



DANNY LENNON:

Mike, welcome back to the podcast. Good to talk to you again.

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Danny, great to talk to you again. I'm honored to be back.

DANNY LENNON:

Before we get into anything else, one quick question I had for you, because I do see some of your meals that you post on Instagram, and I'm wondering like, do you have like training in a Michelin star restaurant or stuff like that, where did you get your culinary skills?

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Yeah. I just don't like to talk about it. But I'm classically educated in cuisine. We call it cuisine, and I'm mostly continentally focused, a lot of Sicilian cuisine is especially my interest. I've been to three academies in France. After I graduated these academies, they're all like, please come to Singapore and open your own French restaurant. I'm like, guys, honestly, I'm so embedded in fitness culture, it's too big a paradigm shift for me. I'm just there to learn, you know, Danny, I'm just there to learn my craft and get a better version of me. So sometime down the road maybe open up an exotic restaurant, but for now, I think it's just hypertrophy.

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DANNY LENNON: Well, you definitely have meal combinations that are unique and novel to me, so it definitely shows there's something...

MIKE ISRAETEL: I mean, what would you know about fine dining, Danny, let's be honest? Nothing, you are just regular guy.

DANNY LENNON: Zero.

MIKE ISRAETEL: Yeah. So to you, this looks like magic probably.

DANNY LENNON: Yeah, with that, I did want to touch on a few more things that are related to some of your own personal experience, particularly with your goals in relation to body composition, competing, etc. from your own personal view over the last couple of years. Can you maybe just give people listening who maybe might be unfamiliar, some context as to your kind of focus, your competing, etc., over the past year to two, and what does that look like?

MIKE ISRAETEL: Yeah, so I've been training for size for quite some time, 21 years now, and January of 2020 I started a fat loss phase that was supposed to take me into a competition in something like June or July 2020. I got through 14 weeks of that and then COVID cancel the shit out of everything. I took basically a maintenance phase for six weeks, mid-May to late June, and late June, I started dieting again, having had moved to Las Vegas that was gym access, etc. And they started putting shows on again, so I have a decent chance of competing in a show. And I dieted for the sum total of 22 weeks on that last diet and put together my, by a longshot, absolute best look ever, striated glutes; the whole deal, and it was a very difficult process. 22-week diet is fun in some capacity, I suppose, but it was very tough but I didn't succeed. About eight-tenths of the way through, I contracted COVID, and I dieted just right through that. I was supposed to compete the day after I contracted it to do like a warm up show, and I was like, well, that's done, so that really sucked. But then I recovered, and

then I continued, so then I competed, and I won a bunch of stuff, won a bunch of divisions and qualified for nationals. So the NPC in the United States is where you turn pro at national level shows and I'm qualified to do that, so hopefully, what I'm doing now is I'm taking the next year is the plan, with some mini cuts of courses to mass up just sort of the next level, so I can hopefully come in as a super heavyweight, which means I'd maybe have a stage weight of 105 kilos or more. And then I would like to take a shot at as many times as my body lets me to try to do my best and maybe in some strange universe, get a master's pro card, but we'll see.

I'm 36 years old currently. I'll be 37 in a few months. And so, most people tell me that means I have maybe five years of growing left in me, maybe three to five, which is cool. So I'm taking that opportunity now to do that, and then I'll be doing a lot of fat loss, but it's really cool, because over this last year, I've tried a bunch of strategies, successfully implemented them, and now we have a template that works. I did a ton of data collection on myself. So for example, I know what calories it takes for me, on average, to lose whatever amount of fat I have to in a certain time. I know how much cardio I have to do, because I kept track of every single step that I took with some kind of watch. You can see it because we're on video, but the folks who are just listening, I promise I have a watch on that I flashed to Danny. And we basically have a lot of things figured out, including the supplement side of things to where now it's a bit more of an algorithm process, because especially with enhanced contest prep, body water dynamics get really, really crazy, just so many things in the works. And you may look 12 weeks out, at some point, you pull your water and you're really four weeks out, and then ambiguity is really difficult to deal with. But once you successfully complete the whole process, you know the underlying variables you have to manipulate anyway and you don't need to – it's like flying an airliner at night, just on radar alone. You

don't need to see what's out there. You know that the radar is true. So now I have that sort of information and future contest preps would be, I was going to say, easier, that's probably a misnomer, more straightforward.

DANNY LENNON:

And the reason I ask that question is to allude to something you actually touched on, and hopefully, throughout this conversation, address some of the realities of dieting to that level of leanness. Was there anything about this particular prep that was surprising or that you couldn't have predicted ahead of time with the COVID thing aside?

MIKE ISRAETEL:

It's a good question. A lot of that unpredictability is going to have to require a dive into pharmaceutical interventions, which I'm relatively comfortable doing in a hypothetical universe. I don't know how pertinent this is to your audience, but – so anabolics, especially for me, take quite a psychological toll, a really big side effect of the profound persistent anxiety. And people sometimes ask me anxiety about what, it's just pharmacologically induced anxiety, just anxiety. You are just kind of like, argh! And I threw a lot of thought, I wasn't going to be able to take real sort of requisite dosages because that anxiety was a real big limiting factor. And then I actually discovered that, quite ironically, if I was administering the substances more frequently, the ups and downs weren't as big, it was a more of a smooth curve. And for some reason, I'm not sure of, that actually diminished the anxiety considerably. So it turns out the most difficult part now psychologically with using such substances is the on ramping period, when you start getting into higher dosages, that's like, argh! It's like the launch part of the rocket sequence to go to the moon, but once you clear the atmosphere, it's all peaceful. In this case, not all peaceful, but I used to sort of administer them less frequently, same total amounts, and just the sort of – really hate the process. You have a

sufficiently high level of anxiety, you hate being around, because being around drives you nuts.

So this time, I was able to handle it much better. Another thing maybe that I – it's not that I couldn't predict, but I didn't use before, step tracking, and this doesn't just apply to enhanced folks, I used to do a lot of formal cardio on the treadmill for XYZ number of minutes and XYZ incline. That's cool, but you never can't quantify the amount of neat reduction that counterbalances that, and we know that neat reduction very well studied, very well confirmed, and it happens especially towards the higher end of outputs. And this is something I'm sure you're very familiar with, but as humans approach really high levels of daily energy output, the body and brain are really, really good at pulling back in other places. There's a certain amount of output your body just won't let you do consistently. And when you're flirting with those outputs, especially at a lower calorie diet, your body has really good ways of making you sit down, making you slow down, making you talk less, that reduce neat. And I think a lot of folks, myself included, they sort of assume daily activity of x. And then if I layer in cardio on top of that, I can count that as an additive energy expenditure. In reality, you layer enough cardio and you cut the calories enough, and then the x that's daily activity should shrink so much that the cardio really just keeps you at your old levels of expenditure, which stores off your estimates of how much weight you should be losing and so on and so forth.

So with a step tracker, I was able to completely quantify my daily physical activity, or nearly, right? And it's actually super easy to get in, I did zero formal cardio and never got on the treadmill on purpose. Like, I did, if I needed more steps, and my training partner was finishing up in the gym, I'd go, I have 15 minutes to kill, I might as well walk around. But just walking around also is much more productive. For example, podcasts did not

require a video. I would do them while I was walking around, pacing in my apartment. I would take walks outside, Las Vegas is a fine place to take walks outside. Although when I did it in early July, the bottom of my shoes started melting.

DANNY LENNON:

Wow.

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Yeah, no joke. Right? I was like, I just didn't understand what's going on. I was like, what the hell. Like, my feet were hot, but tops of my feet were fine. Where the sun was pointing was fine, but the bottoms were hot. I was like, "fuck!" and the road is like, if you step out your actual unshod foot on the road, it will burn your shit off completely, like, that's how hot the shit is. So I was like, oh fuck, but yeah, surely intense, Vegas is legit the desert, no doubt. But I actually walked to the store and stuff like that, and it just made me, you know, dieting gives you sort of lazy mode, where, like, if you're going to change the channel, but the remote is two meters away from you, you might be like, I will watch this. If you have a step tracker on, you kind of auto-incentivize, the more I move, the better, and it all adds up. And I have to hit a daily total of 14,000 steps, and then because it all adds up, it's just super awesome. When you're like, look at your watch, all right, how much walking around do I have to do today, it's 8:00 p.m., day's almost over, and you're like, oh my god, I'm almost at my total, because I was just more active. And that was super great. I would highly, highly recommend a step tracker to anyone who's comfortable with formalizing their experience and wants really high-end results. It also hugely drives down the anxiety, because it wasn't back of our minds, and you're trying to get the best shape ever, like, am I doing enough. Well, if you set a marker 14,000 steps a day, you hit 14,000, you're doing enough. You know what I mean? And there's no ambiguity to it, which is amazing. So I really benefited from that a lot.

DANNY LENNON:

Yeah, from a behavioral standpoint, I guess, there's a degree of gamification almost that you're talking about there. You can see these numbers and you're trying to hit a certain amount or you see how much is left, and there is something as arbitrary as that is, we, as humans do try and end up hitting things like that.

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Totally, I would get into real mindfuck scenarios before I have one of these of, like, all right, I did my cardio, now I relax. But if I relax too much, my knee's going to be really low. Maybe I should move around, but I don't want to cause too much fatigue, and there's this huge uncertainty in it, it tends to. I mean, look in the throes of a diet pharmacology or not, a lot of us tend to be a little bit anxious, because your entire being is pulling you away from the state. Like, I'm sure you've dieted hard enough before where everything about your body and mind are just like, dude, stop, stop, sit down, eat a bunch of food, sleep for 10 hours, that's what you need to do. And if you could quantify the proper path, you can just stick to the quantified proper path. If you have a sort of generally outlined proper path, it's really easy for that, you go down that path and then tangent off until, okay, I'll sit a little bit more, I'll eat a little bit more, so on and so forth. So we're all used to counting macros, but most of us are not used to counting physical activity. And if we get into that state, I think it's a big advantage to essentially, like, it de-burdens your mental state to a huge capacity. Now, of course, there could be the contrary view, and I'm sure this applies to some people that if they formalize too many things, they start to feel sort of really burdened by the numbers. You know what I mean? Like, we are so numbers focused, that I'm sure some Instagram meme pages if you're like, you're not the number on your step tracker, you're a good human being, no matter what. So it's not for everyone. But if you have the emotional maturity to understand that your goodness as a human being has nothing to do with how you do your diet, then you can parse

the two out and then just do your diet properly with the proper quantified constraints, and it makes things a lot easier.

DANNY LENNON: Given this timeline where you'd gone through 14 weeks of dieting, we hit a global pandemic, you have cancellation of shows, you then go into a 22-week prep, you then have another show missed, you have a COVID diagnosis, all these things...

MIKE ISRAETEL: A bunch of shows got canceled too. I had to change my eventual show to fly to Florida or some shit. It was supposed to be in Las Vegas, it just was.

DANNY LENNON: So with all those things, I'm wondering, because you strike me as someone that I would describe as very well adjusted and being able to handle most things that maybe a lot of people...

MIKE ISRAETEL: The charade works.

DANNY LENNON: Yeah. But I guess, given, I often find that when obstacles are thrown up, we kind of learn something about how we handle situations that we can only guess ahead of time how we deal with them. So I was wondering, do you feel you learned anything through that about yourself, if that's not too much of a deep, analytical question about you...

MIKE ISRAETEL: No such thing.

DANNY LENNON: Is there anything that you felt you learned about yourself because of just the obstacles that were added on top of an already difficult process of dieting to that level of leanness?

MIKE ISRAETEL: Luckily, I'm no stranger to obstacles. But I have developed, I guess, a system, pattern of behavior in regards to obstacles that has done me maybe more good than everything I've ever learned. So I consider this a profound lesson. When I say it, it's going to sound really simple and, like, yeah, okay, but how do you pull it off, and the pulling off literally just comes with



practice, and an enhanced awareness of when you're in this scenario and how to act. And the lesson is like this, and I didn't learn it in this prep, but I had a lot opportunities to use it. And especially when you're on enough gear, and your brain's all fucking mush anyway, it's tough to use it. But I think I used to, more often than not, and here it is, when you are presented with a large impediment to your initial plans, fundamentally, the temptation is to become frustrated, angry, to try to – you start to envision that there's a discordance between the reality you want and the reality that exists. And that discordance from an Eastern religion perspective causes suffering, because it has to, because reality is just not what you want. And ignoring reality, and trying to pretend and squint and change it with your mind doesn't work and causes deep suffering. So that's realization number one. If that road to wanting things to not have changed is an untenable road, it's absolutely pointless to walk on. And if you don't believe me listener, try walking down at a whole bunch, I promise you it goes nowhere. Like, your gym closes, you're like fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, ugh. Keep going, keep saying fuck, keep squinting, keep being angry, throw your phone, and then see if anything changes for the better. I can guarantee you it won't.

So now that we know that that road is pointless to walk on, what would someone who has real life do in that scenario? As a matter of fact, what are our options? Well, we can rebel and stew and that doesn't do anything we already know. But what you can do is try to calm down just a little bit, try to calm down is a bit of a misnomer. Just breathe. Just breathe and see the world as it is, and ask yourself the only permanent question: what is my best alternative option now? What is the best realistic option I have? So as soon as our gyms shut out of Philadelphia, Charlie and I, my training partner, we were like, we just have to buy gym equipment. So Charlie found us quick and dirty shit, he goes on Amazon or Craigslist,

and we just fucking bought it, and it was just the bare bones to keep training, and that happened, and within three days it arrived, and there it was, we were training.

Did I like training with three pieces of equipment versus like 50 in the gym? Hell no. Did it work? Yes. But it is the best option at the time in freaking out while there's a national human reaction, just doesn't do anything. So when you're presented with a difficulty in your life, feel the emotions of frustration and anger, but don't assume they have any relevance to what is going to be helpful to you. Once you sort of feel them a lot, you realize they are just emotions, they go up and down. But then you go, okay, all right, I'm pissed, fine; now, given that the world has changed, how do I change my behavior to do the best thing I can do in this case? I wish I could do, not goddamnit, if gyms were open, because they are not, what am I going to do that's going to be the best use of my time? What am I going to look back on and be proud of myself for doing? To me, that line of action, if you pull it off, pull it off to some extent, that is the correct answer to life. I have always, and this is to me something that stuck out a lot, I used to be when I was younger, I was very emotional, and I did a lot of – frustration was a big thing for me, and it always got me nothing. And I was especially impacted by movies luckily and this isn't a big deal. I was always drawn to characters in movies that when everyone else was freaking out, they weren't, and they could take action when everyone else was freaking out; like a plane crashes and people are like, ah, ah, but they're like, all right, let's take people out of their seats and put them out of the plane, go down the slide, go down the slide. I mean, that person's first of all a hero, and second of all, is only a hero because they were still effective. Because they realize, look, the plane crashed, there's no point in screaming, because there's no one to help you, but I'm still mobile, I can help, I'm just going to calmly do the next best thing.

And if someone who's trained, Danny, such as yourself, in martial arts and jiu-jitsu, they've actually the entire key to jiu-jitsu, it's like I'm in a certain position, freaking out literally makes it worse, I'm just going to do whatever it is I know, whatever my tool set is, I'm going to use it as best as I can to improve my position. If you're good enough at that, you beat everyone in the world, right? That's not just the solution to jiu-jitsu, that's the solution to life. Whatever you can do logically at the time, that's your best, give that some thought, think it through, take your time and then calmly begin to execute. I mean, can you imagine how, if you are the opponent in that case, how tough it is to deal with you. Imagine you're shooting like a robot that's approaching you, it's going to kill you like Terminator style, and you shoot one of his arms off and he just uses the other arm. You shoot his legs off and he still has the arm. He's crawling with it, he still wants to kill you. You shoot him in the torso, but his head's still up. So his arm is attached to half torso, but he's still coming. You're like, holy shit, there's no quitting, he doesn't quit because he doesn't know how, he just pursues the next logical best step. And you cut his arm off and he's trying to headbutt you, and you're like, fuck, how does this work.

So if you can be more like that robot, then you will be as successful as possible in any scenario. Here's the trick, as successful as possible, is the only level of success you can have, because a lot of people are like, well, I could have been this if, but for – a big way in which this occurs is injury. Like, if you get hurt in the gym, of course, it's that frustration, of course, oh my god, what am I doing. Learn your lesson about what you did wrong, sometimes when you train hard, you didn't do anything wrong, injuries just happen. Learn your lesson, calm down, leave the gym, develop a plan for how you're going to train around the injury, come back and train around the injury, and that's it. I've had a bunch of injuries, I did exactly that. It's tough to do that. A lot of people get

overwhelmed. A lot of people quit training altogether because of the pandemic because they couldn't train at their best, they stopped training altogether, you know, maybe that is the best alternative use of your time. For me, it wasn't. I did the best that I could. Do I wish 2020 went better? For sure. But does that matter? Like, I wish I had fucking pink hair and dragon's wings too. That shit ain't happening overnight. So it's just, do your best with what you have. Easy to say, tough to do, but with practice, everyone can get better at.

DANNY LENNON:

I suspect that practice piece is where people actually can prove to themselves that this works right, because I think, cognitively, we can understand what you say, yeah, like, there's no point going down and beating ourselves up over something that can occur. But it's very hard to connect to that sometimes until you just take the step to, I'm going to make myself act in a certain way, then you see it actually eases some of that suffering, basically that mismatch between what we want and what our reality is.

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Yeah, you can practice it very easily just by driving in traffic. So you get into traffic and cars are slowing down or there's a big stop, and you can be like, you can yell at cars and be like, goddammit, get the fuck out of my way, but they can't hear you, so it's not going to help. Or you can be very frustrated like, fuck, I'm on my way somewhere, like, why the hell is there a stop, like, stupid people, and those emotions are interesting ones. But if you think about them long enough, you only lie for so long, and you want to be able to look back when you're in your 80s or whatever and think like, I had mostly a good time with life, where you look back and be like I was mostly frustrated because my desires and expectations don't line up with reality. So you give that a good heart think, then you can say, okay, traffic occurs, and there's a big sort of plug in the road and I can't go anywhere for a while, what are my best alternatives? You try to look for ways to get

around, of course, you're not just like consigning yourself to your endless fate sitting in a freeway, in your car. But like you said, it's illegal for me to use the shoulder to drive off and the next exit's not for a while, then the best use of my time is to either become productive in some other way or to relax and have fun. Either you're relaxing and having fun or you're being productive, that's probably 98% of your life ideally should be between one of those two things, and yelling at people in traffic is simultaneously pointless and poisons your own existence, it's a bad time. You're having a bad time for yourself.

So next time, if folks want to try to implement this, and you get into traffic and all of a sudden there's a big stop, you go like, fuck, this delays me by 20 minutes, that's 20 minutes of you listening to a podcast, that's 20 minutes of you getting on a business phone call and arranging a deal or something like that, that's 20 minutes of you calling your significant family member or a friend and just chatting with them and then spreading some love around and getting a lot out of that while the traffic around you, you don't have to worry about it, because it's out of your hands entirely. And then when the traffic starts moving, you start going. What person do you want to be at the end of the day? Do you want to be the person that spends 20 minutes and be like, fuck, I can't believe this, stupid construction, you know? Or do you want to be the person that's like, oh there's traffic, it stinks, I'm going to call my wife, I'm going to chat with my wife. And then you have 20 minutes chatting with your wife. And you can imagine being a frustrated person looking over in the car next to you this guy's blah, blah, blah on the phone. And you're just like, that guy seems like he's having a great time, but we're literally in the same situation. So do you want to be having a good time? Do you want to be doing something effective? Or do you want to be fucking miserable? Because I think there's like a glorification of misery too where it's kind of funny, people think it's righteous.

I got into this a lot, especially with high dose anabolics. You feel a righteous anger, like, how dare he cut me off. It's like, are you having any fun doing that? No, it's awful. So why are you doing it? Well, it's instinctual, it's the temptation. Well, every time it comes up, realize that at some point, okay, this is toxic... All right, let me do something else, let me have some other kind of thoughts, let me get productive, because hatred and anger and misery, I would be totally for them if they had a point. But usually they just fucking don't. And if you can just learn other ways to think, catch yourself in the act of doing them, listen, it's okay that you're doing them, we're all human for the love of God. You don't have to have a guilt complex, like, I was bad today, like, just I was totally karmically misaligned. Like, it's okay, now you're still being bad by hating yourself. It's okay. It's okay to yell at the guy, fuck you for cutting me off. And then once you're done with it, you are like, all right, let's just do something a little better. And once you can get into that habit, after a while, you just do more cool, productive, happy shit, and less be pissed for no reason. In fact, if nothing at all, of course, it makes you more productive; of course, it, over the course of your life, gives you better friendships and makes you a better person than everyone else, earns you more money; but if it did none of that, if it was completely neutral, you can at least look back at age 80, and be like, I really just generally had a really good time. Can you imagine looking back at your life and just seemed mostly frustration? Good god, fuck that. Fuck that. I don't want to live like that, because it's literally hell, you live in hell without hell actually being real. You just made it in your own mind.

DANNY LENNON:

And that traffic example is not trivial, because it's this idea of, well, how you start doing one thing is how you start doing all things, essentially, which is this kind of habit idea you've mentioned. And I've definitely

experienced the attractiveness of being in misery because you kind of split off into, well, I can't have this idealized thing I wanted. So fuck everything and I'm just going to sit in this misery as opposed to the rational thing that you said is like the next best alternative, it doesn't have to be the ideal number one thing we want. So I think very wise answer and very much appreciate that. I could talk philosophy for a long time, but to switch gears back to something more in line with some of these realities of dieting I wanted to ask about, and people sometimes try and misapply strategies they may see, say, someone like you doing, because, well, he knows a lot about dieting, particularly practical tips around it, that may or may not apply to their situation. So as a more concrete way to put that, what do you see as some of the practical differences in someone, let's say, dieting from 25% body fat to 20% that are different to someone dieting from 12% to 7% – that's just arbitrary numbers, and not even necessarily physiologically, but how people should view that from a practical sense if that ramble made sense at all.

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Of course it did, yeah. So there's a degree of fine tuning that needs to be very different or doesn't need to be, but if it is different that can sure say that 25 to 20% personal whole lot has. General principles alone applied in a broad swath will be very effective, and what that does is it saves a considerable amount of logistical and psychological difficulty work for that person dieting for 25 to 20%, that does not have to be applied like dieting from 12 to 7% does have to be applied. For example, do you need to weigh your food at all when you're dieting for 25-20%? You may get away without weighing in at all. Just like eat less junk food, keep your meals a little bit more healthy, and when you're pretty decently full, just stop eating, and legit will take most people, literally most people from 25 to 20%, in something like roughly eight to 12 weeks. And people can ask, like, so did you do macro, did you do keto, that's my favorite question, do you do macros,

like, we all do macros. There's a huge life hack. Do you breathe air, like, oh yeah, you do too. You may not be aware of it. So you can answer that question, like, oh yeah, I mean, I just eat like really well, eat plenty of protein, veggies, fruits, and I just don't overeat, I haven't had any junk food in eight weeks, I'm like well off, I'm like way leaner.

That doesn't quite cut it from 12 to 7%, and there's a very good reason, one major reason, your hunger signaling can no longer be trusted. You are getting so lean that you're hungry no matter what, you can be hungry and have a hypercaloric day and still be hungry, because your body wants to shoot you the fuck back out of 7% or 6% or 5%, wherever you're at. It wants to shoot you real far the other way. You're like a stretched slingshot, and nothing makes any goddamn sense anymore, and you have to run your diet by the numbers because your brain and your body are now lying to you officially, because they don't agree with what you're doing. Evolution's like what the fuck is wrong with you. You're starving. It means your hunger signaling is going to tell you eat all the goddamn time. So if you started at 12% fat and you stop eating, when you were relatively full, you may end the diet at 11 or 10% fat and someone's like, I thought you were going to go down to seven. You're like, yeah, I guess, my body just needed the fuel. It didn't need shit, it wanted it, because your body doesn't want to get you below 10% in most cases, because it's very artificial, and it thinks you're starving. So in that case, you should be weighing your food, you should be counting your macros, you should be tracking your activity, and applying them in a sort of feed forward fashion, where how you feel is of only limited context.

So essentially, probably a good way to diet is to push yourself into the quite discomfort zone for as long as you can until you're like, dude, I can't do this anymore. And you go back to maintenance eating for three to five days, you feel significantly better; though, if you really



had your pick, you would just be eating pizzas every day, but I'm fine using the term clean diet, it's like everyone knows what it means at this point, the IIFYM-crowd used to hate that term, and now I think it just like not shit, you. So you eat fundamentally healthy foods for three to five days, you feel a lot better, and then you go into another, you know, I don't know, seven to 10 days of like focused, distinct hypocaloric state, and you do that again and again and again, and unless the feedback is ravenous hunger or super low energy, you just kind of assume that that's what it's going to take. Whereas with 25 to 20% dieting, you shouldn't experience a whole lot of that, it shouldn't be that hard of a diet. Good news is because it's not that hard of a diet it's a very high chance you will achieve it with a lot of sort of psychic bandwidth left over so that you can stay at 20% or even stay there for eight to 12 weeks and then go down again to 15%, that's totally fine.

When you get into the rarefied air of being very lean, yeah, it's like flying a reconnaissance aircraft at 80,000 feet of altitude, shit shakes, your instruments are all fucked up, you're like, that's just part of the plan. You kind of fly by instruments, like, if you just use your intuition, like, dude, I can fuck this, I'm going to point the nose down, I'm going to die up here. But your instruments say everything is sort of okay, then you just keep going. So I think a lot of people who take their lessons on dieting for bodybuilders and fitness celebrities, they start at 25%, these folks that follow Instagram people, they learn how do we get to 20 and they look up these Instagram folks and these people are measuring out their meals, everything is exact, macros manipulation, they're like, well, that's what it's going to take. And because they haven't dieted much or anything like that, it turns out that that amount of input into reorganizing the life is a significant stressor, it burns them so much that they fall out which is totally understandable, like, counting every fucking grain of rice for people not really used

to dieting, or even people that are, that are just like, couldn't be doing it way easier. That could be like six weeks, you know, fuck this, I don't need this shit at all. And it turns out they literally are correct, they never did need the shit, they could have taken a much more relaxed approach.

DANNY LENNON:

And I think you see that play out a lot when you anecdotally hear people say, oh yeah, calories in calories out is bullshit, I started counting calories, didn't work for me, then I found this low carb diet and I don't count anything and it works great. They're just like misinterpreting what was actually going on or they're kind of using the energy balance equation synonymously with tracking calories and even other things. But you can see how they got there because they literally didn't need that level of attention where they're at. They just made some changes, and hey, you take carbohydrates in your diet, you take a ton of those pleasurable foods, so I think it manifests in many ways like that.

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Absolutely.

DANNY LENNON:

One last thing I wanted to ask, because people tend to point to you whenever this topic comes up for some reason...

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Oh boy! I don't talk about my arrest for various crimes between 2009 and 2010, Danny. I can't talk about that. My parole officer says I was not as close to that school as those people said.

DANNY LENNON:

That'll change my question then, seeing as I can't ask about that. But just generally the idea of gaintaining, why do you tend to, on the average, maybe suggest that may not be the most productive way for people to go if they are aiming to gain muscle mass gain training?

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Gaintaining is the idea that – there's really two ideas there. One is expressed well by Eric Helms and colleagues. One is expressed poorly by Greg Doucet, I don't think he has any

colleagues. Greg Doucet's idea is you stay at whatever body fat percentage is sort of comfortable for you, he prefers relatively lean, and you just train and eat, and you don't really focus on trying to put on weight. And as a matter of fact, in some of his communications he used to probably just stay in a similar weight, and then you'll build muscle and burn fat. And if you're a beginner or even intermediate, that can work pretty well until you reach a sufficient level of leanness to where we know that a very powerful tool for muscle building is a hypercaloric condition, and we know that when you get sufficiently lean, simultaneously... a powerful condition for fat loss is a hypocaloric environment, probably the most powerful. And if you're maintaining, you have neither weapon to use, so you're trying to build muscle and lose fat, at the same time – it has to happen at the same time, because you're staying the same weight. Like, your kidneys aren't going to get converted into muscle. Your body fat has to be reduced, muscle has to be gained, and you're attempting to do two of those things with them two weapons that are the biggest in that equation, and you're just not using them.

So for example, if you really had a gun to your head, aliens come down to earth and say, look, we're going to nuke the fucking world unless you gain 10 pounds of muscle over the next year, are you going to gaintain? Get the fuck up out of my face. You're going to eat a lot. But do you have to eat a lot, if you just want some moderate muscle gains, you don't want to focus on stuffing yourself? No, you don't have to do it at all. But the reason people come to me or point to me is because I think I've represented to some extent a concern for optimality. I think a lot of people want to know their best option, and then, of course, you can scale down from that. What's the fastest car you can buy? Here it is. Okay. Can I buy other car that's not as fast? Of course. But like if you want a fast car, you should probably know what the fastest one is, just so you have a reference frame. Just the

same way, if you want to do your best possible job of gaining muscle, you should know what that is. And in my view, that's probably a manipulation of your body weight to slowly and steadily gain weight, realize you've accumulated an excessive amount of body fat, reduce that body fat by cutting weight, perhaps some stability phases, maintenance phases between that to reduce fatigue, resensitize, and you continue that cyclic process, because the hypercaloric condition is very powerful for muscle gain, more powerful than the isocaloric condition, unless you want to take a bet that we have two groups of people, one group isn't gaining weight, the other is, who's going to gain more muscle. But that's not even a serious discussion, Danny, you can know three things about nutrition, you already know that, and that is true that people gain weight, gain more muscle, and so weight gain is probably a good idea.

We also know from quite a bit of research now that you can lose a considerable amount of fat and as long as you don't get too lean and you are in it for too long, it doesn't really risk muscle gain much. It's difficult to gain muscle while losing fat, but it's pretty easy to maintain it. So in the end, there's a really good argument to make for those cyclical approaches. There's one final big argument, and it's this, if you weigh 150 pounds, you want to be jacked which we'll say is 180. Nothing you do at maintenance will make you weigh 180. Thermodynamics is a motherfucker. You have to be in a caloric surplus, and it's funny because I think Greg Doucet himself has weighed in the excess of 220 pounds or 230 or something. He physically didn't get there from being 150 with anything other than a hypercaloric condition. Right? So if he's telling other folks, you don't have to gain weight to get jacked, yes, certain level of jacked, but I started training in high school, I was 103 pounds. Right now I weigh 240 and I have probably slightly lower body fat now than I did then. How the hell does that work? I didn't just maintain, right?

The other position held by, I think Eric Helms and colleagues, or Eric Helms specifically, is that, look, you don't have to worry about stuffing yourself a shitload. If you just have good training set up with good healthy diet, eat plenty of food, enjoy yourself, your weight will just rise on average, slowly, as you eat and grow and train and are hungry. Maybe that's true for a lot of people. And it's psychological debunks a lot of people, which I think is maybe where Eric is coming from that because a lot of people worry a ton of getting enough weight, just relax, just eat, train and grow. And that's true until it isn't. It's true for a lot of people, but not true for everyone. For example, some people's hunger signaling, and I'm sure you know people like this, they're just not eaters. And if they train and train and train and eat and eat and eat, they're like 60 kilos in a month one, and in month seven they are 57.5, fuck, and they're just, I don't know, I think I'm eating. And for those people who are like, look bro, you got to eat a little bit more than you want. And how do you know you're succeeding at that? You look at the scale, and maybe gain five kilos over the course of seven months. And now extreme mass phases where you do like two pounds a week for six weeks, that's probably pretty stupid. It's needless and difficult. I've done it before, I was wrong about it then, I've advocated again, I'd be wrong about it now. But there's some middle ground there where, yeah, some people benefit from a willful approach to making sure they add body weight, because maintaining absolutely works to some extent for most people. But especially as you get closer to your genetic ceiling, it doesn't work all that well anymore, you have to willfully gain mass and that means gaining weight. And dare I say it, it may make you uncomfortable at times. And the thing is, is that it especially baffles me when high level bodybuilders will say stuff like they rarely do. preeminent example. I mean, almost a rule in high level bodybuilding is being uncomfortable with how much food you have to eat.

Do you think Ronnie Coleman went up to 335 pounds in his offseason just eating wherever you felt like? Come on now. And this guy's posted on Instagram about like another meal down the hatch, two hours later have to eat again, don't want to live anymore. Like, it's tough, because you're intentionally taking yourself out of your body's homeostasis. Nothing about my body wanted me to be 240 pounds, but here I am, and it's through a lot of stuffing myself intelligently most of the time, just largely not overdoing it. You don't need 6000 calories a day, maybe you need 4500. But like, look, some days you feel like 3800, and that's probably just not enough to give you best results. If you're approaching training more recreationally, gaintaining I think is totally fine as long as it works. But when it's not working, realizing it pretty soon and doing something about it is a good idea unless you just want to be disappointed. And I've gained, I've been through long phases of gaintaining in my training history, and they're mostly, some of them went okay, most of them were gigantic disappointments. I just didn't gain nearly the muscle I thought I was going to be gaining, and I realized, okay, unless I really just take a real good stab at gaining the weight that I know I need to gain to get to a certain size, it's just not going to happen automatically, it's not going to happen naturally. So that's my position on that.

DANNY LENNON:

Or you could just do what I do, I complain and pretend that I'm a genetic non-responder to hypertrophy training. So Mike, before I get to the very final question, where can people find you on social media, the internet, any RP stuff, anything that you want to mention, let them know what to go and check out.

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Totally, thank you so much. So if you go on to Instagram RPDRMIKE, RP, Dr. Mike, if you click on the link in my bio, it takes you to all my YouTube videos and the hypertrophy book we just wrote which is really sweet, and then the YouTube, Renaissance Periodization YouTube,

we are making, gee, we put out five videos a week or something and almost all of them are super informative and content heavy and it's just to help you get jacked and lean and strong. So really, really to the point pretty well organized to a bunch of series in which we cover broad topics. And then Renaissance Periodization on Instagram is a good place, and if you go there, all the links will take you the rest of the way.

DANNY LENNON:

Awesome. And for everyone listening, that'll all be linked in the show notes of this episode. With that, Mike, we come to the very final question that I always end the podcast on. So you've probably got it before, but most of the time, my answer changes daily, so I can ask you again. Although you've already given us one very wise answer, that would be very difficult to beat. But if you could advise people to do one thing each day that would have a positive impact on any area of their life, what might that one thing be?

MIKE ISRAETEL:

Sure, I got a good one. Try to see where people you disagree with are coming from, try to steal man their position at least once, trying to wrap your head around, like, I hate them, and they're wrong and stupid, but maybe like, this is why they think this and I can see where they're coming from. Because there's like a little bit of divisiveness now with politics, that probably isn't more divisiveness than they used to be, it's just more visible on social media because of the crazies get the clicks. But I think it's easy to start caricaturing yourself into this noble angel that is all well intentioned and knows no bad, and people that disagree with your position to be just really evil fundamentally deep down and to have absolutely no good intentions of their own. And then the truth is maybe 90-95% of all people are just trying to do their goddamn best, and they're probably not evil, they just maybe have a different understanding of things, and maybe you can even learn from that. But even if you're totally right, you can sort of see how people get on stuff that's, you

know, you can see where they come from. A quick example is a lot of people deny the sort of anthropogenic global warming. Right? They think manmade global warming is a myth, and you can see if you're scientifically literate, you can think of like, well, those people are fucking insane. And you may not be wrong in many cases. But you can maybe try to see where they're coming from. It doesn't mean condoning their opinions. It's like, okay, would you want to live in a world in which the very things you do daily are destroying your aquarium that you live in, the planet? Like, no, fuck, I wish that was different. Some people just take that wish and make it reality, like, no, no, no, we are not fucking up the climate, because they really want to believe it. You know what I mean? Of course, I'd like to believe that, it's just not true.

When a second place they're coming from is like, unfortunately, I wish science was intellectually pure, but it's really not, like, sociology and critical theory studies made sure that that wasn't the case. So like they'll tell you that, like, so I'll just get right to it, there's like an entire department's focused on what's called whiteness studies and how evil it is to be white. And like, if that's considered a serious intellectual pursuit, it's literal racism. And they're like, well, no, we've redefined racism to make sure that that doesn't, kind of, like sweet, nothing matters anymore. Right? There's no truth, and then they're like, oh, but global warming is real. You're the same fucking people in the intellectual... saying this, I don't believe you. And once you see from that perspective, you're like, I see how people can be skeptical of climate science. A lot of times you talk to, not all, but a lot of climate scientists [inaudible 00:48:25] global warming is real. Like, okay, should we use nuclear power, because it's super clean, super-efficient, super safe? No, no, no, it's super bad. And you're like, well, you clearly scientifically literate if you say that, so why am I supposed to believe you on this, right? So a lot of times if you consider all



the parts, yeah, global warming in my view is still absolutely very real, we absolutely need to do something larger about it. But the people that don't think it's real, it's not like they're all completely insane. You're like, okay, I think they're wrong, I see where they're coming from.

Another real quick one is like, the mask thing. Like a lot of people are like masks don't work, I don't want to wear masks. But who the fuck wants to wear a mask? It's just fucking annoying. It's all over your face. It's fucking bullshit. So I can see where they're coming from. They're not evil people. They just wish things weren't the way they are, and I fuckin agree with them. Do I still wear masks? Of course, I think it's a marginally good idea to slow the spread of COVID. But like, do I see where they're coming from? Totally. And all the others, just to keep it politically neutral, like, you see people complaining about like, let's say, gender discrimination, and you're a crazy psycho feminist or like male dominated this and that, you guys are insane, like, there's total equality, like, in some places there is, but in some places there's not; and there's a lot of undertones of inequality left even in the way we speak, like, you call someone a pussy, you do that around a feminist, like, so you're equating being bad and insufficient with being female and you're like, haven't really thought about it that way. So that you can kind of see how angry feminist psycho lady is coming from a fucking pretty decent place of just wanting to be true like a fucking human being. Once you see that, you are like, I don't hate you anymore, I think you're fucking wrong, but maybe I can engage in a civil conversation with you, and maybe we can check off some things we agree on, and then if we can agree on some decent shit as a society, it's a lot easier for everyone versus just thinking there's these two sides that are fucking killing each other all the time, and everyone's wrong, everyone's nuts.

DANNY LENNON:

I really like it, and I often need to remind myself more of that. Because if I was truthfully

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reflecting on most things that I, at least, now feel I'm on the right side of, I would suspect a large majority of that came about through luck, number one, of what information I happened to be exposed to at a certain time point that just happened to be lucky for me that it was X rather than Y. So yeah, some degree of empathy probably is not a bad thing. Mike, thank you so much for this time. I really, really enjoyed chatting, really enjoyed some of the stuff we talked about. I'm so glad you're able to do it.

MIKE ISRAE TEL:

Danny, always a pleasure. Thank you so much.