



Episode 7 Transcript

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Andy Speer: How To Train Like An Athlete and Stay Photo-Ready, Too

Nick Collias: He edits out all the bad shit, so ...

Dr. Krissy Kendall: Yeah, thank goodness.

Nick: At least that's what I've been told. The people who've listened to these podcasts, they say, "Oh, that one was all right." I'm, "Well, that's not how I remember it."

Krissy: That's weird.

Nick: We've got with us Andy Speer. He's a coach, co-founder of SoHo Strength Lab in New York City, Performix Athlete. You can also see his stuff all over the Internet on Bodybuilding.com, [Men's Health](#). You've got a background in lifting, gymnastics, wrestling, track and field, having people take pictures of you in your underwear a little bit.

Andy Speer: All of that.

Nick: He's got a beautiful head of hair too, which honestly doesn't really look natty to me. I don't know about the rest of it, but the hair, I don't know. I will say, I don't know if this is the right way to start off this conversation ...

Krissy: Oh boy.

Nick: We have a nickname for you in the office.

Krissy: Oh yeah.

Andy: Oh yeah?

Nick: Yeah.

Andy: I'm ready for it.

Nick: It's Swole W. Bush.

Andy: Swole W—

Nick: Have you ever been told that you look a little tiny bit like George W. Bush?

Krissy: Like a young—

Andy: No.

Krissy: ... G ... No?

Andy: No, never. That's a new one.

Nick: A young, jaunty George W. Bush if he had really taken care of himself.

Andy: All right.

Krissy: Yeah.

Nick: That's a big if, but ...

Andy: Exactly.

Nick: I hope that's not offensive.

Andy: No, not offensive. I haven't heard it, but I'll take it. I've got a lot of nicknames though.

Nick: They'll shout that one out on the platform when you're up at the Olympic lifting meet, right? You are preparing for one, is that—

Andy: Yeah, the Brooklyn Barbell Open, the end of August this year. First time I'm actually going to compete in Olympic lifting, which will be kind of fun. I've done a lot of different competitions throughout my time. My co-founder, Ryan and a good handful of guys at my gym are really into Olympic lifting and very talented coaches and athletes themselves so, decided to jump on this wagon, and train, and hopefully have a good meet.

Nick: That's interesting they way you're doing that. I mean that requires a fairly systematic approach to training, you still have to save room for all this other stuff you're doing. You just did workout with us I'm assuming and other things like that. Does that come fairly naturally or do you feel, oh it's hard to find time?

Andy: Yeah, it's a constant struggle. I'm not going to lie. I'm going on a pretty strict training program. I've done that for a lot of different things throughout my time. It can be a little tricky when tomorrow I have to go do this workout, and the next day you're flying and you're going to do something else. It's

totally competitive with what your actual goal is in six weeks from now. That said, I'm not going to be an Olympic weightlifter at the Olympics, I want to put my best effort forth into this and do a really good job at it. My coaches are writing programs and helping me train so I obviously want to do my best for them as well. It is a constant struggle. I don't like the word struggle, but that's the way it is.

Nick: A dance.

Andy: A constant dance around, yeah, doing things that are completely in line with a far off goal, and things that are not quite as in line with that goal.

Nick: With your athletic background I'm assuming you've done some [Olympic lifting](#) for quite a number of years, right?

Andy: Yea. I started lifting weights really when I got to college. Through high school it was all bodyweight training, plyometrics. Even in track and field I wasn't required to go in the weight room. I really didn't know my way around the weight room. I knew my way around bodyweight training, sprinting, plyometrics, that type of thing. It wasn't till I got to college to run track there, but we were on a D1 lifting program, lifting next to the guys who were going to the NFL with phenomenal strength coaches. Got thrown right into that, and that's when I started doing the Olympic lifts, mainly training for track. We do a lot of power cleans, split jerks, a little bit of snatching. I've pretty much been training the Olympic lifts as carryover into sport for the last 15 years. I've got a decent background in some ...

Nick: It probably also means that you've had some limits in your mind of, "All right, this is how much I can do it," right?

Andy: Yeah, absolutely.

Nick: Competition's a whole other thing. They're probably pushing you a little bit.

Andy: Training three days a week ... Olympic lifting three days a week at, not an immense volume, but relatively higher than what I've been used to doing is definitely taking a little getting used to. As I said, it's a challenge and I'm definitely looking forward to it.

Krissy: I'm interested in that because you said that you don't have sets. It's not Rio 2016. You're not competing in the Olympics. You don't see that, but, coming from a competitive background, you're an athlete. I know Nick and I can both agree to this, that sometimes it's really hard not to push yourself to the point of, "I think I can do a little better." When you have so many things, and you're balancing so many things, how do you listen to your body, pull back even if your coaches say, "Look, I need you in the gym doing X, Y and Z today." You just had a photo shoot, a workout, how do you adjust things, and how do you keep your mind in the same place as, this is somewhat fun. It's a challenge. It's somewhat fun. I need to keep myself injury free, but still push myself? It's a very interesting—

Nick: And still enjoy training.

Krissy: Yeah, there's so many ... I think that's where people get lost is they see something and they want to go 100%. Then sometimes that leads to injuries, *hatred* of the sport, or of training, so I'm interested to see how you take all that in.

Andy: Yeah, absolutely. No, that's a great question. I'm literally going through all of that right now. To hit on the first aspect of it, definitely growing up as a competitive person, you put me in front of any competition and I want to win it. However big or small it is, and whoever it's against, as soon it's, "Okay, you do this and you win that," I'm in. I don't care what I win, as long as I beat the next person. That's definitely always an underlying theme. Moving forward in that, for a specific example right now, I'm dealing with some tissue issues with a lat/tricep/rear delt, which are coming from some shoulder mobility stuff. I thought I had pretty awesome shoulder mobility till I started feeling this horrible pain down in my lats and went through a really great PT. We're working on some things, taking some FRC stuff into it. It's going really well. That said, after I clean and getting ready for my jerk, this whole thing really fires up. The last couple of weeks has been really inhibiting my practice. My coach is like, "Listen, today you're just going to do two cleans instead of clean and jerk for these sets, all right? We're not going to throw that thing over your head and have you either hesitate and get hurt, or just blow yourself out, so you can't continue competing, or continue training, or do anything else." They appreciate where I'm at. I'm 36 years old. I'm not—

Nick: You didn't have to tell us.

Andy: Just to say, I'm not 26 anymore when ... I remember when I was 26 when this didn't matter. It would go away in three days on its own. It's just a different game right now. Adjusting, a little auto-regulation on the fly is sometimes necessary. I know that if I put myself in certain situations and I get the exposure I need throughout that week to whatever volume or intensity we're looking for, I'll be okay even if I have to adjust that from day to day. If in only clean and jerk really heavy, one time a week, I think right now I'm going to react pretty well to that, and be okay with that moving forward. I said, if I was 26 I could probably do that two or three times a week, and it would be very beneficial to me. You have to look at the individual. For everybody it's totally different. I've got 15 years of clean and jerking experience, not at like I said, an Olympic caliber level, but my body has gone through that motion so many times. I still need to tweak my form, it's not perfect. Being smart about the loading and the increasing intensities throughout the next six weeks, and I'll probably have a pretty good total by the end of that time. I can't blow myself out training and then come here and say, "Sorry guys, I can't do the workout I planned for you on a photo shoot." It's just one of those things that, yeah, it's a dance but, you just got to be smart with it. Make sure the people around you appreciate where you're at in your not only training career, but your life in general, and everything else that's going on. My coaches who are also my business partners and my trainers at my gym obviously understand and appreciate that. I don't know if that answers your question.

Krissy: Yeah, no, perfect.

Nick: I also noticed on Instagram over the weekend though that you did have a gut check.

Andy: Yeah.

Nick: What was that like? Where does the gut check fit in, though? Were you, "Goddamn it, I need to go just do some work."

Andy: Yeah, exactly. It really was one of those ... One of my clients who I often work out with he's, "Hey man, let's run a circuit today. I want to get some reps in." I just felt I needed a little, yeah, a little work. I wanted to sweat. I wanted to lift hard. I programmed this whole thing so we're doing deadlifts; we're doing front squats, we're doing some ringers, all stuff I need to work on. It wasn't something

out of the blue. I'm not doing sandbag walking, lunges up a hill that's totally out of the realm of what I need to be focusing on. You can still when programmed appropriately take a little veer off from the one, two, and three-rep city. I need some endurance. I got to sweat. I just want to feel I got a great workout in. As long as you program it appropriately, and even if it's a little ... Even if it's way off from what you're doing, as long as you know you're not going to get hurt, I don't think you're going to ... For me anyway, it's not going to take away from the Olympic training, or whatever other training I was doing. Sometimes it's like, "Man, let's get after it today. I'm going to switch it up a little bit." It's cool. I know what I'm doing. I'm doing everything I'm doing for a reason. I think that's what ... People get lost a lot with these crazy challenges is you're in one road of training and you're working on some things and then, "All right dude. Let's go do 500 of these, 500 of these, and this is as fast as we can." "Cool, let's try it."

Nick: Or, "As heavy as we can."

Andy: Yeah, "When was the last time you lifted over 85% of that lift?" "Not for a long time." Why are you doing 90 of it for 10 reps right now, and jumping roping in-between? If you're a high level CrossFit athlete and that's what you're training for, great.

Krissy: Great. Do it.

Andy: If you're not, think about it before you do it. See if you can maybe get the same physical and mental carryover and benefit from it that you would if you just thought about it for another two or three minutes. Then planned it out a little bit better, and got after it again.

Nick: Sure. Something I hear all the time is people saying, "You see in the gym, once they do something one time. A certain weight one time, or a certain workout one time, they're afraid they'll let go of it so they keep sticking it back in even at a high intensity that they're not normally working at." If I know I *can* bench that much, I've got to keep it on the front burner all the time. It can be hard to take something light that you can do, and then move under the backburner a little bit. As many different modalities as you've trained in over the years, I'm thinking about, yeah, you did that Beast Hammer Challenge, I saw a video of that. Is it hard for you to sometimes say, "Okay, I know I can do this, but it's got to go not only on the backburner but I got to go do something else entirely maybe for months, and then maybe come back to this thing?"

Andy: Yeah, absolutely. I'll tell you right now, I could probably do the Pistol and the Pull-Up with the Beast, but I couldn't do the shoulder press cold right now. I would have to train for it, because I trained for it. I did a six-week ladder lifting program. It was an intense training program that I did to get that. It doesn't mean that you can always do a physical feat that you performed however many years or months, or even days ago. That's the whole thing; we train, we periodize, we peak, people have different views and points on how ... On peaking and all this. You said it was a goal I set to accomplish. I reached it. Cool, I did it. If my goal is to be able to press 106-pound kettlebell every day of my life, then we got to change my life around a little bit for that to happen. I'm cool with the fact that I did it. Maybe again someday I'll bring that back into the rotation and train for the Beast again, but ...

Nick: Do your clients struggle with that when they've hit a benchmark, they're, "Oh, this is great. This is something I've been working for, and now onto the next thing"?

Andy: Some do, some don't. That really depends on individual personality. You have somebody

who hit a number on the bench press and now we're focusing a little more on Olympic stuff, a little more on conditioning. We'll do a bench press workout within that program. It's like, "Man, I could do 220 last ... Three months ago, and now I'm only doing 205 for three or whatever it is." "Dude, we just came off a bench press cycle. Now we had another goal. We're trying to drop some body fat and get you a little more athletic and working in some different modalities." Some people do, some people don't. It's just all about putting them back in a right frame of mind.

Nick: "I'm getting weaker!"

Andy: You're a lawyer, and you're a stockbroker, and you're an agent, you're not professional athletes. Some of them train like they are, and some of them are really ... We have some *amazing* clients at our facility who just impress me day to day. That said they're also sitting at a desk for another eight hours a day. We have to take your whole lifestyle into consideration. It's not a max out every day, at least in my book. I know some people push that. I'm not saying you don't try your best every day. I'm not saying you don't give it your all every day, but I am saying you don't need to push your body to its physical limit every day. It won't last long no matter who you are.

Nick: Looking at the workouts on a site like ours which is Bodybuilding.com, there are a lot of body part specific workouts where I think people they see that, or it's, "If I'm only working this I can keep piling on, piling it on." A lot of what I see you putting out online and the two workouts that I've seen that you've done for us so far are both full body workouts. What do you like about that, and why is that your first thing that you put out there, your first message? "Full body training, man."

Andy: The reason why I'm giving you; Bodybuilding.com, these total body workouts, one is because you said, there's a thousand split routine workouts for every body part already up there. I could give you one but it's just going to fall right in that mix even if it's really awesome. I'm trying to give your readers and viewers and everybody a little different take on something that they're maybe not as familiar with, where you can still hypertrophy, where you can still have a great physique. You know that the last workout I put out, the [gymnastics-oriented total body one](#), man, you can work that into a body part split routine. No problem. You got four body parts split days. Take a rest day. Do a nice total body workout. It's not going to absolutely crush you, but it will probably challenge you, and it would probably fix maybe a little, some imbalances you have. It will probably challenge you in some ways, some core control ways that you don't really know you have issues with yet. I have no problem with body part split, especially if you're a bodybuilder. You have to train that way. You can't do a three day a week total body workout, and expect to step on a stage for a bodybuilding competition. It doesn't work that way. You can do a three day a week total-ish body workout with some different focuses, and train for power lifting that way, or train for anything that way. I'm not against split routines. My thing is that you need to know when you're using them and why you're using them. For the general population, getting them doing total body movements where you're working on not just a cable machine or a hammer strength machine; I love them both. Having some motor control, becoming aware of what you're doing and space, being able to jump and swing and hang, and push, and pull yourself around, and then do the same with an external load. Whether it be a barbell or a dumbbell, or kettlebell, or sandbag, or anything, or another person, it's just as important for general pop. I think even more important. I have nothing against split routines. I think they're very important for a purpose. I just feel for general population, mixing in total body workouts can be really beneficial.

Krissy: I think too, yes, like you mentioned, bodybuilders for sure benefit from split body parts but, when you look at the number or the percent of people that is that population, it is very small. We

tend to neglect other people that only have three to four days a week to workout, who maybe don't even have accessibility to all of these machines, weight rooms. Looking at the gym that you have; some of my favorite gyms are the ones that you walk in it doesn't even look like a gym necessarily. You're, "Where is the machines? Where are the free weights?" I was an intern at a place and you could probably count on one hand the number of dumbbells we had. It just wasn't there. It was ropes. We did have power racks, and it was a turf that you could push a sled on more of that functional training that makes it transfer over to everyday life I think a little bit better. I think it encourages people to work out because you're, oh I can do this. I have this equipment. Other than, I don't have a Hack Squat machine, so how do I do this?

Nick: Nothing in a gym like that is there by accident either. It's there because somebody wants it to be there, because you chose it out. "This is the vision I have of my training space."

Andy: Exactly. Especially in Manhattan where—

Krissy: You don't have the space.

Andy: Space does not come cheap. You really have to think about every day it's, man this thing is so cool. Where are we going to put it, and what's leaving if we get it?

Krissy: Yeah.

Andy: You know what I mean?

Krissy: How many functions can it do? It's great the more things you can do with something.

Andy: Yeah, multifunctional and is this just for our trainers, or can our clients actually use this too? Stuff like that. I love the space we have in the gym. It's not bound up with machines. We lift a lot of heavy weights there. People are very strong but, they're very agile and mobile, and can climb ropes, and jump, and swim, and do that stuff too.

Nick: As you've gone from not only being an athlete to being, "All right I'm an athlete but I'm a model, too. People are taking pictures of me." Do you find that that approach of, yeah, you train like an athlete, training full body. Has that served you well enough, or sometimes you're, "Oh my god, I feel I need to do some bodybuilding, too"?

Andy: Don't get me wrong, I have chest days. I got back days. Today we shot a chest and back workout so not complete split, but semi-split kind of deal. When I'm looking to get a little bigger, hypertrophy, I just late spring going into the summer I just do a 5/3/1 type program. That's the powerlifter's version of body part split. It worked great. I put on some muscle. I felt really strong. I was missing that pump a little bit of the five sets of 10 pull-ups, chin-ups. Five sets of 15 dips, your arms kind of blowout. I felt I was missing that a little bit just in my training leading up to that. It felt good to get the pump on. I love that. I don't train three days a week full body routine. That's it all the time at all. I absolutely will hammer my back, hammer my chest when I need to. As far as developing and keeping athleticism, I think working those total body movements, and those total body type days in, are very important. That said, as far as hypertrophying muscles, you got to have a back day, or at least a back-and-something-else day, whatever it is. If you're working out for 60 or 90 minutes and you're doing a total body, you just don't have enough time to focus on that particular body part. To really get the response that you're looking for to put the volume on it, that you need if you want

something to grow. I've done, and I still do, my fair share of split training. I'll just pepper that in, or I should say, program that in when and where it's appropriate.

Nick: As you've gotten into your mid-thirties, I guess you would call them (I'm 36 as well), do you find that doing some of that prioritizing muscle building is more important? I feel I've heard that from some people. I did a piece with Charles Staley recently who; he was saying, yeah, [he's in the best shape of his life at 55](#), he says. It's just by doing alternating phases of strength, muscle, strength, muscle and he says, "If I had it all to do over again when I was starting to get older I should have done more muscle," which is as a strength guy is really hard for him to say. Do you feel yeah, as you grow as a person a little bit older, do you have to alter your priorities a little bit like that?

Andy: Yeah, absolutely. Number one priority that keeps coming back around is staying healthy. As you get older, age and then also the wear and tear that you've put on your body, especially if you've been a competitive athlete or lifter for the last 20, 30 years, keeping in mind the health aspect of it. Checking back in on things, man, I thought my shoulders were in pretty good shape, but having somebody else who's really good at looking at shoulders look at it and be, "Hey man, you got to work on this. Here are some drills to do that. This is a little too tight. You're a little too protracted here, this part. Your retractors are not really as strong as they should be." "I thought I always had a super strong back." Stuff like that, but then going to the hypertrophy aspect of it. Absolutely, keeping muscle mass on just gets harder and harder, as the human organism gets old. That's the bottom line. If we can keep that muscle mass on safely, I think that's one of the best anti-aging tools out there. No questions asked. I can't hammer myself with the volume I did before, so I have to do it with a little more thought than just I said, getting after it every day.

Nick: You just eat more, isn't it?

Andy: Yeah, you just got to ...

Krissy: Sleep.

Andy: Eat more—

Nick: Eat more and sleep more. And train more.

Andy: Right. I 100% agree with Charles on that one. Keeping as much lean muscle mass on the body as you age is probably one the best and health and longevity tools around. That doesn't mean you have to be 5'10", 230, but, just for your frame what is an appropriate amount.

Krissy: On that same topic, how would you say your nutrition and recovery has changed? You have been an athlete. From a gymnast to track and field to keep ... The list goes on. As you've gotten older, and as your training's changed too, but to make sure ... Obviously you are dealing with some injuries right now, but have you noticed changes? Were you able to get away with a lot more things younger? Where did you learn, or was it just more trial and error; my body needs this more than that. It needs to do this sort of stretching mobility, more on these days versus a lower-intensity day?

Andy: As far as the nutrition, I grew up a skinny, skinny kid. I think I wrestled at 128 my junior year in high school. I was a rail. I think I broke 100 pounds my sophomore year of high school. I literally could eat anything and I wouldn't ... I was just a thin, little rail. I was a lean, wiry guy. I've always had the opposite issue of the skinny guy can't gain weight. That said, when I was younger, college and

mid-twenties, it was basically just calories. I just needed to get calories in. At that point I was getting plenty of protein between shakes and food. In college, I would probably eat five to six,000 calories a day. Give or take three huge meals at the cafeteria, an extra thing on top of that, whatever came. Late night—

Nick: Which you emptied and stuff into the backpack?

Andy: Yeah you know.

Krissy: Totally did that.

Nick: I heard somebody ... The video we ran the other day where this guy was saying that he would take the thing of hard boiled eggs and just dump it into his backpack and eat 28 hardboiled eggs a day. Anyway, continue.

Andy: I wonder what that backpack smells like.

Nick: Yeah or just the human being, man. He smells like chicken.

Andy: I've noticed absolutely more so probably the last three, four, or five years that I cannot eat whatever I want anymore. I still have leeway. If I train frequently and well I have a pretty good way to burn off what I put in me but, I do need to eat cleaner. Not saying I don't, just in general from my younger years rather than just piling down the Subways and the pizza, and then a protein shake. High quality nutritious food, cleaner, that's a big thing. I notice if I go on a little junk food bender, if I'm just not careful for a couple of weeks and I'm eating on the go, travelling a lot, that thing, you get a little back fat popping in there. Right back there where did that come from? Definitely have to just be more on top of that kind of thing. As I said where I found out what I needed to eat or ... This was just over the years of a lot of reading and experimenting both on myself and clients. I think probably a test there's the general rules out there that hold true for the most part for everybody, but then there's everybody's a little different so you got to tweak your macros. I used to do, and I still do fairly well on a relatively higher carbohydrate diet as long as I'm getting 30, 40% of that's protein and the rest fat. I did a really hardcore paleo trip a few years back and I totally OD'd on bacon and sweet potatoes. I didn't eat a sweet potato for like three years after that man, it was like bacon, grass-fed butter and sweet potatoes every meal possible. I was incredibly lean and ripped, like I always was just like sugar was out, processing were out, super clean, relatively high fat, high protein and then all the carbs were paleo-approved carbs, tubers, and some rice and stuff like that. I couldn't gain any weight, so I couldn't eat enough to gain weight but I got super lean. For me it's pretty much just adjusting the carbohydrate intake and I find that true with a lot of people whether you want to put on a little size, maintain your where you're at, or shred down is the one variable that's like the most easily accessible to control. Then you deal with the fat and the proteins. I like people to get, especially if you're trying to lean out protein is key. Just getting that. I work off like 100 grams per body weight. Did I say that right? 100 grams per pound ... A gram per pound of body weight.

Krissy: Some people *would* do 100 grams ...

Andy: Somebody is writing that down right there.

Krissy: They're like, "Okay, there we go, yes!"

Andy: They're okay, "12,000 grams of protein today."

Nick: "Eat a human being."

Krissy: Well the person eating 28 hard-boiled eggs is probably close to that.

Andy: Close to that, yeah. For weight loss and leaning out for most people will start there and then tweak as we need to. If I keep the protein high enough then carbohydrates so they're pretty ... I'm getting enough healthy fat in the carbs. I find that holds true for most people, the carbs are that easy thing to adjust if you want to either have more energy for sport or activity. Or if you want to lean out and drop the body fat.

Nick: Looking back at all the different modalities that you've trained in, do you feel like there are easy things that you can point at and say, "Oh my God, that's the thing that made a huge difference." I mean talk to somebody who has been training for a long time and say, "Well looking back was like, my time as a gymnast this is what made all the difference." Or you hear from people who did the RKC [Russian Kettlebell Certification], as I did earlier this year, felt like that thing made a huge difference, so I could just ... It's a watershed moment where it's like okay, it set the foundation of everything that comes afterwards. What are some of things in your career as an athlete that you just go, "Oh yeah that's set me."

Andy: That's funny because literally the two things you just mentioned, as far as a physical foundation, my gymnastics at an early age was absolutely what gave me that ability to perform at higher level in other sports, no questions asked. The connective tissue strengthening, the plyometric response, the isometric holds that are necessary. Then just the mobility, I can't do all as many crazy gymnastic things that I used to be able to do, but I can still walk on my hands around the block and back and just hold that really solid overhead position and a really solid, hollow body type position. Which I think gave me a great foundation moving forward and then going to like the track and field and sprinting. Just learning proper sprint mechanics, learning proper jumping mechanics. One of my biggest things and I try to get this through to my clients, we just do ... In the space we have, like 60-70 feet of turf, you can't go for full on sprint but you can mimic that in a lot of ways in skipping drills, little plyo drills that type of stuff. Just to get the body mechanics ingrained, I think its super, super, super important.

Nick: That's just good movement.

Andy: Just good movement quality, exactly. That did make me a very linear person, gymnastics and track as much as they do spinning in gymnastics that's still a very linear type spin. Later in life and trying to, when I get into things I've been training Muay Thai recently in the last five-six years of my life.

Krissy: What do you not do? I also do Muay Thai.

Andy: There's a lot of thing I don't do. I just like to dabble and ...

Krissy: That's awesome, it's awesome.

Andy: I just use that example because there's a lot more rotational and that transverse plane and also the dipping and diving in and out of avoiding hits and the defense aspect of it. My front kick or

the Teep, they call it, is really, really strong. And I have a strong rotational kick but the technique of that does not come nearly as natural to me, it's just that straight, sagittal plane hip extension does. It's funny you look back and say all of these things really built my foundation, then there's also some gaps in there too. I was really lucky when I first started training in the city, to have a really good group of trainers around me. I did the RKC I think in 2009, '9 or '10. That's when [Pavel \[Tsatsouline\]](#) was still actually teaching the RKC, so he was our lead instructor. We had awesome team there of assisting instructors but spending three days with Pavel when I was 27 or 28 or something like that and just getting into the world of personal training, strength and conditioning. I'd been doing it for a long time but taking the look of like how to apply it now to training in both myself and other people. That was a really phenomenal experience. I went to a couple of seminars with him and guys like Dan John, who is another amazing just voice and trainer. A side from the physical aspect of that and the little goodies and the gems there just dropped, just the ... Looking at the completeness and the kind of calmness, some of these guys who just have been around the highest level of sport for the last 30 years have, was really amazing. Made me want to follow along, not do the same thing but just be able to get to that same space of like, "All right I've been around the block, I don't know everything but I do this right now, so I'm going to give it to you because I know it works and we're still working on figuring out maybe what works better than this.

Nick: You started changing your mindset from an athlete to a teacher almost? Sounds like you're here all of a sudden. You're not just doing stuff, but you're doing stuff and sharing it that seems like an important step.

Andy: Absolutely, and that's was ... I feel like always ... I haven't always been so outspoken; I was a pretty shy little kid. Like I was really awkward, super skinny kid those years. I did gymnastics all through high school, you didn't get too many girls that way. These Olympic guys with their big buff arms I'm sure they're doing all right but I was like, I was awkward and goofy. I wasn't the prom king by any means, but that said, I always had something innate in me that was like I just wanted to push the person next to me. Even if I knew like in track practice through high school and through college. When I got to college I was running next to these guys, they were just flat out badasses. They were going to be in the NFL and even my guys who were just track guys too were just phenomenal athletes. I did okay competition-wise but I knew I wasn't going to the Olympics. It's just you have that feeling like, all right this is where I'm at, I'm totally cool with it. I'm having a great time competing, I love the competition, but I really love fall training even a little more and I love being the guy that would like, "Let's go, like I'm going to push you in the sand pit sprint, you're going to beat me in the track in the spring, but I'm going to beat right now." Or at least push you hard enough to get yourself to push harder and I think that's what kind of carried over and allowing that innate little motivation to come into play in the teaching, training, coaching forum was really when I And that happened progressively over my mid- to late twenties when I started training people. I was like, man, this is what I do for fun, like with my friends just like helping them out, training. Giving them tips on this like motivating, I can do this for like a living now, it's awesome. I mean I get personally so much satisfaction out of watching somebody accomplish something they couldn't do before. Whatever it is, if it's a physique goal, it's a performance goal. Half the time the clients, the people they don't even know what their goal is and that's our job too is to kind of set those goals. I've been really fortunate over the years to be able to work with hundreds of people and hopefully moving forward affect thousands more.

Nick: You still like to be coached also, right? I hear you have your friends, your colleagues coach and you're saying, yeah I thought my retractors were strong, you like having that objective set of eyes. That's a whole another skill it seems like once you've doing it for a while you think, I know

what's going on here. Clearly I know my own body but is there maybe even at an elite level you don't.

Andy: No, and I think I feel even like the more you grow the more you ... I don't want to say that. The more you get really good at something sometimes you can get very myopic in your view and also the more you start looking at other people the less you start looking at yourself. It's like okay I'm cool nothing is like totally breaking down on me, I still look pretty good, I can still hang with the little guys in a lot of these lifts, like it's cool. I take a little bit of look off of my own self and on to other people but yeah I need, I love like having somebody watch me train and telling me what's wrong with it. Or going to the PT and they like, "Dude we got put some serious work into these retractors here, that's what causing this all mass of tissue right there, it's because you're compensating this way and that." And I thought it was something totally different, it's not that I wasn't aware there was a problem, but always you know I don't know everything as nobody does. I'm not a corrective exercise specialist at all. I think I'm really good at getting motivating, getting people to do really fun, creative, effective workouts but I'm not a specialist in Olympic lifting, my partner Ryan is. He's phenomenal, he can look at me from across the room 50 feet away, watch me do a clean and jerk and give me two cues that ... How do you even see that from that far away, you know? Like I love and appreciate everybody in my life that is willing to help me better myself, and that comes back around. Now I'm more aware of where I'm at in certain areas and that's going to come back to my clients. It's that big circle, and it's ... sometimes you can get stuck in the circle, and if you don't let those outside views and perspective come in, you keeping spewing the same stuff. It may not be bad stuff but it's not growing and it's not maturing and I think everybody. I find myself stuck in these circles sometimes, and so that's when I'll do something like, I mean compete. Let me really like get some outside eyes on this, let me put something in just get a little more specific and see what comes out of it.

Nick: Competition sort of keeps you honest almost there, then? Have you competed in Muay Thai then, as well, or?

Andy: Not ...

Nick: That's a whole other step, competing and fighting, man.

Andy: This is ending, I don't know if it's getting closer to the middle-life crisis or whatever, but I've been training in the sport for five or six years on and off. I love it, it's probably the thing I picked up later in life that I love the most and after this Olympic lifting meet, I want to get back in and make the same push to go and do some amateur Muay Thai fights, so yeah, absolutely. It's on the list, I've been in and out of it for a while and just one of the things that sometimes life takes over and you get off track. It's a little different than running a 5K, you want to be like pretty well prepared going into those things. It's a great place I train at in New York and they're super smart and they have a lot of belts on the wall they know what they're doing. Again I'm not going to walk into that gym and say, I'm ready to fight or I'm ready to fight in six weeks. I'm going to say, "Coach I'm back, I want to fight, let's set a plan I want to make this happen." I'm going to listen to him on what the plan is and what we're going to do to make it happen.

Nick: It's kind of like a 5K though, like if you run a 5K you're not going to set any world records in the 5K at this point like you're going to go do this competition even though you're probably not going to make it anywhere in the global Muay Thai scene right?

Andy: Right.

Nick: What for people who like getting into stuff but don't take it to that next level of competition, what's the value?

Krissy: And then to follow up, what motivates you? If I'm not going to necessarily win gold or what not and people might be like I'm getting to the age where ...

Nick: Why bother competing?

Krissy: Why should I even do this?

Andy: That's a good question for ... For me personally, it's just exploring new avenues of physical and mental challenges. Physical expression and mental strength, toughness, capacity however you want to put that, has always been part of my life. I think it's just ... we put this word competition out there and it gets kind of scary for people, but you know, what about the 30-Day Squat Challenge? Like this challenging ... A competition is a challenge, so let's not scare people away from challenging themselves with a big competition that's if I don't make it people are going to make fun of me. If I may get hurt training for this, like ... People ... I don't know, it's just setting a goal and challenging yourself and running through, especially you know in physical training if ... In anything in life. You can kind of go through the motions and if you're okay with that and that's just part of your routine, like that's totally cool but I think adding some challenge to some aspects of the training really sparks people, it gets them fired them. Whether it's a weight-loss challenge or a performance challenge, it happens all the time, to lose 10 pounds, whatever it is. I think people get scared of the word 'competition' when, in reality, competition and challenge, although in the nuances there's some differences.

Nick: One of them you pay money, that I think makes the biggest difference? You pay your money to enter that Muay Thai, it's like there it is.

Andy: You pay money to get into that competition. Yeah, exactly. But people ... These little challenges and competitions through people's lives, what can it ... That's what going to keep you going and getting motivated. I think it's just applying the proper competition or challenge to the individual at the right time which is going to have a lot of benefit to that and yeah very few people are ever going to make the major leagues and the Olympics, whatever it is. But that doesn't mean you can't really make some great strides and have some great achievements where you're relatively in your own life. I think people take away from that too much, like, that was awesome man, like a year ago there was no possible way you could have even come close to doing what you just did right now. That's a great accomplishment, that's a huge accomplishment for anybody. I like to take ... Let's make things in relative terms and then we can appreciate what we're doing and appreciate the achievement and the hard work that went into it.

Nick: That's very well put.

Krissy: So do a lot of your clients, do they have ... When they come to you do they have a competition or challenge that they want, or do you encourage them as a means to keep them on track and stay motivated?

Nick: Or like you've earned it, you've earned the right now to go and compete in this or something, yeah.

Krissy: Yeah. Or just lost, like I don't know what I'm doing.

Andy: Sometimes, yeah I know. You know it really depends too, like we've got a couple of our clients at the gym now who are competing in the Barbell Open at the end of the summer, too. It's a 52-year-old guy and his 13-year-old son. My partner Ryan coaches him in Olympic lifting so, super cool. We have people do road races, Spartan races, that type of thing. If we don't have a goal we're going to set one, I have guy that wants to come in and learn some gymnastics stuff so we've got a couple of moves that we're working towards: the hand stand push-up, and we're working towards the lever. To be honest, a lot of what my mind set is in general population training, at least with my clients is, I want them to be really good at what they're doing outside the gym. If I had a guy come in 50 years old, I still like to surf, I still want to be able to run around and like if I want to do a boot camp in the summer with my friends or I want to go skiing in the winter. "Okay cool, so we're going to design a program that's really beneficial in a lot of ways but how did your surf trip go?" "Dude, I've never felt so good on that surf board, my friends are like what's going on with you? First of all, you look amazing and you're crashing it out there." Like that, to me, is the grand scheme benefit and why are we doing that? I guess we're separating the life in the specific competition, but I want somebody to be able ... Who like skiing, to go and ski and have great time skiing and do very well and not get hurt, period. We don't need to put you on a pedestal for that, like that's what ... That's your life. I want you to enjoy your life. So, a lot of the training I do with people obviously there's a lot of physique-based stuff and everything is kind of geared towards, "All right, we're keeping the physique in check at some level." If they come as like, "I want to do gymnastics." Okay, we're going to set our gymnastics goals, and you come in, "I want to do this." We can learn a power clean and we can gain our rope climb at the same time as setting you up to have an amazing surf trip. I'm not training for an Olympic lifting competition. When we're just learning to be competent in a power clean, which is going to have some carryover everywhere in your life. Again, my big thing with the general pop is if you have something you're specifically aiming for, let's do that but let's keep you really healthy in the meantime and not let *that* take away from the rest of your life. And if you don't have a specific thing, all right what do you like to do? What do you do on your off time? Because everybody has, you know, whatever it is, skiing, surfing, biking. I like playing baseball with my kids in the front lawn but my shoulder is bothering me. All right well, let's figure that out then, lets adjust that because I want you to play with your kids, I want you to have a great time doing that. For me it's like I just want a better the overall life and enjoyment of things outside the gym. I feel that a lot of times the numbers in the gym can get in the way of that. Like I said if it's a specific issue that you're working with or training for, numbers are really important, we've got to keep track and we've got to push a little bit harder. If you just want to learn how to do and be competent in some certain movements and develop robust movement variety and then you want to ... I just want you to feel good in life. I want you to walk out of that gym feeling like, yeah, you had a good workout, but more importantly, after you've come and seen me for a year you feel better overall. You can go on your runs and your runs are going to be faster but you feel better running. You can go on your trips or whatever it is and play softball and you're healthy and doing better at softball. Like I said, it's not the Olympic softball team, but that's your thing man, I want you to love and I want you to be really good at it and I want you to be better than you were last year at it.

Nick: Maybe save room in there for the occasional parlor trick, like doing a Turkish get-up with your girlfriend on your arm or something like that.

Andy: Sure, yeah, you know.

Krissy: It's a good thing to bust out at a party. Yeah.

Andy: We'll throw that in there, too. Yeah, exactly.

Nick: Krissy wanted to ask you the correct way to do the human get-up, as I recall.

Krissy: Human get-up, that was impressive.

Nick: What's the secret, apart from trust?

Andy: You need to have a girlfriend or fiancé now like that knows how to stay tight in the ball.

Krissy: How many ... Was it successful on the first try?

Andy: Oh yeah, the get-ups, again honestly I will take that right back to gymnastics, like my overhead locked-out position it's just super, super strong. I'm not saying getting something up there isn't difficult but once it's up there I can pretty much hold a house over my head. Going through the RKC and really putting a lot of times in some kettlebell, barbell, dumbbell, heavy get-up work, it's actually ... I don't want to downplay the event, but once you ... if you trust the person you're with and you get the setup right, it's not as crazy as it looks. It's definitely challenging.

Krissy: So, we're going to practice this tomorrow? Ha ha.

Nick: Well, I've done a get-up with my niece on my arm and I found that it was actually easier than doing it with most other weights because the center of gravity is ...

Andy: The center of mass is lower, exactly.

Nick: So, it's like she's, whatever, 15 pounds heavier than the heaviest kettlebell I'd ever done it with and I got up there and like, "This wasn't so bad."

Andy: Yeah, that's one of the tricks.

Krissy: Ok. Ok.

Nick: She's got to stay tight because if the person is moving, yeah.

Andy: You get it locked in. You've got to stay tight. And their mass, like you said their mass, just even more so than the kettlebell, is almost down by your elbow, so that's going to shorten that whole lever arm and give you a lot less instability aspect to work with. It's a really cool thing to do, I've never been on the other side of it, but yeah.

Nick: You've never been gotten.

Andy: I've never been gotten. I've never been lifted up or gotten up.

Nick: That seems like a good place to end a conversation, I really appreciate it. If you look on Bodybuilding.com, we have [all of Andy's workouts](#) that he's contributed to us so far there. We need to get like a landing page, like the Andy Speer shrine on there. To have all those ... Let's do it, let's

make it happen.

Krissy Kendall, Ph.D.: Yeah, we'll get it done.

Nick Collias: Anyway, thanks for talking with us, it was great.

Andy Speer: Thanks a lot guys, had a great time.



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