

Introduction

When you hear the term weightlifting, what do you most often think of?

For most people, the phrases *weightlifting*, *strength training*, and *pumping iron* conjure up images of “meatheads” with bulging muscles strutting along the beach. I was once a meathead.

Unfortunately, this stereotypical image has kept many of us away from a healthy activity that could change our lives. I’m going to ask you to do one important thing right now—that is, forget the pumping iron image forever. Light the fuse, cover your ears, and blow it to pieces. After reading this book you will think about strength training with a whole new mind-set.

I will show you a different approach to strength training that can evolve into a life-altering experience. It isn’t just about muscles. When done correctly, it’s about rebuilding a foundation of mental and physical strength. It’s about regaining health and self-respect. It’s about feeling a sense of

strength that emanates from your body and permeates your psyche.

The program that I set forth in this book is one that all people, young or old, male or female, can adapt to fit their lives. Studies show that women as well as men gain tremendous health benefits from strength training. Women between 50 and 70 years old will increase their bone density by 1 percent per year if they lift weights regularly, according to a study done by researchers at Tufts University in Boston. Those who don't lift weights lose an average of 2.5 percent bone density per year. This can be a critical difference considering that according to the National Institutes of Health, 10 million individuals, mostly women, have osteoporosis, and 18 million more have low bone mass, placing them at increased risk for this disease. Moreover, the study found that those who worked out with weights reduced their blood pressure and improved their overall coordination.

Yet, despite these tremendous physiological rewards, the biggest benefit of strength training may not be physical at all. What we're going to explore in this book is a shift in something far deeper and fundamental. It's about gaining a much greater power than a pumped-up bicep could ever provide. It's about rediscovering the essential relationship between your body and mind. In a manner of speaking, it's about using what I call "mindful movements" to learn how your body can help heal and strengthen your mind.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 18.8 million Americans suffer from depressive illness, 19 million have anxiety disorders, and 2 million are diagnosed with

bipolar illness. Figures from the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence show that 18 million Americans have alcohol problems and 5 to 6 million have drug dependencies.

This book has been written for the millions of people who deal with emotional challenges of all kinds. Whether you are working to overcome depression or other mood disorders, suffer from too much stress, are in recovery from alcohol or drug abuse, or just want to feel more relaxed and physically stronger, this program is for you.

Exercise in the form of mindful movements is one of the best tools you can use to deal with any of these challenges. It can help you to achieve your highest level of inner and outer fitness.

Ultimately, it's about gaining control over your own life. I should know. I lost control of my life and was lucky enough to find my way back. In this book, I will tell you how I reclaimed myself and how you can too.