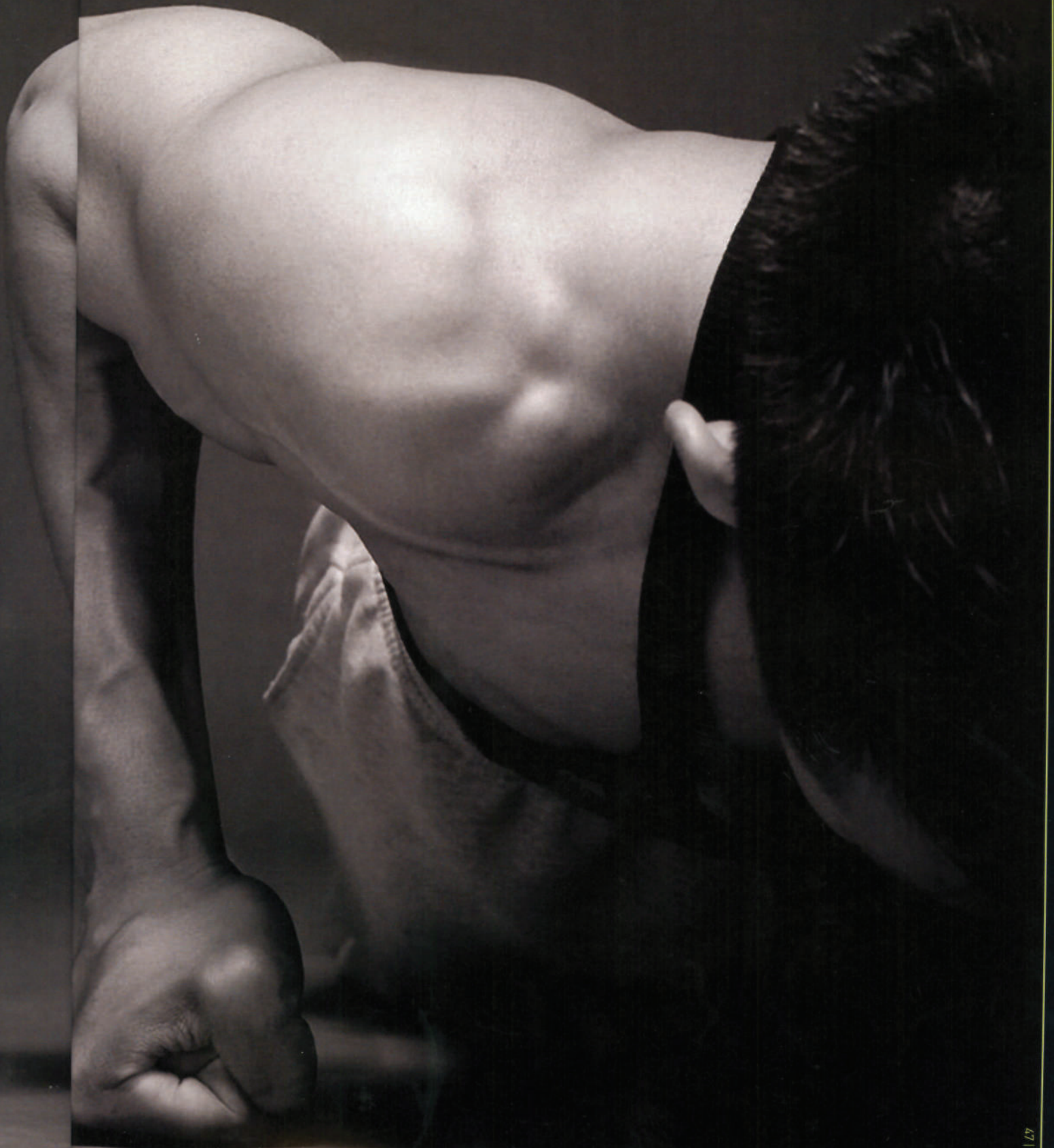


THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BODY TRANSFORMATION

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FITNESS: FOR SOME IT IS A LIFESTYLE; FOR OTHERS IT IS AN EVER-ELUSIVE GOAL. SO WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE WHO CAN SUSTAIN CHANGE, AND THOSE WHO WILL ALWAYS FEEL ESTRANGED FROM THE NEW BODY THEY HAVE CREATED AND REVERT TO THEIR OLD, COMFORTABLE WAYS?





TRAINING VS. TRANSFORMING

The most frustrating thing for a body transformation expert to hear is that someone wants to 'lose weight' or 'tone up'.

Training is a continuous, ongoing practice that can be done with or without a concrete short-term or long-term goal. For those who do not require a major change, 'training' is sufficient.

However, when you aim big and decide that you want to go from point A to point B where there is quite a significant gap, you do not need a personal trainer but a body transformation expert. Some may be able to carry through on their own without one — but it will be a long road ahead.

Your gym pals will cheer you on for that last heavy-duty squat, but they will not be there when you open the fridge after your training session and feel to devour everything in sight!

Transformation is a precarious business, so having that level of support is crucial if you want to succeed.

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

WHY do you want to transform your body? The more powerful your reason, the harder you will work at your goal. If it is a short-term goal, acknowledge this.

Let's examine possible scenarios with three friends: Julie, Jason and Mike.

Julie has an upcoming 20-year high school reunion, and after a lifetime of being obese, she

wants to prove to her high school friends that she is in charge of her life and her body. Jason has just been through a bitter divorce, and suddenly at the age of 45 he finds himself on the dating market again. Mike's doctor informed him that if he does not lose half of his current body weight, he will become so dangerously obese that he will need to undergo a surgery to reduce the size of his stomach.

Will Julie, after her reunion, go back to her old ways? Will Bob, when he meets a woman and settles down into a relationship, still stay as fit as he was when he was single? Or will it be a wake-up call for Mike, who — when faced with certain death — decides to make a change once and for all?

The fact is, all of these persons can succeed in maintaining beyond the point of reaching the primary goal. The question is... who is the most motivated?

CONNECT WITH YOUR EMOTIONS

How you look makes a huge difference in the way you conduct life.

Are you comfortable applying for a new job, where others do not know you and will be faced with your body as their first impression of your capabilities? Are you confident to approach a 'cutie' if the two of you lock eyes across a room? When you shop for clothes, can you quickly grab your size, or do you need to try on a dozen options in your fluctuating 'size range' and ensure that nothing is jiggling or bulging where it shouldn't?

One does not simply get up one day and decide to be a fitness god or goddess. You have to prepare mentally and emotionally. You have to prove yourself equal to and worthy of it; that you're willing to go the distance; that you're able to face it with the strength, grit, and determination required; and that you will not bail out at the first sign of trouble.

If it sounds scary... it is. It is supposed to be.

SITUATIONAL VS. DISPOSITIONAL BARRIERS

The reason many don't attain their goals can be situational or dispositional.

FINANCES: A common situational factor is budget constraints. Large quantities of fish and lean meats are pricey, whereas fast food is dirt cheap; it appears that the system is built to counteract our best intentions! However, those who 'cry poor' are often the ones that find themselves in every party, eat out often, wear the best clothes, and drop loads of money on highly visible purchases like a new car. Now, no one is telling you not to enjoy yourself and live your life... but you have to understand that sacrifice is essential if you want to live your life in the body you want. If you truly do not have the finances, this does not mean that you should give up... only that you need to get creative. Look into planting provisions and vegetables or rearing small livestock, or research dietary alternatives and exercises that can be done at home.

TIME: Another situational factor is time. The reality of some jobs (e.g. medical profession, shift workers, or upper management) will mean that fitness may fall by the wayside as a day-to-day priority. Again, for some, it will be easy to say "I don't have time for that," when they clearly have time to do just about everything else under the sun except that. If time really is a serious issue, however, it can be a little tricky to circumnavigate. But some time is always better than no time. There are ways to squeeze in a high-intensity workout into just a half-hour. Are you willing to get up earlier, or go to sleep later? Can you suggest a gym or even a single item of equipment be procured for your office, so that you can combine a work meeting with a friend into a chat while you both walk on a treadmill? Time is limited only if your imagination permits it.

PERSONALITY: This is the key dispositional factor that affects just about everyone along the course of their path. Self-doubt and laziness go hand in hand with failure. "I was never good at sports, and my genetics are messed up, so why bother..." or "Carnival is over, why do I need to still go to the gym..." or "I tried this before and it didn't work for me..." or even simply: "I really like food..." We have heard it all before. Half-hearted attempts and excuses are part of human nature. You cannot, however, expect transformation if your mind is not ready for it.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF TRANSFORMATION

And, once you DO circumvent all the evils of dispositional and situational factors and DO achieve a significant body transformation...

How often do you hear...
A friend: "You looking too hard, boy..."

A family member: "But girl... you drop so much weight, like you disappearing!"
Or even worse, your significant other: "But oh gosh, baby, I miss your curves!"

What lies behind the gentle teasing from loved ones can be a myriad of things — it may be genuine concern, but more likely it may be doubt or insecurity on their part. A significant other, for example, may be worried when your fitness level drastically surpasses his or her own — it can trigger anxiety that (1) you may no longer be satisfied with his/her own level of fitness (2) you will be getting much more attention from the opposite sex, or even simply (3) your interests have gone out of sync with each other and he/she can no longer relate.

Greatness comes with consequences — when your body changes, your perceived identity changes. There might be more attention from the opposite sex, more subtle rivalry with your friends/colleagues of the same sex, or even quite simply 'haters' who are not pleased that you have been able to achieve what they cannot.

It is easy to fall back into your old ways when you have all the negative energy surrounding you, but remember: your feeling uneasy and unhealthy serves a purpose. It allows you to avoid facing deep-rooted fears, encounter ongoing obstacles, open those old wounds, and make those crucial sacrifices.

CONCLUSION

Many may be wondering why diet and exercise have hardly been mentioned, but this is intentional.

Designing a regimen is easy. However, the law of individual

differences means that "what works for you, will not necessarily work for me" — and you must appreciate that. You cannot afford to get discouraged when friends are losing weight more rapidly than you while using the same regimen; and you cannot and must not lose heart when you do not hit the goals you set for yourself.

If you are truly ready to embark upon a long-term body transformation, there is a psychological aspect of motivation and understanding how to use your "why" as fuel to achieve your goal.

You can achieve anything through troubleshooting your transformation process. If you stay motivated and driven, eventually you will figure out a solution.

Spend time being introspective and figuring out why you want to achieve a specific body transformation goal. Surround yourself with like-minded people, rather than those who only have passive-aggressive (or fully aggressive!) negative comments to throw your way.

Even if you do not have the budget or the desire for a paid transformation expert, seek out a mentor who has gone through a similar body transformation process — you may not even need 'advice' per se, but simply to be in the presence of positivity.

Finally, be prepared to lose friends if your new fitness regimen does not agree with their lifestyle you once enjoyed.

Be prepared to hold your ground and tell your loved ones that you have made a decision to change, and either they get on board (join you) or at least get the picture (accept you).

So in closing... stay motivated, and most importantly: get started! **U**