

Wing Beats

Monthly Supplement for the Chrysalis Community

Issue No. 43 Feb-Mar 2017

New Member - Please Welcome Amber!

It's official. Amber, Danielle's colleague and friend, completed her Foundations training in March and we're pleased to have her join our group classes.

Do you have anyone you want to invite to Chrysalis for a free workout? You can book any Saturday at noon for your friend(s)/family member(s). Just let us know and we'll do our best to accommodate the group.



Upcoming Events & Reminders*

May 22nd - VICTORIA DAY, CLOSED

July 1st - CANADA DAY, CLOSED

Aug 1st - AUGUST LONG, CLOSED

Sept 4th - LABOUR DAY, CLOSED

*We'll likely have an early summer event, it's not scheduled yet, but stay tuned! We'll post it at the gym and announce it once we have it pinned down.

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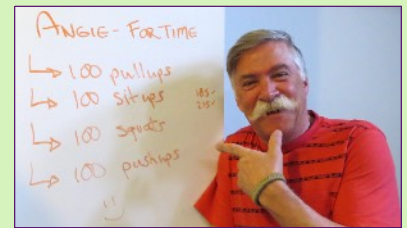
Thank You!

A big Thank You goes to Wayne who "kept the lights on" during our absence this past February. It sounds like a number of you enjoyed the four Open Gym sessions we planned for you. Excellent! We had a great time and some much-needed recovery of a different sort in Costa Rica. And, we're pumped to be BACK!



April...Fooled!

Gotcha! Well, at least a few of you on April 1st. Pranksters that we are, you know we're up to no good on that day. It was our privilege to initiate Griff into our tomfoolery.



The Art of the Hard Part

Guest Contribution

We have a special treat for you in this issue of Wing Beats. Instead of us providing a book summary, David Cain, a repeat guest lifter at Chrysalis, has agreed to allow us to reproduce an article he first published to his audience on *Raptitude* on Monday, April 17, 2017. Enjoy!

I was always moved by a particular line in *The Godfather*: "Mister Corleone is a man who insists on hearing bad news immediately."

The line stuck out to me because it was so clearly the opposite of my natural tendencies. I always tried to move away from unpleasant realities. When I started to worry about money, for

example, I avoided looking at my bank balance. When one of my friends was mad at me, I would avoid talking to them.

This is an almost perfectly terrible life strategy. Virtually every personal victory I've had amounted to doing exactly the opposite—finally confronting some reality, or some experience, that I had historically avoided. Monsters grow in the dark, so if you like your monsters small and manageable, you probably want to go and meet them at your earliest convenience.

The story arc of my adult life has essentially been a long process of learning and accepting that fact. A few weeks ago my friend H el ene taught me something that brought this principle to a new level of clarity. Her suggestion not only destroyed a specific problem I was having, but also seems to be a master key to all sorts of long-standing problems in other areas of my life.

Continued on page 2...

“The Art of the Hard Part”, continued from page 1.

I sought her help because she is, among other things, a strength coach, and I had been having a psychological problem with a very physical task—the barbell squat.

Some of you are familiar with this exercise. With a barbell resting across your back, possibly weighing a few hundred pounds, you brace your whole body, squat down, and stand up. Repeat. The movement is extremely demanding physically, but the real difficulty is psychological. If you’ve ever done heavy squats, you know they have a way of defeating you before you even arrive at the rack. It’s a daunting thing to get under a heavy bar, unrack it, and voluntarily squat down with it, especially when you’re pushing your limits at it.

The intimidating nature of the squat makes it a prime candidate for excuse-making and avoidance behaviors. There’s a running joke in the fitness world about skipping leg day—if you don’t feel perfect, if anything about the day seems off, if the stars aren’t all in the right houses of the Zodiac, you’ll convince yourself to do legs another day.

Being a master excuse-maker, I had taken to aborting or shortening my squat sessions a good two-thirds of the time. It got to the point where I was really only doing it on a token basis, squatting just often enough to convince myself I still do it.

Coming Out of The Hole

Like so many difficult things, the squat has only one truly hard part. It’s when you’re at the bottom and you’re beginning to move back upwards. This position is known, ominously, as “the hole”. Being in the hole is a convergence of several almost-unbearable feelings: you’re holding your breath, you’re bearing a tremendous weight on your back, and you’re immobile and vulnerable. You’re about to see if your body will be able to bring you back to the surface, and you fear it won’t be able to.

The hole is a scary place to be, and you don’t want to be there for long. It feels like forbidden territory that you need to escape immediately. The impulse is to get out of it, and when you’re there for even an instant too long, the mind wants to panic. The normal strategy is to really psych yourself up for the squat, dip down and blast your way out of the hole because it’s just so unsettling to be there.

The whole time I was avoiding squats, I was really just avoiding that intense, taxing moment in the hole. The rest of it was relatively easy.

Hélène gave me the silver bullet to hole anxiety, and many analogous types of trepidation. She had me practice a different form of the movement, once a week: use a lighter weight, then squat down and stay in the hole, braced and holding my breath, for a very slow five-count—an eternity—before coming up. These are called “pause squats”.

This was a very strange feeling, actually inhabiting a place you normally feel compelled to escape immediately. It felt like discovering I could live underwater. It turned a forbidden, hostile, panic-inducing place into a somewhat familiar one, even one where I could find some measure of comfort and confidence.

Having this sense of patience and familiarity in the hole feels like having a secret weapon. I’m advancing my squat every week now. More importantly, it no longer feels like something I need to either avoid or confront. It’s just something I can do when it’s time to do it.

Everything Has a Second Act

In movies, the Second Act is typically where the main characters are at their lowest point. The villain has the upper hand, the heroes are constrained or beaten down. To bounce back, they must respond with a moment of growth: find some sort of inner strength, make a hard choice, or reframe their view of things. By Act III, they’ve hit their stride, and while it’s not quite over, it’s clear that they’re going to make it.

My working hypothesis now is that everything that is persistently difficult in our lives has its “hole”, its second act, the part you hate and want to blast through or avoid altogether. The key to overcoming this persistent difficulty is to locate this difficult moment, and let yourself spend time there. A bit of familiarity with that moment is all you need to do to transform a long-term trouble into something routine and doable.

The math makes it clear why this works—if you can go from spending, in a given week, ten panicked seconds in the hole to spending two patient minutes there, the task transforms. It loses its ability to defeat you psychologically, because you no longer treat it like a monster.

Since this breakthrough with the squat, I’m noticing my to-do list thinning out. My attitude is more relaxed and more confident. There seem to be fewer reasons to delay on things, and my projects don’t seem so fraught and risky anymore.

Whatever the task, if there’s no hard part, good. If there is one, I want to get there. I want to meet the monster instead of thinking about where it’s going to appear. If I need practice with a particular hard part, I’ll find an appropriate “pause squat” practice—spending *more* time where I’m uncomfortable, just with a lighter load.

I’m already doing this with things I have historically dreaded—cleaning much more frequently but for shorter periods, ledgering my receipts daily instead of monthly, handling more communications via phone instead of avoiding calls. The lifelong psychological blocks I’ve had with these parts of life are fading as I willingly enter the hole more often.

Any hard parts, any tough second acts, don’t seem like downsides or costs anymore, because I know that they’re the most valuable places to be. Any time spent there just makes another kind of long-running trouble into a new kind of ease.



“Monsters grow in the dark, so if you like your monsters small and manageable, you probably want to go and meet them at your earliest convenience.”

February Photo Box

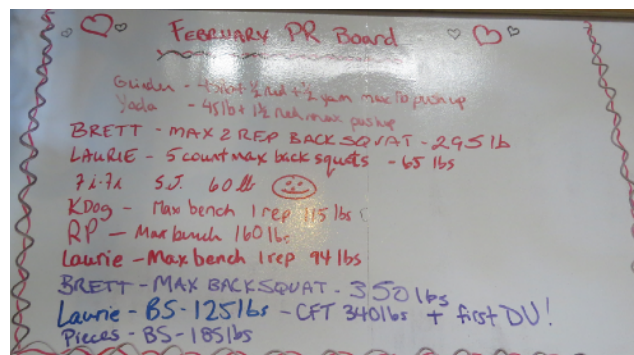
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Go to **WOD Pics**.



PR Board - February

Congratulations to eight Chrysalis athletes for setting new PRs:

- Brett & Lise - Back Squat
- Louise - Split Jerk
- Karlene & Rob - Max Bench
- Nishad & Hélène - Weighted Push Up
- Laurie - Bench, Back Squat, CFT and 1st Double Under



March Photo Box

Want more?
Go to **WOD Pics**.



PR Board - March

Congratulations to five Chrysalis athletes for setting new PRs:

- Karlene, Danielle, Chelsea and Hélène - Dumb Bell Split Jerk
- Rob & Danielle - CFT & Back Squat
- Danielle - Deadlift
- Hélène - Kneeling Ab Roll to Floor

