

Gregg Slater



DANNY LENNON:

Gregg, thank you so much for taking the time to come and talk to me and welcome to the podcast.

GREGG SLATER:

No, Danny, thanks for having me on. I think as we were saying before, I've been listening to this for years now. It's a real pleasure of mine, so thank you for having me on.

DANNY LENNON:

No problem at all. I really like a lot of the ideas and philosophies you have around nutrition training and how that bleeds into other areas, which I'm sure we'll discuss today. And as we've talked about over probably the last couple of years, I think since at least definitely 2017 when we first kind of realized we had a similar way of trying to piece through some of these ideas and how to visually represent them and some similarities in that. But before getting there of course, just to kind of give some context to what we're going to get into and your role educating trainers, can you give people an overview of your background within the industry, how that's led into the kind of current role and roles I should say that you have and then how that kind of relates to maybe where we're going to go with this conversation.

GREGG SLATER:

So, did my degree in sport exercise science about twelve years ago. By all accounts,

probably a pretty crappy students. Not that motivated at that point. Quite motivated to go out. Fell into the family business of being a PE teacher. Knew that I loved fitness but didn't really love that. Joined the Air Force as a physical training instructor. Did that for about five years. Looked to transition out and found this thing called Lift the Bar, which is kind of like a central hub of education for personal trainers, I suppose. Started to join that as I was transitioning out to carry on my personal training. I got taken on board by Chris, who owns Lift the Bar, as their head of education and it kind of went from there. So, for the last four years, I've been head of education for Lift the Bar, where, as I said, we're kind of a central hub for all things personal training, education. And we've had some great practitioners like yourself, Mike Israetel, James Krieger coming in to present. And one thing I've seen time and time again over the last three or four years is personal trainers who have fat loss clients because for whatever reason personal trainers have become synonymous with weight loss. If somebody wants to lose weight, they go and see a personal trainer. So, I was time and time again seeing trainers from all over the world actually who would have a client, they'd put them on their diet plan ... their macros or whatever it might be, and then they wouldn't lose weight and their weight loss would stall. And oftentimes, people would be placing their professional and self-worth on their ability to help people get weight loss, apart from the fact they didn't quite understand the entire dynamic relationship of calories in, calories out, which I'm sure a lot of your listeners do. But they were very unaware of, you know, metabolic adaptation and lots of metabolic active tissue, reductions in NEAT and that huge kind of, as Kevin Hall would probably say, that exponential decay of dietary adherence. So, I actually did two courses. There was one course that was kind of looking at the science behind why weight loss does stall, all the adaptations behind it, why weight loss maintenance is so hard and actually why exercise as a standalone tool is a pretty poor

intervention for weight loss, but paradoxically good for weight loss maintenance. So, kind of outlined how hard it is as a personal trainer. So, they knew these things, but then I had to follow it back up with a second course on, well, actually, what can we do to try and help you get results long term with your clients? And for me, obviously, it came down to at the end of the first course, showing that adherence was king. And that regardless of some of these adaptations or increases in hunger or whatever it might be, if we could get the right behaviors in place, then we could help people lose weight and keep it off. You know, as Kevin Hall said, behavior is in the driving seat and kind of resting energy expenditure, et cetera, comes along for the ride. So, I painted this clear picture of kind of why weight loss and weight loss maintenance was so hard. And then in the second course, it's integrated in traditional periodization. I wanted to try and help them understand how we could look at nutrition on a bigger picture than what a lot of personal trainers tend to do is just kind of go, well, here's your macros or here's your, you know, your intermittent fasting or your habit-based approach. Very much on a method-based approach and try and help them zoom out to more of a principle-based approach. So, we did a program design course on Lift the Bar that tried to help personal trainers move from a session-based kind of approach to one that writes programs and with the more long-term thought of periodization. And then in this course we just released, I wanted to do the same thing with nutrition. So take people away from a slightly myopic view of just implementing methods like, you know, certain macros or a certain size deficit or ketogenic diet or whatever it might be, to one that's more joined up thinking in the way that we would do with our program design. So, kind of understand the principles and you can select your own methods based on whatever client situation comes to you. So, it was kind of a case of going in the same way that we did with the program design course. You know, what's the client's overarching goal? How can this goal be broken up into phases? How can

each phase we broken up into each week? Will it be a linear intake or a nonlinear intake? When we break each week down or micro cycle down, how does each day look? Again, is it going to be linear or nonlinear? And that's where we dig into things like something that I wrote about three or four years ago called the nutritional tracking continuum. And then how do we piece this all together so we can basically help somebody put a plan together long-term? So, if a client's diet does stall or you're not sure where to go, we know that this is only one point in time and there are a number of different options that we can take. So, quite a long answer there, Danny. I don't know where you want to go with that, but hopefully that gives an overview of the kind of my thought process when it comes to the course.

DANNY LENNON:

Like you said, there's a lot to get through. So, I'm probably just going to jump from different ideas that I know are within this kind of model or framework that you've presented to people, that I think are particularly interesting and maybe of use to people. One that I really liked was this parallel you drew between the fitness fatigue model within training and what you've termed the deficits adherence model as it would relate to dieting and nutrition. So maybe first, before I get into any specific questions, can you outline to people first if they're unfamiliar, what exactly fitness fatigue model is, but then more importantly, how you apply that to nutrition when we're looking at this deficit adherence model?

GREGG SLATER:

Yes, sure. So, when we look at a lot of the training literature, we talk about this kind of fitness fatigue model. In order to have the best performance in an event, and this is normally the kind of idea behind most periodization models, is that I've got a certain level of fitness, but it can be masked by my level of fatigue. So, we'll typically see within training, for example, a deload to allow my fatigue to dissipate, to allow me to be ready to train hard again in the next phase or if I was getting ready for competition,

a taper so that I can minimize my fatigue, keep my fitness nice and high and then I can maximize my performance. And so, I think the same things very true with any diet or dieting phase. So, within the kind of nutritional sphere that your dietary performance, whether that being predominantly looking at weight loss, is going to be your kind of predicted deficit, which would be the equivalent of your fitness minus the level of the client's non adherence or what I'd probably call their dietary fatigue. Because we can have instances where we perceived them to be in a large caloric deficit. However, their level of adherence is pretty poor. Their dietary fatigue is very high; therefore, then their outcome is either no weight loss or very small amount of weight loss. However, if I can help to manage that dietary fatigue and help lower that nonadherence, then I'm going to get a greater dietary performance. In this instance we're talking about weight loss. And then if we start thinking about it in that respect, we can start moving beyond simply a session level or a micro level and look at trying to support that at every single tier. So, tier four, what's the client's overarching goal? This gets broken down into individual phases. And I can decide, you know, let's say I've got a six to eight week dieting phase, we know that if it's quite a severe caloric restriction that over time dietary fatigue, the want to binge or overeat calories, etc., is going to be increased. So, what can I do? A kind of micro session level? Oh, sorry. A meta cycle level. I can look to things like diet breaks. I can look at intermittent caloric restriction, like we saw in the Matador study. If I then go down to more of a daily level, I can look to manage dietary fatigue over the course of the week by putting in things like high and low days or having in refeed days. And then even on an hourly level, we know that most people tend to overeat in the evenings, or it might be certain instances, such as in the office. How can we help support their dietary success there by lowering their nonadherence? Say, for example, somebody eats in the evening. I'll give them intermittent fasting potentially as they've got

more calories in the evening. So, on a daily level, they might do some intermittent fasting. Across the week, they may have a couple of high days or days where they're not dieting to help manage fatigue. And then across the course of the mesocycle, they may have intermittent caloric restriction, or they may have some sort of dietary breaks in order to allow them to dissipate that fatigue. And then if we go back up to that third level, the kind of mesocycle level or block level, we just can't diet forever. So, we look at most people, they want to jump on a diet and they just want to go from weeks one to 20, like diet forever. We know that's probably not going to happen. So actually, why don't we try and diet for as long as we can, eight, 10 weeks. When it becomes unbearable, we bring people back into a weight loss maintenance phase. We stop practice habits. We start to allow people to live life and practice living at that lower weight. And then once that fatigue's been dissipated down, we can look to move back into the next stage of dieting. So, we're basically trying to manage this dietary fatigue, this nonadherence at a daily, weekly, monthly and block level.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. There's a couple of things that I really find useful about the way you've described some of that. So first to summarize that, you've talked about this idea of dietary performance being equal to the deficits minus their dietary fatigue. And I actually really like that term that you use for dietary fatigue because it kind of gets at something a bit distinct from just using adherence or compliance, particularly when we're thinking about long term planning of a diet because it reilluminates the people that there's a specific things that happen as a diet goes longer and longer, particularly the harsher the deficit is, that are gonna create the likelihood of someone not adhering or complying with a diet that are distinct from other factors of someone just not wanting to do it. That this fatigue, no matter who you are, is going to build up and is going to make the chances of non-adherence higher no matter who you are. And I think it kind of helps encapsulate

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that idea a bit more. Was that some of the thinking behind the specific language that you've used in some of this explanation?

GREGG SLATER:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, if you think of some of the most adherent people in the world, you know, pre-contest bodybuilders, they can be adherent, yet, still experiencing huge amounts of dietary fatigue. And they'll hold on just long enough until the show is gone and then hopefully, nowadays, look at things like reverse dieting, getting people back up to maintenance quickly and helping them transition back out. But their level of dietary fatigue that they'll be holding will be absolutely huge despite them being extremely adherent. So, there was ... I think there's definitely a differentiation to be made between somebody simply sticking to a diet, but there can still be other factors that are building up this kind of residual fatigue over time.

DANNY LENNON:

One thing that I did want to talk about was diet sustainability. And I think before the ... I've tried to separate out between what a sustainable diet is and what sustainable results are and that can kind of be something we circle back to. But one thing I know you've mentioned as being ... trying to essentially balance out these three factors of on one side sustainability, then the rate of progress someone is likely to make and then also that adherence piece, as well. Can you explain that kind of balancing or how you get people to kind of conceptualize that balancing act and what things would go into ensuring they're appropriately balanced?

GREGG SLATER:

First of all, I wanted to highlight the fact that a lot of people say that all diets have got to be sustainable. And if you can't sustain it then there's no point in implementing it. And I'm sure, actually, I was one of those people that kind of said that four or five years ago. When actually there is very much a place for a non-sustainable diet that somebody can adhere to. So, think of it: A super low-calorie diet. We know this gets large amounts of weight off

people. But can they sustain that? No. But is there anything wrong? If somebody comes to me and says, Gregg, I need to change my life. I feel like I need to get 20 kilos off. Is there anything wrong with those potentially looking at a rapid weight loss phase that isn't going to be sustainable? Well, it's something they can adhere to and they're going to get the rate of progress they desire. And then over time, as they start to find this dietary fatigue start to build up, we can start to transition them back into more of a maintenance phase where we're dissipating some of that fatigue, so it now becomes more sustainable. We can work on those habits that's going to help them stay there long term. We're now at the rate of progress that they want, which is basically not trying to maintain their new low and, you know, they can adhere to it. So, it doesn't have to be their diets always have to be sustainable or unsustainable. They can be both. And then the same thing comes to rate of progress, because somebody can have a sustainable diet they can stick to, but they're actually really, really unhappy with the rate of progress. And if I'm not balancing all these things, there's a good chance that the client's going to look for a different option. I think oftentimes, with the kind of just the slow and steady approach: Can you adhere to it? Can you sustain it? We open ourselves up to our clients turning away to people who have got slightly shadier practices, maybe, like a herbal life or something. Because they go, all we're preaching is sustainable diets that you can stick, slow rate of progress. But they might say, Gregg, I want to change my life. I need to do it quickly. And if you're not going to help me, I'm going to go and take that shake that's told me I can lose 20 kilos in however much amount of time. So, I think it's just us as practitioners being more open to the fact that we have to be able to match the rate of progress to the client's current needs. We have to match the level of ... hopefully, always match the level of adherence. But then we have to be able to say that all diets don't have to be sustainable, but we do have to have periods of sustainability. So, I'm not just saying crush that

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and have no idea what we're gonna do afterwards, but it's just saying in each different phase of the diet know what's going to be appropriate? Is it going to be a sustainable approach or actually is an unsustainable approach absolutely the way to go? And we'll go back to that example I gave earlier. Bodybuilders - they are adherent; they're in the rate of progress they want, but what they're doing is not sustainable. So, it's trying to match those three things in order to fit the current diet to the client's current settings.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. And in one of those examples you gave of a client comes to you and they say, look, I need to make a major change in my life right now. And they have maybe some sort of time pressure around it, whether that's due to health scare or whatever it is. How do you or how do you suggest people take client's previous experiences? Not only from where they're coming, but the previous experiences maybe they've had with weight loss attempts in the past or diets in the past that haven't worked out so well. Or maybe put another way, how do those types of previous experiences shape some of the early conversations you might have with a new client?

GREGG SLATER:

Yeah, brilliant. I think that's really important. And again, I'm not saying that rapid weight loss is going to be right for all people, but it's not wrong for all people, but at the same time we have to know where someone's been. So, in order to map out where somebody is going to go, we have to know where they're at now and where they've been in the past. It's having those conversations around what happened if people have tried these things in the past. If they worked for a short period of time, why did they stop working? Did it lead to any developments in their changes in behaviors around food, et cetera? So, for me, it's a case of getting that big picture around the client - what they've done in the past, what they've enjoyed; but then allowing them to see if it's going to be the right or wrong scenario. So again, a lot of the time I

think back to a lot of the work from coaching self-determination theory. I can't really tell people their goals. I can just try and provide a perspective and support the hell out of them. However, if someone comes to me with a clear eating disorder, that I'm going to refer them out. But the vast majority of times I'm going to tell people, given my professional opinion, the pros and cons of each approach based on their previous history and what they've liked and disliked, or you know, what their experiences were. Then, ultimately, it's up to them to make the decision and I'm just going to support the hell out of them as much as I can. Because ultimately someone might come to me and say, Gregg, you know, I really want to lose weight really quickly. But I look at their lifestyle. They're really stressed. They've got loads of work and I don't think it's their best option. Two things are then going to happen. Right? They're either going to say, okay, Greg, I'll listen to your advice and we'll build some habits for now and then when life settles down, then we can push it harder. Or they might go, no, I really want to push hard. And then you've got two choices as a trainer. You can either get rid of them or you can say, hey, I'm going to support the hell out of you. I think X, Y, and Z might happen in terms of high dietary fatigue, lack of adherence. You're gonna be miserable and this kind of stuff. And then what happens? Right. They either get results. Everyone's a winner. Or they don't get the results they wanted because they didn't listen to you, but this time they're more receptive and they know that you have a bit more authority because you've kind of spoke to them and said, I told you this is going to happen and this has happened. So, for me, it's a case to kind of summarize, getting that background information, digging into their experiences, digging into their beliefs, providing my best opinion on whether they should go with it. But ultimately if it's not contraindicated, they're the driver of their journey and I'm just gonna support the hell out of them after that.

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DANNY LENNON:

Have you found that based on maybe previous experiences people have had either trying to lose weight or eat healthily or whatever it is that they were trying to pursue that they felt that they wanted to come and hire you to help them with, that they once they find out what your opinion is or your strategy or your recommendations, that they almost greet it with a bit of apprehension or not believing this is possible because they've been maybe told some other things or they've been led to believe certain things about what it takes to lose weight or so on?

GREGG SLATER:

Oh, probably every time you get into a consultation with someone, I think. You know, there's so much misinformation and poor information out there for people to take in that some people just come in absolutely confused about what they're supposed to do. Will they go into starvation mode if they don't eat enough food? Will they gain fat if they eat too late? And all those kinds of things. And so, for one, again, it's my trying to dig into why they believe those things and then some reeducation around it. But I'll be honest, I'm at a point now where people come to me, they do tend to see me as an authority. So, they tend to listen to what I've got to say and to the content that I've put out. But, yeah, very much early on in your career, it's hard because people may have read a magazine, or their friends have done certain things and they're influenced in that way and you've then got to try and educate them. But again, I'll go back to what I've said previously, they're the driver and you are the copilot, right? You're the navigator. You're just trying to help them. So, I will give them every reason why I think they can do the thing that they want to do or the pros and cons of each approach, whatever it might be. Ultimately, it's up to them to buy in and you know, adhere to what I'm asking them to do. So, I can provide the case for it, for and against, but ultimately, it's up to them to choose if they want to or not. So, I can't make people do what I want them to do. I can just give my opinion and then

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support the hell out them in whichever direction they decide to take.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. That kind of analogy of the client being the driver of these decisions and behaviors and the way they're going to go and you essentially just helping guide them along is actually pretty well encapsulated with the idea of dietary autoregulation, which you've also used. So again, another kind of comparison between typical terminology we see within training and then trying to apply that across to this nutritional periodization paradigm. How does that idea of dietary autoregulation play out in practice? What might be some examples for people listening that you have either used or suggest people could use that would be an example of where we can build in some autoregulation to this whole process?

GREGG SLATER:

Sure. So, obviously from a training perspective, we're now starting to see the use of HRV and all that kind of stuff. And this idea that actually we need to match the training stress to our readiness on a daily basis. But we don't seem to apply the same thing too often to nutrition because what happens if I'm supposed to have a really low-calorie day. Well, actually the world is just against me. You know, my alarm clock didn't go off. The kids are fighting. I'm stressed on the way to work. I didn't have time to prep all my food. Can we provide that person with a little bit more flexibility, a little bit more slack in the system to ease off when they need to and then actually go really hard when they want to, as well, in the same regard? So, a few different things we can look to do. Just again, coming from some training to analogy, so like a flexible approach. So, we might simply say to people, if you're counting calories or whatever it is it might be; you know, you might have three medium days, two high, two low, and you kind of go on a daily basis based off ... over the course of the week, you've got to get those seven days in. But where they come in is going to be based on how you're feeling on that day. So, we can literally go straight away, we need three high

days, two low days, two high days. And from that they choose what they want to do depending on how that day is going. So that'd be one easy way. Another one, so obviously most people like to put their higher calorie days or days of less calorie restriction on the weekend, but it may just be that you've had a high day and so that's going to be your refeed day. Obviously, we can borrow calories. So maybe I'm just really hungry on one day and I borrow up to 15-ish, 20 calories from a different day. I can use things like high and low goals. Again, we're talking about calories a lot here, but I want to stress the fact that it's not always just about counting calories. There are so many more options that we can do with this. But like a high and low goal for a day might be ... if I'm feeling really good today, you know, and I'm in a rapid weight loss phase and trying to hit 2000 calories. However, if I'm not feeling too good today, my upper end of that is going to be 2300 calories. So, I've got ranges that I can hit for that, but that can also be done for any kind of method we can think of. So, if it's a habit-based approach. On a not so good day, maybe I'm looking at three portions of veggies; on a great day, I'm looking at six portions of veggies. We can also have things called fallback plans. So, if the world's falling apart a little bit and it's all going wrong: What is the bare minimum that you can do to help you move towards your goals? Because lots of people have that kind of dietary mentality of on-off switch. Today's not going well, I'm off the diet. Whereas something like a fallback plan can help them conceptualize it as more of a dim switch. Okay, the world's ... you know, it's a tough day today, I'll just turn it down, but it's still on. And on a day where I've got a little bit more capacity, I can turn it up and then I can go a little bit harder. That also with things like if then strategies ... so, coping implementation, intention. So, if I get in and I'm supposed to have a certain plan, but I didn't have it thought through then, I will go and get a chicken kebab with just salad and meat. You know, something as simple as that. And that's where it comes down to something we've talked about in the past. On the daily kind of

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level, we are creative problem solvers and that's where I kind of put that in that. So, flexible nonlinear, refeed, borrowing calories, high and low goals, fallback plans - all those kinds of things that just allow people to understand that you don't have to be perfect all the time. We do have slack in the system and it's not an on-off switch when it comes to our diet. It's simply about turning things up and down when we have the capacity to do so.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. I think that analogy of conceptualizing things as a dimmer switch as opposed to the on-off switch is actually really useful in a number of different ways. One, like you said, it gives people that kind of fallback plan that it doesn't need to be perfect, but there's something that they can still do. And whilst the kind of primary thing it obviously does is allows them to keep to some degree on track, I think psychologically it would make a lot of sense that that allows people to still feel that they've got some degree of control. Because at least anecdotally that's what I think is one of the biggest problems when people have black or white thinking or this kind of on and off the diet mentality is not so much even physically the quote unquote harm they do from eating something that they might not plan too. It's more about they feel then that they're out of control, that they've lost that bit of control they had by sticking to some degree of plan. And so if they have this kind of continuum of it doesn't need to be perfect, it can just be somewhere along this kind of sliding scale or this dimmer switch, then I'm still controlling my intake in some way, maybe not as tightly as I wanted, but it's still eating in a controlled manner as opposed to just completely gone. And that kind of therefore would probably prevent the feelings of guilt and so on that often cascade down from that.

GREGG SLATER:

Again, I think this dim switch, turning things up and down, not only like I said at a daily level, but even if we think of typically most people when it comes to dieting, they diet, they lose the weight and then they have no idea what to do once

they've lost the weight. They only know to keep on doing the things that helped them lose weight in the first place. Whereas if we start to set it up in a slightly more phasic approach, we've got a weight loss phase that's going to go into a weight loss maintenance phase, the weight loss phase, the dim switch is turned up high and we're working really, really hard on the kind of weight loss maintenance phase where we're practicing life. We can't just go back to doing what we did before the diet. We're still working on things. We're just turning it down. So now we're working on those kind of good habits, laying those foundations so next time that we move into another weight loss phase, it should hopefully be even easier for us or slightly easier for us because now we're better equipped and we've got more habits ingrained to do so. So, just giving them the idea that actually weight loss is only one part of the journey, so we're turning a dim switch up. But weight loss maintenance is also part of the journey where we turn that dim switch down is equally as important and it helps people get off this mindset of on-off as aside to just turning things up or down and being appropriate with our dietary focus depending on the goal.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. Let me ask you about that transitioning from a period of dieting to a period of weight maintenance because this is an issue that many struggle with both a) logistically and b) psychologically. Anecdotally at least, I've found this to be most difficult for folks who have maybe lost substantial amount of weight and have been very successful doing so and maybe for perhaps the first time in their life after maybe several attempts previous to that. And with that success comes then an increased fear of slipping back to their pre-diet ways or slipping back to a point where they have created some sort of mental barrier to being able to relax their nutrition or lifestyle or training habits in any way to allowing themselves to eat a bit more food, to include a bit more variety of food choices purely out of this fear of not wanting to sit backwards. How do you suggest people tackle

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that transition to that maintenance period both from, maybe we can talk also about the practical logistical perspective of changing what you're doing in a dieting phase to that maintenance phase, but then also psychologically framing that ... that psychological framing perspective of how would you even talk to a client about that shift to make it more likely they can buy into that without this fear?

GREGG SLATER:

I think a lot of this really comes down to when we first start a dieting phase, we kind of outline the fact to people that that's only one phase of the process because most people think that the weight loss is the process and that's it. Whereas, actually it's just one phase of the process. So before anybody starts a weight loss journey, whether it be slightly slower and more mindful eating, whichever method they want to use, calorie restriction, whether ... sorry, I'm like severe calorie restriction, whatever it might be, I'm going to start off before that and kind of tell them that actually there's probably going to come a point where you don't want to die anymore and that we have to make things a little bit easier for you so you can practice living at this weight because that's what a diet break is, is you practicing living at this weight and then if we can help you do that and enjoy life a little bit more, remove from this restriction whilst maintaining your weight, that is an absolutely massive win. And then again, I go back into this idea of this is where we're laying the foundation, so eventually we can maintain our weight with less effort. So, every kind of weight loss maintenance phase we go through, hopefully we've ingrained habit a little bit more. There's less for you to kind of get, you know, ego depletion or decision fatigue from, and it's going to set you up better next time we get to weight loss phase because it's going to take less effort, less mental fatigue. So, I think it's got to be front loaded before they start that it's an actual part of the process. It's not just an afterthought and then help them to buy into it by helping them see the benefits of getting in those habits, helping them to practice living at a slightly less

... with less food focus, let's dietary restriction because ultimately that's the goal long term, right? The goal long term is not for everybody to feel completely restricted and that they can only have a very few number of calories and they got trapped forever. So, this is all just practicing that, laying the foundations and then moving it in. Now in terms of practicalities, for some people that have been losing weight for a long amount of time and whatever methods they've used, let's say the count and calories on My Fitness Pal. If you try and rip that off them straight away, that's going to cause a lot of psychological stress with people. So, think back to that analogy that we've just talked about. And this is always going to be on a case by case basis, but for some people we're not just doing like a hard or fast transition from, okay, weight loss phase, now you're in a weight loss maintenance phase, start tracking all your calories. It may be something as simple as adding in a few more calories to start off with, seeing how their weight changes. Then as time progresses, maybe we're going to try and pull back one meal a day where they don't track and then maybe it's two meals a day where they don't track and then eventually maybe they only track their snacks because they will typically overeat on it. So, I'm not just going, you know, end of fat loss phase into a maintenance phase or a habit formation phase or weight loss maintenance phase, whatever we're calling it. I'm saying, hey, let's transition into that slowly. Let's slowly bring you back out of this as opposed to the hard and fast. Now some people can get away with it. You know, those people that don't really have too much of a food focus. They've gone through a bit of a weight loss phase and now they just want to relax a little bit. They can quite happily go to eating, you know, a far more of a maybe a template approach like a PN type approach or something like that and they'll have no dramas. But for those people who have done it for a little bit longer, we have to help them gradually transition out. And like I said, it might be as simple as pulling out one meal a day and if that's still too much, can you pull out one meal on one

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day where you're not tracking. We now know the sizes and the weights anyway, and then we just gradually start to pull it back over time. So again, the idea to dim the switch, turning things up and down, how I move them up and down ... that dietary continuum as opposed to just on-off.

DANNY LENNON:

Right. One thing I did want to get back to that you had mentioned earlier, Gregg, was that whilst again one of those foundational principles of any type of diet, regardless of what the specific goal is, would be looking at the overall energy balance or from a dietary perspective, at least the energy intake side of that of is someone consuming an appropriate amount of energy for whatever their goal is. And that's kind of one of those kinds of key principles. However, as you had previously mentioned that whilst that doesn't actually necessarily tell us all that much about different methods, we could use to control that energy intake. So, the obvious one that springs to mind when we mentioned calories is obviously some degree of calorie counting or tracking macros and so on, in a very kind of objective quantified fashion looking at energy intake. But like you said, that probably can be contra indicated in many cases, may not be an appropriate method for different types of people and so on. And so, there's this whole suite of tools that we can potentially use. What are maybe at least some examples that you have used that can still allow us to assess and plan out a dietary strategy without actually quantifying calories in a specific way? And in what type of cases do you think some of those are better or worst aimed for, if that's not too broad of a question?

GREGG SLATER:

So, yeah, this is where the idea of what I call the nutritional tracking continuum came in. So, if you think, on the far-left hand side with the least amount of precision and the least amount of effort, then I can ab libitum intake or intuitive eating as people might want to call it. And then on the far-right hand side it's something like tracking the exact macros, so exact number of,

but maybe within five grams, protein, carbs, fats. Now, anywhere in between that ... you know, a myriad of methods, and I'll mention some in a second, that we can implement with people to help the caloric deficit or whatever the goal is. So, within this, when I kind of outlined it, I used the analogy of a car. So, we've got some that are manual where you physically have to track as you said or others that will naturally create a caloric deficit without tracking. So, for example, we can go from an ad libitum approach to more of a habit-based approach because I think oftentimes in our evidence-based fitness community, we tend to forget sometimes that not everybody's like us. So, lots of clients come to you and people want to call their clients on counting macros and counting calories. They don't even know what a macro is. So, actually, it's me just helping them be better, not perfect, and to help them get the results they need. So, I could do something like a habit track. So, like I said, I could look at somebody's diet and I don't know if this happens to you, Danny, but the amount of adults that have come to me sometimes that don't eat protein or very little of it. They barely touch a vegetable. And so actually is there any need for me to start asking them to count their calories if I can just make that diet slightly better? But I'm not sure you're going to do that by having the habit approach of veggies every meal, potentially; protein each meal. I'm naturally going to reduce caloric density. I'm naturally going to increase satiety and that's going to help create a caloric deficit for us without ever having to actually talk about calories or macros. That's similar to kind of the PN [Precision Nutrition] kind of portion approach, I suppose. We can have things like a process based one. So, at each meal you're going to fill half your plate with veggies. You're going to have a palm of protein and you're going to have a thumb of fats. Again, a little bit like PN. But the process can be anything that the client so chooses or based on their career goals. We can have templates. I know you showed some really good examples in your lecture for LTB and I know this is quite popular in the online sphere

actually. So, people aren't necessarily tracking all their food, but we might be about, you know, we know that there are, say, 30-ish grams of protein in a certain amount of chicken, beef, pork, whatever it might be. And they kind of swap in those templates. They've got an idea of what they should be having. And as we start to move a little bit through the continuum, maybe some people they just track the amount of protein they're eating. Maybe some people only track the amount of calories they eat in junk food because maybe junk food is their thing. Most of their diet's really, really good. But we know that when they have one biscuit at night, it ends up leading to five biscuits at night and that's what's putting them in a caloric surplus. So actually, if I say to them on three days of the week, you've got two to 300 calories that you can have on whatever you want, but no more, that will naturally make their diet better. Not perfect, but better for this stage, which is going to allow me to put that caloric deficit automatically without having to track too much. And then we can start moving into weekly caloric targets. We can move into daily caloric targets. We can move into intermittent tracking. So maybe tracking everything only two or three days a week. And that comes to the idea of tracking just to make sure that we're kind of calibrating our intake every now and again. Then we can move into macro ranges. And then kind of lastly, like I said, looking at tracking exact macros. What I always remember and, you know, Eric Helms and Mike Tuchscherer say; We're basically limited by our imagination and the client's circumstances when it comes to what we implement. And I know Martin MacDonald, for example, has talked about before creating something as simple as a rule for a client that they can't have fats and carbs at the same meal. Now does that have any scientific merit in terms of mixing to the two-mapping interest you have will make you fat? No. But it naturally creates some sort of constraint where the clients can have to limit their choices and by that will limit their caloric intake and help them be better, not necessarily optimal, but better than where they are

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currently. So, it's ... again, it's that dim switch. Where is somebody currently at? What can I do to meet them where they're at to make their diet slightly better based on their current circumstances?

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah. And I love the fact that you bring up this idea that we're really only limited by our imagination in this context of like there's so many different ways that you can go. And rather than that be overwhelming, that actually gives a lot of freedom. And where that old cliché of the art of coaching actually comes in that with all different types of clients you have every single one of them may be actually tracking things or assessing things in different ways based on what you think is going to be useful for them. And whether that one person you might have tracking their numbers of portions of vegetables that they're having per day, cause that's the thing they need to work on or for someone else having specific macronutrients or someone else that has all the other things that you've mentioned. And it can be that there's not one way or one strategy you use even with one specific type of demographic. It can go from person to person. You're just gonna think and have to actually use your brain a bit to say, okay, what is going to be most useful for this person? Number one, to get them to follow habits that will make them successful. But what are the things that we actually need to worry about tracking for this person? What will be irrelevant? And then you can come to your kind of own conclusions and that's, well, I think the whole idea of where people should want to get with their coaching, that they don't have to have a strategy that someone else has come up with, but instead they understand the kind of what is their client's objective and now I'm going to fit whatever kind of tactics or method that I need to in order to achieve that objective.

GREGG SLATER:

That, Danny, in a nutshell, is the course. So, it's going from this method-based approach. I give people macros. I give people intermittent fasting. And saying: What is the client's goal,

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overarching goal? And is it time bound? What phase do I need to break this up into? For that phase, you know, what's going to be the most appropriate method from Monday to Friday and from week one to week six? Like I said, and that can allow us to actually come up with a million and one different diet implementations based on the client in front of me. Because what we always say is fat loss principles are universal, fat loss application is individual. And so, it's that ability to say: Hey, what does this person need for their current circumstances and the current phase that we're in and their quarter goals? And I can change that. So actually, a couple of days a week somebody might be intermittent fasting and a couple of days a week somebody might be tracking calories because that's going to be the perfect fit for them based on their preferences, their goals, their circumstances. But when we transition into a different phase or their life circumstances change, I might have to change it again. But like I said, that's coaching. That's not just saying here are some methods. So, understand the principles and you can select your own methods.

DANNY LENNON:

Right. Before I get to the final question, Gregg, for people that either one) want to get more information about Lift the Bar, about any of the courses you discussed and then, two) find you specifically on the Internet and connect with you, where the best places that you would divert their attention?

GREGG SLATER:

Yeah. Cool. So, if you are kind of a personal trainer, then it's LifttheBar.com. If you're looking to become a personal trainer, then it's LTBTraining.co.uk. And that's all the work that we do around that. And then myself, I'm not great on social media. I do put stuff out every now and again on Instagram. That's [Gregg_LTB](https://www.instagram.com/Gregg_LTB).

DANNY LENNON:

Perfect. I'll link to all of that in the show notes for everyone listening. You can go and check all that out, which I highly encourage that you do. And Gregg, that brings us to the final question

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that I always end the podcast on. If you could advise people to do one thing each day that would have a positive impact on any area of their life, what would that one thing be?

GREGG SLATER:

No. Obviously, I've been a listener. I knew this question was coming and I had a little think. And I think if I gave this answer five years ago, I really would have disliked myself. But it's the idea of gratitude. I think having a son and stuff like that changes you a little bit. But I think too oftentimes we don't celebrate the fact when nothing bad's happening, right? Like I hurt my knee recently. When I didn't have a bad knee, I didn't really celebrate or stop to take a minute to appreciate the fact that I'm fit and I'm healthy and I could do all the things I want to do. Just in the same way that at some point, you know, you're going to lose parents, you're gonna lose relationships and friends and actually just stopping ... I'm never going to be a journal guy. I'm never going to sit and write this down, but just trying to take a minute to sit down and take stock and say, hey, I'm appreciative for the things I've got. I think if a lot more of us did that, we'd be in a good place.

DANNY LENNON:

Awesome. Gregg, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me. I really, really appreciate it. I really love the work that you do. I have a lot of respect for it and I want to say thanks for coming and talking to me.

GREGG SLATER:

No. Thanks for having me on, Danny. Hopefully, I've done the course a little bit of justice and that you guys are interested. Like I said, Lift the Bar. You can check it out for free and I'd love any of your feedback.