



Human Optimization

Pod Club Discussion Questions



E65: The mental game of physical fitness

Guest: Jonathan Jenkins, Psy.D, CPMC; clinical and sport psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital; Team Clinical and Performance Psychologist for the New England Patriots; and Behavioral Sport Psychologist for the Boston Red Sox

The three big questions explored in the podcast:

Question 1

What is the "mental game" of fitness, and why is it just as important as physical training?

Question 2

Why do so many people struggle with the psychological friction of staying physically fit?

Question 3

How can we actively train our minds to overcome these blocks and elevate our physical fitness?

Discussion Questions:

1. Dr. Jenkins notes that while many people dedicate hundreds of hours a year to physical fitness, time spent on mental fitness (mindfulness, therapy, reflection) is generally much lower. If you audited your own routine over the past month, what would your physical-to-mental balance look like?
2. High achievers often excel at "activating" for performance but struggle to calm their nervous system down for true rest and recovery. How easy or difficult is it for you to intentionally rest without feeling guilty or anxious?
3. What is one goal where relying on "feeling motivated" has failed you, and what automated rule or system could take its place?
4. Has perfectionism ever derailed a habit of yours, and how could a "take what you can get" mindset change your routine?
5. What is one daily "time sink" you could reclaim for movement, rest, or personal care?
6. Where in your life are you currently finding it hard to stay patient with slow, incremental progress?
7. When you picture yourself 10 or 20 years from now, what does a high "quality of life" physically and mentally look like to you?
8. Based on this episode, what is one small change you are going to make to help improve in this area? How are you going to keep yourself accountable to that and measure your success? (Be sure to keep it simple, start small, and make it very clear).