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There's a common misconception that inmates have literally nothing but time on their hands, and that everyone's going to leave prison just shy of being a bodybuilder. Sorry to burst anybody's bubbles but the next Arnold Schwarzenegger isn't here, and this couldn't be anything but further from the truth for many reasons.

I can agree that inmates do in fact have a generous amount of free time on their hands. After completing whatever work detail assigned and the brief communication we're permitted to have with our friends and loved ones, we still have the entire day ahead of us to utilize and conduct exercise routines and strength training, right? This is true, but there is so much more that goes into one's physical health other than exercising, that I didn't quite believe until it wasn't as readily available. I'm talking about maintaining a proper diet and getting adequate sleep each and every night.

The exercising part of the whole equation is by far the easiest to maintain in here. Most prison compounds offer a recreation period where inmates can choose to go to the yard and play sports, run around a track, and even lift weights. Now unless you've been incarcerated for a while, or you know somebody, you will probably have to wait your turn to use the weights. Not only is there an unofficial waiting list to get on the weights, but they are slowly diminishing and vanishing completely. Several years ago, the BOP adopted the Zimmerman bill preventing any institution from purchasing or replacing any strength training equipment. So if something breaks or is mishandled in any way, you can say goodbye to the piece of equipment. So, it's quite obvious the government is not supporting of the idea of an inmate becoming ripped and jacked. But the good news is that equipment is not necessary, in fact calisthenics training is by far more popular in this environment. Regardless of what's going on in the institution, whether it be a lockdown or just a temporary yard closure, you can virtually do push-ups anywhere you go.

Now that shedding off that extra weight is covered, what you put into your body isn't as easy to balance out in here. I must admit, often times you will not go hungry in prison. We are in fact fed three descent sized portions every day, but the nutritious value isn't quite up to par. Most meal are accompanys with rice, potatoes, or some other starch, that is filling, but lacks the benefits our bodies crave and desire. Unless you are spending \$100 a week strictly on protein shakes, peanuts, and fish; building any lean muscle is not in the foreseeable future. You try working out everyday for multiple hours without the proper diet, let me know how you do it because I must know the secret. I personally have been on a tuna-spinach wrap diet lately. While it did hurt my wallet a bit, it's the only diet I've ever been on that I've seen the result I've really desired.

By far the most difficult thing to accomplish in here is a good night's sleep. Between battling the constant temperature rises and drops, the blinding lights shining throughout the night, the absurd noises that constantly echo on the unit, and not to mention the fact that I'm sleeping on something that somebody had the nerve to call a mattress; sleeping isn't easy. I'm on a pretty fixed routine, close my eyes at approximately 9pm, open them back up at 5am. But I honestly can't remember the last time I successfully made it through that time frame without someone or something waking me up. This has definitely caused some of my muscles to hurt and ache for an extended period of time, or a short period of crankiness the following day.

Whenever I first entered prison, I was physically in rough shape. I mean technically round's a shape, right? I couldn't make it up and down a staircase without gasping for breath, I was convinced desert was a necessary meal, and I didn't even want somebody to mention the words "push-up" or "pull-up" to me. Then one day I had a sort of epiphany and strong desire for a change of lifestyle. I realized that one day I want to have a family upon my release and truly experience the joy and excitement of running around with my children. So I used my drive, ambition, and strong desire to seriously buckle down, and focus on my physical well-being. Today I incorporate running the staircase into my daily cardio routine, although I continue to make cheesecakes for the general population I've personally eliminated sweets from my diet, and I can complete a hundred straight burpees in under seven minutes.

Although I am currently in the best shape of my life, I still wouldn't dare to say that I'm on my way to being a bodybuilder, in fact at this point I'm withering away. I know once I'm released and can reach Planet Fitness, maintain a proper diet, and properly introduce myself to a bed again, any further training I conduct will go a lot more smoothly and productive.

Physical health was the last piece of the whole-person health spectrum I was waiting to fill. It went from something I completely neglected to now something I refuse to live without. Once I make my way back home, and if anybody's interested in learning the convict workout, I'll be more than happy to teach anybody a trick or two. But, good luck keeping up with me.