomic nervous system.** This means practices to *increase* our carbon dioxide threshold, which can often mean slow breathing, or *reduced* breathing exercises - allowing what I have often called the “subtle breath.” This could include forms of meditation, or direct breathwork. This can be different for each person. In line with this, the warrior generally avoids excess breathless exercise and endurance training. These are perceived as more stressful and up-regulate the nervous system.

To shift body composition then, essentially, we support our metabolism and decrease stress as much as we can.

This is opposite to many the approach of many in the fitness industry, which generally promotes an increase in stressful exercise that elevates cortisol, alongside a net decrease in food.

This can also be a little slower, but is far more sustainable in the long run.

“Several adaptations happen to chronic, poorly balanced dieting - the thyroid slows down, the muscle tissues atrophy, from the stress of dieting. In the stressed metabolism, you shift over to burning fat rather than sugar. But at rest, the brain and red blood cells need sugar and they’ll keep burning it regardless of where they have to get it. If you don’t eat enough of the necessary nutrients, the body will convert it’s muscles to sugar to keep getting what it needs.” - Dr. Ray Peat

“It’s the massive muscle, at rest, which will burn fat calories and leave the protein for your functioning tissues and sugar to sustain the brain and immune system.” - Dr. Ray Peat.

“When the muscle is stressed, it begins producing oestrogen. When you are “building” the muscle, in a safe way, it starts to produce testosterone, right in the muscle.”

“Well developed skeletal muscles are actually sustaining the heart muscle, as well as the brain and the lungs.... Everything that tends to kill you, shrinks your muscles. Frailty is the basic thing that is associated with ageing. Bones and muscles go away at about the same rate, with ageing.” - Dr. Ray Peat

Getting Off Track

Quite often on the journey of health and “healthy eating,” the warrior finds that he hits “roadblocks.” Even once they “know” what they feel they “should” be eating, results seem to stagnate, or it’s one step forward, two steps back.

A week of living on track, then a few poor choices and they are back to where they started.

This is often despite our best intentions, and we do need to remember to maintain a healthy approach to eating, that is in balance with being a human and enjoying life!

However there are two things to consider. Firstly, we are not simple beings or organisms, our journey is never linear and no two journeys will look the same.

Both awareness and patience are key parts of our journey.

Secondly, when we look deeper, we often find that sometimes if we are making these “choices” which send us off-track chronically, it can be a *subconscious* mechanism - as in we aren’t fully “conscious” or present to the choice when we make it.

This is particularly relevant in times of stress, anger or frustration and can be exacerbated in the modern, fast-paced culture of today, where we are over-activating the stress response and the reactionary, reptilian brain.

When this happens, we have in a way, “disengaged” the executive functioning part of the brain - the decision making centre.

We also know that this part of the brain is supported through mindfulness and meditation.

We find then, we have some options, if we choose.

We find that if we can create tools to remain present in times of stress, through better decision making we can often stay on track in the direction we want to go.

“We can intend not to be our program.” - Lujan Matus

The “Triggers”

It's the subconscious patterns that are in play

Case Study - Anne

Anne contacted me saying wanting to work on her mindset and body composition.

She exercised often, she worked in the fitness industry.

Anne loved high intensity training, circuits, rowing and intervals..

But still, she was unable to find a healthy weight that she was happy with and she also discussed wanting to feel a little more “in control” of her habits and actions around food.

In the mindset work, she had been feeling tension and anxiety and wanted to see if there were any ways to reduce this.

Anne already had a great understanding of the right types of food for her. So when we worked together, we decided the first step was to learn to see and then down-regulate the impact stressors were having in her life.

We did this through:

Eliminating all high intensity training for a month (walking only)

Identifying the people and environments in her life who were catalysts for stress and excitement.

Introducing some basic breathing meditation to help regularly down-regulate the stress response

Through self-observation Anne found that when she was stressed, her eating habits went haywire.

During these times, she could easily eat most of a pack of biscuits.

Once we went a little deeper, we found the exact pattern that would unfold most days each week.

Anne would arrive home after work in the evenings, go inside and then meet some of her housemates who were at the time both high energy and “anxious.”

This environment would then shift Anne’s “neuroception,” elevating her mobilising (stress) hormones which also impacts decision making.

Anne then would soon find herself eating unconsciously.

She then made choices which were not in line with the food habits she wanted to cultivate, so we got to work on managing stress and attention through breathing exercises and some basic meditation.

Once we identified the pattern, we introduced inner silence and breathing meditation directly before she entered the house.

This means that when Anne did walk in the house, she was now centered and able to make sound, rational decisions in line with where she wanted to go, rather than reacting to the situation.

It didn't mean that she never ate biscuits, but by introducing a "pause" and effort to become present, it was more likely that if she did choose to eat them, she might have just one or two.

When this was combined with a slower exercise regime, Anne found that she was easily able to get the results she was after.

"The sudden falling of the blood sugar causes a surge of cortisol, and that changes the metabolism, makes you waste protein. The thymus and muscles especially.. The cortisol helps to direct the fat deposition to the waist area and back and face.. The so-called metabolic syndrome." - Dr. Ray Peat

Clear Decision Making

It sounds simple - we make decisions all day long that influence our actions.

However, with much of our day run on autopilot, the question becomes, how many of these decisions are we making *consciously*?

The warrior understands that to make decisions “consciously” is important.

He looks at the “triggers” in his life that might be shifting him into “reactive” or subconscious decision making rather than “responsive,” or conscious decision making.

He understands that it can be unnoticed stress that can create this issue.

When the warrior starts to understand habits, triggers and conscious choosing, he finds that through awareness of his environment and patterns, he can often regain sound decision making skills.

To do this more effectively, it can help to be part of a group, or have a mentor, coach or trainer that can help with deep understanding, action and accountability. Often, we struggle to *see* when our own subconscious patterns come into play.

More great information on habits and habit cultivation can be found in Charles Duhigg's book, The Power of Habit.

The Warrior Comes From Love

When we commit to the journey of cultivating acceptance, or self love for our entire being, our posture around movement, food and other lifestyle factors can often shift to an abundant, healthful setting.

When we don't have feelings of sufficiency, when we feel that we are lacking, we are at risk.

Being at risk simply means that we are more easily swayed by marketing, social media, influencers and advertisements. Clear decision making is more difficult. When we start to accept ourselves for who we are, in this exact moment of time, it becomes a little bit easier to make conscious choices that are in line with the direction we want to go.

This makes the question: “Is it from love?” or, “Is this from abundance?” a powerful tool to help navigate choices.

From Love

The simplest filter.

In a society distracted by social media and comparison, fueled by "growth" and "hustle," we can find ourselves feeling conflicted.

We consciously and subconsciously place ever increasing demands on our physical and emotional selves.

We do this while also decreasing resources, such as food quantity and quality, sleep and rest.

So, knowing that we too play a role in the fabric of this society, what can we do? How do we decide on whether we are undertaking something from scarcity (fear), or abundance (love)?

"If I am going to undertake this task, is it from a place of scarcity, or from abundance?"

While nature moves from abundance, the conditioned mind can often move from scarcity.

So, knowing this trend, we have a head start. Here are a few other ideas:

1. Are we competing? Who with? Others? Our old self?
2. Are we focused more on the outcome than the activity itself? Where is your attention when you start the endeavour or session?
3. Does it go against the grain of nature? Nature moves from abundance. *This also guides us to the subtle breath* and automatic down-regulation, or rest, when needed.

If it is from scarcity, it is not right. If it is from abundance, or love, it is right.

The Judge, The Separator

In “Positive Intelligence,” Chamine introduces the main *saboteur*, or disruptor of our emotional intelligence and decision making process.

The name of this saboteur is “The Judge” - judgement of self, others or situations.

The judge creates separation, or division.

Interestingly, when we watch nature, we can try, but we fail to see this separation or division.

The ocean waves lap up to the rocks - the rock itself is impenetrable,

Yet despite this difference, there is no division.

The rock remains at peace with the ocean. They form a partnership of sorts.

The rock welcomes the ocean, inviting her to wash over its surface, then slowly retreat again.

There is no self-importance - the ocean provides coolness for the rock and the rock provides a place of knowing for the ocean.

The acceptance removes tension, it allows growth

And so a cohort of plants and animals make a home and even thrive through this arrangement.

The way of the warrior is to find the path of health and vitality, and enjoyment of the human experience. Part of this process is to become aware of The Judge.

In particular, the chronic, deeper judgment of self and others.

To understand our narratives, our acute levels of self-importance,

then through awareness, to slowly allow these to drop and welcome each other in.

After all, we are all coming to our end.

To spend much of our short time here on earth in judgement is to be separate from existence and to not be fully alive.

Inner Silence

The warrior practices inner silence and loving kindness to maintain optimal energy and love-warrior context.

On the battlefield, the warrior can go “within” to find stillness, or inner silence, to learn to restore balance in the mind.

This is the only way to create deeper clarity around our narrative - the voice in our heads - and start to see a truer nature of reality and the environment.

In the modern landscape, the over-abundance of stimulation, marketing and media can create a trap - the warrior trips up.

This is normal.

This can surface as the hidden enemies of negative self-talk, doubt and deprivation or feelings of scarcity and judgement.

One of the tools we can use is inner silence.

The benefits of inner silence are accumulated over time, as well as being acutely present.

As we cultivate inner silence, we come back to the centre.

The place of no comparison.

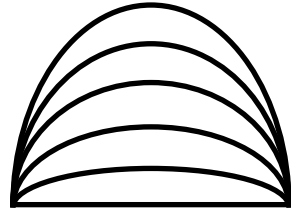
We break down the barrier between “us” and the broader universe.

Inner silence could be a specific meditation practice, a mindful walk in nature or a period of just stopping to sit peacefully in silence.

Or, it could be a particular practice, such as a loving kindness meditation (“metta”)

The effect of inner silence is cumulative, the more we practice, the more easily it comes to us. When we practice this regularly, we find we cultivate not just a powerful tool to come back to our centre, but also a powerful ally that helps us to move from a place of clarity - to connect and contribute more powerfully with the broader world.

*Have you tried to cultivate inner silence to help with the mind?
What about to help with conscious decision making or intuition?
If so, what is your favourite way?*



3



Relaxed Muscles When at Rest



RELAXED MUSCLES WHEN AT REST

The muscular system is a driver for our movement. But a muscle that is tense when at rest is as useless as a muscle that won't activate or fire when we need it to.

The warrior can develop awareness around three states:

1. Conscious tension
2. Conscious relaxation and
3. Subconscious relaxation.

Typically, we are great at number 1: the ability to create force or tension.

To “do” with effort.

The second is a little more difficult, because the physical body is linked to the mind - today, the mind is so filled with ambition, that the warrior often finds it difficult to even consciously relax - This tension can come with us to work, to dinner, into our conversations, even as we go to sleep.

The third is very difficult for most people. This requires awareness that subconscious tension even exists, and then engaging in practices to help reduce it.

Because it is *subconscious*, often we don't know of its existence until someone points it out!

Various practitioners, therapists or healers can be great at helping us to *see* these subconscious patterns of tension.

Do you have practices for conscious and subconscious relaxation and healing? How could these impact your vitality and ability to remain present while you make an impact?

Subconscious Tension - This exists in the gap between what we are preparing for subconsciously, and what is actually happening now - This is called “False Potentiality.”

False Potentiality

When we sit at rest, the mind is still active.

This is in part due to the background activity in the brain.

This is the futurist, the analyser of the past, the self-reflector.

The “Default Mode Network.”

When we are considering possible future outcomes, or holding on to past events and possible future *repercussions* of these events - even subconsciously - we can create physical tension in the body, while at rest!

This “readiness” or “potential” though, is usually false, as the events inevitably don’t arrive, or they arrive in a different way than expected anyway. We didn’t need that tension, that potential.

You can feel this - as you sit before a big meeting, as someone cuts you off in traffic, or when you think about a big date you have with someone you met last week.

The mind shifts forward (or back) to the event and the physical body can “set the stage” for motion.

Yet, when we are just at rest, this physical representation of false potentiality can simply be “tension.”

The Short Term Fix

Often, we tend towards a “piece by piece” view of the body.

This means if there is pain, we see a practitioner and they try to physically “release” tension.

My neck is sore, I need a neck massage.

This can at times be helpful, but it also can be a limited approach on its own:

1. The subconscious patterns that are creating the tension in the body can remain in play. These could be how we breathe, how we interact in our relationships, how we hold our posture when at work, how we hold tension from past traumas, injuries or illnesses.
2. The therapy itself can be a stressor. If there is a subconscious tension in play that is creating chronic tension in the body, then a treatment that creates *more* tension in the nervous system through high load treatment can exacerbate the subconscious tension.

While this of course isn’t always the case, it can often lead to a circular pattern of a short term fix, but a remaining long term, or chronic pattern that re-surfaces later.

Other Options

The warrior understands that sometimes tension is a result of a physical injury or acute incident, and sometimes it is governed by other imbalances, and occasionally even by the nervous system as a whole, even subconsciously!

We can use tools to help unwind some of this tension, or “release” the holding pattern that may have started from a physical or mental-emotional incident or trauma.

There are many healing modalities that focus on this and it is often practitioner specific. Sometimes this healing process can last for years or even decades depending on the individual and level and depth of the tension or past trauma.

Usually, an understanding of the nervous system, breathing, emotional stress and habits or patterns can be helpful insights or tools to help alleviate this type of longer term pain or muscular tension.

The healing journey for this type of tension can be long and varies person to person.

Cultivating awareness and patience can be very helpful.

Some Tools

Addressing the Pillars of Power as a whole can be effective tools to help with alleviating subconscious tension.

Often, working with a practitioner is helpful as it can be difficult for us to observe some of our own patterns.

It is difficult for us to see the water in which we swim.

With breathing for example, for many, the simple act of observing the breath can change the breath pattern itself.

The Art of Relaxation - "Relaxare" - to "Release."

What does it actually mean to “relax?”

Not just to band-aid the problem, but to let go?

We know that when we move beyond tension, when we let go *into* relaxation, we recover faster, learn better, remember and connect more.

But what if we can't do it? What happens if we try, but fail?

To relax fully takes time, it takes practice.

To begin, the tension itself is a part of us. A part of who we "are." It will not allow us to let go initially.

So, like any skill, falling in love with the *practicing* of the skill itself is the main thing.

This allows us to progress, to play the long game. We don't worry about the first few attempts, regardless of how terrible they might be!

So, if you try one form of relaxation and it didn't work, no problems, the question is, was it enjoyable enough for you to try it again? To keep practicing? If so, it will come, in time. Create the habit, chip away. Play the long game. If not, try something else - there are a number of ways to elicit the relaxation response and no "one right way."

For some, to sit still in meditation is torture. They need to move.
For others, sound or listening meditation might be the answer.
Others might start with some partner work or even a massage.
Enjoying the journey, or the process is (once again) the name of the game.

How Does This Subconscious Tension Come About?

Of course there are many factors in play, and we already mentioned the mind playing a role in "planning," "preparing" or focusing on possible repercussions of past actions.

But also an interesting area seems to be the "perception and assessment of our environment," this is known as neuroception.

If we perceive our environment to be healthful, abundant and a place where we can learn and grow, then we seem to do better emotionally and hold less tension.

If we perceive our environment to be scarce, difficult or threatening, then we tend to hold more emotional stress and can create patterns or "ways of living" that create greater tension.

More on Neuroception

The process of perception and and evaluation together, or how neural circuits distinguish whether situations or people are safe, dangerous or life threatening.

Stephen Porges coined the term “Neuroception,” he states that this process explains why a baby coos at a caregiver but cries at a stranger. Neuroception was (and is) an essential tool for us to decide whether to engage, or flee from a situation.

In a way, it is part of our risk management software that runs so quickly and is governed subconsciously by our reptilian brain.

Here's the thing though. While once upon a time risks that were more life threatening were fairly common, we are now confronted with a more constant, low-level stimulation and perceived social risks.

When we perceive a situation to be dangerous through neuroception, we can see a rise in our heart rate and other stress markers.

Today, we can have this same physiological fear or stress response, even in a far more tepid situation (i.e. everyday social situations for some people)
Porges states that faulty neuroception might lie at the root of several psychiatric disorders, including autism, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, depression, and Reactive Attachment Disorder.

Could it also be at the root of more subtle fears or tensions? Joining the gym?
Starting your business? The need for people to constantly check social media?
Those tight upper traps and neck muscles?

Once we understand that our instantaneous process of perception and evaluation is going to be flawed at times, we can choose to notice and feel these thoughts, fears, sensations, and implement tools to try to move beyond them.

Tension Changes How we Interact

Physical and emotional tension and stress can play a big role in our social interactions. Deeper social connections are typically made in a more relaxed, parasympathetic state. Creating conditions for this to happen then, is a direct route to deepening your everyday connections with the people that you live and work with.

Creating Connection

When the body is physically or emotionally tense, often, we find we aren't completely present.

We are somewhere else.

Or, when we aren't fully present, the body is often physically or emotionally tense.

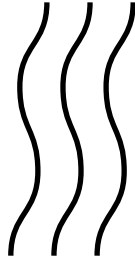
Either way. Tension is often an imprint of "what has been," or "what we feel might be to come."

To "down-regulate" means to come to the centre. To quieten the reptilian brain.

Yes we see a drop in stress markers and an increase in activity of the parasympathetic nervous system (warming, improved digestion, relaxation), but a key thing now is we have the tools to become present. This reduced activity of the reptilian brain also supports positivity and happiness.

In the more relaxed state, we are not just more adaptable (and according to the science, "smarter!"), but, we are more ready and able to connect and relate.

What practices do you have for conscious relaxation?



4



Natural Spine Curvature



NATURAL SPINAL CURVATURE & STRONG SKELETAL STRUCTURE

Posture is performance. The warrior recognises changes in posture as an adaptive process to changes in habit and environment.

“Your posture affects your breathing, which affects the way you exercise, which affects your posture... Put together, breathing, posture and exercise form a supportive trifecta that boosts your optimum health.” - Paul Chek.

The Warrior See Posture as a Reflection of Habit and Environment

Not only does she “balance” her physical training to support a natural spinal curvature and mobile spine, but she also amends shortfalls in her work and sitting habits.

Strong Skeletal Structure

The physical activity that the warrior engages in helps to create strong, healthy bones and the nature of the training promotes sound posture.

While “chronic” endurance exercise can exacerbate poor posture (long periods of fixed positions or limited ranges), osteoporosis or bone loss, resistance training, a diverse movement practice and smart strength work can be a great way to *increase* bone density and improve posture.

For this reason, the warrior rarely engages in “chronic cardio,” or long endurance exercise as a way of “training.” Rather, they choose to use training methods that increase metabolism and strength and help support the skeletal structure.

Often, this can mean additional movement work or “accessory” work that is separate from regular “training” as a way to help strengthen or mobilise the “weak links” in the physical chain.

Looking at training from a “movement,” or “movement pattern” perspective can be a great way to avoid training traps that can negatively impact posture. If we focus on diverse movement and movement complexity, we find that we can create a strong and balanced skeletal structure.

Power Postures

In a similar way that our perception of our environment can cause physiological changes, our personal physical posture can as well! How we sit, stand and walk can have an impact on our hormonal system and influence both testosterone and cortisol.

This can change how we feel, perform and other factors such as immunity.

An important study by Amy Cuddy, et al, from Harvard University shows clear evidence that posture influences our hormones, specifically testosterone and cortisol.

If it affects these two hormones, because of how and where they are produced, they could also affect, estrogen, progesterone, adrenaline and noradrenaline levels.

Cuddy states, the “results of this study confirmed our prediction that posing in high-power nonverbal displays or “postures” (as opposed to low-power nonverbal displays) would cause neuroendocrine and behavioral changes for both male and female participants

“High-power posers experienced elevations in testosterone, decreases in cortisol, and increased feelings of power and tolerance for risk; low-power posers exhibited the opposite pattern.”

Acute Changes

The results from this experiment and others like it (there have been more than 50 now) show that we can *acutely* change our posture to have a desirable impact. One way we can do this is adopt what's called a “power posture.”

A power posture is fun! It definitely feels “powerful” and it includes the following

- The body is tall, upright
- Hands can be on hips, or somewhere to encourage an “open” posture and “open” chest.
- Upright spine
- Not slouched over
- Overall, the posture is taking up “space”

The adoption of a power posture can be helpful as part of your *morning routine*, or before a big event or meeting, to create an acute shift in the physiology and feel more powerful, at ease and prepared.

Not sure? Pause for a moment, stand up tall, put your hands on your hips and take up some space! See how you feel after 2 minutes.

Long Term Changes

While acutely we can shift posture fairly easily (within the realms of our physical ranges and control), “long term postural changes” on the other hand are completely different.

While many people complain of “bad posture,” we need to remember that the posture itself is an adaptation, or a *reflection* of how we are living our life: our habits and patterns.

The warrior then doesn’t look at posture in just a compartmentalised fashion.

The “Posture” isn’t “bad.”

To optimise posture then means to increase awareness and *choose* to create lasting change in work habits, ways of sitting (standing) or ways of working and moving.

To ignore these habits and patterns, to get a massage for relief and purely focus on movement or rehabilitative exercise for a couple hours per week, is at best, to keep pushing the stone uphill.

As we adjust our *habits* and ways of living (namely, reduce sitting), we often see improvements in our ability to breathe correctly, less physical tension and generally see faster results from our strength and mobility work.

Posture and Breathing - The Trunk

“How” we are breathing has a big impact on both our physiology and even mental-emotional states. For many, when we work towards *natural* breathing, feelings of fear, anxiety and panic can disappear.

Dr. Buteyko has done a lot of leading work in this area.

Dr. Raymond Peat also discusses the importance of carbon dioxide (a by-product of cellular metabolism) as a “calmative.” Carbon dioxide is heavily regulated by our breathing.

When we sit, slouch, fold forward, in many cases we compromise the natural curvature of the spine. The result is a structural “shift” in our trunk and compromised function in the diaphragm.

This is easily seen:

If you notice a work colleague or family member slouched over a screen for a while, you’ll see a forward head posture, shortened breath rate and often overactive or “tight” upper-respiratory muscles around the neck, shoulders and traps.

So “posture” becomes a key element in our breathing!

When we are upright, relaxed, we can *allow* the natural “softening and opening” of the lower 2/3rds of the trunk.

A relaxed breath pattern.

The action item for the love warrior traveller then, is to adjust any seated positions to maintain a neutral spine to allow a natural breath pattern.

*Does your work position compromise your posture?
Does your work position compromise your breathing?*

Posture and Ergonomics considerations - The 52/17 principle.

Can we use productivity tools to also address postural imbalances?

A study in 2014 by the Draugiem Group, a social networking company used the time-tracking productivity app DeskTime in an experiment to see what habits set their most productive employees apart.

They found that the 10% of employees with the highest productivity didn't even work full eight-hour days.

What they did do was take regular breaks.

Specifically, they took 17-minute breaks for every 52 minutes of work.

How does this impact posture and broader health?

We can use the "work" interval as a period to complete uninterrupted, high quality work.

From a health perspective, if our work environment or position is sub-optimal, how we "rest" or how we "break" is key.

In our breaks, we can introduce natural light exposure, movement and even breath work to help balance our physiology and maintain health.

Typically, although this type of work scheduling is *very* productive, it can take some getting used to.

I often encourage a 1-2 week "easing in" period to adjust to the increased demand of attention over the work intervals.

Expanding Horizons

This is a technique I created that includes shifting the focal point of the eyes and a "repositioning" of our body in space and the environment.

In simple terms, it is broadening our perception to remind ourselves that we are human, that we live in this vast universe, not in a screen.

A remembering: you are a love warrior traveller, not a cog in a wheel!

This reminder is helpful not just for posture, but for breathing, focus, eyesight and general wellbeing.

There are four steps. Do these in your work breaks to help create balance.

1. Stand up, increase depth of field of the eyes. Spend 5 minutes or more "looking" beyond. At a minimum, look out the window. If you can see the clouds, or the horizon, even better. Allow the eyes to focus on a distant point and relax.

2. Roll the eyes - relax the eyelids and roll the eyes inside the eyelids both counterclockwise and clockwise, left to right, up and down
3. Expand the horizons of *movement* - move the spine. Spinal waves, hip circles, controlled articulations are all helpful
4. Avoid phones, screens and sitting, all of which are a “compressing” of horizons.

Complete “Expanding Horizons” work during the 17 minute rest period in the timed work blocks, after work, or wherever you feel necessary.

The Warrior’s Abode

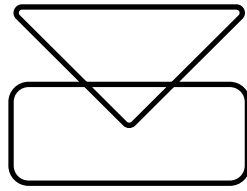
The warrior’s abode does not look like most people’s “homes.”

There is often minimal furniture, no televisions and an emphasis on open spaces.

As you adjust from some of the modern comforts (that can really slow you down), it can take time.

Here is a partial list of some of the differences you may notice when you visit a warrior’s abode:

1. Minimal furniture for sitting. There’s a low couch, but it is maybe deep enough to sit cross-legged on. Chairs, lounge chairs, foot rests are minimal. The floor is set up for sitting - meditation cushions, open floor spaces.
2. The bed is low and the mattress is firm and of a natural material. When we sleep on a soft mattress, the physical body can hold and maintain “tension” more easily. A firm or hard mattress can take some getting used to, but encourages the body to soften and “release” over night. It also encourages natural movement during sleep.
3. There is usually no TV. In particular there is no TV in any bedroom. There may be a screen or ability to watch intentional, or on-demand shows or entertainment, but the warrior typically chooses not to engage with daily, free-to-air TV or advertisements.
4. There are plants.
5. There is a designated spot for phones - usually some sort of bowl or container in an out-of-the-way location. This keeps phones out of the bedroom.
6. At night, the place goes dark. Wifi, all lighting, screens and other transmitters are turned off at night to allow for a restful sleep.



5



Efficient Digestion and Elimination



EFFICIENT DIGESTION AND ELIMINATION

The body functions as a whole. Efficient digestion indicates balance in the autonomic nervous system. Poor digestion and elimination is often indicative of a stressed state.

Health as a Whole

The ability to generate energy, cultivate vitality and become a *power source* for creating greater happiness and impact in the world is important and wide-ranging.

The warrior then chooses the right foods for this. They also do their research on medications and supplementation and their water quality is also paramount to them.

They understand that as digestion is disrupted, other aspects of health can also be compromised, and vice versa.

The Beginning of Digestion

Technically, it could be said that the digestive process starts in the brain.

We have talked about neuroception in this book and have noted the importance that our subconscious “perception” and evaluation of our environment can play on our overall well-being. If the environment is stressful, then digestively speaking, we are off to a poor start.

The next stage is the mouth. This is where we find saliva, and chewing (“mastication”) which helps kick off the process.

Food should be chewed fully.

The production of saliva, which helps assist this early part of digestion is again tied to the state of the nervous system. Production of saliva is a parasympathetic (“rest and digest”) dominant process.

A dry mouth will indicate that you may be dehydrated, or the body is stressed - digestion is likely to be impacted.

So it follows that even from these early beginnings, we can often notice if there is an overall energetic or stress imbalance in the body as a whole is when the digestive cycle becomes compromised.

Irregular bowel movements, fluctuation between constipation and diarrhea, or infrequent movements are often an indicator of stress.

“There’s a direct relationship between the health of your digestive system and your overall look, feel and physical performance” - Paul Chek.

“When you start your day by rushing to prepare for work or school, the digestive system shuts down. This often results in constipation. If you’re too busy to stop work for a good meal at midday, stress levels further escalate.” - Paul Chek

“Digestion is quickly shut down during stress...The parasympathetic nervous system, perfect for all that calm, vegetative physiology, normally mediates the actions of digestion. Along comes stress: turn off parasympathetic, turn on the sympathetic, and forget about digestion.” -Robert Sapolsky

“Just mental stress for example, will shift the blood away from your digestive system, out to your legs and arms - the fight or flight reaction... If that persists, or is very intense, the intestine loses it’s barrier function and bacteria can go right through the membrane..” “A much lower degrees of stress even will let endotoxins in... just thinking stressful thoughts will tend to increase your endotoxin absorption.” - Dr. Ray Peat, PhD

“Poorly digested starches, caused behavioural changes in animals. Makes them anxious and aggressive to have stuffermenting in their intestine.” - Dr. Ray Peat, PhD

“Research shows that there’s more neurons controlling digestion and elimination through the abdominal brain (solar plexus) than there is in the brain and spinal cord, combined.” - Paul Chek

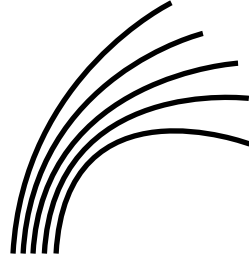
Steps to Help with Digestion

When we approach digestion from an energy or “stress” perspective, we can find that there are several starting points available to us. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- *Improve food quality* (and often frequency). The food supply chain can be filled with stressed, or even toxic foods - many of which can irritate the digestive system directly, or create stress. Improving food quality can help support healthy digestion and food frequency can help many people manage energy and blood sugar levels which can help with stress.
- *Understanding which foods support healthy digestion* and which do not. Many foods contain natural enzymes or agents which may not support healthy digestion. Occasionally, an individual might have an increased susceptibility to something in their diet. A food that doesn’t “work” for them. Journalling, or food logging can be an effective way to increase awareness of which foods may be causing problems.
- *Stop to eat* - creating an abundant environment for your meals can help to promote digestion. This means not eating at a computer, TV screen or while working.

- *Chewing more thoroughly.* This is two-fold. Firstly, the warrior becomes more present during their meal because there is more *attention* on the process of chewing, and secondly it helps to break the food down more to support digestion
- *Reducing stress* - implementing a nourishing movement program, incorporating meditation (inner silence) and breathing work can all help to improve digestion
- *Becoming aware of other stressors* - international travel, late night TV, environmental stress, traffic, excess working and excess screens or social media can all exacerbate digestive issues.

*Look closely at the environment that you are in when you have each of your meals.
Is the environment relaxed and allowing for effective digestion of your meal and greater health?*



6



Normal Breathing



NORMAL BREATHING

“Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor.” - Thích Nhất Hạnh

“It is great for your health if you can sit quietly from as little as 5 minutes to 30 minutes or more each day and do some simple breathing exercises” - Simon Borg Olivier

The Breath is Our Connection to the Broader Universe

It is the ultimate “bridge” between the conscious mind and the subconscious. As we create awareness of the breath and restore a *natural* breathing pattern, we find the breathing slows and quietens down, as our mind relaxes.

In the world of exercise and training (and even in modern yoga,) there is confusion around breathing

In a lot of cases, there is an emphasis on greater “output” as the main priority and often times fast breathing, heavy breathing or “deep” breathing.

However, when a person is at a high level of fitness and in great physical shape, they actually breathe less than what is now “normal,” relative to the amount of activity they are engaged in.

What are we talking about here?

Breath Basics

As we exhale, we are “getting rid” of carbon dioxide, a by-product of cellular respiration, or cellular energy generation.

In many circles, carbon dioxide (CO₂) is thought to be simply a waste product of this metabolic activity.

However, it turns out that carbon dioxide is an incredibly important compound and if we breathe incorrectly (“over breathe”), then we can create an imbalance (shortage) of CO₂, a change in pH and lead to a number of health issues.

So, we have the potential to increase both acute CO₂ levels in the blood, as well as longer term CO₂ threshold levels through basic breathing exercises.

Usually, the slowing of the breath happens naturally through other methods of down-regulation such as high quality sleep or meditation (which also brings about an increase in metabolism and body temperature), but specific breath exercises can also be a simple, direct method.

However, as we consider specific breathing work practices as an *ally*, which may be for 5 to 30 minutes or more, it also makes sense to develop an awareness of how we are *actually* breathing in the remaining 23 hours of the day (and night!).

How are we actually breathing now?

Learning to use the breath as a tool, or a lever to greater awareness of our state and our health is a key part of the *Access Potential Program*.

*Notice your breath throughout the day. Choose three different situations.
What is the nature of the breath in each of these?*

Where do you feel the breath?

Do you breathe through the nose or the mouth?

Do your shoulders rise and fall through standard, passive breathing?

Do you often cough or yawn?

Are your sinuses often blocked?

The first step is awareness. Then we can develop a practice!

“Carbon dioxide has the important role in your body of being able to signal the red blood cells to give the oxygen they carry to your body cells. If there is not enough carbon dioxide in your body then red blood cells tend to retain their oxygen and not release it into your cells. This is called the Bohr-effect” - Simon Borg Olivier

Physical Superpowers and “Levitation”

The warrior is on a path of growth and discovery.

The physical feats that a well practiced warrior are capable of are nothing short of extraordinary.

This is, of course, an attractive aspect of the warrior journey - the ability to lift, jump, run and flip.

To levitate!

So, how do we develop these higher level tools, and how does it relate to breathing?

Levitation

We are bombarded with images of people levitating.

Amazing achievements: marathon running, big wave surfing, handstands, starting businesses, trekking for hundreds of miles.

So we too set off on the journey. We buy a surfboard, we enter the race.

The human body and mind is capable of supernatural feats. Of rising above gravity. Levitating!

However, to levitate easily, we see that the first step is to become grounded.

To levitate vertically, first we must be on the ground.

We need to be grounded, we need to reach the *natural state*.

For a lot of us, we spend most of our time indoors, at work, at a desk, or under artificial lighting, even our breathing has become compromised.

Maybe this environment is part of our job, or a requirement (for now).

However, this is often an *unnatural state*, so we may need to do a little extra work.

If we try to levitate from here straight away, we have no foundation. Our rhythms and sleep may be out of sync, or breathing is often off: we might be a little stressed.

If our breathing is out of balance, our oxygen delivery to the tissue and even brain can be compromised, our ability to perform is limited from the beginning!

If we push the boundaries from this position, we risk early burnout, or simply falling short of our goal.

So, we cover some basics to make sure we are grounded.

Of course, this can be in the context of the *same* job/house/environment (sometimes, but not always), but may just be some habit shifts to serve our physiology.

From this “grounded” state, we can begin the journey to levitate.

The fastest way to the supernatural feats is via the natural.

The fastest and only way to levitate is to ground ourselves first.

Cultivating a natural environment and natural breathing that allows us to *thrive* not survive is the first step.

“Awareness” of Breath

Like anything, we can look at the breath in a lot of different contexts.

From a physiological perspective, in our training, in our sleep, in meditation, from a developmental perspective, a mental/emotional perspective.

It could be never ending (in fact, it actually *is* never ending, until the end!)

Where do we start?

We start with now.

Simply with awareness. With watching.

For me, breath attention began when I was either swimming in the ocean, surfing, or learning to spearfish. These all happened before I was 12. Take a breath. Notice the urgency to have to take another breath, but not be able to.

Stay calm.

So for me, this came through breath "holds" in the free-diving, or what's called "apnea."

Now, the cool thing is, we don't need to go spearfishing or free-diving to bring awareness to the breath if we don't want to.

We can start at any time.

We can simply watch and be an observer. We can let go of any concepts that we may have heard: "holds," "deep breathing" or "shallow breathing."

We can forget everything.

Let's simply start by sitting quietly, with the eyes closed, however is comfortable, with a timer set for 5 or 10 minutes and simply watch the breath.

Watch as an intrigued observer. What are you noticing? What are you feeling?

Don't study as the intellectual student, watch as the child watches the clouds go past overhead.

Over time, we start to see patterns. How we are breathing and how we "feel."

We see (and feel) links between the breath and our "state."

The awareness of the nature of the breath starts to give us hints of our state as a whole, both within practices and in daily life. As we become more aware of our state as a whole, our general awareness can also increase.

And so the cycle repeats.

So, while there may be many books, guidelines or tips on certain ways to breathe, we want to avoid creating conflict in the mind (and thus negatively impact your breathing!).

Often, simply becoming the observer and seeing what the breath itself can teach you is the greatest place to start.

The Warrior can develop “A Connection with the Breath” to Create a Tool

A place to return to.

The breath is one of the master keys of our physiology.

How we breathe can influence how we feel, and how we feel can definitely change how we breathe!

As awareness grows, the breath then becomes a tool that we can use at all times of the day.

When the breath is subtle, calm and relaxed, we have awareness that we are living in alignment, in peace.

When the breath is tense, fast, or high, we can look deeper. Are we in some way living in conflict with our natural, relaxed state?

"If the breathing is at all unsettled, life is not your own."

- "Heaven and Earth," c. Ming dynasty work Anthology on the Cultivation of Realization

Specific Breathing Exercises

If the breath can influence how we feel, then the idea of incorporating specific breathing exercises makes sense.

There are two main types of breathing exercises.

Breath control exercises are often known as *pranayama* in yoga.

One type of breathing exercise includes breathing *more* than normal, known as “hyperventilation.” This can be used to allow the body to gain more strength endurance in the short term (by “dumping” carbon dioxide prior or during the exercise.)

The other type of breathing exercise includes breathing *less* than normal, or “hypoventilation.” This type of breath work is slower but can be used to cultivate more energy and life force for the warrior.

However, we must remember that in comparison to any time we spend in these exercises, there is still a large percentage of the day where we are reliant on our normal breathing patterns. Therefore, it is helpful if the main focus of the breathing exercises allows us to regain “natural” breathing.

This means that for many of us, the specific breathing work we do will be breathing “less” than normal, focusing on “allowing” the breath and relaxation of the body and mind. In time, this can help regain natural breathing patterns in general.

Interestingly, we can influence the breathing in two different ways here - through changing the breathing, or through observing, or “watching” the breath, which also can change the breathing. It turns out that to “allow” natural breathing means that we need not consciously “change” or influence the breathing

We can simply start by “watching” and we notice that this in itself can invite a shift towards a relaxed breath pattern.

There is a little more about this in the following sections.

The Effect of Watching the Breath

In Physics, the Observer effect is the theory that by simply *observing* a situation, we change the situation itself.

When we talk about breathwork, we have two options - we can be “active” in the practice - we can *change* the breathing, or,

We can be “passive” in the practice - we can simply *observe* the breathing.

There are benefits available with “slow breathing” practices.

So, this can be done “actively” - with specific breathing “exercises,” or, when we are simply observing the breath naturally, over time, the breath also slows.

The observer effect kicks in.

As we “watch” the breathing, the breathing itself changes.

Simply “watching” is a beautiful practice. It can teach us patience, “allowing” and acceptance. It can also teach us an infinite amount about our own breath. It is a great place to start* and yet is also a powerful practice for life.

*to start, try 5 minutes per day, in one session, or broken up, simply sitting with an upright posture.

What about Hyperventilation?

There are a number of hyperventilation "breathwork" practices.

Some of these involve breathing fast for a period, then often a period of breath holding, then repeating this process, or alternatively “deep” breathing with a large volume (“stroke volume”) of air.

What do we know about fast exhalation? It is our main way to "get rid of" carbon dioxide.

This means it can sometimes be used to “dump” CO₂, which can influence our strength endurance or training.

But there are other things to consider:

In 1986, Djarova et al studied trained subjects with either hyperventilation, or hyperventilation (~47 breaths per minute) followed by breath holds.

"A significant hormonal response after the applied experimental procedures was found for HGH (1.5- to 5.56-fold increase) and cortisol (1.5- to 2.2-fold increase). It was concluded that the increased hormonal response of HGH and cortisol is an expression of the stress reaction induced by hyperventilation and breath-holding per se or in combination."¹⁰

Generally, we see an increase in ventilatory rates with a decrease in carbon dioxide levels.

According to Dr. Ray Peat, PhD and others, carbon dioxide itself is not the "waste product" many believe it to be.

It causes vasodilation and is a calmtive - helping to keep us warm and relaxed.

It also helps deliver oxygen to the tissue via the Bohr effect.

So, although we can experience a "shift" in experience with hyperventilation, and sometimes feel some short term "energy" it is potentially due to a short term increase in cortisol, a mobilising hormone, which can often have us feeling "alert" or energised.

Depending on the pre-existing physiological load of people in the group (often too high already), my personal view is that hyperventilation can often be of little use.

Breathing in exercise

In training or exercise, usually the best option is to focus on maintaining natural breathing.

Occasionally a group will pop up that encourages especially loud breathing, over breathing or under breathing during exercise.

Typically though, unless there is a specific reason for this (i.e. a big wave surfer), we are best served by focusing on the most complex part of the situation, which is the exercise or movement itself.

How do we maintain natural breathing?

Well the warrior can choose to *regulate* the training to maintain "natural" breathing.

As the training or exercise load increases, so will the amount of carbon dioxide in the blood. This means that the breath rate will also tend to increase.

Maintaining natural breathing then is to "pace" the exercise in a way such that we can breathe as close to normal as possible.

The breathing rate of course will still increase above a resting state, but we can work to keep it somewhat relaxed and mostly nasal breathing.

This takes practice, patience and composure! Often we need to let go of the ego and slow down a little bit in order to learn how to do this.

Of course this isn't the case in *all* training sessions, it is a helpful tool to use most of the time.

Because consistency beats intensity, the warrior trains in a controlled manner, with attention on the breathing.

Most of the time it is nasal breathing, most of the time it is controlled.

Breath in Movement - Two Ways to Go

When we exercise and consider the breath, there are two ways to go:

1) Change the way you breathe to suit the task. So if the effort escalates, so does the breath. This would be seen in a hard run or a workout that is "For time." For example a 10km running race, or a workout such as:

"Run from A to B, then do 20 box jumps."

So, we breathe however we have to, in order to get the task done, often quickly.

Or, another option:

2) Change the pacing and/or exercise to suit a certain way of breathing.

We regulate pace, recovery time, effort or otherwise in order to maintain, or return to, a particular nature in the breath.

This is largely a foreign concept in the exercise and training world.

Is one right or wrong?

Of course, it depends on our context. If the task is speed, the second approach will have us going far too slow.

If the task is regulation of physiological load (or "stress") or to maintain CO₂ levels in the body, then the second approach works far better.

Considering different approaches to how we prescribe (and follow) exercise tasks can add a huge amount of value and for many people help create a long game practice with their movement.

Breathing Work Post Exercise

Training, or exercise, is an acute stressor. Our body is placed under a stimulus, or load, and we look for adaptation. Assisting the process of recovery or adaptation through recovery techniques such as using the breath for down-regulation is powerful.

In a study of post exercise recovery techniques (Bera et al., 1998), it was found that lying in a supine position with a specific conscious relaxation process (Savasana) was considerably more effective than just lying in a supine posture or sitting in a chair.¹¹

It was found that on average, with the supine position *and* conscious relaxation techniques, recovery from the stress of a treadmill test could be achieved in just 10 minutes or so, while a seated position in a chair took over 30 minutes.

For these reasons, the warrior recognises that after engaging in movement or training exercises, it makes sense to include a lying relaxation technique for 10 minutes.

The attention to breath work, post workout nutrition or other down-regulatory practices is similar to tidying up at work or cleaning up after a job.

It may not seem so necessary, but if you ignore it, then eventually it comes back around.

“If you don’t have time to clean up, you don’t have time to cook.” - Seth Godin

Action Item - Breath awareness and hypoventilation practice

Here is a simple breath practice to incorporate after work, after training or in the evening. If possible, repeat this task each day.

This type of breathing work with an emphasis on each *part* of the breath was inspired by the work of Simon Borg-Olivier (Yoga Synergy) who I had the fortune to meet in Melbourne at a movement and breathing workshop.

[Simon’s work has been referenced multiple times in this resource. I highly recommend looking deeper into it for those who may be interested.]

The breath comprises of four sections, the inhalation, natural hold on inhalation, the exhalation, the natural hold on exhalation.

With basic breath attention, we often start with becoming “aware” of the breath.

This means “witnessing” the breathing. Perhaps the feel, the sound, the changing shape of the body or otherwise.

This can be meditative, down-regulatory and bring us back to the present moment.

Another tool that is helpful is to “break it up” and emphasise each part of the breath consciously.

As we increase awareness of each *part* of the breathing, we develop more awareness and control of the breath overall.

For example, here is a basic 10 minute practice:

2 minute *inhalation emphasis* - slowing the inhalation, noticing the inhalation, *emphasising* the inhalation. The rest of the breathing is natural.

2 minutes *hold emphasis* - emphasising or extending the hold on inhalation (“antara kumbhaka”). The rest of the breathing cycle is natural.

2 minutes *exhalation emphasis* - emphasising or slowing and noticing the exhalation. The rest of the breathing cycle is natural.

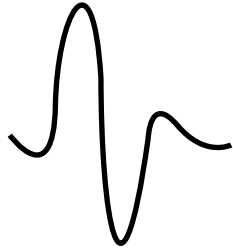
2 minutes *hold emphasis* - emphasising or extending the hold on exhalation (“bahya kumbhaka”). The rest of the breathing cycle is natural.

2 minutes natural breathing.

These types of practices are great to explore if you are looking to develop more breath awareness, they are calming and they are “adaptive.”

This means they can suit any individual, as the “emphasis” can simply be extended (even up to 1-2 minutes per breath in some cases) or shortened to wherever is comfortable.

It also offers a little bit of “change” which can be helpful to keep attention for some and we can also extend any part of the practice to a longer period, or create 4 separate longer practices out of each stage.



7



Excellent Sleep Patterns



EXCELLENT SLEEP PATTERNS

A full sleep from the time you go to bed until you wake up in the morning is a sign of health.

*“Sleep is the greatest legal performance enhancing drug that most people are probably neglecting”
- Dr. Matthew Walker, Sleep Expert.*

The Warrior Prioritises the “Rest and Digest” Cycle Each Day

A key part of this is sleep.

Disturbed rest can be associated with aging, obesity, menopause, depression, and other health problems. If sleep quality is poor, the basis for the issue can be an energy problem.

If energy production is low, the nervous system can become sympathetic dominant. This state of scarcity can easily result in poor sleep patterns.

There are many signs of poor quality sleep.

- Waking up groggy or unrested
- Evening urination
- Night sweats
- Trouble going to sleep
- Trouble getting back to sleep if awoken
- Waking up during the night
- Waking up with a racing or rapid heart beat
- Waking with inflammation, swelling, or coldness
- Snoring
- Sleep apnea
- Dry mouth or signs of mouth breathing
- Nightmares
- Waking up with no appetite

Often, using a journal or a log can be a great way to establish the nature of sleep patterns.

We all know the benefits of high quality sleep:

Among others, there are:

1. Hormonal balance
2. Stress reduction
3. Mental rejuvenation and memory processes
4. Physical rejuvenation

We also know that a poor sleep means we are:

1. Subjected to the stressors of darkness while in a wakeful state
2. Miss out on the rejuvenation, physical and mental health benefits of a good sleep
3. Aren't seeing optimal recovery from training

In this chapter then, we focus on the strategies to *improve* sleep, rather than clarifying the need for *better* sleep, as this is already fairly clear and well known.

1. Eat enough food, in particular carbohydrate and salt, including something before bed

High quality sleep (unbroken, waking up refreshed) requires enough *energy production*. This *energy* is necessary for the body to remain relaxed fully in a parasympathetic state and remain in deep sleep. Therefore, for sleep quality, we need to do more than just look at habits before bed, we also need to look at general energy production.

If your sleep patterns are broken, it is often helpful to start tracking your food for a while. This is particularly true for busy people, who often end up under-shooting their caloric (and carbohydrate) needs as they get “caught up” with work.

Having a snack right before bed that includes carbohydrate (sugar) and also salt can be helpful to replenish glycogen stores.

Both sodium and sugar are helpful to down-regulate stress and raise the body temperature and metabolism. Ripe fruits, fresh orange juice, or milk are good sources of sugar before bed.

Include a small amount of protein also (for example collagen, or dairy)

These carbohydrate choices also contain anti-stress minerals (magnesium, potassium, and calcium) that benefit energy production and sleep quality.

So for example, fresh juice with some salt and gelatin added is a good combo, and to make it more potent coconut oil eaten off a spoon can help produce energy efficiently and balance the bloods sugar.

“Blood sugar falls at night, and the body relies on the glucose stored in the liver as glycogen for energy, and hypothyroid people store very little sugar. As a result, adrenaline and cortisol begin to rise almost as soon as a person goes to bed, and in hypothyroid people, they rise very high, with the adrenalin usually peaking around 1 or 2 A.M., and the cortisol peaking around dawn; the high cortisol raises blood sugar as morning approaches, and allows adrenalin to decline. Some people wake up during the adrenalin peak with a pounding heart, and have trouble getting back to sleep unless they eat something.” - Dr. Ray Peat

2. Get enough outdoor light exposure - in particular in the morning

Light is very metabolic and is a key part of energy production.

Darkness on the other hand is anti-metabolic and is perceived as stressful.

This is particularly evident in dark, winter months in some areas, when natural light is scarce during the day.

As soon as the sun goes down, metabolism drops and stress rises.

Light also plays an important role in our internal, biological “clock.” This makes our morning light exposure very important, as it can impact our “clock” which, if disrupted, then can throw us off when we try to go to sleep!

Try to get 30 minutes of outdoor light exposure first thing in the morning, ideally between sunrise and 8:30am.

Getting sun indirectly into the eyes and directly onto the bare skin is helpful.

3. Refrain from late night screen and TV usage, in particular after 8pm

“One hour of Iphone use will delay the onset of melatonin production by about 3 hours. Your peak melatonin levels will also be 50% less” - Dr. Matthew Walker, Sleep expert.

The endless Netflix series, the thriller movies on demand, late night comedy. These can all be entertaining, but they also all up-regulate the nervous system through both content and also through late night blue light exposure.

When we are working towards maximising our sleep, it’s important to wind down.

A big part of this is choosing to reduce stimulation and blue light exposure in the evenings (after dark)

4. Don’t exercise late in the day

Exercise is stressful on the nervous system.

If you are having trouble sleeping, it can often be helpful to change the time that you are training. If sleep is poor, it is ideal to work out before 3 or 4 pm, or choose an easy walk instead. If you are training in the evening, be sure to include some down-regulating breathing exercises and work hard to relax the nervous system through food and adjusting your environment in line with this guide.

Late night, indoor training sessions with machines, or under bright lights and heavy music can ruin sleep patterns.

5. Eat less meat later in the day

“Protein can stimulate the waking signal in the brain,” according to Chris Masterjohn, PhD. “Increasing carbohydrate intake is often considered more important,” says Chris, but if sleep is still compromised it may be helpful to shift the evening meal to a slightly lower amount of protein, or change the protein source to a collagen rich source: Bone broth, gelatin or hydrolysed collagen powder.

6. Implement slow breathing exercises

It is well known that meditation, breathing exercises (slow breathing) and conscious relaxation techniques can help to down-regulate stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, as well as decreasing heart rate, blood pressure and inflammatory markers. In our natural rhythms, from the late afternoon, our stress hormones are at a low. They then rise over the course of the night (darkness). Using breathing exercises before bed can be a helpful tool to calm the nervous system, increase carbon dioxide levels in the body (which is a “calmative”) and help you relax.

Find a quiet, safe place where you will not be disturbed to do your breathing exercises.

7. Sleep in a dark environment

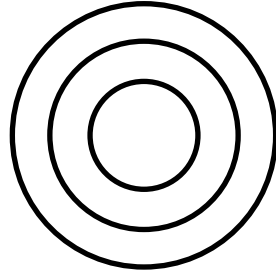
Traditionally we have adapted to being able to sleep with some light - from the stars or the moon. In modern times though, we have a lot of light “pollution” in cities and towns. This is light from street lamps, signs, screens and LEDs. Most of this light includes “blue” light, which up-regulates the nervous system. This means that the light pollution is likely sending a signal to your brain that it’s time to wake up, not go to sleep!

8. Psychologically wind down

Take a walk after dinner, relax, enjoy casual conversation. Leave the TV, phone and tablet off. Allow the mind and body to relax as you wind down and prepare for sleep.

Changes in sleep patterns can take time. Furthermore, because we aren’t “conscious” during the night, it can be difficult to track changes.

Keeping a journal or noting your sleep alongside your food or training log can be a great way to increase awareness of changes in patterns as you make slow adjustments to lifestyle factors.



8

*Relaxed, Focused Mind and
the Ability to Hold Attention*

RELAXED, FOCUSED MIND AND THE ABILITY TO HOLD ATTENTION

What does the mind do in the absence of external demands for thought?

How does this background activity, or “stimulus-independent” activity in the brain impact our performance?

Can this stimulus-independent activity influence our task performance?

The “default mode network” is linked to a particular region of the brain that is active when we are not faced with other tasks that require acute attention. Essentially, when the brain is “resting,” the default mode network is active.

The “default mode network,” (DMN) or “stimulus independent network.”

Mason, et. al, 2007¹² found that mind-wandering constitutes a psychological “baseline” that emerges when the brain is not occupied with a task, and that there was increased activity in the default mode network when the mind was passive.

When a task *was* being tended to, as the complexity of the task *decreased*, the activity of the default mode *increased*.

So, when the mind is otherwise unoccupied, we find the DMN light up and we also find the wandering mind!

The default mode network is also associated with the sense of “self,” the past and future, and other social engagements - so it does have a function!

The baseline activity levels of the DMN can also play a role in our mental health.

Sheline et. al, 2009 found that the DMN stays active in people who are depressed, even when they are concentrating on specific tasks.¹³

So, it turns out - and as many people who have ever gone on a meditation retreat will tell you - a wandering mind is an unhappy mind!

Task Performance

When we look at task performance, maintaining deep and wide attention on the task at hand is a strong attribute that the modern warrior recognises.

The notion of “wandering minds” provides another possible theory of attentional lapses during task performance.

It is very possible *“that generalised deficits in attention and cognitive control may well coincide with an increased incidence of stimulus independent thought or mind wandering and the intrusion of increased activity in the DMN.”¹⁴*

To increase task performance and attention levels, we can choose to practice and engage with tools that help us to cultivate attention over longer time domains while also remaining relaxed.

The love warrior traveller can *choose* to engage in methods to influence the activity of the default mode network.

This is effective both on an acute level (intra session, i.e. with meditation) and on a longer time frame (i.e. with meditation), outside of practice.

This means that as we practice these techniques over the years, we see not only a reduced activity in the DMN during each practice, but a generally *lower* level of DMN activity on a day to day basis.

Influencing the Default Mode Network

If we understand that “we are not our thoughts” and that the mind is in a way a consciousness machine in a way that is ever-changing and adaptable, we can choose to engage in practices that may bring us to mind-states that are more beneficial or helpful either when at rest, or when engaging in a task (task performance).

It turns out that there are a number of ways to influence the Default Mode Network (DMN).

The main three ways include:

1. Meditation (and to a lesser extent, “tasks” requiring attention)
2. Psychedelics
3. Sleep

In this section we focus on more meditative approaches to influencing the DMN, as well as alternative “ways of learning” that may be of use

Training “Attention”

The surrounding modern environment is begging for our attention. The average attention span now is a matter of seconds, not minutes (5 seconds according to some studies..!), as the brain tries to adapt to multi-tasking.

If you are online, you are bombarded with ads, updates, alerts and more.

If you are offline, today, you are usually not far from being *online*.

We also know that when we sit still, our mind tends to wander on it's own accord.

And when we engage in a task, this same wandering mind can creep in frequently enough to ultimately crash our performance.

This makes the journey of staying on task, or maintaining attention a definite conscious effort!

It turns out, that we can influence this ability.

Tools such as meditation have *proven* to help us cultivate *attention* and quieten the busy mind, (reduce activity in the DMN) in both an acute and long term setting.

The modern love warrior traveller recognises that these tools are worth noticing.

Interestingly, as we start to cultivate *attention* with inner silence, meditation or specific tasks, we also see positive impact on health and wellbeing.

The following are just two different ways we can train attention or quieten the “DMN.”

Task Emphasis

This is the intentional creation of a “task” that we can use to focus the mind.

This could be an intentional “time block” in your work, some time with a colouring book or some craft, or playing with your kids.

The main aspect of “task emphasis” work is that it is intentional. There is an effort involved in staying on task - a conscious attempt to eliminate outside distractions.

Task Focus, Hand-Eye Coordination and the Default Mode Network

I know a lot of people who have expressed that the happiest they have ever been was in a previous job when they were young: labouring, construction or building work, gardening.

Then, they went to university and now work in a bank, or drive excel spreadsheets. They want to add value in this new area, but miss the clarity of the mind that the previous work helped cultivate.

When we work with our hands with an *actual* object or project that is tactile (rather than a screen), it is possible that we may be quietening down the default mode network (DMN) - a part of the brain which is associated with the wandering mind, past and future thoughts and our sense of self.

We see this in children (basic play with blocks etc) and also with adults (adult colouring books, gardening, some sports, hobbies)

I feel we also see this in physical activity, physical “practices,” or training.

Personally, I’ve always loved building, landscaping and physical movement.

Now it makes even more sense.

While this is a separate consideration from a formal meditation practice, this can be a great addition to a daily or weekly routine to quieten the mind, create space and clarity and improve wellbeing.

Tasks that I’ve personally explored in the past that have helped hugely include:

1. Writing, drawing, a physical practice, artwork, music
2. Building projects, gardening, sculpture
3. Cleaning/re-organising as a task of mindfulness and attention

So, if you find that the wandering mind is impacting your wellbeing, it could be that implementing a hobby, or more hands-on tasks into your day might be beneficial.

Start with a short-course, or a weekly engagement, then increase this to a daily exposure if it seems to be working.

Perhaps there are other parts of your day that you are able to bring in “task focused” work to increase mindfulness and presence such as at meal times or right when you wake up?

Meditation or Breath Attention (and the DMN)

The default mode network is active during daydreaming, thinking about others, the past, the future and more. Many describe it as the part of the brain that gives us the sense of "self."

The DMN has also been shown to be negatively correlated with other networks in the brain such as *attention networks*.

As we engage in a more complex "task" the activity in the DMN decreases. As the complexity of the activity decreases, the activity in the DMN can *increase*.

There are three main ways that we can influence (down-regulate) the activity of the DMN:

- It has been shown that activity in the DMN decreases with the use of some psychedelics (psilocybin, LSD).
- In long term meditators it has also been shown that activity in the default mode network (DMN) decreases, both during meditation and afterwards.
- Dreaming

This brings us to two thoughts:

1) Perhaps at times, our day-dreaming state (self-referencing, futurising, considering the past) and the activation of our default mode network, can be a key culprit that can rob us of our attention and potentially a perception of a truer reality.

and

2) Yes, meditation can also bring us to lower level of activity in the DMN, potentially a higher level of "awareness" and attention, and therefore a change in the perception of reality?

Meditation and Psychological Changes

Meditation is a popular form of stress management. Many people choose it to down-regulate stress and numerous studies have backed this up.

However, many of the individual studies in this field commonly fail to include an active control group.

Pascoe et. al¹⁵ then did a meta analysis of 45 of these different studies and included randomised controlled trials comparing meditation interventions compared to an active control on physiological markers of stress.

Here's what they found:

- All meditation subtypes (focused attention, open-monitoring and automatic self-transcending) reduced systolic blood pressure.
- Focused attention meditations also reduced cortisol and open monitoring meditations also reduced heart rate.
- When all meditation forms were analysed together, meditation reduced cortisol, C-reactive protein, blood pressure, heart rate, triglycerides and tumour necrosis factor-alpha
- Overall, meditation practice leads to decreased physiological markers of stress in a range of populations.

Focused Attention and Connection (Relationships)

When we engage socially, attention becomes a cornerstone to powerful connections. The wandering mind, or more specifically, “distraction,” then, becomes the anti-force to connection.

There are two major ways we can then influence our ability to connect with one another:

1. External measures
2. Internal measures

“External measures” means we can shape the environment - we can remove distractions (TV, phones, computers, over-working) and create a clearer pathway for a human to human experience.

“Internal measures” means the warrior creates a disruption of their normal flow of behaviour to facilitate more connection. They consciously “shift” to a new state of awareness and perception to facilitate a deeper interaction.

This requires awareness and a commitment. Here we have tools such as:

- Active listening
- Eye contact
- A commitment to engagement
- Attention to body-language and facial expressions
- Listening to *understand* (vs. listening to respond)

While both measures are helpful, we find in time that it is important to address both sides of the coin.

Meditation and Connection

If you choose to truly connect with someone when you meet, you create an entirely different path and future reality.

But, it takes two to tango!

To connect with someone authentically requires an unspoken (or spoken...) agreement from both sides.

An agreement to shelve distractions, work, emails, complaints, gossip.

This is why it's become so rare. Even from a statistical point of view, most people simply are so busy now that the chances of meeting another person at this point, *where both are present*, is decreasing.

Anyway, rather than throw in the towel and give in, we can dramatically increase our chances through bringing connection itself to the engagement.

From this point of view, we choose to *become* the connection.

This means that when we interact with others, they can't help but notice the difference. We commit to becoming a pillar for connection.

This can in turn change the context of the interaction and they can come to the party as well (or, they might run away, but then there wasn't going to be the connection anyway.)

Here are some tactics:

1. **Decide if it is something that you want.** Do you want to take a stand for this, to enrich your relationships? You don't have to.
2. **Choose connection** prior to meeting the person. Become present yourself before interacting with others.
3. **Have a default phone strategy.** This is either: no phone (optimal), or phone on full volume and make no excuses. The situation is: "I apologise, in this case I need to have my phone here with volume on, as I'm expecting an important call." Then you don't need to look at it*.
4. **Practice listening.** There is actually a "listening meditation." It involves giving your *full* attention to what is being said. The message, the intonation, everything. It's a great exercise and inhibits a typical "listening to respond" pattern
5. **Celebrate.** I love a quality connection. If you feel that you really had a great time with the person, tell them!

So, if *you* choose to foster the connection, then no matter what happens and where they are coming from, your odds of success increase.

When you make this choice to connect, you build an entirely different path together.

*A silent, buzzing, alerting, vibrating phone that people pretend they aren't paying attention to, but really can't be ignored is the worst.

Other Ways of Training Attention - How do we engage in learning itself?

In a day where many people "learn" passively, through podcasts, audiobooks or videos, it is possible that engaging in new tasks that demand wide, keen attention in *order to learn* can be a great way to develop the ability to hold attention itself.

There are many ways of learning, we can look at two here. The first way, alongside most western school models (not all), is *Assembly line learning* - the lesson itself has a teacher and a set location that is separate from the community. There is a set topic, set exercise and a fixed sequence.

However, another way that the warrior can use is *Learning through Observation and Pitching In* (LOPI). This is an integrative model that is used in many Indigenous cultures and creates deep and wide attention.

Traditionally, Learning by Observation and Pitching In (LOPI) is common in many Indigenous cultures in North and Central America. This type of learning is likely to involve much wider and keener levels of *attention* from the students.

The main characteristics are:

1. The end goal for everyone, including the student, is to contribute to the group, not extrinsic reward from a teacher. The student also moves towards *mastery*.
2. There is less talk, more observation and more doing or creating. The participants observe the activity from the beginning, then where they can and where it is helpful, they start to “pitch in.”
3. There is flexible leadership. The participants in the group who are at a higher level of mastery may lead the activity, but there is flexibility for others to pitch in and lead.
4. The participant is *learning to collaborate with participation and consideration*, as well as learning the skills or attributes involved.
5. Learning involves **wide, keen attention**, in anticipation of being able to contribute to the group.
6. Communication is based on a shared reference - there is a lot of non-verbal communication and any verbal communication can be based around the task at hand, or can include stories or past lessons around the task.
7. Assessment includes appraisal for the success of the amount of support provided for the *learner*, as well as appraisal of the learner’s shift towards mastery.

This type of learning is by definition experiential, and incorporates members of the society of all ages and backgrounds, if they want to contribute in this type of task.

In contrast, Assembly-Line learning seeks to control learners’ attention, motivation, and behaviour in settings separate from contributions to the broader community.

Accelerate Your Learning

When I was 12, we were living on a boat in Fiji that Dad had built and we were at an island called Waya. I was invited by a group of local kids to catch freshwater shrimp. I didn't speak Fijian, and they didn't speak English.

Late morning, we headed off up a steep river, with big boulders, barefoot. I didn't know what we were doing, or where we were going.

I got the gist that I should follow them closely.

Eventually we stopped at some coconut trees - they started to collect some fronds, strip them down and tie them into nooses, or loops.

All I could do was get the hint that I should copy them and make my noose.

Then later, we got to a stream - they sat in a squat position on the edge, chewed up some old coconut and started spitting it into the water.

I copied this too.

When I spat out chunks that were too big, one kid would shake his head and point until I got it right. Eventually, I heard a murmur and watched one guy lower his coconut frond noose into the water slowly, near his chewed up coconut that was near a rock. Suddenly, quickly, he drew the noose shut and pulled out a big shrimp that had come out of hiding to eat the coconut. He had stalked and trapped the shrimp with the coconut as bait his little loop. Simple, but very difficult.

Of course, it then took me a lot of tries to get my first shrimp, with plenty of head shaking and nods to help me in between. At the end of the day, I contributed maybe 3 shrimp to the group. They had about 10 each. *We divided the total into even amounts and took our lot home.*

There are times here or there, when a guidebook, a speech, or a tutorial are effective.

Then there is every other time, when we can expedite the learning process by realising that the quicker we figure it out, the quicker we can be of use to the group, the quicker and more effectively we can contribute.

Today, this of course requires a concerted effort. A seeking out of this group. However, this accelerated method of learning transcends language, age, location and even the complexity or perceived difficulty of the activity. We can accelerate learning by observation and pitching in for both personal and professional development.

Tying it Together

This is the part where the many inquire about the “program,” the cheat sheet or the 5 steps.

Unfortunately, no such thing exists and to follow one would potentially block another experiential source of learning!

What we do have however, is an awareness of an entire pillar of power that can supercharge many of our other pillars for the modern love warrior traveller.

A regular meditation practice, or accumulation of inner silence, as well as mindfulness practices or tools to engage attention, can be helpful for the warrior to calm the wandering mind.

This can potentially help to increase performance in task-focused activities.

This type of practice can be done frequently and if desired, over the course of our entire lives. It is an excellent partner to the warrior’s continual practice to develop movement competency.

Additionally, using ways of learning that promote contribution or “pitching in” (LOPI) when we engage in a new task can also help to develop deep and wide attention.

Action Item - Morning Meditation: Cultivating inner Silence and Observing the Narrative

When we come to our centre in stillness, we find the truth. The mind might tell us all kinds of stories, but whatever we find at the centre, is real.

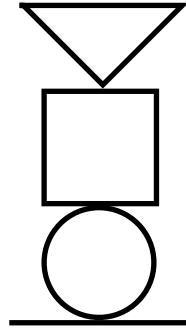
This is a basic daily practice that we can use to cultivate inner silence.

It could be called meditation, but sometimes the term “witnessing” or simply “watching” can be more helpful.

The effect of using these terms is that we can eliminate any particular feeling that we “should” be doing something particular. Many of us are heavily conditioned around the importance of practices such as “meditation.” This conditioning can create inner conflict when we stop to sit and realise all of a sudden that it might not be “working.”

A Practice for Inner Silence and Witnessing

1. Choose a “power spot” - this is a place that is only for you, that you can visit each time for your practice. It could be at your home, outside, at work, at the park or near you gym. Declare it as a power spot.
2. Try to choose a “time” that you can repeat each day. This could be right when you wake up as part of a morning routine, in the evening, or at another time.
3. Find a comfortable seated position. Sit upright, so that you can breathe naturally. Try to refrain from leaning back against the wall, as this promotes “slouching” and poor breathing mechanics.
4. Make sure you are not set up for distraction - if you have a phone, it is off, or on airplane mode
5. Close your eyes and bring attention to the breath. This is the perfect time for you to take the attention to your inner being. To your centre. This is where, over time, we find our truth.
6. Now notice where you feel or perceive the breath. This can be different for everyone!
7. When the mind wanders away from the breath, notice the nature of the thought. The *narrative*.
8. That little voice. The often senseless babble. Notice it and smile
9. We are “getting to know” the narrative. We aren’t judging it, we are simply observing it. A new friend.
10. Come back to the breath
11. Sit with the breathing for between 5 and 30 minutes. Notice the breath over this time. Notice the breath at the end of this time.
12. Slowly bring your attention back to the present reality and space around you.
13. Move your body and smile at the space of inner silence you created for yourself before you continue on your day.



9

*Good Circulation and
Energy Balance*

GOOD CIRCULATION AND ENERGY BALANCE

“Since living cells are the fundamental units of all life, the basic science underlying human health and disease is the science explaining how living cells function. This basic science is cell physiology.”

Dr. Gilbert Ling

“The ageing process is really a slowing of the metabolic rate.” - Dr. Ray Peat

[JM: I am not an expert in cellular physiology. My own journey has included a healing process after an extensive period on a “paleo” diet, “low carb” diets and intermittent fasting, which spanned from 2009 to about 2017 in various forms. Some of this was coupled with elite level endurance training, starting two businesses and generally a high “output” lifestyle and likely too much stress.

Ultimately, after several health issues, I went back to the beginning to research stress and cellular metabolism to try and understand what was happening at an energetic level.

As part of this process, the work of Dr. Broda Barnes, Dr. Ray Peat, Josh Rubin (East West Healing) and others was incredibly helpful in restoring health.

Nutritionally, this included balancing food frequency and changes in macro-nutrients.

The shift in personal energy, wellbeing and happiness was nothing short of extraordinary after this change, which is why energy balance and circulation is included as a key Pillar of Power.

This is a brief effort on my part to summarise some of the work of the previously mentioned experts. For more information I recommend diving into their work.]

The Warrior Cultivates Energy Production through Supporting the Metabolism.

To look at the function of the human body, we need to look at the energy production of our cells, light, fuel, oxygen (and really carbon dioxide), then we can create health from the inside out. We are looking at how our cells are “breathing” and operating.

They are making carbon dioxide, energy (ATP) and water - this is oxidative metabolism, or the oxidation of glucose.

Then, when CO₂ is present, there is a release of oxygen from haemoglobin, and this allows the muscle to produce more energy!

When this is balanced, we see a healthy metabolism, good circulation throughout the body and nice, even energy and wellbeing.

Body Temperatures

During the 1860's, an extensive study by Dr. Carl Wunderlich of over 25,000 patients revealed that the average temperature in the "normal" range was 37 degrees celsius. Based on that study, we have accepted this to be our "normal" temperature, with variations being sub-optimal.

However, more recently we are seeing studies with lower average body temperatures, which some medical professionals believe may be due to increased prevalence of a subclinical, hypo-metabolic state. This means a potential "slowing" of the metabolism, which would reduce the body temperatures.

Dr. Broda Barnes introduced a basal temperature test as an easy way to determine adequate thyroid function and health of cell's energy production process (metabolic health)

This means that the newer, lower "normal" however, might not necessarily mean *optimal*.

According to Josh Rubin (East West Healing), when we look at body temperatures *and* resting pulse readings, we can get a direct insight into cellular energy production - the most fundamental need as a human.

When our body is producing energy using a balanced diet, all the systems *within* the body are communicating with each other and are able to function at their optimal level.

For many people, chronic dieting, low carb diets, fasting, ketogenic diets or the wrong types of exercise or stress are creating an imbalance and the metabolism and body temperatures are falling.

"Besides fasting, or chronic protein deficiency, the common causes of hypothyroidism are excessive stress or "aerobic" (i.e., anaerobic) exercise, and diets containing beans, lentils, nuts, unsaturated fats (including carotene), and undercooked broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and mustard greens. - Dr. Ray Peat, PhD.

Many health conscious people become hypothyroid with a synergistic program of undercooked vegetables, legumes instead of animal proteins, oils instead of butter, carotene instead of vitamin A, and breathless exercise instead of stimulating life." - Dr. Ray Peat, PhD

When we see a compromised ability to metabolise glucose or produce energy, we can see any of the following symptoms:

- Excessive fatigue
- Increased sensitivity to cold, or feeling cold even at room temperature
- Slow, rapid or irregular heart rates
- Reduced sex drive or libido
- Menstrual problems or fertility issues
- Fluid retention
- Difficulty managing weight
- Course or brittle hair
- Dry or rough, scaly skin
- Constipation or irregular bowel movements
- Slow healing, respiratory infections
- Muscle weakness

Because we are looking at energy production, we know a few factors can help:

- An abundance of natural light exposure
- Slow breathing exercises (meditation has been shown to increase metabolic rate)
- The right movement for the individual's needs (not too much/too little exercise)
- Optimising food choices and food frequency
- Reducing stress: environmental toxins, too much work, mental/emotional stress

These can all be helpful ways to restore balance and start to cultivate more energy.

Because we are all different, the specific nutrition and movement protocols to restore optimal circulation, thyroid function and energy balance can be varied.

The Body Temperature Piece

Dr. Broda Barnes was the first person to introduce the basal temperature test as a way to check for metabolic (“thyroid”) health.

This can be potentially a helpful tool to see if your nutrition and lifestyle factors are serving you.

“The late Dr. Broda Barnes introduced the basal temperature test as an easy way to determine adequate thyroid function. It’s important to do an oral temperature test. The oral temperature is measured with an oral digital thermometer after arising. ...Thyroid needs increase during the cold, dark winters and decrease during the warm summer days when there is more sunlight. In addition to the seasons, any kind of stress hinders thyroid function.”
- Lita Lee, PhD”

“Birds have a very high body temperature, so probably have extremely fast digestion and ability to extract everything good from the food.. Besides being very long lived, those birds are extremely intelligent and can solve complex problems very quickly. I think the cognition and longevity go closely together.” - Dr. Ray Peat

“Broda Barnes, who worked mostly in Fort Collins, Colorado, argued that the body temperature, measured before getting out of bed in the morning, was the best basis for diagnosing thyroid function.” - Dr. Ray Peat

Body Temperature and Pulses - How It Works

The first step to creating awareness around the state of the metabolism and energy production is to increase awareness.

This means that if any of the aforementioned signs are showing up, it may be worth also creating a baseline of your body temperature and pulse, as per the recommendations of Dr. Broda Barnes, Dr. Ray Peat, Dr. Lita Lee, Josh Rubin and others.

If these temperature measurements are low and you also notice previously mentioned symptoms, it is likely worth looking deeper at balancing your nutrition and lifestyle factors.

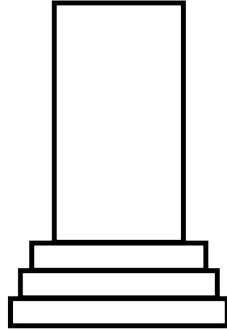
Here’s how it works:

Use a basic thermometer to take temperatures (orally) and measure pulses, as follows:

Best times to check temperature and pulse*

- Upon waking, while still in bed and lying down, prior to sitting up.
- 20 min after each meal and snack. After eating breakfast, the cortisol (and adrenalin, if it stayed high despite the increased cortisol) will start returning to a more normal, lower level, as the blood sugar is sustained by food, instead of by the stress hormones. Normally, both temperature and pulse rate rise after breakfast, but in hypothyroid people either, or both, might fall.
- Prior to going to bed

*For more on body temperature and pulses and nutrition for metabolic health, I recommend checking out Josh Rubin, East West Healing: www.eastwesthealing.com



10



*Positive, Dream Affirmative
Outlook on Life*



POSITIVE, DREAM AFFIRMATIVE OUTLOOK ON LIFE

"A path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you... Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself alone, one question... Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't it is of no use."

- Carlos Castaneda

For many people, large parts of the day engaging in the human experience is a chore. A difficulty.

When this is the case, they can travel along as an observer in their life on an arbitrary path, rather than a conscious participant.

When we are not a conscious participant in our own lives, often, things are being done "to" us. Our lives continue, but if we are not following our *dream* then we feel conflict or frustration.

When we *become* a conscious participant in our lives and direct where we are going and how we want to live, we begin to cultivate even more energy. We step into *self leadership*. This "alignment" between where we want to go and where we *are* going reduces day to day tension, freeing up energy to create. This is the "dream affirmative" way of living.

In today's world, it is easy to mistake "dream affirmative" with feeling like we have to start a business, travel the world, or make it to Hollywood. On the contrary, what we are really looking at is: *do you feel your path has "heart?"*

If we don't have a path with heart, we tend to float into short term distractions and find ourselves in a place of dissonance.

"If you aren't on the path towards your ultimate goal, your dream, of course you are susceptible to the short term rewards, the treats.." - Pete Jacobs, Ironman Triathlon World Champ

If we don't know exactly where we want to go, we get taken on a ride. We go anywhere and everywhere, even deep into the land of distraction or false paths.

There are a couple of key ways then we can begin to create a more positive, dream affirmative outlook.

These are all also the steps towards leadership, starting with self, and then moving outwards to others:

Generate Energy - Become Your Own Power Source

From an abundant physiological state, we are better prepared to generate an abundant mind state. We do this through our movement practice, attention to our environment and breath and nutrition and lifestyle habits. This helps us to cultivate energy *and* health from the inside out and feel good each day.

Generating Energy and creating a platform to re-discover and cultivate *Personal Power* is the main emphasis of this book. The Pillars of Power are the basis for energy *cultivation* rather than energy *dissipation*.

Personal Power

For there to be a “winner,” someone needs to lose.

To create competition through force, is to divide, or to separate.

There is direction, one rises, one falls.

Power though, is the amount of energy expressed per unit time.

The energy comes from within, and moves outwards. It is non-directional.

It's not divisive, it does not rely on a comparison.

Your power is your potential, to move through fears and resistance, to create, to express, to contribute.

In the **Access Potential Academy**, we teach you how to cultivate long lasting energy in your own life. This is the “potential,” or the drive to create both a bigger impact in the world with a dream affirmative life, and to connect with each other powerfully. You are your own power source.

The One Day Retreat

The one day retreat.

At home, or away.

Self led, or guided.

Some simple meditation, or just quiet.

Once per month: no phones, no computers, no hard training, no shopping centres, no city driving.

These are a great way to round off the end of a month.

Not because we want to “reflect,” “improve” or “self-develop,” but purely to pause and find some inner quiet before the next calendar month begins.

Cultivate Powerful Habits that Align

The love warrior traveller is wary of habits. Each habit generates its *own* energy, its *own* life force. If we aren't careful, they can easily disrupt our journey to a dream affirmative life.

However, the warrior also recognises the *power* of habits in the modern world.

These are an effective, malleable tool that we can use to streamline our flow of ordinary daily events, so that we can focus energy and *intent* on creating the outcomes we want.

The process of habit development and creation can be found in many resources. Here are four *stages* that we use in the **Access Potential Academy** with our members to ensure we are aligned with what we are *actually* doing:

- 1. Education** - "Who is the habit for? What is the habit for? What is the change we want to create?" This is key to make sure we are focusing on the *right* habit, rather than something we thought might be effective based on those around us.
- 2. Awareness** - "How does it feel to implement this new habit? How does it compare with how I'm currently living? What are my typical resistances to creating new habits such as this? This is becoming *aware* of our current patterns, and the details of new patterns.
- 3. Practice + Reward** - When we are sure about the new habit we want to cultivate, then we notice or create the cue, practice and reward. This is essentially our habit that we are building from the ground up. The "cue" is the time of day, location, or "trigger."
The "practice" is the *routine* itself. The "reward" is the extrinsic (to begin with) reward that we can use to maintain motivation or recognition.
The reward mechanism is always part of habit development, whether we know it consciously or not.
- 4. Habit** - The final step is *time*. According to Duhigg, we are looking at an *average* of 67 days to cultivate the habit, or switch the old habit. In this stage, continued *accountability* becomes critical.

A note on "environment" - Seeking out an "environment" and in particular a tribe that is conducive to your new habit or habit switch is immensely helpful. If we are looking to cultivate a movement practice and create a *habit* of going to the gym, then having a fun, vibrant community to meet with like-minded people is a game changer.

In the **Access Potential Academy**, the peer to peer system that we have is immensely effective at helping individuals cultivate powerful habits that are aligned with their dreams.

This is because we not only have stable systems in place for all of the above four pillars for habit generation, but we also create a form of “peer pressure” that helps to support people to *lean in* to the actions and habits they are looking to develop.

Choose Connection

In Pillars of Power, we have done a deep dive into tools to help develop both attention and connection. This can be a great way to improve the human experience, and are extremely powerful in cultivating your dream affirmative life.

How? Well a cornerstone step for the love warrior traveller in creating the dream affirmative life, is to be clear on *who* they want to serve in the work that they do, or the actions that they take.

Who are their efforts for? Or simply, who do they want to be surrounded by and work with?

Some examples could include:

1. Our peer group
2. Our children or future generations
3. Our business network
4. Our clients
5. Nature (plants, animals, endangered, poorly-treated..)
6. Our country
7. The broader human race (!)
8. ...and many more!

Once we *lean in* to this connection, we start to see opportunities to create, problems to solve, or people to serve.

We can see a problem - we can then *choose* ourselves to contribute to it.

To powerfully contribute to a particular group of people does not mean you are neglecting the rest. It simply means you can be targeted, specific and *intentional* with whatever it is you choose to do.

Often, developing our dream affirmative life can *only* come after we choose to amplify connection in our own lives with those around us.

Networks [Metcalfe's Law]

Metcalfe's law states the effect of a network of connected individuals is proportional to the *square* of the number of connected users of the system.

When we are trying to create a positive change in the culture, the people in our environment become important.

The early adopters end up being essential. Then, the more, the better.

So Metcalfe's law states that having 2 people in the network is 4 times better than one. Having 3 people connected is over twice as effective as 2...

Once we have an idea, or a change, connecting with or finding people that are aligned with our idea becomes increasingly important.

The “Posture” of Contribution

“Every human is an artist. The dream of your life is to make beautiful art.” - Don Miguel Ruiz

The fear of looking bad, the fear of standing out and the fear of being criticised.

These are three fears that stem from The Judge - our main internal saboteur of the mind.

These are also three fears that stand in the way of many love warrior travellers from creating their dream affirmative life.

Eventually, the warrior sees that for us to fully cultivate our personal power, helping others to rise is of supreme importance.

Our power can not just be expressed, but in fact grows through acts of connection and contribution.

Yet to contribute means to create, which means to step into the new. To be generous.

To stand out and be in the direct “line of fire” of criticism.

Marketer Seth Godin often speaks of developing the posture of contribution. To me, this means that slowly, consistently, over time, we practice small acts of generous contribution towards the people we are connected with.

Small acts of generosity, with no expectation of return.

In this way, we cultivate a new *posture*. A way of living that *contributes* to our culture and the people we seek to serve.

Examples of contribution could include:

1. Showing up at work as *powerfully* as we can. Doing our absolute best.
2. *Creating* something new - art, dance, music.
3. Connecting and leading a tribe - friends to start a movement practice with, a book club to further learning.
4. Starting a business - creating a product or *service* to serve the people you are connected to.
5. Smiling and offering a deeper connection, or a richer experience for your customers.

Don't cheat the world of contribution. Give it what you got. - Steven Pressfield

Alone-ness, Retreats, Inner Silence

“The average man is hooked to his fellow men, while the warrior is hooked only to infinity.”

— Don Juan Matus

Inner silence, meditation or breathing exercises can be a great way to help calm the busy mind and cultivate a dream affirmative life.

From this space of quiet, we can create find that creativity and ideas flow.

Nobody else is able to give us direction or positively impact our life experience in the long term, it must come from within.

Inner silence or a regular one-day retreat (or longer) can be a great way to dive deeper for those who feel inclined.

Alone

This one is a matter of opinion.

People are afraid of being alone and don't spend enough time observing alone-ness.

There are one-million-and-one methods of distraction, of interaction, of ways to reinforce a false belief that we are not alone.

When you see someone who seems to be by themselves, now, they are often not alone. They have their phone*, their social media alerts. The radio, the TV, the messages and continuous inputs.

Ultimately however, we are here on a solo journey.

Yet in the cities, we have created a fabric such that in order to experience this if we choose to, we need a concerted effort.

Alone-ness is not anti-connection of course.

It is pro-connection. We have our family, our friends, our community. This is not against them.

Yet, when we are able to experience our aloneness more regularly, more fully, we can *feel* it, immerse ourselves in it, observe who we are, be comfortable with what we see.

Ultimately, cultivate love for our raw selves.

Self love.

From self love, powerful connection isn't just *possible*, it gets a little easier and a little more regular.

What's the method?

At its core, we have meditation, or awareness - the courage to stop, to go into ourselves, to be alone for a just a few moments and observe.

At the beginning, it is difficult. There are a million reasons the mind can create to not begin this. To stay engaged. When we move past these though, we start to notice the power.

*I'm not bashing phones. I'm pro phone, pro technology, pro device... But above this, pro-awareness.

“People look for retreats for themselves, in the country, by the coast, or in the hills... There is nowhere that a person can find a more peaceful and trouble-free retreat than in his own mind...

So constantly give yourself this retreat, and renew yourself.”

- Marcus Aurelius

The Distancing Effect

This isn't an actual defined bias or true cognitive effect.

It is made up.

Understanding that at any one time our involvement with our social circles, our jobs, our friends is influencing our decisions, our fears and our actions can be powerful.

Through spending time alone, coming to our centre, going on retreats, or shutting down the phone for a day we aren't looking to go "against" the culture we are in, but often we find clarity.

Often, we can make observations. What's working, what isn't working? What could we do differently? What could we *contribute* or change in the culture?

Maybe it's in our work, maybe in our relationships.

So the distancing effect is this: As we increase the distance between ourselves and our daily routine, we have more opportunity to see clearly - other, more powerful cognitive biases have a smaller effect as we become the observer.

When we are *in* the fish-bowl, it can be difficult to see the water. When we have pauses, we can start to notice what is really happening.

Of course, breath attention, or meditation is the acute path, but a mentor, coach, an overseas trip or even an honest friend can help in another way.

Creating “Urgency” and “Necessity”

When the warrior finds some people she seeks to serve and notices a problem that she would like to solve or a way she would love to contribute, there are still a couple of ways to catalyse the dream affirmative life.

The first is to recognise *urgency*. While patient once the journey has begun, the warrior understand that *urgency* is perhaps the single greatest tool to create intentional actions and habits.

He understand that a lack of urgency is the breeding grounds for distraction, for stalling, for resistance, for bailing.

“Don't prepare. Begin. Our enemy is not lack of preparation. The enemy is resistance, our chattering brain producing excuses. Start before you are ready.”

- Steven Pressfield

“In a world where death is the hunter, my friend, there is no time for regrets or doubts. There is only time for decisions.”

- Carlos Castaneda, Journey to Ixtlan

The second is to create *necessity* - we must *raise the stakes*.

This means that we “elevate” the *necessity* to continue forward on our journey, to take the next step. The love warrior traveller prefers to live in the land of “HELL YES” - this is in the land of necessity.

[JM: In my coaching calls, we often go through intentions and the necessity of each intention. How necessary is it for them to reach this goal or target? I like to use a rating system. On a scale of 1-10, if it's coming in under an 8, then we need to focus here in order to raise it up!]

With both *urgency* and *necessity*, we find that only then are we able to break free of the power of distraction, poor habits, or other daily forms of resistance that plague the modern warrior.

This allows the warrior to stop energy leaks, and continue to cultivate personal power.

NOTES ON LEADERSHIP

The only real commonality we find between different “leaders” is that they lead.

Often, in today’s world, we can hear words like “leadership” and recoil, thinking that it’s not for us. It’s for someone else in a nicer suit, or someone coaching a winning sports team.

Leadership though is simply the willingness to lean into the emotional discomfort that is required for change.

This can be self leadership (change in our own lives) or leading a tribe (helping create change for others).

The Pillars of Power and energy generation are simply some tools for consideration to catalyse self leadership for the modern love warrior traveller.

Toeing the Line of Discomfort

As humans, we actually prefer things to be fairly stable in a day to day setting. We like our car to work as usual. We prefer it when the house stays standing.

Yet many of us also crave change: a shift in the culture, personal or professional growth, disruption!

This is the gap in which the discomfort lies - we want stability and we want instability and change.

The path of the warrior traveller is to explore this space. To feel that discomfort, but to nevertheless see what actions are available. In the space where most people freeze - in the vacuum, the warrior slowly, little by little, learns to create action and direction.

For more on this, check out:

[STAND TO BECOME](#)
[14 Ideas on Self Leadership](#)

CONTINUATION

The machine is dying.

The old way is done.

The future belongs to those who are questioning the status quo.

The future belongs to those who embrace what it means to *thrive* as a human and to those who use technology and the market to lever themselves into a position of greater connectivity and contribution.

It belongs to those who embrace leadership, those who *see* that we are all leaders. That it starts with yourself: With energy generation, with cultivating integrity of speech, actions and habits. With re-discovering and cultivating our personal power.

Each day, each week, each year, we are seeing change - the rate is faster than ever before. It can feel overwhelming for sure, but if we come back to our centre, and then continue to connect with those we seek to serve, we find the overwhelm is temporary.

While this can be scary, the Pillars of Power are simply some examples of time-tested methods to cultivate energy and personal power.

Nothing in these Pillars is new. It is simply an attempt to return to what is real, an attempt to *see* what is working and what is not. From there, we can intend to create anything we like.

You are your own power source. There is no-one else there to choose you, to support you. But once the warrior accepts this, it is liberating.

The Pillars of Power include only things that you already have.

Considerations that are innate to all humans. Tools like this may be helpful for some as a reminder, but you already have everything you need to live an extraordinary life.

Do You Want to Access Your Full Potential?

If you believe in cultivating true energy, in becoming your own power source to make a big impact in your work,

And if you want to become deeply present in your relationships and life, then the only way forward is to choose to level up.

The only way to level up is to put yourself on the hook, to surround yourself with a like-minded cohort of people who support you on your weaknesses and push you on your strengths.

If you feel like you are ready to level up and if you would like to find out more about leadership starting with leading yourself,

Then send me an email with the subject: "Access Potential" as I have a limited number of deep dive conversations available for the right people.

e: john@johntmarsh.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I was lucky to be born to some amazing parents. They are adventurers and they challenged the status quo from the beginning. They plucked us out of school many times and took us on adventures living on a home-made yacht.

This was undoubtedly a kernel in deciding to engage in some of the work that I do.

Years ago I stumbled across the work of marketer, teacher and creator Seth Godin - his convincing argument to start a daily blog encouraged me to write, something which I've done each day now on my blog since December 2017.

From that practice (which I also recommend), creating this resource was a no-brainer.

The Pillars of Power of course includes the work of many others, with just my own attempt at weaving some of this into the culture that I see and have worked with.

I thank Chris Jones (Primal Movement) as my first teacher in the health and wellness industry. When Chris first did an assessment on me, I was a broken triathlete with adrenal fatigue. It took me a little longer to figure out what he was trying to show me back then, I'm slowly getting there.

Paul Chek made a huge impact when I first met him in a holistic lifestyle coaching course, as did Lucille and Di at GITA Yoga in Melbourne. Also definitely the work of J. Krishnamurti and Jack Kornfield during my first bumpy exposure to meditation and mindfulness practices in 2008.

In strength and movement I am simply a collector, experimenter and mostly observer - I learn from many others such as Rod Cooper at The Movement Collective, Vik at Anatomy in Motion and of course I am thankful for my time creating and running Workshop Gym in Melbourne with my amazing sister Liz.

I am grateful to the hundreds of people I've been able to work with individually and in groups and also for those I am fortunate to continue to connect with today.

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