

# What not to do when you are trying to get ripped for a bodybuilding show.

The onslaught of strain through every rep and ounce of sweat toward stepping onto a bodybuilding stage is very real. Those whom have faced the inner voice of doubt will know that the challenge toward having the best possible stage presence is not in the gym but rather in the mind. Deprivation consumes our every thought during show prep, from the amount and type of food we eat to the lack of social time we may have with our friends, a complete sacrifice of oneself is required toward achieving the desired result to step on stage for a few minutes of glory. Along the way we become somewhat engrossed in the idea of less is more and the fad processes that may enforce our insecurities. Over the next paragraphs we will debunk some ideas and harmful processes that may set you back on your quest toward optimal presence, lets slice and dice a consensus of pure rubbish.

## Don't make drastic reductions in food intake

From Hero to an absolute zero, I have often seen amazing physiques wither away to absolute skeletal frames of muscle all because of an over enthusiastic determination to lose body fat. Reducing your calories will make you lose weight that is a given, however there are more complex biological processes that govern our composition that we ought to consider. When we initially reduce calories or do so periodically our metabolism increases the use of stored energy as a fuel source, which given the right source of nutrient dense diet we may just lose fat (pause for an applause). Consistent calorie deprivation however accompanied with a dramatic increase of calorie expenditure will lead to an excess of stress hormone release.

Stress hormone regulates our blood sugar for the purpose of maximal muscle contraction and overall proprioception, too much however simply creates a scene toward anxiety and inflammation. Ever see a bodybuilder calm 2 weeks before a show? You are probably more likely to see Donald Trump give out a green card to a foreigner! Anxiety, stress and aggression are all not signs of high testosterone but rather high cortisol, deprivation of calories and an increase of exercise only leads to one outcome: a moody skinny bodybuilder trying to hold on to a slither of a hamstring. Gradual reduction of calories and increase of exercise is by far a more efficient strategy toward optimal proprioception and fat loss whilst also maintaining your muscle mass. Homeostasis is critical and establishing a gradual shift toward a stage ready physique takes time, patience and above all a level head.

## Don't increase cardio too dramatically

Ever see a muscular marathon runner? Comedy is the only word that I can use to explain the volume of cardio bodybuilders use toward the objective of fat loss. Cardiovascular training is important during competition preparation but more for the purpose of increasing circulation after a strenuous hypertrophy workout than optimizing your fat loss potential.

How many calories can we actually burn doing 'cardio'? 300 to a possible 500 if your super fit. However what value of consistent cortisol release would we notice during high volumes of steady state cardio? Truth be told cardio conditioning for a bodybuilding show should be done with extreme caution! Cortisol eats away at hard earned muscle if it is left unchecked, leaving you with a string bean muscle machine. The objective of fat loss needs to first be understood by the outcome of exercise, that being either increased EPOC or lactic acid accumulation. EPOC or exercise post oxygen consumption relates to the volume of

oxygen one would consume to repair damaged muscle tissue, EPOC is a huge metabolism increaser outside of the weight training session. Lactic acid accumulation develops during consistent movement that has little to no rest such as 'cardio'. During lactic acid base training one will most definitely burn more intra workout calories but most definitely will not increase your metabolism once the onslaught of cortisol has left your system.

Cardiovascular training increases circulation as an attempt to metabolise lactic acid more effectively. This is useful when we are training hard with greater volumes of weight training toward our intended show. Reduced inflammation equates to better circulation and reduction of metabolites that may only serve to slow down our fat burning potential. When doing cardio simply do not go crazy and loose your muscle marbles in a cortisol shop, slow gradual increase in relation to the required motility of inflammation is what we need to concern ourselves with. If you are not inflamed and are recovering in a 24 hour window simply leave out the cardio and concentrate on your weight training and posing practice toward your competition endeavor's. However, if you are human and do notice inflammation increase due to show prep programming then install the right amount of cardio for an objective outcome and effect of muscle retention and fat loss.

## **Don't drink all your calories**

Liquids nutrition intake may have its place during a competition preparation phase, however knowing what that place is vital! I am no fan of protein shake consumption during show prep however in the case where fasting blood sugar is extremely elevated, having a protein shake with added phytonutrients such as blueberries, raspberries, kale, parsley, lemon and cinnamon may be beneficial. Elevated fasting blood sugar is clear sign of an immune reaction to stress, either created through excessive intention of extreme 'cardio' or through environmental sensitivities. When our immunity is compromised due to an increase of fasting blood glucose the hormone gastrin is also inhibited. Gastrin is primarily responsible for action potential of activation of digestive enzymes that metabolise our food and prevent a possible scenario of dysbiosis (imbalance of gut bacterial balance). When Gastrin is not released optimally and we eat dense solid food we may be setting up further bacterial complications, in which instance liquid meals may be helpful. Liquid meal however will NOT serve the purpose of a stable diet for competition preparation, if you are embarking toward a bodybuilding competition and feel that your gut can only withstand liquid meal, then you are simply not in a position to healthily step on stage and that's just now worth it!

Climbing the steps toward a bodybuilding stage takes a commitment toward optimal health, not only during the prep phase but all year round. A healthy digestive system will handle metabolizing food effectively without the complication of possible bacterial overgrowth, sure there may be days where things are a little off but for 95% of your prep you should not require the aid of a liquid meal to sustain your nutrient load toward muscle dominance.

## **Don't obsess over the scale**

What you weigh is not how you look. Simply focusing your attention toward the gross factor of overall weight will never serve purpose toward optimal body composition. As muscle has the density three times that of fat, losing a ton of weight may not always equate to a leaner more muscular physique! Slow steady weight loss and maximal fat reduction goes a lot further toward stage presence than focusing on the kilos every day you climb out of bed. Instead of worrying about your weight loss try focusing your efforts on your biological markers such as fasting blood glucose and heart rate variability. Fasting glucose and HRV will tell you a great deal more on your physiological state toward actual fat loss not simply overall weight loss. Forget following the sheep become a Shepard and guide your process toward a championship status.

## **Don't compare your progress to the progress of other competitors (social media)**

Lions do not concern themselves with the thoughts of sheep. Over my time in the fitness industry I have faced my share of non constructive opinion often formulated by those with little to no insight over the topic they feel necessary to gossip about. We live in virtual world were people live in a dream state thinking that others lives are perfect and in comparison our own effort feeble. The truth however is that most of the 'gurus' out there have more demons in their closets than you or I could every think of, the only difference is they have become masters of deception and sell themselves off as a voice of reckoning with nothing to equate to beside their own ego.

When you are diving into self accomplishment keep your focus on exactly that, yourself! The acts and opinions of others should neither encourage nor discourage your efforts, the only person whom is important to take into account toward motivating your actions is truly yourself. Don't become lost in the woods with all the other creatures looking for sunlight, rather step under the bar and lift your efforts for yourself and one one else.

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