

Einstein suggested that we make things as simple as possible and no simpler. the right questions can simplify things. change them - or, more accurately, change us and allow us to see the answers that are directly in front of us. people often ask me what i learned at GYM JONES, other trainers are more specific and ask me what workouts i did, if they send me a "workout of the day". i was lucky. i found a group of talented individuals who helped shape my relationship with training from the beginning. i learned early to ask why and how and not just what should i do now. i also began to learn what to do with that information...

this is a short list of questions - it is hardly complete, but answered honestly these questions can help arrange a framework, a scaffolding to build your training around. these questions should bring up more questions, they should start a process, give you hints of where to look, where to push and where to rest. just remember that you are never going to find your way to your destination if you can't be honest about where you are...

first, we define fitness as "the ability to perform a task" the task you chose will outline the attributes necessary to achieve your goals, the first step is to define the task, the test...

how will you test (and in doing so, define) your fitness?

how long before you undergo this "test"?

how many hours per week (total) do you plan on dedicating to training?

what small tests do you have arranged as "error corrections" on your way to the main test?

- gut check - is this time-table honest and reasonable?

what is the duration of this test? will fueling/hydration be a factor? will boredom? will weather?  
how often during this test do you expect to reach a max or near max heart rate? for what duration?  
what condition will you be in going into a max heart rate situation - a late attack during a bike race?  
a standing start off the blocks?

will you have an opportunity for intermittent recovery during your test? if so, under what conditions?  
(standing? sitting? walking? hanging from a good hand-hold? pinned under an opponent or against a cage?)

what factor does specific technical skill play in the final outcome?

in previous tests, has a lack physical strength ever been a deterrent to your performance? has fatigue (physical or emotional) or endurance/stamina? be specific.

during training, has lack of physical strength or endurance ever been a deterrent to learning a lesson or performing a task? at what point during training (at what level of fatigue) does your technical skill begin to deteriorate and to what extent? at what point does fatigue prevent you from tying a secure knot? making a catch? locking in a hold? defending a take-down against a lesser opponent?

has your weight/size ever been a deterrent? too heavy or too light?

has explosive power ever been a factor in your performance? quickness? the ability to "change gears" - going from a stand-still to a sprint? changing positions?

in training or during previous tests - where have you failed? what excuses distract you from training? from recovering? from eating properly? what triggers you into self-sabotage? how often must you test yourself to avoid complacency?

why are you eating the way you do? for what objective? does your diet reflect your stated goals?

what plans do you have to cope with these pitfalls? to avoid them, recover from them, or at least mitigate their effects?

what are the effects of your mental and/or emotional state or your training? on your tests? what triggers change that state? (risk? competition? failure? success?)

what sort of return on investment can you expect from each corrective effort? do any corrections contain a natural order or progression? which corrections will lay groundwork for other corrective efforts?

this list could go on, but do not mistake answering questions for progress - or asking them for that matter. that has been a pitfall of mine. the flashing lights of data points and interesting questions can be just as paralyzing as not enough information if you are not careful. the important thing is to learn from what is in front of you. to ask questions and find answers. to test theories. to try and fail and try again. the goal is to learn. to grow. and to improve.

re-evaluate often.

give things the time and attention they deserve.

do not give up what you really want for what you want right now.

look at trends, not snapshots.

be willing to take a step back to make a leap forward.

do not waste today fighting yesterdays battle. that which got you from point a to point b may not be able to get you from point b to point c. it may, in fact, be blocking your path.

pay attention. ask questions. don't quit.

add to that - find someone smarter than you. better than you. as many as you can, and learn from them.

(on that note: mark & lisa twight, rob macdonald, michael blevins, james gardner, johnny carlquist, john frieh, john spezzano, rob fusco, jenny raff, matt owen, ryan mcCliment, bill mcconnell, fred bigliardi, josh harth, jonathan yankee, candace and frankie puopolo, rachel nievelt, to everyone who makes the station what it is ... thank you for making me try harder every day.)



things have their place. ju-jitsu is a technical sport. there are, however, gym movements that can set the groundwork for better technique. we can handle the “dumb” stuff here so you can spend your mat time focused solely on practicing technique and not wishing you knew how to push through your hips or that you had a stronger grip.



sometimes you have to court failure. to experience a little fear. it keeps you hungry and it keeps you humble.



it is never too late to start.