

Power

By Lesa Knollenberg

I wonder what we could do with the power we hide.

I've read a thousand times that strength training is important to fitness. Weight training aids in battling osteoporosis, building lean muscle mass, burning calories, yada yada yada. I've never given weights more than a cursory nod at the gym until this past summer, when I hit a three-month-long weight-loss plateau. (Ever driven through Indiana? My plateau was more flat and unyielding than that, and I'm from *Nebraska*. I know flatlands.)

I needed a big jump-start to my routine, so I leapt on that bandwagon called strength training. I studied up on all the components, remembered the basics from an eight-week body pump class with an ebullient, inspiring instructor (see Exhibit A), and started incorporating weights into my fitness routine. I started with reasonable weights and a reasonable schedule, and I have to tell you: I love it.



**Exhibit A: Sue Hodges
of Spartan Fitness**

I've seen the teensiest appearance of definition in my biceps and triceps, but mostly I'm amorous of the pure power I feel when I lift weights. I start thinking about what I **wish** I could do. It soon becomes what I **could** do, and by my third set I'm bound to what I **will** do. The power is a catalyst for the life I want to live.

When we were younger, my brother couldn't pronounce his L's. My parents worked with him to stop pronouncing them like Y's. They would have him repeat after them, sounding out an 'L' over and over until he got it right:

Dad: L-L-L-L

Bill: Y-Y-Y-Y

Mom: L-L-L-L

Bill: L-L-L-L

Dad: Good! Now what is your sister's name?

Bill: Yesa.

I wonder if we live a bit like my brother's speech pathology. We practice in theory. We work out to be in shape for when our life really starts. We get very close to pursuing our goals, but when it comes to assimilation into real life, we revert to what is comfortable.

My new faux obsession is plyometrics, which focuses on a burst

of energy that forces the muscle fibers to snap to attention from a resting position. It boosts metabolism and strengthens muscles at the same time. I'm a fan because it cured my Achilles tendonitis. I struggled with Achilles pain every summer when my running mileage increased, so last summer I finally went to a physical therapist and we broke the pattern. She introduced me to the concept of plyometrics, and explained that it was like surprising the muscles around the tendons into being in shape. Now I practice a regular dose of plyometrics, and I have not had any pain since then.

Maybe plyometrics could be applied to how we live, too. Little by little, we can practice just jumping into life with a burst. Just taking the explosive leap, trusting in ourselves and our bodies, trusting that our hard work will pay off.

Recently, during a winter jog outside, I tripped and almost face-kissed the sidewalk. One would assume I slipped on the ice, but one would be wrong. It was a dirt clod. Other than knees and palms, I didn't touch the pavement. I automatically protected my face and head with my arms, and the next day my triceps were *tres* sore. My stoic little triceps, who bemoan their extra work lately, protected me when I needed it. Strength training gave me that power.

Imagine what we could do if we exercised our power. We could change the world. I suspect that the fear of our impressive power is what keeps us from pursuing it. There is a poem by author Marianne Williamson (but often attributed to Nelson Mandela) that starts:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?"

Join me in finding more power. Unyesh it.

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