



Episode 1 Transcript

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You're Doing It All Wrong...

Nick Collias: Hey there. Welcome. Welcome to the Bodybuilding.com podcast, the fittest podcast in the world!

Dr. Krissy Kendall: Ever.

Nick: On your phone. It gives your phone an instant six-pack.

Krissy: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Nick: Just ripples.

Krissy: Yep. 22-inch biceps.

Nick: Unless, of course, you do everything wrong. And that's our topic for today. You're doing it all wrong. Surprising, you think "What could I be doing wrong? I subscribed to all the right Instagram feeds, I go to the right websites, I go to Bodybuilding.com. I listen to this podcast. There's no way I could be doing everything wrong."

Krissy: Chances are you are doing everything wrong.

Nick: Well I know I'm doing everything wrong.

Krissy: Yeah. No, I think we can all learn from one or two things discussed today.

Nick: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Krissy: All right.

Nick: We have here Krissy Kendall, a.k.a. "the Fit Chick." Dr. Krissy Kendall, a.k.a. "the blue shirt."

Krissy: The blue shirt.

Nick: It's a blue shirt, right? Isn't that it?

Krissy: Mm-hmm (affirmative), it's famous.

Nick: Yep. And this is radio so it doesn't matter what color. We're all wearing posing suits.

Bill Geiger: Going to be naked.

Nick: That's right. I've got my hair back in a Kai Greene man bun.

Krissy: Yeah. Don't ask what's happening *below* the table.

Nick: And you just heard the voice of Doctor Bill Geiger. You're a doctor, right?

Krissy: No!

Nick: I know. Bill Geiger is here. He's our first guest, former editor of Muscle Mag, Muscle and Fitness, Muscle Fitness Hers, Muscle and Fitness Ours?

Bill: Theirs.

Krissy: Everyone.

Bill: All the pronouns.

Krissy: All the muscles.

Nick: Bill's been around the block anyway, and he's going to tell us, pass along some life lessons, what he's learned so that we don't have to.

Krissy: Yeah. Learn from your mistakes.

Nick: I'll be your guinea pig.

Krissy: Thank you.

Nick: Give us a little window into what got you in the gym in the first place? You're at the dawn of Bill Geiger's training life.

Bill: Well it was a long time ago, I was doing ...

Krissy: Like, are we talking 60/70 years?

Nick: Respect him all right, Krissy's bringing the age jokes early here!

Bill: I've been training for 35 years now, and I've worked in sports information at a small division III college in LA, and I worked with all the athletes from the various sports as part of that job. I was friends with a lot of football players—that sort of got me training. I liked how it looked on those people, and they weren't insanely large at the division III level, and then you just get sort of hooked.

Nick: So you were lifting with football players rather than bodybuilders at first?

Bill: There were no bodybuilders, there were so few bodybuilders back in the, this was the early '80s. Arnold had just finished competing in 1980, so it was still pretty new.

Krissy: So then where did you learn from?

Bill: Where did I learn? Well I gotta tell you what, there were none of the resources you see today. For the most part, I learned from people that were already doing it. You watched guys do it, guys would help you learn how to work out. It was a small gym, so it wasn't too large, and perhaps you read a magazine. But there's only so much you can learn from an A and B picture, and you'd be reading exercise description, because you're not reading it at the gym, you're reading it at home, and then you have to remember all that by the time you get to the gym, and by then most of that's gone so...

Nick: Yeah that's something that I tell people, I'm sure that we all have people in our lives who come to us and are like, "You work for Bodybuilding.com, you guys are experts, you gotta tell me what to do, or send me some articles." I always think, "You don't understand; there is zero substitution for personal oversight from somebody who knows what they're doing. Somebody just to come and say, "Yeah, here's what you're doing wrong," because when you're starting out, you have zero body awareness.

Krissy: Right, right.

Bill: You're uncoordinated, yeah, for sure.

Nick: You're totally uncoordinated, and somebody can tell you—this is something I've heard from a bunch of trainers as well—they say, "Don't round your back during that deadlift," and you think, "Oh okay," and you really think your back is straight, and your back is so bent and everything looks so wrong and you just have zero awareness, zero control.

Bill: Absolutely true.

Krissy: Or that even which muscles, so it's like, "Pull with your lats," and it's like, "Where the hell are my lats? Where do I feel this?"

Nick: Over there.

Krissy: Lower body, legs, calves?

Nick: Around the corner.

Krissy: Somewhere.

Nick: Who was the great mentor that kind of put you on the right track finally?

Bill: Well, I actually had a couple friends that were on the football team and invited me to come work out with them to get started, and that's where I learned most of what I learned in the beginning—basic free weight movements. But you're at the mercy of their knowledge typically.

Nick: Did you have that moment of, "I got pinned under 95 pounds?"

Bill: No, never had that moment.

Krissy: Lucky for you.

Bill: 95 pounds, wow.

Krissy: You haven't lived until you've been pinned under weight.

Nick: Jay Cutler of one of those guys. He has one of those stories where it's like, "Yeah I got straight up pinned under 95 pounds the very first time.

Bill: Yeah one of the interviews I did early on was with a guy who'd gotten pinned, or his father got pinned, and I hate to say this, but he actually died under the weight.

Nick: Wow.

Krissy: Jeez.

Bill: You learn from one of those stories. He was at home alone training in the basement and put a collar on a bench, and you can't move without a spotter, and big problems can happen, so, lesson there is, don't use collars when you train alone.

Krissy: Exactly.

Nick: So you had collars from the start. You did it right.

Bill: Pretty much. In the college gym, there's a lot of people there. The thing is, when you're a beginner, every workout, you're stronger than the last one, so you're always putting on a little bit more weight and pushing yourself to do more, and it keeps going up, so it's very motivating.

Krissy: You remember your first injury in the gym?

Bill: No. Probably embarrassment from my skinny legs or something.

Nick: Calf shame is an injury I'm pretty sure.

Krissy: I always remember my first.

Bill: Yeah, something like throwing your back or something like that?

Krissy: I think it was just jumping on a box, falling, and it moved.

Nick: All right, it's empty, jump on the box.

Krissy: Yeah. Falling a few inches short.

Bill: I think it was something like biceps curls, strained something in my back, and I could really feel it for a couple of days. Some cheat.

Nick: Monster cheat curl.

Bill: Yeah, look at that. I can curl that. Give me that thing.

Nick: How do you injure your back on biceps curls. How is that possible?

Krissy: That momentum. Keep the bar up.

Nick: The back is the deal, man, I feel like that's the thing that sends so many people toward websites like ours in the first place anymore. I know in my case, every six months like clockwork, I'd have two days on my ass where my back would just decide that it hated me over and over again. And after two or three times doing that I was like, "You know what? I'm going to be chasing around back pain or getting chased by it for the rest of my life if I don't start doing something right now, and it's got to be a choice, like I have to embrace it as a way of life with the specific goal of not being in back pain, because back pain is the worst thing," as I think you understand, Bill.

Bill: Yeah.

Nick: And you understand that as well.

Krissy: Yeah. Yeah.

Nick: Everyone thinks they're immune to it, you know?

Bill: For long-time lifters, it's common. Most of us had back-pain stories. It's just one of those things you better learn from or it's going to knock you out eventually.

Nick: One thing I see around here watching people in the gym and listening to people talk about strength training all the time is you see people catch different bugs all the time. Somebody gets the strength bug, that's it, you know what? I'm going to see what my 1RM potential is, or I'm going to be 10% body fat all year round sort of bug. I'm going to compete sort of bug. People get those, you can just tell people get in a phase. Have you caught all the bugs over the years?

Bill: Absolutely. Especially if part of your job is going to bodybuilding shows, and you just see these guys in great shape, and you think "I want to just get big, that's the only thing I want to do is just get big." And then at summertime, you see the ones that have the great abs on the beach and think, "I need to get on a diet and just get my body fat down, and that will magically make me look bigger, even if I'm not as big as I thought I wanted to be."

Nick: When do you think was the best shape of your life? Like the baseball players say so-and-so is in the best shape in your life. When were you in the best shape of your life?

Bill: It's hard to say, but it's funny, because people have posted pictures on Facebook of me 20 years ago, and I was like, "Wow, was I really in that shape?" Because sometimes your perception is different then, and looking back now I'm like, "Wow, I didn't realize I was that big or that lean or something."

Krissy: It's how you define the best shape of your life, too. Because you could look amazing, and you'll hear competitors talk about that, but the damage that they're doing to their bodies to get to that point, whatever they're taking, however they're training, however they're dieting... It's not really the best shape of their life. That might be in their 50s and 60s when they figure it out and get their shit together and say, "This is what I need to do and this is what I need to not do."

Nick: Yes, I've heard that from a couple of our athletes where they say, "Yeah, I competed X times, one time, three times, and my body never forgave me." Without naming any names I was like, "Oh yeah, I kind of see what that means up close sometimes."

Bill: Even at Muscle and Fitness, we'd shoot guys the day after the Mr. Olympia contest, the guys that won the contest, the biggest and best bodybuilders in the world, and they struggled with their workouts the next day, because they were so depleted mostly, just energy. The worst of all was

giving them the leg workout to do the day after they competed in a Mr. Olympia kind of contest and they'd only want to put two plates on the bar. That was the pre-Photoshop days; now we can fake anything, right?

Nick: We got a photo from Phil Heath in the final days before we moved into the new office. He's holding this dumbbell like this, doing this curl, and it's got like eight 10-pound plates or whatever, and on the other side, there was one. I guess somebody didn't crop the photo properly.

Bill: It's funny because there were times when we'd have articles and one top pro who passed away, Nasser El Sonbaty, we shot him with this heavy arm workout, and he's doing standing dumbbell curls with 35 pounds. Again this is pre-Photoshop, and it's like how is that going to work in this article?

Nick: Do you have any accomplishments looking back in your 30-plus years that you're like, that was maybe the greatest accomplishment you had in the gym? Doesn't have to be a 700-pound deadlift. I've asked that of various bodybuilders like Jay Cutler; they always have interesting answers.

Bill: I wish I had Jay Cutler's accomplishments. I always wanted to bench press 400; never came close. I think I got to 315 for a couple reps. I was more limited based on my genetics than other people, but we're always comparing ourselves upward rather than downward so in a sense those were good accomplishments, but I always wanted more. Honestly, too, I have learned so much since then. For example, if my bench was 315, my best bench, I've learned from two of our strength writers, Todd Baumgartner and Josh Bryant, that there are ways to attack your bench from the start position and the lockout position that can help you improve. We didn't even cover those kind of concepts 15 years ago in a bodybuilding magazine. I feel like if I had some of that knowledge that I see now that I had back then, I probably would have been able to at least have some strategies to overcome some of those limitations.

Nick: One thing that it seems like bodybuilders get right, as opposed to guys who are so focused on strength, is figuring out how to make heavy weights light. There's this obsession these days with your 1RM, I see it in the YouTube comments all the time. "Oh, my 1RM is blah blah blah." What does their 1RM look like? It's probably a battle for their life. But somebody who can take a reasonable weight and make it into something that gives them a sincere stimulus to get stronger is a whole other skill.

Bill: Absolutely, bodybuilding isn't about pushing maximum weights, number one; it's about looking good on stage. So it's clearly different. But I was thinking about that point the other day, because I have a bum shoulder too, and so one of the things I do for chest is like a pre-exhaust routine, and that allows you to isolate with a single-joint movement your chest first. It becomes pre-fatigue, so when you get to the heavy presses you don't have to use as heavy a weight, because maybe the press hurts your shoulder. So now you have to use less weights. There are ways to make a weight feel heavier, and pre-exhaust is one. There's slowing your repetition speed and some other techniques that a lot of bodybuilders use. A lot of bodybuilders have injuries, and after having interviewed many of them, they do things to cheat around the system, and they don't go full-bore heavy all the time just because they can. So making a weight feel heavier than it really is is a real skill. A real art and a skill.

Nick: I think there's an under-recognized strength benefit there too. One of the strength coaches that writes for me, Tony Gentilcore, had an interesting piece on his blog recently where he said he started doing chest flies so that he can feel his chest working more during his bench press. And he feels like his bench press form—and he's not a guy that's seeking muscle, he's a pure strength guy—but he feels like pre-fatiguing the chest allows him to feel a heavy movement where he should

feel it a little bit more. I know I joke around about the ass-blasting program that Paul [Salter] and I have been doing...

Krissy: I'm Paul, ass blasting.

Nick: ...If I beat the shit out of my ass before doing kettlebell swings, I can tell what good form is, and if not, that then my ass is numb from sitting up there all day. I have to pre-fatigue it where it's like, "Oh god, I just woke up, I feel terrible." It's got to be sort—ass and triceps both have to be sore, I find, in order to actually work for me.

Krissy: Right, and I think that people can get that confused, because I'll see people doing pre-fatiguing and then trying to do heavy squats. I think you're missing the point of why you do a pre-fatigue set or why you might do higher repetitions.

For me, shoulders, unless I do super-high reps, I'm not going to feel anything, but I could do 3 sets of 10 on RDLs and I'll be sore for three days after that. I learned which muscles respond and adapt to a certain stimulus. Yes, that takes a lot of years and reading and staying up to date and listening to experts and watching videos, but it kills me when I see people just doing, "Oh I read it in this article. Pre-fatigue does this, I need to do 4 sets of dropsets on leg extensions before I go and start doing some heavy strength protocol." You're missing the whole thing. And then again, that's what leads to injury. You have to figure out what works for you. You have to play around, you have to try, you have to experiment. I think people get a little nervous about doing that in the gym if they're not comfortable with it.

Nick: Totally. Well nobody wants to feel those eyes on you if there's somebody shaking their head at you.

Krissy: Yeah. And that's just again, years of experience, I don't give a shit. I go in there, headphones on, don't talk to me, let me do my thing. There's mirrors there if you want to look at what you're doing but kind of getting over your ego and what you're doing. Try it out, videotape yourself, look at your form, because like you were saying before, "My back's totally straight, I'm not ruining my back." Yeah you are. But if you can't see it, can't feel it, you're not going to learn.

Bill: That gets to the one lesson I did not put in the article that I had written about the 22 lessons I learned, was that you never stop becoming a student. You're always learning new things. I have been exposed to so much with professional trainers and bodybuilders and athletes, and I always learn something new from them, and I try it in the workout. If you come in with the attitude of "I know everything that there is to know." You're going to close off new ways of thinking and new ways to train. It's really important, in my opinion, to just always be a student, always be a student of the sport.

Nick: If you go to the website of our [podcast](#), you can click a link to read Bill's [articles](#). How many is it? 14 things?

Bill: [14 Lessons I Learned After 34 Years of Lifting](#).

Nick: Oh, okay, what makes you shake your head when you see somebody doing something in the gym?

Bill: You mean, daily? Multiple times daily.

Nick: Nobody has ever done anything with poor form in this gym of course, in the Bodybuilding.com gym.

Krissy: Absolutely not. We are models.

Bill: We are all experts.

Krissy: We are models.

Bill: I see it in our gym too. Again, beginners tend to make more form types of mistakes. As you get more experienced, hopefully you're learning, and that's why it's so important to learn from someone who knows. You're not born knowing how to do a Romanian deadlift and keeping your back flat; it's something you have to turn sideways in the mirror and know what to look for. I've actually tried to teach a flat back to people, and it's really hard to get them to learn that; they just want to keep it rounded. It's like flatten it, stick your butt out, bring your chest up. It's not first nature to a lot of people. It's really tough to learn.

Nick: Why do you think that is? Is it weakness in the lower back? What's the weak link? I feel like I see that all the time.

Krissy: Well, think about how you pick up something from the ground. And I think that's how people associate with... I'm not going to use my legs. I'm going to bend at my back, or bend at the waist, and pick something up. That's what we're used to doing, which is why lower-back injuries are the most common injury we have.

Bill: There's deadlifts, and there's Romanian deadlifts. A lot of people don't know the difference between them, so they actually make a movement that combines elements of both. I see that all the time.

Krissy: Stiff-legged RDL?

Bill: And then there's the stiff-legged deadlift as well, but in terms of the deadlifts, which should touch the floor because you're coming from a dead stop, whereas Romanian's don't touch the floor. But I see people putting the bar down between reps of Romanians all the time, but it's just like, well no, that's supposed to be a deadlift, and that changes what's going on.

You might have a good idea how a movement is done, but there's lots of technical things about your head, and because I see too many people craning their neck and putting their cervical spine ... And that's actually how I had a herniation in my cervical spine. I was looking down while I was shrugging with heavy weights. Now those 100-pound dumbbells are going right through my arms, through my shoulders, right to my spine and there's a real natural desire to look down, and if you watch people in the gym with heavy shrugs, they're going to look down, and that changes what should be a natural position of the cervical spine, and all of a sudden you got it out of position, you've got stress applied with heavy weight with a spine that's out of alignment, and that is a recipe for disaster, nothing short of disaster. I ended up having neck surgery. That was an injury that lasted several years actually.

Nick: It was just one rep, you went, "Oh shit"?

Bill: Well it was a little bit progressive, but it was one exercise, I had one technique part down wrong. I was looking when it happened. It felt like a knife got inserted in my shoulder blades. It was a stab, and my whole arm went numb for about three weeks, and then it just atrophied, and I mean atrophied so bad that I could do a dumbbell press with my good side with 100 pounds. The bad side, I couldn't do 20 pounds on a dumbbell press, and it was shaking the whole way. There was no nerve connection anymore, I mean, that's how bad it got.

Nick: Did you go to a doctor right away, or did you hang out? "It'll pass, it'll pass."

Bill: I went to the chiropractor, acupuncturist. You know, they tell you to start with conservative treatment, but with nerve injuries I think you need to be a little bit speedier on how it's done, because some of those, if they hang around too long, they're not going to reverse themselves.

Krissy: But nobody wants to hear that they can't lift, to take time off, so I don't go to the doctor. It's fine, it'll fix itself.

Nick: There is this other world of sports therapy out there. What have you guys had good luck with?

Krissy: Chiropractor.

Bill: I love my chiropractor.

Krissy: Love my chiropractor.

Bill: I do too. I've had the neck injury, but when I get chiropractic, it just sort of releases, and it just sort of moves more easily, the same with my middle back as well, but I love going to chiropractic.

Krissy: Yes.

Nick: What about soft tissue stuff, Graston and all of those? Ever tried any of that?

Krissy: I've done a little bit of it. I'm just not quite a fan, because I really think that a lot of where my injuries come from, where I always feel lower back pain on my right side, same spot, it's because my hips are off. I'm putting more weight onto my right side than my left side, I'm compensating, and a lot of that I think comes from manual adjustment. I think, in order to release some soreness, some treatment like that, massage, those sorts of things, stim, or now they make those portable TENS units, and I have one, it's awesome.

Nick: Oh really?

Krissy: Yes.

Nick: What do those ring up, that's interesting.

Krissy: Oh, super cheap on Amazon, \$25.

Nick: Wait, so lay that out for us. What do you do with that exactly?

Krissy: Really cool portable unit, and if you ever had—I remember back in my high school days, I broke a bone in my ankle, or I guess the lower part of my tibia. They use it to... It's more or less just immediate pain relief; it doesn't really translate into prolonged, any sort of relief from discomfort sort of thing, so you used to get it, we call it stim, I used to get it on my lower leg. It helped to increase nerve impulses, increase conduction in the area, helped to minimize some of the inflammation, things like that.

Nick: Is it like a cold laser or...?

Krissy: No. I'm trying to describe it. I come from a science background. It's like electrodes, if you can think of that. It feels like, kind of like if you were to take a high dose of beta-alanine, and you get that sort of tingling feeling, which you just did. So imagine that, but on a body part that you can

localize, and so now I use it for my lower back when I feel like it's really tense. It kind of helps relax it, so basically what you're doing is kind of disrupting the normal neural patterns there to kind of take a really tense muscle or group of muscles and cause them to relax a little bit, to increase blood flow and circulation, things like that. You put it anywhere, they give you instructions obviously, so you don't hurt yourself. You can adjust the intensity so that the more tight you are, the more pain that you're experiencing, crank that bad boy up. You can keep it on for an hour if you will. Yeah. Super easy, portable. It's been pretty awesome. I know a few people in the office are using it...

Nick: They're just sitting on one at this moment.

Krissy: Yes, just 'zzzzzzzz' sitting when you're at your desk hearing that. Yeah.

Nick: That's what that is, okay.

Krissy: Yeah, I know what you're thinking. It's for health, so that's one of the things I started using after I ruptured a disk in my back, for the same reason I have such tightness on one side. You go to the chiropractor if they use it there, or physical therapist, I've always used it with physical therapists. They probably have a nicer one that's a little bit more expensive, but you can get them pretty inexpensively on any online that sells tense units.

Nick: Interesting.

Bill: You know, Nick and Krissy, one of the most important lesson learned in training was that God didn't design the human body to do this kind of activity repetitively for many, many years, if not decades or more. We weren't designed that way. Bodybuilding has only been around for 50-60 years; we haven't had the chance to evolve that fast. It's an activity that will tear your body down over time, even if you do everything right. You're going to have issues, ultimately. There are ways to lessen that: Make sure you use good form, schedule downtime and some other things, but it's just ultimately your body breaking down, and you need to be able to manage that. Most of us are recreational athletes. For people who are seriously into sports or professional bodybuilding, they're committing everything to it. But I think for the rest of us it's an activity we need to manage.

Nick: I'm sure both of you have known plenty of people who compete, over the years, maybe helped them out in various ways. That person, as they get closer and closer to that climactic date in their life, how dark of a time is that for somebody? Is the potential for injury for doing things wrong almost inevitable at that point? That would be my concern, that I would get to a point where I couldn't be a good ally for myself, I'd be working against myself and I would need somebody there to tell me, "Whoa whoa whoa whoa, you're doing this wrong right now." Do those people need somebody in their corner?

Krissy: I think so, and I don't even think it comes down to what they're doing in the weight room as far as a safety thing, but some of my friends who have competed, you're just concerned about their mental stability, when they're alone what are they thinking, what are they doing, some of these journals, these things they write down, like where their mind goes, it's a...

Krissy: They've got lists of just foods they're going to eat, and you can do the same thing in the weight room, but when you're so structured for a certain period of time and then you just let yourself go, whatever that means, all restraints are gone, there's nothing holding you back, that's scary.

Nick: Is it just the allure of seeing those abs in the mirror the first time? "Wow, never again will I allow myself anything. I must have them forever."

Krissy: Yeah, yeah.

Nick: I don't know, having never seen my abs, I can't say.

Krissy: I've seen two of mine.

Bill: Well Nick, in professional bodybuilding...

Nick: Oh wait, wait, there...

Krissy: Yeah, there, there...

Nick: I just found them! They're right here!

Krissy: If I lift my skin up...

Bill: When the light is just right in a very dark room, you can see abs.

I was going to say. in professional bodybuilding about a decade or two ago, you saw a lot of the top guys relying on Nubain, I'm not exactly sure if that was a drug, it was an anti-inflammatory or what, but they were training having to use this as a painkiller. I sort of hear about it, not in the mainstream press but more kind of underground... [Editorial note: Nubain is a synthetic opioid analgesic.]

Nick: Conversation.

Bill: Yes, and that's not healthy. Because if you're on a painkiller, you can do about anything, and once it wears off, you're going to be awfully sore from what you put a damaged joint through during that time.

Krissy: Yes, it seems you see that with bodybuilding more on the female side of things when you got bikini competitors, and I don't think they're still trying to push heavy weights. They're dropping weights, they're doing a lot of cardio, so it just becomes—it's still wear and tear to your body.

Nick: Those fitness competitors I imagine...

Krissy: Oh, the physique too.

Nick: Fitness at the Arnold and at the Olympia, we always try to watch, because it's such an incredible display of athleticism. It's like this weird little mini Olympic event with way worse music, but those women I imagine just must be sore as hell.

Krissy: Yeah. I was a weight-class athlete in college, and obviously, we weren't judged by how our muscles looked but how we performed. I was a rower, and I raced as a lightweight rower, and you want to talk about being miserable trying to make weight and still practice three hours a day and we're weighing in, you weigh in an hour before, so it's not like I'm a UFC fighter and have 24 hours to put weight back on and...

Nick: But even that...

Krissy: Even that, it's horrible, the things you do to your body. I've learned a lot since then. I would do things 100 percent differently than how I was trying to doing it back then, but it's the same thing, you learn from the other people. So what the other rowers were doing, that's what I'm going to do. The one thing I will say, you're starting to see people who are competing who are doing four months' prep, 6 months' prep, and slowly going into it, kind of getting away from this 8 and 12 weeks balls-to-

the-wall, trying to diet down in the shortest amount of time, and that's what we did as athletes. You don't want to be in a calorie deficit and working out and training your ass off for six months.

What I think we're finally starting to realize is that if you do a slower progression, you don't have to make it so drastic. You don't have to cut so quick and then you see less injuries, you see less burnout and you see less rebound coming back from it. I hope to see it continue in going that way with these longer...

Nick: That makes sense. It's interesting you bring up 12 weeks. Of course we always have these 12-week everything in our programs here and everywhere. I remember Bill Phillips telling us all the story of 12 weeks which is "I had a vacation in 12 weeks. I decided that was what I was in it for," but that was what, 20, 22 years ago when that particular story happened, but you've been in this industry longer than that; did that have cachet before then, or before that did everybody have a more reasonable expectation?

Bill: I think the transformation aspect is something that probably emerged after Bill Phillips, because he offered I think the first kind of contest for these kinds of things. You saw before-and-after pictures used by advertisers before that, but you didn't see the competition, the transformation-competition aspect of it, and Bill I think at the time was giving out \$100,000 to his winners, so that changed more for the regular guy as opposed to the before and afters featuring professional athletes. Well of course, he can get out of shape and he can get into shape, he knows how to do it, and you see a lot more of that today. I think there's a motivational aspect to writing your name down and committing to a transformation because other are people doing it. "We had people at work doing it so I want to do it," and I think that's more successful than just some arbitrary "I'm going to get in shape." So I think that's one of the reasons—it's just more of a successful way to do a transformation.

Nick: Yes, but sometimes it can just get a little awful. I'm sure you hear it as much as everybody, but I hear it from some people—"God, I hate transformation season"—because you start hearing weird things discussed. You're just, "Why are you talking about that?" I heard two people arguing in the break room about whether carrots had too many carbs.

Krissy: Wow, if there was ever a high-carb food, it's carrots. Stay away.

Nick: In this person's defense, I have since then seen these charts with various pieces that are like yeah, carrots are remarkably high carb and high GI for a vegetable, but whatever. It's a carrot. How many are you going to eat?

Krissy: You're going to tell me I can't eat carrots? Come on. That's what I hate about transformations. You start picking apart every food.

Nick: One of our co-workers when we had our goal board put up said something like, "Don't have such a fat lower body!"

Krissy: That was me.

Nick: No. [laughter]

Krissy: I'm kidding, I'm kidding. I know, I know.

Nick: I saw it and was like, "Come on! Don't write that out there for everybody, come on! That's not even a goal, that's just an insult!"

Krissy: You're insulting yourself!

Bill: That's an insult we could just band around.

Krissy: Put yourself down before anyone else can.

Nick: Right. And some part of me was like, "Oh you shouldn't say anything" and another friend said, "What are you doing? Get that off there, that's a horrible goal."

Krissy: Yeah. But essentially that's what a lot of the times when we write these goals, we're saying what do we suck at right now, or what's the crappiest part about our body, and then can I change it in 12 weeks, and then what am I going to do to change it?

Nick: Maybe that's it, though. Maybe we need to do a single-body-part-focused transformation, 12 weeks of nothing but...

Bill: Like spot dieting for a particular body part.

Krissy: Yeah, I've heard that.

Nick: 12 weeks to bleaks!

Krissy: Spot reduction works, just get those Saran Wrap bells.

Nick: Cold, if you put cold on it...

Krissy: Cryotherapy. Some lady died doing that, FYI...

Nick: No not full-body therapy, but localized. There's this condition where in the old days kids, their cheeks would get really gaunt when they had a lot of ice and ice cream during the summer, and there's been some research into this, there actually is a localized fat-burning process that happens when you expose something to cold over and over again.

Krissy: So if I just put a bunch of ice bags...

Nick: Ice bags, straight up...

Krissy: On my ass, done. Don't bother me tonight.

Nick: There are some companies who make the brown-fat-activating coal bags, they say they add brown adipose tissue which is the fat-burning tissue, or fat-burning fat, it's located up here and here, and there are some little vests that you can get. You freeze them and put them on...

Bill: I've heard of that.

Nick: Tim Ferriss and Ben Greenfield both have written about it.

Krissy: When are we going to start selling them on the side? And can I get a discount?

Bill: I think we need some testers.

Krissy: Yes, sign me up.

Nick: Let's talk about this, young man, you see the young Bill Geiger around you, the young

everybody around you in the gym right. How is that person setting themselves up for pain?

Bill: Oftentimes, you just see someone at the beach, at the store, little jacked bodies, and think, "Yeah, I want to look like that." They either have equipment, build a little gym in their basement, have a school gym, join a gym, 20 bucks a month, whatever, then everything's available to them. You can do hundreds of movements in a gym, but some are better than others; everyone can be done wrong until you learn the right form, even things like how many sets should you do, how many reps should you do, what kind of weight should you lift, how long to rest between sets; those are all important variables linked to muscle growth. Oftentimes these beginners have no idea, they just go in, put weight on the bar, and lift it.

Nick: We do see this profusion of advanced training ideas, everywhere. Everybody talks about drop sets, double drop sets, triple double sets, going beyond failure, as if that's an inevitable part of everything that you do.

Bill: It may be down the road; those are very advanced techniques. You don't want to get distracted from the basic task as a beginner, which is learning new movement patterns and identifying the kinds of exercises you want to do and how to do them right. That should be the focus when you start, because yeah you can do these incredible advanced training tips, but really they're meant for people who are advanced. I think for beginners, keep it basic, keep it simple, and just get in there with enough frequency that you're starting to cause an effect on your body.

Krissy: We've been saying beginner, advanced, what do you see? When is someone a beginner, when do they cross over into advanced? When can I start occluding the blood flow to get massive pumps?

Bill: Like when I say so. No. [laughter]

Krissy: Get the stamp of approval!

Nick: We've got this belt on your arm; let's go right now!

Krissy: Go for it.

Bill: You know, I don't know that there's an anniversary date that says, "Hey, I've been lifting for six months. I'm now going to jump into an intermediate." Beginners typically follow certain kinds of routines where they don't do a lot of exercises per body part, that's sort of a whole-body routine, like three sets of one exercise that's for chest, three sets of a leg exercise, they do it all on the same day. After a while, that workout stops working. There's a law of diminishing returns for just about everything in life, but it works for training, too. You're going to need more stimulus to make that next step to the next level, and so you start doing more volume per body part, you start splitting your workout up, that's where you start seeing the jump to the next level. That's a continuing process; you should never expect the same workout you did is going to work forever, because it just doesn't. You need to start understanding what those variables are that are linked to growth and start finding ways to manipulate them to put changes into your workout to keep it going.

Nick: It sounds like what you're saying...It's not just finding the perfect workout, which is what I hear people searching for all the time, but it's also having the right mindset as you enter the gym. Even as a beginner, not letting your intimidation get in the way but actually trying to build expertise from the start.

Bill: None of us knew much of what we were doing when we first started. Krissy's a PhD now, but she wasn't a PhD when she started lifting in high school.

Nick: She bought that PhD online.

Krissy: I did, there's actually a Groupon for one out now.

Nick: Still paying.

Krissy: Weekend PhD course.

Bill: Even pro bodybuilders I've interviewed...

Nick: Guadalajara Bodybuilding Institute.

Krissy: Yup.

Bill: There's even some pro bodybuilders I've interviewed and I've asked them, "Tell me about some of the things you did wrong when you first started training and you find amazing." Milos Sarcev once told me he would train biceps for 5 hours and they'd actually be smaller by the time he finished...

Nick: Muscle wasting...

Bill: But we're all going to make mistakes early on. The thing is you don't want to make mistakes that might cause an injury, which means learning good form is absolutely imperative when you're first starting out. It might be worth a good investment to hire a personal trainer, which obviously needs to be somebody who know what he's doing, not one that you'd sort of see at the low end sort of fitness health club who's still in high school kind of thing. Investing in that, reading as much as you can for beginner-based stuff, don't get caught up in the triple dropset kind of things.

Nick: Or how much weight is on the bar. That's the thing that drives me crazy is when I see people who are like, "Well, if I'm going to do a squat, I better put two plates on there, otherwise it doesn't count as a squat, but it's a battle for their life..."

Bill: Well neither does going a quarter down...

Nick: Exactly, going a quarter down, heels coming up. Deadlift is another one. I've heard from pretty smart strength coaches saying nobody needs to do anything lower than a rack pull. If you are deadlifting for a very good reason, you really want to measure your strength. If you want to compete, that's one thing, but the rest of us... Put it at knee level. What are you thinking, you know?

Bill: There might be other strength coaches who have different opinions as well, and really, I can't say that anyone is right, because they both have compelling reasons behind them, but...

Nick: Scalability is something that does get lost in contemporary gym culture, because you see people online constantly bragging about how strong they are.

Bill: But the free-bar squat is probably not the first squat you're going to try. A goblet squat is real easy for beginners to learn, once you start feeling the hips and the knees, how they flex and extend, then you graduate to something a little bit more difficult. The idea is, start off with movements that are fairly simple, sometimes even down on machines as you learn the movement patterns, and then you're going to start making things harder. Why do you make things harder? Because that's when you adapt to the increase and the overload. You're not going to adapt if you keep it simple all the time. You have to make this sort of a progressive challenge over time.

Krissy: I think something that we've kind of hinted around but haven't really addressed it and probably one of my biggest pet peeves in the gym is something that I've learned over the years is planning a workout and tracking your workout. Because if you go into the gym and say, "I'm going to hit chest today," and I'll see people do flat-bench barbell, flat-bench dumbbell, incline barbell, incline dumbbell, and it's hitting the same muscle groups, more or less the same stimulus, and then if they're not tracking their weight, how do you know you're progressing? Then they do a program for two weeks and they switch to something completely different. You're never going to progress that way, or probably not in the way that you want to. I always tell people just come in with a plan. Have an idea; you don't have to have it 100 percent done, because something might be taken, something not. But it drives me insane when I see someone doing the same thing over and over.

Bill: We've got some good workouts on our site that I've seen that have smart approaches that I've seen for any progression for any body part you want, but there's tons of bad information online too...

Krissy: Of course.

Bill: It's hard to sift through, so...

Krissy: But as a beginner, come in with a plan and know what you're doing.

Nick: I'm going to have my kettlebell moment here. This is one reason I like the kettlebell, because you have fewer choices to make. There are fewer weights to choose from, and the weight jumps are bigger, so it's not like am I going to do a squat with the 53-pound, 55-pound, or 57-pound? It's like you got the 35, you got the 53, you got the 70. You got fewer choices to make, and it makes it so much easier to come in with a plan, especially when you start to get exhausted.

Bill: I don't know what gym you go to, but those plates don't exist where I train.

Krissy: We train in Canada; there's the metric system there.

Nick: We have 2.5-pound plates here, though. You can move up in 2.5-pound increments, and then there's also the pound-and-a-quarter collars.

Krissy: I make sure to have those in all my...

Nick: You can do the super-incremental way here if you want, even though this is not the most outfitted gym by any means.

Krissy: No. It does its job.

Nick: Oh, absolutely. Bill, if you had to do it all over again, you run across a hot tub time machine, you could go back and tell little Bill Geiger...

Krissy: Little Bill Geiger...

Nick: ..."Dude. You gotta do it this way."

Bill: Well, it's funny, because I do help a lot of beginners out at the gym, so it's not like I'm under the notion I'm going to start again, but I oftentimes can help someone out who's just getting started who's very enthusiastic about what they're doing. I think a lot of beginners get overwhelmed with the amount of information. There's just so much they can learn, but like Krissy said, you just got to keep it basic, keep it simple, and you go from there. They don't need to know everything about what's happening at the gym and all the things they can be doing. There are dozens and dozens of chest

exercises to choose from; many simply just repeat what you've done on a barbell with dumbbells or a machine, so they're most or less interchangeable, but you don't do them all.

Nick: Those are good words to live by. Just watch out for meaningless repetitive volume, because you go there and you're like, "I got an hour. Today's chest day; I'll do all the chest stuff."

Bill: I know people who do that.

Nick: Right, I'm sure.

Bill: They have nine exercises they do for chest, and it's just like, that's going in the wrong direction. In fact, you often hear bodybuilders say the longer the workout means it's less intense. You should focus on building intensity in a shorter time than trying to make up for what you didn't do by lengthening your workout, by adding on more sets of different exercises. This is not an aerobic activity we're doing here.

Krissy: You have to get your selfies in too, keep that in mind too. Lengthens the workout, take your pictures.

Nick: I was in New Jersey six months ago in this random-ass hotel gym, and there was this guy there, and I thought "I think I recognize that guy. Oh, it might be Steve Weatherford, but no, I don't think that's Steve Weatherford." And then I saw him go over and take his shirt off in the middle of the gym and start taking selfies next to the dumbbell rack...

Krissy: Yeah, it's Steve.

Nick: Yeah it's Steve Weatherford. So there is a benefit to it. If I had not seen him taking that shirtless selfie in the middle of a crowded room of people who are like, "What the hell's this guy doing?" I wouldn't have known it was Steve Weatherford and I wouldn't have went up and said hi to him...

Krissy: And the workout doesn't happen unless you have proof of it. So I think that's really what lengthens the workouts.

Nick: So Krissy, let's talk about creatine for second. First of all, have I been saying it wrong all this time?

Krissy: Ah, you know? That's...

Nick: Because looking at that, I see creatine.

Krissy: Creatine.

Nick: Creatine.

Bill: And you certainly don't want to be a cretin.

Nick: Here's the thing: I think a lot of times in the world of academia, you find a lot of researchers a lot of times who will say creatine...

Krissy: Which looks wrong, as somebody who likes my silent E's that change vowels.

Krissy: It's funny because I say beta-alanine, so I have the E in there.

Nick: Alanine...

Krissy: Alanine. I think it's, you grow up, you learn from your mentor whatever was said in your lab, and for us it was creatine...

Nick: Was it cretin or creatine? Because there's one of those where there's creat...

Krissy: Creatine, not cretin. Skeletal muscles or skeletal muscle...

Nick: Skeletal?

Krissy: The Canadians will say skeletal.

Nick: 'Antonin Skeletel.'

Krissy: Yeah, so just don't hate me on because I say creatine.

Nick: No, no, no, I was worried about being hated upon.

Krissy: No, I would say probably creatine. Is that how you say it, creatine?

Bill: Well Krissy, being from a southern state, says things a little differently from the rest of us here?

Nick: Wait, what?

Krissy: Huh?

Nick: I thought you were French Canadian.

Krissy: Yeah, so cretin, creatine, cretin.

Nick: Anyways, you just had an article come out a couple days ago about creatine and how people can get seemingly the most simple of dosing supplements wrong. Like whey protein, I could see you get it wrong because I'll just take a shake every now and again. But the dose of creatine is so simple you would think it'd be near impossible to screw up. Take it every day. Take one scoop, every damn day. But plenty of people don't see the results, maybe they assume that they're one of those famous nonresponders. How few are they? What's your take on the nonresponders?

Krissy: It's estimated about 20 percent of people...

Nick: 20 percent? that's a lot.

Krissy: But again you have to look; these studies are not the longest-running studies. It's very hard to get clinical research and supplement studies to go for a very, very, long time. They're not funded very well, and then there's compliance. You say someone's a nonresponder, you're saying you gave it to them for four weeks, their strength didn't increase, they must be a nonresponder. It's not so much we ran all of these genetic tests and we did muscle biopsies...

Nick: You lack the creatine gene.

Krissy: You might have noticed after four weeks that phosphocreatine levels did not increase, so they might be a nonresponder. Or every other person who did this study had significant changes,

these two didn't, they were on it, they might be nonresponders.

Nick: I've heard it theorized that a nonresponder person is potentially just somebody who eats so much meat...

Krissy: Usually it's because their levels are already at a high-enough point, where supplementing with anymore...

Nick: Okay, so the person's not low generally.

Krissy: You can have the same thing with beta-alanine. If you have someone who is a sprint athlete, who is kind of an athlete that excels in activities that last 1-6 minutes, kind of the sweet spot for beta-alanine, they're training, their body can adapt to increased carnosine levels, which is what beta-alanine increases, so giving them extra alanine is not going to do anything. It kind of taps up their source.

Nick: Carnosine machine, just this walking, bubbling font of carnosine.

Krissy: Geez, naked all day. So that's a nonresponder, but I would say most people are just not using it correctly or taking it correctly.

Nick: Okay, what do you think the most common explanation is? Is it just the person is like, "I took it a couple days, didn't take it a couple days, I took it a couple days, didn't take it a couple days?"

Krissy: I would say either did a loading protocol, felt miserable, or noticed a small weight gain and went, "No no no. Creatine makes me bloated and it makes me gain weight and yeah yeah yeah." Or they're like, "Oh, it's in this drink I already have, it's in this supplement I already have," whether it's pre-workout, post-workout, whatever it is. And a lot of times, because of the number of ingredients in those products or the cost of having to include some of the ingredients, they will included only 1 or 2 grams, and that's just not going to do it. For most people, that's just not going to do it.

Bill: You see with some of those proprietary blends, you really don't know the exact amount of each of the ingredients you're getting.

Krissy: Right, which is why I tell people creatine is so cheap to buy on its own. Buy a tub of it.

Nick: Beta-alanine as well.

Krissy: Beta-alanine, yes. Creatine, you're talking a teaspoon, you don't even notice that you're taking that.

Nick: On the other hand, it gets a lot more expensive after the cretin makes you snap and go beat somebody up in the grocery store and defense fund and all the...

Bill: Or you suffer a cramp on the football field.

Krissy: Or have kidney failure.

Nick: That's right, kidney failure.

Krissy: That's expensive, when you have to deal with a transplant and dialysis. I would say those two are the common ones. It's funny, the article came out yesterday and there are so many comments like "heard that you should cycle off." Don't ever cycle off; why would you cycle off fish

oil? Or why would you cycle off taking a multivitamin? It has no effect on your body's own production of creatine. People are like, "What happens when I come off it?" Well, you go right back to where you started and you reduce your level of creatine, and it's like, why would you? There's just no point to it.

Nick: Has anybody researched the grace period that goes with any of these various loading-based supplements like beta-alanine, sodium phosphate, like how long are they good for?

Krissy: Like if you stopped taking them?

Nick: Yeah, well I'm thinking of sodium phosphate, and it has this 4-6 day loading protocol in theory, but what if you're doing a multiday race?

Krissy: That one I don't know, I know that with creatine and beta-alanine it takes about 4-6 weeks to come down. I tell people, if you're traveling and you don't want to bring a container of creatine or beta-alanine or whatnot, you're fine. If you take a few days off here and there once you've loaded...

Nick: So you could do a weekday one.

Krissy: Yes.

Nick: A weekday protocol as well.

Krissy: Yes, and that happens a lot too, because I always remember to take it with my BCAAs or whatever else, and if I don't train that day, sometimes I'll forget or I won't add it to something, and I've been taking it since I started my master's program, and actually I used creatine in my thesis, and I'm 24, so two years!

Nick: How many people did you murder over the course of that...

Krissy: Only three, surprisingly, yeah...

Nick: But you're considering a fourth, right?

Krissy: Well, you know, I've been searching around this area to see where I would dispose of the body, so once I figure that out...

Bill: Now Krissy, you said the daily dosage creatine was about 5 grams, right? So how many grams would you get in a 16-ounce steak for example? Is that enough to cover your daily needs?

Krissy: No, I don't know quite the conversion from cooked to raw or raw to cooked, but it takes about 2-3 pounds of raw meat to get about 2-3 grams of creatine. And, again, your body does make some, it makes about 2-3 grams, and it excretes some as well. So if you wanted to go solely food, you're talking about 3 pounds of meat. It's going to cost you...

Nick: So it's doable.

Krissy: It's doable. But we're talking maybe it cost about 3 cents to maybe take a serving of creatine, and I can tell you it's a lot more when you're cooking up that steak.

Nick: That is the low-price option for sure, as opposed to tart cherry. One of my friends wanted to get some tart cherry; my god that stuff is...

Krissy: But then it's, what is the option? You eat it, it's like 40 cherries or something like that.

Nick: That might be cheaper still though, getting the actual cherries. You can go to Costco...

Krissy: Or a pie. If I ate a whole pie.

Nick: Kirkland makes a big old bag of tart cherries.

Bill Geiger: Are you sure they're not the other kind of cherries?

Nick: No, they are. Montgomery Tart cherries, which are the ones they use in studies. I might pass that along.

Krissy: We just need to get you sponsored by a tart cherry person. Solved.

Nick Collias: This is Nick Collias here for dark cherries. Get tart from the start. If you go to the website of our [podcast](#), you can click a link to read Dr. Krissy Kendall's [5 Reasons Your Creatine is not Working](#). We're going to take a break, and then when we come back, you've heard about beta-alanine, but what about 'beer-da alanine'? Beer?

Krissy Kendall, Ph.D.: Anyone, anyone?



5 REASONS YOUR CREATINE MAY NOT BE WORKING

Just taking creatine doesn't guarantee it will work. Avoid these 5 mistakes, and get the most out of this proven muscle-and-strength builder!