

EPISODE 280

Exercise Secrets & Building Superhero Bodies – with Celebrity Fitness Trainer Don Saladino

Shawn Stevenson: Welcome to *The Model Health Show*. This is fitness and nutrition expert, Shawn Stevenson, and I'm so grateful for you tuning in with me today.

I've got a question for you. Do you believe in superheroes? Do you believe in superheroes? You know, we see these incredible films now out there on the interwebs, and of course in theatres, and at home, and just the landscape of that whole phenomenon is really interesting.

But this goes back to the days of the comic book genre, and people really believing that there are these super-human individuals that are walking around and there to protect us when we're in need, right?

So do you believe in superheroes?

I'll tell you right out, I'm a huge fan of superheroes, and I believe that they exist, but it's the everyday men and women who are choosing to step into their greatness. That's who the real superheroes are.

And there are also superhero trainers, alright? People who really help to cultivate and churn out the greatness in all of us, and we have one of those individuals on the show today. Alright?

It's going to knock your socks off, and you're going to see also the direct connection to the superheroes that you see on the screen as well.

Before we do that, I've got to tell you, listen I've been through a lot recently. A lot of travel, a lot of this and that, a lot of new projects, and man, when I'm getting into the gym - because you know we still have to get it in, alright? Superheroes have to handle their business.

And here's why I use Onnit. Now this is a double-blind placebo-controlled study, alright? This is the gold standard of studies. This isn't like, "You know what? Cousin Vinny said that this works, so try it." Alright? This is not like that. It's not the stuff coming out the back of the van. It's not that, alright?

So double blind placebo-controlled study, and this was a twelve-week study, clinical trial at Florida State University, and they utilized participants and checked out all the different metrics during training utilizing Shroom Tech Sport.

Here's the results. Number one, they found it was shown to increase bench press reps by 12%. Alright? 12% is significant. Shown to increase bench press and back squat reps by 7%. Shown to increase- and by the way, that's a superset. And also shown to increase cardiovascular performance by 8.8%. Pretty phenomenal.

Now the main constituent, the reason that I use Shroom Tech Sport, is that it's based on earth grown nutrients, alright? This isn't some synthetic weird- this is based on cordyceps mushroom, it's the main constituent, and it's been utilized for literally thousands of years.

And here's another study, published in 'Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise.' Looked at thirty healthy athletes for six weeks to record the effects of cordysex- cordyceps. I said cordysex. Alright? Cordyceps on their performance. And by the way, there is some evidence of its ability to improve libido in a clinical trial, FYI.

So I guess that was a Freudian slip? Is that what they call it? Yeah so on their performance, the group that added cordyceps to their daily regimen had twice the oxygen intake of the control group, and oxygen is essential to transport nutrients to your muscles, preventing fatigue, helping to prevent lactic acid buildup. Really, really powerful stuff.

And another study done by the same group showed a 9% increase in overall aerobic activity from taking cordyceps.

Listen, if you're not taking Shroom Tech Sport, what are you doing? Head over there, check them out, www.Onnit.com/model. That's www.Onnit.com/model. You get 10% off that and all of their other health and human performance supplements. Highly, highly recommend them. Alright? Again, based on earth-grown nutrients.

And on that note, let's get to our iTunes review of the week.

iTunes Review: Another five-star review titled, 'My Favorite Podcast Station by Far,' by ThatBoyant.

"I've been listening to *The Model Health Show* for the past six months, and what I've learned in that short amount of time has changed my perspective on a lot of things regarding health and wellness.

It has made me more aware of my environment, food, chemicals, and so much more. Listening to this podcast is like taking a master class on nutrition and health. Shawn

is all about delivering facts and giving you the tools to perform at your peak in any aspect of life.

You are certainly missing out if you don't listen to *The Model Health Show*.'

Shawn Stevenson: Wow, that was awesome. Thank you so much for leaving me that review over in iTunes. And listen everybody, please keep them coming. If you've yet to leave a review, please pop over and do so. Just hit 'Pause,' leave the review, come back. I promise I will be here, alright? I truly, truly do appreciate that.

And on that note, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day.

Our guest today is Don Saladino, and he's one of the nation's most sought after performance experts, and in high demand as a personal trainer for professional athletes, golfers, and celebrities.

His client roster includes the likes of Scarlett Johansson, Sebastian Stan, Blake Lively, Ryan Reynolds, and more. He also serves as a brand ambassador for several top tier health brands.

Don graduated from Sacred Heart University in 1999 with a Bachelor's of Science where he played four years Division I baseball and served as team captain as well.

And his state-of-the-art training studio is located in NYC, and he lives outside the city in Cold Springs Harbor, New York with his wife and two children. And I'd like to welcome to *The Model Health Show*, the one and only Don Saladino. How's it going today, man?

Don Saladino: What's up, my man? Thanks for having me on. I'm really excited.

Shawn Stevenson: Oh, it's totally my pleasure. I've got so many things I want to talk to you about, but first of all, let's talk about your superhero origin story yourself, man.

What got- was Don as a kid, was he just like super into fitness? What got you interested in this space in the first place?

Don Saladino: You know, I would backtrack to about the second grade when I developed a hearing problem, had a pretty serious stutter as a kid, and was kind of struggling to find myself in school.

My dad was a serious baseball player growing up, so he introduced me to the sport, and it was really my avenue. It's kind of my- it was my escape. And I dove into that, and became really good at that, and it was the way I could excel from a lot of my peers.

And then at the specific time you just start diving into, "Well how do I improve this? How do I enhance this?" Athletes in the mid to late eighties started getting a lot stronger. I started telling myself in the early nineties, "I'm going to get a lot stronger."

You start diving into nutrition, you come back to school, all the girls are looking at you going, "Oh my God, look at your muscles," and it was just like this whole- it was just this whole approach, man.

It was just looking at guys on magazine covers like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Michael Hern, and just saying to yourself, "Wow, like I want some of that," and it was just slowly climbing into that.

And I mean now it's- I started that, I was probably sixteen-years-old with the exercise, and the real kind of regimented weight training. The nutrition probably started about then, and it's been an evolution since.

I mean, I just shot the cover of 'Muscle and Fitness,' and I was on it in March, and my diet's still evolving. So it's just been an incredible field for me to be in. It's been a lot of fun.

Shawn Stevenson: Man, I love that word 'evolve' as you're talking about this, and that's something that I picked up - and I shared this with you earlier - that as incredible your career has been, you're somebody who is kind of outwardly like a lifetime student, and I really admire that about you.

And the willingness to evolve, because things change. Like you said earlier before we got started, like we know a tiny bit, and we can maximize that, but it's just like so much more to learn and it's incredibly exciting.

And so with that said, I want to talk about some of that stuff because there's going to be a big misconception when we see these people on the big screen and their physiques.

Is there a program, when we think about this, like an exercise program that's geared towards somebody who's shooting a movie. Is that going to be radically different than somebody who's just trying to get in shape?

Don Saladino: No, you know, it's really not. I mean I give them a lot of credit, because when I'm getting these actors ready, whether it's Ryan Reynolds, or Sebastian Stan, when they dive into their role, and when they commit to what they have to prepare for, it's as good if not better than any professional athlete I've ever seen.

They are doing every component of that health and wellness umbrella. You know, we're monitoring their sleep, sometimes I might even be sending them for blood work, or we're measuring cortisol level, adrenals, et cetera.

That's a real intense way of diving into it, and a lot of people don't necessarily- might not have those means. But you know, they walk around all year long in pretty good shape no matter what role they're playing, even if they have to lose muscle.

They're doing mobility and foam rolling, I might have them do belly breathing in the morning, they're making good choices, maybe following more of an 80/20 rule approach during the week, rather than Ryan, when he gets ready for *Deadpool*, he's all in with his diet, whether he has his shirt on or not, it's more of the mental aspect.

And I think that's the most important part. Because even like I just prepared Dave Harbour, he's playing- he's the actor from the show *Stranger Things*, and I prepared him for *Hellboy*.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah.

Don Saladino: This was a guy, when we started with him, he had back problems, he couldn't deadlift a 24-kilogram kettlebell, and nine weeks later, he's pulling 400 pounds off the floor comfortably.

So even though he had to wear a prosthetic suit, it was the mental aspect of it. It was him getting into that suit knowing, "Wait a second, I'm a strong dude, man. I'm 6'4", I'm 250 pounds, and even though I really haven't lost weight since I started nine weeks ago, I'm a strong guy."

And I think that itself, going in with that approach, that's the most empowering thing to see in people when you introduce them into this world, how they just- how their confidence just improves.

Shawn Stevenson: Wow, that's powerful, man. I'm so glad you took it that direction because I already know the answer, it's just like it's not the program, it's the approach, right? It's the mindset. Man, that is so powerful.

And so with that said, let's talk a little bit about the programs themselves, just a little bit, which is are these workouts- when you talk about what Sebastian Stan is doing for example, who's playing the Winter Soldier in these various movie, right? Bucky.

And are these workouts pain- like when you see them, again you're just like, "They must work out for three hours a day." Are they painstakingly long? What's the difference?

Don Saladino: No, man. They're smart. So what it is, is I always say it's never the routine. I've been writing routines for the last nineteen years of my career, and routines I've written thirteen years ago are still great.

I mean now I've realized with my years that probably there's a less is more approach, and that specific really good movements have carry-over, and your exercise routine doesn't need to look like a Chinese menu.

But with someone like Seb, I mean we could have prepared him for that role with a high frequency split of training full bodies, we could have done it with kettlebells, it really doesn't matter.

I think what it really comes down to is paying attention to that individual day in and day out, and not thinking you have to take that Rocky type approach, because that's what's ruining a lot of people in fitness.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah.

Don Saladino: They're always relating success to the sweat, and they're never listening to their bodies. And you know, thank you for clapping-

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, I'm clapping over here.

Don Saladino: But it was one hour ago when I was training with my team, and I train with a team in here, one of my guys who was a kettlebell sport instructor, we've been doing more hard style work, and he's looking at me going, "Yeah, man. I'm just beat up today."

And I said, "Alright man, let's just downshift you a little bit," and to me that's training, rather than going into a group class and just running and sweating. It's smarter.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, because you know, I spent over a decade a strength and conditioning coach, and people- a lot of times they feel like if they're not running to the ground, like they didn't get a great workout.

You know, and sometimes people need to work in more than work out. You know? And so just hearing that is a parallel and consistency is really important.

I want to ask you about different training styles, because you mentioned David Harbour, right? And so like you said, he plays on *Stranger Things*, he's the police officer there, like one of the hero figures, and also so he's playing *Hellboy*, which is going to be coming out I think maybe 2019, and just kind of rebooting that, and man, I know he's going to crush it.

But the training objectives, right? They're going to be different. So can you talk a little bit about the comparisons? Like what is the workout style for somebody like him versus a Ryan Reynolds?

Don Saladino: You know, there's a lot more similarities than most people would think. I mean a lot more of it comes down to diet. I mean there's one thing that I have

in common with almost everyone I work with, and I would say everyone I work with, the first thing I pay attention to is movement.

So I don't care if they're a model, I don't care if they're a superhero professional player of a sport, I want to make sure their bodies are resilient, because a lot of these guys and girls are doing their own stunts now, and they have the stress of having to shoot fifteen, sixteen hours a day.

So there's a lot of similarities in their training. I think where the difference really comes down to is there are little things- like with Ryan's body. Ryan's body always looks good, so my thing with Ryan is that when we get him started, how resilient can I make him for that period of time that he's shooting?

Because he is one of the hardest working guys I've ever seen in Hollywood, and you know, he's working fifteen, sixteen, seventeen hour days at least, so if he starts feeling kind of junky, and he's starting to feel tired, or his body is breaking down because he decided to jump through a window, which he's done, I've got to make sure that this guy's resilient and that I'm just keeping his confidence up and continuing to work on mobility, but keeping those initial lifts, those big lifts that make him feel great.

You know, the deadlift, the Turkish get up, some specific types of pressing. I keep those strong on him because I know psychologically that might keep him really sharp.

So whether they're trying to be really lean, or someone like Dave who can keep his body fat up and needs to keep it up a little bit higher, the key is that I want them strong all around.

Shawn Stevenson: Got it, got it. Resilient is the word that you used, so let's talk a little bit more about that.

You mentioned some of those specific lifts that I know intimately. Like if we've got somebody coming in, like you said it doesn't matter if they're a model, a fitness model, a female fitness competitor, or somebody who's playing Hellboy and he needs to be big and strong.

Being able to pick heavy things up off the floor creates this sense of like, "I can handle myself." Right? So let's talk a little bit more about some of those exercise components.

You mentioned a couple of them. Like what are some key players that you feel like as foundational for a lot of folks can be valuable?

Don Saladino: I think the suitcase carry, or a specific type of carry, whether it's an overhead carry, a rack carry, a double rack carry, carrying weight; I feel like they're probably one of the safest and most under-utilized tools in all of fitness.

Shawn Stevenson: Yes.

Don Saladino: And you know, it's funny, even when I go back and look at a lot of physique competitors, there's such an antiquated- and I'm friends with a lot of them, and they know it, but they've almost been so stuck in one realm of training.

And I watch it sometimes and I'm like, "Wow guys, you're not optimizing your body. You're not optimizing your physique because you're trying to run a car with a parking brake on," and that's why they're always battling with injuries.

So with me, it's a lot of- I can't lay the program out for a year. Like I used to do that, I stopped, there's too many variables. But to answer your question, I think something like the farmer walk, a specific type of carry, you can't beat that.

Teaching the body how to throw things, throwing med balls, specific plyometrics where the body can move on different planes I feel like is really important, and I get people to do that more in their warmups.

But once they show me they can do all that, and they can get through the screening, guess what? We're going to some type of a deadlift where we can pull weight off the floor, or a variation of the squat depending on what their hips or their ankles allow them to do.

It might be a box squat, it might be a double kettlebell squat, it might be a front squat.

So it all depends on the individual, but I'm never glued to one tool. That's kind of my methodology.

Shawn Stevenson: I love that so much. I wasn't expecting you to go there with the carries, man, and it's so true. That was a component that I left- like you're speaking to my soul right now because I left this out for like a couple of years.

I'd randomly do it, and as a result traveling, being on flights all the time, in these different back of Ubers everywhere, man I started to have little tweaks with my hips, you know?

And so I integrated back the one arm farmer carries, and just doing different types of carries, and just getting my- like it gets your body reorganized.

And so what I hear you saying is like these different exercises- the exercises that get your body working in synchronicity.

Don Saladino: Yeah, I love it. I mean to name drop a little bit, I had Emily Blunt here the other day, she's walking through the gym carrying weight, or Blake Lively.

I mean these are- and I can say it, they're beautiful women with very feminine physiques, but they understand the importance and the empowerment of being strong, and they understand that picking up heavy things isn't going to get them bulky.

You know, there's a reason why I might look a little bit more bulky. It's testosterone levels, growth hormone levels in the body naturally occurring, and the fact that eat 10,000 plus calories a day.

Shawn Stevenson: The food.

Don Saladino: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So Blake's not going to eat as much as me, so we're going to look completely different.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah, I'm so glad you said that too, man.

Don Saladino: Thanks, man.

Shawn Stevenson: Because even today, we still- like I just did a talk a couple weeks ago, and I was talking about the same thing. I got to put up a slide and say deadlifts don't make you heavy, donuts make you heavy. You know?

Don Saladino: Yeah.

Shawn Stevenson: It's really understanding, like even for guys, and I know you know this, like trying to get that amount of food in, especially when you're eating real food, it's difficult.

Like it's like a little bit of a job itself, you know? A little part-time job you've got to undertake, and most people are just simply not going to do that, so you don't have to worry about putting on all of that size, you know? So thank you for that.

Don Saladino: Everyone always thinks they eat a lot, especially the guys who talk, they're trying to put size on, they're like, "I already eat a lot." And then when I break down their diet, I'm like, "You're eating one big meal. Everything else is like you're a mouse, so we've got to fix this."

Shawn Stevenson: Man.

Don Saladino: You nailed it.

Shawn Stevenson: Actually, let's talk a little bit about this. Alright? Because in that same event, and this was when I did the Phenomenal Life Cruise, this was with Eric Thomas who I've had on the show a couple times, number one motivational speaker in the world.

And so I was on stage, I was doing a Q&A, and one guy stood up and he asked about putting on size. And then I heard like rumbles in the room like other people were like, "Oh sorry you have that problem, you can't gain weight," right?

And so but that's the objective for many people. I did a show on this way back in the day, I'll put that in the show notes, but I think it's a great time to talk about it because you've done it successfully and helped other people to do it.

It's really important, like you've got to eat, right? So how do you go about that? You know? How do you go about like- for example, let me throw this out here before I pass the mic to you, which is when we're growing up our parents would be like- you know, you'd get your plate, like eat it all. Right?

That's the kind of mentality you've got to have. Like you've got to be able to actually eat all your food. Not only have it prepared and on standby, but eating your food. Any other little tips you can add in the mix for folks who want to put on size?

Don Saladino: Yeah, you know what? Every individual is different, and I've got people who come to me where I take a very minimalistic approach because they don't need much to achieve their goals, and I always find that's a great approach.

Now unless I have someone coming in like a Ryan who's fanatical or a Seb who's like, "I need to be world class," then yeah start pulling out the apps that measure meals, and we can start tracking, and we can start looking at the macronutrients, which I know freaks people out a little bit, but a lot of people would be surprised.

If you actually downloaded- and most of the apps are free. But MyFitnessPal, or one that I use called Cronometer, and you actually started logging what you ate during a day, I still do it for myself personally.

Every day I log my meals, because at the end of the day for some reason if I had a steak instead of chicken, and my fat is all off, I want to know that because for me, this is not only my job, but it's a hobby I enjoy.

So what I recommend for people to do is actually stop assuming that you think you're eating a lot, and start actually tracking and getting a general idea on what you're really consuming.

Because a lot- a buddy of mine the other day turned to me and said, "I think I'm eating a lot." When I looked at his macros, this is a 200-pound guy consuming about 100 grams of protein a day. I said, "Come on man." I said, "Seriously, like look at this."

And it's so simple for us, but other people it's not so. I think it's a few things.

I think one, it depends on their goal and if they're really looking to take it to that next level, it's going to take a little bit more effort. But if someone is really happy with their body, and they just want to put on a few pounds, I don't think they have to go so- they don't have to start diving so far into it, but they need to start doing quantifiable measures I'd say every week to see if they're putting on some size or not. You know? There's got to be a way to measure it.

Shawn Stevenson: I love it. I love it. And also, what I'm hearing you say too, is that for a lot of folks, like we don't have to be 'neurotic,' you know? You can just be able to- again, like we talked about this earlier, just eating real food.

It's a good way. Your body is just going to manage its own satiety, your hormones are going to be doing the right thing, leptin and ghrelin.

But if you really have this goal, and you're having a hard time like wondering why, then actually pull back and maybe track it a little bit, you know? So kind of Captain Obvious, but a lot of people don't do it.

Don Saladino: Start doing it.

Shawn Stevenson: Let's talk about the idea that we can- and I know you've done this, I've done this as well. I work out so I just eat whatever, right? And so, so many folks are in the gym trying to out-run, literally out-run what they ate. Right?

How successful can people be when they're trying to out-run or out-train the food that they're eating versus eating food that supports their process?

Don Saladino: It's funny, I always say you can't out-train a poor diet, but the reality is if someone's healthy, and they take their shirt off and they feel good about themselves, and they look good naked, and they're like, "No, I look-" then who am I to tell them that they're not doing it right?

I mean, I'm more of a believer that food is medicine, and I believe that as we get older, we're all going to kind of eventually run into problems if we're not respecting the process early on.

So I think putting the esthetic part aside, if someone esthetically is like, "I'm fine," I would do it more for the fact that our sleep, and our food, it's like little doctors that are running into the body, and they're cleaning everything up, and they're fixing everything up.

And that's how we repair, that's how we reduce that aging process, and that's how hormonally we kind of keep things in check.

So you know, I think there's two ways of looking at it. If someone's in there, and they're doing cardio every day, and they're not weight training and picking up heavy

stuff, and they're eating poorly, but they're working out seven days a week, then the answer is you've got to start cleaning things up.

At least 80% of your week, I would recommend should really be spot on, I mean at the very least, and then leave the 20% to error, and mistake, and life in general, and I really think that's a good balance of moderation.

But you know, when you're someone like me who's trying to be ready 365 days a year for a cover, I don't have the luxury of being able to do that, but that's what makes me happy, so who am I to tell anyone that they're wrong because they're not following my plan?

Shawn Stevenson: I love it. Stay ready, I love that. You know, I think it's important to just kind of point people's attention to- you've said this a couple of times now, in relationship to sleep and hormones, and how important- like this nutrition isn't just for your physical appearance, right?

You're actually making it more difficult on yourself if you're like I was when I was sixteen, jamming down McDonald's double cheeseburgers, and whatever- I don't even think it was actually a real shake, the strawberry shake. It was like something, right?

Don Saladino: Something processed.

Shawn Stevenson: Some foreign substance, right? But I'm just like, "I'm doing pushups," you know? And I had a six-pack, right? There's a big difference between health and fitness, right?

I was not healthy, and I ended up having some big issues, but I had this incredible level of fitness. And so what are you making your body out of, right? Asking that question, what are your muscles actually made of? And also what are your hormones doing?

Because we really need to be eating not a fitness-based diet, but a hormone healthy diet, right?

And so just thinking about that, and keeping that in context, what are the foods that are going to help me to have healthy hormone function?

I would love to shift gears actually now, and I want to go back to talking about the training, because you're one of the top people walking around the planet.

There's this idea- and you've said this, you want them to be able to move. So let's talk about functionality in your workouts versus like fashionable workouts. It's National Benchpress Day.

Don Saladino: Yeah, I call them fluffy workouts. Listen, I love the benchpress. I mean I still bench, and I still think it's a valuable exercise, but I think the problem that I have is so many people will get so pigeonholed into one training approach, and they don't start paying attention to how their body is moving, or the inefficiency, or thinking back squats are bad for you. They might be bad for you, but there's no reason why you can't squat or do a goblet squat.

So I think it's important, if you can, to get an understanding. And this may sound complex, but like at my club here, everyone comes in and they go through a really basic screening, it's like a ten-minute screening, and in their warmup we find out how they're moving, and then we're able to kind of educate them a little bit on what exercises they need to be doing or not, if they're not working with a coach.

If they're with a coach, they have nothing to worry about. But a lot of people out there aren't going to have that luxury.

So my first ounce of advice is start videoing yourself doing exercises. I don't think this is something that I always do, is I'll still do this day video myself doing kettlebell swings or squats, and I might show it to a trainer in your gym, or if it just doesn't feel right, our bodies are smart.

Like if you're sitting there squatting, your heels are raising up, and your hips hurt you every day, like it's probably the fact that you're either doing squats incorrectly, or your body hasn't earned that right for you to be squatting with the bar on your back, or whatever that might be.

So you know, I just think a lot of times people just- they're so intrigued on the program. "Oh that's Ryan's program, give it to me," and they just start jumping into it not realizing that what Ryan's doing is good for Ryan, it might not be good for you.

Shawn Stevenson: Oh I love that, man. That's the first time I ever heard that, 'Your body hasn't earned the right to do it.' That's powerful. Really, really powerful.

Don Saladino: And that's the problem with a lot of these group training components, and I'm not going to sit here and bash CrossFit. Someone asked me the other day, "What do you think about CrossFit?"

And was like, "You know what? I've seen some good CrossFit boxes, and I've seen some good coaches, but just the problem that I have is when someone's coming into the gym that has been sitting in a chair for the last twenty years, ten hours a day, and now you have him doing jerks overhead, and they have no thoracic mobility, or they have no external rotation in their shoulders, and you have them doing an exercise that they have not earned the right to do.

So I think there's still an easy way to give them that training effect that they're looking for, but there's no reason why they have to come into a one size fits all exercise.

I can get the same effect out of a med ball slam for someone that I would be doing with an Olympic barbell. Like is it really going to matter?

The answer is no, but a lot of fitness professionals out there want to own the process, and like it's their methodology, like they created it, and I think as fitness professionals we have to do a much better job of educating people.

I think there's a lot of low grade coaches out there, and it's making the jobs for us a little bit more difficult because we have to sit there and tell people, "Relax. Let's take a step back so we can move forward."

Shawn Stevenson: Oh man, that's so good. And thank you, thank you, thank you. So everybody, this is a heads up for you, because you are the owner of your own body to really understand like when you're coming into a situation, working with a trainer, and there are lots of great trainers out there, but making sure that it's individualized, right? It's for you and your unique physiology, where you are right now in your life.

And that can change, by the way, but initially- yeah, some stuff is like again, like he said, your body hasn't earned the right to do it yet. Very, very powerful.

So next up I want to talk to you about this concept of muscle failure, alright? So this is really fascinating stuff, but we're going to do that right after this quick break. So sit tight, we'll be right back.

Alright we are back and we're talking with the one and only Don Saladino, who's just killing it. He's been killing it for years, and helping people to really achieve their superhero potential, right?

With their physical health and also with their overall health and well-being because he's not just looking at this one piece. He's looking at things very holistically in, "How is your sleep? How are we modulating your hormone function? What's going on with your nutrition?"

And he's got so much incredible knowledge, and before the break I mentioned muscle failure, right? So this is something that's one held belief, there's different approaches to this, but the idea that in order to get the progress we want, maybe we want to work that muscle into complete failure. Is that what we need to be doing?

So let's talk about muscle failure, let's talk about time under tension, yeah let's go ahead.

Don Saladino: Sure, so you know I think there's a time and place for everything. Again, these are boring answers right now, and I really apologize, but I think it depends on the individual.

And I think if you have someone coming in, let's take some of your listeners who might be sleeping five hours a night, or four hours a night, and they're under a lot of stress from work, or relationships, or not getting the nutrition that they want or that they need, I would say that muscle failure is probably the worst thing for them to do for themselves.

I think it's going to be way too taxing on their central nervous system. I think they might feel great for the first week or so out of the gate, and they might be like, "Wow, I'm sweating and I feel awesome."

But in time they will, no doubt about it, start seeing a decline in their strength and in their energy.

So I think it depends on the individual. I think for someone like myself who's pretty in tune with their body, do I train to muscle failure 365 days a year? Absolutely not.

I might take a couple of blocks of my training, or a few weeks of my training, and decide to train to muscle failure, but I also understand that I have to scale off of that.

So I think it really comes down to your body is really smart, and if you're coming into the gym on a day and you're not feeling great, whoever said you can't see good progress by going through the motions?

And I think taking a little bit of an easier strength approach, I think this is something that- you know, one of my favorite movies of all time is *Rocky*. I mean, how do you not love *Rocky*?

But it was almost the worst movie ever for people when it came down to training because they want to revert back success to the *Rocky III* training scene with him sprinting on the beach, him and Apollo, or climbing up the mountain in *Rocky IV* until he's literally falling down.

And it's really set a bad precedent for people because they're under the assumption that unless they're killing themselves, they're not going to see progress.

And I tell people now, "Don, I hate training more than fifteen minutes." And I'm like, "Well train for ten." "Well am I going to see progress on that?" I'm like, "Absolutely."

If you don't train one day next year, but you train and break a sweat ten minutes a day for let's say 300 days, of course you're going to see progress. You're going to sweat, your body is going to feel better, you're going to be more active.

So this assumption that you need six days a week at ninety minutes a clip, it's insane. Like you're going to see progress doing- do something. You're going to see progress.

Going to failure and taking the muscle to exhaustion is a very difficult thing to do, and yes, you might see a percentage increase on muscle stimulation, but the reality is it's probably going to be so minute that you're not going to see the difference at the end of the year, but your body is going to feel a lot different.

So I would urge more people to kind of throttle back, get through the workouts with some confidence, feel really good, and then come back the next day with a high energy level.

Shawn Stevenson: Oh man, I love it, love it, love it. Thank you so much. Alright so let's talk a little bit about how do you prepare your clients for their workout? Alright?

So of course I want to give a quick example, when I was in high school, right? Football practice. Immediately as soon as we get out there, we've got our helmets on, and they're having us do these static stretches, right?

Like we were touching the toes, we were grabbing our helmets and stretching our necks, right?

Don Saladino: I love it.

Shawn Stevenson: Like we just left- I just left science class, and now I'm out here like pulling my neck apart. Is that a good idea, you know? And a lot of times, like seriously a lot of times, most practices somebody got a 'stinger,' right? Like this charged energy down your neck, it feels terrible.

Don Saladino: Yeah.

Shawn Stevenson: You know, so I'm curious, is that the way we should be going about things right out the gate?

Don Saladino: You know, yeah so for most people I would say no. I mean I've had people coming to me that might be incredibly deconditioned to where even loading them up with too many exercises, it's just going to be too much.

So a workout for them might be very simple. So yeah, I might spend fifteen, twenty minutes going through some movement-based exercises, more of the dynamic stretching.

I mean if they're so frozen that we have to focus on static stretching early on, that probably means I'm not going to be doing much more after that.

But for the typical clientele, what I like to do is this. I like to bring them in here, I like to have them elevate their feet, focus on some belly breathing for about five minutes, make sure their ribs are in a good position, just kind of start getting their mind right.

I might go into another five minutes of foam rolling, and that's something they can do before they even see me.

You know, after that we're spending probably five minutes on a dynamic warmup. I like to take everyone through something called a jump, throw, carry.

So I have them do some type of jump, some type of throw, and some type of carry if their bodies have earned the right to do it.

And at that point, depending on their goals, I will run them through some type of a strength component. If they're trying to drop body fat, it might be some sort of a strength circuit where the heart rate is elevated a little bit, and towards the end of the workout I might have them do some energy systems, which is more their conditioning where it's just a fancier word for some HIIT training at the end of the workout.

But you know, even when they're on their own, I'm looking at their day-to-day lifestyle, I'm looking at their job, and I'm not always throwing people into HIIT training. It's not always the best decision.

I mean HIIT training, when you look at the science, well it's HIIT, steady state, HIIT, steady state, what burns more fat? You know, even if the HIIT, which scientifically has been shown to potentially burn some more fat, it might not be- my body might be too taxed by doing HIIT training with my lifting program that I'm doing, and the fact that I'm waking up every morning between 4:00 and 5:00 in the morning.

So steady state might be more of a restorative form of cardio where I can still burn that body fat, I'm keeping my heart rate between 120 and 150 beats a minute, and my body is sweating and still moving, but I'm coming back the next day feeling better, not necessarily feeling worse.

Shawn Stevenson: So good, so good. And guys, he just laid out a great protocol. Like he just laid out a program for free.

Don Saladino: I gave you the program.

Shawn Stevenson: This is like a million-dollar guy here, you know, for free. Just it's right there. But you also said 'restore.' So let's now talk about the recovery process, right?

Workout just wrapped, you just finished your last rep, do you immediately just go get in your car? What should we be doing?

Don Saladino: No. In my wish list, I think the muscles are warm now, and I think what we can do now is if you want to throw some static stretching in, I have no problem at that point in throwing some in.

But again, taking a little bit warmer approach and really focusing on belly breathing, focusing on two birds with one stone, killing two birds with one stone, and getting-almost relaxing into the stretch a little bit.

I feel like if it's good, sound programming, your flexibility is really going to be built into a lot of those good movements you're doing, and you're going to notice that your body is going to be moving and feeling pretty good.

But just because someone can do a split doesn't necessarily mean that they have good functioning joints and good functioning muscles.

I always say there's a difference between flexibility and mobility. Flexibility is earning that ability, be able to get in a position, but mobility is actually being able to control through those positions.

And I've gotten clients in here that are so flexible and so gummy that they can end up hurting themselves, so we actually have to add stability to the body. So stretching isn't for everyone.

Shawn Stevenson: I don't know why I was thinking about Jean-Claude Van Damme when you said that about the split. Immediately I thought about that.

Don Saladino: Because he owns them. I love it. Good for you, I love it.

Shawn Stevenson: Man, this is such good stuff. And you've mentioned several times throughout this episode about deep belly breathing, right? You've said this several times. Let's talk a little bit more about that, because I'm assuming a lot of folks don't hear that coming from their trainer.

Don Saladino: Yeah, you know I've learned from actually a few of my team around here, a few of my coaches at Drive that our bodies get tight from sitting, and you'll really notice on people that they get this flared ribcage.

So a lot of individuals are walking around with this upright posture of trying to stick their chest out, but their ribs are flared, and that's something that I've been paying really close attention to, and I've noticed that by really learning how to breathe into my belly, get my nervous system to calm down, expand almost some really deep pelvic floor breathing, I've noticed that my mobility has improved drastically just from breathing itself, because my body is in a better position to move, and I think that's really important.

So the reason why I like a couple minutes of breathing beforehand is because now we're getting the body and the ribs set to a good position that when we're requiring it to move, it's going to do it with more ease.

Shawn Stevenson: I love it, and then the post-breathing is- wow, and by the way, as soon as you talked about the breathing, I know people's attention went to their breathing, right?

Everyone in the room as well like, "How am I breathing?"

Don Saladino: Don't forget, don't breathe into your chest, breathe into your belly. And you just asked a great question, the post-exercise breathing. We just spent that last hour or whatever, half an hour, call it what you want, getting that body jacked up, getting it sympathetic.

You know, you're probably taking a little caffeine before your workout, a little pre-workout, and then after the workout, we want to get the body to heal as quickly as possible, and that's called getting the body to restore and getting it parasympathetic.

So one of the ways we do that is through breathing. And I know if you even just laid on the ground on your back, close your eyes, maybe put your iPhone on your belly, and just started breathing on your belly and feeling that expand for five minutes, the restorative process is going to get so much better, it's almost a little bit of a meditative process, and you're going to notice that your body is going to heal and recover so we can come back and repeat it the next day.

Shawn Stevenson: I love that. We got a physical cue he added of placing something on your belly, you know? And man, that's really, really good. I like that.

And also guys, when you think about this process, again everybody here immediately, and everybody listening, you probably became aware of your breathing. And the question is, 'Was I not breathing before?'

We're breathing, but we're probably breathing shallow. It's kind of something that happens today, just the stress involved, and it's part of what we call our autonomic nervous.

And so autonomic sounds like automatic, and so this is tied in also with your heart beating, with your digestion, and you don't beat your heart, or you don't control your digestion.

And by the way, you don't want that. You don't want that responsibility, right?

But the crazy thing is that the way we're designed, we can consciously control our breathing, even though it's part of that autonomic nervous system. We can grab the steering wheel on that.

And why is that? It's because being able to manipulate and change your breathing can immediately change your state, can change your hormones, can change your neurotransmitters.

And so he talked about shifting from the sympathetic, which is kind of the 'fight or flight,' to parasympathetic which is this 'rest and digest' nervous system.

So the recovery process from that training, getting the most out of that, as he shared starts as soon as the workout is over, right? Don't run out the door and go to Shake Shack, or whatever. I just made that up, I don't know if that's a place. It probably is a place, isn't it?

Don Saladino: Sounds good.

Shawn Stevenson: Yeah.

Don Saladino: Sounds good.

Shawn Stevenson: So that's really the key, guys. So super valuable stuff. Now having you here, and you being- even if you're reluctant about being the superhero and the expert that you are, there are still certain qualities that you carry that have set you apart, and have enabled you to make the impact that you've made, and to enable you to have the clientele that you have.

So I want to talk about you personally. I want to talk about what you feel- I want you to give me three. Three qualities that you've cultivated in yourself that have enabled you to make the impact that you're making.

Don Saladino: You know, the first one that comes to mind is that I know I'm very empathetic to the client. And when I say that, it's not that I'm a sap.

It's just that I'm very in tune with what they want, what they need, and for me it's not about coming in and training them for the hour. The hour is the easy part.

It's really trying to add value to things in their life that are just going to make the whole process a lot easier.

So I think probably one thing that I'm the best at, and I'll pat myself on the back for, am I the smartest guy in the room? Absolutely not, no way, but I think when it comes down to looking at the client walking in, for some reason I feel like I have the ability to almost connect with them and understand what they need that given day.

And whether- listen, they're not always in great moods, they may have had a problem at home, like things aren't always dandy with these people that I'm working with, they're human beings also.

So I think understanding what adjustments I have to make with the program according to what they need is something that I really, really excel with.

Otherwise that, I would just say it's a passion. I mean, I'm so passionate. Even eighteen, nineteen years later, I've developed this incredible performance facility in downtown New York City, but the ability to continue to learn, and even improve my body at forty years old, and just continue to become better at what I do overall is another thing that I'm almost proud of myself for.

Otherwise, I don't know. I mean, I'm just doing what I'm doing, but I know the man upstairs put me on earth to do what I'm doing right now.

Someone asked me the other day, "If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing?" And I said, "I'd be dead." I said, "I don't know what the hell else I'd be doing." So you know, I'm really blessed.

Shawn Stevenson: Wow, that's incredible, man.

So again, I was not expecting that first answer of empathy. The passion is clear, but the empathy I think is like- that's a secret superhero strength that you have.

Don Saladino: Yeah.

Shawn Stevenson: You know, and being able to see that, and it just makes sense in translating it over. So all of us, everything that he has already talked about, that he's described, these things are not inherent. These things are also skills you can develop. Right?

And so you developing empathy, I want to talk a little bit more about that. How do you feel- is it just by putting in the hours? By seeing people? How do you feel you've been able to develop more empathy?

Don Saladino: You know, I'm not saying I've necessarily developed more, I think I've just always had it. I think I'm recognizing that the individual has a job to do on that given day, but they're human beings also, and it can't always be this approach of, "Alright Rocky, let's go, put your foot to the floor. Kill it, kill it, kill it."

I've developed a very simple philosophy when it comes down to when I work with people, and it's no matter what, they're leaving there feeling better than they did when they came in.

And you know, that could mean through the training, that could mean just kind of putting your arm around them and saying, "Listen, you're doing great. Let's keep it going."

I mean this is really just more than getting someone red carpet ready, you know? This is about really truly caring about them and their lives, and figuring out a way to solve a lot of their problems.

Sometimes they might have issues with how they're moving, serious issues, or there might be specific surgeries that they might need, and I'm on the phone with my team from hospital special surgery, and I might be taking a trip up with them to get an MRI done, and we might be turning that MRI report over within only a couple hours, where typically it would take - in New York City - weeks.

So for you to kind of ride that process with them. One of my really close clients, he's on the PGA tour, Morgan Hoffman, he just was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at 26 years old. It's a very rare form that he has, and I've been going through that process with him for about four or five years.

I can't even tell you how many tests I've gone to him where there were nerve testing, and endocrinologists, and MRIs where we're sitting there with him for three hours in the MRI chamber, and it's like you can't expect to get paid for this stuff.

You shouldn't want it. This is part of you loving, and doing what you do is giving back for others and helping them figure it out. Because there is nothing- there is no better feeling than watching someone accomplish their goals in life.

I mean hands down, if you're a good person, and when you're sitting there at a premier and you're watching your guy or your girl on the screen, and they've got their shirt off, and the crowd is going nuts, and I'm sitting there going, "You know, I didn't do all the work, but I definitely helped with this."

Like I get choked up. Or if I'm watching my player play a really good event, or he's in a professional game, or she, and watching them excel and succeed, you're watching them live out their dreams, and the fact that you can have a part in that is one of the reasons why I'm in love with what I do.

Shawn Stevenson: Oh man, so, so good. So on that note, what are you excited about coming up? You know, you've been putting in some work, you've been- you even started a new show that we'll talk about in a second, but what are you like pumped about that's coming up for you?

Don Saladino: I'm really excited about digital. So I launched a digital platform, I joined a team called Playbook. I owned my own digital company probably about six years ago, did some deals with guys like Dwayne Wade, and Adrian Peterson, and exited from that, and just focused on my brick and mortar.

But just recently I came out with a digital product, and it's a monthly subscription, and it's finally the way that I can turn around and give the programming, and the nutritional advice, and just the overall health and wellness advice to people living all over the world.

So for me to be able to give something that is like bone cheap, it's a monthly subscription, to be able to give that interaction, that same interaction and customer service for me is incredible.

So that's called Playbook, it's an app called Playbook. It's under my name, Don Saladino, and for me that's been really a lot of fun because finally I can turn around and take everything I've been working on the last few decades and deliver it to anybody.

So that's the number one biggest thing. I joined with a company called Garden of Life, it's an all-organic, non-GMO company. We came out with a sport line, which I helped create, which is doing really well and I'm really proud of that.

Otherwise that, continuing to build my club. A food company that I joined with called Epicured, we're doing meal delivery service, and another clothing company called Greyson.

So I've got my hands in some different things, but the bread and butter right now for me is Drive 495, and it's Garden of Life, and obviously my Playbook.

Shawn Stevenson: Perfect, perfect. And by the way, Drive 495, so that's your gym in NYC.

Don Saladino: Yeah.

Shawn Stevenson: And guys, listen if you can, get involved with what Don is doing because he's truly, truly a world changer.

Don Saladino: Thank you.

Shawn Stevenson: And by the way, when this comes out in a few weeks, if you guys are checking this out when it's first released, you're going to be able to go to the theatres and see some of Don's work in his superheroes who have got movies coming out.

So let's talk a little bit about those movies that are coming out soon.

Don Saladino: So Ryan Reynolds is launching *Deadpool*, I was just with him this morning, and he was talking about- we were trying to figure out when it's premiering, but I should be at the premiere with him in New York. Really excited about that.

Sebastian Stan has got- he stars as the Winter Soldier, he plays Bucky and his character I know has been changing a little bit. But his movies are coming out just around the same time.

So this has really kind of going to turn into superhero month this next month. A lot of other people that I'm working on some fun projects with, actors like Billy Crudup, or Liev Schreiber, I work with him. Ray Donovan, I was with him this morning.

But these are people that are just kind of doing their thing, and they're continuing to be great at their craft. Blake Lively, another one. But all the actors I'm working with, they're in, they're out, they've got all these great exciting projects, it's just funny to be able to kind of ride on their coattails a little bit and go through that experience, because it is special.

Shawn Stevenson: Awesome, and it's just a testament to you, and the quality of human that you are.

Don Saladino: Thank you.

Shawn Stevenson: So final question for you, man. What is the model that you're here to set with the way that you live your life personally? What's the example that you're setting with the way that you live your life personally?

Don Saladino: You know, don't disrespect the human body you were given, you know? It's okay to do things in moderation, it's okay to enjoy life, have that ice cream, have that piece of pizza, that cocktail, but there is a line where this is too much, and if you start feeling very down about it.

Every time I'm running into people, they're always almost trying to justify, "Oh my God, I'm not in the same shape I'm in," and this and that.

And my thing is, is that if you're feeling this way, if the first thing that you have to come to me and discuss is negative, then do something about it. But you might be surprised that it's going to be a lot less effort to make a very big change than what you've been let on to.

You don't need that *Rocky* type approach to really start moving the needle.

So my advice and my prayer to everyone is this, let's take one thing this next month, like really a baby step. One thing that you're talking about, let's take one thing that Shawn's talking about that he's been preaching, because he's so phenomenal with all of his content, but try and implement that one thing into your life, and you know what? Don't go to the next thing yet until the second month.

Slowly implement it, make it happen. Let that change marinate a little bit. Get really used to it so it doesn't feel so intrusive, and then by next month we can jump into something else if you want to.

But if you just take that approach, little bits here and there every month, by the end of the year think about the change you're going to have made on your entire lifestyle.

And I just think we have to stop with this all or nothing approach.

Shawn Stevenson: Perfect. Can you let everybody know where they can connect with you online, and you've got to let folks know about the new podcast you've got.

Don Saladino: I love it, thank you, man. So you can connect with me online, @DonSaladino is my Instagram. That's my main channel. I've got Facebook, I've got Twitter, but Instagram is the main one, so if you're going to go to one, it's Don Saladino's Instagram.

Derek Hansen and I, who's an incredible sprint coach out of Vancouver who I absolutely love, we started a podcast called *D&D Radio. D&D Fitness Radio.*

We're a little baby podcast, we're only thirteen episodes in with a few subscribers, so we're nowhere near my man Shawn over here's status, but hopefully one day we can get someone like Shawn on to kind of grace us with his presence.

But it's fun, we discuss some good topics, and it's really been enjoyable for us, so thank you.

Shawn Stevenson: Perfect. Oh my goodness, my man. So of course everybody, we're going to link everything up in the show notes for you.

I appreciate you immensely, I appreciate your dedication, I appreciate your willingness to be a lifetime student, and I just appreciate your vibe, man. You're incredible.

Don Saladino: Thanks, brother. Right back at you, man. I feel the same way.

Shawn Stevenson: Awesome, awesome. Everybody, thank you so much for tuning into the show today, I hope you got a lot of value out of this.

Listen, when we're talking about world class, when we're talking about learning from the best of the best, that's what you're getting with Don, alright? So definitely make sure to check him out. Again, we'll link everything up in the show notes.

Big take-away for me today, wow when he said that no matter what- when the clients are coming in, no matter what, they're leaving here feeling better than when they came in. What if we made that the objective in how we live our lives, right?

The people in our lives, having been better just by being around you that day. Right? And so the guys here in the studio with me, hopefully their day is better having been around me today, and hang out with Don.

I know it, they're smiling right now. He's got like a little half smile because he's got the Illuminati shirt on. Alright?

But anyways, everybody I appreciate you immensely for tuning into the show. And listen, also keep in mind, this was another huge take-away, your body- when your body hasn't earned the right to do it. Alright?

We need to have some graceful on-ramps for people, and just pay attention. You don't have to do the fancy like crazy workouts you might see on an Instagram video, or in a magazine, or whatever the case might be.

There are different versions, and there are different on-ramps for people. We want to get you functional. We want to get you to the place where you can do those things.

And keep in mind though, chances are there's a lot that you can already do, and it's just about connecting with the right people, and having the right approach so that you can get the proper on-ramp, and get the goals- hit the goals and get the results that are truly worthy of your greatness.

I appreciate you so much for tuning into the show. If you got a lot of value out of this, make sure to share it out on social media; Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, all that good stuff. Of course you can tag me, tag Don, let him know how much you loved the episode.

And listen, I've got some incredible shows coming for you, so be ready. Take care, have an amazing day, and I'll talk with you soon.

And for more after the show, make sure to head over to www.TheModelHealthShow.com. That's where you can find all of the show notes, you can find transcriptions, videos for each episode, and if you've got a comment you can leave me a comment there as well.

And please make sure to head over to iTunes and leave us a rating to let everybody know that the show is awesome, and I appreciate that so much.

And take care, I promise to keep giving you more powerful, empowering, great content to help you transform your life. Thanks for tuning in.