



[Guest Post: How Lifting Weights Transformed My Life](#)

A reader in Sweden asked me, unsolicited, if I would like to publish his story about what lifting weights has done for him. I'm glad I said yes, it's a great article that shows how getting into shape via weightlifting changes many other aspects of your life for the better.

How Lifting Weights Transformed My Life

by a Rogue Heath and Fitness reader in Sweden

(I have to preface that throughout this I didn't go on a certain diet or took any kind of steroid. I've always eaten pretty well, no junk food and very little in the way of sugar and alcohol. The only thing I did was to add daily protein shakes to my normal diet.)

It's been almost exactly one year since I first joined a gym and started lifting weights, and with that I find it fitting to look back and evaluate.

I'm a man in my late twenties, married, and have two kids; aged 1 and 3 years respectively. I work as a middle school teacher which includes long working weeks, bringing work home, and being mentally exhausted at the end of each day. When I get home I eat dinner, play with the kids for a bit and by 7:30 P.M. they're both often asleep.

Here's where I have around three hours of free time before I have to go to bed if I want something that even resembles sleep, and one year ago, I decided to spend some of those hours in the gym three days per week.

It's been one of the hardest things I've ever done, but as it happens, it's also one of the best things I've done.

I know that many people, especially young, tired fathers like myself, have a hard time getting started. So did I. Before this I had looked into bodyweight fitness, sporadically did a routine or two just so I could fool myself that I was actually doing something. One day however, I was lucky enough to be struck by reality. I went to pick up my wife (who was pregnant at the time) and our daughter. Daughter wanted to be carried home and my wife was unable to, "no problemo; dad will handle this", right? After all, it's just a couple of hundred meters. About half way home, I started to struggle. I remember thinking "Damn, this is heavy." and then it all hit me at once.

You see, until now I had only seen reality, I had never tasted it. And now I was getting force-fed more than I could chew, and every scenario in which I could fail because of my lack of strength flashed through my head. The next day I went down to my local gym and bought a membership.

My first gym session was a nerve-racking experience, as it is; and has been, for many others. My theory for this is that you're forced to see yourself as you really are – the true you. At home you can delude yourself, thinking you're stronger than what you actually are. And at an empty gym, you have no one to measure up against, so you're still somewhat okay. But in a gym full with people, normal people just like yourself, you get a taste of reality. And it doesn't always taste very well.

What made it even worse was the fact that my local gym happens to be one of this country's best gyms, where a lot of those who work out also compete in some form of lifting. It's extremely rare to see someone "untrained". And every time I walk through those doors, I become the smallest and weakest person in there. I could have let it scare me away but I chose to stay, and I'm glad I did.

Gradually, I started to change my perspective. I started to see these athletic people as people to emulate instead of being envious of. After a while, I started asking other people questions between their sets. I remember asking a mountain of a man why he did a certain cable exercise because I was genuinely curious, and I got an extremely informative answer. As I started lifting weights I also stopped assuming I knew everything; I mean, if I wasn't as strong as I thought I was, why would I be as smart as I thought I were? Soon enough, this mind-shift started spilling over into other areas of my life. Like work.

Coincidentally, I also started my first teaching job a year ago, and when I first started, I thought I had everything under control, but pretty soon reality was once again shoved down my throat. A few months in, I was still doing pretty much everything on a day-to-day basis which was extremely stressful. But then I started dropping all pretenses that I knew everything and started asking questions instead, asking colleagues, taking advice, admitting to students that I didn't know everything and asked them to look something up if I didn't know it, and had them report back their findings to me. After that it didn't take long before I was one of the more likable teachers at school. Because as soon as you admit to yourself that you aren't that all-knowing entity that's always right, your words and actions start coming from a place of humility and sincerity, and people seem to notice that. But there was something else as well.

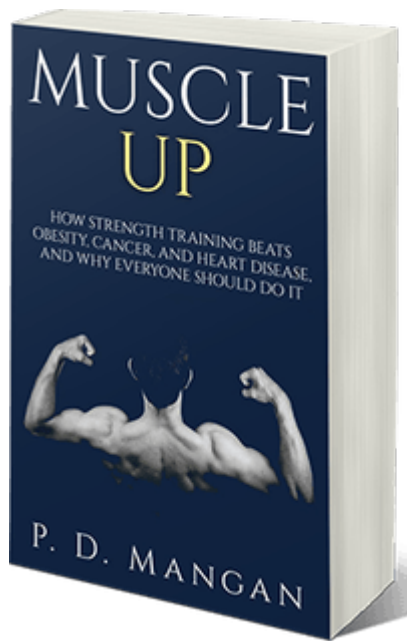
Apart from two nasty colds that kept me out of the gym for almost six weeks in total, I had been going three times per week, doing full-body workouts on both machines and with free weights, and the results had started to show. Gradually, shirts started to become tighter and I was walking more upright and with more confidence than before, and as it turns out, people respond well to that too. Getting attention and focus in the classroom became easier as well. Now, you could argue that this change was due to me becoming more confident in my line of work in general and that the students had gotten to know me, but would that have happened this fast without lifting? My answer would be no.

What about home and family life then? I'm more active with the kids, and throwing them around and carrying them, like many kids enjoy, isn't that hard anymore. The relationship between me and my wife is also a lot better. In fact, just about everything is overall... better. And apart from the examples I gave above that's about as precise as I can be.

Because our experiences will differ; we are all in different situations and we respond differently to things. Lifting weights did not only bring about an increase in energy and better physical health for me, but also personal insights – for which I'm grateful.

Today I'm comparing myself less and less to others, in all areas of life. And while I'm not a huge guy with big lift numbers (just recently hit 225 on the bench press if that matters to you), and I think it would be nice to get a little bigger, I don't obsess over it because that isn't my goal. My goal is to be the best version of me possible, and nothing has helped more with that than weightlifting.

PS (from P.D. Mangan): If you want to learn more about weightlifting, see my book, [Muscle Up](#).



PPS: [Check out my Supplements Buying Guide for Men.](#)