

LEAN WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

The underground guide to getting (and staying!) lean without dieting, without counting calories & without giving up any of your favorite foods



**Published By: Underground Fitness Tips,
All Rights Reserved**

TITLE: LEAN WITHOUT REALLY TRYING

Subtitle: The underground guide to getting (and staying!) lean without dieting, without counting calories & without giving up any of your favorite foods

Published By: Underground-Fitness-Tips.com

No part of this manual may be reproduced or distributed without the expressed written consent of FitnessUnderOath.com

Every word of this manual is protected by U.S. Copyright Laws, 2021.

LEGAL NOTICES

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical or electronic, including photocopying or recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, or transmitted by email without permission in writing from the publisher.

While all attempts have been made to verify the information provided in this publication, neither the author nor the publisher assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions, or contrary interpretations of the subject matter herein.

This publication is not intended for use as any source of advice such as legal, medical, or accounting. The publisher wants to stress that the

information contained herein may be subject to varying international, federal, state, and/or local laws or regulations. The purchaser or reader of this publication assumes responsibility for the use of these materials and information.

Adherence to all applicable laws and regulations, including international, federal, state and local governing professional licensing, business practices, advertising, and all other aspects of doing business in the US, Canada or any other jurisdiction is the sole responsibility of the purchaser or reader.

MEDICAL ADVISORY

The information and workout procedures provided in this guide are very intense and should not be attempted by anyone unless a doctor has cleared you for such an intense workout.

If you have any existing health problems that would prohibit you from taking part in any of these activities, you should refrain.

As always, you should clear this and ANY program with your doctor before you begin.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Getting Off The Ride.....	4
Part 1: Mindset	8
Chapter 1: “It’s Not A Diet It’s A Lifestyle” (And Other Lies).....	9
Chapter 2: Standards. Not Goals.....	17
Chapter 3: What Doesn’t Work For Maintenance.....	24
Chapter 4: The Joys Of Practicing Maintenance.....	28
Part 2: Habits.....	32
Chapter 5: The 16 Habits Of Lean Without Really Trying	33
Part 3: Action.....	58
Chapter 6: Change Your Habits, Change Your Life.....	59
Chapter 7: How I Freed Myself From The Diet Roller Coaster.....	62
Chapter 8: Questions & Answers.....	75
Chapter 9: Making This Work For You.....	78
Chapter 10: Formula For A New You.....	82
About The Author.....	83

INTRODUCTION: Getting Off The Ride

On the 3rd attempt, the car finally starts.

It's the worst kind of winter morning in Michigan -- dark, cold and windy.

The wind chill is 10 below. A much younger version of myself is warming up the car to drive to the gym.

While I wait, I light up a cigarette.

The gym is only 10 minutes away but I'll end up smoking another cigarette on the way.

The idea of smoking a cigarette on the way to a workout session is hilariously stupid. And yet, that's exactly what I did every morning for years.

I'd tried to quit multiple times. I'd make it a few days but I'd always relapse.

Until one day when I finally quit for good and never looked back.

I'm in my 40's now. And I haven't touched a cigarette in over 20 years. That's not the impressive part.

The truly impressive part is that I haven't even **thought** about smoking a cigarette in 20 years. It doesn't require any willpower for me to remain a non-smoker. I don't need to plan my day around not smoking. I don't need to avoid smokers. I don't need to read books about not smoking or listen to seminars or anything like that.

In short, I don't have to *do anything* to NOT smoke.

This is the pinnacle of achievement for anyone who wishes to be a non-smoker. This is “*unconscious competence*.”

The Goal Of Lean Without Really Trying

My goal for this book is to show you how to achieve unconscious competence as it relates to staying lean.

If you're not familiar with the term, “unconscious competence” is the highest level of attaining any skill. For the purposes of this book, the skill in question is *the skill of leanness*.

Level 1: “Unconscious Incompetence”

This is when you're bad at something... but you're so bad at it that you don't even realize you're bad.

Example: A fictional character named Joe. Joe is actually overweight but he doesn't know it. He thinks he's in great shape.

Level 2: “Conscious Incompetence”

This is when you're bad at something... but at least you realize it. You are aware of your lack of skill.

Example: Joe visits the beach with a group of friends. They take a group photo at the end of the day which later gets posted online.

Joe is horrified to see what he looks like in his swim trunks. In this moment, Joe realizes he's overweight and not in the kind of shape he thought he was in.

Level 3: “Conscious Competence”

This is when you've achieved a certain skill level, but it requires constant work and mental effort.

Example: Joe makes sweeping changes. He starts a new diet & workout program. Within a few months Joe has completely transformed his physique.

But he still has to force himself to exercise and he still has to count his calories to stay on track.

Level 4: “Unconscious Competence”

This is the highest level of a skill. This is when you've achieved the desired outcome and you don't even need to think about it anymore.

Example: Joe stay leans without really trying.

He's found exercise that he truly enjoys. He doesn't diet, count calories or avoid any foods, but he stays lean.

Getting Off The Ride

Most people don't realize it but when they start a diet or a new fitness program, they're getting on a roller coaster.

They might lose weight, but every big drop is almost always followed by a big gain. They get whipsawed up and down, over and over again.

And most people just end up gaining and losing the exact same 10, 20 or even 50 pounds for DECADES.

Because they're stuck on the diet roller coaster. I know this because I've been there. I've logged more than my share of miles on this ride. But eventually I found the exit.

In this guide, I'm going to show you how to get off the ride for good.

Living On The Other Side

Once you've mastered the skill of staying lean without really trying, life is completely different.

It's mentally freeing.

Suddenly your entire world opens up.

You can eat what you want to eat, wear what you want to wear... and do what you want to do without a second thought.

I realize that sounds like a fantasy. Especially if you've struggled with your weight for decades. But by the end of this guide you'll see exactly why this fantasy can turn into a reality for you.

It won't happen overnight... and there will be some bumps and bruises along the way.

But as you're about to discover, staying lean without really trying isn't magic. It's a skill.

A skill that can be learned, practiced and mastered over time.

Let's begin...

PART 1:

Mindset

1. “It’s Not A Diet It’s A Lifestyle” And Other Lies

I’m a naturally skeptical person.

And I’ve carved out a nice little niche in the fitness world simply by questioning conventional health & fitness advice.

You’ve no doubt heard the expression: *“It’s not a diet, it’s a lifestyle.”*

The implication being that you should never go on a short-term diet, but should instead make sweeping changes to your lifestyle.

It sounds reasonable enough on the surface.

And we all know somebody who crashed and burned after a few days on a silly fad diet.

But what’s the truth? If you need to lose weight, should you really avoid going on a diet?

The Most Extreme Diet Plan In History

In 1965, Angus Barbieri lost 275 pounds in just over a year.

How? He simply stopped eating for 382 days. That’s right, for one year and 17 days he ate no food. He lived on coffee, tea, soda water and vitamins.

The story goes that Angus was sick and tired of being overweight. (He weighed a massive 455 pounds at the start of his diet.)

So he checked himself into the local infirmary and told doctors that he was going to cut out food all together. Unsurprisingly, the medical staff didn’t really believe him but they agreed to monitor him.

And they didn't see any harm in a short-term fast.

To everyone's surprise, Angus stuck with his plan. He checked himself out of the hospital after the first few days, but stayed on his fast and continued to check in with his doctors.

He kept going until he reached his goal weight of 180 pounds.

And then after 382 days of no food, Angus broke his fast with a boiled egg and a piece of buttered toast.

The Real Story Is What Happened Next

Obviously Angus Barbieri could not continue fasting forever. So what happened once he broke his fast and resumed eating every day?

Did he balloon back up to 400 pounds? According to the *“don't diet change your lifestyle”* crowd that's exactly what should have happened.

But 5 years after ending his epic fast, Angus Barbieri weighed a healthy 195 pounds. And he maintained that weight until he died decades later.

Why “Changing Your Lifestyle” Doesn't Work

Angus Barbieri didn't lose the weight by changing his lifestyle.

He lost the weight by going on a diet. (An extreme diet, to be sure. But it was still a diet.)

If you want to lose weight, going on a diet is the single most direct path of action to the desired outcome. Full stop.

So why do so many “experts” in the health and fitness community

insist on telling people to “change their lifestyle.”

It’s because they’re trying to solve the wrong problem.

When it comes to losing weight and staying lean, we really have two distinct problems. Which requires two different solutions.

Getting The Water Out Of The Boat Versus Keeping It Out Of The Boat

Imagine waking up in a rowboat in the middle of the ocean. You wipe the sleep from your eyes and realize you’ve got a problem.

There’s water inside the boat.

You don’t know how the water got in the boat. (Remember, you were asleep and you just woke up.)

But you need to get the water out of the boat.

You’ve got many options. You can scoop the water out with your hands. If there’s a bucket, you can start bailing the water out with the bucket. And if there’s a pump, you can pump the water out of the boat.

Once the water is out of the boat, the problem is solved. You don’t need to keep running the pump. Grabbing the bucket and tossing out empty buckets of air doesn’t make any sense.

Your new problem is KEEPING the water out of the boat.

You check the boat for leaks but it appears the ship is solid. You realize the water gets choppy after dusk and bigger waves start to spill over the top of the boat. That’s how the water is getting in the boat.

You've diagnosed the problem. Now you need a solution. There's some nearby driftwood floating by. You realize if you build the walls of the boat higher, you can keep the water out of the boat successfully.

Different Problems Require Different Solutions

Building higher boat walls would not have helped you get the water out of the boat. And pumping out the water in the boat would not have helped you keep the water out of the boat.

You had two different problems, and each required a unique solution.

Here's what this has to do with losing weight and staying lean...

If you are currently overweight, you have too much ocean water in your boat. Your immediate problem is getting the excess ocean water (body fat) out of the boat (your body.)

The obvious solution for this problem is to create a caloric deficit/go on a diet.

Once you've managed to get all or most of the water out of your boat, THEN it makes sense to turn your attention to figuring out how to keep the water out of the boat.

In our boat example, the solution was building higher walls. By building higher boat walls, we could stop the waves from crashing over the walls and filling our boat with water.

In the case of staying lean, the solution is to build "walls" that prevent you from regaining weight. The way we achieve this is by building key HABITS that will allow you to remain lean without really trying.

Each habit on it's own won't be enough to keep you lean. But when

you stack enough of them on top of each other, the wall gets higher and higher. And eventually when you've stacked the right number of habits, you can remain lean without really trying.

Diets Aren't Bad.

Diets get a bad rap because people tend to gain weight after they go off the diet.

That doesn't mean the diet didn't work.

The diet is supposed to get you lean. It's NOT supposed to keep you lean.

That's a different problem and it requires a different solution.

Now there are many different diets available and the little known "secret" in the fitness industry is that basically any diet that puts you in a caloric deficit will work.

But still, some diets are better than others. The secret is that a diet should not only help you lose weight but it should also help you establish habits that will KEEP you lean.

Case in point:



Years ago one of the most famous fad diets was a “Cookie” diet. This was a low-calorie diet where you’d replace certain meals with low calorie cookies.

Did it work?

I’m sure it did for some people. But how many actually kept the weight off? Probably not too many.

Because while the diet may have created a caloric deficit, it also created a habit of eating cookies. And eating cookies is not a habit that supports long-term leanness.

This is the problem with most “fad” diets. They don’t build habits that you can carry on for the rest of your life.

“Will This Diet Help Me Build A Habit That I Can Use For The Rest Of My Life?”

Before you go on another diet, ask yourself the question above.

Yes, you can lose weight by cutting out carbs. But is cutting out carbs for 2 weeks really going to help you build a habit that you can use/stick with for the rest of your life?

Probably not.

The Best Diet Plan “Tricks” You Into Setting Up Habits For Lifelong Leanness

All of this may sound odd coming from a guy [who wrote a diet book](#).

But the reason why I stand behind my book is because not only does my method help people lose excess body fat quickly, they also establish habits during the diet that will serve them for life.

For example, I have people reduce the number of meals they eat per day. Plus I have them performing a resistance training workout at least 2x per week and walking a minimum of 7,500 steps per day.

After the diet is over, those are habits that can be continued for life. Eating fewer meals, performing regular resistance training and walking a certain number of steps every day doesn't require you to cut out any of your favorite foods or live the rest of your life on a diet or a "point system."

The Goal: Lean Without Really Trying

So the goal of any diet is not to make you lean for life. The goal of a diet should be to cause you to lose weight WHILE building habits that can eventually be used to help keep you lean without really trying.

That is the ultimate goal: Lean without really trying.

We're striving for "unconscious competence."

In other words the goal is to build habits that you do automatically without even thinking about. And if you can stack enough of these habits, you can remain lean without really trying.

The Vacation Test

In the middle section of this book, I'm going to introduce you to the full list of habits that can help you remain lean without really trying.

Establish enough of these habits and you too can get and remain lean without really trying.

But my ultimate goal for you is to be able to pass "The Vacation Test."

Here's how that works:

The Vacation Test is the ultimate proving ground for your leanness habits.

If you can go on vacation and not gain any weight then you'll have mastered the habits necessary to keep you lean without really trying.

I'm not talking about dieting while on vacation. I'm talking about living your life and enjoying your vacation while letting your unconscious habits keep you lean AUTOMATICALLY.

That's the pinnacle of "lean without really trying."

2. Standards. Not Goals.

Imagine for a moment that you set a goal to lose some weight.

You start a new workout program and a new diet and for the first couple weeks things are going ok.

But lately progress has been slow. And to be honest you're getting frustrated by your lack of progress.

Then there's a knock at the door on Sunday morning.

You open the door to see your best friend standing there with a big smile and box in hand. He/she says...

"Surprise! I brought you a fresh hot donut from that brand new bakery. These are sooooo good. You have to try one! Do you want it?"

Do you eat the doughnut?

Wait -- don't answer yet.

Let me give you another scenario.

Same deal -- you set a goal to lose some weight, things haven't been going well, there's a knock at the door on Sunday morning and it's your best friend.

"Ummm hey. I was going to bring you a fresh hot donut from that brand new bakery. I bought the donut... but then I dropped it in a pile of dog poop. And it must have rolled into an ant hill because now there are ants all over it. Do you want it?"

In the first example, maybe you take the donut from your friend and maybe you don't. Let's say it's a 50/50 proposition.

But in the second scenario, there's no chance in hell that you're going to eat that donut.

And it's NOT because of your goal or your level of will power.

It's because eating a donut dropped in dog poop and covered in ants is BENEATH YOUR STANDARDS.

You don't have to summon any will power to say no to the "poop" donut.

You don't need any special motivation.

Trying to better yourself and chase your goals requires TONS of motivation and energy. But maintaining your current standards is easy.

In fact you will fight like mad to maintain your standard if you even feel yourself getting close to breaching your standards.

Think about what happens when you realize you need a haircut. Once you are aware that your hair no longer meets your standards, it's only a matter of time until you make the appointment and get the problem resolved.

And every day that goes by just increases the pressure exponentially until you finally get your hair trimmed.

So what does this have to do with getting and staying lean?

Standards ultimately determine who you are.

The “poopy” donut scenario is an extreme example. But it’s one that we can all agree on.

I’ll venture to say that no matter how overweight you are right now, no matter how addicted to sugar you are... you will NOT eat a donut that’s covered in dog poop.

We can all agree that’s a fairly low-level standard.

Let’s raise the stakes a bit.

If you’ve read my [Underground Fat Loss Manual](#) then you know that I advocate anyone trying to lose weight to try and get 7,500 steps per day.

And that’s something that I try to do as well since the research shows that walking 7,500 steps per day is an important benchmark for health and longevity.

But guess what: I’m human.

I don’t always get 7,500 steps per day.

7,500 is my TARGET... but no matter what I almost ALWAYS get 5,000 steps per day.

5,000 steps is my standard -- a baseline that I’ve established that causes me some anguish if I go below that level.

Another example: I don’t drink liquid calories. (Except for alcohol.)

If given the choice between a regular soda and a diet soda I’ll take the diet soda every time.

This is a standard I’ve established for myself. And it’s a standard that

helps keep me lean.

Do you see how having standards like this could be a useful tool for staying lean?

You Will Spend The Rest Of Your Days On This Earth Living Inside The Worst Version Of Yourself That You Will Tolerate

There's a saying in the business world:

"You don't get what you deserve. You get what you will tolerate."

The body that you have right now... the physique you see in the mirror... you have this body because it's what you will tolerate.

Having a "goal weight" can be useful, but in my experience having an "anti-goal" weight is even more useful. The "anti-goal" weight is the upper limit of what you will tolerate.

Case in point:

Angus Barbieri had a goal weight of 180 pounds. To hit that goal weight he had to go over a year without eating any food. Once he started eating again though, he probably never weighed 180 pounds again.

That might sound depressing, but that's how "goal weights" work for most people. They'll hit their goal weight for ONE DAY and then they never see that weight again until the next diet.

However, we know that Angus Barbieri maintained his weight loss and stayed around 195 pounds for years after his experiment.

I'm speculating but maybe his "anti-goal" weight was 200 pounds. Maybe he learned that as long as he stayed under 200 pounds, he was

happy.

Over time you can elevate your standards and alter what you will tolerate.

For example, at my heaviest I weighed 215 pounds.

After I lost the weight, I never weighed over 200 pounds again.

But I still had bad periods where my weight would creep up over 190 pounds.

These days my weight remains between 170 pounds and 180 pounds. I haven't weighed over 185 pounds in 18 months.

I am currently attempting to keep my weight below 180 pounds. My "goal weight" is 170 pounds but I know it's not realistic to stay at 170 pounds year round.

But having a standard of staying under 180 pounds is doable (for me).

"I'm The Kind Of Person/I'm NOT That Kind Of Person"

The reason that standards are so much more effective than goals is that standards are tied to your identity as a person.

If you don't smoke, then you think of yourself as a "non smoker." It doesn't take any will power to refuse a cigarette because that's not *who you are as a person*.

If you are lactose-intelorant, you probably don't need to spend much willpower to refuse ice cream. Because part of your identity is that you don't eat ice cream.

After years of practicing intermittent fasting, I am almost never hungry in the morning. This has turned into *"I'm not a breakfast*

person.”

It's now part of my identity that I don't eat breakfast. This is obviously a useful standard for staying lean.

Here's one more:

I haven't missed a scheduled workout in years.

This was a habit I worked years to develop. I didn't always feel like working out... but I'd make myself do it.

And eventually the habit turned into a standard. It's now automatic for me. “I'm not the kind of person that misses workouts” is part of my identity.

Standards Can Sound Intimidating At First

If you're a person who struggles to stay consistent with your workouts, then the idea of becoming a person who does not miss workouts can sound intimidating.

But don't worry -- establishing standards can be easy. The secret is starting small.

Example:

Two years ago, I didn't have any standards for daily step count.

18 months ago I studied the research that showed benefits to getting 7,500 steps per day.

I spent the next year working to establish the habit of getting 7,500 steps per day. Some days I hit the target. Some days I didn't.

But even on days where I failed to hit my target I was establishing a

standard of getting 5,000 steps per day.

So the long view is that it took me two years to turn a habit into a standard. And now I get to reap the benefits of a standard that is virtually automatic.

That is my goal for you as well. In the second part of this book I'll introduce you to some lean habits. If you practice those habits for long enough, they will turn into standards.

3. What DOESN'T Work For Maintenance

In this chapter I'm going to give you a quick rundown on things that do NOT work for staying lean.

This is important because knowing what NOT to do is the first step on the path to knowing what you should do.

So in no particular order here's a list of things that don't work for maintaining leanness:

Willpower -- I've found you can achieve a stunning transformation by "muscling through" a diet on will power alone.

But staying lean is a different ball game altogether. Will power is great for getting started, but trying to maintain something for the rest of your life based on willpower never works.

Counting Calories, Points, Or Macros -- Counting calories or points or macros can be useful during the dieting portion of your transformation, but once you switch to maintenance you need to find a way to control your calorie intake WITHOUT counting anything.

This is because counting calories is pretty much impossible to continue as a practice for the rest of your life.

I've often said that counting calories is like counting the number of trees you see on your drive to work. Can you do it for a week, two weeks or even 12 weeks?

Sure.

But the idea that you can count the number of trees you see on the way to work for the rest of your life is absurd. Especially when you consider that the mere act of counting trees makes your morning drive a lot less enjoyable.

Making Certain Foods “Off Limits” -- What happens when you make something “off limits” for a teenager? You guessed it -- they’ll move heaven and earth to do the thing that you tried to keep them from doing.

The reality is we’re all still teenagers at heart. And we all react pretty much the same way when something is made “off limits.”

That’s why labeling foods as “bad” or “off limits” almost always leads to binging on that very same food.

Attempting To “Eat Less” -- After your diet ends, your reward is that you get to start eating MORE. This is simple mathematics -- you need to eat less in order to create a caloric deficit to reduce your weight.

But if you’re no longer trying to reduce your weight, you don’t need to create a caloric deficit and therefore you can eat more.

The trick is knowing how much more to eat (without counting.) Oftentimes people will freak out when they see the scale going up during maintenance. So they’ll start making an effort to “eat less.”

But this just puts you on a weird “pseudo diet” where you’re attempting to eat less, but not counting anything. The result is almost always weeks or even months of wasted effort and frustration.

Rigid Schedules -- Trying to maintain your weight by only eating during certain hours of the day is a valid strategy. But when you

make the schedule too rigid, the system breaks down.

Example: Not eating after 10:00pm can be a decent guideline depending on the person. But when that same person starts to view eating anything at 10:01pm as a “failure”, the system breaks down.

Trying To Stay At Specific “Goal Weight” -- Trying to stay at an ultra specific goal weight just doesn’t work because it doesn’t account for normal fluctuations in body weight.

A gallon of water weighs 8 pounds. And the amount of water in your body can easily fluctuate by a gallon or more. Which means you can step on the scale and weigh significantly more or less than you did yesterday just based on shifts in water weight.

The amount of carbohydrates you ate yesterday (carbs hold water), the saltiness of your food and simply the volume of food that you ate can all have a huge impact on the scale weight.

If your goal weight is 150 pounds, it’s unreasonable to try and stay at exactly 150 pounds for the rest of your life.

Not Having Any Plan At All -- Finally, the worst mistake you can make when trying to maintain your weight loss is not having any plan at all.

Sadly this is what MOST people do. They go on a diet PLAN... and when the diet plan ends, they transition into having absolutely no plan at all.

Thankfully, you’re not most people. By reading this book you’re now aware of the need for a plan for maintenance. And by the time you finish this book you’ll have a solid plan in place to get and stay lean without really trying.

But before we get into the details there's one more thing we need to cover. We'll tackle that next.

4. The Joys Of Practicing Maintenance

Most people approach maintenance with a sense of fear and dread.

They are terrified of undoing all the work from their diet, so they can't even enjoy NOT being on a diet.

That's a shame.

Because let's face it -- dieting can suck. Sometimes seeing the light at the end of the tunnel is exactly what you need to stick with a diet when things are getting tough.

So in this chapter, let's explore all the great things about practicing maintenance. Starting with everyone's favorite part...

You Get To Eat More -- Hopefully this point is obvious to you but many people mistakenly believe that they need to stay on a low calorie diet for the rest of their lives to avoid gaining weight.

Not true.

What typically happens is people fail to track their calories accurately as they get near the end of their diets. So they inadvertently start eating more calories, which I call "calorie creep."

If you can avoid calorie creep, then you absolutely will be able to consume more calories during maintenance as compared to your diet phase.

How much more?

That will vary by person but as a general rule of thumb I've found that most people will be eating at least 1,000 MORE calories per day during maintenance compared to dieting phase.

So if you're a man who dieted on 1,500 calories per day, you should be able to eat 2,500 calories per day during maintenance without gaining fat.

Note: This is just an example. I don't actually recommend counting calories during maintenance. So you don't need to worry about figuring out how many extra calories you can eat during maintenance.

The important thing is realizing that you can certainly eat MORE calories during maintenance as compared to the dieting phase.

You Will Feel Better -- Make no mistake about it, dieting can make you feel rotten. Especially when you get to the final stages of a diet where you're trying to lose those last 5 pounds.

But when you switch to maintenance mode, you'll be amazed at how much better you feel. You'll sleep better, you'll move better and you'll just generally feel better overall.

You Will Have More Energy -- When you're dieting, your body makes an effort to conserve energy. This can lead to feeling lethargic, lacking energy and reduced motivation.

But when you switch to maintenance, you'll find your energy and motivation come roaring back.

Your Metabolism Will Increase -- It's a simple fact that when you diet and lose weight, your metabolism will slow down a bit.

Some people believe that your metabolism stays low once you go off your diet and that's why you regain the weight.

But the reality is your metabolism goes UP once you go off your diet.

The simple fact is this: Your metabolism is dynamic. It changes in response to over-feeding or under-feeding.

When you diet, your metabolism will go down a bit. (Not anywhere near as much as people think, by the way.)

This is NOT a bad thing. It is just "a thing."

When you overeat, your metabolism will go up a bit. (Again, not as much as people think.) This is NOT a good thing. It is just a "a thing."

Your metabolism is a flexible system that changes in response to overfeeding or underfeeding. Stop getting caught up in the trap of thinking that a high metabolism is "good" or that a low metabolism is "bad."

Remember that ultimately you cannot control the number of calories that your metabolism burns in a day. But you can control how many calories you consume and your activity level. People spend way too much time worrying about their metabolism (which they can't control) and not enough time worrying about calorie intake and activity levels (which they can control.)

Better Sex Drive & Mood-- Anyone that's ever dieted down to a low level of body fat will tell you that sex drive dips once you go below a certain level of leanness.

Thankfully, it comes roaring right back once you enter the maintenance phase.

Same for mood. It's normal to feel crabby during the last portion of your diet. But your mood will soar when you go off your diet and start your maintenance phase.

So as you can see, there's no reason to fear the maintenance phase. There's a host of benefits you'll enjoy once you move from the diet phase to the maintenance phase.

Of course, the key to maintenance is to stay in maintenance mode. Because if you end up gaining fat, then you've got to shift back to dieting mode again.

So in the next chapter we'll tackle the habits that can keep you lean without really trying.

Recap Of The Key Points Of The Maintenance Mindset

- The diet you use to lose the weight does NOT need to be the diet you stay on for the rest of your life.
- Standards are more effective than goals.
- Knowing what doesn't work for maintenance is a pre-requisite for figuring out what does work.
- Maintenance is a period to be enjoyed, not feared.

PART 2:

Habits

5. The 16 Habits Of Those That Stay Lean Without Really Trying

As the old saying goes, “success leaves clues.”

By studying the routines and practices of those that successfully stay lean without really trying, I’ve come up with a list of key habits that anyone can develop to stay lean.

In total, I’ve discovered 16 habits that seem to be common among those that stay lean without really trying.

Show me anyone who stays lean without really trying and I bet they’ve developed the majority of these habits.

Some people develop these habits without even thinking about it. Some people develop these habits based on the environment they were raised in.

But no matter -- the beauty of this is that you can develop these habits for yourself.

How Many Of These Habits Do You Need?

When viewed individually, none of these habits will make you lean.

But when you start to stack multiple habits... that’s when you’ll see the magic happen.

How many of these habits you need to develop to keep you lean will be a matter of individual choosing. It depends on your unique metabolism and goals.

Are you a 6’6 male athletic type who doesn’t care about sporting a

6-pack and just wants to stay under 250 pounds? Then you'll probably only need to develop a few of these habits to stay in your target zone.

But if you're a 5'2 75-year old woman who wants to be a size 4, then you'll probably need to develop almost all of these habits.

The good news is, once you've successfully developed these habits they won't feel like work. You'll do them automatically without even thinking about it.

The other piece of good news is...

The Standard For These Habits Is “Most Of The Time.”

I call this my “MOTT” Standard: MOTT = Most Of The Time.

Your version of “Most Of The Time” might vary from mine. So to make sure we're all working from the same playbook I like using 9 out of 10 as a benchmark for what constitutes “most of the time.”

I don't try to implement a new daily habit unless I believe I can successfully perform the habit 9 out of 10 days. Or when viewed from an annual perspective, that's 328 days out of the year.

2 Reasons For The MOTT Standard

#1) I want to throw cold water on any proposed habit that might be too extreme for you to perform to the MOTT Standard.

Example: If someone who doesn't exercise tells me they are going to start exercising for 1 hour every night, I already know they've bitten off more than they can chew. There's virtually zero chance this person will go from not exercising at all to exercising for one hour a

day for 328 of the next 365 days.

However, if this same person told me they were going to try and establish a new daily habit of walking around the block every day, then I could see how this new habit is small enough to be doable.

#2) The second part of the MOTT Standard is accepting that you don't need to be perfect to get results.

Example: Your dentist scolds you for not flossing. So you commit to establishing a daily habit of flossing. And you floss your teeth every night for the next 9 days. Then you miss a day. But you pick right back up and you floss your teeth every night for another 9 days in a row.

If you kept up this pattern until your next dental check up, I'm quite sure your dentist would notice the difference.

“The Vacation Test”

When it comes to developing habits that keep you lean, the biggest mistake I see people make is trying to change too much too fast.

That's why I like using the MOTT Standard AND The Vacation Test.

Before you attempt to establish a new habit, ask yourself:

“Is this something I can do consistently 9 out of 10 days... even when I'm on vacation?”

If this answer is “no” then you need to shrink down the habit, make it easier or pick something else.

Examples:

Proposed Habit: “I'm Going To Work Out For 2 Hours A Day Starting

Tomorrow!”

Likely to pass the MOTT Standard AND the Vacation Test? **No.**

Revised Habit: “I’m Going To Do 1 Pushup Every Day. I can do more if I feel like but I’ll always do at least 1.”

Likely to pass the MOTT Standard AND the Vacation Test? **YES.**

Proposed Habit: “I’m done with sweets! Never again!

Likely to pass the MOTT Standard AND the vacation test? **No.**

Revised Habit: “I will eat one piece of fruit before I eat any sweets.”

Likely to pass the MOTT Standard AND the Vacation Test? **YES.**

Do you see why setting easily achievable habits is the key to lasting success? Remember the goal is establishing easy-to-do habits that become a part of your lifestyle and make it easy for you to stay lean without really trying.

Now let’s get into the actual habits...

Leanness Habit: Don't Drink Calories

This is a great one to start off with because it's easy to implement AND it's a great habit to "put under the microscope" and see if it passes our MOTT Standard and Vacation Test.

The habit is simple: *Lean people don't drink calories.*

I don't know any lean people that REGULARLY drink soda, milkshakes or even juice.

The reason is obvious -- liquid calories make it tough to get and stay lean. Liquid calories don't provide much satiety which means you can consume hundreds of calories from liquids and still be just as hungry as when you started.

But remember -- I'm not asking you to swear off any of your favorite drinks. In fact last week I had beer with my friends and orange juice with my daughters.

But I still followed this rule **Most Of The Time**.

If you assume that I have 10 servings of liquid per day, then that's 70 servings of liquid per week. I had 4 beers on Friday night with my friends and 1 glass of orange juice on Saturday morning with my daughters.

So of the 70 total servings of liquid during the week, 65 of them didn't have calories. (Water, diet soda or tea/coffee with minimal cream/sugar.)

So that's 65/70 or 93%. You don't need to be so mathematical about

this, I just wanted to prove the point.

And this is a habit that I can easily maintain even when on vacation.

Sure, I might have a few more beers than usual on vacation and maybe I'll even enjoy a milkshake during the trip but for the most part I don't drink calories even when on vacation.

What About Protein Shakes & Smoothies?

I still say avoid protein shakes and smoothies most of the time. These are obviously healthier options compared to regular soda, but for the purpose of staying lean without really trying, eliminating as many liquid calories as possible is key.

Again, the key is MOTT -- Most Of The Time.

ONE protein shake or one fruit smoothie per week won't ruin your attempts to stay lean. But immediately slugging down a massive dose of liquid calories after every single workout is counterintuitive to the goal of staying lean.

Leanness Habit: Don't Eat Between Meals

This one habit alone can put you on the path to staying lean without really trying.

The great thing about this habit is we're not really taking anything "off the table." We're not restricting the types of foods you can eat or how much.

The problem with eating between meals (aka "snacking") is that snacking adds to your total calorie consumption WITHOUT doing much to increase fullness.

That's obviously NOT a great thing for maintaining leanness.

So developing the habit of NOT eating in between meals is crucial for maintaining leanness.

This habit will take some time and effort to develop depending how big of a snacker you are, but once you've mastered this practice you will find it easy to maintain without much effort. (Especially if you take the time to build your environment, which we'll cover later on.)

And remember, you just need to avoid snacking MOTT (most of the time.) Enjoying 1 afternoon snack every once in a while won't ruin efforts. But daily snacking isn't compatible with the goal of remaining lean.

Leanness Habit: Don't Eat Late At Night

This one is a little controversial so hear me out:

In theory, there's nothing "wrong" with eating late at night.

Calories consumed at 10:01pm don't automatically become "fattening" compared to calories consumed at 9:59pm.

The problem is, people tend to make worse food choices after 10pm.

Let's be real -- nobody is munching on celery sticks at midnight.

As the day goes on, your will power gets weaker. This is why it's easy to avoid junk food at breakfast, but almost impossible once the sun sets.

You can combat this by developing the habit of not eating late at night. Remember, it starts with a mindset shift. "I am not the kind of person who eats late at night." Or "I prefer not to eat at night."

Don't be surprised to discover that you actually sleep much better once you stop eating late at night. So this one small habit can trigger a domino effect of positive outcomes.

Leanness Habit: Get Enough Sleep

This is easily the habit that everyone will ignore.

We all roll our eyes when told to get more sleep.

But this is one of the single biggest “secrets” to getting and staying lean without really trying.

I’m not going to bore you with the research.

I’m not going to try and convince you that sleep is important.

Because honestly I already know that most people are going to skip over this part.

Which is fine. But I’m telling you right now that getting enough sleep is one of the easiest ways to maintain leanness.

The problem is that developing the habit of getting enough sleep can be tough. And it’s all because of screens. (Cell phones and TV.)

Make it a rule to shut off all screens at a certain time per night and you will automatically start getting more sleep. It flat out works.

As an added bonus, you won’t have the same urge to snack. Eating a bag of chips while reading a book just doesn’t hit the same. Shoot for at least 7 hours of sleep per night. Obviously 8+ hours would be better but getting 7 hours of sleep consistently is a great start.

Leanness Habit: Eat 2-3 Meals Per Day

A recently watched a video of an NFL linebacker who was trying to gain weight for his upcoming season.

He was eating 6+ meals per day.

The interviewer asked him why he didn't just eat 3 bigger meals per day.

The answer? "It would be impossible to get enough calories to gain weight if you're only eating 3 meals per day."

Which is interesting. ***One man's problem is another man's solution.***

If you're an NFL linebacker, the fact that you cannot eat enough calories in 3 meals per day to gain weight is a problem.

If you're a regular person just trying to find a way to stay lean, the fact that you cannot eat enough calories in 3 meals per day to gain weight is a SOLUTION.

If you've been stuck on the diet roller coaster for years, the idea of eating a full breakfast, lunch and dinner every day and NOT gaining weight might sound like a pipe dream.

I've found that most people need to drop down to 2 meals per day -- most of the time -- to stay lean.

So for example, maybe Monday thru Friday you eat 2 meals per day while Saturday and Sunday you eat 3 meals per day. This averages

out to “2-3 meals per day” when viewed over the course of a week.

Food choices matter, of course. For the average person, eating fast food 3 times a day will end up in fat gain.

But eating whole, mainly non-processed foods for 3 meals a day and you should be able to maintain your body weight with ease.

If anything, the 3rd meal a day is almost like a reward for making good food choices.

If lunch was takeout from the local chinese place and dinner is going to be pizza, you’re better off sticking with 2 meals per day.

But if breakfast and lunch were meals consisting mainly of non-processed foods, then adding in a 3rd meal per day (also of non-processed foods) should allow you to maintain your leanness without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Strive To Eat Whole, Non-Processed Foods

Nobody ever got fat from eating too many bananas.

Or too many potatoes.

Or too many eggs.

When you eat mainly whole, non-processed foods you can eat to fullness multiple times per day without gaining weight.

When you start adding in liquid calories or processed foods, suddenly it's possible to eat extra calories without even getting full.

Which is obviously a problem for anyone attempting to stay lean.

Now, you should know that I've got as much of a sweet tooth as the next guy.

So it does take some effort and practice on my part to shun processed foods and instead opt for whole, non-processed foods.

And in the interest of full honesty, sometimes I fail.

But that's the beauty of the MOTT standard. You don't have to be perfect to win this game. If you strive to eat whole, non-processed foods most of the time, you'll be able to stay lean without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Eat Fruits & Veggies Daily

As discussed in the previous habit, we're striving to eat non-processed foods.

Most people understand that means trying to avoid donuts and candy bars. But as the saying goes, nature abhors a vacuum. So rather than focusing on what to cut out, let's talk about what to eat MORE of.

And the answer is fruits and vegetables.

Not the most exciting answer in the world, but the simple fact that lean people tend to eat more fruits and vegetables than overweight people.

By INCREASING your consumption of fruits and vegetables, you get to eat more food (on a volume basis) without needing to worry about calories.

Later on, I'll show you how using this simple tip actually helped me reduce my overall caloric intake without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Minimum Daily Activity Level

In [my previous book](#), I established a daily step count target of 7,500 steps per day for anyone looking to lose weight.

This is a fairly modest target. Highly motivated individuals always ask me if they can target 10,000 steps or even 15,000 steps per day in an effort to get faster results.

But maintenance is a different story.

We know that lean people are more active than obese individuals. So this is a habit we want to have.

And while higher step counts can be useful for weight loss, when it comes to maintenance the goal is finding a target that you can hit consistently without really trying.

So we're essentially establishing a minimum daily activity level.

In my [Underground Fat Loss Manual](#), I showed the research that 7,500 steps per day is a good target for longevity. But for maintenance, we're more concerned with establishing a minimum.

For me, that's 5,000 steps per day. This is my daily bare minimum, a standard that I can achieve day in and day out without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Engage In Resistance Training At Least 2x Per Week

Resistance training is absolutely crucial to getting and staying lean.

You can get lean without doing a lick of cardio.

You can ignore mobility work for months and still get lean.

But if you avoid resistance training, it makes the journey to leanness nearly impossible.

And as is often the case, the activities that help you get lean are also the ones most likely to help you stay lean.

Thankfully, you don't have to do much resistance training to reap the benefits. There's no need to "kill yourself" in the gym with 2 hour workouts.

You don't need to get strong enough to squat 600 pounds.

But you do need to consistently challenge your muscles against resistance. This simple practice will help keep you lean. And the nice thing is that once you put this habit into practice it doesn't take long to develop a positive "addiction" to resistance training.

When you absolutely don't want to skip a workout because you love the way it makes you feel, that's a very easy habit to maintain without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Find An Activity That Doesn't Feel Like Exercise

Confession time:

I hate cardio. It's something I've never enjoyed since I was a kid.

But I love playing volleyball. I play volleyball 2-3 times a week.

I get plenty of cardiovascular activity playing volleyball, but in my eyes the two couldn't be more different.

To me, volleyball is FUN. (Yes, it's also frustrating, challenging and exhausting at times. But still... it's fun.)

I don't have to force myself to play volleyball. Whereas I have to force myself to do cardio.

Finding a physical activity that you ENJOY is a key habit to staying lean.

It doesn't have to be a sport.

Gardening is an activity that can help keep you lean. (If you enjoy it.)

Dancing qualifies as well.

Even something as simple as going for a bike ride with a friend can be a habit that can help keep you lean.

But find some form of physical activity that doesn't feel like exercise to you and it will help you stay lean without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Tracking & Awareness Of Your Body Stats

Lean people stay lean by monitoring their stats. Overweight people avoid the scale as much as possible.

There's a saying in the business world:

“That which you measure, improves.”

And it's true -- the simple act of TRACKING your stats will spur you to improve. Or at least maintain.

In my book, [The Underground Fat Loss Manual](#), I insist on daily weigh ins.

This is important when you are trying to lose weight.

If you're just trying to maintain your weight, there's no need to weigh in daily. (Although some people still swear by this method.)

But you should at least step on the scale once per week so you'll know if you're actually maintaining your bodyweight or if you need to make changes.

There is also value in tracking other metrics depending on what you want to improve. But for the purposes of maintaining weight loss, stepping on a scale at least once a week and documenting the results is a key habit.

Leanness Habit: Never Let One Bad Day Turn Into Two

You are going to fail.

It happens to the best of us.

The secret is to simply refuse to allow yourself to let one bad day turn into two.

This is something that lean people understand and practice.

A lean person may establish a standard of never failing two days in a row. This is a DOABLE standard.

Whereas someone who struggles with their weight will often attempt to hold themselves to an unrealistic standard.

The overweight person will say *“That’s It! I’m Never Cheating On My Diet Again!”* And of course, no one can live up to this standard. So they eventually crack.

And when they crack, they often let 1 bad day turn into 2 days... which turns into a long weekend... which turns into a full week... which turns into a month.

Next thing they know, they are starting over at the beginning. Only this time they are 5-10 pounds heavier than their first attempt. So they resolve to REALLY get serious this time. *“That’s It!”* They say. *“I’m never cheating on my diet again! For real this time...”*

Don’t hold yourself to an unrealistic standard. Instead, give yourself permission to fail, just never two days in a row.

Leanness Habit: Environment Trumps Willpower

Professional bodybuilders may be some of the most dedicated athletes on the planet.

For months leading up to a bodybuilding show, every part of their diets and workouts are planned.

They cannot deviate from their diet plan at all. No treats, no desserts, no “just 1 bite.”

These are quite literally the most motivated and disciplined athletes on the planet. And one of the most famous bodybuilders of all time is Dorian Yates.

He would get so lean for his bodybuilding contests that he couldn’t even walk due to pain. That’s because there is a small pad of fat on the bottom of your heel for cushioning. But Dorian would get so lean prior to his bodybuilding events that his body was forced to burn that last little bit of “heel fat.”

The reason that Dorian was able to achieve this unheard of level of leanness is because he never took a single bit of anything that wasn’t on his diet plan. He never ate any extra calories. Never “slipped up.”

The secret to his superhuman willpower?

Realizing (and accepting) that he didn’t actually have superhuman willpower.

Dorian wouldn’t allow any junk food in the house. The only foods allowed in the house were the items on his meal plan. Because he

knew if there was junk food in the house, he'd break down and eat it.

Dorian knew "Environment Trumps Willpower."

I've found I have no problem sticking to my diet plan when I'm at my office. This is because there is nothing to eat and the only drinks are coffee and water.

Sure, I could always get in my car and drive to get junk food. But most of the time I don't. I stay on track because my environment makes it easy for me to stay on track.

Contrast that with the weekends. I'm at home surrounded by all kinds of delicious treats. So it takes a greater degree of willpower for me to stay on track during the weekends.

It's not impossible - but it absolutely requires more willpower.

Lean people work to improve their environment. Because they know that improving their environment will pay bigger dividends compared to attempting to boost your willpower.

Here are some subtle shifts you can use to improve your environment:

- If possible, don't bring junk food in the house. Make it easy on yourself. (This isn't always possible for most people, but adhere to this when possible.)
- Put fresh fruit or other low-calorie foods on the counter or anywhere within view. Hide junk foods behind cabinets or place them out of sight as much as possible.
- Put "friction" or extra steps between you and high-calorie foods.

For example, put the ice cream at the back of the freezer behind the frozen veggies. Keep the cookies in a ziplock bag. You'd be surprised how well these little "extra steps" can prevent you from snacking.

- If you struggle with ordering take out options that you know you shouldn't, delete the offending restaurant or food delivery apps from your phone. Sure, you could still place an order on the website but adding this extra step is often all it takes to help you stay on track.
- Find ways to reduce the friction between you and positive behaviours. For example, take the TV out of your bedroom to reduce the friction between going to bed and getting enough sleep. Or laying out your gym clothes the night before so you have one less excuse when the alarm goes off in the morning.

Do what you can to slowly improve your environment and you'll find that simply improving your environment makes it easier to stay lean without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Start Each New Habit SMALL

The key to achieving the “lean without really trying” lifestyle comes down to having automatic habits.

These are habits that you don’t have to think about.

And the key to building automatic habits is to start SMALL.

If you’ve been a couch potato for the last 20 years, the worst thing you can do is launch into an advanced-level, two-hour-per-day workout program.

Instead, figure out the smallest habit you can make stick. Maybe that’s one push up a day. Maybe that’s walking about the block just one time per day.

Whatever it is, find the smallest habit you can start with. Then do that every day. Eventually, this small habit will become automatic. You’ll do it without even thinking about it.

And at that point, you can build on it. But you **MUST** start small. You cannot build on a habit until it becomes automatic.

Leanness Habit: Practice Mindful Eating

Try this simple trick:

The next time you eat dinner, don't eat in front of the TV. Don't scroll through your cell phone.

Don't read a book.

Just sit there and eat your food.

There is a zen proverb that goes "When drinking tea, just drink tea."

I want you to do the same thing - "When eating a meal, just eat the meal."

You'll notice that when you're not distracted you get full MUCH faster. You'll automatically eat less without actively trying to eat less.

If you want to take this to the next level, put your fork down in between bites.

This might not sound like a big deal but these two strategies can be absolute game changers for those with insatiable appetites.

Best of all, you don't have to count calories or swear off your favorite foods or anything like that. Just turn off the TV, put away the phone and put the fork down in between bites.

Try it tonight and you'll be amazed at how much this can help you get lean without really trying.

Leanness Habit: Don't Eat If You're Not Hungry

The final leanness habit is the single most important one of all: Don't eat if you're not hungry.

It sounds so simple but it's something that most of us struggle with. Make no mistake about it -- you will have to PRACTICE this to make it a true habit.

But if you can master this one habit, you are well on your way to staying lean without really trying.

Oddly enough, this is a habit we all had as children.

So you're not starting from scratch. You're simply relearning a habit that you a younger version of yourself already mastered.

And it starts with giving yourself PERMISSION to not eat unless you're hungry. This can be tough at first. If "dinner time" is 6pm we often find ourselves eating whether we're hungry or not.

Of course, there will be certain social situations where it makes sense to eat. If you attend a wedding, you have to eat whenever they serve dinner.

But there will be multiple other times during the week when you'll be presented with the option to eat whether you're hungry or not. If you're hungry and it's meal time? Eat! But if you're not hungry, don't eat.

Master this and you'll stay lean without really trying.

Full List Of All Leanness Habits

Here's the full list of all the leanness habits we just covered:

- Don't Drink Calories
- Don't Eat Between Meals
- Don't Eat Late At Night
- Get Enough Sleep
- Eat 2-3 Meals Per Day
- Strive To Eat Whole, Non-Processed Foods
- Eat Fruits & Veggies Daily
- Minimum Daily Activity Level
- Engage In Resistance Training At Least 2x Per Week
- Find An Activity That Doesn't Feel Like Exercise
- Tracking & Awareness Of Body Stats
- Never Let One Bad Day Turn Into Two
- Environment Trumps Willpower
- Start Each New Habit Small
- Practice Mindful Eating
- Don't Eat If You're Not Hungry

In the next section, we'll talk about putting this into action.

PART 3:

Action

6. Change Your Habits, Change Your Life

“First we make our habits. Then our habits make us.” -- Anonymous.

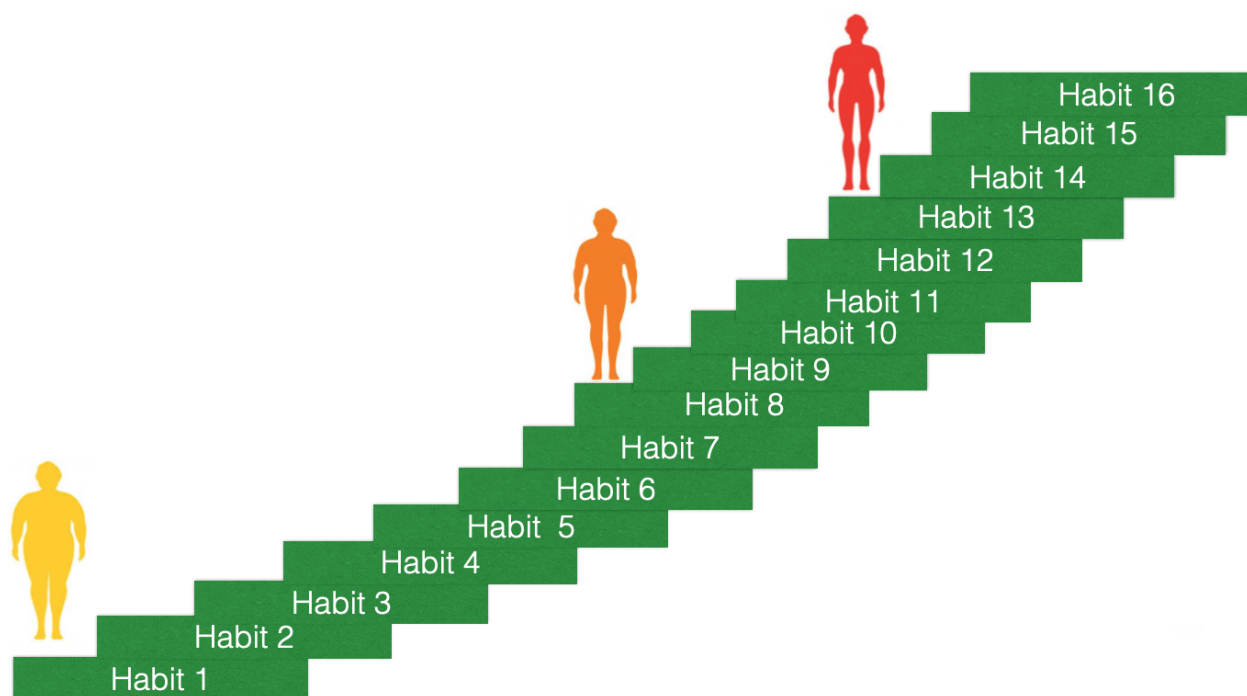
The person you are right now is the result of your current habits.

Which means to change the future version of yourself, all we need to do is change your current habits.

In the previous chapter, I gave you a laundry list of habits that support the end goal of staying “lean without really trying.”

If you put the right number of those habits into practice, you will get and stay lean without really trying. Individually, each of those leanness habits probably won’t be enough to get to the goal of staying lean without really trying.

But when you start to stack the habits on top of each other, it’s only a matter of time until you achieve the goal of staying lean without really trying.



Notice that each habit stacks on the previous habit. And that over time, if you stack enough of the habits together, you get the desired end result.

In this case, the desired end result is staying lean without really trying.

A Lean Physique On Autopilot?

It may sound overwhelming to consider the idea of adding 16 new habits to your daily life.

But keep this in mind:

You're not going to add 16 new habits.

You're only going to add ONE habit. And once that new habit becomes automatic, then you'll add another one. The good news is, once a habit becomes automatic, you don't have to think about it.

The truth is, most of your life is already run by these “autopilot” habits.

You wake up, make coffee, let the dog outside, check your email... all without thinking about it.

It happens on autopilot.

Experts say that the average adult makes 35,000 decisions per day -- and 99.9% of those decisions happen on autopilot.

You might think about what to wear in the morning, or what to eat for dinner. But the other 34,998 decisions are handled automatically.

That’s the goal -- putting enough of these leanness habits in place so that you can stay lean on autopilot.

It may sound like a tall order, but in the next (and final) chapter I’ll show you how I achieved exactly that.

7. How I Freed Myself From The Diet Roller Coaster And Set Myself Up To Stay Lean Without Really Trying

In this chapter, I'm going to show you EXACTLY what I did to achieve the goal of staying lean without really trying.

It's been a long journey for me -- mostly because I didn't have this book.

But it's my hope that thanks to this guide, you'll have an easier path than I did.

The Cold Hard Truth About The Fitness Industry

The sad truth is that most of the people in the fitness industry are only truly "fit" for a few days a year.

They'll diet down for a photo shoot or a vacation or a physique contest. They'll take thousands of photos over the course of a couple days and they'll use those photos for months on their social media accounts.

I know this because I was one of those people.

The reality is this:

Getting lean is hard but anybody can do it. Even the most poorly thought out diet plan will work if your willpower is strong enough.

But willpower always runs out at some point.

And that's why staying lean is so brutally difficult.

You can't use the brute force of willpower to stay lean. It just doesn't work. (Trust me, I've tried.)

But after years of losing the same 10-20 pounds over and over again, I've finally cracked the code and managed to stay lean without really trying.

In just a moment I'll tell you EXACTLY how I did it. But first, I need to tell you this:

I am going to "pull back the curtain" and show you exactly what I did. However, you should NOT follow my plan exactly. The plan that I devised and followed was designed to address my own weaknesses and struggles.

Your weaknesses and struggles will be different from mine. Of the 16 Leanness Habits, there will be different habits that you need to work on to reach the goal of staying lean without trying.

So you can use my plan as a "template" for what you need to do to stay lean, but please be aware that you may need to work on different habits than I did.

Let's dive in:

My Starting Point

When I started my journey to staying lean without really trying, I was already pretty lean.

This is because I had already mastered some of the leanness habits. For example, I never miss resistance training workouts and I've found

a physical activity that I enjoy which doesn't feel like exercise (volleyball.)

In addition, after practicing intermittent fasting for years I have trained myself to skip breakfast and lunch on weekdays without really trying.

So while those habits got me to a point where I was leaner than most “normal” people I still wasn't happy with my condition most of the year.

I knew that to take things to the next level and be able to MAINTAIN a new level of leanness I would need some new habits.

And I knew that to make those habits stick, I needed to START SMALL.

I also knew that I didn't want to count calories for the rest of my life. And I knew that I still wanted to enjoy all of my favorite foods -- nothing could be off limits. A tall order, right? ;)

So here's what I did:

My First New Habit: The First Thing I Eat Every Day Is A Fruit & A Veggie

As I mentioned previously, I had already trained myself to skip breakfast and lunch most days.

But I was running into issues because after getting home from work, I found myself eating too many sweets and snacks before dinner.

Ultimately, I knew I needed to cut back on the snacks/sweets. But I also knew if I tried to go “cold turkey” I would eventually fall back into my old habits.

So rather than try and restrict myself, I started with a very small and simple habit -- eating 1 fruit and 1 vegetable before eating anything else.

This habit was simple and easy to start.

On weekdays, when I got home from work I would eat an apple and a handful of baby carrots.

On weekends, no matter what time I ate I would remind myself to eat 1 serving of fruit and 1 serving of vegetables before I ate anything else.

This simple daily habit may not seem like much but the genius of this strategy is that it can help you...

Lose Weight By Eating **More**

By developing the habit of eating a fruit and a vegetable before you eat anything else, you are filling your stomach with foods high in fiber and lower in calories. Which means you'll get full faster and ultimately you'll end up eating fewer calories without really trying.

Now, you should know that I didn't lose any weight after implementing this habit. And that's ok. This was just one small habit designed to be a building block.

After practicing this habit for a few weeks it became automatic. So at that point I was ready to stack a new habit on top of it.

My Second New Habit: Drink A Tall Glass Of Water With The Fruit & Vegetables

So the next thing I did was remind myself to drink a tall glass of water

when I ate my fruit and vegetable servings.

Again, this was a very simple and easy habit to implement.

When I got home from work on weekdays, I'd eat an apple and some baby carrots. Then I'd drink a glass of water.

Keep in mind, once I'd done those two habits I was "off the hook." If I wanted to drink a beer and eat a piece of cheesecake at that point, I could. I had the freedom to do so.

Of course after eating an apple, some baby carrots and drinking a tall glass of water, the desire to drink a beer or eat a slice of cheesecake was greatly reduced.

But simply knowing that I had the freedom to do so if I wanted made these new habits easy to implement.

Whereas if I tried to restrict myself on willpower alone I would have eventually cracked.

On weekends, if I was frying up pancakes for breakfast I could eat as many pancakes as I wanted. I could add butter and syrup and even enjoy some orange juice as well. But FIRST, I had to drink a tall glass of water. And eat a serving of fruit and veggies.

After a few weeks, this new habit became automatic. So I decided to add a new habit.

My Third New Habit: Fruit + Vegetable + Glass of Water THEN a meal.

As I mentioned above, at this point I still had the freedom to wolf down an entire cheesecake after I completed my habits for the day.

And while most days I didn't have the urge to do so, there were plenty of times where I found myself eating snacks or junk food instead of a proper dinner.

So I'd come home from work and I'd put my computer bag down. I'd hug the kids and kiss the wife. Then I'd eat an apple, crunch down a few baby carrots and drink a glass of water. At that point, I would still find myself reaching for junk food.

That's not a winning recipe. But again, if I tried to restrict myself it would only be a matter of time until I cracked.

So my next habit was again very simple -- after eating my fruit and my vegetable and drinking a glass of water, the next thing I ate had to be a proper meal.

It didn't matter what the meal was. If it was family pizza night, I ate pizza. If we were having burgers on the grill with pasta salad, I ate that.

But this new rule prevented me from snacking on chips BEFORE the meal. This prevented me from wolfing down cookies BEFORE the meal.

I was of course still free to eat whatever I wanted AFTER the meal. And it's that level of freedom that made this another simple and easy habit.

So now when I got home from work I was eating a piece of fruit and a serving of vegetables. I was drinking a tall glass of water. And then I wasn't snacking on anything else until I'd eaten a meal.

On weekends it was basically the same idea except my first meal was

typically breakfast or lunch. But no matter what time I had my first meal, I made sure to check off my habits first.

Again -- zero food restrictions. I wasn't counting any calories or macros. And I wasn't actively trying to eat less food. In fact I was actually forcing myself to eat MORE food due to my rules about eating a fruit or vegetable first before any meal!

(Not more calories, but a greater VOLUME of food.)

Notice that everything I'd implemented so far would still pass "The Vacation Test." Which means I could go on a vacation and still follow all of these habits with ease. Which means it should be easy to maintain these new habits.

So after letting these new habits "stick" for a couple weeks, I was ready to take things to the next level. Here's what I did next:

My Fourth New Habit: Fruit + Vegetable + Glass of Water THEN a meal + Mindful Eating.

At this point I'd noticed that I was not practicing "mindful eating." I was eating while watching TV or looking at my phone far too often.

So I decided to layer the habit of "mindful eating" on top of the other habits I'd already stacked up.

So whenever I eat a meal now, I don't look at my phone or watch TV. I also don't read a book. I simply focus on my food. (Or if I'm eating with others then I'm 100% engaged in the conversation.)

This might not seem like a big deal but try it and you'll be amazed. You will get full MUCH faster than usual.

This is awesome because you don't have to make any dietary changes.

You don't have to count calories, or try to restrict yourself.

Even if you're eating a "junk food" meal like pizza or fast food, just using this simple trick will automatically make you eat less. It's the essence of "lean without really trying."

In addition to making my meals "distraction free" I also started focusing on putting my fork/spoon down in between bites. This forced me to slow my pace of eating and enjoy my food more.

Again, this naturally allowed me to consume fewer calories without really trying. So once again I gave myself a couple weeks to allow this new mindful habit to stick.

Then I added...

My Fifth New Habit: Fruit + Vegetable + Glass of Water THEN a meal + Mindful Eating + Brushing My Teeth After Dinner

At this point I was making excellent progress.

I was actually leaning out a bit without counting calories or restricting myself in any way. But I knew to take things to the next level I would have to add in some new habits.

I was prone to snacking late at night. It was negatively affecting my sleep AND I was making poor food choices later at night.

So I designed the next habit to add just a bit of "friction" and make it slightly less attractive to snack late at night.

I was tempted to "swear off" sweets or set some kind of hard & fast rule about eating after dinner. But again, I knew that wouldn't last.

I had to make it simple and easy.

So my next habit was simple: I started brushing my teeth after dinner.

That's it.

Once the evening meal was over, I would brush my teeth. (And floss and do a mouthwash rinse.)

I was still “allowed” to eat whatever I wanted in the evening. I still didn't have any restrictions or anything like that.

I could still eat a big bowl of ice cream at midnight if I wanted to. And sometimes I still did.

But the simple act of brushing my teeth shortly after dinner REDUCED MY DESIRE to eat junk food at night. All I did was add a bit of “friction” to make it just slightly more difficult to snack at night.

And again -- this habit passes the vacation test. This is something I could easily do on vacation without feeling restricted.

And truth be told, I would still end up snacking at night on occasion.

But the majority of the time, simply adopting the habit of brushing my teeth after dinner added just enough friction to prevent the habit of eating late at night or eating junk foods after dinner.

At this point I had things pretty well dialed in. With these new habits in place I was able to maintain my weight without counting calories, without any food restrictions and without making any kind of effort to eat less.

But there was one more habit that I wanted to tack on.

My Sixth New Habit: Fruit + Vegetable + Glass of Water THEN a

meal + Mindful Eating + Brushing My Teeth After Dinner + 5,000 Steps Per Day Minimum

My new eating habits made it easy for me to control my caloric intake without really even trying.

But I still noticed that on some days I was very inactive. I would drive to work, sit at my desk all day, drive home, and spend most of the evening sitting.

I wasn't happy about this but I needed a small and easy new habit to get me out of this rut.

So I set a daily minimum standard of 5,000 steps per day. This is an extremely manageable habit for anyone. And truth be told most days I get closer to 10,000 steps. But having that minimum daily standard forced me to get up from my desk a couple times a day and take a quick walk outside.

And on days where I didn't manage to get up from my desk at all, it forced me to be a little more active when I got home at night.

Keep in mind that on it's own this habit would not have been enough to keep me lean. But when stacked on top of all the other habits I had put in place, it worked well.

This too passes "The Vacation Test." I could easily get 5,000 steps in per day while on vacation without feeling like I had any kind of overbearing task hanging over me.

Recap Of The Habits I Used To Stay Lean Without Really Trying

So to recap:

- I had already mastered many of the 16 leanness habits. For

example, I was already doing regular resistance training and I already rarely ate in between meals.

- This allowed to me to stay at a level of leanness that most people would consider “good.”
- But to take my physique to the next level I had to add new habits.
- I chose the new habits that I did to address current “weaknesses” in my eating habits.
- I made each new habit small and easy to start.
- I waited until each new habit became automatic before stacking the next habit.
- Each new habit that I selected needed to pass “The Vacation Test.”
- Ultimately, I found the right combination of habits needed to keep me lean without really trying. You will need to experiment to find your own winning combination of habits.

Some Of My Habit “Missteps”

In addition to the habits I mentioned above, I also experimented with other habits.

However, these habits didn’t end up sticking. Here are a few of my habit missteps and the lessons learned:

- Adding in a Protein Shake.

After establishing a habit of consuming 1 serving of fruit, 1 serving of vegetables and 1 glass of water before I eat anything else for the day, I tried adding in a protein shake to the mix.

My reasoning was the protein shake would increase fullness and allow me to naturally eat less without trying.

So the first thing I ate every day was 1 serving of fruit, 1 serving of vegetables, 1 glass of water AND 1 protein shake. (The shake had roughly 150 calories.)

This worked out decent enough. It did make me a little more full.

But ultimately it started to feel restrictive and it didn't pass the "The Vacation Test." I can vacation anywhere in the world and find fruits and veggies. But always having a protein shake on hand isn't guaranteed.

Plus, protein shakes break the rule about liquid calories. So ultimately I discarded this habit.

- Trying to "Mega Dose" Fruits and Veggies

After achieving success eating 1 serving of fruit and 1 serving of vegetables as my first calories for the day, I thought...

"What if I ate 2 servings of fruit and 2 servings of vegetables before eating anything else?"

This wasn't a terrible strategy. And it's something I might revisit in the future.

But ultimately, it felt a little too restrictive. Truth be told, I probably ended up eating more than a serving of vegetables anyway. (I wasn't counting out how many carrots I ate or anything like that.)

But most days I was eating an apple or a banana for my fruit. And eating two apples or two bananas just seemed a little goofy to me.

I might revisit this in the future but ultimately just making sure I ate 1 serving of fruit and 1 serving of veggies before consuming anything

else was enough and I didn't feel the need to try and scale this up.

- Trying a “hard and fast” rule about no eating after 10pm.

When I realized that my late night snacking was essentially the only thing keeping me back from getting lean, I tried to set a hard and fast rule: No eating after 10pm.

This worked well at first, but ultimately it felt too rigid and too restrictive. And it definitely didn't pass The Vacation Test.

So I killed this idea and instead replaced it with the much gentler idea of just brushing my teeth after dinner.

The new habit of brushing my teeth after dinner ultimately made me less likely to eat after 10pm, while still giving me the freedom to do so if I wanted to.

8. Questions & Answers

Here are some common questions and answers...

Q: Do you still practice/recommend fasting as part of the maintenance lifestyle?

A: Yes, I still think fasting is one of the single most powerful tools for fat loss and health. But to be honest, I've found I don't need to fast as much or as often now that I've established the habits that keep me lean without really trying.

In the past, I would try to do a 44 hour fast every week to help maintain leanness.

I still try to shoot for that, but thanks to my leanness habits even if I go a few weeks without doing a 44-hour fast I still stay lean.

Q: Can you rank the leanness habits in order of importance?

A: They are all important. And to be honest the habit that will make the most difference for YOU will be different than the habit that will make the most difference for somebody else.

However, I would say the true “keystone” leanness habit is developing the habit of only eating when hungry. This is the one thing I've noticed that all “naturally thin” people seem to do well.

(I've also noticed that most children do this instinctually. So developing this habit is essentially just relearning a habit you already had as a child.)

Q: How long will it take to develop these habits?

A: That will vary by person. But I recommend adding only 1 new habit at a time and sticking with that habit for 2-3 weeks before attempting to layer in the next habit.

Based on that timeline, you're looking at approximately a year if you are starting from scratch and need to add all 16 habits. (Which is unlikely, since most people will have already developed a few of these habits.)

A year might sound like a long time. But consider that most people spend their entire adult lives trying (and failing) at various diets. When you look at it that way, a year to get to a point where you can stay lean without really trying for the rest of your life sounds like a fair deal.

Q: Can I Use The “Lean Without Really Trying” Habits To Get Lean/Lose Weight? Or Is This Only For People Who Have Already Achieved Their Goal Weight?

A: The fastest way to get lean and stay lean would be to use my [Underground Fat Loss Manual program](#) to get to your goal weight, and then follow the Lean Without Really Trying method to stay at your goal weight.

The nice thing about this approach is that during your time on the Underground Fat Loss program, you'll actually be developing many of the habits you'll need to easily transition to maintenance. I cannot say the same of most other diet plans.

However, if you are fine with a slower and more gradual approach than you could use the Lean Without Really Trying method to lose

weight as well. It will take longer, but you will arrive at the same destination either way.

Q: I have other questions... can I email you?

A: Sure. You can email me at fitnessunderoath@gmail.com

Please be advised that I cannot offer medical advice.

9. Making “Lean Without Really Trying” Work For YOU

You’ve got all the pieces of the puzzle now.

I’ve shown you the mindset secrets needed to get and stay lean without really trying.

You know all the habits that you’ll need to practice on your path to staying lean for life.

And I showed you the route I took to make this method work for me.

But now let’s talk about making this method work for you.

Here’s a step-by-step guide to putting this plan into action:

Step 1: Review the Leanness Habits and pick ONE that addresses a current weakness for YOU.

I recommend starting with one of the habits in **BOLD** below.

- **Don’t Drink Calories**
- **Don’t Eat Between Meals**
- **Don’t Eat Late At Night**
- Get Enough Sleep
- Eat 2-3 Meals Per Day
- Strive To Eat Whole, Non-Processed Foods
- **Eat Fruits & Veggies Daily**
- **Minimum Daily Activity Level**
- **Engage In Resistance Training At Least 2x Per Week**

- Find An Activity That Doesn't Feel Like Exercise
- Tracking & Awareness Of Body Stats
- Never Let One Bad Day Turn Into Two
- Environment Trumps Willpower
- Start Each New Habit Small
- **Practice Mindful Eating**
- Don't Eat If You're Not Hungry

Step 2: Once you've picked a habit to work on, try and come up with the smallest and easiest way to start building the habit.

And if possible, try and work on the habit WITHOUT restricting yourself.

For example, if you're trying to eliminate liquid calories I might start working on a habit of drinking 16 ounces of water in the morning and 16 ounces of water with dinner.

By INCREASING your water consumption, you will probably reduce your consumption of other liquids without really trying.

If you're trying to work on the habit of avoiding eating late at night, you can try my strategy of brushing your teeth right after dinner.

If you need to make resistance training a habit, perhaps set a goal of just doing some form of resistance training on your scheduled day.

So for example, if you set a goal to do resistance training on Monday - Wednesday - Friday, then maybe you will do at least 1 push up, 1 bodyweight squat and 1 situp on your scheduled resistance training day. You can of course do a more strenuous workout, but come hell or high water make sure you do at least a few reps of a resistance training to build the habit.

If you are starting with the habit of practicing mindful eating, start small. Maybe you choose just 1 meal per day to practice this habit. Or maybe you only need to put your fork/spoon down once per meal.

Step 3: Find A Way To Document Your Progress

There are a variety of “habit tracking” apps that you can use to document your progress.

Most of them will give you daily reminders as well.

Just search “Habit Tracker” in the Apple or Android app store and you’ll find a bunch of options.

Just pick 1 and get started with it. (You can always try different habit trackers once you’ve developed a routine.)

Step 4: Stick With The Habit For 2-3 Weeks Until It Becomes Almost Automatic

This will take 2-3 weeks for most people PROVIDED that you’ve started with an easy and small version of the habit.

During these 2-3 weeks, your goal is to do the habit that you’re working on every day. Down the line, once you’ve got the habit in place you can use the MOTT standard.

But in the early stages of building a habit, daily practice is essential.

Step 5: Review Your Progress and Course Correct As Needed

After 2-3 weeks you can review your progress and make adjustments as needed.

If things are going well, you can attempt to scale your current habit.

For example, if the leanness habit that you were working on was eliminating liquid calories and you started out by increasing your water consumption, maybe your next move is to eliminate any liquid calories before noon.

Or you can pick a new habit and work on adding that one to your arsenal.

However, if things didn't go as planned over the last 2-3 weeks then chances are the action that you chose was too difficult.

You need to break the habit down into a smaller and easier first step.

Remember: Start as small as you possibly can! It needs to be so easy that it almost feels useless to perform such an activity. (Like doing 1 pushup.)

That's it -- those are the 5 steps towards making the "Lean Without Really Trying" method work for you.

10. Current You + New Habit + Time = New You

“We are what we repeatedly do.” -- Will Durant, 1926

“When we look at living creatures from an outward point of view, one of the first things that strike us is that they are bundles of habits.” -- William James, 1887

At first blush it can be weird to think of yourself as nothing more than a “bundle of habits.”

Until you realize the only thing standing in between the *You* that you are now and the *You* that you want to be is the right bundle of habits.

The formula for change is simple:

Current You + New Habit + Time = New You.

As is often the case in anything with health and fitness, simple does not mean easy.

And yet, once you start putting the Leanness Habits into action you can take comfort that it is only a matter of time until you start to enjoy the benefits.

Start small. Start now. And it's only a matter of time until you wake up one day and discover that you have become lean without really trying.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Marshall is the author of *Lean Without Really Trying* and other health & fitness books.

He's helped thousands of readers around the world lose fat, get fit and stay lean thanks to his unusual and unorthodox approach to fat loss and fitness.

Matt lives in Michigan with his wife and twin daughters.

