



Lose Fat, Not Faith:

A Transformation Guide

By Jeremy Likness,

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Dedication

Brian Vest, whose passing fostered my awakening; my beautiful daughter, whose light shines so brightly to help me navigate these paths in life; my son, who in learning to become a better son teaches me to become a better man and father; my wife, who completes me, makes me whole, and has supported me from bitter and overweight to happy and healthy; to Ian King and the Dream Team, who teach me how to put hooks in my dreams and pull them into reality; and most importantly, to God, whom I have come to know through Jesus Christ, our Savior who makes all things possible.

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Symbiosis

*Were I a flower,
Swaying, delicate,
Perfumed in paramount beauty,
I would listen to the bluebirds' songs
And wish I were borne on wings.*

*Were I a bluebird,
Drifting, fragile,
Diving with manifest grace,
I would gaze upon painted stems
And wish I were ringed with petals.*

Jeremy Likness

This eBook contains various links to external, third-party sources. This will allow you to visit more current information on the web and gain access to other resources that may be more in-depth than the material contained here. Links will be designated in the following format:

► <http://www.naturalphysiques.com/>

▲ Natural Physiques is a physique transformation resource center

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Part I: Becoming the Journey

I used to dread when my son would ask me to play with him. Simply putting on my shoes and bending over to tie them was an enormous effort that would leave me out of breath. I would pop the buttons off my pants or rip the seat on a regular basis. I kept buying baggier shirts and pants in an effort to hide the mass of fat that I was rapidly accumulating. As the fat grew thicker and clung heavier, my attitude grew more sour. I was burying myself in a pit of blubbery despair that I could not imagine digging myself out of. When I would wake in the morning, I would sneer at the reflection in the mirror and simply remind myself what a horrible person I had become. Then I would find consolation in food while aiming my misdirected anger towards friends and family.

Today, I still have trouble keeping up with my son on the basketball court, but I have no trouble putting on my shoes. *He* tries to keep up with *me* as we lift weights in the small gym I have built in our basement. The little number on the small tag on the inside of my jeans reads 32" instead of 44" and I've torn my pants only once, when I was wearing the wrong style to perform squats. I am a positive, happy person who loves to wake to see my daughter smiling and asking enthusiastically if I can prepare her breakfast. I like what I see in the mirror, but it is less my physique and more the smile and twinkle in my eyes that I notice. Instead of taking my anger out on my family and friends, I direct my energies toward helping them achieve and accomplish new goals in their lives.

Now it is time to help you. Before the year 2000, I knew less about weights than most of my friends who don't train today. I never had an interest. I had no clue what protein was as compared to carbohydrates or even that there were different types of fats. The only thing the word "cardio" meant to me was jogging. I made a change – a tremendous one – but that change is not because I know a magic secret or took a special pill that I am trying to sell to you. That change

was the result of a total transformation that started somewhere unexpected – on the inside. It was about changing my mind and becoming a better person: to take responsibility and then empower myself to conquer my wildest dreams.

I thought that dropping weight would help me regain my confidence and self-esteem and build a greater self-image. I was wrong. Dead wrong. Instead, I had to build to my confidence, improve my self-esteem, and create a new self-image *in order to* take control of my weight and health. I know many people who go on a “diet” and try to do it the same way I did – backwards! This book is my attempt to help you learn from my own mistakes.

Over the past several years I have coached scores of people to better health, and have always had a distinct style for doing so. I teach others to take control, rather than telling them what to do. There is a saying that if you feed someone a fish, they have a meal for that day, but if you teach them *how* to fish, then they have meals for life. Physique transformation matters most in the mind. As my clients tell me time and time again, I am the one person who was not afraid to let them know that they had to resolve their job situation or a conflict with a friend or spouse *before* they could successfully lose weight and keep it off. No, I am not a psychologist. I am a health coach who wants results, and I have learned the many factors that impact those results. Although nutrition and training are important, all of your success starts in your mind and from the person you are and become.

In this book, I share with you the techniques I have developed over these years to coach people to success. I also share my own story with you. It is my hope that you may relate to many turning points in my life, and that this will empower you to make the breakthroughs necessary to achieve your goal of good health. But before we can become the journey, we must begin the journey. For me, that journey began in a small, dark garage apartment in St. Petersburg, Florida.



When I worked in St. Petersburg, my life was a skipping record, playing the same notes over and over. I would drag myself out of the luxury of my 10' x 12' garage apartment, the one with no ventilation except for an undersized air-conditioning unit stuffed into a hole twice as large as the unit (I plugged the gap with old slacks, jeans, socks, and underwear) and the small draft that managed to squeeze through the slats on the door or the small hole in one corner. Our house was in a high-crime section of town, so the windows were barred shut. Since the apartment had been used as a photography studio, the windows were also spray-painted black. The frame of my waterbed had busted a few months back and sat on the floor in the corner, next to a small throw rug that barely covered the terrazzo floors.

My commute to work was less than a mile, but I never thought of doing anything other than driving. I sat in a small cubicle and complained the same complaints day after day. I worked through my stack of assignments, spitting out computer code faster than any of my superiors but was rewarded with nothing more than another stack of work. Each workday, I left as soon as I could, drove back to my apartment, and stopped by the small convenience store at the end of the road. On days that I had plenty of cash, I would purchase a pint of Old English or Colt .45, some snacks, and a pack of cigarettes. On other days, I took advantage of a trick learned only when you live at the edge of poverty, buying cigarettes by the cigarette, rather than the pack. Sometimes I could afford only three, but if it was a question of food or smokes, the smokes almost always won.

At home, I would rouse my roommate from his nap. We would fire up a bowl of pot and get high, then play 3-D shooter games until we passed out. The next day the cycle would repeat. Sometimes we had a little fun: I would drag one of my speakers outside of the apartment and point it toward the sky. I would throw on Smashing Pumpkins, and we would play footbag (hacky sack) on the roof. One time we dropped acid and lay on the roof in the rain, wearing shades so we could watch the raindrops fall. I am not proud of my past, but it is something that will always be there.

The stereo and the computer were consistent. For some reason, I never pawned the sound system even when I hocked my class ring, class jacket, the keyboard my parents gave me, the set of pool cues I spent months saving for, and just about anything else I owned in order to make my car payment. Rent was always a secondary concern, because my landlord was also a close friend who I did not treat as a friend because I took advantage of him and never paid the rent on time. After I was down to nothing but the sound system, my parents bought me the personal computer. I assume they thought it would help me direct my mind toward more constructive goals. My mother also introduced me to the job at the insurance company that kept me just shy of being broke.

Every once in a while, a good friend of ours would stop by. We would hear an enthusiastic knock at the door, and there she would be, smiling. Sometimes she would have a handful of whippets, or nitrous oxide canisters. Other times, she would simply be holding Purple Haze, the huge, purple bong she had affixed a Jimi Hendrix sticker to. As I said, my life was monotonous and going nowhere. It was during one of those rare moments when I was not high, drunk, or working that I realized I should probably pursue something more than what I was doing. It was a beginning. I was 22 years old, and the year was 1996.



What do a small refrigerator, a six-foot tall metal cart, a nine-year-old child, a softball-pitching machine, a large Labrador puppy, and an eight-foot dinghy all have in common? They all weigh about 65 pounds! Sixty-five pounds of fat contain about 227,500 calories – almost a quarter million! What is so special about 65 pounds? Sixty-five pounds was the difference between walking dead and truly living.

Sixty-five pounds ago, life was nothing more than a boring routine that I endured each day. A typical morning would begin with the ritual of standing in front of the mirror, looking at my body, and then literally sneering at the image that I saw. I would drag my feet from place to place, hidden in a cloud of depression and self-hatred. I could not even bend over to tie my shoes without losing my breath, and my size 42" slacks were getting difficult to button.

I had literally tried it all. I fasted. I went on crazy diets, such as eating nothing but one can of pears per day. I jogged until I could not feel my legs. I took special “herbal remedies” or went on no-carbohydrate diets that left me feeling dizzy and nauseated. Every attempt ended the same way: I was burned out, hated myself more, could not “stick with the program,” and somehow managed to gain more weight than I had lost.

My wife, Doreen, is the one who made the difference. She had noticed some co-workers transforming their physiques, and asked them for their secret. When she told me about the book, Body for Life by Bill Phillips, I was very skeptical. After so many failures, I was not about to pay someone for the latest “fad.” However, Doreen understood that the proceeds from the book purchase would go to charity and had no problem buying the book and passing it along to me. I let it sit for several weeks and finally decided that I would try it.

► <http://www.naturalphysiques.com/link.php?l=1>

▲ Body for Life book

What I found amazed me. It was not a huge advertisement for a special product. It was not a crazy diet where you had to weigh everything you ate or run calories through complex equations to determine a “daily intake.” Most important, the book focused on something many other programs did not – *me!* It taught me to look inside and discover the true reasons why I wanted to change, and to set goals and find inspiration to make that change happen. The change did happen – my entire life transformed.

My change has been about total health, not just my waistline. I’ve learned to focus on having a healthy body, because health is something you must maintain forever; it doesn’t fluctuate like scale weight or waistlines. Along with good physical health comes good mental and spiritual health. I cut my body fat in half; lost 65 pounds of fat over a year (30 pounds of fat in just three months), dropped 10" on my waist, and gained energy I never knew existed. However, these numbers mean nothing compared to the newfound sense of happiness and togetherness that I share with my family and God.

I encourage everyone to take the first step. Sure, you might be worried about the extra flab at first, with your mind focused on weight loss. However, as you progress, you will learn to focus on living. In the end, it is about control, and you can and will regain control of your life, through consistency and persistence. Always remember that living is giving ... and when you do reach your goal, share your progress with someone else and spread the good health.

In my experience, many people know what it takes to achieve a balanced lifestyle and wellness. They understand eating “clean” foods (healthy choices) and learning about calories, and they recognize the importance of exercise for burning additional calories and improving overall health. How often have you heard someone say, “I don’t have any problem getting down into the gym to exercise. It’s the nutrition that I struggle with”? Why is nutrition such a daunting area to tackle? A personal trainer and friend of mine, Tony Wild, says that people should practice push-offs with their push-ups. A push-off simply means: when you’ve eaten enough, push off the rest! This requires a mental attitude, and

sometimes it is not the easiest attitude to come by. For this reason, I believe the beginning to any successful transformation starts on the inside. We must first focus on the *inner stuff*.

► <http://www.twild.net/>

▲ Tony Wild's T-Wild Training site



I remember sitting in the apartment, staring at the room for the last time. My friends had just thrown my going-away party. This one was less mellow than the one when I returned from dropping out of college. During that party, I had finished a fifth of Jack Daniels and woke up in bed, miserable and with my high-tops still on. This time, everyone else drank, but I abstained. I had to close the deal for my apartment in the morning, which meant driving straight through from St. Petersburg to Atlanta. The last person to say goodbye was my landlord and closest friend at that time. He smoked one last cigarette with me, and then wandered into the main house.

I packed the last item, my television set, into the back of my two-door Honda Civic. I was proud of that car. With my first raise at the insurance company, I went out and bought a car for myself, brand new. I received \$200 for the 1980 Pontiac Bonneville that my parents had turned over to me. I asked the salvage department at my insurance company what my best investment would be, and then spent two months with a co-worker who had been a former car saleswoman, going from dealership to dealership to find the right price.

My first car, a four-door Civic LX, was totaled by another co-worker who ran a stop sign about two months after I bought it, and the insurance pay-off was higher than what it cost me to drive the car off the lot. I took the extra cash

and used it to buy the next higher model, the two-door EX, but I had to leave out the automatic transmission in order to afford it. I had never driven stick shift before!

That was the first time I learned an important lesson in life: with a sense of urgency, when something needs to be done, you can master a new skill faster than you would believe. The police stopped me only one time when I stalled attempting a left turn at a busy intersection before I mastered the standard transmission. I had left myself with no other option than to learn it.

I set out for Atlanta at about 2 A.M. because I knew it took about eight hours to make the drive from St. Petersburg, and the apartment complex opened at 10 A.M. Halfway there, near Valdosta, with the sun breaking over the horizon, I stopped at a rest area and took my cat out on a leash to do her business. I smoked a cigarette, thought a little about how I was pursuing a new life, leaving old habits, and tossed the rest of my cigarette pack in the trash.

Right there, at that moment, I made a decision I could never seem to make before then. I used to joke that I would “cut back on quitting smoking,” because so many times I swore I would stop but failed. I was smoking two packs of Marlboro Reds a day and had been doing so for two years when I made that decision to quit. To this day, with the exception of an occasional cigar, I have never smoked again nor had the urge. Ironically, it would be far more difficult for me to break my addiction to unhealthy food than it ever was to quit smoking on that cold day in 1996.

1. The Choice Is Yours

It's time to make a choice.

I've got to be kidding, right? Of course you've made the decision. You *know* you want to get rid of that spare tire, exchange the six-pack of beer for the type of six-pack you can show, rather than share, at the beach. It was a simple choice, wasn't it? You're sick and tired of being overweight, so it's time to go. Right? *Right?*

Wrong!

The biggest mistake many people make is starting a fat-loss program without truly making a decision. Sure, we know you want to get rid of the extra weight, but have you stopped to truly think about *why*? It may seem trivial, but having a deep, meaningful reason is critical to success. It is one thing to throw the scale into the corner and bust down the gym door with a barbaric yell and start smashing around iron. But physique transformation doesn't happen overnight – it takes time. You spent years filling those sacks of adipose tissue (fat cells) with extra fat calories, so why would you expect them to empty their precious load overnight? Eventually, you *will* lose that initial high, and reality will come crashing down in its entire splendor. You'll prepare a healthy meal and suddenly it will look too bland or even revolting, and the only thought on your mind will be something taboo – something unhealthy. Or you will hear the alarm clock blaring in the morning and decide you are just too tired to exercise today. You might be staring at the treadmill and suddenly get the uneasy notion that it is mocking you, and decide you don't feel like struggling with the sweat and pain right now.

It is in these moments of weakness that the decision comes into play. See, if you just jumped into the endeavor, chances are you can jump out just as easily. Sure, you are overweight, but man, that meal makes you *happy*, so you're just going to sit down and have it anyway, right? Oh, yeah, you wanted to drop weight, but these workouts are tough, and don't you just want to rest? Sure, you can rest. There is always tomorrow to train. You know what? It has been a rough week. Let's just start over again next week. You lull and coddle yourself into a pipe dream, but hey, you let it seem real – you

let it pull you in. You haven't truly committed to anything, so it gives you a nice, comfortable back door – push the eject button and go back to the same old way.

Let's get real.

You've spent I don't know how long living a certain way. And you know what? You do *not* know what it feels like to be lean, strong, and healthy. Sure, you can try to imagine it or read articles about it, but how does it really feel? Don't you owe it to yourself to make a choice – an informed decision? I think you do. I think you can handle living a few months differently from how you have before, even if you hate every moment of it, if it means emerging from the other side with a new physique, a new you. It might be a battle, but then you will know what it feels like to come out victorious. Sure, if it isn't what you had it cracked up to be, feel free to lapse back into old habits, but how will you ever really know for certain?

Make a goal. But don't just make it: make it real. Make it tangible. Instead of “I will lose weight,” make it, “I will lose 40 pounds.” “I will lose 40 pounds by July of next year” is probably best. Did you know that the only difference between a dream and a goal is a deadline? You need a specific deadline. You want something realistic? Consider this: men can typically lose between 0.5% and 1.5% of their body weight per week in fat if they are aggressively performing cardio, resistance training, and eating healthily. Women are in the 0.5% - 1% range. If you are male and sitting at 300 pounds, then look to lose between 6% and 18% of your weight (18 – 54 pounds) in 12 weeks. Wow, a big range, I know, but let's get real – you know where you are starting and how well you will stick to it. Slow and steady? Eighteen pounds is comfortable. You think you're ready to go all out, and hit it like no tomorrow? Then set those sights high and take the 54 pounds.

► <http://www.naturalphysiques.com/cms/index.php?itemid=144>

▲ See a gallery of my progress with body fat and weight measurements

It is not enough just to lose the weight. You need compelling reasons. See, your mind will play tricks with you every step of the way. It is very easy to talk yourself into “I will be happy if I just eat this piece of food, so I am going to do it” if you don't have a solid reason not to. Just want to drop the weight? Hey, who cares? Take an eternity. But if you are doing it for health, then you'll realize this isn't something to stop and start at will – it is a full-time commitment. If you are doing it for your children, then you know that you need to set an example around the clock, not just when it is convenient.

Set those goals, know your reasons, and explain how you will achieve the goals. Write these down. Put them on paper. Share the word with everyone you are comfortable with. Print multiple copies and carry them with you. Read them every day. Most important, make the decision. Don't lie to yourself and sell yourself short – this is a major decision. If you make it, you'd better be willing to see it through to the end.



The apartment appeared to be as big as a mansion to me. Where I was born in a small town in South Dakota, Sturgis, known mainly for the yearly motorcycle rallies held there, the house we lived in was less than 900 square feet. Our other homes were not that large, and my first apartment was blessed with a length of 12 feet and a width of 10 feet. I had spent so long in an unclean environment (I rarely cleaned my apartment, and the lack of ventilation combined with my chronic smoking all but erased my sense of smell) that this empty apartment was like paradise. It was 1,200 square feet, with its own living room, kitchen, and bedroom. The carpets were clean and fresh-smelling

and the walls pure and white. More incredible, the windows were not only free to open, but instead of being spray-painted black, they were an explosion of sunlight.

I moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in the fall. In a desperate attempt to pull myself out of the whirlwind of drugs, depression, and anger that was my life, I had accepted a job as a systems analyst at a software company situated on the bank of the mighty Chattahoochee River. They wooed me with the sleek, clean building and friendly smiles. The drive from the airport to the interview had been incredible: never before had I seen so many trees, and the fall colors were dazzling. I was used to long, straight, flat roads, but here you could only see a few feet before your sight was interrupted by a bend, a turn, a small forest of trees, or a hill. The air was fresh and cool and the sky was clear. I was in Heaven.

Ironically, I stepped into the taxi cab to return from my interview with no intentions to move. Although I was in love with the opportunity, I feared leaving my comfort zone. I had lived in St. Petersburg for 16 years. Even when I moved out on my own, it was to live in a garage apartment attached to a house owned by a close friend who had taken care of utilities and phone bills and other concerns. I had no clue what it would be like to move, to set up a new place, or to rent an apartment from a disinterested third party. I did not know a soul in Atlanta.

It was the cab driver who changed everything. At the time, I was a “proud” atheist. I blamed my problems on the world and believed that there could be no God who created such a miserable place. When the cab driver began talking to me about Christ and God and love and truth, I did what I normally did and started to hear without listening. Normally, I would have simply ignored him altogether, but something about the way he was speaking to me, rather than at me, caught my attention.

He told me that I needed to overcome my emotions and do what was right for me. This was odd and intrigued me even further, because he had no way of knowing what my life in Florida was like, or even why I was there in Atlanta. He continued to tell me that God was blessing me with a choice in life. I was at a crossroads and could make a decision that would turn my life in the right direction. Now was the time to face my fear, he said, because if I continued to live in fear, I would get nowhere. If I would just have faith in God and trust Him to carry me through my fear, I would begin to reap the benefits of living a blessed life. When he dropped me off at the airport, he turned and looked me directly in the eyes and said: “Son, God bless you. Please, make the decision that is right for you. It may not be the most comfortable decision, but put your fear in God's hands and He will take care of the rest.”

I had stepped into the cab with my mind made up: I was going to stay in Florida. When I stepped out of that cab, my heart was pounding and my hands were trembling. I was afraid, because I knew then that I would be leaving Florida. How the cab driver knew what he knew I will never know. I can only thank God. 1997 was just around the corner.