
Upper Limit Fat Loss

An “in-the-trenches” guide to the
fastest possible fat loss

Published by FitnessUnderOath.com
Copyright 2013

Title: Upper Limit Fat Loss

Published By: FitnessUnderOath.com

No part of this manual may be reproduced or distributed without the expressed written consent of FitnessUnderOath.com

Every word of this manual is protected by U.S. Copyright Laws, 2013.

Legal Notices

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying or recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, or transmitted by email without permission in writing from the publisher.

While all attempts have been made to verify the information provided in this publication, neither the author nor the publisher assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions, or contrary interpretations of the subject matter herein.

This publication is not intended for use as any source of advice such as legal, medical, or accounting. The publisher wants to stress that the information contained herein may be subject to varying international, federal, state, and/or local laws or regulations.

The purchaser or reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information.

Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, including international, federal, state and local governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising, and all other aspects of doing business in the US, Canada or any other jurisdiction is the sole responsibility of the purchaser or reader.

Medical Advisory

The information and workout procedures provided in this guide are very intense and should not be attempted by anyone unless a doctor has cleared you for such an intense workout.

If you have any existing health problems that would prohibit you from taking part in any of these activities, you should refrain.

As always, you should clear this program with your doctor before you begin.

Introduction & How This Guide Developed

This is not a diet book.

This guide does not contain a workout program, a 12 week plan, or a recipe section.

This guide will not give you any instructions on what to eat or how to train to lose weight.

The aisles at Barnes & Noble are jam packed with those types of books. If that's what you're looking for, there's no shortage of options.

This guide is different. This an an “in-the-trenches”, blow-by-blow account of how I managed to drop 20lbs in 40 days. You should NOT attempt to duplicate my method. Instead, study my process. Success leaves clues, as they say. So study what I did. I will indicate key points along the way.

Then use my experience and my results to help you accomplish your own goals. Let's begin...

Hard Line Fat Loss

So here's how this all came to be.

In the spring of 2013, I was living in Colorado. I was training hard, eating fairly clean and making good, slow, steady progress. Then my wife and I decided we wanted to live closer to friends and family (we are originally from Michigan.)

So we put our house on the market. 30 days later, we had a sold sign in our front yard and a to-do list a mile long. Anybody will tell you... moving suuuuuucks. Moving across country, with twin toddlers, plus a cat... not to mention moving a business (I'm self-employed)... well,

let's just say this particular situation sucked worse than most moving experiences.

Along the way, I fell off the wagon. Sold my garage gym shortly after the house in Colorado sold. (Didn't have space for it at the house in Michigan.) Told myself I was going to keep training (using bodyweight exercises) and keep eating right even after the last of the home gym was loaded up and carted off. But that simply wasn't the case. More often than not, after a long day of work, plus packing, plus taking care of the kids, getting them bathed and ready for bed.... I was all but ready to collapse into bed by midnight.

Diet wasn't much better. You can wait until the last possible moment to pack up the kitchen stuff but once it's packed it seems pizza and beer become the defacto fuel of choice for moving.

Then of course the actual cross-country drive ends up being 3 straight days of caffeine and fast food. Long story short, a full month goes by and you realize you haven't exercised once and you're starting to forget what a salad looks like. (Any of this hitting close to home?)

So at this point in the story I'm living in Michigan. We're mostly unpacked. Kids are signed up for school. Found a local gym and I've started getting back "under the barbell." Feeling good.

I start scanning the local powerlifting website looking for an upcoming competition. Thinking maybe I could compete again (I'd done one competition in Colorado before my twins were born. Planned to continue competing but having twin newborns all but squashed that idea.)

As luck would have it, I happened to find an upcoming powerlifting meet just an hour from my house. Great! The day of the competition was only about six weeks away. Not ideal, but I compete for fun (I'm in no danger of setting any world records) so this wasn't such a bad thing.

At the time I weighed about 185 pounds. In powerlifting, there are different weight classes. The first time I competed, I weighed 194 pounds which put me in the 198-lb class. (Each weight class is defined by the upper limit. So the 198lb weight class means you can weigh up to 198lbs. If you weigh in at 199lbs, you get bumped to the next higher weight class.)

Anyway, like I said I was a little leaner than I was when I first competed. At a 185lbs, I was well within striking distance of the 181-lb weight class. I could just clean up my diet a bit, avoid carbs the last few days and boom, I could easily duck into the 181-weight class without too much hassle.

Or...

The Decision To Drop To 165

The next weight class down from 181 is the 165-lb class. For competitive purposes, you want to be as light as you can. A guy who can bench press 250lbs at a bodyweight of 165 is stronger (on a pound for pound basis) than a guy who can bench press the exact same amount of weight but weighs 181 pounds.

So if I could drop down to 165 pounds (without losing strength or muscle) I'd ultimately be more competitive. That was one small aspect of my decision.

But there were a few more important reasons why I was considering dropping down to 165lbs.

#1) Walmart: One day after arriving in Michigan, I ran out to the local Walmart to get some essentials. I was blown away. Colorado is a pretty healthy place. Sure, they've got their share of overweight people but most people are reasonably healthy.

But seconds after walking into the Walmart in Michigan, I realized I was no longer in Colorado. Nearly EVERYONE was on a scooter. And

practically every single person was fat. Not “a few pounds overweight.” I’m talking 300, 350, 400 pounds or more.

Grossly overweight.

For some reason... this motivated me. When I see a very fat person, I feel bad for them. Because I can only imagine how hard their life must be. I know that, given the choice, if they could snap their fingers and be thin they would jump at the opportunity in a heartbeat.

But because they cannot find the will to change, they remain trapped in their overweight body. I realize this sounds rather sympathetic. But the truth is, I felt rageful. Angry at the entire state for being so fat. Angry that somehow it was perfectly acceptable for dozens and dozens of humans with two working legs to somehow motor along on scooters rather than walk. In retrospect, I was pissed off at the world... and for no good reason.

But for whatever reason, I channeled the emotion. Filled out my entry form for the powerlifting meet. Wrote the check for the entry fee. Where it said “weight class” my pen hesitated for a second. Then I circled “165” and mailed that sucker immediately before I could change my mind.

The stage was set.

Key Points: “Getting Ready To Start The Diet” Mindset

Key Point #1: Personal change is often inspired by rage. If you're not pissed off... you're probably not motivated enough to make a change. Nobody looks in the mirror, feels great about their reflection and then goes out and makes widespread changes. Nope. What really happens is somebody gets fed up... pissed off.... angry enough to make a change... and then they use that rage as motivation to fuel a dramatic personal change.

Key Point #2: Every man needs a war.

I'll be honest: If I'm not attacking some kind of goal... I turn into a pretty miserable S.O.B. I don't realize it at first. I just know I'm bored, depressed, unhappy, not sleeping well, etc. But then once I latch onto a goal, my mood suddenly gets better and everything lines up. I guess every man (and woman) needs his/her own personal war.

Key Point #3: Hard target

Most dieters fail. And most dieters have hazy goals. “I'd like to lose a few pounds and feel better.” Awww, that's adorable. Don't set adorable goals. Set hard targets.

Mine was simple. I needed to weigh exactly 164.9 lbs or less on Saturday Nov 2nd by 8:29am (weigh-ins were from 7am – 8:30am.)

That's a hard target goal.

Key Point #4: Dream No Small Dreams

I could have taken the easy route. I could have decided to compete in the 181's and had a very enjoyable 6 weeks of training before the meet.

Instead I decided to gun for the 165's and had to endure 6 weeks of misery.

But for some reason the brain doesn't get excited by small goals. If you choose a big goal, it forces you to commit 100%. And more often than not total commitment is the only way to get results. I've grown to accept this phenomenon over the years, but it still baffles me.

If I give myself an easy task like “try and eat more vegetables this week”, more often than not I'll fail. But if I set up something huge like losing 20lbs in 40 days... and I almost always come out on top.

Key Point #5: Cut the check

This was another very important of the process. I took out a pen, filled out my entry form, wrote a check, marked the box for “165-pounds” and mailed it in. On the surface, nothing special.

But examine it deeper and you'll notice I was essentially making a commitment – in writing – to be at a certain place, on a certain date, at a certain time... and at a certain weight. And to make the commitment even stronger... I was sending a check essentially cementing my commitment.

Key Point: #6: Fear of failure

This might be the most important feature of all. If you've ever failed at a diet before... what was the consequence? I'm guessing it made absolutely no difference at all. Heck, I've been in the same boat. Decided to lose weight... then quit when the going got tough.... without any consequence. “Oh, I'll just start again on Monday.” Sound familiar?

This time was different.

In reality... it would not have such a terrible thing if I didn't make weight. I simply would have changed my form on the day of the meet and they would have put me in the 181 class. No big deal.

But I sure as hell didn't want to do that. I didn't want to be the guy that showed up and “couldn't make weight.” I didn't want to fail.

And as the meet started to get closer... I ended up having to tell more people my intentions. Usually I'm a pretty private guy and don't like to tell people my plans.

But this time around I ended up telling damn near everybody. Not by choice, just by circumstances. My parents were planning to do something with my kids on a Saturday, so they asked about this particular Saturday... so I ended up telling them. Then I ended up getting invited to a party on the Friday night before.... told the person I couldn't go because I had “a thing on Saturday” and before you know it I'm telling them about the meet.

During the final week, when everybody around me was wondering why I wasn't eating pizza and candy like a normal person (it was Halloween) I'd end up telling them about my upcoming weightlifting competition.

And of course, I ended up telling my email list all about the meet and my intentions to lift in the 165 class. When all was said and done – there were probably over 500 people that knew about my goal and my deadline. That is a LOT of social pressure.

So that's a glimpse inside my mind at the onset of this plan. These are my key points for my personal journey... but many of these points are universal so keep these in mind and start to figure out how you can adapt these for your own purposes.

You may not ever lift at a sanctioned powerlifting meet, but you can embrace these principles and use them to propell your success.

Next...

The Madness & The Misery

(The mental obstacles that keep people fat)

In my eyes there are some key mental obstacles that prevent people from losing weight. Some of these are male specific, but most apply to both men and women.

#1) Get light to get lean.

Thanks to Arnold and the articles in the muscle magazines, we all have unrealistic expectations of what our bodyweight should really be.

I call this the phenomenon “225 and ripped” because almost everyday somebody asks me for help gaining muscle or losing fat. When I ask about their goals, I always hear “I’d like to be 225lbs and ripped.”

Most people don't realize you have a better chance of winning the lottery than becoming 225 pounds and ripped. (For our purposes, let's call “ripped” 6% bodyfat or less.) I don't care that “pro bodybuilder xyz” is 275 pounds and ripped – he's been blessed with incredible genetics and he's probably been taking powerful anabolic steroids for over a decade.

For us average people (not genetically blessed and not taking steroids)... you're going to have to get light to get lean. This is hard for most people to accept – especially men.

Trust me... I get it. I don't like the fact that I “only” weigh 165 pounds on contest day. That feels like a shockingly small amount for a man. I have to constantly remind myself that I could weight 185, 195 even 215 pounds... but it would only be extra body fat that would make me weigh more. So I have to accept that I'll never be 225 pounds and ripped and instead find a way to be lean (and also “light”) whilst getting as strong as possible.

Most people can't accept this. Men especially seem to have a "lower weight threshold" where they start to get uncomfortable. If your goal is to get lean/get ripped then you have to see the process through to the finish no matter what you're "left with" on the scale.

But often times a guy will be losing fat and making great progress... right up until the point where his bodyweight dips below a certain boundry. I've seen it happen with guys of all sizes. For some guys, it's 200 pounds – once their weight dips below 200 they get uncomfortable, they start to find excuses why they should be eating more or why they should not weigh less than 200 pounds. This is despite the fact that they're still not lean.

They cannot give themselves the mental permission to weight less than they "think they should."

The solution: Decide how lean you want to get based on body fat or waist measurement. (Ie: 6% body fat, 30 inch waist.) Then commit to achieving the goal no matter what your final bodyweight ends up being. Expect that you will probably end up weighing 10- 15 pounds less than you think you will when all is said and done.

#2) Metabolism

Another major stumbling block for most people trying to get lean is the idea that eating less food will somehow "damage" or "ruin" their metabolism.

This issue is particularly frustrating for me because I see so many "expert" trainers and gurus out there continually repeating misinformation and lies about metabolism. There's even a handful of gurus who make their living helping people repair the "metabolic damage" that their clients probably don't have!

Let's set the record straight. First, when we talk about "metabolism" we typically mean resting metabolic rate. This is the

measure of how many calories you'd burn in a day if you were confined to bed rest. Obviously running 5 miles a day will burn calories... but those calories are burned from your activity and therefore should not be included in any calculations for your resting metabolic rate.

Your resting metabolic rate is determined by your lean mass. When people hear "lean mass" they immediately think "muscle" but your lean mass is everything that's not fat. Water, organs... the food in your stomach, the piss in your bladder.... everything.

As you get leaner... you will lose lean mass. NOT MUSCLE. But you will lose water weight. You will probably have less food in your belly and less poop in your colon. This all adds up to small drop in "lean mass." And because your resting metabolic rate is calculated based on your lean mass... your metabolism is going to dip.

Do Not Freak Out.

This is normal. A smaller person will have a lower resting metabolic rate than a larger person. This is normal. A mouse burns fewer calories per day than an elephant. Again, normal.

Since you are trying to become a smaller person... it is NORMAL for your resting metabolic rate to become more like that of a smaller person.

It's not "slowing down." Your metabolism is not being damaged or broken. You're just burning (slightly) fewer calories because you are becoming a (slightly) smaller person.

Once you understand and accept this, you'll find it easier to lose weight. I see far too many people get derailed during their attempts to lose weight because they are overly concerned about their "metabolism."

They think if they didn't lose any weight then their "metabolism" is shutting down and therefore they should eat MORE food. The reality is if the scale isn't moving you should eat LESS food.

This is one of those areas where being "too smart" can actually hurt you. Take a "dumb" person and put them on a diet. Tell them to eat less so that they weigh less. Pretty freakin simple, right? If you're not losing weight, eat less. Boom. Problem solved.

But the smart person will over-think this. "Hmm, I'm not losing weight. Too much food? No, that couldn't be it. It must be my metabolism. I should eat MORE food. This way I will lose more weight. Brilliant!"

I'd laugh if that wasn't the exact advice that many celebrity trainers actually tell their (struggling) clients.

Just to put the final nail in the coffin, I hired a test-subject to go 7 days without eating a single calorie. He consumed only water and coffee. No calories for 7 days. He got a DEXA scan done before and after the experiment. After 7 days, he'd lost 15 pounds. (8 pounds of fat, 7 pounds of water.) Yet according to the DEXA scan, his metabolism "slowed" by only 80 calories per day. That's about half a banana.

So the idea that the average person is "ruining" or "damaging" their metabolism by eating a few hundred calories less per day is laughable.

The solution: Stop worrying about your "precious metabolism." If you want to burn tons of calories per day... gain 100 pounds of fat and then run 5 miles every day. You'll burn plenty of calories. But that's not the goal...now is it?

If you want to be lean, then accept that your metabolism will ever-so-slightly come down as you become a smaller person. But that's simply the price of success. If you want to be 6% body fat with a full set of abs,

then you'll probably have to eat less food than the guy with a giant beer gut in order to maintain your weight. Accept that fact. Deal with it. And then move on.

#3) Loss of muscle/skinniness

This is probably the single biggest stumbling block for men. They decide to get “ripped, brah!” Then, they go on a diet. Things are going great at first... but then they start to feel skinny. They look in the mirror and decide they must be losing muscle mass. So they go “off” the diet and back to bulking. I know guys who have been “bulking” for 10 years now.

All because they felt they were losing muscle mass.

But here's the truth: As long as you're doing some kind of resistance training... you are NOT losing muscle mass.

Let's think about this logically for a second. Why would your body burn muscle tissue for fuel? Some people would say it's because muscle is “needy” and requires 50 calories per pound per day to maintain. But turns out, that's not true. A pound of muscle only requires 5 calories per day to be maintained. While organ tissue requires anywhere from 50 -200 calories per pound for maintainance.

And the single most metabolically active organ is the brain. So if the body “decided” what type of tissue to “eat” during a diet based on the metabolic “cost”... then you're body would eat brain tissue everytime you go on a diet.

Obviously, we know it doesn't work that way. Remember – your body doesn't care about building muscle, burning fat or looking great on the beach. The body cares about SURVIVAL.

So if you have fat stores – which are really just stored energy – and you enter into a caloric deficit... then why WOULDN'T your body simply burn the fat for energy? Fat doesn't do anything – it's sitting there waiting

to be used in times of need. Your organs have a purpose. Your muscles each have their own individual jobs. But your fat cells exist solely for the purpose of storing energy.

So to think that the body would burn the muscle tissue for energy while sparing the body fat... is ridiculous.

Do you want to know how to lose muscle? (Stay with me here. Once you discover how to lose muscle you can actually reverse-engineer the process and figure out how NOT to lose muscle.)

Here's how to lose muscle:

Go see your doctor and have them put your arm in a cast, from your wrist all the way to your shoulder. They probably won't be willing to do this so you may have to actually break your arm first. All in the name of science. ;)

Ok, so you've got a broken arm and the good doctor puts your arm in a cast for 8 weeks. The time flies by and you head back to the doctor. He cuts off the cast and... surprise, surprise your arm has shrunk!

In technical terms, the muscles "atrophied." Because your muscles were not being used, they shrunk. Very simple. The muscles in your "good" arm did not shrink because you were still using your good arm. But the muscles inside the cast shrank because you were not using that arm for 8 weeks.

Notice this process occurs whether you eat a high protein diet... or not. If you drink 5 protein shakes a day, the muscles inside the cast are still going to shrink *because they are not being used*.

Muscles work on the "use it or lose it" principle.

Now let's flip this around: If you go on a diet... but you are still using your muscles... why would you expect them to shrink?

Answer: If you're thinking logically... you wouldn't.

Now, you're going to lose water weight. Your arms might end up getting smaller because you lose fat and water from all over your body... not just your gut.

But that's all it is – a reduction of fat and water. Your body is NOT eating through muscle tissue in an effort to spare fat stores. The opposite happens: Your body uses the energy from fat in an effort to spare muscle. Because muscle is useful.

And here's a study that supports this:

Effects of resistance vs. aerobic training combined with an 800 calorie liquid diet on lean body mass and resting metabolic rate.

[Bryner RW](#), [Ullrich IH](#), [Sauers J](#), [Donley D](#), [Hornsby G](#), [Kolar M](#), [Yeater R](#).

Source

Department of Human Performance and Applied Exercise Science, West Virginia University, Morgantown 26506, USA.

Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

Utilization of very-low-calorie diets (VLCD) for weight loss results in loss of lean body weight (LBW) and a decrease in resting metabolic rate (RMR). The addition of aerobic exercise does not prevent this. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of intensive, high volume resistance training combined with a VLCD on these parameters.

METHODS:

Twenty subjects (17 women, three men), mean age 38 years, were randomly assigned to either standard treatment control plus diet (C+D), n = 10, or resistance exercise plus diet (R+D), n = 10. Both groups consumed 800 kcal/day liquid formula diets for 12 weeks. The C+D group exercised 1 hour four times/week by walking, biking or stair climbing. The

R+D group performed resistance training 3 days/week at 10 stations increasing from two sets of 8 to 15 repetitions to four sets of 8 to 15 repetitions by 12 weeks. Groups were similar at baseline with respect to weight, body composition, aerobic capacity, and resting metabolic rate.

RESULTS:

Maximum oxygen consumption (Max VO₂) increased significantly (p<0.05) but equally in both groups. Body weight decreased significantly more (p<0.01) in C+D than R+D. The C+D group lost a significant (p<0.05) amount of LBW (51 to 47 kg). No decrease in LBW was observed in R+D. In addition, R+D had an increase (p<0.05) in RMR O₂ ml/kg/min (2.6 to 3.1). The 24 hour RMR decreased (p<0.05) in the C+D group.

CONCLUSION:

The addition of an intensive, high volume resistance training program resulted in preservation of LBW and RMR during weight loss with a VLCD.

PMID:

10204826

[PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

If you don't feel like geeking out with the science, here's a quick synopsis: Researchers took a group of people and fed them a shockingly low 800 calories per day. Half the group did aerobic training only, the other half did resistance training. The group that did the resistance training did not lose any lean body mass or experience any reduction in resting metabolic rate while the group that only did aerobic training (cardio) saw a loss of lean body weight and a reduction in metabolic rate.

So please.... stop worrying about losing muscle mass when you're on a diet. As long as you're continue to perform some kind of resistance training, you're not losing muscle mass.

There is one small caveat. I want to point this out because some people are always looking for the exception to the rule.

If you're at roughly 5% body fat or below and you decide to go on a diet, you could lose muscle. What happens is you're body has already used up all available body fat and the only remaining fat is the fat surrounding your organs. This fat is very important as it supports the organs and protects your vital organs from a potentially fatal impact.

So, at that point... with survival in mind... the body would then burn muscle tissue to spare your last remaining bits of organ fat.

Obviously, this doesn't apply for most people. (And no, you're not at 5% body fat. Just because you can "kinda see your top two abs when you flex in the bathroom mirror with the lights dimmed real dark.")

5% body fat means a 29 inch waist (for a male) maximum. So loop a measuring tape around your waist (at the belly button) and if it's larger than 29 inches... you have more than 5% body fat.

The bitter truth is most of us simply aren't as "big" or as "jacked" as we think we are. The extra body fat makes us think we're bigger than we really are. And once we start to lose the fat, it leaves behind our true level of "bigness" or muscularity. This is tough for guys to take.

I get it. I always wore an XL t-shirt back when I carried more body fat. But after losing the fat, I realized I could wear a large. I didn't like this. Didn't like that without the extra fat I didn't look as big (while wearing a shirt.)

But the crazy part is by achieving leanness I actually look way bigger without my shirt. So you've got to make a choice: Commit to get lean and accept that you won't look as big in street clothes. Or stay fat so you can look like the big guy in the room.

#4) Discomfort & The Dark Period

The bitter truth about losing weight is that you **MUST** expect some discomfort. Expect to be hungry, weak, tired, cranky. It is going to happen.

I know a girl who wants to lose weight but says every time she goes on a diet she gets a headache. So she goes right back to eating the way she was before and never loses any weight.

You must expect discomfort. You must expect a headache or two. You must expect diarrhea or constipation. Expect trouble sleeping.

Workouts will suck. Energy will be in the toilet. Expect it.

The Dark Period is a term coined by powerlifter Jamie Lewis. It's the weird period where you are dieting and losing weight (according to the scale) but it seems like nothing is happening.

Even worse, you could be losing fat/water from your arms but not yet losing it from your waist so it might seem like your arms are getting smaller while your waist stays the same!

Expect it. And keep fighting through. Keep pressing forward until you achieve your goal.

#5) The Scale

Lastly, we have the scale. The scale is actually an excellent tool for gauging progress. But only if you can use said tool in a detached, logical manner.

During my 40 day diet, I weighed myself every single day first thing in the morning. I did this to keep a running tally of where I stood and how things were progressing.

But I also understood that this was simply a tool for gauging progress. The scale gives you an accurate assessment of how much you weigh at any given moment. That's it.

I had days where I didn't eat anything (fasting for longer than 24 hours) and then I stood on the scale the next morning and I had actually gained weight.

Obviously, I was simply carrying more water. That's the only possible explanation since I did not eat any food since my last weigh in. On an intellectual level, I know this. And yet I still found myself getting pissed off.

Other times, I would weigh in first thing in the morning (after peeing/pooping, whatever). Then I would go about my day, drinking coffee, water, etc. Then sometimes for whatever reason I would go weigh myself again. Even though I had been consuming liquids and had not gone to the bathroom again, I would sometimes weigh in 3-4 pounds LIGHTER at that 2nd weigh in. That doesn't make any sense. But it happens.

You can't stress about it. You can only accept the data for what it is (data) and continue.

So remember: The scale is a measurement of your weight at that moment. Over time, you should weigh less. This means if you weigh yourself every week, the numbers should be getting smaller over time. But it won't be linear. Understand that some weeks you might lose 2 pounds of fat but for whatever reason you retain 3 pounds of water. But you won't know this is happening. All you'll know is the scale says you're one pound heavier than you were last week.

If you get frustrated and throw in the towel, you'll never make any progress. But on the other hand... if you are constantly making excuses for the scale... if every single week you're telling yourself you're holding

water... or “Oh I must have gained muscle” or “Oh, I just had a big meal”... well you won't make any progress that way either.

Recap... And The One Thing You Must Understand

As you can see, most of the reasons why people fail in their efforts to get lean are mental. Because the actual, physical process of losing weight is simple:

#1) Eat fewer calories than necessary to maintain weight.

It does not appear that there's any metabolic advantage to eating “clean” or “healthy” foods as compared to eating junk foods. Yes, obviously you'll feel better/perform better on 120 calories from vegetables rather than 120 calories from cookies.

But from a pure fat loss perspective, there doesn't seem to be much difference.

#2) Continue some form of resistance training through your diet.

It's the resistance training that preserves the muscle mass.

That's it. Those are the only two requirements for losing weight/fat. What you eat... when you eat... how many times you chew... none of that stuff truly matters.

Eat less. Keep lifting. Those are the only two rules you need to worry about. In the next chapter, I'll show you how I harnessed the simplicity of those two rules to lose 20 pounds in 40 days.

From 185 To 165: How I Did It

In this section I'll give you the nuts and bolts of how I went from 185 pounds down to 165 pounds in about 6 weeks. I'm not going to pull

any punches or hold anything back. So you'll see the good, the bad and the ugly.

On the morning on Sept 14th, I stood on the scale and weighed 185.6 pounds. On this day, I started kicking around the idea of training for and competing in a meet on Nov 2nd.

At the time, I was basically following an intermittent fasting type eating approach. Mainly eating 1-2 large meals in the evenings. At least in theory. In reality I was doing way too much snacking.

I would make breakfast for my kids... and end up eating what they didn't finish. Same thing would happen at lunch. Again at (their) dinner and then I'd eat my dinner, go train... then eat again.

So my first move was to simply tighten that up. I went to 2 meals per day on training days and one meal per day on non-training days.

Note: This was simply my method for reducing calories. There is nothing magical about eating only 1-2 meals per day. It's just an easy way to reduce the calories.

Shortly after beginning, the entire family got sick. Me, my wife, my kids... everybody. Naturally, my initial reaction was to stop the diet, stop training and just rest.

But because I had a deadline... I couldn't afford to do that. (Note: Most powerlifting training cycles are 12-16 weeks in length. I was attempting to start and finish my complete training cycle in just 6 weeks. Not ideal, but manageable. But I couldn't take an already shortened 6 week cycle and shrink it down to 4 weeks. I couldn't afford to miss 2 weeks of training.)

So I pressed on. Worked during the day and took care of the kids. Did laundry. Cleaned. Took care of my wife. While feeling miserable the entire time. Then went to the gym... squatted and deadlifted... came

home, ate. Passed out. Woke up 3 hours later when my kid cried. (My kids are old enough to sleep through the night now but when they get sick they still wake frequently through the night.) And then repeated again and again.

So that first week was rough and I probably wasn't as strict on my diet as I needed to be. After a week I was down to 183ish pounds. Loss of 2 pounds in a week. Not bad, considering.

On Sept 23rd I decided to make it official. This is the day I actually cut the check and mailed in my entry form to the meet. This is when things got serious and I really started to tighten up the diet. The next day I weighed 181, the day after that I was 179 and from that point forward I stayed in the 170's.

There is nothing "special" or magical about the diet I followed. I simply tried to consume fewer calories. I started out with 2 meals per day with some snacking. Then dropped to one meal per day. And during the final couple weeks I incorporate a few 48 hour fasts to further speed weight loss.

Remember: There is no worry of damaging your metabolism or losing your muscle mass or anything silly like that. So to lose weight you simply need to find a way to eat less.

Things I Did Daily

Losing weight is really a mental battle more than a physical one. So I did a few daily practices to keep my mental state strong and focused.

First, I weighed myself every single morning and recorded the results. There's an old business maxim stating "That which gets measured, improves."

Again, don't get too wrapped up in any single weigh-in... but over time the numbers should be getting smaller. Next, I read a motivational

article every single day. I don't mean a different one, I mean I read the exact same motivational article every single day.

I also found a picture that I found motivating. (In my case I found a picture of a guy who had a similar build as me but was leaner – this gave me an idea of how I would look once I had achieved my goal.) I looked at that picture once per day.

Towards the end of my diet plan I also started incorporating mini-goals like doing 300 mountain-climbers per day. (Google it if you don't know what a mountain climber is.)

I would just break these up into sets of 50 and do them spread out through the day. I don't think these really burned a ton of calories or anything but they got me out of my chair and moving around instead of just sitting on my butt for 8 hours in a row (which is a problem for those of us who work at a computer.)

Finally, I made sure to drink a ton of water daily. Most days I would shoot for 2 gallons. I bought a gallon jug of water, tried to drink the entire thing before about 1pm and then filled it up again and tried to drink another gallon before bed.

The Final Week

During the final week, I realized I had a lot of work left to do when one day I woke up and my weight was hovering around 177. So I immediately implemented a 48 hour fast. It was actually easier to do this during the final week as I was done with the heavy training leading up to the meet.

But still, fasting is never all that fun. You're hungry, tired, cranky and just all around miserable. Plus I personally had issues sleeping while fasting so that makes for a very long day with no food.

So the last week was again nothing special – two 48-hour fasts and when I did eat I made sure to eat high fat and protein... very little carbs.

Thursday before the meet was Halloween: While everyone else ate pizza, candy, and pop/beer, I drank water. After everybody had gone to bed, I made myself scrambled eggs. I ate 9 eggs (yes, 9) and went to bed.

The next morning (Friday) I woke up and weighed in at 173.8.

This was not good. I knew I could cut about 5 pounds of weight by simply not eating or drinking any liquids over the final 24 hours. But there's a big difference between 5 pounds and 8.8 pounds.

But there was no turning back and no reason to alter the plan at this point. So over the last 24 hours I didn't eat anything nor drink any liquids. I took Dandelion Root pills – an herbal remedy supposed to help you expel water – 6 pills in total spread out over 3 different doses.

Within a few hours I saw my weight dip into the 160's (I think it was 168) so I felt like I had a good shot at success.

The Day Of The Meet

I couldn't sleep the night before the meet. This was to be expected: Nerves, combined with no food or water, make for a tough night of rest.

I finally managed to fall asleep at 1:15am. As luck would have it, one of my kids awoke at 3:15 am from a nightmare. I took her downstairs, gave her something to drink, sang her a few songs and put her back in her bed. At this point it was almost 4am. I fell back asleep and my alarm went off at 5:15am.

It was time to start getting prepped for the meet.

I tried to squeeze out a few drops of urine, got completely naked and stood on the scale: 166.2 lbs. Tried again. Same result.

I had about a 75 minute drive to the gym where the competition was being held. Maybe I'd lose a couple pounds over the next hour. Maybe the scale at the venue would give a different read-out.

There was nothing more I could do. So I got dressed, packed my stuff, and hit the road.

#####

The drive ended up taking a little longer than expected. It was raining hard, my tires were bald and it was pitch-black on the expressways. So I drove extra careful as my reflexes weren't feeling all that sharp after the lack of sleep/food/water.

So I arrive at the gym. Make my way inside, sign-in, fill out my forms and wait in line to weigh in. 6 weeks of hard dieting were about to come down to this very moment.

The judges are weighing people two at a time in the bathroom. There are two judges, two scales, and two lifters in the bathroom all at one time. Needless to say it was a little cramped. So I strip down. I left my underwear on. If need be, you can request a nude weigh in but I was really hoping it wouldn't come to that.

I step on the scale, exhale and the judge says, "164.8".

Whew. I'd done it. I quickly got dressed and exited.

#####

The rest of the meet was a bit of a blur. I immediately chugged 3 gatorades, ate a bunch of candy, a few protein bars and later on I ate some PB&J sandwiches to keep my energy up. I was worried about cramping from the dehydration but I had no problems.

I didn't have my best day on the platform – when calling for my attempts I made some errors.

(The weights are in KG so you have to look at the conversion chart, find your desired weight in LBS and then call for your next attempts in KG. It's not exactly rocket science but my brain just felt foggy all day and for some reason I ended up calling for a 3rd attempt squat that was 8 pounds higher than what I planned for. I missed the 3rd attempt and that basically ruined my “total” for the day.)

The meet lasted for about 8 hours. I took 2nd in my weight class. There was only 3 of us. If I didn't miss my 3rd attempt on my squat I probably would have easily took 1st but there's no point in bragging about 1st place among 3 people. In total, there was about 75 lifters at the meet but the lower weight classes are always pretty empty as most powerlifters are big, fat, strong guys.

No matter. To be perfectly honest, the fact that I took 2nd has me even more motivated than ever. I cannot WAIT for the next meet as I WILL be taking first place.

Random Odds & Ends

In this section, I'm going to show you a few things I think can help the average person take their physique from “average” to “incredible.”

You won't read any of this stuff in other diet books. Mostly because it's too weird and controversial. I'm sure other authors would think twice before putting this stuff on paper. But I stand behind my tagline: “The truth, the whole truth... and nothing but the truth on all things fitness.”

#1) The Necessity Of Misery

One thing advanced trainees need to realize is that you need to make yourself miserable to see results. Beginners can get “easy results.”

If you've ever heard somebody say they lost weight by “cutting out soda and going for a walk” you can bet you were listening to a beginner.

That type of stuff works if you're 150lbs overweight. But when you're at 10% bodyfat and trying to get down to 6%... you've got to accept the fact that it's going to be miserable.

You must learn to embrace the misery. Embrace the hunger, the weakness, the sleepless nights. This principle seems to hold true for most things in fitness. (Heck, maybe most things in life.)

To improve my squat, when I was a beginner... all I had to do was change my rep ranges, try a few new techniques and boom – instant results.

But now? I've got to be miserable. Got to suffer in the squat rack with multiple sets of heavy triples of singles. Or high-rep sets of 20-30. No matter what end of the spectrum, their needs to be misery.

For the advanced athlete, there is no progress without misery.

#2) Believe In Magic (At Least For A Month)

This is weird... but I think it tends to hold up for most people. I've noticed anyone who accomplishes a big goal usually masters the basics... but at the same time they latch onto something “magical” at least for a short time.

Let me give you an example: So to lose 20 pounds in 40 days I mastered the basics: I was eating less... training hard... and doing whatever I could to make the numbers on the scale a little bit smaller every day.

But I also latched onto something magical: Every night before bed I would eat a raw clove of garlic. Why? Well, I was concerned about getting sick and screwing up my training. So I read something about how

people who eat raw garlic almost never get sick. Then I read something else about how garlic can help you lose weight. None of this stuff is proven, by the way. But during times of demanding efforts I've found it's natural (and even helpful) to have SOMETHING to believe in.

So I chomped down a clove of garlic every night. It burned. Made my eyes water and my stomach burn. But I did it every night. Because at the time I wanted to believe it was helping me.

Did it work? Well, I didn't get sick. And I did end up successfully losing the weight. So maybe it did. But right after the meet I stopped doing it. The appeal was gone. The "magic" dried up.

I've seen a lot of people go through this same phenomenon. Sometimes it's a simple food item, like garlic. Some guys/gals fall in love with a particular exercise for a short period of time. And sometimes it's a supplement. Heck, the billion dollar supplement industry is based on this. How many times have you tried a new supplement... been completely blown away by the results... and then simply got bored of it/stopped taking it a month later for now real reason? The magic wore off.

None the less... perhaps this is a good time to experiment with new supplements, herbs, etc. Because you need every bit of magic you can muster to deal with the misery of striving for greatness.

#3) Sexify Yourself

When you think about it, losing body fat is a process that runs directly AGAINST our natural instincts. As a species, we're hard-wired for survival. For the last two million years or so, having extra body improved your odds of survival. So from that perspective, having extra body fat was a good thing.

Which explains why losing weight is so difficult. It runs against your survival instinct. Just like trying to hold your breath or stay awake

for a week straight... sooner or later your survival instinct will overcome your will power.

What's the solution?

Sexify yourself. I've told this story before but it's worth repeating. A few years back I knew a guy who owned the largest chain of hypnosis centers in Florida. His specialty was using hypnosis for weight loss. (Actually, his speciality was making money... but his "method" for making money was convincing gullible people that hypnosis for weight loss would actually work.)

Anyway, when a new client would come into one of his clinics the secretary would meet them at the door and give them a bunch of forms to fill out. On one of the forms, there was a question: "Why do you want to lose weight?"

This guy told me that 90% of all women wrote "More Sex!" in response to that question. Then, they would enter his office for a quick chat before he did the hypnosis. These women did not realize it but he was looking over their completed forms while they spoke. So he would verbally ask them, "Why do you want to lose weight?"

And unsurprisingly the women would give much tamer answers. "For my health." "It's the right thing to do." "To set a good example for my kids." etc etc etc.

On the surface, this is just a funny story. But let's dig a little deeper. Remember that when losing fat we are trying to fight against our survival instinct. No easy task.

But our reproductive instinct is stronger than our survival instinct. This is why males animals in the wild will fight (often to the death) for the chance to mate/reproduce with an available female of the species.

So if you can somehow convince yourself that losing weight/achieving your goal will result in more sex or better sex... your mind will become a powerful ally in your battle to get lean.

Controlling The Rebound

The final thing I want to talk about is “controlling the rebound.” After you achieve your goal... how do you maintain? How do you avoid undoing all your hard work?

This is a very real problem because if you can't control the rebound, not only will you undo all your hard work but you'll also lose your motivation to start another diet. *“What’s the point... I’ll just gain it all back again like I did last time.”*

I am writing this in the middle of November. It's been over two weeks since my contest. And this morning I woke up and weighed in at 173.0 – exactly what I weighed two days before the contest. In other words... I have not gained a single pound of fat despite celebrating and over-eating quite a bit after the contest.

Here's how I did it:

Before I even got close to finishing my diet, I was already figuring out a way to control the rebound. Since my method for losing weight was mainly based around fasting, I knew I'd be ready for something different after the day of the meet.

Here's what I did:

First: Gave myself permission to go crazy on the day of the meet. Which I did. After I weighed in, I ate candy, drank gatorade, munched on protein bars (which will pretty much just like candy bars) and ate some PB&J's. This was all during the meet.

After the meet, I wasn't really all that hungry but I kept the party going. I grabbed a few slices of pizza at the meet on my way out the door. Drove over to McDonalds and got some hamburgers and fries to eat on my drive home.

Once home, I had more candy. Then my wife and I got Lebanese food (which I absolutely love). I ate a bunch of that (chicken, rice, bread, lamb, etc) and I enjoyed a full 6-pack of beer.

Then I slept the hardest I'd slept in weeks. I woke up the next day feeling absolutely amazing. Maybe the combination of heavy singles, candy bars and alcohol works for me but whatever the reason, I felt great.

Now... just as I gave myself permission to go crazy on the day of the meet... I also had a plan to get right back to work the next day. But I knew I didn't have the willpower to go right back into fasting.

So I changed gears and decided to follow an ultra low-carb "keto" style diet for a while. With this method, my food options are limited (no carbs, obviously) but I can eat whenever I want. So I woke up, enjoyed some sausage, eggs & bacon.

Snacked on beef jerky all day long, ate beef for lunch, steak for dinner.... all good. It doesn't even feel like I'm dieting. Yet it's working because I'm controlling the rebound.

So in my eyes the keys to controlling the rebound are:

#1) Give yourself a break

I suffered a great deal of misery in order to lose 20 pounds in 40 days. It would be unrealistic to expect that I could just continue with business as usual. So I gave myself a one day "pass" and allowed myself to eat junk food with reckless abandon.

#2) Cut it off and control the bleed

My cheat day deadline was whenever I feel asleep on Saturday (the day/night of the meet). I knew once I woke up on Sunday, it was a new day and the cheat day was over. This can be tough to stick with. A lot of people will find themselves rationalizing “Oh well, what's one more day....”

But be firm with yourself.

#3) Start a new plan – immediately.

After my one day break, I immediately jumped into my new plan (low-carb, eating whenever I want). As I already discussed, it's probably beneficial to change up the plan a little bit.

#4) Have a new goal

My sights are already set on the next powerlifting meet in my state – which is just 12 weeks away. I'd like to continue to build strength and also lose maybe 1-2 pounds more of fat simply so I don't have to cut so much weight in the last 24 hours.

Conclusion... And My Challenge To You

I hope you enjoyed this short guide. Most importantly, I hope this guide inspires or helps you in some small way.

Not everyone who reads this guide will be interested in competitive powerlifting. I get that. But I think anyone who reads this guide can use the principles discussed within to achieve their own personal fat loss goals as fast as possible.

So that's my challenge to you: Whether you're interested in signing up for your first powerlifting meet or not, there are a wide variety of other

training goals you can use to give yourself a fat loss deadline (which I think it's crucial for achieving upper limit fat loss.)

Possible Deadline-Driven Weight Loss Challenges:

#1) Sign up for a powerlifting meet (A full powerlifting meet consists of the squat, bench press and deadlift but there are also bench press only meets push/pull meets (bench and dead only.)

#2) Sign up for an Olympic lifting meet (Olympic weightlifting consists of two exercises: #1) The Snatch and #2) The Clean & Jerk

#3) Use a vacation deadline as motivation to hit a certain weight. Vacations are good for giving you a hard deadline, just make sure you actually pick a certain weight (ie: I want to be 175lbs the day I leave for Cancun) instead of picking a hazy "I want to look good in swimsuit" type goal.

#4) Consider taking part in a "Diet Bet."

If you work in an office, it's common to have "diet bets" where the winner gets money. These can be good motivation. You can also take part in an online diet bet through a website called (You guessed it): www.DietBet.com

You put up some cash and you have one month to lose 4% of your bodyweight. If you fail, you lose the cash you put up. If you succeed you get your cash back plus a share of the what the losers forfeited.

#5) Get married.

I'm only half-joking. The wedding day is a huge weight loss motivator for women (and men too). High school reunions are good too. If you have any such event on the horizon, use it.

#6) Compete

I'm not a big fan of cardio, but signing up for a 5K, a 10K, a marathon or even one of those fun run/tough mudder type events can also be useful motivation. The leaner you are, the better you're likely to perform and competition (any kind) is useful for fueling motivation.

These are just a few off the top of my head. As always, get creative and use whatever deadline-driven event you have to accelerate your fat loss efforts.

Good luck and feel free to drop me a line with your results.

Matt Marshall
matt@fitnessunderoath.com

P.S. See the following bonus sections for my daily log and a brief overview of my training during these 40 days.

Appendix A: Daily Tracking

As I mentioned previously, I recorded my weight daily. I also jotted some notes where appropriate. Reading this may give you some insight into the natural “ebb-and-flow” of my weight loss and also my mindset during the experiment.

Weight:

Sept 14th: 185.6

Sept 15th: 183.8

Sept 16th: 183.0

Sept 17th: 182.2

Sept 18th: 182.6

Sept 19th: 181.6

Sept 20th: 181.4

Sept 21st: 182.4

Sept 22nd: 182.6

Sept 23rd: 183.4 (paid for meet, started meet training)

Sept 24th: 181.4

Sept 25th: 179.8

Sept 26th: 179.0

Sept 27th: 181.6

Sept 28th: 179.2

Sept 29th: 180.8

Sept 30th: 179.4

Oct. 1st: 177.4

Oct. 2nd: 179.0

Oct. 3rd: 178.8

Oct. 4th: 179.2

Oct. 5th: 177.6

Oct. 6th: 177.0

Oct. 7th: 177.8

Oct. 8th: 179.2 (playoff baseball game yesterday: beer, hot dogs, taco bell)

Oct. 9th: 177.4 (fasted yesterday, only a few eggs for dinner.)

Oct. 10th: 177.6

Oct. 11th: 179.8 (fell off wagon yesterday)

Oct. 12th: 178.4 (begin hardcore diet: eggs/beef/pickles)

Oct. 13th: 177.6

Oct. 14th: 175.0 (finally!)

Oct. 15th: 175.2 (annoying, but expected as I ate late at night and consumed a ton of water during squats/deads)

Oct. 16th: 175.2 (you gotta be kidding me. Expecting huge drop tomorrow.)

Oct. 17th: 174.4 (couldn't sleep last night, ended up eating some carbs (4 granola bars) to induce sleep.

Oct. 18th: 176.4 (couldn't sleep again, ate way too many carbs (cake, toast).

Oct. 19th: 179.2 (fuck. Wife's birthday yesterday. High stress kids. Beer, bunch of junk food.)

Oct. 20th: 176.8

Oct. 21st: 179.6 (need to make rapid gains. Begin 48 hour fast.)

Oct. 22nd: 175.2 (back on track).

Oct. 23rd: 176.0 (begin another 48 hour fast).

Oct. 24th: 174.6 (not bad. Need to stay vigilant on one clean meal tonight to make sure I don't undo the fast. Feel like crap.)

Oct. 25th: 174.0 (ended up having friends over and pizza for dinner. I ate a bunch but kept it all confined to one meal so that's good.)

Oct. 26th: 177.8 (yesterday was last training session. Ended up eating a little too many carbs last night but all good.)

Oct. 27th: 177.0 (Had some wine last night, which might be causing bloat. Begin another 48 hour fast.)

Oct. 28th: 178.2 (Amazing that weight actually went UP after fasting. Need to trust the process. Feeling discouraged.)

Oct. 29th: 176.8 (Only had a little bit of food last night (few bites of spaghetti and ground beef.) Plus I'm weighin in with jogging pants

on (it's cold!) so I think I'm actually a few pounds lighter. Home stretch now. This is going to be close.

Oct. 30th: 173.4 (with jogging pants on.) Now we're getting somewhere. Can't sleep. Cold as hell all day. Miserable. But the scale is moving.

Only ate a big plate of beef and eggs last night. Same tonight.

Oct. 31st: 172.2 (with jogging pants on.) Right on pace. 2 gallons of water today. Eggs for dinner, no carbs. No candy!

Nov 1st: 172.8 Well... fuck. Didn't have any candy yesterday but still ended up gaining weight. I did drink plenty of water yesterday so maybe it's bloat but now I have to lose nearly 8 pounds in 24 hours. No food, no water... and hope for the best.

Nov 2nd: (Day of the meet). Morning weight was 166.2. By the time I got to the meet, I weighed in at 164.8. Whew! Barely made it.

Appendix B: My Training

I'm just recording this as a basic example of my training leading up to the meet. Remember – you need to do some kind of resistance training. But what you do is not very important when it comes to losing fat.

Your fat loss comes from your diet, not your resistance training.

It's interesting to note I lost 20 pounds without doing any cardio. I trained 3x per week with weights and simply did not have extra time for cardio.

My basic split was as follows:

Monday:

Calf stuff (for warm-ups – my knees feel better if I squat after getting a good pump in my calves).

Front Squats: A few sets of 5, a few triples, and a couple singles.

Back Squats: Sets of 5, sets of 3.

Deficit Deads (Deadlifts performed while standing on a plate to increase range of motion: Sets of 5, sets of 3.)

Wed:

Bench Press: 5 sets of 5

Incline Press: 3 sets of 10

Overhead Press: 2 sets of 8

Dips: 50 total reps, as many sets as it takes.

Friday:

DB Row: 1 set with each arm, high reps: 20-30 reps.

Weighted Chins: 5/4/3/2/1, then 5x5 (So I would do a set of 5 with bodyweight, then strap on 10lbs and do a set of 4, then strap on 25lbs for a set of 3, 50lbs for a set of 2, then anywhere from 75 – 110lbs for a final single.) Then I'd drop back down to roughly 25lbs and do 5 sets of 5.

Curls: 3 sets of 10 or sometimes I'd just take the empty barbell and do one set, trying to get as many reps as possible.

Abs: Ab Wheel: 3 sets of whatever (usually 10).

Again... there is nothing “magic” about this particular training split. It just happens to be the routine I followed for these 6 weeks. There are a million and one different workout routines. Find one you enjoy and get after it.

--END--