

MASTERING HANDSTANDS AND BEYOND

THE 5 KEYS TO UNLOCKING YOUR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL
BY LEE WEILAND



“We are not yet what we shall be,
but we are growing toward it,
the process is not yet finished.”

-Martin Luther

For my wife Alexis,
our children,
our team,
all of our amazing students,
and everyone I have yet to meet on this journey.

INTRODUCTION

BUILDING
STRENGTH
FOR LIFE



INTRODUCTION

This book is about much more than handstands...

It's about a way of life...

Of strength...

And of commitment to setting and achieving goals.

This is for every single person on the face of the earth.

It's for children and teenagers who want to begin building the kind of body they want for the rest of their lives.

It's for adults who are trying to heal their bodies from years of wear and tear.

It's for those who have never trained a day in their lives and are ready to take that step into a whole new life of strength.

And it's for those who have worked out for years and want to reach the next level.

It's for everyone, of all ages, shapes, sizes, and professions, from those who sit behind a keyboard all day to those opening people's skulls performing neural surgery.

Ultimately, it's for each and every person who wants to build the kind of strength, mobility, and skill you were designed to attain.

My name is Lee Weiland and I'm the founder of Strength Moves University, a Federation of Academies which is headquartered at Pacific Rim Athletics in Alaska.

I have a wife, 2 children, an amazing team, and amazing students.

And I'm also an educator, artist, and philosopher with degrees in each discipline, as well as the head Gymnastics coach at PRA and head coach and ceo of SMU.

And I've spent years studying, training, and teaching so that I can continue making progress as well as help others become the strongest version of themselves.

This book began as a simple outline for a handstand workshop, but I was so inspired by a lecture I heard, that I just decided to expand it into this little booklet. So please forgive any typos that you might fight since I just wanted to get this material out there for you. Since safe training protocols require individualization, and since everyone is unique, this book will focus on the foundation, the mindset, and the journey necessary to master not only handstands, but bodyweight strength, skill, and life.

Let's get started, so you can have handstands on demand at any angle--and beyond!

THE MINDSET

OVERCOMING
THESE
FEARS



CHAPTER 1: THE MINDSET

First, we have to come to terms with the fact that we are where we are in life for reasons, some coming from within ourselves, and others from outside.

And our brains have been neuroplastically shaped, sculpted, and wired to reflect, think, and act according to the environment in which we were born, raised, and continue to live, from the home we were born into, to the schools we were told to go to, to the degrees we were told to get, to the jobs we were told to work.

This has a direct bearing on people's success in all areas of life, including physical goals such as handstands, but way beyond that.

First, it is vital to understand that we are designed to be both individuals as well as part of a community.

Thus, our bodies and brains come to reflect the actions we take on a regular basis, as well as the community in which we are immersed, including our homes, schools, and jobs.

It is common knowledge that you are the average of the 5 people you spend the most time with.

The type of finances, relationships, health, and strength those people have will be directly reflected in you, from their accents to their attitudes to their actions.

The media, too, is a major source of influence.

If you do the research, you'll see that the vast majority of media is a constant onslaught of negativity which bombards your brain with a level of pessimism, uncertainty, and skepticism that does not do anything to spur people on to positive action, but rather fans the flame of failure.

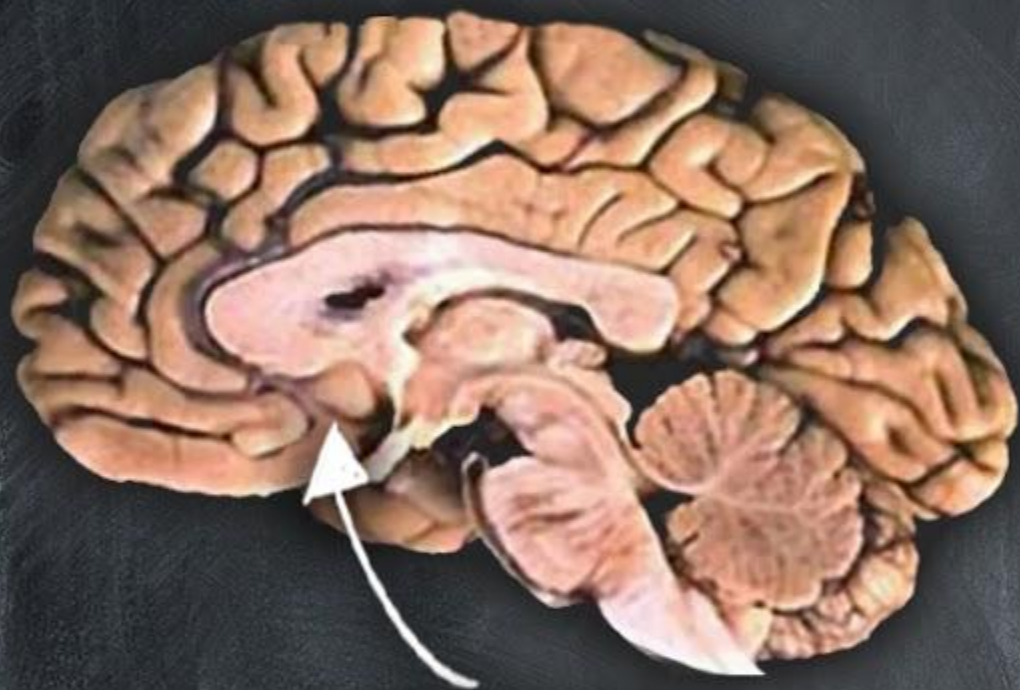
Let me just ask you, if a person constantly surrounds themselves with negative people and negative media, what do you think the results will be?

Moving on from there, we are also designed for individuality, and despite all of the external influences we bear, we can literally shape our own lives--and even our own brains--to become more successful than we ever realized...if we but take the necessary steps of disciplined, focused action that's required.

Now, before we get into the anatomy of the brain and how to rewire the mind, do a quick assessment of where you currently are.

Write down the 5 people who you spend the most time with as well as all of the external influences that you experience on a daily basis, from home, to school, to work.

LIMBIC SYSTEM VS. PREFRONTAL CORTEX



AMYGDALA

Now that you've done your self-assessment, we can dive into effecting the change we want to see.

My wife told me this a long time ago. It's something I regularly repeat, so much so that an online student who is now opening his own Strength Moves Academy reminded me of a time I said it. It stuck in his mind with such emphasis that he was spurred to life-changing action.

The main way that you can both change yourself and change the environment that you're in so that you can continue becoming the person you were designed to become is to adopt this mindset: "Be the change you want to see in others."

Easier said than done though.

My wife told me that over a decade ago. And it's been a daily war to implement.

Why?

It's a problem everyone will struggle with, including you.

That problems are your own brain, your neural anatomy, and everything you've been hardwired to think, from when you were freshly born to wherever you are now in life.

Part of it is physical. It's your limbic system. More specifically, it's your amygdala which is responsible for the "fight or flight" phenomenon.

You see, this doesn't just occur in life-or-death situations, but in every single decision you make, which is why making decisions is so difficult.

You've heard these before, and probably have thought them or said them: "I need to think about it." "I need more time." "I have to talk with someone first."

They are all forms of procrastination. Whether it's avoiding studying, neglecting that project that needs done, putting off that big purchase, or not getting married.

Then the "rationale" kicks in. The "set of reasons or a logical basis for a course of action or a particular belief" gets pumped through the brain from the prefrontal cortex and actually inhibits action when in fact the opposite is necessary to introduce the change that's necessary to produce the result of achievement: an emotional action. In fact, the word "emotion" actually comes from the Latin "to move." Therefore, an emotional decision is correctly a meaningful action. And a "good" action is one driven by what you know is ethically right.

And these type of actions, on an emotive level--not mere thinking--is what is necessary to rewire the mind for positivity, success, and achieving mastery of bodyweight strength and skill. The bottom line is that you have to blast through fear and shift your mindset to take massive action in order to produce massive results.

THE FOUNDATION

L A Y I N G
T H E
G R O U N D W O R K



CHAPTER 2: THE FOUNDATION

I once heard it said, “The time for thinking is over. It’s now time to make a decision.”

Making a decision is not thinking. It is, in fact, an action. Thinking leads to over-thinking and over-thinking is a form of procrastination which inhibits the action necessary to build anything.

Logically then, it is action that’s necessary to master handstands, any form of bodyweight strength and skill, and anything in life.

Of course, there’s study and thought involved, but that should always be centered around the most important thing: the goal.

And that’s where building the foundation begins-goal-setting.

The reason why most people don’t have success in any area of life, be it financial, relational, health, or strength, is not because of lack of “doing stuff.”

People can fill their calendars and schedules, but never actually achieve anything of substance and rather end up living the life they swore they would never live.

But to change that, you have to set the goal, and there’s really only 1 kind of goal. It’s specific, observable, and measurable. Period.

When I was a special education teacher, I wrote Individualized Learning Plans (IEPs for short). And these included goals, from physical to social to academic. The strategy was good, but most teachers I knew just made stuff up. They filled in the boxes to be done for the day.

If people actually took this strategy and applied it to everything in life, they’d accomplish so much more than they do. And they’d have handstands on demand.

So let’s break down how to set goals.

You need an objective. Let’s say just a handstand.

I’ve seen breakdancers, martial artists, crossfitters, and yoga folks all say that though, and still never get a solid, basic handstand. That’s because it wasn’t really a goal.

So you need it to be specific: Let’s say still, straight, and 60 seconds.

That’s better! But still, I’ve heard hundreds of people say that...and more.

So let’s give it a time frame: it has to be accomplished in 60 days. Now we’re talking, and now that’s a goal! The foundation is beginning to take shape. Write it down now-and every day--until you get it.

THE 3 ELEMENTS OF A STRONG FOUNDATION

SET GOALS

Write down on a daily basis what your goals are.

They should be specific.

They should be objective.

They should be measurable.

COMMIT

Commit to achieving your goals at all costs.

Make the mindset shift that's necessary.

Stop over-thinking and take the steps of action necessary to achieve your goals.

TRAIN

Train like you'll never have another day.

Incorporate the steps of action necessary every day.

Focus on the victories and enjoy the journey!

Rome wasn't built in a day.

And neither will your handstand be.

You have a specific, objective, measurable goal, which is only the beginning of your foundation.

You still need 2 other ingredients for the concrete of your foundation.

The first is commitment.

This is actually the most difficult thing for human beings. The statistics show this to be true. If we look at it from a macro point of view, 50% of marriages end in divorce. There was lack of commitment along the way. It could have been lack of commitment to the spouse...or it could have been lack of commitment to oneself and settling, jumping the gun, immature infatuation, etc. If we look closely, we can see this on many other levels of interpersonal relationship as well.

And it doesn't end with relationships, but also includes education. 75% of people will not work in the field that they obtained a degree in. Again, either they didn't commit to the degree because they didn't relentlessly pursue employment in the field of the degree, or they didn't commit to their individuality, and enrolled in college because of external influences. Either way, it's a problem of commitment.

And in terms of physical health and wellness, well, let's just let the numbers do the talking again. 80% of the world suffers from back pain, 1/3 of the earth is overweight, and 99% of the human population will never achieve Muscleups, Backflips, or handstands, which should be basic to human movement.

When you boil it down, it's a problem of unfaithfulness to oneself and that to which we were designed to attain. It's a lack of commitment. But when you faithfully commit to the goal, then you have what it takes to achieve massive results, even moving mountains.

Then comes the second essential ingredient: You must train.

You have to train incrementally, properly, and with the ferocious intensity of a parent protecting their child.

I know, it might sound intense. It might sound unreasonable. And it might sound blunt.

But the time for niceness is over. You need a body that works and that's healthy and strong enough to do a basic handstand, and everything else it's designed to do.

And it's time to be intense and unreasonable, because apathy and reason got you where you are...and worse still, apathy and reason will keep you where you are.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

KNOWING
T H E
MEDIUM



CHAPTER 3: THE BUILDING BLOCKS

If you train for strength, skill, and power, then a powerful physique will simply be the byproduct of work done the right way. And a handstand is fundamental to this.

All too often, people have come to me to train with the first questions being those about aesthetics, appearance, how much muscle they can gain, or how cut they can get not realizing that if you train for skill, the aesthetics will naturally follow, but if you don't, the outcomes can be vastly different, like...

A fancy car with no horsepower, a beautiful home with nobody inside, or a diamond ring and a negative marriage.

But focusing on function will allow a truly aesthetic form--and so much more--to emerge.

Thus, form must follow function and not vice versa, otherwise, you'll end up with a chiseled body that can't move, can't perform at a high level of skill, and can't even do a handstand from any angle let alone every angle with speed and power.

You see, it's easy to pack on the muscle, to get ripped, and to look the part.

It's easy to do the yoga poses, to get flexible, and to stay thin.

It's a whole different story to train your body to perform at a high level of skill, with handstands from any angle you want being simply how you move.

And we must remember that handstands themselves are the foundation for all other acrobatic movement, whether Tumbling and doing Roundoffs or Back Handsprings, doing Giants and connecting skills on the high bar, or levitating sideways in a Human Flag for Calisthenics and spinal health.

All bodyweight skills are dependent upon a handstand, for handstands are fundamental to the foundation of true bodyweight strength and skill--and are the foundation for a truly powerful physique.

The process, or building blocks, for learning a handstand is exactly the same as an infant learning to walk. It is a process I watched first hand as a father, and a process I see many go through.

First is learning to get upright, then your first steps, then gaining the neuromuscular balance, then multi-directional travel, then squatting, spinning, and jumping! It's a natural process and can be sloppy at times.

But getting an understanding of the process and building blocks can help speed your progress.

BASIC ANGLES

1 PIKE



Engaged Core
Open Hamstrings
Open Lower Back

2 HOLLOW BACK



Engaged Posterior Chain
Open Shoulders
Backward Lean

3 STRAIGHT



Engaged Core
Engaged Glutes
Slight Hollow Core

Again, the process will take a variety of shapes, phases and forms.

Like an infant, the person learning to build a handstand must develop the neural wiring.

The brain must send the signals to the rest of the structure.

As you're learning this, it might feel crazy. Very uncertain, even sloppy.

This is because, like an infant learning to walk, there's something else that needs to grow: strength.

Children have much more mobility than adults, and so the learning curve is shortened simply because the musculo-skeletal structure is more pliable. The strength comes quickly

That doesn't mean it's impossible--or needs to be slow--for adults.

It simply means you have to do the training to open up your joints and gain more range of motion--more pliability--and then the strength, and then the neural wiring.

Handstands from a variety of angles are actually a really good measurement of overall flexibility, strength, and health.

Now once you have built the flexibility, strength, and neural wiring, then comes the kinesthetic awareness and proprioception.

Again, handstands are a great tool for developing this because the orientation is completely shifted upside down and once you have the strength to hold for periods of time, then you can start thinking about how it "feels."

This leads to the process of engaging certain muscles and relaxing others so that you can find different shapes for the handstand.

Some of these shapes will be dramatically different from one to the next, and others will be much more subtle as you find the positions of alignment for your biomechanical uniqueness.

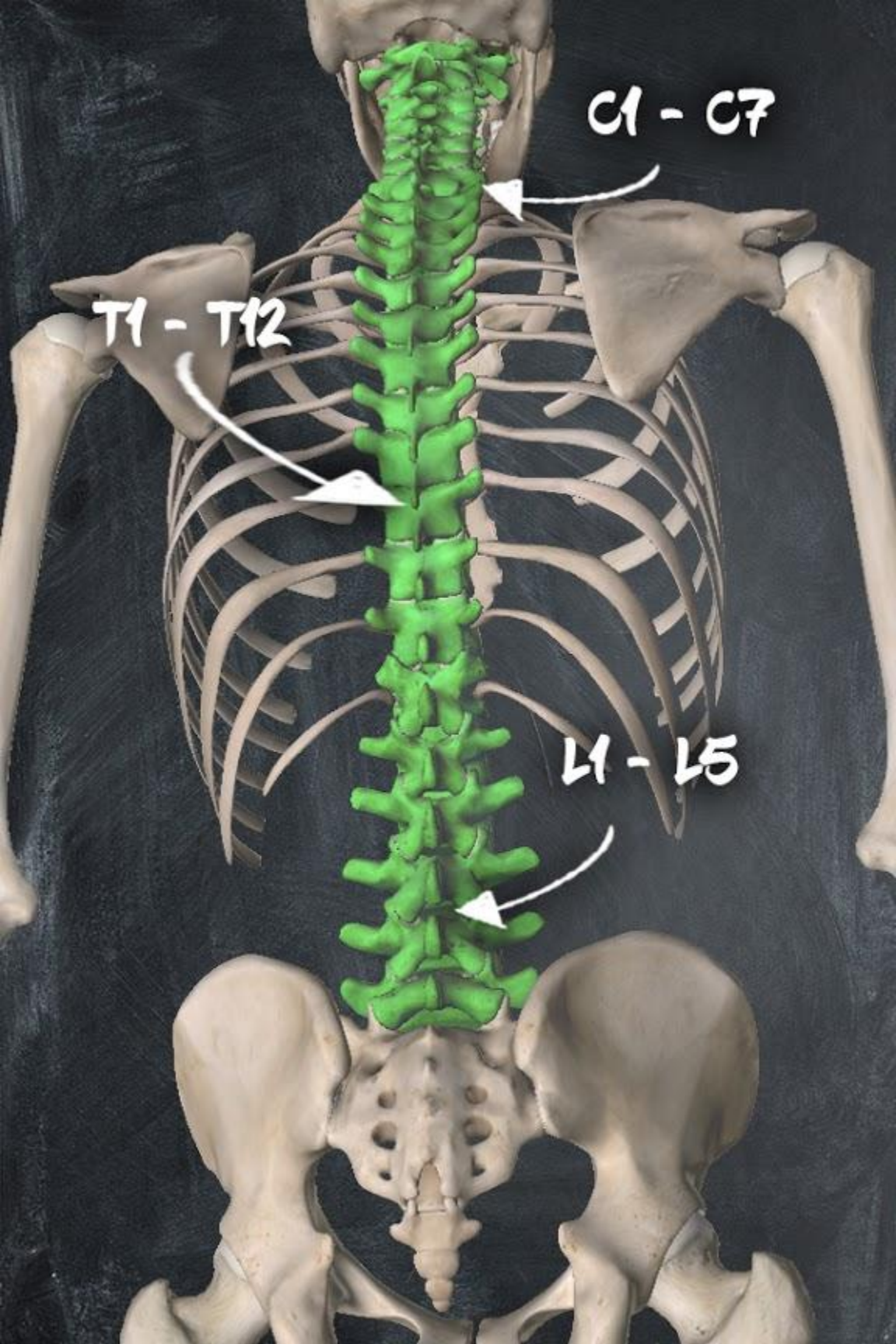
But it will require a lot of hard work, determination, and grit. There's no two ways about it.

Now in order to develop a greater understanding of what it's going to take to move forward into unlocking all of your potential, we must diagnose and fix your Weak Links in the Big 3 joint complexes.

Let's start with what ails 80% of the human population, and will cause problems for you too if you don't set goals, commit, and train...

A human spine is shown vertically, with a skull at the top and a pelvis at the bottom. The spine is yellowish-brown with black intervertebral discs. The text "THE SPINE" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the spine.

THE SPINE



Your body is only as strong as its weakest link.

And if your weakest link is your spine, then game over.

For each area of the body, we'll focus on one specific thing so that you can strengthen it for optimal health, and with the spine, it's your core strength.

Core strength is vital for the health of your spine, and building core strength has nothing to do with crunches, situps, or hanging toes-to-bar.

Neither does it have anything to do with a 6 pack.

If you cut enough weight, you'll have a 6 pack, just like anyone else on this earth.

The truth about core strength is that it affects your entire spine and all of your health.

Excluding the 5 fused sacrum (and 4 fused bones of the coccyx), you have 27 vertebrae: 5 lumbar, 12 thoracic, and 7 cervical.

In between each of these vertebrae are discs that provide cushioning between the bones of the spinal column.

And when your core is weak, all the pressure stacks on those discs, vertebrae come out of alignment, and worse problems result, like degeneration, arthritis, and injuries.

This is where strengthening the surrounding muscular structure comes into play.

This muscular structure includes the Transversus Abdominis, Rectus Abdominis, Obliques, and Longissimus Thoracis, just to name the 4 Key Players.

There are a variety of ways to train these, but the best way is through bodyweight strength training, and that to progressively higher degrees of difficulty.

If a person remains at, say, the level of pushups, v-ups, burpees, and box jumps, they are, quite simply, floating atop the waters of superficiality.

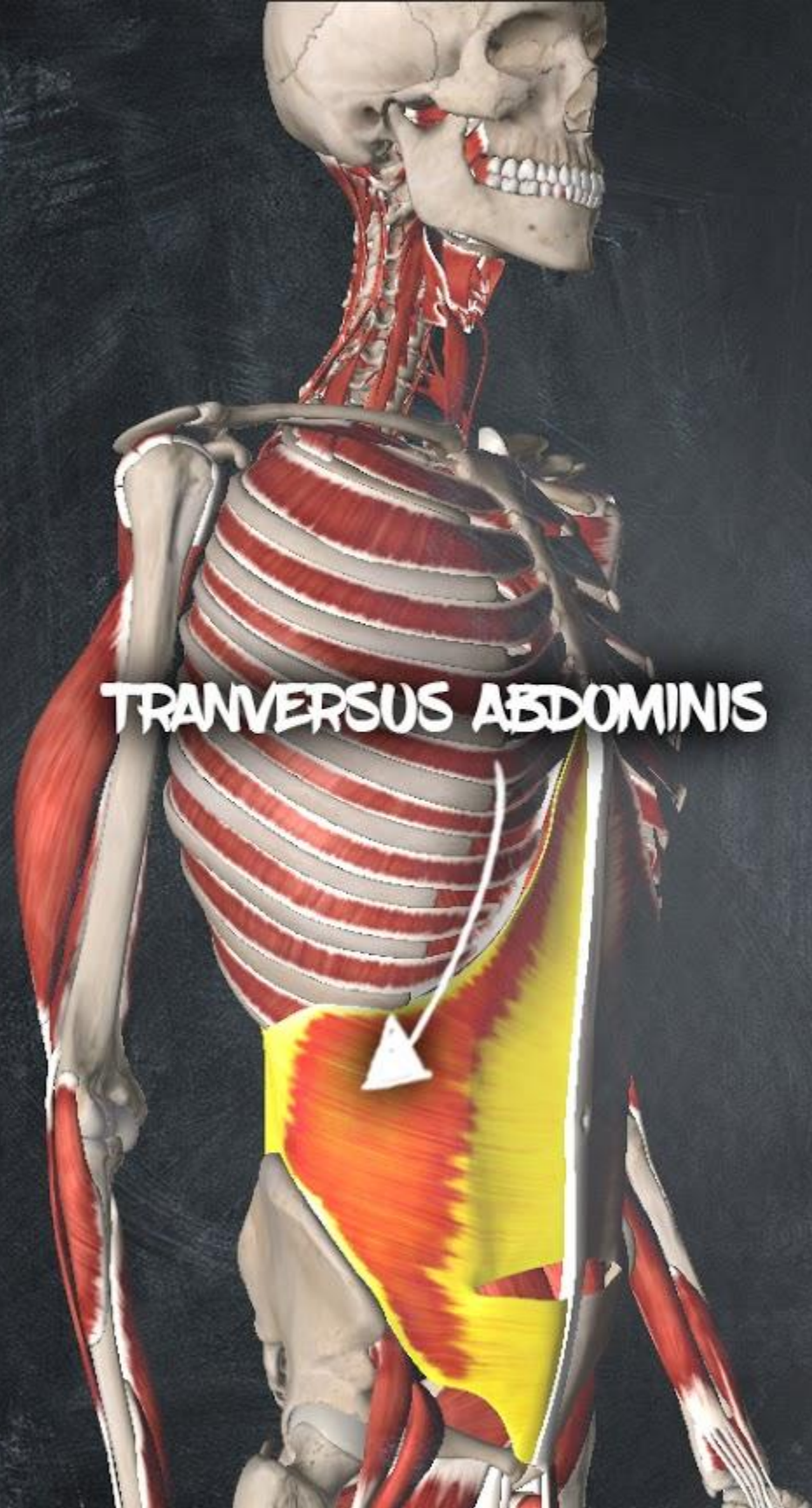
They haven't delved into the depths of what their bodies can achieve.

In reality, it's like investing in any other area of life. You can imagine what happens when the easiest, cheapest, or free options are selected, be it education, relationships, or work.

You reap what you sow, in all areas of life, including physical strength and health.

So let's take a look at how to really build the core and achieve next level strength that will make handstands, from whatever angle you imagine, seem like a walk in the park.

TRANVERSUS ABDOMINIS



You'll see that the Transversus Abdominis wraps around from the anterior to the posterior of the body and provides the compression strength required to defy gravity.

Strength in the Transversus Abdominis is demonstrated through Strength Moves such as the V Stand, Press Handstand from all angles, as well as the Front Lever, Back Lever, and Human Flag.

Further still, it is responsible for providing the stability and strength of all athletic movement.

Failure to develop this means failure of the spine.

And this is definitely an area of concern for the vast majority of the population, thus the back pain epidemic.

Most people that come in for a consult at my training facility get a double dose of "Holy cow!" first when they see what's required to graduate Level 1, and then when they try it.

One is a simple progression for V Stand. It's basically just sitting on the floor with your hands at your sides, legs straight out, heels touching the ground, and lifting your butt up using compression strength so that your chin touches your shins.

Most people still have about 6 to 12 inches of space between their face and knees, which shows a serious lack of hamstring flexibility and serious weakness in the Transversus Abdominis.

Such can be rectified by lengthening the hamstrings through weighted stretching coupled with core compression training.

It isn't as easy as slapping another plate on the barbell though because it requires a number of different progressions as well as individualization to make sure the training suits the person and they make progress.

It will probably take a few months to get the mobility in your hamstrings.

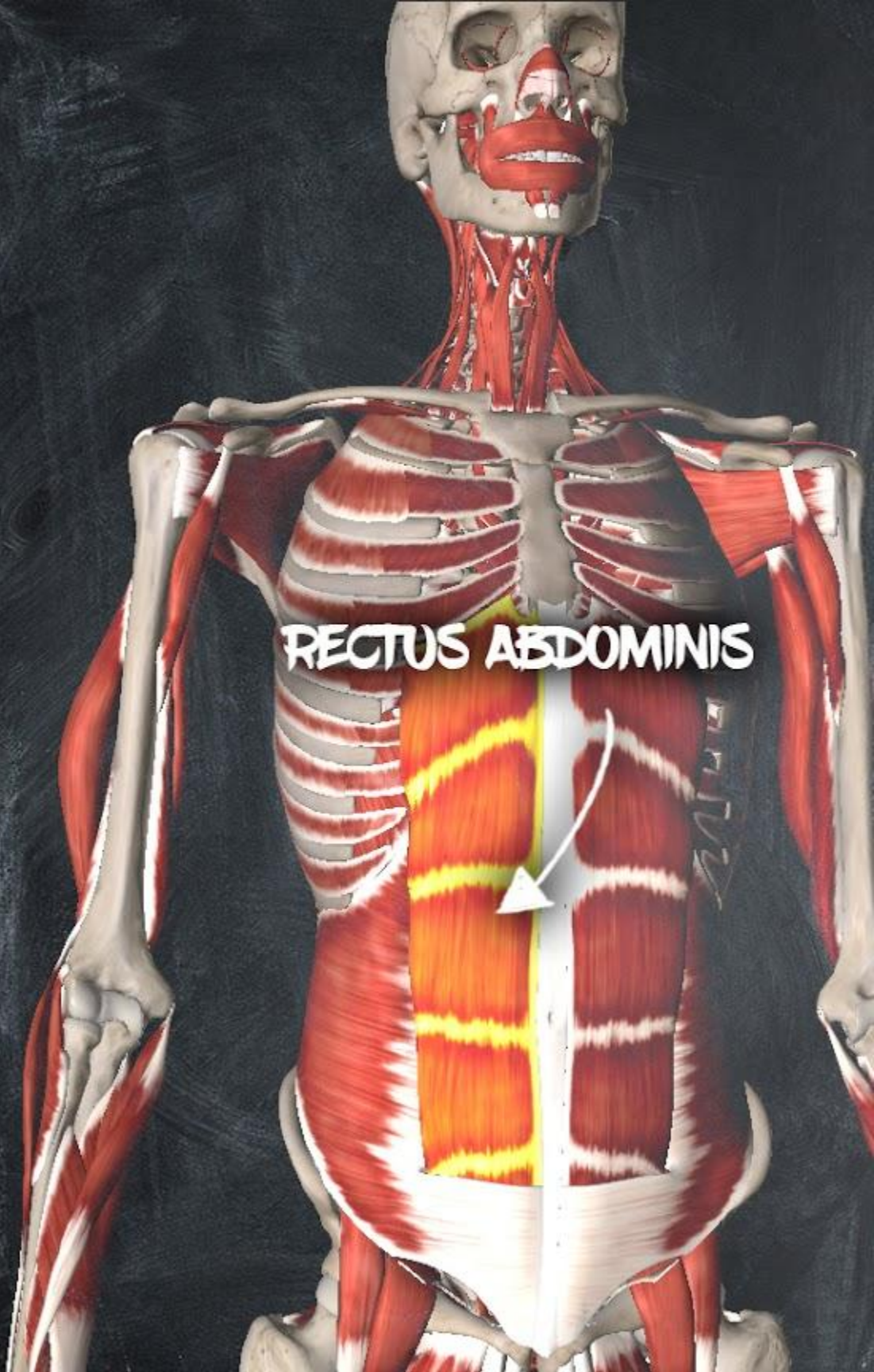
And it will take about just as long to build the core compression strength.

But eventually, you'll have developed much better strength and mobility through your core to be able to begin defying gravity in an easy handstand from any angle you want, due in part to the development of the Transversus Abdominis.

Yet even though the Transversus Abdominis is very important, we still have more work to do.

Let's go!

RECTUS ABDOMINIS



The Rectus Abdominis is responsible for hinging at the hips.

This is the 6 pack and the holy grail of fitness enthusiasts.

But as I've said elsewhere, it doesn't matter how good your 6 pack looks if the muscles underneath them, and the muscles surrounding them are atrophied.

However, just to set the record straight, the 6 pack is important, but not necessarily for what you think.

When we deal with the 6 pack, it's about having the quick twitch strength in them to be able to pull the hips up over head to initiate rotation for a flip.

If you don't have these muscles developed, there's going to be an imbalance with much of the work being done by the Hip Flexors, a group of muscles we'll discuss later.

The Hip Flexors tie in to the spine and so overdevelopment of the Hip Flexors and an overreliance on them will lead to compression in the spine, which is something we want to avoid.

Thus, it is of great import to develop true strength in the Rectus Abdominis.

To do this, you need to do strength work that involves lifting the hips and legs overhead, such as those building up to 1 Arm Hanging V-Ups, Pike Backflips, and V-Stand Press to Handstand.

Eventually, you'll develop the strength to achieve these skills--and the byproduct will be a 6 pack that is far more useful than a 2D picture.

And that's what you want, right?

A solid core capable of high level movement without the aches and pains of age.

Training the Rectus Abdominis will help you achieve both.

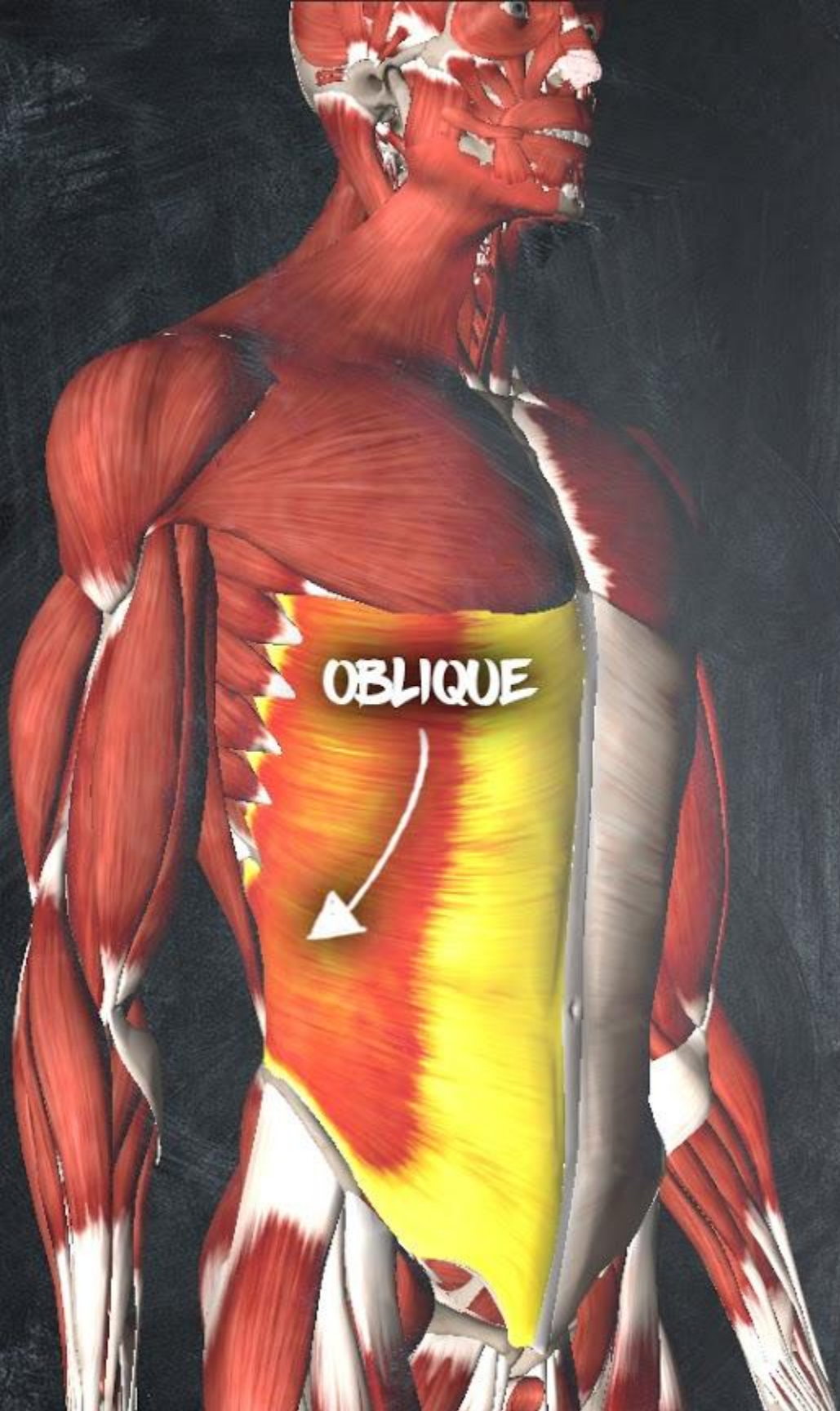
But again, it will take focus upon the goals, commitment to them, and training.

You can do it though.

You just have to believe it and take the necessary steps of action to achieve it, steps of action specific to you and your body.

And some of these steps lead to the next area of development of core strength.

Let's take a look...



OBLIQUE

What would your core be without the ability to twist and rotate?

Yep, stiff and awkward. Zombie-like.

Nobody wants to be a zombie...I think.

Your anti-zombie muscles are your Obliques.

They provide the rotational strength for twisting, turning, and spinning.

Yet they can go neglected quite easily.

You might see someone here or there doing hanging windshield wipers in the gym, but that's really only getting started with the Obliques.

Failure to build these, or training them improperly, can lead to tightness and imbalances in the Obliques and pull the vertebrae off center.

Can you bend to one side more than the other? Or do a Flag on one side or the other?

That's a prime example of Oblique tightness leading to issues in the lower back.

What we want to do is build strength and mobility in this area as well.

This can be done through weighted flexibility training.

And to increase strength, the procedure is building up to 1 Arm Hanging Wipers, aka "Meathooks," and handstands bending to each side.

Those type of handstands are also called Flags.

Sometimes people will train Flags on 1 side only, and this will lead to a major imbalance that will start serious problems in the back.

But it can be fixed through balanced training on both sides with an approach cognizant of building both strength and mobility.

Once this is done, the spine will have the support it needs and you'll have the strength to do whatever kinds of twisting, flipping, handstanding feats you want to do.

You see, it's not just about handstands.

This is about so much more.

LONGISSIMUS THORACIS



If railroad tracks converge, what happens to the train?

The same is true for your spine, and the muscles that run parallel to it.

One pair of muscles that runs parallel to your spine is the Longissimus Thoracis.

When this, or any other number of pairs of muscles running alongside your spine are imbalanced, improperly trained, or compensating for weakness in a different part of your body, it's a train wreck waiting to happen...

...except the train cars are your vertebrae.

As we look at handstands and bodyweight strength and skill, we have to remember that it's about progressively higher levels of strength and skill.

It is not about just doing the move, pose, or technique, but rather about maintaining the structure so that it can perform at a high level over the duration of life.

Even though the some of the skills are fast or require a tremendous amount of strength...

It's a marathon.

And to win this marathon, you need to build your Longissimus Thoracis.

These spinally parallel muscles help to posteriorly lift your body to defy gravity, be it in a Planche position or some other Strength Move,

The way to train these is by active engagement through their full range of motion and sometimes with additional weight to stimulate growth.

Think about these muscles like cables of steel running up and down your back holding your skeletal structure together.

You live or die by the strength of your Longissimus Thoracis, and so do your feats of strength and skill.

I knew a guy who was always trying to get a Planche. It was one of his goals.

But he wouldn't do the hard work to train his back in the proper positions. Maybe because it required long static holds, or because it was just hard.

After some time, he finally decided to put in a month of hard training and he finally unlocked the strength he needed.

And once again, we come back to the need for specific goals, with a measurable time frame and commitment to training hard.

THE HOLLOWBACK HANDSTAND



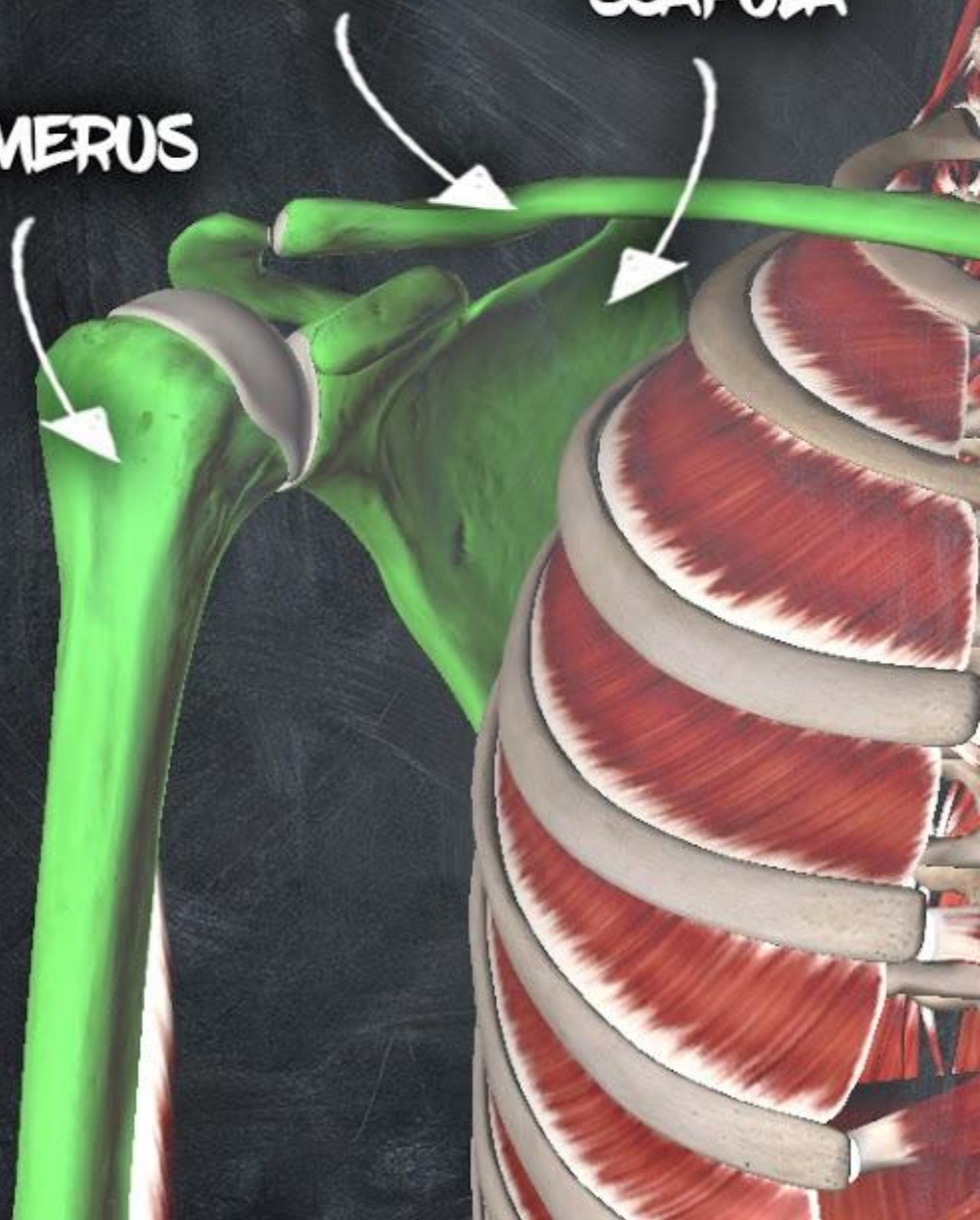


THE SHOULDERS

CLAVICLE

SCAPULA

HUMERUS



When I say the words “Rotator Cuff,” what do you think of?

Nobody says those words without talking about some kind of pain or injury.

Let’s face it.

People don’t know how to take care of their shoulders.

I mean every single person I’ve talked to about training, and shoulders came up, it’s something negative about the “Rotator Cuff.”

The shoulder is an amazing joint.

It’s design is exquisite.

But at the same time, the higher the level of design the more susceptible it is to failure, that is, if maintenance and upkeep is not consistent.

The shoulder is basically three bones: the Clavicle, Scapula, and Humerus.

They’re connected together in such a way that the arm can rotate on multiple planes in arcs of range of motion over 180 degrees.

Your arm can essentially travel in the same amount of motion of a hemispherical forcefield!

Well, if the shoulder joint is maintained that is.

Most children have great ranges of motion through all their joints including their shoulders until they sit in a desk and slumped over homework for 12 years, and then a degree and a desk job later they’re so rigid they need WD40 and painkillers to get through the day.

It’s pretty simple to fix though.

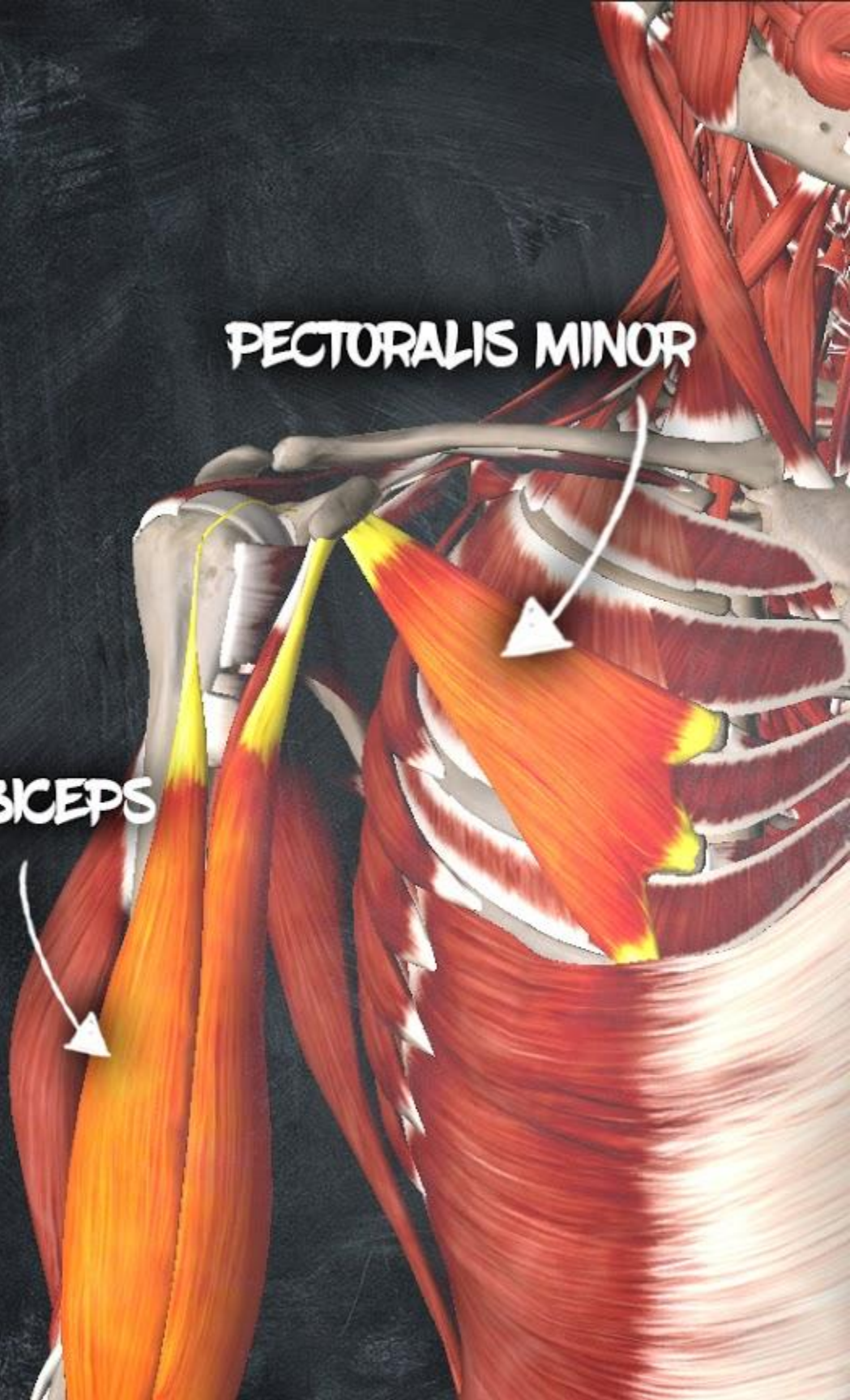
It just requires the hard work to break it down and build it back up.

And it will take time as well.

So let’s start looking at what’s involved in building the shoulders.

PECTORALIS MINOR

BICEPS



“How much ya’ bench?”

Ever heard that before?

Let’s shift the focus to a different question: “Can you handstand on demand in whatever angle you want?”

That’s a whole different ball game.

And it’s an entirely different world of mobility and strength.

I don’t know about you, but I’d rather have shoulders that are strong in hypermobile ranges than be able to press 3 times my bodyweight (even though bodyweight strength training alone will allow a person to lift more than most gym buffs without even messing with weights. Even though my deadlift, squat, and bench got well over the 1,000 pound club, the consequences far outweighed the benefits.)

Certainly, there’s a benefit to resistance training. In fact, that’s what bodyweight strength training is. And you can increase the intensity by adding weight to your own body. Ever heard of a 135 lb. added dip on gymnastics rings?

Here’s the deal. It’s a mindset and action shift out of old paradigms that became watered down and saturated the masses.

And the results are worn out rotator cuffs.

The rotator cuff is the attachment point of the tendons of muscles connecting the shoulder joint together.

So let’s start building up the shoulder joint.

First, let’s just look at the origin of the Biceps. One tendon actually wraps up over the Humerus. Both heads attach to the Scapula connecting the Humerus to the back of the shoulder.

Second, the Pectoralis Minor attaches the Scapula to the ribcage.

Tightness in the Biceps is going to cause impingement of the Humerus and Scapula.

And tightness of the Pectoralis Minor is going to cause pronation of the shoulder.

Tightness is quite commonly too many pushups and curls.

These muscle can be rebuilt with opening up the arm into extension behind the back as well as building a Hollowback Handstand, which requires diving deeper into the shoulder.



This anatomical diagram illustrates the muscles of the shoulder and upper back. The supraspinatus muscle is shown originating from the acromion and inserting into the greater tuberosity. The infraspinatus muscle originates from the scapula and inserts into the greater tuberosity. The teres minor muscle originates from the scapula and inserts into the lesser tuberosity. The muscles are depicted in red, with yellow and orange highlights indicating areas of stress or strain. The spine and ribs are visible on the left side of the image.

SUPRASPINATUS

INFRASPINATUS

TERES MINOR

Now we'll dive into the deep muscles of the Rotator Cuff.

The first three on the posterior side include the Supraspinatus, Infraspinatus, and Teres Minor.

These attach the Scapula to the Humerus and provide the physical action of "packing" the shoulder back, i.e. lifting the Humerus up into the socket.

Have you seen people with slumped forward shoulders?

They look like they sit at a desk, right?

This is because they probably do.

And since childhood, they haven't done much work that actually pulls these muscles taught in a retracted position.

This is necessary, especially for doing Strength Moves like 1 Arm Handstands and Muscleups.

They are responsible for the stabilization necessary in handbalancing .

And they're responsible for helping with the contraction of pulling the arm into extension.

If they aren't trained, they'll become elongated, the shoulders pronated, and less responsive. This scenario will lead toward overcompensation of other muscles. And those imbalances lead to all the things you don't want to hear about.

How do you build these?

This is where joint preparation and mobility work come in, such as weighted arm circles, full range of motion rotations, and time under tension in the extended position.

Again, it takes time.

Over 200 days for soft tissue to adapt.

And 90 days for muscle to strengthen.

Remember, set the specific, measurable goals.

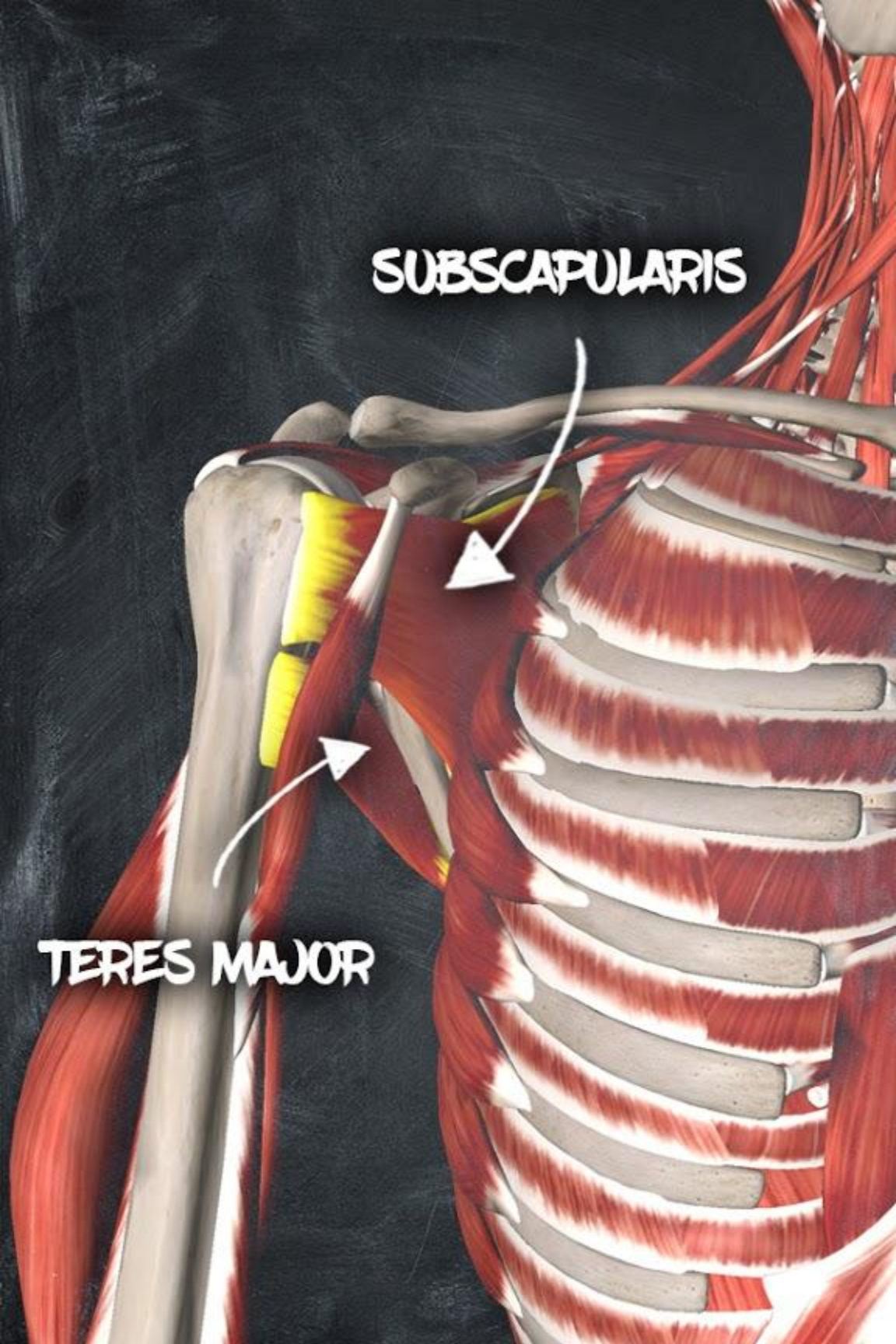
Commit to achieving them.

And then do the training on a daily basis to achieve them.

You can do this!

SUBSCAPULARIS

TERES MAJOR



From the anterior view, we can see the other muscles of the rotator cuff, and those responsible for the Muscleup.

These include both the Teres Major and the Subscapularis.

I know someone who tore their Subscapularis.

It was from typical heavy lifting.

His shoulder was stretched beyond his strengthened range of motion and injury occurred.

Now, of course surgery can repair this.

And the necessary training can be undertaken to rebuild.

But something often happens post surgery, and this gets into mindset.

Training ceases. Weight gain ensues. And all prior gains are defeated.

The problems happen more in post-op than the actual injury and repair, and it has especially to do with mindset.

Training toward goals should continue. I did it with a torn and repaired bicep. Muscleups and 1 Arm Handstands were regained in 4 months. Flares were back in 6. And that's when the doctors said it would take 1.5 years. I've seen others come back from broken bones, tears, and worse, faster and to return even stronger!

Keeping the rest of your body strong and healthy despite injuries is crucial and must be done properly and safely, while listening to your body and the doctors. Obviously, this is done under the supervision of your coaches and trainers, and the training should involve what is going to make you stronger, not do more damage.

Speaking of Muscleups, the Subscapularis and Teres Major are extremely important in protecting the shoulder during this Strength Move.

It isn't necessarily just about getting good at pullups and dips.

A Muscleup can be achieved pretty quickly, but full range of motion during training is necessary to build the Subscapularis and Teres Major.

And to avoid injury, flexibility and mobility training for these muscles is crucial.

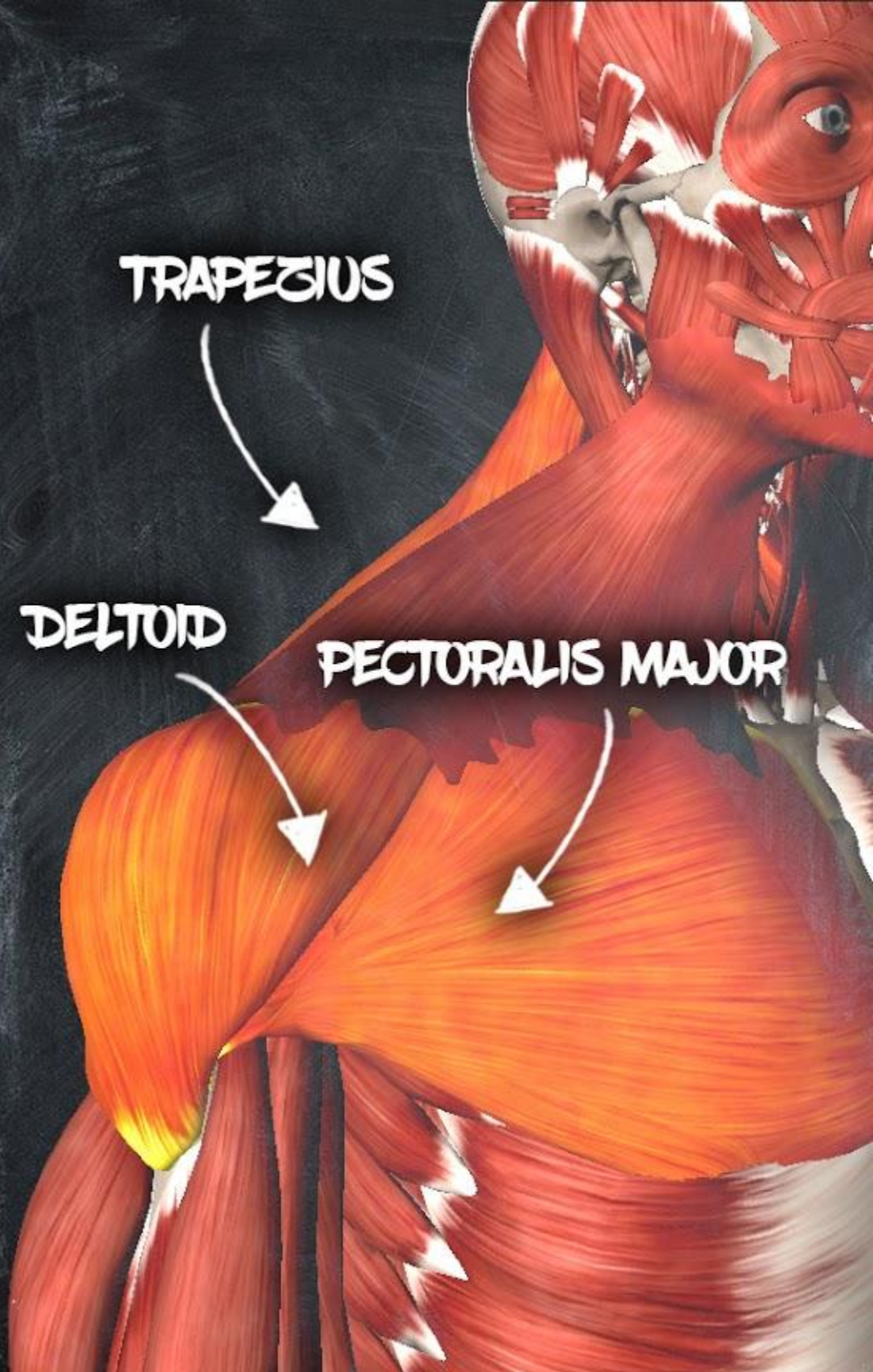
So train smart, train hard, and keep striving to achieve your goals.

Your body will adapt, and you will transform!

TRAPEZIUS

DELTOID

PECTORALIS MAJOR



I began my training as a competitive martial artist.

I bought myself a Muay Thai book when I was 11 years old.

After training for years, I earned a few Black Belts.

Eventually I started teaching and had an awesome group of students that I took to competitions.

And then, quite late in life by many standards, I dove into acrobatics training of all sorts.

But then in college, I caught the bug to put on muscle.

And that, obviously, meant weight training.

It was at a time where the spread of information was just beginning to increase and the traditional means for strength gaining such as bodybuilding and powerlifting were the most popular.

In fact, it was so popular that I heard that at one point the USA gymnastics team used bodybuilding type weight training and they ended up packing on a ton of mass through sarcoplasmic hypertrophy leading to submaximal performance.

Little did I know, I was doing the same thing, and hindering myself with this silly goal of a 300+ pound bench press and weighing over 200 pounds.

Achieving those goals actually accomplished quite little for me as well.

And it made my shoulders even tighter than they were before. I already had a difficult time learning a Back Walkover and Hollowback. This just made it worse.

And it made me bulkier in a bad way.

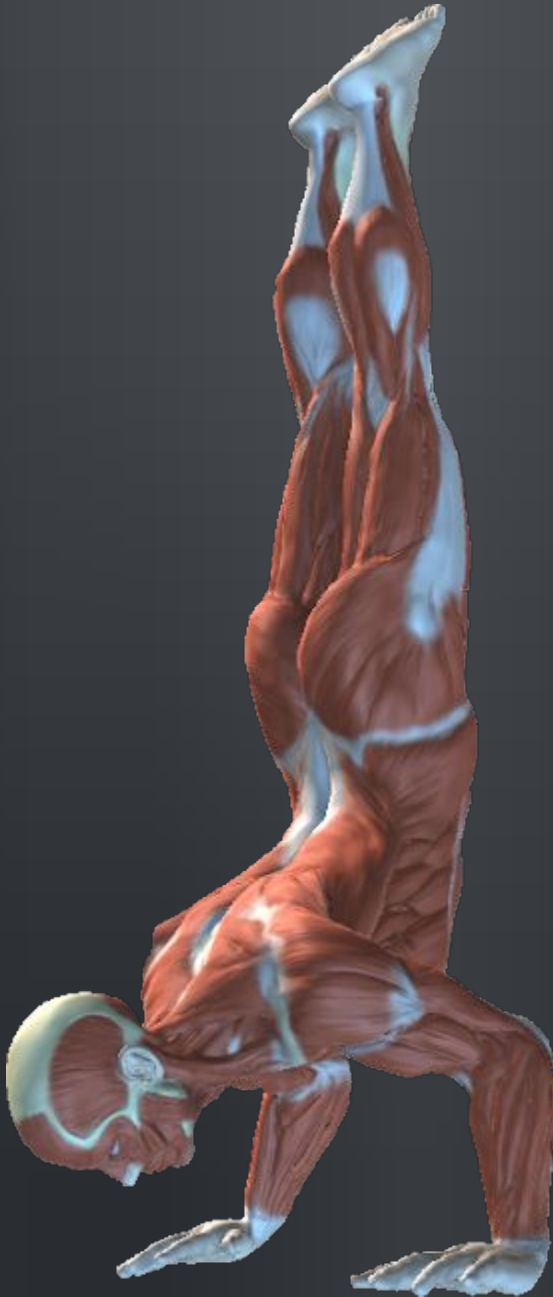
Once the light bulb turned on and I realized the physics of the body and all of the ways to incorporate leverage into training as well as advanced progressions, my levels of mobility and agility increased literally by leaps and bounds.

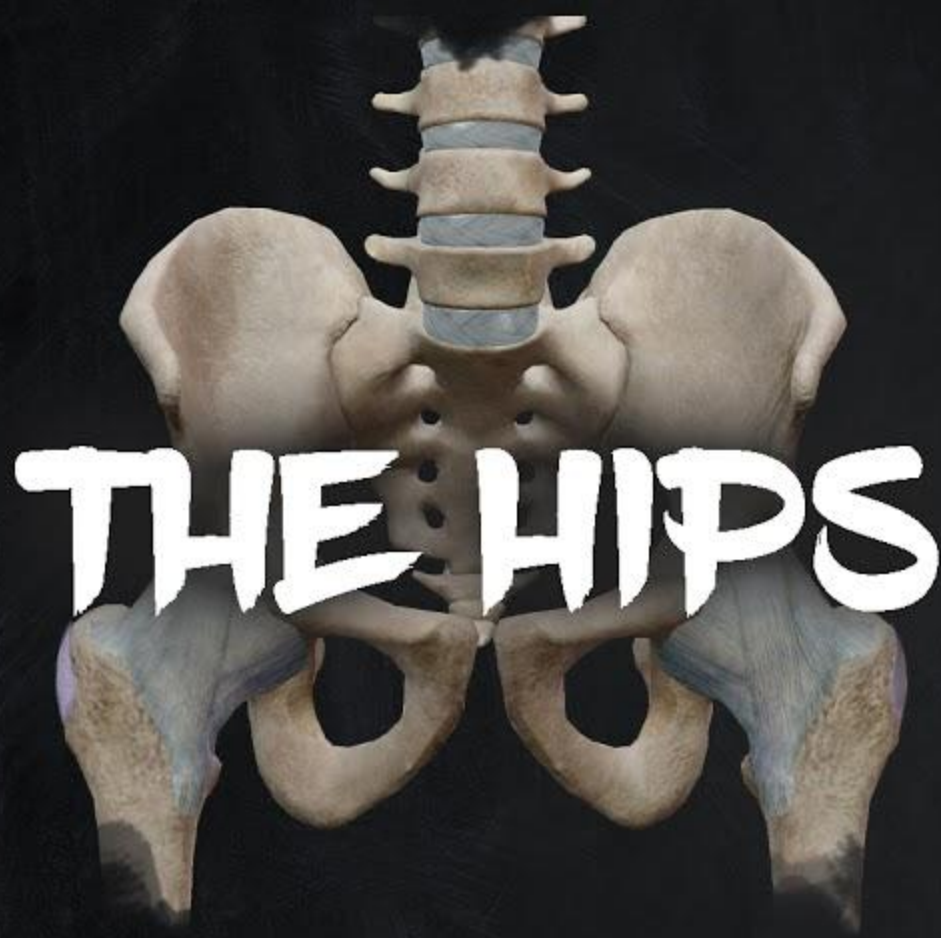
The switch was transitioning into a skills-based training regime that placed a priority on function over form.

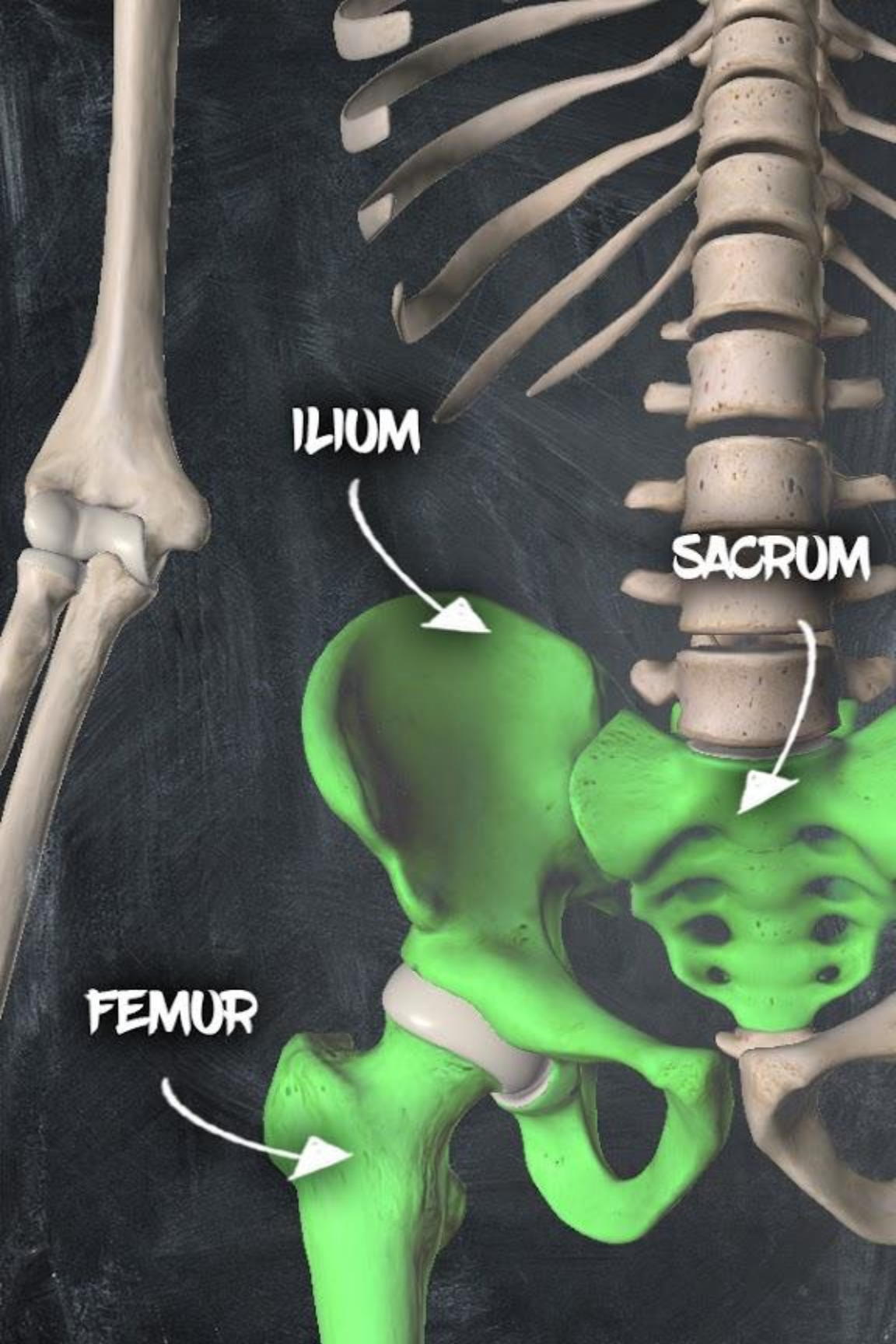
If you train for function, the form will come.

Your Pectoralis Major, Deltoids, and Trapezius don't have to get big by pushing and pulling iron in limited ranges of motion, but you can rather build well sculpted, fully functional muscle as big as you want with bodyweight training!

THE BENT ARM PRESS AKA HANDSTAND PUSHUP







ILIUM

SACRUM

FEMUR

Hips don't lie!

If you don't build hip flexibility, mobility, and strength, you won't achieve all the fun stuff like Flares, Straddle Planches, or Meathooks.

What's more is that it's common for impingement to develop and arthritis to set in.

Like the shoulders and spine, the hips are quite complicated and need a serious amount of work to build.

Tight hips can make the difference between achieving your goals and getting frustrated and giving up.

And many people unfortunately choose the latter.

But there's no reason for that to be the case.

All we have to do is dive in and get an understanding of the bones first, and then the muscular structure that supports the system.

The Femur is the part of the leg that attaches to the hip socket of the Ilium.

The Iliac Crest is where the muscles of the core attach, such as the all important Obliques.

And the Sacrum also connects to the Ilium.

These bones create the bowl of the Pelvis where all the muscles from your upper body to your lower body come together.

If these muscles are weak, then you'll have instability.

If these muscles are short, then the tightness will cause compression between the vertebrae, between the spine and hips, and between the hips and the Femur.

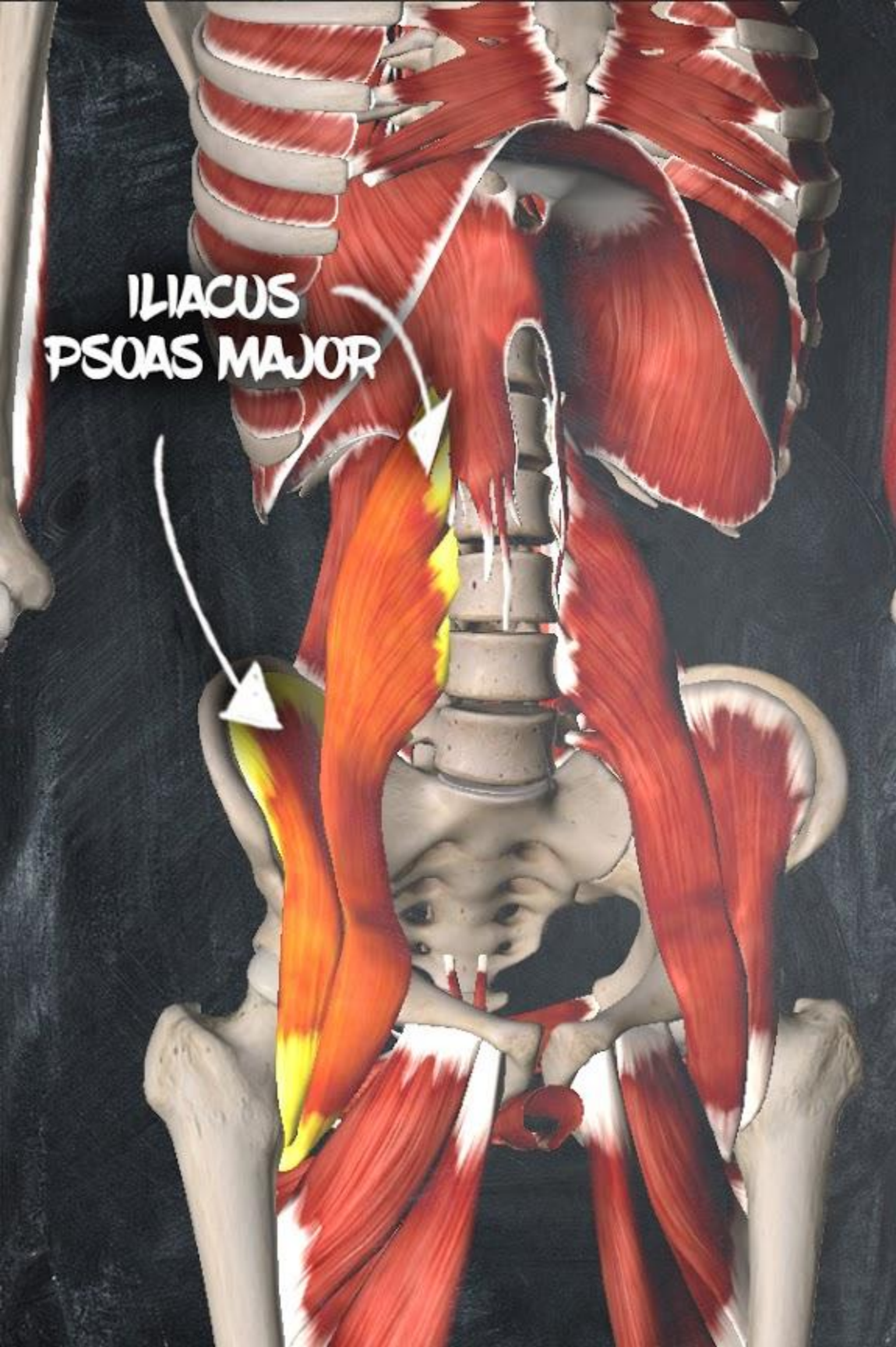
This pressure is not good for the system or for you overall mobility and health.

Thus it is of utmost importance to elongate all of these muscles as well as strengthen them so that your fullest potential for mobility can be achieved.

But it will take really diving in and going over the muscles and how to train them.

Ready? Let's get busy.

ILIACUS
PSOAS MAJOR



Two of the most important, but neglected, muscles in the body are commonly referred to as the “Hip Flexors.”

Fitness gurus will discuss how situps are really working the Hip Flexors and yada yada yada.

In reality, these are extremely important to be lengthened and strengthened and it has nothing to do with sit-ups, crunches, or anything else.

The first muscle is the Iliacus.

This muscle originates at the vertebrae and attaches to the Femur.

It's responsible for pulling the Femur up towards the body as in running or kicking.

The Psoas Major originates at the Iliac Crest and also attaches to the Femur.

It also aids in lifting the leg.

So how do we strengthen these?

The same way these muscles are related to mastering handstands and bodyweight strength and skill!

It requires handstands on the anterior of the body, as seen in the V-Stand or Manna, and especially pressing up to handstand from Stalder.

That's how they are strengthened.

But how are they lengthened?

By extending the body in the opposite direction!

The Hollowback.

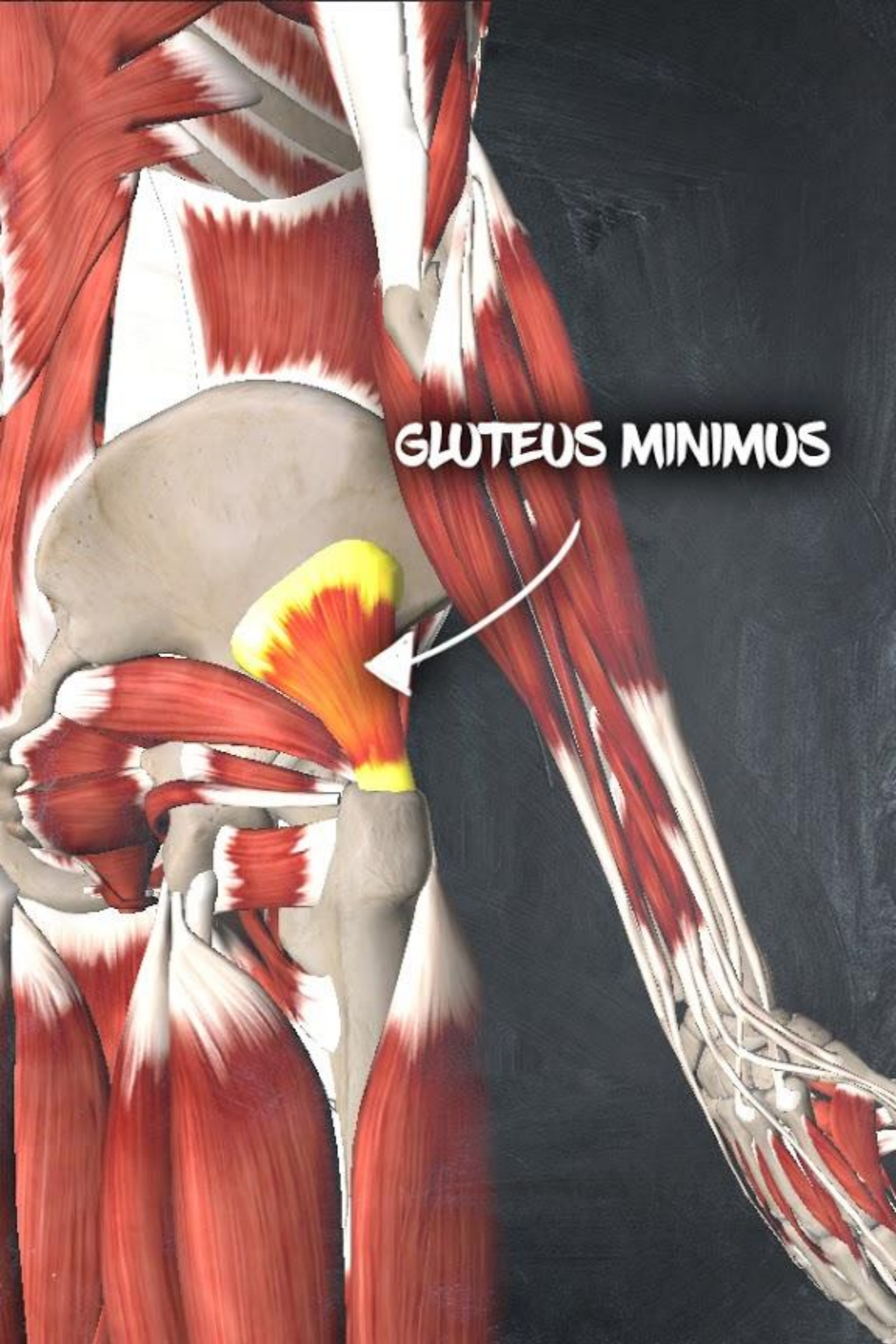
So by building a V-Stand Press to Handstand, Stalder Press to Handstand, and a Hollowback, you are giving your hips--and therefore your spine--wonderful gifts of mobility and strength.

Again, it takes time, it takes setting the goal, it takes commitment, and it takes training to achieve the health and strength your body craves.

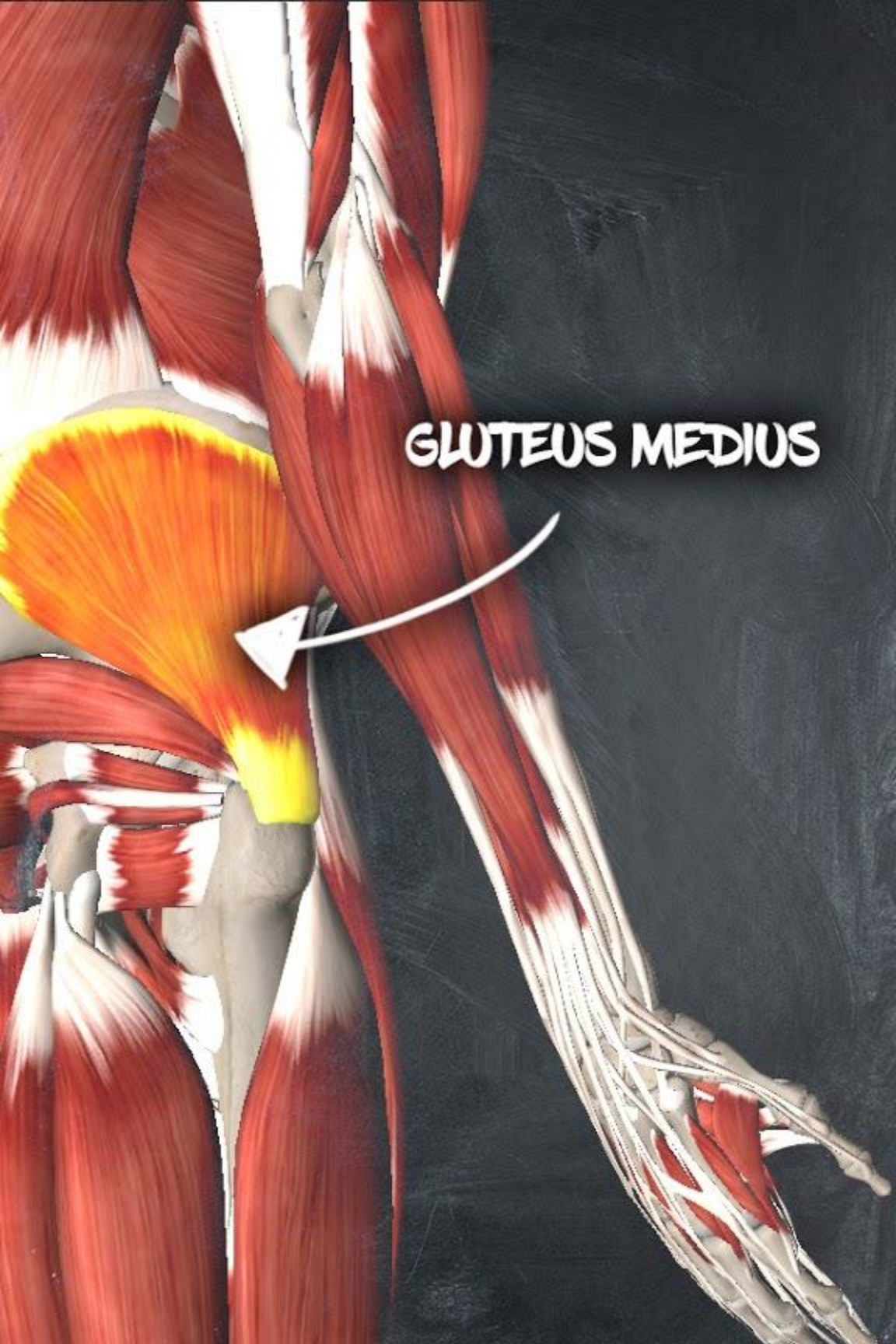
Build a program for yourself and track the data. In a few weeks or months, you should be able to achieve both of these!

You can do this!

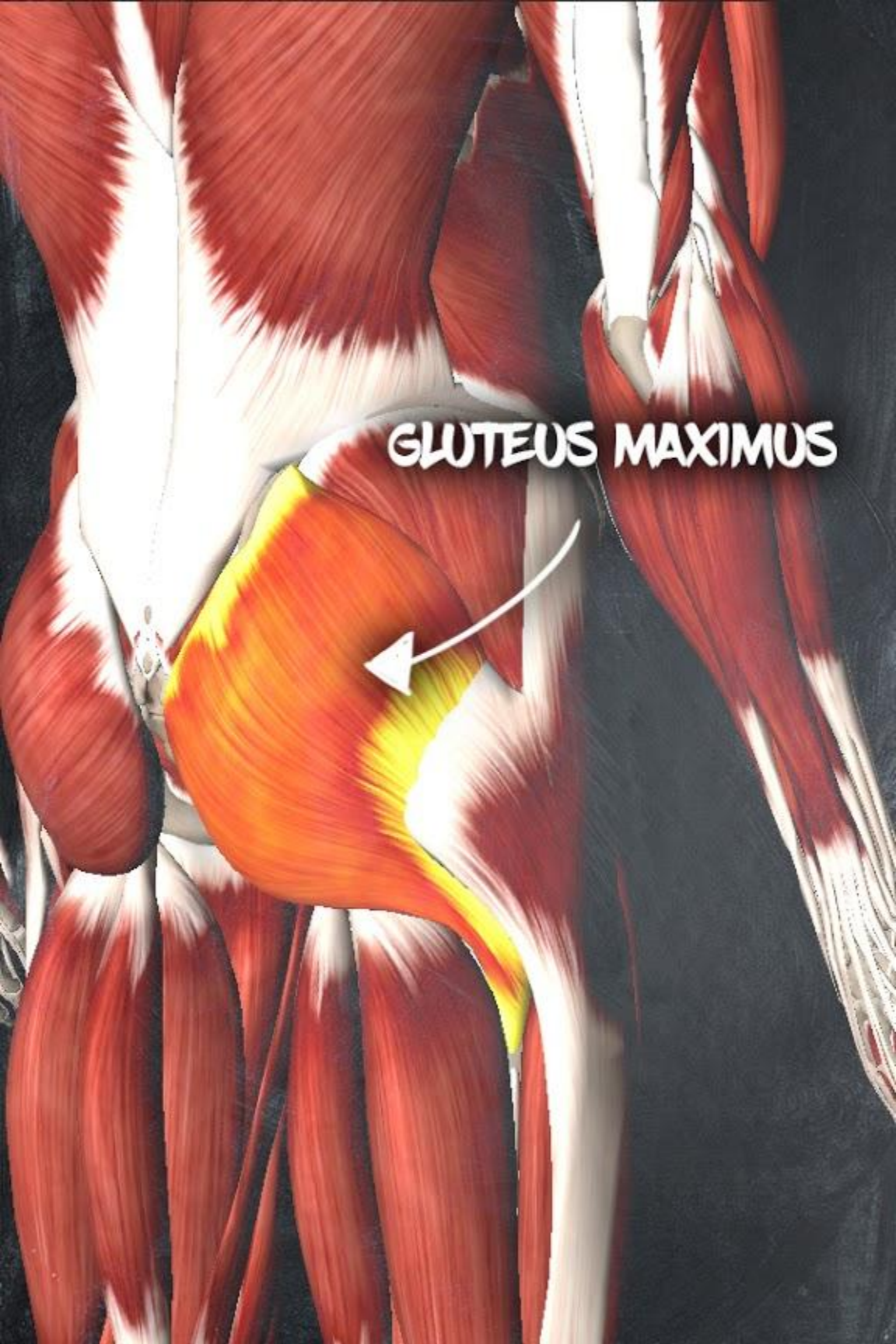
GLUTEUS MINIMUS



GLUTEUS MEDIUS



GLUTEUS MAXIMUS



So the Iliacus and Psoas Major will account for the strength to handbalance anteriorly.

But what about laterally?

Such as for Straddle Planche and things of that nature?

This has to do with the 3 muscles on the outside of the hips.

All 3 connect the Ilium to the Femur and help create abduction of the legs.

In other words, these muscles make a Flying Side Kick, a Straddle Planche, and Flares possible.

First is the Gluteus Minimus.

Next is the Gluteus Medius.

And finally there is the Gluteus Maximus.

All 3 of these connect the Ilium to the Femur, and help with abduction as well as stabilization during squats and lifting heavy objects.

There are a variety of ways to strength these, with everything from holds, poses, and postures to repetitions of movement to adding weight.

Ideally, you want to have strength in all ranges of motion, and a good indicator of your strength level is how high you can lift your leg to the side and do circles with a straight leg.

Is it at or above head height? Good.

Is it hip height only? Uh oh.

Is it only knee height? Serious work needs to be done.

So that's how you diagnose. Now you must do the strength training.

But what if you're so tight you seriously can't get your leg up past knee height?

Well, we have to stretch the adductors.

So let's dive in to that.

You got this!



GRACILIS
ADDUCTOR MAGNUS

This anatomical illustration shows a medial view of the right thigh. The femur is on the left, and the tibia is on the right. The Adductor Magnus muscle is shown as a large, broad muscle with fibers originating from the pubis and converging towards the femur. The Gracilis muscle is shown as a long, narrow muscle running parallel to the Adductor Magnus. Two white arrows point from the text labels to the respective muscles. The background is dark, and the bones are light gray.



PECTINEUS
ADDUCTOR LONGUS

This anatomical illustration shows the right side of a human pelvis and thigh. The Pectineus muscle is highlighted in yellow and red, originating from the anterior superior iliac spine (ASIS) and inserting into the lesser trochanter of the femur. The Adductor Longus muscle is shown in red, originating from the anterior inferior iliac spine (AIIS) and inserting into the adductor tubercle of the femur. Two white arrows point to the origins of these muscles on the iliac spine. The femur, tibia, and fibula are shown in a light beige color, and the surrounding muscles are in red. The background is dark and textured.

Lots of folks have asked me how to get splits.

It's been a lifelong goal of theirs. They see the value and the health benefits.

But full splits continue to elude them.

Yet if you get them, a whole new world of training possibilities open up to you because you now have the mobility to decrease or increase the loads during handbalancing via the positioning of the legs.

For example, the key to building a Planche is by first obtaining a Straddle Planche. Many people will learn a full Planche without straddling and that actually overlooks a Weak Link.

The key to Flares and Airflares? Middle Splits.

The key to 1 Arm Handstands? Middle Splits.

The key to Front Levers and Back Levers? Yeah, you get the point.

By being able to bring your center of mass closer to your hands through increasing the angle of your legs, your able to effectively scale your training.

Overlooking this is major problem and will actually stymie other aspects of your training.

What's the solution?

Elongate the muscles and connective tissue from the Inferior Ilium to the Femur.

Some of these muscles include the Gracilis, Adductor Magnus, Adductor Longus, and Pectineus.

Remember to not rush!

Take your time and have patience.

You can do weighted stretching to increase the depth, as well as an assortment of other training modalities.

The main idea is to continue to see increases in flexibility and to keep pushing forward for more and more progress.

It doesn't take as long as you might think, so work hard and stay focused!

And then if you couple this with upper body strength training in hand-balancing , you'll achieve the Stalder Press Handstand, and many other feats of strength and skill!

THE STALDER PRESS

FROM SPLITS TO HANDSTAND



THE STRENGTH

GENERATING
THE
POWER



CHAPTER 4: THE STRENGTH

Not all muscle is created equal!

But handbalancing and bodyweight strength training will build all the right muscles!

So far, we've gone over some of the basic anatomy and building blocks of engineering the handstand.

This chapter will help you get a better understanding of strength development, inside and out, from top to bottom.

What's necessary to expose is the absurd myths that saturate "fitness."

If you know me at all, or have consumed any of my content for any length of time, you'll know I despise that word: "fitness."

In all of its endless information, tutorials, videos, and vanity, it has come to be used as a catchword for basically everything and now has come to mean essentially nothing.

And in this world of fitness, people, even personal trainers and coaches, float about on the surface of the waters of superficiality.

If you go to the gym, yoga studio, box, or training hall, you'll immediately see what I'm talking about.

There's no end to the age-old exercises being done for hundreds of reps, the bouncing around, the picking things up and putting them down, and all the other generic exercises you can go to the library, yes, that archaic institution, and find in the books from the 1970s.

The internet just repackages them and sells them as new.

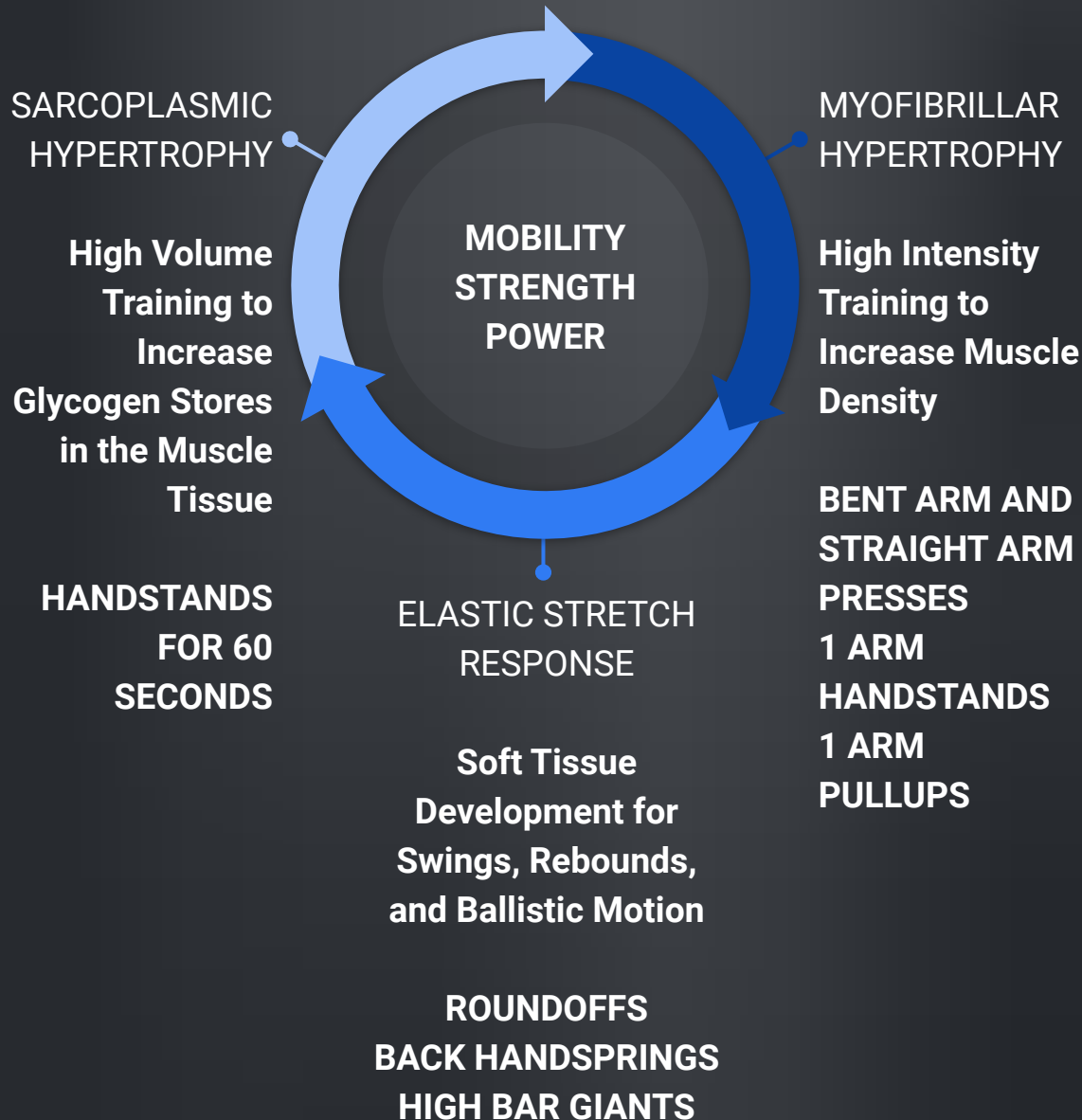
Or disciplines of physical training that have been developed over 100s of years are bastardized and mashed together in an alchemaic attempt to shortcut the hard training and circumvent the system.

In reality, lifting things (powerlifting, Highland Games, Strong Man, etc.), and lifting yourself (acrobatics, gymnastics, calisthenics, etc.) are two branches of physical training that have pushed the limits of human potential, and which are based on 3 key phases of strength development.

Yet the bulk--yes, the majority--of humanity misses the forest for the trees.

It's a lack of goal-setting, a lack of commitment, and a lack of serious training.

STRENGTH TYPES



In order to get stronger, you have to step outside your comfort zone.

It's easy to get lulled into this sense of contentment, which is really no contentment at all.

It's really apathy.

Any system, institution, or routine that provides comfort actually limits your strength.

This is true anywhere you go, from home, to school, to work, to the gym.

You must be willing to push through the walls of resistance until you burst into new levels of strength, be it mental, relational, financial, or physical.

In terms of developing physical strength, there are 3 phases to the paradigm.

The reason why I say that most flutter about upon the waters of superficiality is because they dabble in one phase or another never taking the plunge to go deeper.

Why?

Because it's uncomfortable. Just like anything in life you need to do this to grow.

Growth is actually quite uncomfortable.

Remember "growing pains"?

How this boils down on a practical level for strength development and how it applies to handstand training are one in the same.

The body requires stimulus for growth.

At first, it needs to be that constant, repetitive training to wake the body up, to expand the glycogen stores in the muscles (sarcoplasmic hypertrophy), and to build a foundation of endurance that can support more intensive training. This is where most people spend the majority of their time, from crossfitters to joggers to swimmers to weightlifters.

The next phase will require even more commitment to the goals, and more focus. This will require the implementation of strategic periodization systems that actually limit the volume of training and increase the intensity. This includes every kind of scheme, including ladders, reverse ladders, pyramids, 5x5s, 10x1s, giant circuits, and mini circuits.

And then comes the ballistic stage where explosive force is generated through the entire body, including the soft tissue which requires proper development. After this, a person will cycle back to the beginning.

SCALING STRENGTH

HIGH INTENSITY POWER GENERATION

Ballistic forces,
swings,
rebounds, floor
punches, drops

1
ROUND-OFFS,
TUMBLING,
HAND HOPS,
AIRFLARES

HIGH VOLUME LOW INTENSITY

3
Developing
mobility,
strength,
increasing
muscle size via
sarcoplasmic
hypertrophy, and
hardwiring new
neural patterns

FREESTANDING
HANDSTAND

LOW VOLUME HIGH INTENSITY

Bridging the gap
between maximal
and absolute
strength

2
BENT ARM AND
STRAIGHT ARM
PRESSES
1 ARM
HANDSTANDS
1 ARM PULLUPS



The Injury Zone is a place you want to tread carefully.

This is the zone where once people have done a little something to get in shape, they then add forces and intensity--like speed--that they're not yet ready for.

All of a sudden, they've got tendonitis building up in their wrists because of a lack of joint preparation.

Or they start going for back walkovers or high bar swings and kips, but their shoulders aren't ready and they flare up an old injury.

Either way, it boils down to skipping steps, which a big mistake.

The best approach is to take a series of weeks to go through high volume training, and then low volume high intensity training, and then gradually adding speed.

But this is all contingent on the proper training and a solid foundation of flexibility and strength.

Trying to find shortcuts isn't going to do anyone any good.

It's absolutely imperative to follow a proven system.

And even a proven system doesn't account for the individualization that's necessary.

But at the end of the day, it's all about commitment to those goals, and putting in the time and training according to proven methods and coaching that's going to help a person really bridge that gap between where they are now and where they want to be.

These methods include Training Cycles.

And in bodyweight strength and skill, for everything from handstands to acrobatics, you have to implement these Training Cycles.

So if we take our understanding of the Phases of Scaling Strength and put it into a system, we can then start collecting the data to adjust training as needed.

It will be different for everyone, but typically a good place to start is a few weeks in each, with a rest week at the end of each, and then cycling back through to the beginning.

In this way, we can make sure that we are continuing to lay bricks solidly down upon a sure foundation that gets stronger and stronger and stronger over time until a 60 second handstand feels just as easy as standing on feet!

TRAINING CYCLES

PHASE 1

FOUNDATION
AND LOW
INTENSITY HIGH
VOLUME
SARCOPLASMIC
HYPERTROPHIC
TRAINING



PHASE 2

MAXIMAL
STRENGTH
DEVELOPMENT
ON
MYOFIBRILLAR
LEVELS

PHASE 3

BALLISTIC
DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH
ADDED SPEED
AND POWER

On the next page, you'll find a series of "handstand" positions.

These can either be goals in-and-of-themselves depending on what level you are.

Or they can be progressions that build the strength, flexibility, and mobility to achieve the handstand itself.

They are featured in order of subjective difficulty.

This means that a V Stand might be very easy for one person, giving them the core strength to achieve a handstand.

But they might have very tight shoulders and so the Bridge would be very difficult for them.

For another person, the Bridge might be very easy because of flexible shoulders and back, but they may lack the upper body strength to hold the Frog Stand for the minimum 60 seconds.

All of these positions are critical for good health, flexibility, and strength.

So learn them all.

When we customize coaching for students, one student might have the strength to already do a C Stand, but lack flexibility and strength for all the other position.

So we will tailor sometimes up to a dozen or more progressions sequentially to that student.

Which is what you must remember to do for your own training.

Either customize your training on your own.

Or hire a coach who can do it for you safely and effectively.

And don't get disappointed if you can do 1, some, or all of these positions.

Or if you try by yourself for months and still can't do them.

There's more than likely just a simple blindspot that needs pointed out.

The problem is when a person develops many, many, many blindspots that they don't know about.

Either way, it can be fixed.

And what's cool is that these positions oftentimes helps correct it.

MY 6 FAVORITE HANDSTAND PROGRESSIONS

Mastery is building 60 second holds for each.
In order of difficulty...



1. Frog Stand



2. Bridge



3. Stalder Stand



4. V Stand



5. C Stand



6. Handstand

And don't forget rest.

Just as important as the training is the rest and recovery.

And diet.

All of these things need to come together in holistic fashion to help a person become the strongest version of themselves.

You can do the diet, but be thin as a toothpick and weak as a noodle.

You can do the training, but if you're not putting in the right fuel, you're essentially starving yourself.

And you can do the diet and the training, but if you're staying up all hours, stressed about work all the time, overwhelmed by family, friends, and drama, or your brain is saturated with the influences of negative people and media, you're going to be a walking zombie.

This is why rest must be strategically built into the periodization.

In the short term, as while doing the training, you have to give the necessary time for the body to replenish ATP and get rid of waste products or your muscles simply won't fire as they should.

And on the macro level, it needs to be built into your schedule.

You need sleep.

You need time away.

Even Jesus slipped away from the crowds.

If you need to make other changes in your life, so be it.

Remember, you have to set lofty goals which outshine your normal day-to-day.

And then you have to commit to those goals like your life depends on it. And in some ways, it does.

And then you have to train to achieve them.

This training has to be done according to a system, and that's what we'll talk about next!

THE SYSTEM

MASTERING
THE
SKILL



CHAPTER 5: THE SYSTEM

"If you don't have a plan, you're planning to fail." - Harry Wong, Educator.

I've probably said this to every coach on our staff. And it was something I needed to hear when I was first really learning how to teach.

It's so simple, but so true.

And yet, so many will overlook it.

This can be applied to any area of life, including handstands.

Home, family, education, work. Every subset of each. And every task related thereto.

Without a plan, effort will be in vain. I've seen it plenty of times, even with very talented people who end up "not making it."

It wasn't because they're not good enough.

It isn't because you're not good enough that you won't have a solid handstand, or a Muscleup, or a Backflip, or whatever else you want to do.

It is because of not having a plan.

A plan is simply a system for engineering the desired outcome.

Even if people have a goal, commit to it, and train, they might still not achieve their goal and it's for the fact that no system is in place to engineer their success.

In the multiple decades I've been involved with training people in everything from martial arts to algebra to acrobatics, the biggest difference in whether people will succeed or fail is the type of plan they're using, or lack thereof.

I've seen breakdancers with 20 years under their belt, but no solid handstands.

I've seen amazing athletes who just give up and quit.

It all comes down to implementing a system that will bring you to your goal.

What I do is help people build their bodies brick by brick beginning with the foundation, then maximizing their strength, and doing that with the goal of specific skills in mind, such as a handstand.

Then, we let the system do the work.

Here's a general overview of a system of basic mobility and strength.

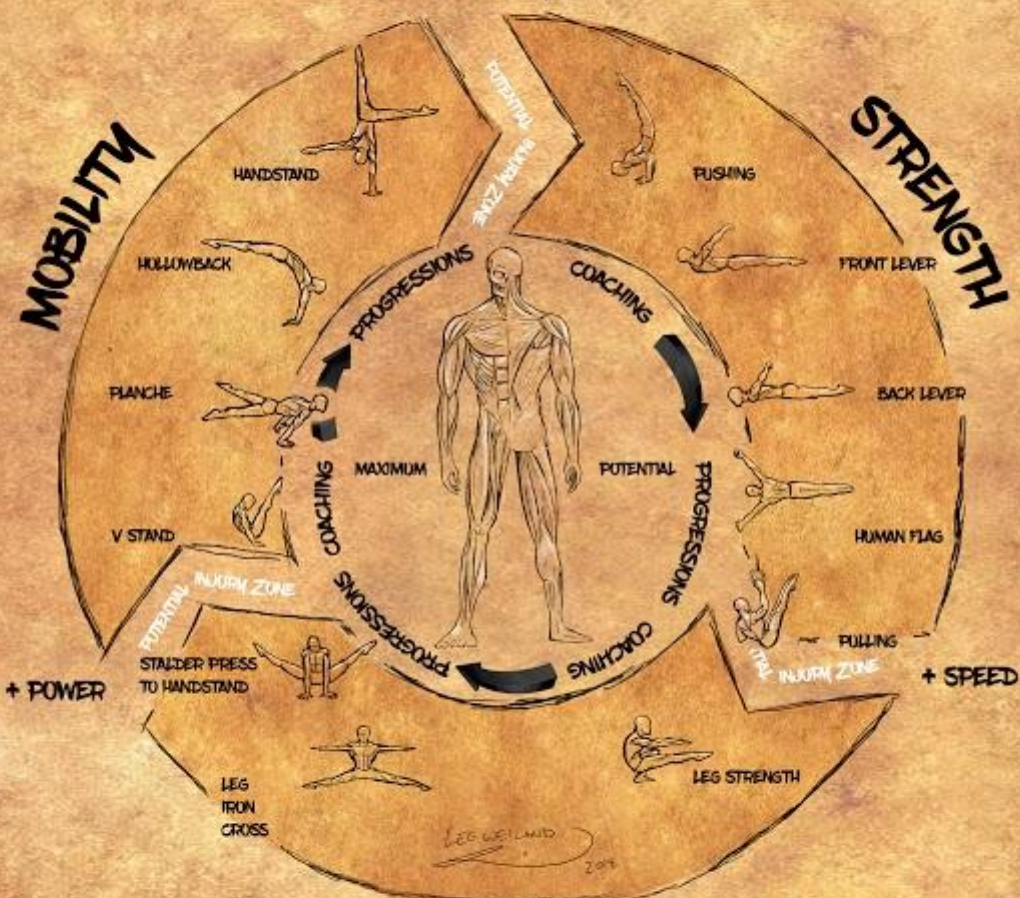


POWERMovement™



CIRQUE STRENGTH™

+ FLEXIBILITY



SKILL

NINJA STRENGTH™



AIRMOVES™



But even the best system won't work unless you're obsessive about it.

Yeah, you can set your goals, you can say you're committed, and you can even "work out" on a daily basis.

But you're not going to get anywhere unless you're obsessed to achieve the final outcomes.

How do you do this?

On an individual level, you have to find that motivation. Maybe it's for your lifelong health. Maybe it's for your children.

I don't know what it is for you, but you to find it...and it's in there somewhere!

And then you need to surround yourself with a community of like-minded people who have your back. People that are just as obsessed with success as you are.

Saturate your life with positivity from the choices you make to the people you surround yourself with.

And then return that support so that it becomes mutual, symbiotic, and beneficial to the collective.

In this collective, you'll need a few types of people.

You'll need a teacher, trainer, or mentor.

You'll need a peer who is ahead of you.

You'll need someone on par with you.

You'll need a person right on your heels.

And you'll need someone you can teach.

This is the ideal collective, and a community system that will help everyone involved.

Build one for yourself or find one. And find a coach who will provide the objective training you need.

And then be the change you want to see in others.

Apply these teachings and go master your body and mind!

TAKE THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

01

What handstand positions can you hold?

02

How long can you hold them?

03

What handstand positions can you not hold?

04

What physical roadblocks are preventing you?

05

What environmental roadblocks are preventing you?

BUILD A TRAINING PLAN

01

Write down your specific, objective, measurable goal.

02

Write down the 3 roadblocks you might face as you get started.

03

Write down what you'll do when you encounter those roadblocks.

04

Write down how many hours per day and days per week you're going to train.

05

Write down the community and people you need to achieve your goal.

CONCLUSION

CONTINUING
THE
JOURNEY



To put all this into perspective, this is a complete physical and mental overhaul.

It's like a blank canvas when working with a child or very healthy adult.

It's also like restoring an old car if the body hasn't been maintained.

Either way, it's a canvas upon which a new work of art can be made.

It's building a sculpture of strength and power.

And it's something awesome to witness and be a part of first hand.

When you see someone go from front rolls to Double Backflips in a matter of 2 years...

Or a person at 50 years of age with a list of surgeries as long as they are tall doing 2 minute handstands, 20 Muscleups, and any flip in the book...

And people of every walk of life transforming into new creations, it's something amazing to experience.

The body and mind are designed for so much more.

You were designed for so much more.

And handstands are only the beginning.

What I want is for you to make that kind of transformation.

So take action!

Be passionate about it!

Set specific, objective, measurable goals.

Faithfully commit to them.

And undertake your training on a daily basis with a level of ferocity and excitement you've never had before!

You can do this!

And when you do, I want you to come and tell me all about it!

Your friend,

Lee Weiland

P.S. If you would like help, [click here to book a Complimentary Coaching Session.](#)



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