

Strength Hacking Course Day 2: Recovery



"There's no such thing as overtraining – only undercreating and under-sleeping."

- *The Barbarian Brothers*

In the last 7 years that I've been training people, by far the #1 thing that they pay the LEAST amount of attention to is their recovery.

On the surface level, people understand and accept the necessity of a clear, well-defined goal and an intelligently-designed plan to get them to where they want to go. No one really argues with it, and even if they grumble and groan, they'll do it.

Recovery, on the other hand, is a different matter.

While no one denies the need for good, quality sleep and healthy food, there's a cultural badge of honor that we wear with pride that goes with not sleeping enough yet still functioning, as well as reveling in our favorite comfort foods. *"But you don't understand – I'm just so busy I can't do anything about my sleep habits!"* and *"When I'm stressed out, I just eat my favorite snack foods – I can't help it."* To be sure, I do sympathize with you and your struggles. Your gains, on the other hand, don't.

There's not much math involved in strength training, but here's an "equation" you must keep in mind:

$$\text{Adaptation} = \text{overload} + \text{recovery}$$

Overload is easily understood – just do a little more over time. Recovery, however, is glossed over in the same way that mobility, flexibility, and a variety of other essential factors are. Probably because they don't make for a cool Instagram post.

The truth is, it doesn't matter how perfectly you've planned and prioritized your goals if you can't recover from the worked required to get to them. Renowned kettlebell expert and former Master SFG Geoff Neupert has famously said:

"It doesn't matter how much work you do – it matters how much work you can recover from."

In much the same way that you plan your work for your goals, you must plan to improve your recovery. There are two principle ways to do this: improve your sleep quality and improve your eating habits.

Sleep & Eat Your Way to Greater Strength



For the record, there are more considerations than just eating and sleeping to help you improve your recovery (for example, things such as relaxed, passive stretching, anything that relieves your stress, contrast showers, massages, etc). However, for our purposes, the two most critical factors to focus on are your eating and sleeping. The other stuff is great, but beyond the scope of this course (at least for the time being).

It's a rare to meet someone who BOTH gets high quality sleep more often than not AND has fantastic eating habits. On the rare occasion that I do meet such a rare individual, they are almost always a beast in their training. I would argue that – outside of particular training protocols – the #1 thing that sets professionals with high levels of strength and performance apart from their amateur counterparts is they know how to eat and sleep to win.

Sleep

Sleep is of critical importance due to the internal processes it stimulates. In the words of former convict and author of the *Convict Conditioning* book series, Paul Wade: "During sleep, your brain essentially commands your body to produce performance enhancing drugs".

This isn't much of an exaggeration, either. Among the hormones whose production is stimulated by deep, quality sleep include Human Growth Hormone (i.e. HGH), testosterone, natural melatonin, and others that are often sold for top dollar both legally AND on the black market. All of these are critical in a number of ways for your ability to train hard and gain hard.

Food

I'm no nutritionist, so technically I can't order you to eat in a certain way. What I CAN do, however, is point out a few facts and encourage you to draw your own conclusions based on them, and because they're easily observable in countless other contexts as well (i.e. among strength athletes, both professional and recreational), they're easy to verify. So here we go.

#1: Eat more protein. Without exception, when my students do this, they tend to tell me two things: first, that they're getting leaner, and second, that they're recovering more quickly between workouts.

Fat loss expert Josh Hillis recommends .75 grams per pound of your bodyweight at bare minimum to anyone training hard looking to get leaner. He also agrees that 1 gram per pound of bodyweight is even better (and experience backs this up – even if it drives your calorie intake a bit higher).

#2: Eat more fat. The aforementioned ex-con Paul Wade notes in his book *C-Mass* (“*Calisthenics Mass*”): “A basic fact known by every endocrinologist on the planet (is that) testosterone...is synthesized from cholesterol...without taking in enough cholesterol from high-fat foods, your body cannot create testosterone, and it cannot build muscle.”

Even if building muscle isn't a major goal of yours, have no fear: this fact is every bit as important if pure strength is what you're after.

#3: Eat more veggies. This should require no explanation – they're good for you.

In short, if your strength is important to you, it's not enough to just show up and lift a few times a week; you have to be prepared for the *yin* as well as the *yang*.

Looked at another way, let's say you work out for 1 hour 3 times per week. That's 3 hours per week of strength training, followed by 165 hours of...what, exactly? 165 is a lot bigger number than 3. There are countless ways to sabotage the 3 measly hours you spend training, just like there are countless ways to support those 3 hours.

None of it has to be hard or has to become a full time job, but it has to be done – especially as you start getting stronger. When your recovery capacity improves, it will allow you to move boldly forward toward newer and bigger levels of strength and conditioning. But in order to coax these levels of strength and conditioning, you need a routine. And in order to set out an effective routine you need to prioritize and plan (hopefully this sounds familiar).

Fortunately, I have put together this routine for you. Don't look at it as set-in-stone laws, but as stepping stones to put you on the right track.

Go check out the Map for Day 2 and follow the instructions listed to start sharpening up your eating and sleeping habits.

BONUS

Below you'll find a few reference points on the amount of protein in some common protein sources. For users of the standard measurement system, 100 grams = 3.5 oz

Ground beef: 26 gr (per 100 gr)

Chicken: 27 gr (per 100 gr)

Salmon: 22 gr (per 100 gr)

Tuna: 30 gr (per 100 gr)

Cottage cheese: 11 gr (per 100 gr)

Eggs: 13 gr (per 100 gr) – 6.29 gr per egg

It might seem tough to get in so much protein, but it's really a pretty straight forward thing if you break it up throughout the day. For example

Breakfast: 100 gr tuna + 100 gr eggs = 43 grams of protein

Lunch: 100 gr chicken = 27 grams of protein

Snack: 100 gr cottage cheese = 11 gr

Dinner: 200 grams of ground beef = 52 grams of protein

If you weigh 165 lbs, that is .8 grams of protein per pound of bodyweight – certainly doable and not the least bit daunting when spread out. Add in good sources of fat (olive oil, coconut oil, nuts, seeds, butter, cheese, eggs, etc) and you'll likely start noticing major changes in your mood, your energy levels, and even your leanness.