

*Wayne Léal's*

# 20-21

**MINUTES**

**DAYS**

**MOVE YOUR  
BODY  
CHANGE YOUR  
MIND**





*Wayne Leal's*  
**20-21**

Move Your Body  
Change Your Mind



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*Cover photo by Tony Harris*

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*This book is dedicated to the  
memory of Lincoln Lèal 1946–1993*

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*‘People always say they should do this, they should do that, but few ever do’*

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## INTRODUCTION

**MOST FAILURES ARE caused by a lack of confidence, lack of direction and negative thinking.**

Success requires a change of attitude, and this will ultimately frame the person that you are.

The goal for success in any area of performance requires mental and physical change. Once you have set that long-term goal, it will always be there.

Move your body, change your mind. *20-21* provides the steps that are necessary to change the way you look, feel, think and communicate.

But before I go any further, let me say this at the very beginning. I am not a writer. And I will not pretend to be, but if you find yourself reading this, thank you.

By way of background, I wrote this book to log an essential part of my life fitness journey. There was a time when I lost my discipline following a near-fatal motorcycle accident and hip surgery. I had completely lost my will to exercise and needed to change how I exercised to kick start getting back into regular practice. This story is about me, my life and my training.

Until the operation, I trained clients, worked in the building trade, taught yoga classes, and was an unpaid assistant boxing coach at All Stars boxing club in Harrow Road, London. I am a certified NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) coach. Fitness and mental strength were my business. It was a way of life, but I could not do it myself then.

I was making excuses to everyone about why I did not feel right to train the way I used to; it was me feeling sorry for myself. I also felt like a fraud because, for years, I had been telling everyone to dust themselves off and start again, and here I was, ready to give up. I then realised I

had no accountability to anyone but myself and thought, what if I could set a specific time-frame for my healing process?

That was my light bulb moment to say, if I could find the discipline to do it for myself, then I could do it for others. Because discipline is the key to doing hard things, but it's not just about making yourself do something you don't want to do.

My hip story began two years before the operation when I rode my motorcycle to the boxing club. I knew the route to the gym from Fulham like the back of my hand, but that accounted for nothing when an Uber driver decided to make an illegal turn into a street with a no entry sign. His action caused me and my then 1200cc Buell motorcycle to hit him side-on at 30 mph, and I flew over the bonnet of his car upside down, as if in slow motion. I remember seeing the horror on his face as I tumbled over the bonnet of his car with my motorcycle in the sky above me before I landed on the opposite side of the road.

Luckily no cars were coming in the opposite direction. The last thing I could remember was hitting my head on the kerbside. Then it was lights out. I was knocked out cold, I'm not sure for how long. The next thing I knew was a paramedic shining a light in my eyes while his colleague attempted to put me in a neck brace. I was in and out of consciousness until we got to the hospital. While in my neck brace, I had no idea how they removed my crash helmet, but I lay there hearing the doctor talking to me. As he began inspecting my body, I had only one thing racing through my mind, and even though I could barely move my jaw because of the neck brace. I remember asking the doctor, 'Is it still there?' Because my body was numb below my waistline.

The doctor replied, 'Is what still there?' I replied through gritted teeth, 'My cock.' The handlebar of my motorcycle had caught me in the groin, and I could feel nothing. He paused, looked at me incredulously, and said, 'Really?' I said life would not be worth living without it. At that point, I could see the ambulance paramedics and nurse doing their best to hold back their laughter when the doctor said yes, it's still there.

Following the accident, I had no broken bones and recovered quickly. Sadly, my motorcycle was a write-off. The police charged the driver and, sometime later, it became a court case. At court, they ushered me to the witness waiting room. Quite a few people were there, and I asked, 'Are you here for the motorcycle accident?' They said they were and I thanked them for coming. At this point, they looked at me with

shock. It turns out they came because they thought I had died, and felt a sense of duty to attend court. I will never forget their reaction and mine to this day.

Two years later, I began to experience excruciating low back and hip pain. I went to see a physiotherapist, a chiropractor, and an osteopath. They all had theories on why I was getting hip and low back pain. Separately they said that for my age, back pain is a 'prevalent symptom that peaks in mid-life and is more common in women than men'. I thought, is that the best you could do? I've just invested my hard-earned cash, and that's the best you could offer. Oh! I forgot each of them suggested that I should book further appointments. At the time, I said yes to everything to make the pain disappear.

I know that everybody gets back pain at some point in life, and for most it's often a short-term episode that will resolve over time without needing specific treatment. But I was in the group where I had pain lasting months after the natural healing period – usually six weeks. It was labelled non-specific low back pain simply because they didn't know what was causing it.

It was when I spoke to a pal who said why don't you talk to a hip specialist – you've tried everyone else. Guess what? He was right.

It turned out that I didn't have a problem with my back, and the specialist practitioners who saw me were wrong – I required hip surgery. The first surgeon I spoke to said there was no guarantee I could do high-level sports again. I did not want to hear that news, so I sought a second opinion. It was from Marcus Bankes, who proudly said, 'I would do my job. The rest would be up to you to do yours'. I loved his confidence and knew I had found my hip surgeon. I went on to have hip resurfacing surgery – not a hip replacement.

Staying positive is something that many of us need help with. But exercise is one way to stay focused, and to do it every day following hip surgery was a real challenge. But, soon into the regular practice, my body started to look and feel much better. And my negativity was slowly diminishing too.

Setting myself a specific time frame gave me a clear objective to make a 20-minute yoga video. I also rebuilt my discipline habit based on the 21/90 rule. To commit to doing the practice for 21 straight days.

I adapted my training and yoga practice, and many of the exercises I was doing were the same as other specialists were suggesting I should be doing.

I don't have discipline made of iron, but I know it's worth developing. It was not easy to wake up early while everyone else slept in their warm, cosy beds, but it was better than waking up with regrets and looking like a 'Mr Blobby'. I also hope that what I do will encourage more people to exercise and help more men to take up yoga.

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*‘Stop saying “I should” start saying “I will”’*

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## MY STORY

**I’M CONFIDENT ENOUGH to say I have enough real-life experience to know what discipline is mentally and physically.**

At 54, I’ve explored most things from the holistic to the hedonistic and I approach life fully committed. Everything that I do meets with my full attention and nothing less.

Riding a motorbike mirrors my Zen philosophy, to live life in immediate consciousness. For me risk is a perception and reality is what we do. Treating risk as a perception drove me to experience overwhelming successes and failures that enable me to live my life with little fear.

I’ve injured every major joint in my body and had more hospital visits and surgeries than holidays: fractured skull, broken nose, dislocated shoulders, degenerative spine, hip surgery, arthritic fingers, bone graft and four operations to both knees. But, regardless of the sometimes-excruciating pain, I accept every moment as it comes.

Since I taught my first fitness class nearly thirty years ago, I’ve seen and heard enough diet and exercise hot air to last a lifetime. I know life coaches who need to get a life. People calling themselves yoga teachers and personal trainers after a short course. I know women who hide their bodies and live in denial. I see men taking training shortcuts using steroids and an array of muscle supplements. But the most priceless of all are body implants. The world is going mad; it’s become the blind leading the blind for the illusion of body utopia.

Doing the 20-21 training has increased my discipline, self-confidence both physically and mentally based on the premises of:

20 MINUTES: 20 minutes is the amount of time that a person can concentrate on a task without becoming distracted.

21 DAYS: The theory of Dr Maxwell Maltz, author of *Psycho-Cybernetics*, who ascertained that the brain does not accept new data for a change of habit unless it is repeated each day for 21 days.

People have differing needs. I'm not concerned where a person comes from. I'm only concerned with what they can become. That's why I'm fascinated with people who have a strategy for motivating themselves for success professionally, but lack a strategy for their personal wellbeing, mental or physical. This at a time when people report being stressed, anxious, lacking confidence and nearly two in three people are overweight and as a result more likely to suffer from diabetes, heart disease, back pain and countless other ailments.

Life is one long football match where goals become our achievements. They say that a goal can change a game. Well, guess what, it can also change your life. I understand that the motivation to change is not necessarily there in people who need to exercise most. That is why my approach is about realistic and achievable goals with specific principles and processes for a successful outcome. The first step to success is having a better idea (goal) of where you want to go. The second step is having a plan to get there. The third is to read this book to help you have a better idea of how to do it. You can become the person you have always wanted to be only if you are completely ready for change.

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*‘Power is not only what you have but what your  
opponent thinks you have’*

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## MY TENACIOUS RESOLVE

**I’VE GROWN UP with two groups of friends: the ones who look after themselves and the ones who don’t. What is clear is that the healthier friends have a greater sense of power in life than the ones that don’t look after themselves. These friends cope less well with life’s inevitable transitions such as changing jobs, moving home, getting married, having kids etc.**

My friends who choose to look after themselves share my attitude toward wellbeing and see it as a key element in defining who they are. The fundamental difference between my training methodology and the guys who lift weights in a gym is that my primary purpose is about self-confidence whereas for most guys like my sons (in their twenties) it’s a preoccupation with their appearance. Although that said, even at my age I joke with my sons because, like them, my vanity forces me to admit I also want to look good in a white T-shirt.

Over the years I have learned to develop a tenacious resolve. It stems from a Zen and Martial Arts philosophy that was introduced to me forty years ago by Lincoln. In that time, I’ve explored and experimented with numerous training disciplines. Today, clients, doctors, surgeons and physiotherapists are all testament to my ageless mind and body training methodology.

There is no written record of who invented yoga but the majority of today’s disciplines follow the fundamental principles described by Patanjali, an Indian yogic sage who lived somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500 years ago.

I don’t teach traditional yoga in its true form because I’ve never really understood yoga philosophy and I’m sure that not many people do. In the book *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* Mark Singleton wrote: ‘In spite of the immense popularity of postural yoga worldwide, there is little or no evidence that asana (excepting certain seated postures of meditation) has ever been the primary aspect of any Indian yoga practice tradition’.

My lifestyle makes me a walking yoga contradiction, but I don't think it makes me less of a yogi than the guy who leads an ascetic yogic lifestyle. Before I became a teacher I was drawn to yoga for many different reasons, but none of those reasons has any significance now because my experience then is not my experience now. What I teach is a form of yoga asana that is more akin to strength training to make the mind and body strong. I don't teach yoga for a spiritual evolution. I do it because it has the power of influencing you on many different levels, including your spirituality.

I have often wondered why more British men don't do yoga asana because the benefits speak for themselves. Yes, I've heard the usual excuses; 'men don't do yoga asana' and 'they're not flexible enough', but I would suggest that there is an underlying dichotomy that challenges men's perception of self-image. It is a fact that men of today are a lot more forward thinking, but they're still weighed down by an archaic tradition that men show fortitude and self-restraint of their emotions; the complete antithesis of yoga. I would further suggest that, apart from the obvious differences, men and women are not linguistically attuned in the same way. Women are expressive in their emotions, whereas men are less so.

Men can also feel emasculated by platitudes of spirituality, love and peace. This does not mean that men are unaware of their spiritual goals. They just want to achieve them in a less prescriptive way that does not appear to disempower them. I ask myself if men were told that modern yoga has military influences, would they be more inclined to take it seriously?

Years ago, I was chatting with a yoga teacher prior to participating in her class and I asked her whether she had a goal with her yoga practice.

She curtly replied that yoga doesn't have a goal; it's about being in the moment. I thought long and hard about what she said thinking, 'Have I got it wrong, surely there is an intention?' Then I remembered a story about people who hang onto the riverbank of life i.e. worldly possessions, car, house, money, career etc. Compare this with those who have possessions but are willing to let them go and jump into the river of life.

These people are living in the moment but they always have one eye on the future (a goal) to avoid the rocks and any other obstacles along their journey. I'm in the river. I disagreed with that teacher then and I would

still disagree with her now because the goal of yoga is ‘enlightenment.’ That’s it.

But in the overall picture, what I teach caters for busy, time-starved people who want a succinct and time-efficient practice. By comparison to traditional yoga, what I teach is the express train version, with a direct A-Z approach that maps out what you want in the quickest possible time to get there.

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*'Be a master of mind rather than mastered by mind'*

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# HOW THE TRAINING WORKS

**MY TRAINING FOCUSES on your belief system. The one thing over which you actually have most control is breaking down the negativity and obstacles you have towards your own self-image. This helps reframe exercise from being a duty into a habitual part of daily life.**

Paradoxically your physical state directly affects your mental and emotional wellbeing, how you feel, think and behave. Marcus, a former client of mine once said: 'I would love to know how to punch someone's lights out'. It's not very yogic, but it's something that a lot of men feel: a need for raw, expressive, physical power. My teaching philosophy is about creating a strong connection with your deepest sense of power.

All fear starts in the mind. When people feel under pressure at work, they tend to work harder to try to close the gap between what they are achieving and what they think they should be achieving. As you read, ask yourself where you are in the process of change. Why haven't you become the person you want to be and what obstacles are standing in your way and preventing you from reaching the next level and ultimate success?

We've all wanted to change something about ourselves: less stress, less weight, better body and so on. When you want to change but don't, those failures most likely result from not being completely ready. The underlying problem for people who say they want to change but don't, is that they are not sufficiently motivated. You will only achieve it if you really want it; it's as simple as that.

We've all had moments when what we do just flows from us effortlessly. Generally, at these times, our mind is quiet and focused. Unfortunately, we have also experienced times when everything we do seems difficult. Whether through lack of belief, attitude, motivation or simply a desire for more success, at one time or another we have all wished we were different. We have all wanted to change at some point in our lives.

Change is the only certainty in life and our attitude to change will ultimately frame the person that we want to be. Therefore, if we want to change the results, we need first to change the thoughts, actions and feelings that go into producing them. Embracing change is important since this is how we learn. The steps that are necessary are the ones that drive us forward and stop us from going backward. Once we have identified and accepted that what we want is achievable, we can start making the changes that are required to make our lives better.

The physical discipline of yoga asana is the perfect metaphor for change and personal achievement, because the aim is not about the asana, it's about the way it makes you feel. The way in which you learn a new asana involves a mental process. This is the same mental process we use for everything we do. It relates to the way you think, the type of friends you have, the music you like, the food you eat or the type of clothes you wear. It formulates your blueprint for accomplishment. It's basically something that affects every part of your life.

Stop and think. Once you've learnt any physical exercise you have a mental concept of its outcome, a visual memory of the movement and its associated breath (inhale or exhale) and also there is an internal dialogue. All of which set the parameters for your thinking and consequently your actions, whether they are positive or negative.

Therefore, changing your internal dialogue, movement and breath will affect the way you feel. Once you understand this mental process, it can be easily broken down into a chunk-sized strategy that can be translated to other aspects of your life to change limiting beliefs into positive ones, using different words, images and concepts that will lead to self-empowerment and ultimately success.

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*'Challenge the mind and body as one. Change is the only certainty in life'*

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## IDENTIFYING AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL

**Goals cannot be reached without a degree of difficulty so before you read any further get a piece of paper and spend a little time answering the following questions. Not doing this simple exercise will defeat the purpose of reading this book. Because if you don't know where you are going how will you know when you get there!**

- What's your goal?
- Where are you now?
- How will you feel when you have it?
- How will you know when you have it?
- When do you want it?
- What do you need to achieve your goal?
- For what purpose do you want this?
- What will you gain or lose if you have it?
- What will happen if you get it?
- What will happen if you don't get it?

### PROBLEM SOLVED

S.M.A.R.T. GOALS ARE: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-frame. They are a great way to achieve success but greater still is what it makes of you, will be more important than what you achieve.

I'm not a doctor, a psychiatrist or a psychologist. I only teach what I know, incorporating aspects of NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) and physical exercise to build strength, focus, and belief to address the self-defeating patterns that hold you back to deliver sustainable change in every aspect of your life. Because to worry about past failures is a waste of time. Things happen, that's life!

When you are setting fitness objectives, the goal to lose or put on weight might not be enough. It's important that it's specific (how much weight) and to a realistic time-frame (for example 21 days) otherwise you will fail. Frame your intention positively 'I want to love the way I look and the feeling it will give me. I'm going to feel positive about the way people look at me and talk about my determination to achieve my goal.' Visualising how you want to look and feel in the future will have to become your everyday thinking as if it's already happened. As with any process, repeating the thoughts and actions over and over again will stop the mind debating whether it can be done; you will simply accept that it will be done.

### *'Real strength begins in the mind'*

A successful outcome can be determined by setting an intention/goal. It's achieved with a clear focus on a measurable target. We can reflect on our efforts in life, and try to understand how clear and positive intentions contributed to the results.

The difference between an intention/goal and an outcome is that an intention is a statement of intent about some aspect in the future. It usually starts with the words 'I want' followed by a description of what that intention might be. An outcome on the other hand, is the result whose success or failure can be measured.

- What are you thinking now?
- Always state your intention in the positive.
- Specify what you want starting from where you are right now.
- Clarify what resources you need to achieve the desired outcome.
- Outline your intention for a point of focus to work towards

something.

- Create a compelling future.

## **MODELLING**

Modelling is the ability to fully replicate a desirable skill or behaviour of those who have already achieved success. You observe, analyse and then replicate the factors that contributed to the outstanding performance.

This is what we do when we follow the movements and techniques of a teacher in a class, a coach on the pitch or a businessman at work. We look out for those deliberate and subtle nuances. There's no guarantee of you getting the same results but it shortens the learning curve, giving you the essential steps and strategies that have helped your teacher (role model) succeed.

*'Mistakes always teach us something new'*

## DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

As well as defining an intention, there must be a clear strategy; a process that guides you to the physical and mental outcome required. A strategy is a set of experiences that consistently produces a specific outcome. For example, in your mind when doing a new exercise, you make a picture of what you are going to do and how you're going to do it.

There is an internal dialogue with its own checklist and feedback responses. Then there's the feeling that tells you whether or not it's delivering the specific outcome that you want. It is then that you trust yourself to execute the movement. That's a typical strategy for learning a new exercise successfully. So, when you don't have a clear picture or a good feeling or positive internal dialogue – that's when things don't work.

Our brains are sophisticated computers. All of our behaviour is controlled by internal processing strategies; which mean that we use strategies for love, hate, learning, sports, and communication. There are strategies for almost everything. For example, a decision is usually made once you've gained enough information and created a clear image in your mind and had a positive internal dialogue. If that formula worked for you, then it would probably be something that you have repeated several times since.

Awareness of the thought process involved articulates our internal processes through movement. It's more than exercise; it's about what you tell yourself. Did you make a picture in your mind? Did you have a certain set of words that you said to yourself? Did you think of somebody else's voice? Or did you have a certain feeling or emotion?

*'There are no limits because everything is possible'*

A strategy is quite simply something that we do in our brain when trying to produce a specific result. It's a specific order and sequence of internal and external experiences, which consistently produces a specific outcome.

## WHAT'S YOUR TRIGGER?

Anchoring is a technique that acts as a subconscious trigger. It is the same reaction as when you eat chocolate, stimulating thoughts, actions and emotions. Examples of anchors are the smell of bread making you hungry or a record that may remind you of a particular occasion. They work automatically without you being aware of the triggers.

Activating an anchor needs a trigger once the thought has been conditioned. For example, pairing the touching of your thumb and forefinger with a good feeling establishes an anchor, so that when this action (trigger) is repeated it will reproduce that good feeling. For most boxers it's the sound of the bell and for footballers it's the referee's whistle which means they are conditioned to perform to the best of their abilities.

What's the one thing that gets YOU motivated? Is there usually one thing (like something you see, hear or smell)? What motivates you? What inspires you? What moves you to action, or gets you out of bed in the morning? Some possible answers might be: money, success, love, power. These are some examples of what drives us.

*'Right here right now is your moment of power'*

Remember a time when you were especially motivated. What set you off? Do you remember the trigger? Was it something you saw, something you heard or the touch of something or someone? It's really important in the process of creating a new strategy to discover a specific trigger that will get you into the strategy. If you design the world's greatest strategy but don't have a trigger, it won't ever get set off. Therefore, it's important to discover the trigger that will set off your strategy to ensure that your intention/goal has a positive outcome.

Unlike regular exercise, when you speak of yoga asana, you're talking about using yoga as a means of achieving mental focus and core fitness; giving you a total body workout, so that the development in all areas of your body takes place more or less simultaneously. This is an excellent way of getting fit.

The stretching, balance and concentration involved will improve your body's regulation of your blood circulation, pumping more oxygen to your muscles and increasing your overall energy. My sequence incorporates compound movements that work several muscle groups at the same time. To build strength that is needed to perform everyday things. For example, the Plank engages the abdominal muscles along with strengthening; chest, shoulders, arms and wrists.

The goal is to go from one exercise to another making them a seamless flow. Throughout the practice you will build strength, flexibility and mental focus with the final result: a greater sense of self.

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*'A slim waistline is a sign of good health'*

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## MIND BODY TRAINING

**ATHLETES, BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS and individuals from all walks of life, who simply want to feel good can use my training. It can also be used as an anti-ageing exercise programme to increase flexibility and range of motion.**

It is a myth that ageing is the only factor that causes people to lose flexibility. Studies show that a sedentary lifestyle is a bigger factor in decreasing flexibility than ageing. 20-21 Training is not a complicated rocket science or brain surgery; it's a matter of doing a few simple things consistently. It's a life-style change without a quick fix or the promise of a miracle potion.

Physically it stimulates all of the body parts together rather than most exercises that work with parts of the body in isolation. Mentally it shows people that 'Success is a state of mind' and that everything they do must start and end with a strategy as the basis of any successful change. If they don't know where they want to go, they will not get there in time... or not get there at all.

Combining NLP and fitness at 'All Stars' Boxing club was a great asset to complement the boxers' regimes. I increased their focus, flexibility, balance and strength. If you were to ask any boxer what their goal is they would usually say 'I want to be the champion.' That is a specific intention/goal to go for and something that you'd expect them to say. There are only degrees of separation between the winners and losers.

As fine-tuned athletes, both fighters go into the ring saying they've got what it takes to win, but only one comes out the victor.

It always boils down to the fighter with the right attitude and mental discipline in their ability to win. While talking to the boxers I would ask a leading question like: 'What will being a champion do for you?'

Their responses and body language would give me an insight as to whether they had what it takes to not just become a 'Warrior Champion' but also to master the strength that we learn from defeat.

At the end of each training session, I took all of the boxers into a yoga pose called Savasana – corpse pose. While lying on their backs in the corpse pose, I would take them through a guided meditation to relax them into an altered state (a state of hypnosis) using the principle of specificity, delivering subliminal messages like, ‘Power is not only what you have but what your opponent thinks you have’, and ‘There are no limits because everything is possible’. This is where it all comes together in their minds, where they reinforce all their physical training and create mental images of themselves doing what they do best, seeing themselves as champions, running a mental movie seeing every jab, upper cut and hook they throw in their combinations – running this movie over and over again in their head until they’re a winner before they go into the ring.

I had the opportunity to also work with professional athletes alongside my regular personal training clients and yoga classes. The two most interesting guys were:

## **The Boxer Hussain Osman**

The Syrian boxer Hussain Osman was a journeyman boxer who became a real-life Rocky hero and a champion. Hussain Osman had worked hard on the periphery of boxing but had never been given the break he deserved until, one day out of the blue, he got a call. He was asked if he wanted a crack at the vacant WBO Inter-Continental Middle Weight title and, despite a ludicrously short notice period of 10 days, he unhesitatingly accepted, knowing that he was meant to be the fall guy. Hussain had technical competence and was physically adept, but he knew that wasn’t going to be enough to make him a champion.

Together we developed a strategy firmly instilled in his mind to make him believe he was a champion. The title fight was the trigger to implement his strategy; we diminished his negative beliefs and increased his positive ones, to imagine a clear picture of what he was going to do. Prior to the big fight, he believed that he had already won it in his mind many times before, visualising every angle, hearing every sound, feeling every punch and smelling the sweat of success. On the night, therefore, he was in the zone. No matter what his opponent threw at him, he always believed he had what it took to win the war. After going the distance, Hussain emerged victorious against all odds.

## The Athlete Tony Jarrett

I had the opportunity to work with world sprint hurdles medallist Tony Jarrett, greatly underrated during his career, even though at that time he was one of the fastest hurdlers in the UK.

He was an amiable guy and was open to a hypnotherapy session to turn the perennial second place into first. While he was in a trance, I asked him to visualise and describe in detail his running strategy to me. He said that his training sessions involved him running behind an imaginary pacemaker because he believed that it helped to improve his focus and track times.

At the end of the session, I suggested that just because his strategy worked once it did not mean that it would necessarily work all the time, because there were times when the environment and circumstances required a plan B. I then suggested that maybe the reason he came second so often was that he always visualised someone in front of him, therefore coming second became acceptable.

This is a common problem for many people who become fixated on one way of doing things, believing that if it worked once it will work again so they doggedly stick to that strategy. But the reality is if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always had and, in his case, it was second place.

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*‘Never question if you are as good as someone else –  
question if you are getting better than you were’*

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## YOGA FOR MEN

**BRITISH WHEEL OF YOGA says that 85% of people who attend yoga classes are women, strengthening a self-fulfilling prophecy that yoga is for women.**

My practice does not discriminate between men and women (70% of my clients are women) but my training programme was originally created with men in mind. And to continually encourage and prove that yoga works so well for men, I recently got a group of men with fixed views on yoga to join my 21-day training course. They included Clive, a 47-year-old gas engineer, John, a 30-year-old London taxi driver and TJ, a 27-year-old builder.

I sold the programme to them by using language and words that they could relate to and drew a parallel between football and yoga with the analogy of how the best football strikers are like yogis in that they don't think about taking a shot, they just instinctively do it, totally absorbed in what they're doing, to the exclusion of everything else. In yoga it's moving meditation in football it's 'being in the zone.' When you engage your senses fully and become absorbed in the moment, there is an unbroken stream of concentrated thought upon a single idea. In order to do this, you need to be able to control your focus on what you see, feel and hear. They were sold!

As with all my clients, the men were given three one-hour private lessons every other day and over the course of 21 days they had to attend a self-practice class once a week and do the routine every day in their own time. It was said that this arrangement was manageable and fitted in with their usual training routines and lifestyle.

*‘Exercise decreases stress and relieves tension’*

I have three basic training components: identifying the intention /goal, learning the exercise and reinforcing the self-image.

1. Identifying the intention involves clarifying what resources you need to achieve the desired outcome through a better understanding of yourself. This includes identifying the negative thought processes or obstacles we create that often stand in the way of achievement. 'I'll never touch my toes because I can't/ it won't work/ I've never managed it before...'. This first session dispels negative beliefs and reinforces positive ones to create a strategy for a realistic outcome.

2. Learning the compound asanas (exercises that work more than one muscle group at a time for a lean muscular body). This is a 20-minute programme designed to (a) maximise the physical self and (b) instil a new discipline based on focus, concentration and breath, linking back to the desired intention.

3. Reinforcing the self-image. Most people don't have the mental discipline to hold their focus for a prolonged period because they're easily distracted but when using the right language, this is something that can be taught and learnt; focusing on relaxation through meditation/self-hypnosis. It allows you to reinforce your beliefs in a relaxed state and assimilate the learning that has taken place to ensure it can be repeated. Eventually your new beliefs will automatically move from the conscious to the unconscious and become a more normal state of mind for you.

The programme is outlined below:

**OBJECTIVE:** To determine whether men's perception of yoga asana can be changed and integrated into their lifestyle using a shorter goal-focused programme that caters to their need for a clear objective experience.

**METHODS:** The sample comprised men aged between 20 and 60 years who did their own training regularly. They joined my 21-day course, that incorporated 20 minutes of daily yoga asana practice and three private sessions a week with me. Their attitude toward yoga and physical performance were assessed at baseline and at the end of the trial. This included daily telephone surveys.

**RESULTS:** The challenge resulted in a change of attitude toward yoga but, more significantly, improved levels of energy, confidence, focus, strength, flexibility and greater self-confidence during stressful situations.

**CONCLUSION:** The results showed that a focused program of yoga asana is effective, to not only change men's perception of yoga, but it is an amazing complement for men who go to the gym regularly – helping to improve focus, balance, muscle strength, and overall wellbeing.

## **PRE-YOGA TRAINING QUESTIONS:**

1. What's stopped you from doing yoga before now?

Clive: I preferred doing something more physical at the gym.

John: Time has always prevented me from doing things like yoga.

TJ: I'm just not supple enough and every time I've seen people doing

yoga they always look so flexible.

2. Did you know that yoga is more than just being flexible?

Clive: I wasn't really sure at first.

John: I've always thought that yoga was all about stretching and relaxing. I never saw it as being physically demanding.

TJ: Yes, because on occasion I have read articles about it.

3. What did you think yoga was about?

Clive: I know that it's an ancient eastern philosophy.

John: To be honest I never really gave it a second thought. It was just something that was always there for people who wanted to do something a little more chilled-out.

TJ: Relaxation and flexibility

4. What kind of people did you think were attracted to yoga?

Clive: I used to think that yoga was mainly for women and guys who were not into normal sports.

John: Dunno! All I know is that I'm willing to give it a go.

TJ: Not sure really. I suppose guys who were a lot more open.

5. Did you know that yoga could build muscle strength?

Clive: Yes because of the various poses.

John: I've always seen yoga as something for stretching.

TJ: No

6. Would you go on a yoga holiday?

Clive: No

John: No

TJ: No.



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*‘True victory is self-victory’*

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## 20-21 FITNESS CHALLENGE

**WHEN YOU START** the 20-21 fitness challenge, **put an elastic band around your wrist and wear it continuously for 21 days. If you miss a day of training, put the elastic band onto the other wrist and start again until you complete 21 continuous days of the programme.**

### THE SEQUENCE

It's not easy to make big changes, and as a result, lots of people cannot stay with their efforts to achieve 21 days of exercise.

The biggest issues people face when trying to achieve success is that they don't create a sustainable or realistic structure in order to hit their goals, because they go too quickly.

Instead of starting with wild expectations, putting too much pressure on themselves, the key to 20-21 is that as long as you're making progress, that's what will make the biggest impact moving forward.

The majority of people who have never paid attention to their fitness will experience a few failures but the key is not to give up when setbacks happen. Do it over and over again, until eventually you get it, but you can only do that if you keep trying and it doesn't feel like a chore or a lot of work. Fitness changes do not happen overnight. You are going to have to work constantly to see progress.

Relaxation, toning the muscles and wellbeing are not the only effects of yoga. It also directly regulates and stimulate the body's finer functions like the heart, the blood vessels, the nervous system and the glands. The movements are low-intensity which until recently have been greatly underestimated. The recommendation to do three 20-minute bouts of high-impact aerobic exercises a week was designed for performance athletes and never meant for the average man or woman in the street, which is why most people find it so difficult to sustain.

The ultimate aim of the exercise is to effectively recruit the deep stabilising muscles to control the position of the spine during dynamic movements. The emphasis is on doing only a few simple poses to bring awareness into what you do as it is more important than rushing through a series of postures. These core exercises build strength from the inside out, to quickly improve overall body movement and posture.

The most common postural problem is poor postural habit. It is normally seen in people who stand or sit for long periods. Every move you perform requires abdominal strength and stability. This can only happen when core strength, posture and balance are aligned, while decreasing the risk of injury to the spine. Strength, posture and balance must continually work against gravity and in harmony with one another to maintain an upright posture.

Core stabilising muscles, the diaphragm, the pelvic floor, the transverse abdominis and multifidus, protect and stabilise our back before we move the limbs. They're like a corset around the spine creating a firm central cylinder for the trunk region so that the stress of whatever we are doing isn't transferred to our back.

To begin with you should start slowly and build up. You may initially find that you cannot control your body, as it begins to wobble, your knee rotates, and your upper body sways.

You will find that your balance will improve greatly coupled with gains in strength as you develop the smaller stabilising muscles without necessarily increasing your muscle bulk.

## THE SEQUENCE

**Follow the accompanying video available for download at [www.meta-age.com/20-21](http://www.meta-age.com/20-21) using the password 2021. The text below serves as a reference to outline the physical effects of the exercise to reinforce in detail the posture that is being demonstrated in the video when doing the 20-21 sequence.**

Ensure that each movement is held for approximately five breaths.

## 1.TADASANA

Many common ailments and discomforts can be traced to poor posture. If the spine is not properly aligned or if there is tightness or stiffness in the back, the result is often an imbalance in the body. Performing the tadasana allows you to observe your posture closely. The mind is focused and free of distraction. The body is experienced as being rooted firmly to the earth and as steady and motionless as a mountain.





## 2. LATERAL FASCIA STRETCH

This exercise aims to improve the flexibility of the muscles on the outside of your hip and leg. If these structures become tight, achieving optimal hip rotation during the swing becomes very difficult.



### 3. URDHVA HASTASANA

A perfect pose to wake up the body, bringing energy and feeling through the entire body that aligns spinal column and protects spinal muscles and nerves. It creates space between vertebrae and prepares the spine for further stretching and flexing.

#### 4. UTTANASANA

Stimulates the liver and kidneys and improves digestion. It also calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression, reducing fatigue and anxiety. It is effective in various disorders – asthma, high blood pressure, infertility, osteoporosis, and sinusitis. The thighs and knees strengthen with lifting in the quadriceps.



## 5. ARDHA UTTANASANA

Stretches your back and front torso, strengthens your spine and improves abdominal organs.



## 6. PLANK POSE

Tones all of the core muscles of the body, including the abdomen, chest, and lower back. It strengthens the arms, wrists, and shoulders, and is often used to prepare the body for more challenging arm balances. Plank also strengthens the muscles surrounding the spine, which improves posture.



## 7. CHATURANGA/LOW PLANK

A great all-round pose that helps to increase strength, balance and stability of the whole body as it develops several muscles including chest, shoulders, biceps, triceps and abdominal muscles.



## 8. COBRA/BHUJANGASANA

This pose is one of the original yoga poses. It strengthens the spine, stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen; firms the buttocks; stimulates abdominal organs; helps relieve stress and fatigue; opens the heart and lungs.



## 9. UP DOG/URDVHA MUKHA SVANASANA

The counter-pose to downward-facing dog. Similar to Cobra except the knees are off the floor. This pose will strengthen your spine, arms and wrists, and give your chest, lungs, shoulders and abdomen a good stretch. It is said to relieve mild depression, fatigue and sciatica.



## 10. DOWN DOG/ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

This is one of the poses in the traditional Sun Salutation sequence. There are many benefits of practising this asana. It provides an overall body stretch and thus builds strength throughout the body. It calms the mind, lifts the spirits and help to reduce fatigue. The blood flow to the sinuses increases with the practice of this posture. It also strengthens the immune system and improves digestion. It is best known for rejuvenating the body.



## 11. SKI SIT/UTKATASANA

An underestimated yet very powerful pose strengthening the ankles, thighs, calves, and spine and shaping the lower muscles. It looks like you're sitting in an imaginary chair, this is definitely not a passive pose.



## 12. DEEP LUNGE/WARRIOR 1

The pose teaches you to descend your lower body while lifting and getting a feeling of lightness through your upper body as you stretch your hip flexor. The deep breathing will allow you to expand your chest and increase your lung capacity. As you reach up and descend down it is the feeling of dynamic opposition.



### 13. SINGLE LEG BALANCE/WARRIOR 3

There are three examples shown, with increasing levels of difficulty. The posture improves balance, memory and concentration, and tones and invigorates the whole body, this pose is a vigorous and challenging one. Athletes are our modern-day warriors. In this pose they will greatly improve strength in their back, legs, ankles, feet, and shoulders. At the same time, they will improve the flexibility of those body parts. This pose can be done with hands on hips, out to the side or to the front.



## 14. BIG TOE POSE/PADANGUSTHASANA

This lengthens tight thighs, hamstrings and calves. It improves focus and has tremendous beneficial effects on the whole of your body. This pose, though a little difficult, is an ideal combination of strength, endurance, determination and balance.



## 15. PIGEON/EKA PADA RAJAKAPOTASANA

Stretches the hips; excellent for runners and cyclists. I have found this pose to be one of the most challenging poses post hip surgery. But, as I ease myself deeper into the pose, I find my overall movement and flexibility are much better. Tight hips are also very common because most of us sit all day. Tight hips can lead to lower back discomfort, due to the shortened muscles across the front of the hips affecting the pelvis, which in turn affects the lower back.



## 16. SIDE ARM BALANCE/VASISTHASANA

This side arm balance pose is a compound pose. The primary purpose of this yoga posture is to strengthen all the muscles of your shoulder, arms, wrist, spine and leg muscles. You don't need to be particularly strong or an expert to do this position. It's one of the most basic forms of yoga and is easy to perform.



## 17. ALTERNATING ARM AND LEG

This exercise helps strengthen the muscles of the lower back, deep stabilisers of the spine, mid-back, upper back, glutes, abdominals, hip flexors, and hip extensors.



## 18. CAT-COW

This is the incorporation of two asanas that are paired together for a gentle, flowing breath-synchronised movement. Move from one pose to the next as you inhale and exhale, matching breath to movement.



## 19. BOAT POSE/NAVASANA

Boat Pose is a total posture where you balance the entire body on your bottom. This pose is associated with willpower and strength of character. It strengthens the abdominal muscles, lower back, hips, thighs and arms. The power of this pose is important for all athletes to improve balance, focus and control.



## 20. UPWARD PLANK/TABLE TOP

This provides a deep stretch to the upper body, including your shoulders, chest, abdomen, legs and spine. This pose will build strength throughout all the core muscles and the muscles surrounding the spine. It also improves balance and posture. Additionally, it will strengthen the wrists, arms, buttocks, legs, and back. Opening up the entire front side of the body is invigorating and energizing, which provides relief from fatigue and stress



## 21. SEATED TWIST

This pose provides a multitude of benefits for the entire body. It increases flexibility in the spine, calms the mind, relaxes the nervous system, improves digestion, and cleanses the internal organs.



## 22. RECLINING BIG TOE/SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA

This is a safe and fantastic hamstring stretch that can be modified for all levels. Incorporating this pose into your stretching routine, yoga practice or post-workout will create a greater range of motion in your hips, which will enhance all of your movement.



### 23.THE PLOUGH POSE/HALASANA

This asana acts directly on the spine, helping it to regain its health, strength, softness and elasticity, and preventing the vertebrae from degenerating and prematurely ossifying. Coupled with the stimulation to the thyroid, this posture is a must for youthfulness and longevity.



## 24. REVERSE PIGEON

Reverse Pigeon Pose, also called Sucirandhrasana, is a version of the Half Pigeon Pose done lying down. This pose is called the 'Reclined Pigeon Pose' or 'Eye of the Needle Pose'. This version for beginners gently opens the hips and stretches the hamstrings. The hips, glutes, lower back, and legs are all stretched and opened. It also makes the IT band longer, which could protect the knees.



## 25. FISH POSE/MATSYASANA

Stretches and stimulates the muscles of the stomach and throat. It also tones the nervous system and the internal organs.



## 26. CORPSE POSE/SAVASANA

This relaxing posture rejuvenates your mind, body and spirit. It's one of the most difficult to master because, though lying relaxed and motionless, you should be fully conscious and awake. The difficulty is that people tend to drift off to sleep while doing Savasana.



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*'You are in charge of your mind and therefore  
your results'*

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## QUIET YOUR MIND

**AN ADJUNCT TO doing the 20-21 challenge is meditation. It can help you feel calm, peaceful, and in balance, which is good for both your emotional and physical health. You can also use it to calm down and deal with stress by shifting your focus to something soothing. Meditation can help you find your centre and stay at peace with yourself.**

It also provides the discipline and focus needed to help us achieve our intention. Going into a state of relaxation reinforces your belief. It helps assimilate your training to ensure it is repeatable so that exercise and success automatically become a normal state of mind. It is about visualising a better self through meditation or self-hypnosis. Use empowering words or phrases to strengthen your resolve continuously.

There are multiple ways to meditate, but the techniques often overlap. Meditation is a lot like sports. There are many different kinds of meditation, just like many other sports. I use three methods.

### **Mindfulness Meditation**

The process of paying full attention to what you are feeling and thinking in the present moment in a way that is focused, it's a way to keep us from getting lost in the past and future and live more in the present. A body scan is a common way to start a mindfulness meditation practice. It means checking in with or scanning all parts of your body, from your head to your feet (or vice versa), to notice any pain, tightness, or other out-of-the-ordinary feelings, without judging them.

### **Guided Meditation**

When I teach yoga classes, I use guided meditation. Because people's minds tend to wander, I use my voice to make it easier for my students to focus and relax, so their minds aren't entirely left to their own devices. I use calming words and phrases to help them stay on track.

## **Movement for Meditation**

It includes traditional Chinese practices like qigong and tai chi, as well as some types of yoga and dance. Most of the time, meditative movement means exercising while paying attention to how the body feels.

## **HOW TO MEDITATE**

### **Step 1**

Find a comfortable posture for meditation either on a firm but comfortable chair or the floor. Place your palms on your lap facing up to open your awareness or facing down to calm the mind. Imagine a hook at the crown of your head pulling you up, lengthening your spine as you rise from the ground of the pelvis base. Scan your body and relax any tension. Draw your chin slightly down and feel the back of your neck lengthen.

Find a spot on the wall in front of you, then soften your focus and close your eyes. With your internal silence, bring your awareness to the inhalation and exhalation of your breath, feeling the rise and fall of your abdomen.

As your focus settles on your breathing, visualise negative energy leaving your body through your exhalation and positive energy entering the body on the inhalation. Stay with this state of contemplation until you naturally begin to settle into a state of unified consciousness. Initially this feeling will last for a few brief moments but with time it becomes longer.

### **Step 2**

Visualise yourself doing the perfect yoga asana successfully and confidently. Create a clear picture in your mind in detail of what you look and sound like, and what you feel in that moment. Now increase those feelings. Make the picture bigger and brighter, the sound of your breathing louder, and intensify the feelings. Now imagine the picture is life sized. Once you have done this, step into the picture of you being completely confident, focused physically strong and flexible. When you feel that sense of success, squeeze your thumb and forefinger together.

This will create an anchor in your mind so that any time you want to feel confident and successful that action will trigger the feeling. Repeat this exercise a few times to reinforce what you did so that you can easily trigger that feeling of being confident and successful.

### **Step 3**

When you've finished, bring your hands together into the prayer position with a feeling of compassion and allow it to fill your being. Count up from one to three and as you start counting make a final statement to yourself about the positive and relaxed state that you want to be in when you come out of self-hypnosis, then gently open your eyes and slowly rise from your seated position.

## **IN SUMMARY**

Meditation is a practice that allows you to quiet your mind. In the beginning, it would be a good idea to set a timer for the desired length of time you want to spend so you don't worry about how long you spend.

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' there's only doing it or not doing it. You cannot turn your thoughts off and make your mind blank. Additionally, you don't need to be good at focusing your attention on anything because there are numerous states of awareness that are all part of the process of meditation. The more chilled out and relaxed you are about what to expect during your meditation, the easier and more enjoyable it gets.

The generally agreed purpose is to train the mind to observe and then to let go of attachments in order to simply be 'mindful'. Whatever the method, after you begin to quiet the mind, your life becomes the practice of meditation.

If ever you find yourself somewhere that you need to feel relaxed or in need of some positive reinforcement, all you have to do is squeeze your thumb and forefinger together to activate your confidence anchor. You will discover how different you will feel with renewed confidence and feeling much more positive wherever you are.

# EPILOGUE

Writing this book was the motivation I needed to get my mojo back. The 20-21 challenge can help you develop great discipline and help you focus on the things you want rather than what you don't want. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to exercise; there is only the discipline required to do it in the first place. I am halfway through my midlife journey, and the next half will be even better.

