

Steve Cotter Interview

[00:00:00] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Hey, what's going on? It's Dr. Mike T. Nelson here. Welcome back to the Flex Diet Podcast, where we talk about all things to improve a body composition, which is more muscle, greater performance, less fat, and also improve your health at the same time in a flexible framework. Today on the podcast, we've got my good buddy, Steve Cotter.

I first met Steve as we talk about in this interview back, oh man, early 2000s, I think, at Josh Henkin's place. I've taken some training from Steve when he was here in Minnesota, done a few of his seminars, and it's always awesome to see what he's been up to and just watch his evolution and progression.

I first heard about Steve for kettlebells. He was one of the very first kettlebell guys I ever followed back in the day when he was with the RKC. And in this interview, we talk all about what exercises are best for you using kettlebells, what kettlebells are best for some other methods we discuss around pain management, and we even talk a fair amount about longevity which Steve has been into, and for the record, Steve is, I think he just turned 54 around the time of this interview, and he's doing really good.

So really enjoyed this podcast. It was always fun to check in with him and see how he is doing. So if you're interested in kettlebells, looking for new movements, new exercises Steve's perspective on longevity and performance, I think you will really enjoy this interview. And this interview is brought to you by the Flex4.

So go to the link below, which is MikeTNelson.com forward slash FLEX, the number four, and in it you will hear what Steve's top four recommendations are for longevity in just a few minutes. So this is a special excerpt from the podcast. This will not be featured in the podcast here, but if you are currently on the newsletter, you will receive it.

And if you want to be on the newsletter and hear all of the past flex fours, including this one, go to MikeTeenElson.com forward slash FLEX the number four that will allow you to listen to Steve's top four recommendations for longevity along with all of the other past episodes. And that also puts you on to the daily newsletter We've got all sorts of fun stuff for you there.

The podcast is also brought to you by Tecton Ketones. We have a new link, go to tectonlife.com and check out and use the code DRMIKE, D R M I K E to

save 20%. This is by far and away my favorite exogenous ketone beverage. So you're probably wondering what the hell are exogenous ketones? These are ketones you can take in.

In this case, they're in the form of a ketone ester, which means that they pass the digestion and your body has ketones. The best part about this is you do not have to do a ketogenic diet per se. What I've been using them for mostly is on some of my longer kiteboard things down here in South Padre, Texas, which is where I'm at right now.

Some days I just don't really want to stop if the wind is good. So I may come in and take a break. May have a bunch of electrolytes from element and some tecton and then just go right back out in the water. The biggest thing I found with them related to kiteboarding is just much better mental acuity, especially if your brain feels a little tired, especially if you're trying to learn new things.

Definitely seems to help with that. And it's not a stimulant. So we have some other people and clients that use them. Towards the evening or later in the day, they have a little bit more fatigue, but they still want to be able to sleep at night and they don't really want to consume anything that is a stimulant.

So they've worked really good for that. Full disclosure, I am a scientific advisor and an ambassador at Tekton. So I do make some money and do have a vested interest in them also as a company. So go to [TektonLife.com](https://www.tektonlife.com), use the code Dr. Mike to save 20%, go to the Flex 4. You're the top four recommendations for longevity and all of the past flex floors, along with being on the newsletter and enjoy this conversation with Steve Cotter, thank you very much for listening to the podcast, huge thanks to Steve Cotter for being on the podcast and sharing all of his wisdom and time with us.

I always like to get different perspectives from people like Steve, who have been in the game and doing this at a high level, both personally and. Traveling all around the world teaching for God. See, he's been teaching now of coming up on almost like over two decades. So it's always fun to check in with them and see both what techniques have worked in the practice and also in the real world.

[00:05:15] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** How's it going, man? I'm always curious, like how did you get into kettlebells?

Cause you were like one of the very first people I ever saw do kettlebells. Like I saw at Josh's place he had kettlebells and strongman and all this weird stuff I had never seen before. And I remember leaving that seminar going online like, I don't know what I typed into the internet at that point.

Like kettlebell or something like that and one of your Like showreels came up with you doing all this crazy stuff with kettlebells and doing splits across Bosu balls and all this stuff and I'm like, what the hell this is crazy

[00:05:51] **Steve Cotter:** Yeah, I was definitely an early adapter in the early days of you know when kettlebell made it to the West Pavel and Dragondorf being the kind of the ones that created the market for that.

So I was early on in that and what drew me to it was I was a subscriber to dragon door had a catalog. Maybe they still do, but I was subscribed at that time to their catalog called vitalics. Oh yeah. Yeah. And I think of some years after that, they split it and they had like the hard style and the vitalics, but in the early days, it was just vitalic and there wasn't a huge, there wasn't much of a fitness component when I first subscribed to that catalog, probably late nineties or early 2000.

And that was like quarterly, I think it was like a quarterly, you'd get it in the mail and I had been a subscriber because I was. I was, very involved in the Chinese martial arts in that time of my life, and I was interested in, all things related qigong and tai chi and those types of the soft.

Soft aspects of the Chinese martial arts. So I had been a subscriber and I bought one or two, books from the Dragondore publications. I started seeing probably 2001. I started seeing Pavel's advertisements and that was I think You know, when they were first getting into branching into fitness I think it was like relaxing to stretch first one and then power to the people.

I thought that was interesting. And then I started seeing the kettlebell around, late 2001. I saw the the art, Russian kettlebell challenge book DVD. And that caught my eye. The marketing of it as you well remember John McCain's very gifted guerrilla marketing, a big ad at the Dan Kennedy method.

And, so his writing was quite quite interesting and compelling. And, I. So I was just reading the ad and I thought, Oh, the Soviet, special forces and military and martial art people were using this. And so that it caught my attention. I had already at least conceptual.

I had been interested in Olympic weightlifting but, it wasn't widespread. This was several years before CrossFit came on the scene. It wasn't like now where you can find Olympic lifting at any CrossFit box. But, at that time, I think there was a. Olympic weightlifting coach Mike Bergner, but he was like, yeah, he was an hour north of me where I'm way north in San Diego County.

And I'm down like in the East County. So for me, it was like an hour and I went up there, one, one time or two times to train with him, but it wasn't something I could sustain just based on the travel. So, in that prior to that. period of finding kettlebells, I would go to the gym and my main training had always been martial arts.

I had, going to the gym and just following the common practices of that time, which was still basically around, bodybuilding, Muscle Media 2000 magazine. It's like, oh, what are the workouts? Or the Arnold Schwarzenegger, encyclopedia. It's like, okay, so you know, so I'm going to, doing machines and free weights and curls and but I never felt that training in the gym, although it, pumped me up and whatnot I never felt that it transferred into being a better athlete, a better mover, a more effective martial artists.

And so intuitively I had the idea like Olympic weightlifting would definitely be more relatable to the martial arts because of the explosive development of power, and striking and not having access to that. So that led me to the kettlebell. I saw these advertisements and I probably sat on it for a good, six, eight months just looking at the ads.

Oh, this is really cool. I was still teaching Kung Fu at that time. Just on the weekends, I think at that point, cause I was finishing up My college degree my, I finished my kinesiology degree in 2001, so I was probably in the last semester, going to school during the week, doing Kung Fu on the weekends.

I brought the catalog out to my Kung Fu students, and I showed those guys and then the next weekend, one of the, one of my students at that time, he had purchased some kettlebells. So he brought them, to the park where we're training. And that was the first time I ever touched them.

And I just didn't have any instruction, but I had seen the pictures and I did what felt like a swing, what I swing. And immediately I felt this, Oh man, the ground connection from the ground up. And I felt that transference of energy. And I was like, man, this is, I got to have it.

So at that point I was reluctant just because of the cost. I wasn't hadn't really developed. I was a young parent. I think we had just one child at that time. My second daughter was born in 2001. So yeah, I think we still had like one child that was about two and a half, three years old at that time.

And it didn't have a lot of discretionary income. So I was like, I didn't want to pay 180 bucks for, a single kettlebell. But once I felt it, I was like, I gotta have it. So I ordered immediately that day. I ordered a 16 and a 24 kilogram from Dragon Door and I got them, four or five days later.

And my student had burned me a copy of the it was actually a VHS. Oh yeah. Yeah. Pavel, Pavel Satsali in Russian kettlebell challenge. So I put that in the TV in my living room and I was just following and doing the movements that he was showing. And I was doing that, diligently every day.

And so that's how I got my start with it. And obviously it's evolved, tremendously in, in methodology and understanding and experience and all those things, 20 something years later, but at that time that was, that was all the information and Yeah, never look back.

And I, to this day I continue to work with the kettlebells, continue to, practice and teach and integrate them, with my overall health and well, well being approach.

[00:12:18] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. I think it's for younger listeners. It's hard to appreciate that. Back then, like there wasn't a lot of stuff on the internet, like magazines were probably still the same way you could order some VHS, and obviously Pavel had some, books and things that came out and I'm very similar to like having, I don't remember it was Pavel or who it was.

I had a VHS and it wasn't an instructional video was. The guy doing kettlebell snatches and I heard of kettlebells a little bit, but I was like, oh man, I'm a poor student. Like I can't, these are expensive and the shipping was just crazy. I'm like, ah, I don't know if I'm going to like this.

No one around me had ever, I couldn't find them anywhere. I couldn't use them. I remember ordering a set of these PowerRX kettlebells for 256. I got a 16, a 24, and a 32. And at the time, I didn't know anything about kettlebells. And they just put them all in one box. They didn't even bother wrapping them.

The poor UPS guy probably gave him a hernia dropping them off at my front door. And I remember opening them up and picking up the 16 and going, these

are more weird shape than I thought they would be. And trying to do a snatches with it and just destroying my wrist, my forearm, because the kettlebell would go up and it was and just kept whapping me on the forearm.

I remember doing it here. I go back in and watch the VHS. I'm like, what are they doing? And I go back out in the yard. That didn't work. Come back in, watch the VHS again. Yes. And then later I realized that the actual shape of the kettlebell matters. And these were so like looking back now, they're so mis molded like the handles had these huge burrs and I just ripped the crap out of my hands.

I didn't, wasn't gripping them wrong. They're not molded correctly. And so later, eventually I stayed with it and my buddy, I found Brad Nelson. He was one of the only people I could find that was teaching kettlebells. So I remember the time I paid him 100 for a lesson, which I thought was just astronomically crazy.

And I realized, I'm like, oh, you can learn how to do these. And, oh, like, the shape of the kettlebell, like, does matter. And, oh, look, the handles are smooth on the RKC, like, the better ones. Like, oh.

[00:14:31] **Steve Cotter:** Great. Yeah. And Brad, I remember he was also in Twin Cities. Yeah. Yeah. Wow.

[00:14:39] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. And then what have you found like over the years since you've had a lot of practice using kettlebells to now, what do you find is like the big advantage of kettlebells compared to, because now people have access to, I think a lot more stuff than they used to from, like you said, from CrossFit to Olympic weightlifting, to, gyms in their garage and equipment, like, what do you find that the kettlebell still serves a unique purpose for, like, what is it most useful for?

[00:15:07] **Steve Cotter:** Absolutely. And I do believe in the concept of best use for tools. So with regards to kettlebells straight off the bat from an energy, energetic point of view, it's power endurance. It effectively develops power endurance, I believe more effectively than any other single tool that I've, that I've seen or that people are familiar with.

So that's the first thing. And then also it has unique. Benefits for what I like to call loaded mobility, which is essentially mobility that's based upon body weight, movement, but adding load on the frame in a way that is structurally

aligned, and so by that, it allows the design of the kettlebell with the space between the load and the handle.

And that window allows us to keep the wrist in a neutral position and it allows us to be able to connect our elbow and forearm to our trunk, which is a huge advantage that you cannot replicate with other handheld weights like a dumbbell or a barbell, with a barbell your elbow is, forward if you're holding it and, your wrist is extended way back.

The kettlebell allows that neutral position here and the connectivity here. As well as when we're overhead, it allows the same thing, that straight alignment, so the load can distribute directly vertically over your center of mass and base of support. And so now if I'm doing various body weight movements with, with either a light to moderate kettlebell, I'm allowed to essentially add a power component to the mobility.

And so that loaded mobility allows us to develop a more athletic expression of. Our body weight movements. And that's a lot of times what athletes that have a strength training background, they're all, they all, they often shy away from body weight because the idea is that, well, you're not getting that power.

Once you learn the movement. Now it's like, I have to keep doing more reps to add F to add intensity to it. And if the focus is on strength. The kettlebell allows you to load those body weight movements now, in a, again, a biomechanically efficient alignment. Yeah. So those are the two, the two obvious.

And then, a third thing that is. Very popular with kettlebell fans is just the variability, the versatility, the fact that we can do traditional strength training movements like press and squat, but we can also pass it. We can flip it and juggle it. And, in the last, half a decade or so we've seen that the term.

Maybe the last decade, this ubiquitous kettlebell flow idea, which kettlebell juggling has been around for a long time, but flow is a, an American style of taking the juggling and adding that your own personality to it, without having as many rules and structure.

To it. So, the variability is the huge thing is, loaded carries and throwing the bell, and all these different types of. Ways of expressing our training.

[00:18:30] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** I've explained that to people that even if you're using the lighter kettlebells, if you have like say two 16 kettlebells and you have them in a rack position and you're doing a front squat, it at the same time, it

feels good, but yet it feels difficult, more difficult than you, what you would expect for the load.

Right. Cause it feels like the load is next to you. It feels secure. If you were to try to do that with dumbbells, it just feels. Completely awkward. Even small dumbbells, like they don't sit right. They're trying to move all over, but I think even like a front squat is what the double kettlebells is, I'd say very deceptive because as the kettlebells get bigger, you're displacing that load more out in.

And the amount of, core stability, mobility, everything else to execute the movement, I think is much more involved than what people realize, right? So if you had someone who, could front squat, say 140 pounds, but you put two 32 kg kettlebells on them. That's a completely different world, even though the weight is similar,

[00:19:36] **Steve Cotter:** right?

Absolutely. So that, yeah, that, that form fitting of the kettlebell allows them to, and this idea of framing and, that's another, for me, and a huge advantage with the kettlebell that allows that. That framing which I'm really involved in the jiu jitsu. It's something I love training jiu jitsu.

I train pretty much every day and that's my main focus for my training my, sport aspect and, doing competitions. But the focus is just the training itself. And then competitions is a way, well, let's test it out and see how my training's progressing. Right. But. The idea of framing is of major significance in martial arts, jiu jitsu and other martial arts.

But, specifically talking about jiu jitsu, the idea of keeping the elbows connected. With the body, with the hips and the activity of the grip, the involvement of the style of gripping with the kettlebell where we're gripping with the fingers as opposed to how people would normally hold, say, a bar or a dumbbell where they're crushing it with their palm.

So these are all things that are parallels between the two with, it's not a good idea to have your elbow floating when we're doing kettlebell exercise. And it's also a bad idea. So, To have your elbow floating when you're grappling because that allows for, under hooks and things like that.

So I find that it reinforces good framing mechanics and the framing is huge for functional strength in the sense of.

In the vernacular of, fitness, we hear the term core, right? Core is a pretty big a word, word that's thrown into, core strength, core stability or dynamic core, and normally in conversation when people are discussing core, they're talking about the muscular core.

And what I've come to focus on more and more is the skeletal core, it's not to discount the muscular core obviously has its significance, but the skeletal core is really the architecture. of the body. And so learning how to use the bones to transfer your weight is where we're getting, real power and real and, in martial arts and sports like jujitsu being heavy has more to do with how you're distributing your weight and using your bony architecture than it is of just applying muscular effort.

It's like I'm squeezing you as hard as I can. Yeah. That's not the same kind of pressure, just being heavy on top of you. And I find that relates also to the weightlifting and the kettlebell lifting, where when you learn how to transfer your bones, and shift your weight from side to side and forward and back.

So those are, that's another great aspect of kettlebell is the education of the body mechanics and body alignment and not to discount the importance of muscle, but the reality is the muscle focus is only going to bring us so far. We only get so big, so strong, and that's only going to be sustainable for so long.

But the bones is, we're bipedal. And so having that upright posture and understanding how to shift your weight and coordinate everything is really another level of movement. Education, I would say the kettlebell is a great teacher in that regard

[00:23:24] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** related to that. What are your thoughts on even just bone health for people who may not be doing a sport particular related to kettlebells and especially I think about the kettlebell juggling or for people who are not familiar with that, like kind of the hand to hand kettlebell, like You're moving the kettlebell, you're tossing it from your right hand to your left hand and catching it and doing these flips.

So the kettlebell is moving through air, but you have to grab it again, decelerate it, and then re accelerate it the other way, which I think is a very underappreciated movement and is not something that most people are exposed to in the gym, both from how do you take and implement, absorb the impact, make sure it's not quote unquote a harmful impact, redirect it.

And then there's some very interesting research on bone research that these like very, like these impulse loads might be more specifically better for bone health than even a constant load. That's debatable but I think about just those load spikes you're going to get with your upper body that you probably won't get that kind of loading anywhere else when you're moving and flipping a kettlebell from your left hand to your right hand.

[00:24:37] **Steve Cotter:** Yeah, that's a really interesting idea, rabbit hole, to go down, electro, the electromagnetic of the skeleton as a, uh, mechanical, well, yeah this idea of this electrical impulse, so this, well, we're talking about the, the dynamic nature of the movement of releasing and catching, but there's an energy, There's a movement of energy in that, and so the bone being a, a conductor of this Electromagnetic energy or, for lack of a better word I would say a couple of things about that.

I tend to agree with that. I tend to be holistic in my understanding and appreciation for, human anatomy and physiology in terms of that the body is an integrated system. The nervous system is often related to like, the branches of a tree, the arteries and just the body itself being this electrical receptor of absorbing and transmitting energy.

But on a less esoteric Less esoteric way of looking at this is the bone is a tissue itself, right? The bone is a is it is a form of tissue and so tissues adapt to stress And so the kettlebell in the way that it is fitting, you know for example you clean or you snatch or you press and The load is compressing into your forms.

And so, like all forms of training, there is the importance of progressive overload, of not doing too much too soon, or too quickly too soon, but with a intelligent approach of gradual progression, the tissues of the bone will become more dense through the use of kettlebell movements, just from the pressure.

Assuming that you're using a weight that is not too heavy and keeping a volume that is not too much volume and building that gradually over time your forearms get very dense and very strong, then there's the obvious, advantage of just the gripping itself, whether it's holding it for prolonged periods like farmers walk or doing, long sets of swings or the dynamic, as you talked about with the hand type of movement all of those give that, that grip development, but at the same time, a dexterity.

Absolutely. It's not just gripping, rip it, but it's catching and releasing. So you're building this dexterity of absorbing and releasing. Yeah, the kettlebell has a lot

of very beneficial properties, in my experience. And I'm turning 54 in a few days.

And, I'm still able to do pretty much everything physically. And I attribute a lot of that to the kettlebell training. Kettlebell keeps you not only fit, but it definitely contributes to a long term sustainability. Throughout the, the aging of the life cycle, maybe when I'm, maybe 20 years from now, I won't be using kettlebells, I don't know, but, I've seen some precedents.

I know, know a guy that's I think in his, he's about 80 now, he still does kettlebell competition, Jerry Gray. He's up in North central, North Michigan. He still does kettlebell competition, he used as like 16 kilos, not using a super heavy weight, but yeah, in your late seventies and early eighties, that's plenty of load.

And, so there's definitely examples out there of individuals who, continue into their, well beyond their mid, midlife years. So yeah, and I think more and more over time, the mobility component becomes more interesting and more, more relevant. I think as younger individuals, strength is very attractive, I want to get bigger, I want to get stronger, this type of idea and at some point we reach our physiological peak, and there's not an exact number and that, that will vary depending on epigenetic, genetics and lifestyle but for most men, it's somewhere between, 35 to 40 ish, And then you plateau and then you're on the downslope and so now it's about how quick, how rapid is that downward.

And so it's the ability to when you achieve that plateau to try to ride it out as long as you can and whatever losses is a slowing the aging process, if you will, or the deterioration of the catabolic phase of life. And so exercise in general has shown, time and time again to be beneficial for that.

But the point being is that as we get older, I think we tend to value, at least speaking for myself. And, I, quite, quite a number of people I train with the Jiu Jitsu is like, we have quite a few guys and, 50 plus so I get to, I get a similar feedback from other people around that age group, where it's like, just want to be able to move and be pain free, I'm not trying to.

I don't want to set records anymore, PRs and, lift the heaviest weight I can lift for one rep, but I want to be able to sustain my effort. I want to be able to play with my kids or grandkids, depending and so that mobility component becomes more important especially if you get to the point in the lifespan where you're not able to move so well, or you have a lot of pain or you have a lot of stiffness.

And. People don't need to live with this kind of pain, knowledge is power or knowledge applied is power and I think generationally the generation, the baby boomers are still in, in the mindset is like, Oh, well, my back hurts. So that's just, I'm just going to deal with it.

My back's always going to hurt. And it's like, give up on the idea. Well, Maybe I can make it better, right? Maybe I can reduce or maybe I can even eliminate that pain and, I went really deep into that myself starting about a decade ago because I was getting, really chronic back pain, for example, in my case, and at that time, I was still traveling all the time, flying around the world.

I was doing kettlebell summit for about a 15 year period. And taught courses in 70 different countries. Wow. And, I was always on airplanes and flying across oceans and sitting in like one spot for 12, 15, 24 hours of travel, and sitting in airports, sitting on trains. And, then I'd have to go and I teach, two or three days of swinging and cleaning and snatching kettlebells.

And as you mentioned at the beginning, I've always been very hands on learned by doing it, ever been one of those coaches that is, okay, I'm just going to talk about the movements. No, this is, we're going to, I'm going to show you, and now we're going to do it together. And then I'm going to correct you.

We're going to do it again and do it more. And, so. It was at a point where my lower back was like the pain was just continuing to get worse and my lifestyle was not helping because I was just immobile for long periods and then extremely dynamic for a few days and then immobile again for long periods of time.

And so I was at a point, at that point I was in my late thirties, probably a little, probably like early forties. And I was like, man, I got to do something with my back because I earned my, I earned my life through physical education, kettlebell training, especially at that time.

And, I'm not going to, I don't want to get a surgery. Like, I don't really believe in that. It has its place. I don't discount the value, but it's like. That's the last one I don't want to have surgery on my spine. It was like, I have to do something, at that point I started to go really deeply into just self study at home studying yoga.

And then I found that yin style yoga, especially I was really gravitated towards that and did a lot of work with the yin style, which is where we're taking certain positions and we're holding it for at least three minutes without moving and just

breathing and relaxing and letting the gravity pull you deeper into the posture and I started noticing the relief from that.

And, in that study, I was really interested in understanding pain and the mechanism of what we call pain or how we're experiencing pain. And so that became a big part of my own, personal interests. And it was, I came to the understanding that what we identify and on a personal level as pain.

I'm talking about physical pain. There's other forms, we can have emotional pain of course. But with regards to physical pain basically as we identify it is essentially memories that are stored within the cellular structures of the body, within the cells. And so it can manifest itself.

In a number of different ways, like I could have pain in my elbow, but, the mechanical view is like, oh, you have a pain in your elbow. So there's something wrong with your elbow, but a holistic view is going to step back and say, well, you're experiencing in your elbow, but that may not be the root cause it may be something to do with some other aspect.

So it's, you have to go deep into it and work your way through and figure this out. Okay. So I, I started studying that a lot and started identifying and understanding that, look, what I'm calling pain is just, it's a memory that I have. Something is triggering it. And, I don't need to hold on to that.

I don't need to hold on to that memory. I can free that up. And, so it's all, it involves really breathing. It involves deep breathing. And then, there's different methods and I don't claim to be expert at too many things. I just know what I know, but movement, breathing with movement is one very powerful form of therapy for.

Reducing and eliminating pain. And I know that through experience, so that's anyway that's a little bit, gets into a different conversation, but stemming out of the kettlebell, it's just to say that the mobility aspect of the kettlebell is a huge asset that it offers.

It's not just about the obvious things of, Oh yeah, we're building muscle. We're building endurance. Absolutely. But You can also be quite less intense and focusing more on let's restore mobility in the body and let's build that and taking that further. Okay, let's figure out how to get out of pain or at least reduce the pain.

And so we don't have to spend the rest of your years suffering because suffering is a choice. Right? Pain is an aspect of life. And, we all experience pain at different times, but suffering is something that We choose for ourselves. I believe that, and so, people that have physical pain and just like, oh, man, well, that's always going to be here and I just have to deal with it.

Well, psychologically, you've given up on the possibility of healing. And, that's, and so if you were to make space in your consciousness to say, I'm open to the possibility that I can improve this situation, now there's room to, there's room for improvement. And so that's a big part of what I'm into and what I like to transmit is it's the physical education ultimately, and I've always been partial to the kettlebell.

It's a great tool. It has a lot of utility and I love it and I have a lot of experience, but it's not. It's not about the kettlebell per se, it's about the human experience within the body, and it's the education of that, which I consider the foundation of all education. I believe that physical education needs to be the center of human education. It's not the only form, we need to educate ourselves, academically and intellectually and, emotionally. However, without the physical education, we are extremely incomplete, and there's a lot of very smart people that have a high degree of education, but they are completely ignorant about physical education, and that's a very dangerous, and in my opinion, it's not responsible because to be responsible is to be response able, and so when you have to respond, that's a physical skill.

There's a physical thing there. And so, the, I say physical education is our salvation. I believe in physical education. I. Envision a world that we're stepping into where all the children begin their physical education at the early years, once they're, well, ideally, even at the beginning, but that's through modeling, and so a baby that's crawling, they're observing their, and so if they're in an environment, obviously, where there's no physical activity, they're going to already be at a They're already off to a slow start, but at least at the point where they're toddlers and they're walking.

And now we have the bipedal locomotion walking and then shortly thereafter, there's going to be running and jumping and then the climbing, right? And the stages of human development, there needs to be education in those early times because, you start a child in their early years by the time they're 20, And they have exposure to good quality physical education by the time they're 20, they're physically very capable and along with the physical education, we are developing much greater control of our emotional and our mental responses to situation because through the body we were learning.

In the what we call training replaces instincts, right? Instincts is what we do without training. And so when we have training, the instinct. Is there's a fire you pull away from the fire and the training is there's a fire you step in to through the center of the fire, or the storm, if you will, right?

And so you pull away from the storm. You get caught up in the storm. You step in to the storm and now you're in the vortex, right? Protected. So that's the conceptual idea. But yeah. Instinct is what we do when we don't have training. And then when we have training that replaces the instinct, and it's not to say that instincts aren't valid.

It's just to say that like most things in the modern world, our instincts also to large degree, in my opinion, have been corrupted through the lifestyle that we live. And, because it can be an instinct to just plop down on the couch and watch the TV, but that may not necessarily be the best solution for advancing, and, I'm not absolute about anything.

I think things in moderation is fine. All of us are only human and we work and we rest and we play, but there has to be a balance. And there's too much, America, I think more than most places I'm sure is there's a lot of deceased, there's a lot of deceased through the lifestyle, through the consumerism.

And just through the education of needing more stuff and the food sources have been corrupted and a lot of things have been, and so the general education about how to eat well and eat healthy and having access to real food as opposed to these food stuffs that many people are eating.

That has some food in it, but it's a bunch of chemicals and other stuff and it's like killing us slowly. So how do we resolve that? Well, I think it starts generationally is we need to train the children and prepare the children with good physical education. Because with that foundation and now you have 20 year olds that are well equipped, they can, because in the training we learn to deal with stress.

And we learn how to, we have to stay calm, and we have to, we have to deal with it, and we learn to deal with pressure, and we learn to deal with discomfort, and if you're not, conversely, if we don't have access to that type of environment, then we have a generation of people growing up, it's where they've never been uncomfortable, and they've never had to deal with it.

Hardship and they've never had to deal with conflict and, and that's really very dangerous. And we do have a generation of, young people now and I'm not all

of them. Some of them are exceptional, but there's also a lot of them that are very poorly equipped for what's ahead, and I don't know the answers any more than anyone else as far as, what exactly is ahead, but it just in terms of forward progress yeah.

I'd feel much more comfortable knowing that the youth are, have good physical education, because there's a certain amount of discipline and self control that is developing through the training process, so anyway, that's my passionate rant about the importance.

[00:43:08] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Oh, that's good.

Because I think it's. It's hard when you're learning to do exercise or doing things, because exercise, when you're learning to do it, it sucks. It's not really, it's not really that fun. It's a lot of discomfort, and it's only over, I don't know what the literature says. Last time I looked, I think it was like, Exercising routinely three to five times a week.

It's like one to three years for someone to be considered a quote, lifelong exerciser, it's multiple reps. And even then you like it, it still sucks, but you can think your way through it and know, Oh, this is beneficial. I feel better at the end. I will have these goals.

It's like this different shift in mindset. I almost equated to, I've been doing a lot more cold water immersion and stuff like that. And I thought like, Oh, if I've been doing this most days after a couple of years, yeah, it'd be pretty easy, but every time before you get in, you're just, there's that hesitation of like, this sucks, what am I doing?

This is stupid. And then you talk your way through it and you're like, oh, okay. Yeah. Well, I'll feel better when I'm done. And it's, it just seems like everything now is such instant gratification, but I think also, I'm part of this, I think. Educators my fault too, is explaining to kids that, and younger people, that yeah, it's going to suck, but here are some of the benefits from it, and then also, like you said, what is the alternative, because especially now, it's very Easy to have everything done for you.

Like the little cartoon, we're all becoming WALL E and we can have technology provide other things for us where, even several hundred years ago, you just wouldn't exist. Like you didn't have any other options where now, unfortunately we have other options and we're wired to try to do the thing that's the most efficient.

We're just happen to be in this environment where we can make that happen now and unfortunately to our detriment So that's my little poor sense.

[00:45:10] **Steve Cotter:** Yes And balance is you know, and you know I'm not saying and I don't think you're saying we need to do away with creature comfort Oh, no prefer, we want to be able to sleep on a bed instead of the floor Oh, definitely.

You want to have a house instead of a you know a tent or a debris hut So it's not about going backwards to the way things used to be, but it's about, in my observation, it's about the reprioritization of values, and and the reason why, you know, and so the reason why, as you said that, the exercise sucked in the beginning for the first is because of the habitual nature of our behaviors is, it does take time to develop habits.

And, that's a neutral thing. It can be good habit. It can be bad habit, but whatever the case may be, we are creatures of habit as the saying goes. And, and so it's about instilling habits that are yes, in the short term, they can be interpreted as sucking because it's not comfortable.

Rather be sitting on the beach, but understanding the value is that. There's the payoff is later, and when we're in a quick fix type of society programming of, , I want it now and you want to push that button that's a difficult sell, of, okay, I want you to invest in, but we do it.

In pursuit of like financial most of the time. So it's like, okay, I'm willing to be an intern for the year because I know when I'm finished with that internship, then I'm going to get, a job. And then, ultimately I'll be able to have a higher paying job. I want that, but I got to do this to get that, but it's the same thing for any other type of advancement that we want to make.

It's not just for financial, but, for exercise. Yeah. You have to do the movements in the beginning. It's not comfortable because you're not trained in it. Your body you're not conditioned for it yet. And it's not even about enjoyment. It's just about accepting that we need hardship in order to grow.

And that can be balanced. We can have hardship, but it doesn't have to always be hardship. But at the same time, it's very dangerous to never have any hardship and only have comfort. Yeah. So the physical education again that's really crucial for civilization and for humans, on an individual and a familial and a societal level to be well physically educated.

And we're taught The focus is on, it's a sort of a, there's this bipolar or this dualistic approach, where we were brought into the world as children labeling everything as good or bad. So a sunny day is a good day and a rainy day, oh, the weather is bad, the rainy day is good, right?

And the sunny day is also good. We need both. They're both good. It's like, I don't follow him too much, but he's a famous guy and most people definitely know him as Jocko, right? Jocko. Yeah. Yeah. It's good. Very good. Yeah. Oh yeah. You didn't get any sleep? Good. Something bad happens, good, right?

So, I can relate to that. That's there's a lot of truth in that. And, embracing the suck, if you will. It's good. So yeah, we need to have that. We need to have that that, Spartans we need the young ones to be trained like Spartans on some level.

[00:49:15] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. Yeah. I think like the luxury we have now in modern society is that we can. Set up our life to have the optionality in a perfect world to pick the stressors we want to expose ourself to, right? Whether that's heat, that's cold, that's, I have a whole course of physiologic flexibility that's based on that.

It's like, okay, so you're good at nutrition, you're good at exercise, you get, sleep's good, you got, you're pretty good at the basics covered, but what Areas that are going to have the most leverage. So you're, you would want to precondition yourself to certain areas because like you said, life's going to happen.

You are going to have stressors. These things are going to happen. What can you do to be more prepared for it? So doing some cold exposure, doing some hot exposure, changes in pH, breathing fuels, that kind of thing. To me your physiology is so wired for those things, but we know because of adaptation, you can get better at them.

And that way, I think, just like training, right, just like exercise, using kettlebells, getting better for doing jiu jitsu, if someone puts you in a weird hold or whatever, you've preconditioned your body so you're a little bit more prepared for this kind of unknown thing that's coming. But unfortunately, The society thing is getting better, but it appears to be that comfort is the only thing that matters, and then people are exposed to high stressors, and stuff goes completely sideways, and they're like, well, I don't know, I don't understand what happened.

It's like, well, you weren't prepared for it, so having the foresight to see, okay, what areas do I want to be a little bit more prepared in, doesn't guarantee it's going to go well, but when, the shit hits the fan, hopefully you're a little bit, better prepared to handle those things when they come your way.

[00:50:56] **Steve Cotter:** Right, right. Absolutely. And I agree with you about the cold exposure. That's another expression of that, that discomfort, adrenaline rush and, impending doom. And yet we do it anyway. And we do it again because payoff is very valuable.

[00:51:16] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. Awesome. And two final questions.

One, what movements for someone who's new, who is primarily goal is to, move well, reduce pain, like have a good longevity. What kind of the, what would be your top movements if they only have access to a kettlebell? Like, where would you recommend that they would start with? Like, what couple of movements would you recommend?

Specific to

[00:51:40] **Steve Cotter:** kettlebell?

[00:51:41] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, let's say they only have a kettlebell. That's like the only tool they have. Like, should they prioritize a swing, snatch, squat? Like, what are your favorite kind of starting points? I

[00:51:52] **Steve Cotter:** would say the I would say the three

I would say that. Two hands swing is pretty ubiquitous and it's low entry, and that's because of, the hip flexion and extension is so, so if you can sit in a chair and you can stand up out of a chair, that's essentially hip flexion, hip extension. The swing is patterning that.

And then there's obvious conditioning and cardiovascular components with that secondarily, a goblet squat is a great working that deep position if someone is quite nascent and they don't have the background and physical education or training, even just a goblet squat onto a stable box or onto a chair, to reduce the range of motion and then gradually, decreasing the height of the box or the chair so you can gradually go lower and lower.

And with some time, you don't need the chair anymore. Now you're doing full range. So that's developing the legs, which is, fundamental for upright.

locomotion as well as getting good hip working that hip flexion and hip extension at a, greater range of motion.

So the two hand swing, the goblet squat, and then I like the press because we're getting some, upper body pushing movement and we're getting some extension in that overhead position. And most of us, to, to all degree, all of us to some degree but some of us to a greater degree have much too much flexion and, gravity in general is throughout the lifespan we're being pulled down, so, the overhead press is going to work you into extension, help with posture as well as working, your upper body pressing muscles in a traditional sense, yeah.

The press sort of has to be previously we'd have to learn to clean to be able to press it. But what I would do is just, the kettlebell on the floor, insert the hand into the handle, use two hands to bring it to the chest and then release the second hand press with the one hand. So I think those three would be the most important there could be argument for some others, but yeah, and I think because they're all relatively low tech, very little barriers to entry it can be a light kettlebell, it can be low reps, 5 to 10 reps, and do some repeats.

And it's not super technical. The press is just a straight line. Keep it close to the midline of your body. Go from point A to point B. Try to get full extension, in the top of the movement. Goblet squat, the weights ahead of you sit back, use the weight as a counterbalance and the swing, just.

Sit back and stand up. So pretty low tech and a lot of return on those three.

[00:54:53] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** And last question, what would be your top four recommendations for longevity? Someone's listening to this podcast and they're like, Oh, he's doing pretty good. He's in his mid fifties. He's still kicking butt doing jujitsu every day.

Like. If someone wants to be in a similar area and still be mobile, reduce pain, what would be your top four things you would tell them?

[00:55:17] **Steve Cotter:** First and foremost, awareness of the breath. That's foundational to everything else that we're doing. So there can be formal breath training, but it's not necessary.

Whether it's yoga or qigong or some other type of breathing program. But at a rudimentary level, it's being conscious and giving some attention to the breath on a daily basis. Even if it's just five minutes, in the morning where you're laying or sitting quietly and just.

Closing your eyes and breathing. Inhale slowly. Breathing. Exhale slowly. And then with more practice, that awareness of the breath will start carrying over into our exercise and into our daily life. So breath awareness is foundational. Secondarily posture, so breath and posture is underneath everything else.

And so the idea of posture is we want to be, we're upright bipedal. So we want to be long. Okay, we want to be long, so we want to be upright. We want to, have the shoulders drop, elongate. Not being tense, but just having. Alignment. So there's a little bit of a surface tension in terms of holding the body in position, but not being rigid and squeezing the muscles.

It's just using the position. So posture conversely, if you don't know what good posture is. Well, it's easy to understand what is bad posture, right? So, if you're rounding forward, if you're leaning on one side, now in some cases there may be injuries and or, genetic predispositions where it's not about being symmetrical because we are not.

Symmetry is a kind of an ideal that we, can shoot towards, but we're not going to be symmetrical. So it's not about being 50 50 and parting our hair down the middle necessarily. Right. Part of posture is understanding that there is bilateral asymmetries and your pelvis might be slightly tilted.

And so one leg is going to look a little bit longer, but it's about referencing the midline of the body, that vertical axis. And being upright. So breathing posture. Third thing,

movement. Okay. Daily movement. And I don't say exercise, because that can mean different things to different people, but movement. If that's out walking, out in nature, outside then that's fine. If that's swimming, if that's jogging, if that's playing some sport if that's lifting some kind of any kind of movement that, that you're willing to do and that, that you can be excited about.

So daily movement. And the fourth thing is we can call it mindset. And I would say that attitude is altitude. And so, the universe and the world that we experience doesn't have any meaning in and of itself, other than the meaning that we give to it. And therefore, at any given moment, we can choose to have an expectation of a positive outcome or an expectation of a negative outcome.

And so being conscious of what your tendency is towards mindset. And if you're not finding happiness and fulfillment consider that. At some level is a choice. And if we are conditioned to expect negativity or to expect some negative outcome, we are most likely preparing ourselves for that experience.

So basically Keep a mindset of well being, keep a mindset of well being there's only one, there's only one of you, right? And so, get away from comparison, I'm not trying to be better than you. Right? I'm trying to be better than who I used to be. So, and I'm the best because I'm the best me.

I'm the only me, right? And you're the only you, so you're the best you. And, take that unnecessary pressure off of ourselves and accept the fact that as long as we're here, We serve a purpose and, make a decision if you choose the positive outcome, or you choose the negative outcome. And I recommend that having that, as I call it, attitude is altitude, having that positive attitude.

Predisposition is a big factor of longevity because it unloads a lot of unnecessary stress and it has been said that stress is the number one killer, right? So, like the book says, don't sweat the small stuff and it's all small stuff. Yeah. So in summary, breath, posture, awareness of breath, awareness of posture, daily movement.

And keeping a positive mental outlook towards life and our daily affairs. Those are my four keys. If there were five, I would say pay attention to our sleep and our nutrition. So if I were to extend it to six things, it would be sleep and nutrition. But I think the positive outlook is even more pressing or impactful than even the nutrition, because You can be a miserable person that eats perfect and you're still miserable.

[01:01:21] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Cool. Those are awesome. Appreciate it. Yeah. And where can people find more about you? I know you've got a website, you've got all sorts of products, like, where can they learn about all the wonderful stuff you've got going on?

[01:01:34] **Steve Cotter:** Yeah, so I'm most active on Instagram. So those of you that are on Instagram, you can find me, it's Steve Cotter, IKFF.

If you're not on the social media, you can find me through my website, which is IKFF. com and if you're on YouTube, you can check me out on YouTube, which is the IKFF channel. Awesome. So those are probably the three best ways. Instagram, Steve Cotter. I K F website, I K F dot com, YouTube, I K F channel.

Everyone is welcome to shoot me a message. If if you, anything I said resonates, if I can help, provide service. Towards your well being, your fitness you can definitely shoot me a message. Happy to have a conversation.

[01:02:31] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Awesome. Well, thank you so much. I appreciate it. And I'd highly recommend everybody check out those sources there.

And, yeah, it was great to catch up again. And thank you for all the wonderful stuff you've been doing throughout the years. It's

[01:02:44] **Steve Cotter:** awesome to see. Thank you, Dr. Mike. Dr. Mike, when we last met, you weren't a doctor at that point. What's your doctorate in? I did a

[01:02:54] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** PhD in exercise physiology.

[01:02:56] **Steve Cotter:** Great.

Yeah. Excellent. Yeah. Well, congratulations. That's a huge, that's a huge accomplishment. It takes a huge amount of commitment. So kudos.

[01:03:06] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** It was seven years full time and I can honestly say it was. By far the hardest thing I've ever done. Just, I wouldn't say not difficulty of subject matter per se, not that it was easy, but just the relentless, like showing up every day of just doing the thing every day for, yeah, for seven years.

But so I'm glad it's done.

[01:03:28] **Steve Cotter:** Yeah, that's really great. Yeah. Thanks for having me. Thanks for having me. It's really nice speaking with you. You look really good and don't look like you've aged too much in the 15 years. Oh, that's good.

[01:03:43] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Must be the lighting in here. It's just doing a good job. Awesome.

[01:03:48] **Steve Cotter:** Thank you. My pleasure.

[01:03:52] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** So hopefully you enjoyed that conversation there. If you want to hear Steve's top four recommendations for longevity, go to MikeTNelson.com. We'll have a link below slash flex. For FLEX, the number four, and you will be able to hear those along with getting on to the daily fitness

insider newsletter. And if you are looking for ketones, in this case, you don't have to do a ketogenic diet.

You can check out Tecton, go to tectonlife.com, use the code Dr. Mike to save 20%, which is D R M I K E. They did recently just lower their price which is great. They are working on hopefully long term having ketones available at a lower price. But right now manufacturing of them is still quite expensive.

So this one is actually a ketone ester. There's basically two forms. So there's three forms of ketones on the market. There's the free form of BHB, which does not seem to cross out of the digestion. So that is a cheap ingredient right now. It's unfortunately being used in a lot of different formulations, but doesn't really seem to do anything.

There's ketone salts, where they take the ketone, which is beta hydroxybutyrate, they bind it to a salt that seems to be okay, but you can't really get levels of ketones very high because you have gastric issues. Basically, if you take too many of them, you will be doing the Wilford Brimley two step in the bathroom, and that's not very helpful.

Last form is different types of ketone esters. This is where they take usually the BHB molecule. and they bind them to something else to allow it to cross through the gut and get into digestion. The downside of most ketone esters is they taste utterly freaking horrible. I've tried virtually all the ones on the market now and I can't say any of them remotely taste good.

And this one is actually pretty darn good. I actually like the taste of it. It's not hyper sweet by any stretch of the imagination. But in comparison to the other ketone esters, it is way tastier by far. It's 10 grams per can and it's the BHB molecule bonded to glycerol which does appear to be in the early study is a little bit cleaner.

There's no other byproducts. Body cleaves that as beta hydroxybutyrate and then glycerol just gets burned as a fuel or sent off to the liver. So check them out. If you have any questions, let me know. Go to tectonlife.com, use the code Dr. Mike to save 20%. I know I was a little uber geeky breakdown of the differences there.

And also full disclosure, I am a scientific advisor for Tecton and I am an ambassador for them. So I do make a little bit of money if you go to the link there. Thank you so much for listening to the podcast. Really appreciate it. Big

thanks to Steve. If you enjoyed this podcast, do the little download link and share it with other people helps us with the algorithm.

If you have time to leave a short review, that would be amazing. That also helps us out a ton. Thank you so much. And we will talk to all of you next week.

You suppose they have any life on other planets? What do you care? You don't have any life on this one!

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