



Transcript of “Zach Even-Esh: Stress, Recovery, & the Art of Coaching #161”

Bulletproof Radio podcast #161



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Dave: Hey everyone, it's Dave Asprey with Bulletproof Radio. Today's cool fact of the day is that fingers and toes with nerve damage don't wrinkle when you put them in water for a long time. That made scientists suspect that we evolved to have our digits wrinkle so that we might have a better grip in wet environments. But then other studies later proved that that theory was wrong. There's still isn't really a known reason for finger and toe wrinkling. It just seems to be a mystery of life. Although I like the idea that when my hands are wet I could climb glass like a gecko, that's always been a fantasy of mine, and it's just not a fantasy that's ever come true. So if you have the technology to do that, please let me know, I'm down for that. That's real biohacking.

Before we get into the details about today's guest I want to make a special mention to Joseph Tucker who's 11 from Santa Cruz, California and just sent me this long letter about what he's doing to make himself bulletproof and to be more resilient. I love hearing that stuff because honestly the earlier you start the easier it is and the less remediate work you have to do. Joseph thanks for your email. Actually that stuff actually inspires me, and I hope you can make it to the conference because you got a free ticket buddy.

Now today's guest is founder of the underground strength gym, the creator of underground strength coach certification. He's trained hundreds of athletes ranging from youth level to Olympic level. He's a consultant to a bunch of division one wrestling teams, and he's helped tens of thousands of men and women get better strength, not just physical strength, but we're talking about body strength, mind strength, and just resilience. As you know bulletproof is really at the end of the day all about resilience. You want to perform better? The first and really only thing you have to do is to learn how to be more resilient. Everything else is just window-dressing on top of a core that's resilient and can take what the world brings it and then bounce back.

The other thing that's cool about Zach his best deadlift was 545 pounds which is like a lot. On top of that Zach's a former elementary school teacher. Zach, by the way I should say, this is Zach Even-Esh in case you haven't guessed already from that introduction. Zach, welcome to the show.

Zach: Awesome. This is real honor and I've been using a lot of your products for a while. It's just awesome. This is really my pleasure. I know a lot of people say it's an honor, but it really truly is, I'm really excited.

Dave: Likewise. I really respect teachers. I taught at the University of California at higher level for five years. I ran the engineering program there in Silicon Valley. I've done junior achievement, which is when you go and you teach kids at different ages just for one day a week or for an hour a week, but you go and give lectures. You think it's hard to talk to an audience full of executives or a group of cross fitters in Miami at Wodapalooza, you're there and you just want to talk. But try getting eighth grader or fifth graders, it's more intimidating. You can throw Snickers bars at their heads, and then you're giving a bad food and it still doesn't make them to pay attention. You did this for years. That's the ultimate resilience. Hats off for that.

Zach: Yeah, those are really the most fun times I ever had. I always tell people, I say I'm always a teacher. Even though I'm no longer teaching in the schools I'm always a teacher. I like you had experience working at the university level and I was just at that Lehigh University, another engineering school. It's great. I love being around people and then teaching them in ways that make them more powerful to live a stronger life. To me that's what it's all about, that's what motivates me.

Dave: Now you've got that experience. But you've also been your own biohacker since you were a teenager, which is kind of cool. You placed first second in your first three bodybuilding shows when you were still a teenager and you won Mr. Teenager as well in 1994. So you've been like I'm a strong guy forever.

I have spent some time traveling to Southeast Asia and met a whole bunch of Israelis. As a general rule the dudes I met where pretty hard core. There were a lot of really fit guys. I'm like, "That guy can kick my ass without even thinking twice about it." You were basically competing at a pretty tough group I would say in order to do that. What made you so driven as a teenager to just outperform like that? I mean a lot of kids don't do that.

Zach: Right, I grew up in a house where ... We immigrated to the country when I was just shy of a year old. I always remember my parents working. I'd wake up when it was time for school they'd be gone. They didn't come home usually until

the late afternoon, late evening. My dad, we didn't really have the videogames and all that. He always took us outside. That was like our thing, taking us outdoors.

As I started getting older, getting closer to my teenager years, my older brother started getting pretty serious into working out. He would run our dog three times a day, and he started acquiring weightlifting equipment. This is back in the day of Soloflex commercials on TV. It was amazing to see how the commercials and how somebody's appearance would inspire you and make you want to go and buy those things. I was reading all the magazines that he would bring home.

Back then this is the time when Arnold Schwarzenegger was the premier action hero, so the magazines were primarily about appearance, they were all about how you look. The training back in the day that was featured in these magazines had nothing to do truly with performance. There's nothing that said, "This is what's going to help you run faster, jump higher, be a better athlete." It was all about looking better.

I followed all the information in those magazines and what inspired me truly was I was the weakest kid in the neighborhood. There was guys arm wrestling or wrestling. I was the known loser. That really fired me up. I remember the summer before seven grade after losing to every kid doing the arm wrestling I said, "I need to get stronger." I went home that night, it's like nine at night and I said, "I'm going to do as many push-ups as I can every night," and was only able to do two. I said to myself, "This is pathetic." I could do two push-ups.

I came up with an idea in my head that all I need to do is I got to get to 20 push-ups, and I added one push up a day. It took me literally a few seconds every day to do my push-ups. Two push-ups became three, became four, 10, 15, 20. I remember once I was able to do more than 20 push-ups simply by adding one a day I started beating kids in arm wrestling. Those were my middle school years. But when I got to high school, even with all the training that I was doing following the bodybuilding stuff, I did not have the sport skills.

To make a long story short I experienced basically a lot of tough times through sports. I trained very hard but I trained the wrong way. You could train as much as you want, as hard as you want, but if you're doing things the wrong way you're just not going to get the results. That was the case with me, both physically and mentally.

I had a really difficult time rebounding from setbacks. I was a mess in injuries to my knees, my shoulders.

When I got out of high school essentially I had a lot of regret, a lot of pain from not succeeding. There was no internet to be known back then in the early 90s, so any information you would get would be from a magazine which did not have the info you needed to perform at a high level. You couldn't Google anything. You couldn't do those things. So my learning came from pain and injury and setbacks.

As you know Dave, you speak a lot about time and hacking and leveraging things, well time is the one thing we never get back, it's the most valuable thing we all have. So my life from those early years of competing, I lived with the pain of regret of not succeeding. When I got to college I didn't have an opportunity to compete because they cut the wrestling program.

Now when I'm training athletes and when I'm training people we're trying to get them to maximize their time, maximize their effort so they don't look back and say would've, could've, should've, or I wish I could have. This morning that's where I was, up at Lehigh University, and all around the world we've got people reaching out to me because they're learning like they learned from you that the bottom line is there's a right way and a wrong way. There's a more powerful way to get things done and why waste time doing it the wrong way.

So my passion, my inspiration comes from that famous quote of the two pains in life, you've got the pain of discipline and the pain of regret. I utilized my experiences to it sounds crazy but I guess that's the teacher in me to save others and get them to experience success. To me that's just what keeps me going. It just fires me up.

Dave: People haven't really seen you. I've got your book here and I've read through and you tell your story, you were pretty unwell, and there's some parallels there. When I was young and fat I was around 300 pounds early 20s, right around that same timeline, might have been I don't know early 90s. I was at some coffee shop and I picked up a bodybuilding magazine. You know back then, not a lot people read those. If you read one you were kind of a freak. It's changed now. Most of fitness are mainstream magazines but back then it was like what do you have like a bunch of tattoos and you got body piercing and obviously you should be beaten from the back of a pickup truck. At least that's what Manteca was like when I lived Manteca. That's central California by Modesta and Stockton.

When I look at that, I read the magazine and they're like carbs make you fat. I'm like, "What the hell, I've been eating all these muffins because I wanted more energy. What's going on with this?" I lost almost 50 pounds when I eliminated gluten and carbs, accidentally just because gluten was in most carbs. It was profound what happened. That was the beginning of this whole way, like this bodybuilders know all this magic stuff.

But on the other hand there's all these anti-aging guys and they know all this other stuff, and I got into that pretty early. Because I'm like, "I should upgrade, my body doesn't work that well anyway." I had arthritis in my knees in 14. That's scary. So I started looking at those two things. I realized that there wasn't much overlap. Like guys were like, "I'm going to get big." But like you said they didn't perform well, and they don't necessarily even live longer. They might live less long because they're injecting God knows what and they didn't even like it.

Zach: True.

Dave: So it's like what's the overlap between the anti-aging crowd. I needed like sticks, sticks and twigs and 45 calories a day, and I might live longer. I sure hope but I'm really cold. I'm making fun of people I knew and respect.

On the other hand you got these guys, I can, whatever, "I can fold you in two in origami," and the overlap between them it's been becoming closer and closer and closer over the past whatever 20 years. That's the space where I talk about biohacking. I'm like, okay, you want to look good, and how good you want to look that's up to you. You want to live a long time. Exactly how long and how long and how inflamed, that's up to you to. But the knowledge that we gain from both of those, plus extreme sports and military and all those, that's core knowledge for biohacking.

Zach: Yeah, what's so funny is when you're talking about the bodybuilding is that I essentially grew up in the gyms. I would go and train and then I would do my homework. I would do my homework at the gym. I was mentored by a lot of those guys in the ways of how do you eat, how do you eat to get ripped, to get lean, how do you prepare for these bodybuilding competitions. Then there were the power lifters about how do you train. There were guys in there over 400 pounds close to 500 pounds. How do you get that strong, and the way you could transform your body, and naturally.

Because like you said some people didn't do it naturally. I remember people would say to me, "There's no way Zach that you could train this hard and be natural." My mindset was trained from a wrestling background where we were trained to basically be top resistant to pain. It didn't bother you. It was just something that you almost chased versus avoided.

Then the nutrition aspect, the discipline with tweaking carbohydrate intake, they did things like carbohydrate cycling. When I competed in my teenage New Jersey competition I went for six weeks of just eating turkey, broccoli, cauliflower, potatoes. But I must've lost 25 pounds in six weeks eating eight meals a day. I mean was eating a whole turkey a day. My mom told that every time she'd go to Costco to buy the turkey that she said the people asked her if she owned a restaurant.

Those days of learning that you can eat a lot but change what kind of micronutrients you're pulling in your body can change the way you feel, can change the way you perform, so I looked great, but I felt like crap and my stomach was absolutely crushed. When I finished the bodybuilding show and tried to have a little bit of carbs and a little bit of fat my stomach did not know how to digest at that stuff at all. It was brutal.

Things have certainly changed through the years but the biggest thing that I've always gotten from the training that I think everybody could benefit from is what it does for your mind. To me you could hit a wall when you are chasing just six pack abs or "I want bigger biceps" or "I want to appear a certain way." Well what training does for the way you feel and for how it allows you to perform in life, the confidence it gives you, the strength it gives you to handle stressors in life, what I say you have struggles in life, you learn through the hard work to turn obstacles into opportunity, struggle into strength.

That is something that I've noticed has disappeared in people, because when you talk to people, especially you Dave, you speak to people in many different realms, meaning you don't speak them about just hacking in the way of energy or health or fitness, but you also do a lot of business consulting.

A lot of times we hear people say, "It's too hard. I don't have the time. I don't have the resources," it's because they haven't experienced struggle and how to overcome it. That's where some hard work, some hard training benefits people. We're so scared to work hard that it actually hurts people, not just fitness-wise but also in life.



That's where I've tried to really help people is that when you learn these lessons from hard training you could apply them to life, to your relationships, to your health, and it's got a very positive impact.

Dave: In the Bulletproof model of just the way of thinking your body and your nervous system, they have all these warning bells that are completely wrong. Even your joints like the I can't handle anymore, and they're set to like 20% of what they can actually handle. You see these 100 pound mothers lift cars of their babies and they don't get injured. I mean clearly the biology could handle more than it's said it could handle. We know it's lying to you.

A lot of training is just like wacking the body over the top of the head saying you got a lot more in there that you thought you did, so let's just raise that bar a little bit to the point where you're still not going to be injured, but you might have to approach that.

Almost everything, whether it's different forms of dieting, whether it's the Bulletproof diet of cyclical Ketonegic approach with low toxins, or whether you're going to do a vegan cleanse, it doesn't really matter. What's going on there is if you need some change you need to push some limits, otherwise if you're not pushing limits the body doesn't really change.

It's the same thing with lifting heavy things. It's the same with studying. If it doesn't hurt a little bit or at least cause discomfort what you perceive as pain you're probably not getting that much out of it. Which is why when I see overweight people going for a walk at lunch to lose weight it's like, there's probably a better way. In fact I'm sure there is.

Zach: There is a better way, takes a little bit more effort but everything is like what you said, it doesn't have to be extreme. It's just so much go that extra inch, find that little bit of extra that actually amounts in a larger return or results.

You and I before we started recording we were talking about when my early days of teaching, and I tell this to everybody that connects with me on business. They say, "Well how do you get so much work done? How do you get all this work done?" I say, "I basically wake up one hour before anybody or any dog in my house or anything that's creeping or crawling, and that one hour I just maximize a lot of work." It's the same thing with my training, is that I've just learned to get more work

done in less time. Or what you were saying about the mindset, the mentality behind it is I expose myself to a higher level, not just of exercise but being around higher level thinkers.

For example when people are going to your Bulletproof Conference they're going to leave and they're going to start taking more action with the Bulletproof diet. They're going to start taking more action because they were around higher level thinkers. If somebody hung out with a group of Navy SEALs you would suddenly start questioning yourself that you'd say, "Wow, I'm not really working that hard after what they just told me they experience and they were still able to do it."

That's the ways I look at things is that you want to leverage everything that you possibly can, whether it's the people that you're around, you want to learn from them to inspire you more, you want to leverage your time, you want to leverage your resources. When you find out how to do that your results whether it's in health, whether it's mindset, whether it's success and business, life, family, they get that much better. It's not so much doing a lot more. Sometime it's just do one inch more in that same amount of time frame.

Dave: What do you think about stress inoculation? For people listening stress inoculation is something that you would do with SWAT teams and what not or military special forces, like in basic training even expose people to extreme levels of stress, show them that they can perform at those levels so then when they are exposed to that stress again they already have an innate knowledge that they can do that. Is this a good thing for non combat people and is it a good thing for kids?

Zach: It's huge and it's beneficial in so many ways. This morning I woke up at 4:30 am and when I do things that are "challenging" it doesn't really negatively affect me because I look back all the way to my earliest years. I started wrestling at age 13 and our coaches taught us that hard work is good for you, hard work will help you succeed. So when I do that my mindset is that this really isn't that hard. Or talk about military and SWAT, two years ago I went through a 12 hour Navy SEAL challenge. A friend of yours organized it, Mark Divine. He's a good friend of mine. Yep, great guy.

Dave: I love Mark, but the porn star name, I don't know about that. Sorry Mark, second time I said that on air.

Zach: I never even thought of that. That is, that really.

Dave: I'm such a cool guy. He can take that joke.

Zach: I won't be the guy that will tell Mark he took the wrong path. He helped organized a 12 hour challenge. They do longer challenges, but that 12 hour challenge that I went through two years ago it remains like part of my mind and my body that when things are hard I got to back to the 12 hours of we barely ate that day, we weren't supposed to be able to continue going. I mean my body was cramping all over, but the body was still able to keep running, doing push-ups, pull-ups, carrying a log, I mean going in the cold water. I was able to do all those things.

It's important that when you train you got to do these optimal workouts, optimal workouts, and maybe once a week, maybe even every other week, heck it could maybe even be once a month or as I mentioned to you I went through a kind of a tough cruise two years, those things remain ingrained in your mind because they're so powerful and effective that they carry you on.

Now should younger kids go through these things? They don't have to do a 12 hour challenge, but what younger kids in physical education go through a little bit more of a challenging routine. A lot of things in physical education is we have them waiting on lines. We're afraid if they keep score. When I was a teacher one of the kids fell off the monkey bars and the first thing the principal said was we're removing all monkey bars.

Dave: Oh good God.

Zach: Another kid had gotten injured during recess. Our school did not have a field in the backyard so the police would block off the street the kids would play. A kid fell down, got hurt, and then from then on the kids were not allowed to run.

What we're doing is, I don't want to harp or I hate doing that kind of preacher thing, but we all know that when you stop taking risk and you ingrain yourself in fear you become so scared to do anything daring or anything worthy of accomplishment in your life that you become what I call "normal" "average". You're a clock puncher. You're going to work and you're going to do exactly what's on the job requirements. You're not going to stay late. You're not going to come in early. You're not going to go above and beyond. You're not going to try to climb the ladder. You're not going to

try to have more impact. You're going to keep everything the same. You're just not going to try to live a great life.

I think when we challenge ourselves you build an inner confidence, some people call it an inner warrior, a warrior spirit, but you simply build a confidence that you are capable of doing greater things in life. I think to take that away from kids it's scary because we don't want to have a future where kids don't believe in themselves. Even adults, we see it today, they lack the confidence to want to share their skills, to share a gift that they have. That was a big thing for me. I was extremely shy and scared of the world when I was young. But I felt very confident in the gym, I felt comfortable and I felt in my realm when I heard weights dropping.

When I got to college I remember I was terrified to speak in front of people but I enrolled in the health and physical education which meant all my classes were going to have a lot of presentations, standing up in front of people. So just I started taking a simple risk, doing that one inch more. Any time it was an opportunity to present the project I raised my hand first because I said to myself, "You need to get used to being a little bit nervous."

Then I found myself harnessing that nervous energy and I started getting just not nervous speaking in front of people. Today I could speak in front of several thousand people and I have a little bit of nervous but I'm not sweating, I'm not freaking out, I'm extremely calm, I don't look off at really bullet points or PowerPoint. I'm able to just go. When you face those fears in life regardless of the age they stay with you. You become stronger for life.

That stuff it's one of the biggest gifts in the world because that's what allows people like you and I, or some of the people, all the people really that you interview on Bulletproof Radio, if they never harnessed fear, they never challenged themselves, what would they do? They wouldn't be out there writing books trying to inspire the world. That's why it's okay to harness. I just simply say, "Get comfortable being uncomfortable." Just little things. You don't feel like exercising that day do five squats five push-ups and you just broke through. It doesn't mean you have to work out for an hour. Do something little to break through and those things add up.

Dave: I'm down with everything you're saying but I want to tell you a story. When I was a young man I had three knee surgeries. Finally we have that in common too. After the last one or second to last, after the second they put a screw in and it

took a long time to heal and it was just horrible pain of getting a screw in your bone. It's something you really don't want to do.

I was worked out six days a week an hour and half a day and I'm like, "I'm going to lose this 100 pounds. I'm going to do everything in my power." I ended up pushing myself, I totally wacked my adrenals. I never did lose the weight even though I got strong and fat, I was still fat. My health actually wasn't that good. Finally the first time I decided I was going to do something fun that might expose my knee to risk I played laser tag and I blew my ACL and damaged the cartilage. Again went back in for my third surgery.

There's a certain point where like, all right, you want to teach people discomfort like, okay, I'm comfortable being uncomfortable, I know I'm safe, I know I'm not going to die at some neurological level and my biology will behave. But especially when you're a teenager and especially if you're a teenage boy you are basically almost wired to pull out all of your joints, and tear up all your muscles, and run your head into brick walls all over and over, because you're going to push your limits, you don't know where they are yet. Because how would you do know? The limits you had last year aren't the limits you have this year. You're seeking the edge. How do you keep kids from just injuring themselves the way I did?

Zach: Kids have to be strong. When your body gets hurt your body has basically ways of telling you you're doing too much, this isn't right. There's times when you break through, and then when you do it the wrong time you break down. Like you mentioned I've also had three knee surgeries and it's from the body being trained the wrong way and trained beyond what your body is ready for. Mentally I wanted to keep training and go beyond that, but physically my body was broken down from training the wrong way. When you do things the wrong way, the bottom line is you have to do things the right way.

Young athletes, if they're not strong they're going to get injured. That's really the number one goal behind a training program for a younger athlete who's competing, is we want to get their tendons, their ligaments strong so they're less likely to get hurt. If you're hurt you're unable to compete and there goes all your work that you put into it.

Kids nowadays I feel bad for them because there's so much stuff for them to be inundated with. Back when you and I grew up there was nothing except a few

magazines that were wrong. Now there's so much information out there, they just can't, they don't know what's right, they don't know what's wrong, they're being pulled in a million and one directions. Younger kids need a lot of basic work. They need body weight exercises. They need to learn basic gymnastics so they have body awareness. They need exercises that are not complicated, simple to teach, easy to learn, that have a very powerful return on results.

Dave: There are a bunch of teenagers who are listening to this right now hearing that and going, "Okay, let's say I buy this. What do I do? Where do I go?" So where would you recommend them. Let's say you're 15 years old, you appreciate working out, you want to look good for the girls, or you're a 15 year old girl and you want to look for the boys or whatever else. But you know what it's like when you're a teenager, that's a big part of what your brain is thinking about, is the opposite sex. So like, "I want to look good. I want to be healthy. I want to be strong," all those things that are innate drives in all humans but are super strong when you're a teenager. So who do they call? Where do they go? Because honestly I wish I would have that when I was kid. I just didn't. So who do they trust?

Zach: Who do they trust? You have to look at somebody's track record. When I look at somebody with today day and age we train a lot of young athletes at our gym and parents will go to the coach that's closer, to the coach that's \$50 cheaper. So for the kids that are listening, for the parents that are listening, you want to find a coach that has proven track record, especially a coach that takes weaker athletes that lack confidence, don't have really experienced success and that that coach has helped them transform themselves, not just physically but mentally.

If you're nowhere near those things then you could go wrong with body weight exercises. There's a big story of how Herschel Walker would exercise. He would do a lot of his body weight exercises during commercials on TV.

But first thing we do when an athlete comes in they go through a body weight warm-up, and that's our assessment. We could see can they do body weight squats, lunges, push-ups, can they do basic exercises for their stomach muscles, do they get fatigued during the warm-up. These are not just 15 year olds, but 16, 17 year olds. They get extremely fatigued during the basic exercises. So there has to be a foundation built before they move on to doing something at a higher level.

Today I was working with the Lehigh University wrestling team. These are division one wrestlers, some of the best in the country. In fact some of them are all Americans. The ones that were not used to me that were inexperienced at training, they were crushed during the warm-up. Those are 19, 20, 21 year olds, yet our well trained 15 year olds can crush that warm-up. They have a high level of sport skill but a very low level of strength and power and basically physical conditioning skill.

The foundation is always you must get great at the body weight exercises, squatting, lunging, push-ups, pull-ups, sprinting up hills, stair climbs, all the basics. The exercises that work the most are still the old school basics. I have a large pile of old magazines from the 50s and 60s. Back then the magazine we called Appropriately Strength and Health because ... I love it because ... or Health and Strength. You can't separate. If you truly want optimal strength and health you shouldn't separate them. They have a lot of basic bar bell, basic dumb bell exercises and body weight exercises. Nothing fancy, nothing complicated.

What I tell coaches also I say, "If you're trying to wow people with fancy stuff and how flashy the exercises are, that's the sign of an amateur." The expert, Bruce Lee said this, "There's beauty and power in simplicity, in the basics." You don't need to really impress the younger athletes out there, males, females. They need to get great at body weight exercises. We want to see kids being able to do 10 pull-ups, 50 body weight squats in a row, 40 push-ups in a row, full range of motion and they don't necessarily need to do a workout.

What I tell our athletes is I go, "The days that you're not here," I go, "After you take a shower, I want you to do 10 squats, 10 push-up, 10 lunges. Come home from school, do that again, and then do that one more time in the evening." Then I say, "When you're at school if you pass by a pull-up bar do a couple reps of perfect technique." That technique, the term is called grease the groove. You're simply practicing the body weight exercise. You're not exhausting yourself. You're just doing at perfect form and you get extremely strong doing that. That's what strength is, it's a skill. They learn the technique, they practice it. The same way you would practice learning a language when you're new to it, you do it throughout the day.

Dave: So doing two perform form pull-ups isn't really going to grow a muscle unless that's really pushing a limit for you, but it's going to grow your nervous system and it's going to grow your form, which is going to make you stronger but not necessarily bigger is what you're saying?

Zach: Yeah. If you wanted to get bigger there's two things really that need to be in play, you need a certain amount of volume, you need to do repetition work, so you'd have to do multiple sets, you have to keep them together, and you would have to increase your protein a little bit.

A lot people say you don't need that but if you're trying to put on size, especially that younger generation, their metabolism is flying, they could get away with it. Things work differently when you're younger compared to when you start getting a little bit older your metabolism changes. But getting stronger is your first step towards adding muscle. So practicing the exercises throughout the day will help people get stronger and it will help build a little bit of muscle. But if you want to build up the muscle you'll require a little bit more volume.

Dave: More volume and I'm assuming that they might want to eat differently. Let's talk about that. I'll assume that the adults know this. They've probably figured out eating junk food probably is not good for them and they can feel the difference. But when you're under about 24 most of the time your mitochondria have not been wacked by life and my mistreatment.

I look at the stuff I used to eat and squeeze margarine was actually supposed to be healthier than butter, so I'm getting really inflammatory margarine and clogging up my cells, I'm just eating the worst of the worst because we didn't know any better. My parents were actually health conscious. They used to read what says in Reader's Digest or whatever, and then that's what you do. Bread, yeah, bring it on. A lot of my problems stemmed from just complete misunderstanding. I had my share of pizza and Burger King and McDonalds several nights a week. It was easy. It was cheap. It was food.

I've actually done some work with Peter Thiel's foundation the 20 Under 20, and this is 20 just really amazing young people who are not going to college. Instead they're funded to start companies. They're looking to mine asteroids and change our genes.

Zach: Awesome.

Dave: Awesome stuff. These are kids who just don't have fear ... They're not really kids, they're young adults, but they just don't have the fear that would come. I sat down with all 20 of them and I gave a talk about food and fully, I don't know, a

third of them were like, “That’s all BS. There’s no science backing up that healthy food is any healthier. Like calories are calories and I can eat whatever I want, and I can drink all night, and it doesn’t matter, so there.” Then the only one that emailed me later was like, “Dave, I can’t believe how my brain works, I can focus all day. Oh my God it’s amazing.” So people would try, they wouldn’t try or whatever, but that natural ability to just basically ... You’ve probably eaten [motor oil 00:35:59] when you were a kid.

What’s your advice or what your take on that? Why is that way, and what should young people do when they want to remain vigorous and strong, or even get stronger and vigorous? What’s the basic rules that you would say give to a coaching client?

Zach: I love this question and then I’ll follow it up with how I changed things when I got into my mid 20s. You’ll love it because it was a hack of how my body changed in probably a week. The first thing I do is I don’t go extreme with these younger athletes. When I say athlete I look at everybody. I don’t say you’re competing in this sport you’re an athlete. You don’t compete, you’re just an entrepreneur, or you’re a mom a dad. I look at everybody as an athlete, the whole picture.

The younger ones ... I’ve listened to nutritionists speak to them and they’ll say things like, “If you’re going to have cereal, skimmed milk. If you’re going to eat chicken, take the skin off the chicken.” These are nutritionists with probably graduate degrees.

Here is what I tell them, I go, “We’re going to with one rule. Stop buying the school lunch and you have to eat breakfast, pack your own lunch, and eat dinner, whatever mom makes.” Once they start getting into that basic premise of consistency with a breakfast, lunch, dinner and they’re not eating the school lunch, I say, “Now what I want you guys to do is try to have a salad a day and have protein on it,” something simple like that. If they say, “Oh, I don’t like salad,” then I tell them, “Then just have some broccoli. It’s okay to throw a little bit of cheese on there, through some butter on there.”

Their body is like you’re saying at that younger age are not ... they don’t have ... Some do, they don’t have this gluten intolerance and everybody stomach is killing them and all this stuff. It’s certainly different from when I was younger. You never had like 50% in the class with a peanut intolerance.

I personally, I just don't trust food nowadays. When I was younger I never remember kids saying my mom has cancer, my dad has cancer, my uncle, my aunt. You just didn't hear that stuff. Today you hear this stuff all the time. As a father I just don't trust the food that's coming anywhere outside of something that I know where it's coming from out a farm. It's tough.

So for the younger ones I try to once they start kind of dialing in, no school lunch, pack your own lunch. When I say pack your lunch I say if you're going to get lunch meats then you're going to get store baked meat, so you're going to stay away from the stuff that's bloated. Some of the stores do have natural turkey so it's not going to be loaded with as much crap as ...

Dave: Not as much my man.

Zach: Not as much but still bad. So we're not going fully extreme.

Dave: You don't have to be crazy. It's way better. That whole idea don't be perfect, just know the direction of perfect and just wobble in that direction.

Zach: You inch it little by little. That's how these big changes start to come. Then they start thriving and embracing the fact that, you know what, this is awesome. I'm starting to feel strong, my energy is greater. Breakfast that they're normally saying, "I always have cereal. I always have cereal," I go, "Well, what you're going to do know is you're going to have two scrambled eggs and try to have like a side of pork roll of bacon." Then things start to change. Or if they tell me, "I don't have time. I go to the deli," I say, "Then you go to the deli and you ask them for, you go scrambled eggs and bacon. You just get it as a platter." They start making these small changes that actually make a huge difference to them.

Dave: The first difference would be acne, right?

Zach: Oh I see this a lot. The skin clears out. The skin of kids is in a really, really bad shape. It's amazing how the parents still are, I don't know if it's that I take the granted the fact that I'm exposed to learning form people like you, from Kelly Starrett that I think everybody is learning from them. Parents are still feeding their kids in these quick ways, "Here is your \$3 to buy school lunch." There's tons of food in a box and in a plastic wrapper. We start trying to get them to move away from those things and it's like little by little adds up.

I say, “Okay, a red light food is anything that’s in a box or in a wrapper. Green light food is something that’s not, you guys aren’t going to find in that.” They start to embrace and they develop I feel it’s a mental toughness. They start embracing and thriving on eating healthier because it makes them feel better, it makes them feel stronger. Then here and there they go back and they eat, let’s say they go and eat a bagel with whatever. They’re like, “My stomach is killing me. I feel like shit all day.” I go, “There you go. Now you take the pain with eating like crap.”

What’s interesting is when I was in my teens except for the bodybuilding times and then leading up until about 24 I was still, my lunch would always be two turkey sandwiches, my breakfast was always eight egg whites. I laugh at that stuff. Then I remember I was a second year teacher and I remember saying to myself, “You know, I’m not really making any progress. I’m not building muscle. I don’t look like I’m getting better. I’ve hit a plateau. I’ve hit a wall.” So I said, “I’m going to cut out all bread, milk, dairy.”

I did that and I remember like a week, week and a half later I remember being at the gym with a tank top, people were like, “Holy shit, are you getting ready for another bodybuilding show?” My muscles and my body filled out and I got leaner by eating more and simply by cutting out the sandwiches, and I was drinking milk, eating cereal. So around that age 24 your body starts to say, “This stuff, we’re done with it. It’s not going to work for us. It’s not good anymore.”

That’s probably also around the time, this is like 99, 2000 when the foods were being tampered with much, much more, they started getting tampered with much more at that time than they were in the 80s where we could drink milk and it was a little less dangerous. So things change. I’ll never forget how quick my body changed in that one week.

I also stopped listening to everybody else around me. I was a natural and I’m a natural lifter. Everybody was training what you said about six days a week, three days in a row, one day off. I started training every other day, but the day after I would do squats or deadlifts I took two days off and I perked up my body and it was bodybuilding split.

A lot of people listening, if they’re cross fitters, they don’t do that, but I was training my whole body once every nine to 11 days and I was getting stronger. I’ll never forget the gym owner. I was at a pretty high level bodybuilding gym. I remember he

passed me by and he said, “Holy shit.” I said, “You know what I stopped doing?” I said, “I stopped listening to everybody here.” I said, “I always noticed that on the second day my motivation was a little bit down on training.” I said, “I will only train when I feel like it.” So train a day, take a day off, and then anything after like a squatting or a deadlifting day I took two days off.

I remember people were like, “How big do you want to get?” I said, “I don’t really train that much.” It was getting my most gains and that’s called auto regulation, meaning some people can handle high volume of work, high stress, but if you’re not that kind of person then you want to learn to work to what your body needs. That takes times. That’s like being your own scientist. That takes time to learn, but you want to basically want to leave the gym before you’re done.

That goes for the younger athletes listening to the cross fitters who tend to beat their body up. Don’t be afraid to rest. It’s a thing that we don’t like to talk about, especially me with my background and going through the Navy SEAL experience and having that wrestling background, but a lot of our athletes train twice a week, some of them train three days a week. We’ve got kids that are going to division one schools that are being all state, all American amongst thousands of competitors. People would assume they train six days. What we do is we train two days a week, some of them three, and I match the training according to their personality trait. If they’re aggressive I move more hard work with them.

Dave: If you’re listening to this whether you’re a young person in school or you’re a busy adult doing whatever it is you’re doing, if your assumption is that you’re a good person because you’re working out six days a week, I certainly changed my habits, what you want to actually work on doing is recovering six days a week. Yeah, you can exercise on the same you recover, but the more exercise you have the more recover you need. If you exercise really, really hard two to three times a week, then you’re going to spend the rest of your time like, “What do I do today to recover? Do I mediate? Do I eat more? Do I get more sleep?” It’s amazing what you can do.

The hard part though is all right, let’s you’re in a high school sports thing. At least if I remember when I played soccer back in the day, we had practice I think every night or four nights a week or something like that, and then on weekends we had games. So I was getting five good hours of exercise there. Are PE coaches and college and

high school level coaches that sabotage themselves by over exercising our kids or pushing them too hard?

Zach: We wonder why the rate of ACL injury tears especially among girls has risen something like 400% in 10 years. Now why are kids getting injured more? In a nutshell for the parents and coaches listening, nobody cares if John is a state champ or the little league champ at age seven, 10, 12 or even 15. There used to be no terms I always say back when you and I were young there was no such thing as little leaguers elbow or tennis elbow. Today we have baseball in the fall, baseball in spring. We have basketball all year round. We have all these clubs.

But the most dominant sports and the most dominant athletes, especially from the 70s, 80s, and 90s where a lot of the overseas athletes because they built up a foundation, they did a variety of sports, they did gymnastics, weightlifting. If you were a swimmer you still did gymnastics, you still lifted weights. If you were a wrestler you were out during the winter doing cross country skiing, you'd play all different sports. But today we don't do that.

If I was a coach running any especially high school what you do the six days a week and you're competing I would have train that would go high intensity, lower, up and down, up and down. Before a big event we would de-load and do less training. That's basically the art of coaching. So yes, harder, harder, harder, it beats them up and what happens is they burn out before it's time to compete at the end of the season when it's time to try to qualify for championship events.

There was a method out there called the high low method where the Russians popularized it where you never train hard two days in a row. If you consider that workout medium it gets categorized as high, so you would go high low, high low, or high low day off.

Here's the real interesting story if we wanted to really go at an extreme of the other end. A kid came to me. I had known him since he was younger. He was burned out with wrestling because it was all the time, all the time. He didn't even want to wrestle senior year. He was a very high level wrestler. I said, "Do me a favor," I go, "I know what everybody else is doing. They come home from practice, they go and run three to five miles, they go to the wrestling club." I mean these kids were putting in about 24 hours of training a week on top of starting themselves so I said, "Here's what we're going to do-

Dave: It's insane.

Zach: Yes, it's insane. I said, "Go to practice. Don't run. Don't go to a club." I said, "Come and lift here, I'll have you in and out in 15 to 20 minutes." He did that. Before the middle of the season tournament he didn't train, and then at the end of the season there's about two weeks during the qualifying tournaments he stopped training. Each workout would be three exercises. We'd warm up for a few minutes, we'd train hard for 10 to 15 minutes, and we'd cool down for five minutes. He's got the record at the school for the most wins. He took fourth in the state.

But if I would've said, "You need to train harder, you need to train more," you see he was already exhausted. For him to get stronger and more explosive and more confident he had to feel better. The way we did that was by training less.

Sometimes the parents were confused because they're like, "Oh, we're paying you to train him for an hour." I say, "Training it's done when it's done. Not train longer, train harder." When I was in graduate school I trained twice a week. I would train Tuesday and Sunday because those were the only days I could sneak in a workout and I was getting stronger. I remember saying to myself, "How little can we do to just like maximize the training." All those experience taught me how to train people in these manners.

So should a coach push people six days a week hard? What a coach should do is they should train year round using body weight workouts, basic free weight exercises, but they should have high low, high low. Every probably six to eight weeks give them a week off so they're excited to come back and to want to come back and train. During the season what you need to do is pay careful attention to when the games and the competition is and don't always do two and a half hour practices. Maybe one day is an hour and a half practice. Maybe the next day is 45 minutes of just light scale work. Maybe the third day could be off or could be a very hard day. But you're going to go up and down with those intensity levels. That's the art of coaching.

Coaches have to educate themselves. They need to get away from the old school ways of thinking. There's a lot of egos with coaches because they're afraid that somebody else is going to come in and change things. But here's the bottom line. As a parent I'm saying this, not as a coach and as a teacher, but kids don't get to go back for a second chance to live their potential. A lot of athletes don't compete in college or beyond. Some of them thanks to guys like Joe De Sena and even Sparta Race and

all these competitions, we can go back, but there's something about those earlier years, and the best way to do it is to train and treat all those athletes as individuals.

How will you get there? If you genuinely care, you will research, you will listen to the Bulletproof Radio, you'll listen to the different coaches, you'll go out and find ways to treat all these athletes differently. Today while I'm training that division one wrestling team this guy needs mental toughness or he got a little a bit of different training protocol. This guy he doesn't need the intensity, he doesn't thrive on that, so he gets a little bit more of a calmness. Everybody is different so training has to match personalities, it has to match their physical preparation. Kids are getting hurt because they're being put into all in one program and that's not going to work for them. It's just going to work against them.

Dave: I sure wish that I had some of this knowledge when I was a young man, and the same with the stuff that I write about. When I started blogging maybe just 20 people will not go through all the pain of all the knee surgeries and all the inflammation and being obese and all that stuff, but maybe just a few of those would be helpful.

I'm amazed how many people actually care about this and to hear a guy who was successful as a teenager and is still successful, you're strong, you're a successful business person, talking about the same stuff, not the same but in similar vein to what Doug McGuff just talked about on the show in the last couple of days body of science, the same thing, work out less, work out really really well, and then recover like a maniac. Whether you're a teenager, whether you're an adult, you're going to increase how you look, you're going to increase your performance. I would say as an anti-aging nonprofit guy you'd probably live longer too because the biological stress you put yourself under is hormetic stress, the kind of causes positive growth versus stress that you can't handle, which is the kind that causes negative growth.

Now there's two more questions that I want to ask you before we run up on the end of the show. The first one is tell me about your underground strength gym, tell me how it works, and also mention where you are. Because I mentioned that there are some people in your area who would love to work with you directly. But just what's different with your approach in your facility and where it is.

Zach: Yes, so I'm in New Jersey. We've got two locations. One is Addison New Jersey which is a bit central or little bit north, it's near Rutgers University, and then

the other is a small town called Manasquan which is the Jersey Shore, so two different places about 45 minutes away. But it started probably my fourth year, the summer before my fourth year of teaching, right after ACL surgery I said, “You know, I’m going to be a man on a mission and I’m going to help athletes avoid these knee surgeries.” My shoulder, I had a pretty severe shoulder tear. My lower back was always injured. I said, “I’m going to change these kids.”

I always trained at a traditional gym, a bodybuilding gym, and I looked great but like we said earlier I just did not perform well. I was confused. “Why am I always tired? Why am I always injured? Why is my mind always can’t fight back against these fleeting thought when on fatigue?”

I started training athletes at my parents’ house. I had a 300 pound bar bell set and two sets of dumbbells. I started training them with the free weights but then I started taking them to the backyard to use stones. We started doing stone workouts training like they were on a farm. Then I’d take them to the playground and have them move animals. They would climb up and down swing sets, they jump on and off the picnic tables, they would press the picnic tables.

I only did have two kids that first summer. One was a basketball player, one was a wrestler. The basketball player started ... He was never able to slam-dunk the ball. In a few weeks he was dunking the ball, he became team captain, he started getting recruited by colleges. The wrestler who had lost to a couple of high level kids, two or three weeks later was beating them. I started saying there’s more to this training than just the physical. It’s the mental that they get from it, the confidence.

Fast-forward a few years I’m running my “underground strength gym” from my garage that I had in my first house, training them in my garage, training them in the backyard using tree logs, stones, climbing ropes, pushing my truck across the empty parking lots when schools are closed. They were getting phenomenal results with this kind of no rules training. I wasn’t really following the perfect workout. I was following what each kid needed.

That progressed and evolved into the first underground strength gym and it’s got all different training tools. But it’s not so much the tools, because now I opened that first gym seven years ago, the first warehouse gym, yeah, tires, kegs, sleds for dragging, pushing. Everybody has those things. But it’s not the tools that make it. It’s how you put those things together.

For example, probably a lot of people drink coffee. Why doesn't everybody get the same results? It's there is a specific to way to do things. So our training is for all athletes. We've got a lot adult, men that come as well. When the men come in the training is not just geared for they want to lose fat but it's for them to get tougher in life, to get stronger in life. The training is a blend of the physical and the mental. To me that's the most powerful thing because getting big biceps and all that stuff is easy, but developing your body and your mind as one to create a successful life, to live a strong life it's just the most awesome thing.

When I see our athletes go onto colleges and succeed and then after college they're successful adults to me that's awesome. We've had kids ... It just blows my mind. They're weak. They're under 90 pounds. They don't win any ... They don't win matches. They don't succeed. Then they start training with us, they build confidence, they build strength. Then it's like their parents, their parents cry. Their parents cry because they see the success that their kid has. When I see that I say to myself, "That's why I do this."

I work with a lot of high level people Dave. I work with division one athletes. With the book coming out I'm going to be working with some pretty high level military. People always ask me, "You've got this thriving internet business, you've got all, you know, you're making a lot of money doing these things." They say to me, "Why do you have a gym?"

I live for that. I live for helping the kid that was weak, that never won, that doesn't succeed. To me my goal one day is all this internet, all the seminars take off to a point where I just train all these kids for free. It becomes their safe haven where they're able to come and train with me for free. Because there are certainly some people that can't afford to do it. To me the biggest thing is the changes I give to this younger generation. That's what I love.

Dave: In my experience all the most successful health entrepreneurs, they're not motivated by money. It's about how do I help the most people. It's funny if you can afford to fly somewhere and do a talk it helps you to help more people. It's one of those things where you're working to change the world, to make it better. All the people that I admire the most are motivated that way, about helping others, not about give another buck here and there. It's about ...

Zach: Change. It's just powerful.

Dave: Now we're running up on the end of the show. So give people your url. Your book looks like something like this, right?

Zach: Yeah, that's it.

Dave: If you're watching on YouTube or iTunes you can actually see I'm holding up here. It's good a book. You tell the story too about how you went from the serious how do I have big muscles to how do I function well. You've had amazing success in training people. What's the url and then I'm going to ask you the final question.

Zach: Sure the url is undergroundstrengthbook.com or you'll probably have a link below your video where you can check that out. They could find the ad, and also I'm easily found on social networks.

Dave: Awesome. The final question since you're listening to the podcast you probably heard it but your top three recommendations for people who want to perform better at everything, not just picking up heavy stuff or kicking ass or whatever. But if you want to perform well everywhere in life, what are those?

Zach: These are like the top three hacks. Number one for getting stuff done is wake up an hour early or set aside one hour time throughout the day where there's just no one or no thing can interrupt you. I learned that a long time ago when I heard Dan Kennedy speak about a very successful entrepreneur. He said that that man said that his most powerful part of his day was when he would escape and he would go to some little shack that he had somewhere near a river and he would play cassette tapes of what he called head trip stuff, stuff that would get like Napoleon Hill, stuff that would get his mind in the right place. So have an hour of your day that is for you, whether it's to do work or to work on your mind, work on your body, give yourself that hour. For me, I wake up an hour early and I get a ton of work done.

Number two and this is been spoken about a lot with you is that things change when you start to get a little bit older and you should really value sleep. There's certainly times during this stuff with all the book where I'm not sleeping as much, and it takes days to get back into that groove to be able to be high functioning.

Number three, this is one is sometimes tough for people but it's who do you surround yourself with. You could hack your way into surrounding yourself, go into the Bulletproof Conference. Last weekend I held a Mastermind up in Vermont at Joe

De Sena's place. We had 15 coaches, two of them were Navy SEALs, and in those two days peoples' lives were changed because of who they surrounded themselves with. When you're around people that think what we spoke about earlier like normal you start to feel awkward when you're pushing to achieve high levels of success. So hang around people that are high level thinkers.

If you can't find those people, then what you do is you leverage it by listening to podcasts, reading powerful books, things that will inspire you. Some basic things that I always do is since I was in my early 20s I always set a goal, I said, "You're going to read two pages every night." The first book that really changed my life was Tony Robbins "Awaken the Giant Within." When you're saying read two pages every night is like saying floss two teeth. You continue reading and you go to sleep with powerful thoughts versus going to sleep with stress or being unhappy or unsatisfied.

So my three things are really taking care to sleep, controlling who you're around, and if you can't control the people you're around, control the information that you're taking in through books, through podcasts, and have an hour a day to give yourself the success, hour in the morning, get away mid way during your lunch.

I always did that once I started learning the power of this. When I was a teacher I rarely went out to lunch with the other teachers. I worked or I listen to motivational things. I've listened to "The Secret" over and over again and it put my mind in a powerful place because I was surrounded by people that would say, "You're working too hard. Stay here. You need this. You need that. You need health insurance." They were ... You're in that normal realm and it helped me expand my way of thinking. That will help people succeed at a much greater level.

Dave: Great advice. Thanks again. It's great having you on the show Zach, Zach Even-Esh, and I look forward to meeting you in person one of these days.

Zach: Yes, absolutely. Thanks everybody. Thanks Dave.

Dave: One of my favorite sources of protein is [Upgraded Collagen Protein](#). This is a pre-digested form of collagen that comes from grass-fed cows. For people who are looking at resetting their leptin levels one of the tricks to do that is to have 30 grams of protein in the morning. The way to modify your [Bulletproof Coffee](#) is to make it the way you would ideally with [Brain Octane Oil](#) and then add about four



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