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Perfect Supplements Interview with Shawn Stevenson – 2/12/14

Shawn Stevenson is a true health fitness guru and has trained hundreds of people to be the best they can be. This transcript will give you the information that Shawn shared in the interview, but we strongly recommend [listening to the interview here](#) so you can hear Shawn's passion and wisdom.

This interview was part of our [Simple Steps to Perfect Health and Wellness Series](#). Please check out the rest of the series for some more great tips on diet, nutrition and exercise.

Perfect Supplements Alright, welcome, this is Dan Nessel from Perfect Supplements and as our regular readers know, we've been running a series on simple steps to perfect health and wellness.

Today we want to focus on exercise and fitness and look at what it takes to really kick things up to the next level. To help us on this journey is a true expert in the field, Shawn Stevenson. Shawn is a professional nutritionist, the author of two books on health and fitness, a featured contributor to Fox News and Clear Channel radio and of course, the host of my favorite health and fitness podcast, The Model Health Show.

Perfect Supplements Shawn welcome and thanks for joining us.

Shawn Stevenson Dan thank you so much, I'm pumped to be here.

Perfect Supplements Thank you for letting us turn the tables on you, I know you're normally asking the questions; this time we appreciate you giving us some insight here. So I want to jump into it, now we're doing this as an audio interview so people are not seeing you but we're going to throw some pictures of you up on our site because you clearly walk the walk, you don't just talk about health and fitness. You look great, you're doing things right so we want our readers and listeners to know what you're doing.

Minute 1:08 So we're going to start with the basics. Give us an idea of how many days a week do you exercise and how long for each day?

Shawn Stevenson Awesome, well that's a good place to start and thank you for the compliment. Well first and foremost, I want everybody to know that when I did that photo shoot, I'm really just representing and trying to demonstrate what's

possible. You know, being a father of three kids, being a great husband, running two businesses, having my own show, writing everyday, working with clients, you know I got a lot of stuff going on and it's not about the quantity, it's about the quality and really making sure that you're doing the things that get you the biggest bang for your buck, the things that really push the button down all the way and get you the maximum benefit.

That's what I focus on and I've been able to really drill down and weed out a lot of the unnecessary stuff and really that's what I'm going to share with everybody today is what is the most important thing to do so for me, personally when it comes down to the amount of time I workout per week is going to surprise people.

I've been there where I'm working out 5, 6 days a week and I've also been in experiments where I work out once a week and what I found is there's a happy medium for me and I typically work out, lifting is my main thing is resistance training 3 times a week for about 45 minutes so cumulatively that's you know, right around 2 hours a week is what I'm spending at the gym. And to have the body that I was able to accomplish that I have accomplished in that little amount of time can be pretty impressive for a lot of people but again, obviously **nutrition plays a lot to do with it which is what I'm on board with [Perfect Supplements]** but, it's also the exercises that I do and I'm pretty confident that, of course we're going to talk about that more today so as we go along here, I'll give some more specifics on what I do.

Minute 3:03 Perfect Supplements Alright that sounds great. Let's start with that. You said about three days a week, about 45 minutes you're focusing on lifting. How do you really break that down and there's a lot of debate between cardio and lifting. Give us an idea of what works for you and the differences in why someone would go with more cardio or lifting depending on their goals.

Shawn Stevenson Ok well for most people their goal is typically fat loss. You know most people's goal is to be the leanest, meanest version of themselves, you know to look good, to feel good in their clothes and to do that, what I found is that running is great for meditation. You know running is great if that's something where you get out there and you just love running. But for the goal of changing your body composition of fat loss it isn't the most effective or efficient way of doing it because you know, when somebody has like for example, if they have an apple shape and they lose weight by running, doing a lot of cardio and cutting calories, they'll just become a smaller apple. Versus when you have an apple shape and you lift weights which can enable you to change the composition of your body, you can actually go from an apple shape to say, a coke bottle shape. So you can actually change your body's composition, you can actually do that

because you're building more muscle and muscle is, it takes up less space in your body. Fat takes up much more space.

So with that said, one of the things that I do is I really focus on compound movements. These are common things that people are talking about today but I really want to get specific on this so that means squats, dead lifts, pull ups or lat pulls, lateral pull downs depending on your strength level. But I really feel that most people can build up to actually be able to do pull ups and dips, lunges, and all these different movements and then a plank, some type of exercise for your core.

Now with all these different movements you know, we're really working on things that are designed for the human body to be able to do. You know like a lunge, we're supposed to have a gait, we're supposed to be able to walk and carry heavy things. We're supposed to be able to squat down and pick ourselves back up with a load. We're supposed to be able to lift heavy stuff off the floor which is a dead lift. We're supposed to be able to press and push things if we need to which is our pressing, you know bench press, and shoulder press and things like that. We're also supposed to be able to pull ourselves up if we need to. These are all things built into our DNA, into our genes for survival, you know but these are things that we don't do anymore because we don't have to. We can just sit back and be a desk jockey or a couch potato or whatever you want to call it.

So what we do is we emulate real life when we get into the gym and kind of recreate some of the things we normally do so those are the lifts that I really focus on doing.

Minute 5:56 Perfect Supplements Yeah, that sounds fantastic and that makes a lot of sense and it kind of ties in with there's a huge movement with Crossfit, you see people walking around carrying big heavy things and doing what kind of what we used to do back many years ago. How does that really work, I mean there's a lot of this talk of this kind of new fads and Crossfit seems real big now but what would you tell our listeners in terms of a philosophy for exercise? Clearly you want to focus on the lifting that makes sense and doing things as humans were supposed to do but you constantly hear new things of this is out, that's out, try this, try that, where should their focus be?

Shawn Stevenson Wow that's such a great question and that's a layered question right there. What it boils down to, I really, I love Crossfit because they've spread the consciousness of these movements, they spread the consciousness of lifting heavy things, especially for women, you know that it's OK. As matter of fact you can build an amazing beautiful body by doing this. They spread the awareness of mobility, of taking care of your body and also they've really tied in the nutrition component you know, it's just one of those things that's kind of caught fire.

However, at the same time it's not the end all be all and it's just a container to put this stuff in. It really depends with anything where you're learning it from and who your teacher is because if you have the wrong protocol with Crossfit, you can run into a lot of problems. But it's just like anything else, for me personally I was doing Crossfit workouts when they just had a very small website and they just posted workouts everyday. So I'd go and I'd do 20 cleans and then like 20 pushups and then go run a 400 meter and come back and do it again. I was doing all this stuff on my own, just pushing myself and kicking my own butt just to see what it did. Honestly, for me it didn't do much more benefit than my normal thing which is, so let me get into some of the specifics on what I do.

So what I really enjoy doing is I'll come in in the early part of the week so Monday usually, when everybody's in the gym cause Monday is like annual chest day. Everybody wants to get in there, they've been waiting all weekend to do their bench press cause that's the thing that everybody thinks is what you're supposed to do to look buff or whatever.

So I'm over there doing my legs, I'm doing the deadlifts, I'm doing my squats on Mondays and really focusing on that, lunges, and things of that nature. Every now and then I might throw in a little bit of extra little bit of calf work. I got to make this quote right now. Lifting weights, in particular lower body lifts make you a better person.

Lower body lifts make you a better person, I really really feel that. It's because like, psychologically it's like being able to lift a heavy load up, you know from being low to really elevate yourself. Number one and number two it really builds a strong foundation. So this kind of stuff really carries over and I've seen people who've come in to work with me, my clients and you know, they're dealing with issues with their self esteem, they're dealing with issues with emotional traumas and getting them physically stronger by doing those type of lifts have helped to get them out of the prison that they're in psychologically. Feeling stronger physically really is a big game changer and for women, they really get that, with lifting and working on their lower body.

For some reason, a lot of guys don't really get that. It's because I guess you know we see the magazines most of the time you see the shirt off but you don't see the lower body. So for me, that's what I'm doing, I'm getting in there, I'm usually doing, right now especially during the winter time, this is just another insight for everybody. During the winter time I'm lifting heavier, so I can put on a little bit more size and then I'll lean out over the spring and summer.

So I'm doing heavy sets, maybe five by five, so five sets of five or five sets by three, really building up to potential max set every time. And then you know later in the week I'll do my back, my pulls, my presses, and then on Saturdays I'll do some fun stuff like the typical guy stuff. I'll do some arms, and some triceps and

some handstand pushups and I'll play around more. But I'm really in there being serious and lifting heavy two days a week and one day a week I'm doing the auxiliary stuff. So that's what I typically do.

Minute 10:22 Perfect Supplements That sounds great and I mean, those are great tips. That idea that exercise is not just about building up your physical body but mentally and that's fantastic and I think that's a thing a lot of people miss with that.

One of the points you touched on there was a question we had, in terms of there's also this debate about how much to lift, more reps, the repetition versus weight and you were saying you were doing about five reps?

Shawn Stevenson Yeah, this is a particular training though so the rep range will change depending on your goals. A lot of people don't understand this one too. Body builders, in particular I'm talking to women, they're usually afraid, like Shawn I don't want to get buff, like look at my shoulders, I don't want to get big. You see my hips I don't want to get bigger.

I'm like just calm down, I've worked with literally hundreds and hundreds of women one on one at the gym, thousands as far as training and courses and things like that and I am yet to see one woman get swoll. I have not seen that happen and here's why. Body builders are lifting heavier weights, I'm sorry. Body builders are lifting lighter weights than they can do for lots and lots of reps. So what are women typically doing because they don't want to get big? They're lifting lighters weights for lots and lots of reps.

We need to flip that on its head, you need to lift heavier weights, less reps and get done and get out of the gym. What our goal is to get the hormonal response, that's the goal. That hormonal response will literally change the way your body communicates with itself and it changes your body's composition. If you don't dig deep enough, you're not going to get that hormonal response. You're just in there like fanning yourself, it's just a nice cool breeze it's not really forcing your body to change.

So when I'm doing stuff to kind of lean down or doing some hypertrophy training, I'll do more value so I'll do some more sets and this is just a little trick for everybody if they do want to put on some size. I'll do like one set of twelve and I'll rest thirty seconds and I'll go again. One set of twelve and I'll keep dropping the weights down because it gets harder and harder if you're not resting. And right there, all of that tension and working your fast and slow twitch muscle fibers can really help to build some muscle.

So this is called either super set training or drop sets, all that stuff is fair game. It all works, it's just being able to have a variety of things at your disposal.

The last thing I want to mention with this is that we talked a little bit about cardio earlier. The number one thing I'm telling you right now, this is the number one thing with exercise, if you want to get lean, the best thing, this is it. I hope everybody's listening in, come close to the speaker. The number one thing that I do when spring summer time hits, is I do HIIT training. I do High Intensity Interval Training and basically what that is is sprint training or burst training.

So for me being a former athlete, running track and winning medals and all that stuff, I have a great background in these things. And essentially what you're going to do is you're going to sprint, trust me everybody you can also do this on stationary bike, you know there's different ways of going about this depending on your level of fitness. But I get out there on the track and I do like a 100 meter sprints, repeats, so I'll sprint a hundred meters, then I'll rest and recover for maybe thirty seconds to a minute then I'll go again and I'll do maybe eight sets of that, on a good day. But I go so hard and it's very very hard.

And why this is such a beneficial thing is when you're doing that long distance like slow trotting cardio for an hour, you're building up and secreting a lot of stress hormones, mainly cortisol which is very catabolic and it's a stress hormone and that builds up in your tissues and you're not stopping for your body to switch gears. When you're doing this burst training, you're just going super hard and your body's secreting a lot of catecholamines or things like adrenaline, noradrenaline and those are able to **literally just cleave off thousands of potential fat cells** of this muscle glycogen that you know eventually cause a spill over and cause your body to store fat if you have too much of it.

So that is the number one thing to really cleave off a lot of that potential fat very very fast. So you get out there and you sprint and your body in the rest and recovery it's kind of switching gears, it's like oh he's OK. He sprinted he made it away. And then you go again. And then you go again and the trick is, you need to go so intensely, so hard that your body is forced to change. That's the real secret.

Perfect Supplements OK, Intensity.

Shawn Stevenson Yes, yes that is the key. And honestly, you should not do that more than twice a week. Some people get onto this kick off and they find out about HITT training and they do it like five times a week, that's not appropriate and your body is not really recovering, you're not giving yourself a chance to actually heal and change from that intensity. If you're going intense enough, you wouldn't be able to do it. Like you'd be frying your nervous system, you know so you need to go so intense so that once or twice a week at the most is right on the money. This will lean you out better than anything.

I mean you could look at the Olympics, look at the sprinters versus the long long distance runners. They tend to look younger, stronger, more vigorous and healthy

and vital and a lot of them, not everybody obviously it's not everybody, there's some very very fit long distance runners but they tend to look older, tend to look, they tend to have some sarcopenia, muscle loss and you can just see it and they tend to have to keep doing it. They got to keep running Forrest Gump style like forever or they're going to get fat because they've changed the way their metabolism works. I rather sprint, do my little bit of workout, my ten minute sprint workout, the time really is the warm up but ten minute sprint workout and then live the rest of my life.

Minute 16:28 Perfect Supplements Yeah that's fantastic, I mean so interesting tying back with what you're saying, running you can go from a bigger apple to smaller apple but this HIIT training you can really move it from the apple to the coke bottle.

Shawn Stevenson Yes, absolutely. If you combine that with a smart strength training program, you're going to be in the best shape of your life, period.

Minute 16:44 Perfect Supplements Yea that sounds fantastic. Let me also tie you in, you just talked about you don't want to do this more than twice a week in terms of the hit training and that was a question we have. Sometimes you see people who get so excited about training, especially now and New Year's resolutions and you get into that over training issue. Now in all your experience, what are the signs of that and what should people watch out for and is that a problem in terms of over training?

Shawn Stevenson This is probably going to come as a surprise but I feel that generally, overtraining is a myth. Generally, I feel that over use and impact can be detrimental. If you're doing the same repetitious movement over and over and over again and really pounding on your joints and your ligaments and not letting your muscles heal, that's a problem. But you can train, like your body can actually do a lot, it's just how you structure things you know.

If you're just doing the same thing over and over again every day, like that's going to get you there faster and that's our concept of health in our modern world today. If something is good, more must be better. And also we get excited and what I tend to see is they get so excited and somebody will work out for an hour a day, six days a week and that doesn't last long because when you go from zero to trying to be a hero like that, what's going to happen is your body's going to get associated with a tremendous amount of pain with that exercise because you go from the couch to running five miles, you're going to feel horrible and your body's going to tell you like seriously, don't do that anymore and you're going to be using your willpower to try and fight against that and that's not going to work in the long term. Versus let's do something more reasonable, in matter of fact let's do something smart. Let's structure our exercise so we get the most benefit, then we get ourselves out of the gym and go live our lives and enjoy our bodies.

It's a whole different concept. I feel that consistency is important and personally what works for me, obviously is what I've been sharing is that I work out three days a week, maybe four you know when I'm doing the hit training and that works for me. But if you really love working out which I do as well but I got a lot of stuff going on so I'm not doing it as often, you can structure things by changing the intensity, changing the body parts that you're working on, changing just being in more variety and you can work out more often. I would highly recommend you make your workout shorter.

Minute 19:11 Perfect Supplements Yea that's fantastic, I mean you're shattering myths for me, there's a lot that I'm learning here so this is really great. Let me ask you about staying motivated. You get in this kick and you decide you're going to get into great shape but you have an off day, maybe you have an injury, you're not feeling good. Any tips or tricks to stay motivated and to stay on track?

Shawn Stevenson: Wow, you know, what it really boils down to Dan, I'm just going to be straight with you. It boils down to you being the type of person that can do all the things that you want to do in your life. The outer work comes as a result of you becoming that person, when you're firmly seated in your spirit as I'm this person, I'm here to be healthy, I'm here to be happy, I'm here to share my gifts, everything else in your life starts to match up with that. That's the biggest motivational tool is when somebody can actually flip on that switch and understand and care enough and love themselves enough to do these things so that it becomes a part of who you are.

Now, with that said, you know it is also the practical application which for me it just boils down to the word discipline. People who are not successful don't like that word. People who are successful love it. They love disciplines, I love my disciplines and it's starting to fall in love with that word and becoming a disciple of your own work, your own body, of your own gifts and talents cause you know the word disciple's derived from discipline.

So having those daily disciplines and really what it is for me is do it early and do it often. The early part of the day is usually where you have more control so getting up and doing something healthy for yourself, as soon as you wake up in the morning. Like for me as soon as I wake up, I drink a liter of water and then I'll do a little meditation, and then I'll do some kind of health activity. Usually I train heavier in the evening now, not evening but in the afternoon but in the morning I'll do some Qi Gong or some yoga or, always do mobility work in the morning now.

That's a little tip for everybody too. Nobody likes to stretch. Stretching is just not sexy but if you reframe it in your mind, it's mobility work, you're doing your mobility work. That's a whole different thing so this is something to cultivate,

that flexibility and long term strength and endurance and that's the way that I retrain myself and now I do it every day and when I used to never do it.

Minute 21:45 Perfect Supplements Right, staying motivated by that with the structure, that's really interesting and when you touched on there with the yoga, the stretch and the meditation, goes to another point which is that exercise really goes beyond the just what we think of fundamentals of cardio or weightlifting. So you definitely work in meditation, yoga and those are all parts of your fitness program as well right?

Shawn Stevenson That's right, yup, I'm a collage of awesomeness with all this health stuff.

Minute 22:12 Perfect Supplements This has been fantastic, and I've learned a lot and hopefully our listeners will learn a lot from this as well and we'll have resources, links here to Shawn and show his podcast, his website which are fantastic and a lot more information there. But let me leave you with this somewhat philosophical question which we've already kind of touched on throughout all this but tell us why do you exercise?

Shawn Stevenson Hmm, I really already touched on this a little bit as you said but I exercise because I care. I exercise because I appreciate being alive. I exercise because I appreciate having the opportunity to be a better version of me and I appreciate the opportunities I have every day to live and I exercise because I want to be an example for my kids, for my family, for everybody who sees me, I want them to know it's possible. That's why I exercise.

Perfect Supplements That's incredible. That right there is incredible. Shawn Stevenson we want to thank you for your time, I feel like I gotta go start exercising now, I'm motivated. This has been fantastic, thanks so much for your time and all your information.

Shawn Stevenson Awesome, thank you Dan.

