

Strength Hacking Course Day 7: Personalizing your warm up

Years ago, I got the opportunity to hear Dan John – one of the greatest strength coaches of our day – speak at my friend Som’s gym. His lecture was called “Reasonableness”. The focus was...well, reasonable workouts and reasonable dieting.

The big takeaway from the workshop was that the most important stuff that we should be doing is the stuff that often doesn’t excite you or inspire you. Nevertheless, it is what lays the foundation for you to be able to do exciting things.

One of the most interesting things he taught that weekend (which I came to discover years later was true as can be) was that “when training students, the ends inform the middle”. This means (as he put it) that the things you do with a super athlete on his/her way to the Olympics and the things you do with a polio victim will make you better at training your average Joe and Jane. This is not because you put them on the same program as these types of folks, obviously, but rather that the insights you’ll gain from working with special populations make training most people infinitely easier.

This is one of the reasons why organizations like StrongFirst make it their business to reverse engineer what the strong do naturally.

There is no shortage of things that the strong do naturally to help hoist preposterous poundages, and one such thing is a warm up.

Ever since I got into the fitness industry, one of the things I started hearing from time to time on the fringes (and sometimes closer to home than I’d like to see) is people poo-pooing the idea of a warm up, trotting out quips like Woody Harrelson’s line from *Zombie Land*: “You ever see a lion limber up to take down a gazelle?”

Well, news flash, bucko: you’re not a lion and gazelle’s run fast. So if you hope to catch it, you DO need to limber up.

On Day 4 we started talking about the first building blocks of such “limbering up” movements that should be used as part of your warm up (at least initially). All those exercises are still valid, so by all means keep them.

The focus of those movements was primarily to hone in on the 3 major road blocks of mobility for most people: the T-spine, the hips, and the shoulders. And in the spirit of reverse engineering what the best do naturally, we also find two major points of interest for strength athletes: their hands and feet.

Because the hands and feet are strength training’s A and Z, the start and finish, the Alpha and the Omega, it makes perfect sense why they need to be taken good care of. Literally every single strength move will require you to use one, the other, or both (usually both). And as Dan John has pointed out (in a mental experiment to get you to understand that your body is a unit and not a collection of parts) if you’re trying to bench press and someone stabs you in the big toe with a fork, you’re going to drop the bar!

Now think to yourself: when was the last time you worked on your hands and feet? I won't hold my breath!

There are a lot of things you can do to take care of your hands and feet, but for our purposes let's start simply: we're going to make mobility our focus.

To make sure your hands and feet are in good working order, we'll do some of my favorite mobility hacks designed to bulletproof your joints and allow you to express your upper and lower body power more naturally.