

Embracing Minimalism



Embracing Minimalism is a concept that has found its way into my training. I used to buy anything I could on training be it magazines, books, DVDs, ect.. Some of these products served me well and did have a profound impact on some of the training changes I made. Many of the materials are great resources but all of the information became almost overwhelming.

A couple of years ago, I came to the realization that dedicated focus on one rep maximal strength was not the best thing for me nor were the training routines associated with increasing my maximal strength.. At one point in time it was definitely important and the priority of my training. At that time my ego ruled my training and I found myself driven by the weight I could lift even though it did not correlate to my fitness or well being.

Over time, I became more concerned with my longevity and my health. Moreover, I wanted my training to benefit my emotional state. That's hard to do when you're focus is on constant tension. That's not to say I don't backslide and get caught up on an occasion by how much I can lift. That is also not to say that I don't have a tremendous amount of respect for people who push themselves to go heavy, e.g. Olympic and Powerlifters. I just know what is the best thing for me now at this stage in my life.

Obviously, as a kettlebell sport competitor, I try to do as many reps as possible and initially that was the primary focus of training high rep snatches, swings and some jerks. But, what I've found is the process involved in this training has made me more "connected" and physically aware.

I have learned that when I can remove my ego from the effort, I tend to have an easier time making progress and going longer and even faster. I found myself struggling before the last competition. Even prior to Nationals, workouts were a struggle because I was too concerned with numbers. Right before the competition, I just kind of let it go and had a great day....

What I've realized is that I don't need a multitude of exercises or exotic routines. Minimalism is my friend. Too many things are a distraction and if you're like me, you've got enough distractions in life.

I have the confidence to say now that all I need is couple of full body movements like the swing, jerk, snatch. But I have an overriding need to stay connected and this training modality that I've found through Valery Federenko and the American Kettlebell Club is the best way to do that; it is very similar to a martial art.

How do we get to this connected state? In order to be successful, you've got to learn to learn a skill and apply that skill for time. Even for the non-competitor, there is a specific-simple way to do this. You focus on making your reps good through slow and deliberate practice. There is no need for complex training routines with this approach. This is simple, but not easy.

Going slow is a sure fire way to bring out flaws. Even going slow, you cannot last if you have bad technique. Going slow allows you to get a true feel for the movement. Going slow also allows you to go longer which of course is a critical component of building work capacity. No one has a true

appreciation for this until they do a timed set where they can't switch hands multiple times or set the bell down. This one component is the single most important component in my opinion. Nothing else forces you to become connected or increases your ability to "stay" How can you reach this connected state if you set the bell down after a minute or even two minutes when it starts to get hard?

You might wonder what I mean by connected? Connected to me means that your body and mind are in harmony; you know that even though it is uncomfortable, you can keep going because you are physically capable. I don't hit this state every workout. The days events or personal problems may find their way into my thoughts during training and I'm distracted; those days longer sets are a huge struggle. But, the goal is to reach this state and to do that I must clear my mind of the days events which is skill in of itself. No one said relaxing was easy! This training is tough; but you will learn to become tougher and the voice that is telling you to stop will become quiet.

This is definitely a modality that can boast effective short duration workouts that will definitely improve your overall fitness and well being. After short time, I found that I recover between workouts quickly and I am rarely if ever sore. I have found that I can increase my volume gradually and things that once seemed impossible are now completed goals. Those times when my ego does get the best of me; I still find that I can grab a 32kg and press it or deadlift a respectable amount of weight.

This minimalist modality has been very liberating. It has allowed given me the confidence to go heavier at times, but it has also given me the confidence and ability to go lighter or to do things for an extended period of time because the successful execution of this training works your mind just as much as it works your body. More times than not our mind is what limits us from doing truly remarkable things.

Catherine Imes is located in St. Louis, MO and is a Kettlebell Lifting Coach under World Champion Valery Federenko and the American Kettlebell Club.

Some of her accomplishments-experience include:

- 1st American Born Master of Sports in Kettlebell Lifting
- Bronze Medalist in the 2006 Kettlebell World Championships in Riga, Latvia
- Current American Record Holder in the 16kg Snatch
- NAKF Best Female lifter in 2004, 2006, and 2007
- Certified Battling Ropes Instructor under John Brookfield
- 7 years Mixed Martial Arts Experience under Jay Damato
- Over 4 years of Kettlebell Lifting experience, and 3 years of "Teaching" experience
- 20 years of progressive strength and conditioning experience

She is available for one on one and small group training. She also provides online assistance with Kettlebell Lifting programs.

She is also ramping up to teach more workshops across the USA in 2008. Please contact her if you are interested in hosting a workshop by emailing her at catherineimes@sbcglobal.net

Make sure you stop by her website: www.catherineimes.com