

i think one reason why adults get so upset with children for asking "why?" all the time is that it reminds us how rarely we ask ourselves that same thing.

in fact - that is the first question we ask when someone walks in for their assessment - "why do you think you need to go to a gym?" - the athletes, the competitors, they are the easy ones. they have a solid answer. they have numbers and measurable goals. they have a concrete reason... "i am going to worlds in 5 months and i get fatigued too early" - "i am trying to shave a little time off my iron man time" - but for most of us the answer is more vague... "i want to be healthier/stronger/more fit" - "i want to be lighter/heavier/leaner" - in most cases these are symbols and not the source - if you just want to loose belly-fat why don't you get liposuction? really. why not? do you consider that "cheating"? why? what does that flat stomach symbolize for you? or maybe its wider shoulders that you are looking for. or a bigger deadlift. a sub 7 2k row. again, without a sport those are just shadows of what you really want, keep asking why - what do all these traits add up to?

understanding why (or at least getting a glimpse of it) will probably do more for your training than any other coach or diet tip or strength training secret. understanding why will shape your priorities, answer questions, and give you a roadmap for how to proceed. most of all, it will get you asking better questions.

unlike many of my peers, i have never found a sport that ignited my passions - outside the gym i have not stumbled into any occasion where i lacked the strength, the speed, the endurance or any physical quality necessary to achieve the task. so why? "because it's there" was the answer Mallory shot back in reference to climbing mt. everest - and that may have been answer enough*, but i think there is more lurking under the surface. many, if not most, of us are physically unremarkable. sure, we may be strong(ish) and fast(ish) and have a modicum of endurance - but we wont be breaking any world records. most of us aren't getting paid to be fit, or betting our lives on our ability to do a pull-up. so why do it?

i cant speak for anyone else, but my driving force is control. to me, the gym is a laboratory, a workshop. i can tinker and explore - i can test theories and fail repeatedly in new and spectacular ways. more than that i can learn. i can see how i respond to stress - see what breaks and what bends, i can become familiar with the razors edge, get comfortable with the uncomfortable. it is there where the real power lies, in the gym we use weights and timers as a symbol for stress. the beautiful part is how we can fine-tune that discomfort, expose ourselves, push into that place where the cracks creep in and everything threatens to come crashing down - and then, we learn to hold it together. the "appropriate" stress that i most often seek is when 49% of me wants to quit, go home, burn the gym down and never speak of this "fitness" shit again. that voice has haunted me my entire life, closed doors that can never be reopened - the gym has given me a framework, a way to learn how to fight back. to make it a habit. automatic. to get that voice accustomed to loosing.

the hope of this exposure is to inoculate ourselves to stress. to re-train our habits, to own them, to become an individual shaped by will and decision and not mere circumstance. the dieter who begins to feel that same rush of satisfaction by NOT eating that piece of pizza, the lifter that can maintain composure and structural integrity under greater and greater loads, the runner who can look both at the miles traveled and the ones left to go and not be lulled into quitting or complacency.

but it is more than that.

this simple asking bleeds into every facet of our lives. ignorance ceases to be as frightening because it is understood as a precursor to knowledge, discomfort begins to feel more like potential as we begin to see beauty and triumph in the lessons earned by failing. as we continue to seek answers

and better questions we earn a quiet confidence - a knowledge of self that is rooted in experiences so personal and visceral that we become both resilient to outside pressure and totally open to it. we begin to lean into the unknown, to seek experiences that challenge us, that scare us, that force us to confront our shortcomings and find new ways to grow.

this is what the gym is to me. my "why". when i see these tools, smell the rubber floor and a hint of stale sweat not totally covered up by simple green, i cant help but ask myself: "why am i here? where am i going? and what am i going to do today to make myself better?"

so. what are you going to do?

-the station



walk the line. carry your burden. embody grace. punch above your weight.

*more likely he was frustrated with the reporter asking the question and the true answer could not be articulated into a simple sound byte