

Brain Carroll's "Gift of Injury" Limit Slayer Podcast Ep.152 - Transcript

Brian Carroll: The reason why McGill is so good at what he does... he has these provocative tests that the MRI doesn't always reveal. The test reveals certain evidence that the MRIs don't. Because you can have someone with a terrible MRI that is completely symptom and pain free. And someone with a great MRI that has tons of symptoms and pain. So that's why surgery just isn't a fix.

You might go in and make the MRI look a little bit better possibly, but not take away the pain. Especially if you have multiple pain generators. Surgery is not a good start for sure.

Nick Ritchey: We're joined today by special guest, Brian Carroll, for episode 152 of the Limit Slayer Podcast.

Brian is a world champion powerlifter who went from daily, debilitating back pain with 2 crushed vertebrae, to becoming pain-free and squatting over 1100lbs in competition.

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Picking Up Where We Left Off

In the last episode we looked at what non-athletes can learn from athletes, how Brian avoided surgery, got pain free, and stronger than ever. We did a quick overview of his latest book, [Gift of Injury](#), co-authored with spine specialist, Dr. Stuart McGill.

Special thanks to Mustbbilling who left us a 5-star review on iTunes saying,

"Amazing interview with Brian Carroll. Inspirational case study of what the human spirit is capable of and provides the motivation and stimulation to help anyone begin their own journey. Looking forward to the next interview."

Thank you so much for sharing what you enjoyed and helping others discover our podcast. I couldn't agree more with your feedback and know you're going to LOVE part 2.

In this episode we're going to pick-up where we left off and cover:

- How, in just 10 minutes, a 90 year old woman learned a new movement pattern that got her pain free and allowed her to stay near her loved ones, so she didn't have to be put into a nursing home.
- We'll discuss what an MRI doesn't reveal, and why maybe surgery shouldn't be your first stop for chronic back pain.
- We'll look at how to correctly wield the double edged swords of mindset, ego, and luck.
- We'll talk about the one thing you can't do alone...

And finish with some excellent advice on how to get your back pain-free, and keep it that way, for the rest of your life.

Let's get this party started!

Hey Brian, how are you?

Prevention First...

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Brian: Hey, thanks for having me back, man. How's everything going?

Nick: Going great! I want to talk about athletes today. Could you tell us what athletes are going to get out of this book?

Brian: Athletes, in the best-case scenario, will adhere to a lot of my hard-won wisdom. And Stu's science and knowledge. They'll avoid my path and not end up hurting their back too bad.

The injured strength athlete or athlete would gain a lot of knowledge. Especially considering what I didn't know at the time about back injury and how to properly progress. How to diagnose and assess.

Then slowly build a three stage program to getting strength back. And do it right with a proper progression using the algorithms that we have in the book. That teach you how to be your own coach and self-assess.

Self-diagnosis and move forward with getting your life back.

A 90 Year Mistake – FIXED in 10 Minutes!



**Basic movement patterns get corrupted where there's pain because we go around the pain...
And it sticks with you.
You have to break the pattern.**

Brian Carroll

Episode 152 - Gift of Injury

Nick: Have you heard Stu's story about the ninety year old woman?

Brian: Yes.

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Nick: Would you like me to share that or what would you like to share that with our audience? Because I think for the non-lifter it's an excellent story about how this stuff is relevant at any age.

Brian: Yeah. Share that. And then I'll add on to how it applies to stuff around the house. Like you're going to talk about here.

Nick: Perfect. Stu shares a story in one of his interviews about this 90 year old woman... I believe he was at a physiotherapist conference.

They had this lady who had terrible back pain.

To the point where she couldn't sit down and get up off the toilet. So they were thinking of moving her to a nursing home. You know, it's one of those terrible things that we all have to think about facing.

You've got your community.

You've got your family. All that stuff. And then you've got to uproot everything. Go be taken care of by somebody else. And lose a lot of freedom in the process.

So he gets this lady up on stage. Does this assessment, like he talks about in the book. And then, basically teaches her some powerlifting 101...

- How to do the hip hinge.
- How to brace the ABS.
- How to breathe properly.

And then he had her sitting down and standing up -- without pain -- a few minutes later. With basic powerlifting 101.

She's not deadlifting 3x her body weight. She's just learning how to do the basic movements that most of these physios and have no idea how to do properly. And the final result is...

She gets to stay in her home.

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Brian: Yeah, [laughing] that was a great story.

So that shows you this book isn't just for somebody who wants to compete in strength athletics. It's not only the foundation of building resilience, but progressing back to getting back where you need to go.

Whether that's back on the platform. Or back to moving around the house without having to go into assisted living.

The lifters wedge and the shortstop position of a proper hip hinge and pulling the hips through at the top. The stand is a basic human movement pattern that we need to learn and do correctly.

Nick: And gets corrupted if there is pain.

Brian: Yes. Just like lifting form.

Basic movement patterns get corrupted where there's pain because we go around the pain. And a lot of the time it ends up looking really goofy.

Unfortunately, that pattern gets ingrained. Good, bad or worse.

And it sticks with you. You have to break that pattern.

And a lot of what happened with me was having to relearn the basic moves as well.

Nick: We'll get into that a bit more. And how you relearn the movements. Because if you're stretching your hips out, that doesn't mean that you're going to be able to use that new mobility in your movements necessarily.

But let's get back to where we left off. You mentioned people doing some silly stuff in the gym. And then I raised [laughing] the idea of seal pilates on the ground. Which I believe was a Dave Tate comment.

Could you tell us a little more about that?

Back to Seal Pilates ...

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Brian: Yeah. So that was a weekend conference where a bunch of big names were lifting at. And we were doing some coaching and some speaking. It was a cool weekend.

I remember Dave making a comment about the McGill big 3 that I was doing. He was joking. But he was wrapping up the weekend. He had the microphone and made a joke about it because I wasn't lifting. I was adhering to my Rehab Protocol.

I think the story ends with a good ending.

With that said, it goes to show you that I was there with a bunch of lifters. It would have been very easy for me, if I wasn't locked in on my goal, to go and lift just because of my ego.

No matter if people were picking on me, making fun of me, and making light of it. The people who knew the deal, like Dave, knew that I was putting the work in.

And I was going to end up in a lot better place than most people realized.

Nick: I couldn't agree more. It was, [laughing] such a good visual though!

When I see people on the ground doing stuff, like when I'm doing the McGill big 3... if seals were doing pilates [laughing] that's what it would look like!

Brian: I was a big guy. So yeah, that was good.

Brian's Road to Recovery

Nick: In the previous episode, we talked a little bit about your injury.

In case somebody is just joining us, you had a fracture disc and a split disc. We talked a bit about the recovery process.

The first part was basically to get you out of pain.

And the second part was to chase performance. So let's go into those a little bit more now.

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To get out of pain, we talked about how pain corrupts. And for injury, I just wanted to quote Stu real quickly here (about your injury):

"The tissue damage was substantial. One of the nastiest fractures I'd seen in my career."

And this is a guy who sees a lot of damage, right?

Brian: Right.

Nick: "And how he had been continuing to compete and train was beyond me, but he's a superb athlete with obvious talent whose lifting had been corrupted by his effort to compensate for his injury."

So talk a little bit about the causes of the pain. And maybe a bit about how Stu said the majority of clinicians had never been trained to perform the type of assessment that he was doing on you.

A bit about that process.

Brian: I obviously had a very bad back injury. L5 was crushed. And my sacrum was split. And I had no disc between L4-L5, L5-S1.

The deal with that was a lot of movement patterns that I was doing day to day were actually perpetuating that injury. It was one of those things where they had to be relearned.

And it was a process.

We saw the MRIs. We knew that I was jacked up when we got to the lab clinic. But he does a very provocative testing that not just anyone knows how to do.

He can do tests to see if you're flexion intolerant, extension intolerant, compression intolerant... and we did those for a couple hours. They corroborated what he saw in the MR -- the nerve roots and everything.

This is from thirty years of him being in the lab, understanding the causes of pain,

the injury mechanism and how to reprogram to move around that pain. So, once we did that, it was as simple as not doing those movements. And for me, that was flexion and compression.

24 hours a day I was being really bad to my body.

Once I realized that, I immediately changed my posture on that day. It was a big deal, but not just anyone can perform that kind of an assessment like he can. To identify those pain triggers and how to move around the pain.

Nick: I had to bite my lip there... you said HOURS of assessment?

Brian: Yeah. We did stuff in the clinic for hours. He had me laying prone, supine. He would test my hips, test my sacral area, my lumbar area, my cervical area, my thoracic area.

We did all kinds of tests.

Nick: A little different than the 20-minutes “you need spine surgery” appointment?
[laughing]

What About Butt Wink? ;3

Brian: Yes. We did a test and I thought I had something wrong with my hips too. But he said, “No, your hips are fine. You're just going into flexion under load under the squat. Getting some butt wink. And that's what's causing you pain. Your hips are fine. You're just getting some neuro referral there, causing you a little bit of flare up and tingling.”

Nick: I had a high level physio tell me that if there's no pain, butt wink is OK. But there's a whole lot of different stuff going on with butt wink.

Could you maybe riff on that for a minute?

Brian: Stu says that he won't argue with people about butt wink.

And he says he doesn't argue with the kids on the Internet about butt wink. They don't understand the biological processes and what it takes to maintain a healthy,

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resilient spine.

And so that movement under load, that bending of the sacral rolling, pelvis rolling whenever you want to call it... eventually will cause discs to delaminate. So micro-fractures wind up creating macro fractures. And so on and so forth.

But Stu would be able to explain the science better than that.

It doesn't make good use of your depth either. If you're trying to squat deeper and you're tucking in and your knees are shooting forward, that's inefficient as well

Nick: Yeah, when it come to arguing with kiddies on the Internet, I kind of like the argument from authority in this one. It's a logical fallacy. But at the same time, like a high level physio versus a spine specialists talking about the spine... I tend to go with the spine specialist.

Brian: Right. I guess some people are of the thought they don't want to worry about the details. Paralyzation by over analyzation, or whatever people say...

The details do matter. That's the bottom line.

Nick: Definitely. One of the comments that I pulled from one of your interviews was that the injury itself might not really heal, but it can change or adapt.

Was that true in your case, or did it pretty much heal up?

Brian: Okay, Yes. So I guess you're talking about the MR. The MRI might not change a whole bunch and show a bunch of healing or whatever, but it still becomes pain free somehow?

Nick: Yeah.

How the Elite Recover

Brian: Yeah. So I experienced a whole bunch of tissue healing. The proof's in the pudding there in section one when they showed my before from four and a half years ago. And my after from July 2017, You see disc remolded that didn't exist

before.

You see a bone that remolded and it filled back out. My sacrum isn't fractured anymore. L5 actually looks like a normal L5 vertebra.

The coolest thing is I have discs where I didn't have them before.

They were completely flattened and crushed. So this doesn't just prove that the process works. Keep in mind that during this time I took over fifty 1000+ pound squats in this time in those four years since the first MRI.

So it wasn't like, "Okay, I retired from any kind of heavy lifting. I only invested in my body. I didn't pull anything out. I moved well. I didn't lift any heavy weights. And all I did was walking, the McGill big three and general fitness exercise and look at my spot."

NO! I actually PUSHED the human potential once again. And still my MRI changed that much.

Nick: Yeah. When I saw that, it just floored me. Because it reminds me of fake weight loss. Where they'll start off skinny. They'll take their after picture. And then they'll bulk up [laughing] for the before picture.

It's almost like we had like this nice, beautiful spine that you decided to beat the shit out of for the before picture....

It obviously the other way around. But it's really impressive.

What happened to your back there?

What the MRI Doesn't Reveal

Brian: Thank you. The reason why McGill is so good at what he does...

He has these provocative tests that the MRI doesn't always reveal, right?

The test reveals certain evidence that the MRIs don't. Because you can have

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someone with a terrible MRI that is completely symptom and pain free. And someone with a great MRI that has tons of symptoms and pain. So that's why surgery just isn't a fix.

You might go in and make the MRI look a little bit better possibly, but not take away the pain. Especially if you have multiple pain generators. Surgery is not a good start for sure.

Nick: Yeah, and I don't see it in my notes right here, but I know Stu talks about it like being like a mechanic. He isn't like, "yeah, just send me a picture of under the hood of your car and then I'll fix it for you."

NO. You've gotta get in there. You've got to see what's going on. You've got to see it from different angles. You've got to play with it a little bit.

You can't just look at a picture and know what the problem is. You might have an idea or see something that might break in the future, but that's definitely not the whole story.

I really liked how he went through the diagnosis first – THEN then looked at the picture for more details.

The second part was chasing performance.

You found what the problem was. You built your training around it. You build a strong foundation. And you made progress while avoiding setbacks.

And we mentioned ego a bit, but I would like to delve into depth a bit more about ego. The good, the bad and the ugly if, if we could.

EGO: Good, Bad & Ugly

Brian: The first phase of getting out of pain just consisted of walking and stabilizing the core and getting rid of the pain. A lot of walking. A lot of the McGill big three.

The biggest thing with ego is this...

I had to have enough ego to not be scared of the loads that I've lifted. And to expect to get better. But also, ego also caused me problems and didn't make me back off before I was in the sorry state that I was.

So, I needed to harness that ego, right?

Harnessing the ego meant putting that much effort into what I was told to do and nothing more, nothing less. And knowing to trust the process that I would return back to lifting.

Ego is a double-edged sword.

For some people, it's what helps them be successful. It also helps them fail. So, I think being self-aware is key. And understanding that sometimes it's better to back off and not push so hard. And understand that maybe your ego isn't going to get stroked as much doing walking and core work versus squatting 1200 pounds.

But understand, you need to think long term.

Mindset Matters



Nick: Definitely. It can be a great thing for pushing yourself. But it can also be really hard holding yourself back.

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There's actually a good amount of research and psychology on this for growth and fixed mindsets. The people who embrace challenges, criticism and effort...

We call that a growth mindset.

It helps you have higher achievement. Because, like when you were learning from McGill, and he's showing you all this new stuff... You went in there with a beginner mindset. You said you had to put your ego aside in order to really get the most out of that process.

And that's exactly what the growth versus fixed mindset literature would predict.

But then, if you have a fixed mindset... when you desire to look good, you avoid negative feedback. The consequence is, of course, lower achievement -- possible reinjury.

There are a lot of tie-ins with psychology and what you're doing here.

You seem to have a lot of the right stuff together. Which doesn't surprise me because you're a world champion. But you've really got a lot going for you.

Brian: Yeah. Thank you. So the last example you gave me, or the example you gave about the person that listens. It's kind of like iron sharpening iron. That's what I would like to think the synergy between McGill and I did for me.

I wasn't too closed minded to learn more.

You've gotta pick your battles.

Understand that at the same time there's gonna be some things that maybe I thought I knew better than him. But I wasn't even gonna go there. I was going to go on there as a complete beginner.

And ended up laying down to a really good foundation. For me to start over.

And kind of reassess what I thought I knew.

What You Can't Do Alone...



Nick: Yeah. And that's hard. To say, "Maybe I don't know. Maybe I do." Cause if we walked around and questioned every decision we made...

That's paralysis by analysis.

So you have to have some confidence. But know when to turn it on and off. Which brings me to the coaching process. You went in. You started working with McGill...

When is coaching a luxury and when is it a necessity?

Brian: Just generally speaking?

Nick: Generally speaking,

Brian: I think everyone should have a coach of some sort. Whether it be a business coach and mentor, a lifting coach, a nutrition coach... whatever it is, someone that gives them an outside perspective that you're paying them for or trading in some way. They can help keep you accountable and not be yes-men to you. And call you out.

So you can be that athlete that can accept criticism and do better. Versus just having a bunch of people around you that are just there to kind of live it up with

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you and pat you on the back no matter what you do.

I think a coach is very important in just about every aspect of life.

Nick: When people say, "I don't have money for coaching." I would recommend rotating your coach. Stick with one for a while, on the most important thing. And then, if you need to go get another coach, fine.

Take the beginning of lifter. Obviously, work with people over the Internet, but they need to get somebody local who knows what the hell they're doing. So they can show them in person, because it's just like looking under the hood.

You can't just look at a picture and go, "Ahhh, do this," and then try to do that real time over skype. I just don't think that's very effective.

But after you've got the basic lifts down, you find another coach for whatever's next on the list.

There's the Johari window again from the previous episode. There are things that other people know that you don't know. And you find those out the most quickly and easily by hiring a coach who knows their shit.

Brian: Yeah, I guess one of those things that I would consider competing or going after a specific goal, a luxury.

What do luxuries cost us?

They costs us money. So maybe if you're not at a point in your life where you can afford to hire something out, I'm not saying you don't want to read and learn and mess things up on your own and learn from it and all that stuff. But I guess it's one of those things...

You've got to have your priorities right in your life because training for athleticism and anything beyond just general fitness is a luxury.

It kind of goes with being disciplined in other areas of your life. Maybe not getting that \$4 cup of Starbucks every day... and utilizing that resource for a coach.

Nick: Yup.

If you really are strapped for cash, that's where books come in.

Like your book, [Gift of Injury](#).

We haven't touched on this yet, but I absolutely love the title. So, tell us about the gift. Why is it a gift?

How can it be a gift?

The “Gift”

Brian: I don't think I would be in this place that I am right now, being more of a complete lifter. Or coach and writer for that matter, if I wouldn't have got hurt the way I did.

When paths are smooth-sailing, it's easy to get comfortable and think you know it all.

If I were to continue that path that I was on, if I didn't get hurt and have to regress and learn so much, there was a lot I wouldn't have learned. I was forced to learn so much because I wasn't learning it the easy way.

So I think that it was a gift to me to learn about how the details matter so much. How your body is a limited resource. And how you need to outsource help at times when things are big and you have really big goals in mind.

I think it's very important to embrace adversity.

That's the name of the game.

Nick: Yeah. Just embracing. I wanted to pull a quote from McGonigal that really supports you there. She says, "Choosing to see the upside in our most painful experiences is part of how we can change our relationship."

She's talking about stress here.

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But in general there's this idea of the growth mindset versus the fixed mindset. If you see it as an opportunity to better yourself, there is something to be said, like you said, about going through it the hard way.

Obviously, avoid the hard way (if you can). That's why you write a book and you're like, "don't make the mistakes I did" because you know firsthand what those are and the consequences of them. But when you learn things the hard way, then it gives more of a profound, lasting impact.

Because you know it from firsthand experience.

Smarter or Harder?

Brian: I think that pain grooves a deeper groove in our brain.

I'm not sure of the exact science behind, but we tend to remember when something really hurts us or affects us pretty clearly. And we kind of keep that in the back of our mind.

So a lot of this stuff that I've learned over the last five years, I won't be forgetting anytime soon. I can tell you that much.

Nick: Yeah, insofar as the science on that... there's something called the Losada ratio. With positive and negative experiences, we basically need about five positive experiences to cancel out one negative one. It just leaves a deeper groove on us. That's how we generally feel with emotions.

Brian: Yeah, that makes sense. Guys thinking really happy, really sad the stuff. In the middle, it kind of just blurs together.

But this book gives a lot of elements of very high and very low, doesn't it?

Nick: Oh Jesus [laughing]. Yeah, your low points and high points... I really liked how forthcoming you were with everything as well. A lot of people just wouldn't talk about, what they're going through because they've got an image online.

They've got to look good for Instagram, and all that bullshit, right?

But you're real honest. You're down to earth. And actually, I wanted to tie in on that with our last podcast. You said, I'm quoting you here,

"So many people are trying to make a career out of complicating the simple stuff and it's just not necessary."

So I'm curious. What are people over complicating today?

Stupid Faddy Problems

Brian: I'll give you an example. Let's say strength training. Someone with a very modest background in strength training. They want to jump into something like Sheiko or a Bulgarian squat protocol where they're squatting three or four times a week.

For what?

And then of course we have people lining up to sell it to these people. You know, you've got to build load tolerance. Over time. And loading a barbell on your back three or four times a week for beginner could be a death sentence. Putting them in a situation like I was way sooner without being nearly as strong as I was.

So I think that you start somewhere in the middle.

We always make things so complicated where it has to be so extreme. We've got to squat four days a week. No rest. And no this. And no that.

Well, why don't we start very simple? And if it works like, the way I trained in high school was very simple, as I needed to get more complex, I added more things and learned and move forward with it. But...

Always start simple.

You don't need to be squatting three or four days a week or benching... some of these programs have people bench squatting and deadlifting three days a week and for a beginner.

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I don't think that's necessary.

Nick: Yeah. Even if you're a pro doing that, it takes a hell of a toll on the body.

Brian: Yes. If that's what it takes for you to max out your human potential because you know one didn't work after a while... Then two worked for a while. Then it didn't. And now three works now, fine.

Everyone's wired a little bit differently.

But that's a very, very small percentage of people that would need that much stimulation.

How Gifted Are You?

Nick: So one of the things that's going on is prescriptions. Well people... The thing is though, this has always been going on to my understanding. People always go for “what was Arnold doing in the golden days of bodybuilding?”

“I'm going to take his program and look just like Arnold.”

So what's the flaw in that thinking? [laughing]

Brian: The flaw is that you're talking about the 0.01% of the population, even the athletic population, with that much of a gift.

Arnold was so psychologically and physiologically gifted, that most people will never understand how blessed he was with genetics. And looking at someone like Phil Heath, I don't care what you take, or what you eat, or how you train...

You're just not going to look like Phil Heath. Unless you ARE Phil Heath.

The problem is, people blindly emulate what they see posted. And you know what the problem with that is? Other than the obvious with genetics?

People Lie

People lie. There's fake weights, fake diets, fake everything.

Photoshop that you see on the Internet. They're being lied to, to sell a product to them. And unfortunately, they're giving them false hope.

Nick: Yeah, which is another one of the reasons why I'm so happy you're here with us today. Your story is genuine and it's inspirational in the best of ways because of what you've done.

And there's no faking your MRI. Well, I mean you could Photoshop that I suppose [laughing], but the results that you are able to squat 1100 pounds again shows us that it was not faked [laughing]. You wouldn't be supporting that (kind of heavy load).

Luck is...

Brian: Yeah, I probably would have been in big trouble around 400 pounds if nothing changed. But nonetheless, we got lucky in a lot of things.

Luck is a big factor. You're in the right place at the right time. You're doing the right things. Luck tends to find you.

And I think we got lucky with the situation. But there were a lot of absolutes that we controlled.

Nick: Luck favors the prepared as well, right?
So you were doing a lot of the right things?

Brian: Exactly.

Nick: One of the things that was said (in the book) was, make sure you have minimal strength for health and longevity.

What is minimal strength in your mind?

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How Much Strength is Enough?

Brian: Well, it's going to depend if they're trying to be a power lifter, or an athlete, or everyday person. But the basics, you know, being able to do a body weight squat, being able to have a good hand grip where you're not dropping everything, or you're not progressing too fast on the deadlift and having to use straps before your grip's ready to pick up what your back can hold.

So the minimal basic things -- being able to balance on one leg. You know, if you can't balance on one leg or stand on one leg, then you probably shouldn't be loading a barbell up to squat.

Just the little things.

If you can't do a push up then you probably shouldn't be doing a bench press. So just the little things like that I consider minimal strength. And then, if you're trying to be a powerlifter, of course, it's a couple of deviations beyond that.

Nick: Okay. For the absolute beginners, I remember Chris used to always start them off with... Like for squatting. He wouldn't just have them get under a bar. He'd have them do a goblet squat, make sure that their feet were in the right place, and all that.

You talk about this in the book. And you have some really nice progressions. So I was really happy to see that.

Brian: Yeah, basics.

It's all about the basics.

And if you can't do a goblet squat, or a bodyweight squat correctly... you put the barbell on there and then you have the thoracic spine mobilization involved. Then you've got all kinds of stuff to worry about.

So the basics, rooting into the floor, hip hinging, rhomboid squeeze, chest down, locking the lats in, and keep it in a nice neutral spine, in neutral head position.

And once you can master that, if you're a beginner, then think about progression to a barbell squat.

You've Got to Earn...

Nick: Playing on that, like the next step... So we had the absolute beginners. McGill says, "you've got to earn the straps."

Tell us a little bit about straps, grip work and your experience with the hook grip.

Brian: Okay, Good question.

To me, straps should never be used unless you're a competitive strong man or you're trying to do some overload set. So again, it's down the road a little bit from a beginner.

What you don't want to do is, and I kind of hit on this earlier, is make your grip so weak or your back so much stronger than your grip that it's a mismatch.

That can lead to injury too. So everything starts with grip.

Being able to bend the bar and solidify a nice starting point, gripping the floor with your feet, gripping the floor with your bar. And then, once you've mastered the technique and you've lifted good amounts of weight consistently, and you want to overload on occasion... THEN you can earn the straps.

But not just simply because someone's hands are weak or soft do you just let them put straps on the bar right away and let them move forward.

Now, the person who's really mastered their grip would be somebody who hooks Olympic style. Or a hook grip where you kind of tuck their thumb under the bar and wrap your fingers around it. Those that can do that with longer fingers and less fat hands... they claim to have an ironclad vice. They basically say they never drop a deadlift.

It's painful. A lot of the pressure goes on your thumbs. You have to build up the tolerance. But those that can do it on the deadlift have a little bit of a leverage

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advantage because they could get their chest up a little bit higher without an over under grip.

They're not as likely to tear a bicep.

And of course, you have the developmental issues with the back. When you have one arm that's pulling the weight up a little bit higher, the musculature of the back is going to develop a little bit different too.

Nick: Yeah. This is something where I wish that I wouldn't have like my...

My natural lift is the dead lift. That's where I excel. So I was deadlifting close to 600 pounds pretty quickly. Whereas my bench press is still just absolute shit [laughing]. That's just how my levers work.

But I definitely experienced the twirling a bit. You just naturally, when you get to those heavy lifts, you want to rotate. Which is not good for your spine. It feels like shit if you go too much on that.

And I've tried the hook grip, as you have. And you said it didn't really work for you. It didn't really work for me either. But I think I might have been a little too aggressive with it.

Brian: It's very painful. Those that advise it say not to pull reps with it at first. And yeah, a lot of people that pull over under start to helicopter. And it's not just the back.

Other people tear packs and biceps when they let the bar get out in front of them. Especially that underhand as it kicks out. I've had days where my chest has been super sore after deadlift days.

What is Strength Wisdom?

Nick: The next topic we're getting into is what McGill called "strength wisdom."

Which, from the Westside viewpoint, is the chaotic stuff. Like the bouncy bench. You've got the bamboo barbell. You've got bands with a kettle bells and stuff on

that.

Could you tell us a little bit more about the strength wisdom that McGill mentioned and why it matters?

Brian: Yeah, so you want to be, you know...

We talk about training for chaos. We'll be ready for anything having an asymmetric load whether it be a carry or loaded on a barbell. Or a bamboo bar bench. Or you can even take it a step further and do a bamboo bar bench and only load one side.

This teaches you stability.

And this is a mind muscle connection of being very tight and locked in under load. No matter what happens. And this could translate in many different ways.

One example could be, not just for your stability, but what happens if someone accidentally bumps your barbell when they're walking by in the health club?

If you're not ready for something like that, or any kind of stability, you could fall off the bench tearing your pec off...

Bar going on your throat -- whatever, whatever it may be.

But if you're used to having to stabilize at all times, you could be ready for something like that. And we can talk about a heavy load, or someone's maxing out and they start to get a little shifty with it. Having that strength wisdom, the balance back out and stabilized, could be the difference in not just making the lift, but from tweaking a tissue.

Nick: I don't remember from [10/20/Life](#) if you talked about strength wisdom, but when would you recommend people start incorporating it into their training?

Maybe with some very light loads... which implements would you recommend? And when should they start putting it into their programming?

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When to Begin

Brian: I would recommend anyone that wants to be more of an athlete and look like a one, start off with some suitcase carriers. That would be the one I have everyone start with and that's just simply carrying a kettle bell or dumbbell in one side and walking really fast. But controlled with it.

Switching sides and developing that stability.

The next step up from there would be a bottom-up kettlebell walk. That's more strength wisdom. And then we could progress later on down the road with the barbell stuff with the loads that I talked about.

But I would start everyone off with carries. Start them off light, and use those conditioning tools in your workout.

Nick: This is why farm boys are so damn strong, because they start with that stuff, early.

Brian: Yes.

Nick: Build a damn good foundation.

Brian: Throwing some hay. Punching cows. Yup.

Nick: What advice do you have for gym members?

We always have to keep going back to who's our population because we have a really broad range here, right? From mom and pops, who are going to be listened to this, to elite lifters.

So what advice do you have for people that are in popular fitness boxes, power lifting gyms, crossfit gyms, training at home and non-athletes?

Just in terms of making sure that they have good backs. And they're not in pain. And they have good movement patterns?

You've got a basic gym membership. You're going in there. You're just training for

health to feel good. Are there any exercises on machines or things that people should be avoiding?

Just to stay safe?

How can they make sure that their backs are going to stay in good condition?

How to Save Your Back

Brian: Do's: proper warm up, core stability before you train, break a sweat.

I cover this in the [10/20/Life](#) warm up, the second edition I released this year. And we also cover it in [Gift of Injury](#).

Do basic movements. If you can stand while doing them, don't sit. Whether it be overhead press, or what have you.

The basics:

- Squat
- Pull
- Press
- Carry
- Row

And you're pretty much carried through with a good foundation there. And that's a good way to start.

Don'ts would be any kind of a sit up, or weighted sit up, or leg raise. I would avoid any kind of good mornings until you have really good a control of stability under load because that's one that can go wrong really quick.

And just too much at first.

Try not to mix Olympic lifts when you're new to training. That's a highly skilled lift that people should be doing after years and years of training, and starting when

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they're very young. That sport picks their athletes. The athlete doesn't pick that sport. Those people are very gifted for that.

So that's five do's and don'ts as far as your health club.

And that applies to Crossfit.

Try not to do too much conditioning before you do your heavy work. Fatigue ends up as the cause, a lot of the time, of tissue stresses. So try to do your heavy stuff fresh. And then do your cardio, your conditioning, towards then end of your workout.

What Wasn't Mentioned...

Nick: Wow. Lots of good stuff there.

I think you've covered most of it in the book. You had your do's and don'ts. You talked about the sit-ups. You talked about doing too much. The Olympic lifts, that's only for the people that are selected...

But what I don't remember being mentioned was “stand, don't sit.”

That's a really good point for integrating everything. Could you maybe just riff on that a little bit more?

Why standing instead of sitting?

Brian: Let's say you're sitting in a military press. Depending on the positioning and the seat, you might be actually sitting into a little bit of flexion under load while pressing overhead. Which a lot of the time, if you have a back condition, or you're susceptible to that, then your disc's just about ready to bulge on you with a little bit of stress there.

Could be the end of your back-health.

But at the same time, don't sit when you can stand. With anything, just be on your feet more.

We sit so much. We're made to be standing and walking around. So do a carry instead of walking on the treadmill.

You know what I mean?

Or do a standing overhead press. Do a barbell row and instead of a seated chest supported row. It isn't something you always have to stick to. But if in doubt, if you have two choices A and B, go with B. Standing.

Nick: That's excellent advice. It just prompted the idea of the standing desk. Do you have a standing desk? Is that something that you've incorporated as well?

What do you think about those in general?

What About Standing Desks?

Brian: No, I get up and walk about every twenty minutes or so. Through my house if I'm working at home. And I go for multiple walks each day.

I don't have a standing desk.

I've considered it, but one thing that I've been fortunate with is, I've never been sitting intolerant. It's never bothered my back once I got everything under control. Because before, everything bothered my back.

One thing I do suggest if you do sit a lot is a lumbar support pad. You kind of put it under the small of your back and pump it up.

Nick: BackFitPro.com right?

Brian: Yeah. I've traveled with these. I have one in my car and I have one here at my desk. So I definitely suggest doing that.

A standing desk for some people may be problematic. They may have bad feet. Or, you know, I would definitely recommend having a nice padded surface if you're going to stand for long periods of time.

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But again, the key is not sitting too long and not standing too long. So find a balance there.

Nick: Yeah, I did the standing desk for about a year and a half. It ended up killing my feet in the long run. And I found like you, if I just get up and move every thirty minutes...

I'll set a timer.

I just get up and move every thirty minutes. That keeps you good, you know?

And the back support, as you said. If you're going to be sitting a lot during the day, definitely. Good stuff there.

Now I'm mindful of the time here. I think maybe we should go into what was not mentioned in the book, and then talk about how it empowers people.

Give our listeners some really strong takeaways in the next episode.

Resources & Next Episode...

You've reached the end of episode 152 of the Limit Slayer podcast with Brian Carroll. Thanks again Brian, for sharing your time and expertise with us.

On the next episode we'll pick up where we left off.

We'll conclude this series with specific movements that help save and rehab your back, mistakes to avoid so you don't hurt yourself, and convert what you've learned into immediate, actionable advice.

You can find the transcript of our interview, links to Brian's other podcasts, products, resources, my one page summary of the [Gift of Injury](#) and more at:

<https://LimitSlayer.com/BrianCarroll/>

And to get the most out of this series, check out the additional resources in the show notes, and visit Brian's website, PowerRackStrength.com to get your copy of

[Gift of Injury.](#)

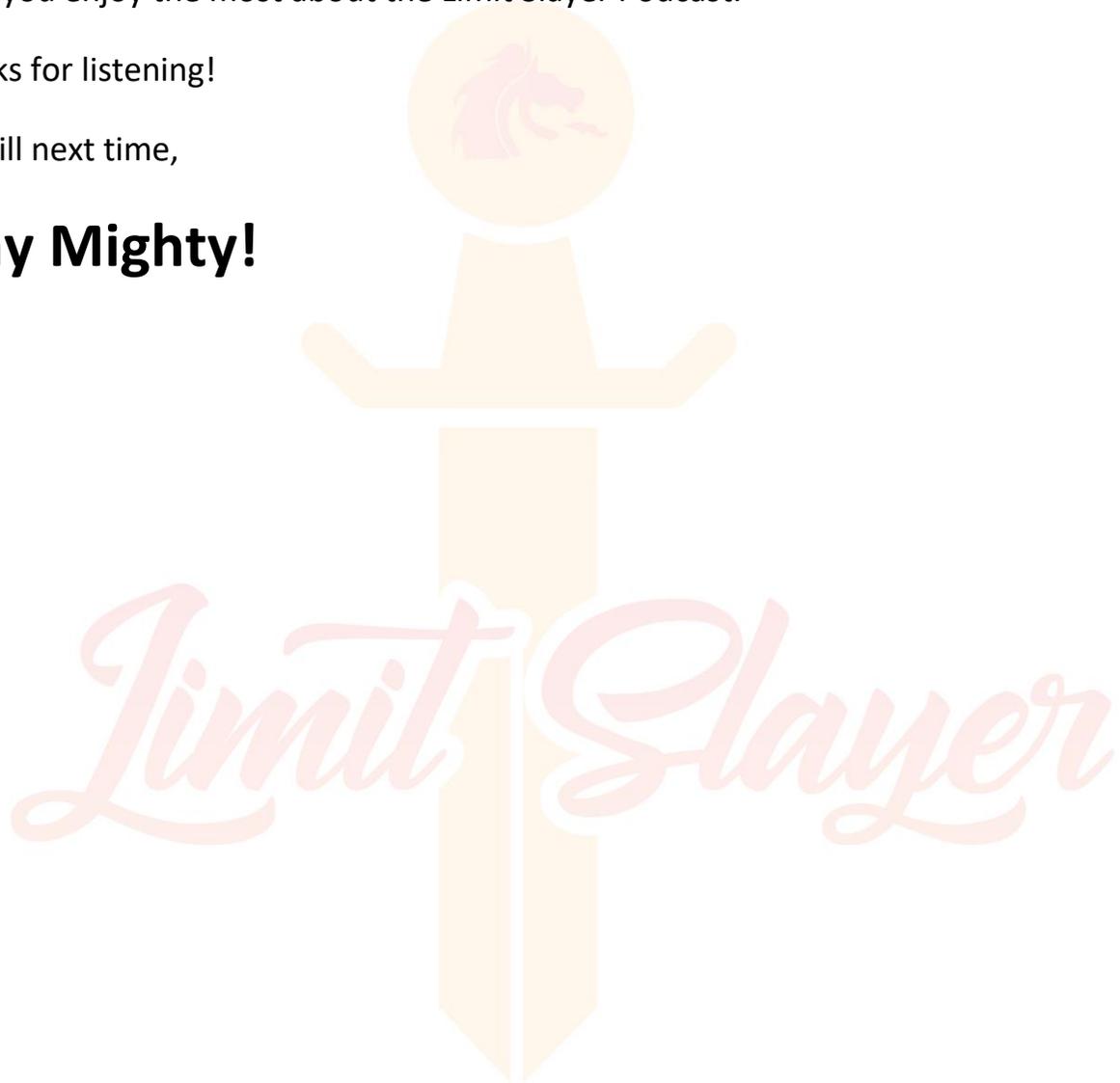
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