

THE LIFE ATHLETE

by Peter Schmock

During my 25 years in the fitness business, I've observed a direct parallel between the ideals and principles people have about fitness and about their lives. As an Olympic competitor, I first discovered this about myself over the four years after I placed ninth – far worse than I'd hoped – in shot put in Montreal in 1976.

My transition happened over the course of the following four years, but the real epiphany was in 1980. After months of frustration, I finally listened to my inner voice and learned to trust my instincts. I learned the power of relaxation, stretching and inspiration, as well as harnessing what I already possessed in my physical body. I stopped punishing myself and pushing my body in ways it did not want to go.



Through effort, discipline and attention to what my body and mind were telling me, I reached the top of my game and won the Olympic trials for shot put in 1980. While the US didn't go to the Olympics in 1980 due to a boycott of the games, the philosophy I developed from that experience has served me far beyond the Olympics and physical fitness. These ideas worked so well for me, I've developed them into an approach that works in other people's lives too.

The three principles that make up my approach to life apply to both physical and non-physical aspects of my life, and could apply to yours, too.

FOCUS ON THE CORE. Physically, the core of your physical being is the most important focus you can have. All movement is based on posture, hips and abdominal muscles. Working on your core will serve you physically in everything you do. Non-physically, the core is about taking care of who you are and allowing yourself moments of self caring. Getting proper sleep, eating

right and caring for your self emotionally will give you the ability to be successful in all aspects of your life.

TRUST IN THE CYCLES OF LIFE. The world exists in cycles. The stock market, seasons and life itself—all of these are cycles we encounter every day. With exercise, it is important to plan and build cycles into your routines. I change the intensity and types of exercise to increase the effectiveness of my workouts. But non-physically, we all go through cycles daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. Our energy ebbs and flows, as do our moods and mental stamina. We have an obligation to monitor, honor and nurture our own cycles to make our lives and bodies as vital as possible.

PRACTICE REAL-LIFE EXERCISE: Life has its own set of demands on our bodies, which is not always addressed by the standard-issue gym workout. Picking a box up off the floor and setting it on a ledge requires muscles and flexibility that is not addressed by chest presses or leg curls. I develop programs to address the real demands of life and develop peoples' bodies in a way that ensures it is there when they need it. And when your physical body is healthy, you will have less stress, more energy and mental clarity.

These principles have guided me in ways that I never expected or imagined. I focus on them everyday, and invite you to explore them with me in the following columns. You have the power to change and make your life better—becoming a life athlete and enjoying the vitality of a balanced and healthy life—physically and non-physically.

— *Peter Schmock* is the founder of ZUM, a Belltown health club. A two time Olympic track and field athlete (1976, 1980) and former Director of Strength and Conditioning for the Seattle Mariners, Peter has been recognized as the regions leading trainer and fitness educator for over twenty five years.

peter@clubzum.com