

Paul Chek's

BIG BANG WORKOUTS



PAUL CHEK'S BIG BANG WORKOUTS

2nd Edition

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You can learn more about Paul and his work at chekinstitute.com or at his blog at paulcheksblog.com

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS A "BIG BANG" EXERCISE?

The phrase "Big Bang" conjures up thoughts of "getting the most for your money," "the beginning of something new," or "getting the most from your time".

No matter how you slice it, the expression "Big Bang" always means something new, more, or better. This is exactly what most gym-goers are after! Many people rush to the gym before work, on lunch hour, or between work and dinner trying desperately to keep the fat off and stay fit.

In this eBook, we will look at how to effectively apply the "Big Bang" exercise concept. I will share some of my favorite, time-effective Big Bang workouts with you so that you can enjoy maximum health, fitness and body shaping benefits with an efficient time investment.

If you are a fitness instructor, filling your classes with members will be much easier if the people attending your classes begin to lose fat faster and look better than people who aren't taking your classes. This is where the concept of the Big Bang exercise can be helpful to both instructor and client.

I classify an exercise as a Big Bang exercise if it:

1. Meets the characteristics of a functional exercise and
2. Utilizes numerous biomotor (life-movement) abilities all at once

To better understand the Big Bang concept, let's first review the characteristics that make an exercise functional.

REFLEX PROFILE

While performing an activity in a sport or daily living, our nervous systems are constantly generating reflex activation of postural muscles to keep us upright and orient our body in space. When moving across a fixed surface, such as a step or a balance beam, we use what's called our *righting reflexes*. When we are on a surface that moves under us, such as a skateboard or a Swiss Ball during certain exercises, we maintain our balance using *tilting* and other *equilibrium reflexes*.

MAINTAINING OUR CENTER OF GRAVITY OVER OUR BASE OF SUPPORT

Most functional activities require that we stand and move in a three-dimensional unsupported environment. Our center of gravity shifts anytime we move our body or extremities relative to our base of support. If our center of gravity goes

outside our base of support (our feet), we are more likely to fall. For example, if someone were to toss you a ten pound medicine ball and you had to reach outside the space occupied by your feet, the weight of the ball could shift your center of gravity far enough outside your base of support that the weight and inertia of the ball could pull you over.

MOTOR SKILL TRANSFER TO FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT

When we perform an exercise, we are learning a skill. For that skill to transfer to any functional activity, the exercise must have similar movement qualities as the activity. For example, the squat and a vertical jump have very similar movement characteristics, which is why squatting is so helpful with improving vertical jump. Conversely, knee extensions and hamstring curls are such isolated movements that they have a negligible effect on improving one's vertical jump performance. In fact, in the long run, such exercise may deteriorate motor control, leading to faulty motor sequencing (the way muscles are recruited during movement). One example is *quadriceps dominance*, which is the premature recruitment of the quadriceps relative to the hamstrings during functional movements. Quadriceps dominance has been linked to the incredibly high incidence of non-contact anterior cruciate ligament injuries in

athletics today. These injuries are particularly frequent among females who have a greater propensity to use knee extension machines and leg presses than their male counterparts.

OPEN VS. CLOSED CHAIN COMPATIBILITY

When selecting an exercise to improve one's performance, it is best to choose an exercise that requires the same demand for open or closed chain function. An open chain exercise is one that allows the distal (or working) segment of the body to move freely against the resistance such as with the bench press - the weight is pressed up and off of the body because you can overcome the resistance. In closed chain movements, the distal segment (hand or foot) is fixed and cannot overcome the resistance, thus the chain is said to be closed. A common example of a closed chain exercise is a push-up. It is closed because you cannot push the ground away from your body. Therefore to improve an athlete's ability to quickly get up from the ground (as in sports like football, wrestling, hockey), the push-up would be a better choice than the bench press because getting up from the ground is a closed chain activity, just like the push-up.

Big Bang exercises address more biomotor abilities (Bompa) and utilize more planes of movement than many traditional exercises.

The term "biomotor" (bio = life and motor = movement) refers to a number of movement abilities people can use. As seen in **Table 1**, it is possible to develop a biomotor profile for virtually any activity. For example, the leg press does not require balance, agility, coordination, or a high degree of flexibility, but it may require strength or endurance. On the other hand, the Cross Box Step-Up (**Fig2A-2C**) utilizes balance, coordination, agility, flexibility, strength and endurance. Therefore, if training for a hiking trip, you would want to choose an exercise that required similar biomotor abilities, making the Cross Box Step-Up the obvious choice.

As you can see, the more functional exercise characteristics that are addressed by any given exercise, the more of a Big Bang exercise it is. Using a point system, giving 1 point for each characteristic that improves someone's functional capability, I've compared three "traditional" exercises to two "Big Bang" exercises in Table 1. A quick glance at this table demonstrates the tremendous return someone can get using Big Bang exercises over traditional exercises.

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EXERCISE	Ab Crunch	Supine Lateral Ball
Type of exercise	Traditional	BIG BANG
Functional exercise characteristics		
Comparable reflex profile (Righting/equilibrium)	No	Righting & Equilibrium
Maintaining your center of gravity over your own base of support	No	Feet & Ball
Motor skill transfers to functional environment	No	Developmental
Open/closed chain compatibility	Open	Open & Closed
Biomotor ability		
Strength	Yes	Yes
Power	No	No
Endurance	Yes	Yes
Flexibility	No	No
Coordination	No	Yes
Balance	No	Yes
Agility	No	Yes
Dominant movement plane		
Sagittal	Yes	Yes
Frontal	No	Yes
Transverse	No	Yes
TOTAL VALUE	4	12

Table 1 - Characteristics of the Big Bang Exercise As Compared to Traditional Exercise Here, a traditional exercise is compared with a "Big Bang" exercise. They have been scored based on their attributes in functional qualities, biomotor abilities and dominant movement plane. As the scores clearly indicate, the Big Bang exercise is far superior to an exercise used in most group exercise classes!

THE SUPINE LATERAL BALL ROLL

Figure 1A



Figure 1B



In addition to the many benefits demonstrated in Table 1, The Supine Lateral Ball Roll (**Figure 1A & 1B**) is an excellent exercise for improving spinal stability, posture, balance and coordination. Because this exercise requires that you hold your body up against gravity while supporting yourself using only one shoulder, there is a tremendous activation of your each extensor muscle from your hamstring to the base of your skull! Moreover with good form, the exercise activates the extensor muscles so strongly that it is excellent for postural conditioning. Additionally, during this exercise commonly weak muscles such as the deep

abdominal wall, *multifidus* muscles of the spine, cervical flexors and hip stabilizers play a critical role in maintaining proper position on the ball, receiving excellent conditioning.

To perform this exercise correctly:

1. Begin by placing the shoulders on the ball with the head comfortably resting on the ball. The arms should be outstretched with the palms up. The hips should be elevated until the torso is parallel to the floor.
2. Start the exercise by shuffling laterally with the feet and letting the body follow. As you can see in Figure 1, the model is suspending himself from the right shoulder with significant extension force required from the left hip.
3. Once you have rolled laterally as far as you can go and held good form for a count of one to three seconds, you can roll across the ball and repeat the same on the opposite side.
4. Performing a one to three second hold on each side constitutes one full repetition.

Since the exercise is performed on a Swiss Ball it allows the user to develop the necessary coordination and balance to stay on top of the ball. As your balance, strength and coordination improve, you will be able to roll further and further laterally or hold the end position for longer, while maintaining good form.

When using this exercise, either place a stick across the pelvis (left to right) or imagine holding one. The stick should remain level to the floor during the hold phase of the exercise. A useful cue is to have the client imagine that a stick placed in the palms of the hands and across the front of the pelvis were airplane wings; they should always try to keep the airplane flying level once in the hold position on either side of the ball. A typical set using a one second hold would include 8-12 reps. The intensity or effort required to perform the exercise is dictated by how far the client can roll laterally on the ball. As the number of prescribed reps increases, the intensity must be reduced or form is likely to deteriorate. This exercise should be used at the beginning of a circuit due to the significant neural demand it places on the body.

An important exception to this rule is when this exercise is used for stability training. Typically, when the exercise is used to do shorter duration strength or power training exercises, the intensity is so high that the muscles best suited to stabilizing the joints (called stabilizer muscles) don't get nearly as fatigued. This is because of their elevated population of slow fibers (oxidative, long lasting). However, if the lateral distance is reduced to allow approximately 10 reps of 10 seconds each for a total work duration of ~100 seconds/set, the exercise should be the

last performed in the sequence of any given workout. When executed using the reduced lateral distance, the bigger strength/power muscles are likely to still have energy left due to the low training intensity, yet *the muscles that stabilize your joints will be fatigued*. To prevent unwanted stabilizer injury or joint injury due to fatigue, all such stabilizer exercises should be done *last* in your routine. In addition, if you have any history of back pain or are currently suffering with chronic back pain, the use of the Supine Lateral Ball roll to condition the stabilizers (or any stabilizer specific exercises) should only be done in the evening after work or chores. This is because performing these exercises correctly is so fatiguing to the stabilizers that training in this manner before work, chores or playing with children can result in injury. The stabilizers have been so fatigued they can't do their job!

THE CROSS BOX STEP-UP

The Cross Box Step-up (**Figures 2A-2C**) is a functional exercise, which utilizes motion in all planes of movement. It can be done using a slow, moderate or fast tempo and weights can be added to the hands or across the back.

1. Initially, the outside foot is placed upon the box (the right foot in our figure). The shin angle should never be greater than 30° relative to vertical to protect knee structures.

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Figure 2A

Figure 2B

Figure 2C

2. As you step up, step across with the left leg moving to the opposite side of the box.
3. You then step down with the right leg, making sure not to allow an angle of greater than 30° at the knee of the leg left on the box (the left leg in our figure) while stepping down.
4. After both feet are on the ground, the exercise is repeated in the opposite direction.

When used with heavy loads, this exercise is great for building strength. With lighter loads, the exercise can be used to develop power. In both cases, the number of repetitions and the intensity should be dictated by the exerciser's ability to hold good form.

The Supine Lateral Ball Roll and the Cross Box Step-up are both excellent exercises that can be added to any group exercise or individualized training program. Both of these exercises are excellent conditioning for the legs and the

butt with the Supine Lateral Ball Roll being the more demanding of the two. These exercises also develop the core musculature and when performed properly, they both encourage good posture and joint motion through functional ranges of motion.

So if you're pressed for time or you're looking for highly functional exercises, Big Bang is for you. Just remember that because of the complexity of these Big Bang exercises, they are best included during the beginning of a circuit (though see the exception I describe above). Where multiple Big Bang exercises are used, order them from most to least complex or most to least challenging for you.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIG BANG PUSHING WORKOUT

In a previous chapter I discussed Big Bang exercises as an efficient means for maximizing the health, fitness and body shaping benefits you see from your workout. This is because they are both multidimensional and potentially challenging to the nervous system. Big Bang exercises are functional exercises that produce more effective activity-specific results since they can be chosen according to biomotor profiles that closely mirror the movements essential to that activity. Finally, Big Bang exercises have a great capacity to elevate your metabolism, and when sufficiently intense, are excellent for adding lean muscle mass as well. In this chapter I will share one of my favorite Big Bang workouts. This little devil of a workout is designed to be short, sweet and very effective.

Typically, I build training programs so that the workouts cycle around movement patterns. In this article, I've organized the workout around pushing movement patterns, though pulling patterns and leg exercise are just as conducive to the Big Bang concept (as you'll see in the following chapters of this eBook).

The Big Bang mini-circuit consists of only two exercises, although the concept can be extended to three or more exercises. More than five gets to be almost impossible to maintain after two circuits because the demand on the body is so great that training quality drops too quickly to be worth the effort.

BIG BANG PUSH EXERCISE #1

The Single Arm Swiss Ball Dumbbell Bench Press

Begin seated on a Swiss Ball with your warm-up dumbbell between your feet. Your warm-up dumbbell should be about 50% of your training weight knowing that you will need to perform 10 repetitions with your training load for multiple sets. If your training weight is more than 90 pounds or ~40Kg, I suggest performing a multi-stage warm-up, increasing your warm up weight by about 10% -15% for the second warm-up set.



Figure 1A



Figure 1B

Bend forward and pick up the dumbbell with two hands (**Figure 1A**), and as you bring it toward the middle of your body (**Figure 1B**), simultaneously lay back over the ball. Be sure to keep the dumbbell in the midline of your body so you don't get pulled off the ball.

Once you are in position to perform the lift, carefully negotiate the dumbbell into the standard dumbbell bench press start position (**Figure 1C**). Now, reach in the air with your free hand. This prepares you for what is called a *reciprocity*



Figure 1C
means that your free arm will be used to drive the working arm, minimizing stress in your working shoulder while encouraging trunk rotation.



Figure 1D

To initiate the movement, begin by pulling the free hand rapidly backward as you accelerate the working hand forward. The movement will be complete when you have rolled onto the shoulder of the free arm (Figure 1D). During this process, you should keep your head and eyes looking straight up at the ceiling. After completing ten repetitions (or as many as you can do with perfect form), draw the dumbbell to the midline of the body and switch hands, repeating the process on the other side. If you have chosen the correct training weight for this workout, you will comfortably complete 10 reps on each side as a moderate to fast tempo before moving on to the next exercise.

With any Big Bang exercise (or resistance training in general!) it is good to follow the 10% rule. This rule stipulates that if your performance drops by more than 10% from first set performance to the next, your nervous and/or muscular system is fatigued to the point that form loss is likely and gains are minimized. *In other words, you are spent!*

So how do we use the 10% rule? To start we need to realize that each single rep (reliable to about 10-12 reps) is worth 2.5% of your max effort for any given lift. Since $2.5\% \times 4 = 10\%$, the 10% rule tells us that if, in a succeeding set, your max performance with good form is 4 less than that of the original set, your body is fatigued and you should *stop that particular exercise*. For example, suppose your set calls for 10 reps (10 repetition maximum load or intensity, training at 75% relative to what you could lift for one rep), you can now determine when your performance drops 10%. Imagine now that on your second set you could only perform six reps with good form. The 10% rule now takes effect and you should end that exercise. In the type of Big Bang workout I'm sharing here where you go for as many sets as you can in 15 minutes, you know to stop when your performance drops by 10% or more, or when you've been training for 15 minutes.

Also, if for any reason you don't have the coordination to complete this exercise as described, you can revert to performing a single arm bench press without rolling onto the shoulder (see Figure 1C for an illustration of how to begin the movement). When your strength and confidence improve, return to the more advanced version of the exercise.

Immediately after completing ten reps of the Single Arm Swiss Ball, Dumbbell Bench Press on each side, move the ball to an area with open space and begin with the next exercise.

BIG BANG PUSH EXERCISE #2

The Push-Jack



Figure 2A



Figure 2B

Begin with your feet atop the ball in a push-up position (Figure 2A). Holding perfect spinal alignment at all times, begin by extending the arms, pushing the body away from the floor as you draw your legs under you (Figure 2B). Your butt should not go up in the air and your spinal curves should stay neutral at all times during the exercise.

If at any point you can't maintain your spinal alignment, you must stop, even if your arms still have energy to continue! As you drop back into the push-up, you return to the start position again. The movement should be smooth. There should be no break in the timing of the working extremities such that the arm or leg movements start or end before one another. Perform 10 repetitions at a moderate tempo. As above, apply the 10% rule!

COMPLETING THE CIRCUIT

Upon completing these two Big Bang exercises in rapid succession, you should rest for 60 seconds and then return to the beginning of the circuit immediately. Continue the two-exercise cycle for as many sets as you can while completing 10 repetitions for each exercise with the 60-second rest period between them. The stronger you are, the more sets you will complete.

The goal is to complete as many sets as you can in 15 minutes. This will provide a very effective, high-

density workout. You should feel physically tired at the end, but at the same time, invigorated. In the next chapter I'll show you a Big Bang Pulling workout.

CHAPTER 3

THE BIG BANG PULLING WORKOUT

In the previous chapter of this eBook, I showed you how to perform one of my favorite Big Bang pushing workouts. To show you that the Big Bang concept can be applied to different movement patterns, in this chapter I'm going to share one of my favorite Big Bang pulling workouts.

Let me begin with a small reminder.

Because Big Bang exercises can be fatiguing be sure to follow the 10% rule. Remember, this rule stipulates that if your performance drops by more than 10% from first set performance to the next, your nervous and/or muscular system is fatigued to the point that form loss is likely and gains are minimized.

As with the pushing workout I showed you in the last chapter, the pulling workout I'm sharing here sets a goal for you to complete as many sets as you can in 15 minutes. So you know to stop when your performance drops by 10% or more, or when you've been training for 15 minutes.

BIG BANG PULLING EXERCISE #1

Dumbbell Power Clean



Figure 1A



Figure 1B

To begin, we will start with a very functional, explosive exercise with application to a vast array of work and sporting environments. To start the Dumbbell Power Clean (DPC), you will need to warm-up effectively first. To do this, begin with a pair of light dumbbells in your hands that you can comfortably jump with 12-20 times without straining. Start by dropping into the bottom position of a jump (Figure 1A) and then jump. As you jump, carefully time the shrug of your shoulders with maximum power output of your legs so that the two forces effectively summate (Figure 1B). I recommend performing 1-3 sets of 10-20 jumps with light dumbbells to get the nervous and musculoskeletal systems warmed-up and on line.



Figure 2A

Once warm, choose weights that are about twice your warm-up weight (sufficient for a 4-6 rep load) and place them just outside your feet and directly beneath your shoulder (**Figure 2A**). Initiate the exercise by taking a deep breath, letting your belly expand so you get a quality diaphragmatic contraction. Holding your breath, draw your navel toward your spine to activate your deep abdominal wall, stabilizing your spine and pelvis effectively.

Be sure to keep your back from rounding. If you can't begin with the dumbbells resting on the floor as shown without rounding your back, place the dumbbells on something (e.g. a step-box) to elevate them to the point where you can attain correct form, keeping your back straight.

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As soon as your core is activated, initiate the DPC by simply jumping, remembering to time the shrug of your shoulders with the power position of your legs so you get maximum acceleration of the dumbbell.

Once the dumbbells have reached maximum acceleration, you must **QUICKLY** get underneath them and catch them in their natural resting position on your shoulders (**Figure 2B**). That completes the rep. As you lower the dumbbells, bend forward as you straighten your arms to disperse the load over as many muscles as possible.

Typically, you will use a weight that will allow you to comfortably complete 4-6 reps and not lose form. You will have to experiment with loads because often people choose a weight that is comfortable for the set with one arm, but which will rapidly fatigue the other, resulting in poor training form. This goes against *the form principle* and is not congruent with CHEK training philosophy. Once you have completed your DPC's on both sides, immediately go to a cable machine to perform the next Big Bang exercise.



Figure 2B

BIG BANG PULLING EXERCISE #2

The Lateral Lunge Pull



Figure 3A

The Lateral Lunge Pull (LLP) is an excellent multi-dimensional Big Bang exercise. To begin, you will need rope handles on the cable machine and the pulley should be set to the bottom position. Grab the rope handles with a double overhand grip and assume the start position (**Figure 3A**), making sure you don't allow your back to round in the bottom position. There should be tension on the cable in the start position so the repetitions are completed smoothly.



Figure 3B

To initiate the LLP, inhale deeply, allowing the lower abdomen to expand. Holding your breath, draw your belly button toward your spine and push off the floor while drawing the rope across your body (**Figure 3B**). As you return to the start position, allow yourself to exhale through pursed lips. This is important because if you don't purse the lips and create pressure as you exhale, your deep abdominal wall will relax, potentially destabilizing your spine.

To warm-up, choose a weight you can do while maintaining a natural breathing cycle and complete 12-20 reps a side. If you are going to use more than 20% greater load to train with than you warmed-up with, I suggest a multiple stage warm-up so you can ramp up the relevant body systems. This prevents injury.

COMPLETING THE CIRCUIT

To begin your training, choose a load that you can

comfortably complete 10 reps a side with perfect

form.

Once you conclude the DPC, immediately

complete the LLP and rest 60 seconds. Your goal

is to do as many sets as you can in 15 minutes.

Because this type of workout is deceptive in its

ability to produce post-exercise soreness, I highly

recommend that you start with a weight that is

intentionally light in the beginning and finish with

a feeling of being able to do more.

Now that you have a Big Bang pulling workout, in the following chapter I'll show you how to apply the concept to leg workouts.

CHAPTER 4

THE BIG BANG LEG WORKOUT

At the start of this eBook, I argued that the Big Bang exercise concept can be applied to more than simply push workouts – there are plenty of other movement patterns and exercises that are conducive to this economical approach to movement.

We've looked at both push and pull patterns so far.

In this chapter, we will get into leg training Big Bang style.

With Big Bang workouts, I stick to a time effective, high-density two-exercise mini-circuit with the goal of completing as many sets as you can in just 15 minutes. This workout will feel longer than the 15 minutes it takes, but you'll definitely feel the benefits in the long run!

BIG BANG LEG EXERCISE #1

Dumbbell Lunge-Press

This dynamic exercise is what I call a total-body leg exercise. The Dumbbell Lunge Press (DLP) can be performed with an Olympic bar or dumbbells depending on how hard you want to work. If you

want a more difficult workout, dumbbells are harder to handle and therefore make for better nervous system training.



Figure 1A



Figure 1B

To begin the exercise, start with the dumbbells held in front of you at shoulder height, arms bent as though at the bottom of a shoulder press (**Figure 1A**). Now, inhale diaphragmatically and as you step into the lunge, draw your bellybutton toward your spine and press the dumbbells over head, ending up in the lunge-press position (**Figure 1B**).

As you step forward out of the lunge-press position, lower the dumbbells back to the start position and exhale through pursed lips ending up in the start position (**Figure 1C**). This constitutes one repetition. With each subsequent rep you travel forward alternating the lead leg. Otherwise, begin as with the first rep and move into the lunge- press position (**Figure 1D**).



Figure 1C



Figure 1D

For your Big Bang workout, you will choose a pair of dumbbells that allows you to comfortably complete 10 reps with perfect form on your first set. As you fatigue in successive sets, ***always stop just prior to the point at which your form breaks down.*** It is important to remember that ***training to failure = training to fail.*** Upon completing your set, immediately progress to the Variable Depth Squat to Toes (VDS).

BIG BANG LEG EXERCISE #2

Variable Depth Squat to Toes

Before describing this exercise I need to begin with two key instructions. First, as I've described all along, ***it is important to warm-up in stages, but that is particularly the case with this exercise because the tempo is fast.*** To warm up, start the exercise with a first set of 50-60% of your

projected *training load* followed by a set of about 70% of your projected *training load*.

Second, proper breathing is vital to performing this exercise correctly. You will find that your breathing will synchronize with your movement. However, the key concern with breathing is abdominal wall control. **As you inhale, you DON'T want to let your guts hang out.** It is extremely important to practice keeping background tension in your deep abdominal wall. This is done by gently drawing your navel toward the spine at all times. You will still be able to inhale fully and naturally, but with a background contraction. When breathing this way, the *transverse abdominis* muscle will be working to stabilize the spine and pelvic girdle eccentrically on inhalation and concentrically as you exhale.



Figure 2A

After your warm-up, begin the exercise with a weight that is about 50-60% of your maximum squat load. Stand with the bar on your back as you would with a traditional back squat (**Figure 2A**). Initiate the squat from the hips and lower yourself down to a different depth each squat (**Figures 2B – 2D**) and

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complete five reps from flat feet. As your squat depth varies, so too should your squat tempo. A deeper squat should be performed at a slower tempo and a shallower squat at a faster tempo.



Figure 2B



Figure 2C



Figure 2D



Figure 3

Immediately following the first five reps begin a succession of five variable depth squats (matching tempo to depth once again), but this time, each rep you will take you up to your tip toes (**Figure 3**).

Repeat this cycle again so that at the end of the set, you have done two sequences of five flat feet and five to toes for a total of 20 variable depth squats.

COMPLETING THE CIRCUIT

To complete your Big Bang Leg workout, do as many sets of the DLP followed by VDS as you can in 15 minutes.

I suggest you rest a minimum of one minute after each mini-circuit. It is also important not to over-work yourself in the beginning with this form of training because it can cause considerable post-workout soreness. When you feel challenged to get 10 reps of each of the exercises, I suggest you stop there and see how your body does the next day. As you get stronger, you will eventually be able to handle a full 15-minute training session.

In addition, I recommend that you don't attempt a successive Big Bang workout until you've recovered to the point that muscle soreness and fatigue are not limiting factors.

Finally, don't be fooled by the short duration of these Big Bang mini-circuits. They are very high volume training and rapidly boost your metabolism, giving you a training effect in as little as 10-15 minutes that most people don't get with 50 minutes or more of typical gym training.

Now that you have some examples of the Big Bang concept in action, in our final chapter we're going to end with some key programming principles that will help you to build your own Big Bang workouts.

CHAPTER 5

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

In the previous four chapters of this eBook, I have showed you how to perform a good number of exercises. I've also offered a number of circuits that incorporate those exercises in various ways. In this final chapter I will show you how you can build your own program. To do that, let's look at some important principles and concepts that will help you with your exercise programming.

TRAIN, DON'T DRAIN

While most people in and out of the exercise profession tend to focus on the *muscular* aspects of exercise, few recognize or respect the *neurological* aspects of exercise. Frankly, the neurological aspects of exercise are much more important than the muscles themselves, for it is the nervous system that activates and coordinates the muscles. The significance of the neural basis of exercise is best illustrated by watching incredible feats of power and strength demonstrated by gymnasts or martial artists. Bruce Lee, for example, was amazingly powerful for a man of only about 132 pounds. The secret behind this strength is a well-developed nervous

system that can access a greater percentage of their available muscle fibers.

With that in mind, it is extremely important to be aware of the neurological demands of an exercise. For example, if you have tried any of the Big Bang (BB) exercise routines I've shared thus far, or have attempted to make up your own BB workout based on the concepts I've presented elsewhere, you will surely have found how taxing these workouts are.

BB exercises are neurologically demanding so it is essential that you don't put more of them in one workout than your nervous system can handle.

This fact is crucial. The high-energy demands of BB exercises mean your chances of training with poor form increase much faster than with conventional bodybuilding or machine based exercises. So being conscious of the neurological load of an exercise means that you are better able to avoid degeneration of form and therefore to avoid injury as well.

A further reason that it is so important to understand the neurological basis of strength is that ***your body learns to move by performing the exercise.*** This is particularly the case with neurologically demanding exercises like those in my BB workouts so, again, it is essential that you don't put more BB exercises in one workout than

your nervous system can handle.

This becomes even more important when we see that *the nervous system always remembers the most traumatic last incident. Your nervous system will learn most from the last repetition and is very likely to forget the previous 10-12.*

Failure to end your workout before form deteriorates will result in faulty programming. This is where the saying "*training to failure equals training to fail*" comes from. By training to the point where your form fails, you not only risk injury, but you train your body to remember the improper form.

If you plan on adding my BB exercises then I recommend using the following formula:

- 1. For beginners** (less than one year of consistent strength training), I suggest only using one BB exercise at the beginning of a workout.
- 2. Intermediate level lifters** (> 1 year but less than 2 years' consistent weight training) may tolerate two BB exercises.
- 3. Those who have three or more years of consistent conditioning** may be able to tolerate as many as three BB exercises in one workout.

ALWAYS SEQUENCE EXERCISES IN DESCENDING COMPLEXITY

This rule is designed to protect you from unnecessary loss of form. In essence, *you should always order your workout such that the most challenging exercises are done highest in the order of execution.* This does not mean, however, that everyone will have the same ordering of exercises for their workout. What may be a tough exercise for a rower may be an easy exercise for a dancer. Each individual's motor skills will dictate their best exercise ordering.

This is another principle that is generally lost on fitness professionals today. Since the late 1950's, there has been a huge influence on resistance training by exercise equipment manufacturers. Their fixed axis machinery lets you get away with murder because the number of muscles being used and the necessity of balancing your own body and the load being lifted is no longer an issue. Thus the neurological complexity/demand of the exercises is dramatically reduced.

HAVE A DEFINITIVE TRAINING GOAL

There is an old saying that goes like this, "*a man with a plan will always do better than a man without a plan*". Or, as business expert Brian Tracy says, "*If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.*" THE SAME IS TRUE OF EXERCISE! Having a goal is not only important

as a motivator to exercise, it will also help you to shape your workout.

For example, let's suppose your goal is to lose body fat. As I have said in many other books, lectures, articles and videos, exercise IS NOT going to be effective as a fat loss tool if the energy being used to exercise the body should be diverted inward to both run and heal vital systems such as the hormonal, digestive, eliminative, thermoregulatory, nervous, immune systems, etc.

If you have followed the assessment protocol in my book *How to Eat, Move and Be Healthy*, you will know how much of an exercise stressor your body can handle and can prescribe exercise stressors accordingly. If you are healthy and have a total score below 150 in my book, you can safely apply the *Undulating Intensity Principle*.

My clinical experience has demonstrated that some people respond better to *high density* (*volume*) training, while others respond better to high intensity training. For example, in Chapter 1 of this eBook I suggested doing as many sets as you can in 15 minutes. This is an example of *high-density* training.

I will frequently get 15 sets in those 15 minutes, which is very high density training. While this type of training will really jack up most people's metabolism, it may not be intense enough (how heavy the weights are) to stimulate growth and

development of fast twitch muscle fibers. I have had clients, for example, who actually grow and get stronger on the *high density* workouts, while I respond more favorably to the *high intensity workout* - heavier loads, more sets per exercise with longer rest periods.

Keeping this concept in mind, to get the best results burning fat, you will need to experiment with the number of high density workouts relative to high intensity workouts you perform. For example, I found I respond best to six high intensity workouts followed by 2-3 high density workouts. You might well be the inverse of that.

An additional caveat for those of you wanting to burn fat is to remember that *how your metabolism responds after a workout is very much hormonally driven*. Research in strength training now shows that short, intense workouts of 30 – 40 minutes are far more effective at stimulating natural growth hormone and testosterone release than the typical long torturous workouts many people do in the gym today. Many of my clients are surprised at the results when they stop talking to their friends in the gym, time their rest periods with a stopwatch, and get serious!

On the hand, if your goal is to get stronger, your workout should be shaped by different principles.

For improved strength you should not let any

set go longer than 60 seconds. For example, if you do a set of squats, from the time you start the set to the time you rack the bar should be no longer than 60 seconds. Going longer will develop endurance, not strength! You will also need to increase the number of sets of the key exercises that make you strong in your patterns of choice. For example, you can't be strong at everything unless you are a genetic freak. Therefore, if you want to have a big squat, do lots of squatting. If you want a big bench press, you better do lots of bench pressing.

Finally, my clinical observations reflect that *most people can only train hard for two to three weeks before the body produces a stress response.*

The stress response is marked by elevated stress hormone (glucocorticoids) levels. After some experimentation with your body, you will find that every third or fourth week should be what I call a ½ volume week - the intensity stays the same, but the volume is cut in half as a form of active rest. This can dramatically increase strength gains!

WORK HARD, REST HARD

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to reaching your health goals – whether you're diligently trying to lose fat or build muscle – is over-training. The result over over-training is excess production of stress hormones, which are catabolic (tissue destructive). Whenever stress

hormones are produced in excess, you are likely to lose as much (OR MORE) muscles as fat. This is a disaster since muscle is the most metabolically active tissue in the body and is vital to keep your fat burning metabolism up.

Always remember this simple rule:

If you can't improve your performance by 1-3% each time you come to the gym, you are not rested and should stretch, meditate, or get a massage. In other words, relax instead of training.

When mixing weight training with other methods of exercise, such as aerobic classes, biking, spin bike classes, martial arts, etc., you must again apply the *most to least complex rule* and prioritize what is most important to you. *The body can only handle so much volume.* This is especially so with my BB workouts.

For example, if you are a tennis player, I suggest you play your tennis on Saturday or Sunday, perform a BB workout either the evening of the day you play tennis or on the next day, and take two days off. This is an example of the work hard~rest hard principle because you couple your stressors and keep your rest days as pure rest.

Most people put other forms of exercise on what should be a rest day and then can't figure out why they are always tired!

If your favorite activity is leisurely, like hiking, you

may be able to tolerate a BB workout on Saturday and then hiking on Sunday, for example. This is because even though you may be fatigued from your BB workout, you can customize the duration, intensity and complexity of your hike to suit your unique physical abilities/readiness.

Moreover, when it comes to designing your own program, you need to look at your goal structure and ***be realistic about your time commitment.***

The BB routines I've shared in this eBook are perfect for a busy executive athlete type that needs to workout and eat at lunch. In this instance, we just used two exercises and went at it for 15 minutes like hungry dogs! Typically, most people can only handle 3-4 such workouts in a seven-day period.

For my BB routines, if you wish to extend the workouts, you can add a third BB exercise into your sequence. However it is a good idea to keep your total sets down to 12 when the complexity rises to the level of three BB exercises. Failure to follow this suggestion can easily result in injury or an over-training response.

Finally, the **MOST IMPORTANT** thing to remember when designing your own exercise schedule is that ***the under-trained athlete will always out-perform the over-trained athlete!***

When you are out of gas, you are out of gas! It is a lot easier and safer to come to the conclusion

that you can handle more than it is to find that you've over trained and are now injured because of it. Or, worse yet, you've exhausted your adrenal glands and are now chronically sick in the name of fitness! Sadly, I see this almost every day in my practice.

CONCLUSION

Now that you understand some of the most important basics of how to design your own exercise program, you are ready to have fun achieving your goals.

While I've outlined a few key principles of exercise program design here, those of you who want to go to the next level will be well served to study my correspondence courses titled *Program Design* and *Advanced Program Design*. For those of you wanting more variety in your training, I have suggested a number of programs below.

Thank you for reading and have fun with your Big Bang workouts!

Suggested CHEK Institute reading/viewing for more Big Bang exercises and programming tips:

1. How To Eat, Move and Be Healthy! (book)
2. Movement that Matters (book)
2. Program Design 2nd Ed. (elearning course)
3. Advanced Program Design 2nd Edition.
(elearning course)
4. Holistic Health and Performance for Women
(elearning course)
5. Scientific Core Conditioning (elearning course)
6. Scientific Back Training (elearning course)
7. The Golf Biomechanic's Manual (book)

All of these resources can be found at
thechekshop.com

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