

## **The Original Primal Blueprint® – The Rules of Living 10,000 Years Ago:**

### **1. Eat lots of animals, insects and plants.**

This is the basic description of everything our ancestors ate to get the protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, phenols, fibre, water and other nutrients necessary to sustain life. But it was a huge list of individual foods – some anthropologists say it may have been 200 or 300 food choices at a time depending upon the geographic area. The net result was a dietary “breakdown” of fat, protein and carbohydrate that was far different from what Conventional Wisdom considers optimum today. This diet provided all the necessary fuel and building blocks that, along with specific exercise, prompted their genes to create strong muscles, enabled them to expend lots of energy each day moving about, to maintain healthy immune systems, to evolve larger brains and to raise healthy children. They ate sporadically, too. When food was plentiful, they ate more than they needed (and stored the excess as fat). When times were scarce, they survived on fat stores. This random or “non-linear” eating pattern kept their bodies in a constant state of preparedness.

### **2. Move around a lot at a slow pace.**

We know that our ancestors spent an average of several hours each day moving about at what today’s exercise physiologists might describe as a “low level aerobic pace.” They hunted, gathered, foraged, wandered, scouted, migrated, climbed and crawled. This low level of activity prompted their genes to build a stronger capillary (blood vessel) network to fuel each muscle cell, to be able to store some excess food as fat, but also to be readily able to convert the stored fat back into energy. Of course, they did all this without the benefit of paved sidewalks or comfortable shoes. Because every footfall landed at a different angle, every muscle, tendon and ligament worked and became stronger together in balance. Note that they did NOT go out and “jog” at 80% of their MAX Heart Rate for long periods of time as Conventional Wisdom suggests today!

### **3. Lift heavy things.**

The women carried their babies much of the time (hey, no babysitters in those days), as well as bundles of firewood, or whatever they had gathered, foraged or scavenged. The men carried heavy spears or other tools, they dragged heavy carcasses of animals they had hunted, and they moved large boulders or logs to build shelters. They also lifted themselves into trees or up onto higher ground when escaping from danger or to scout a new route. The biochemical signals created by these very brief but intense muscle contractions generated a slight surge in growth hormone and a reduction in myostatin gene expression, prompting an increase in muscle size and power; particularly fast twitch fibres.

### **4. Run really fast every once in a while.**

In a world where danger lurked around every corner, your ability to run was a strong indicator of whether you would live long enough to pass your genes down to the next generation. (Note to Nietzsche: That which didn’t kill Grok made him stronger). Avoiding a charging beast to save your life or surging forward to catch a different beast for dinner, the net effect was still survival. A combination of the hormonal events that occurred simultaneously and the resultant gene expression within fast twitch muscle made sure that the next time this happened Grok could sprint a little faster.

### **5. Get lots of sleep.**

Our ancestors got plenty of sleep. Even after the discovery of fire, it wasn’t as if they stayed up all night partying. From sunset to sunrise it was safer to huddle together and rest. Long days of hunting and gathering and otherwise working hard for every bite of food also required sufficient time to repair and recover. Studies of modern hunter-gatherers suggest it wasn’t necessarily always an uninterrupted nine or ten hours, either. It’s likely that they slept together as families or as small tribes, keeping a watch out for predators, breast-feeding the baby or just dozing in and out throughout the night. Growth hormone and melatonin were the major

hormonal players. Of course, the occasional afternoon nap was also available when the urge hit, with no guilt about what else they really should have been doing.

## **6. Play.**

Just like in modern times, all work and no play made Grok a dull boy. Hunter-gatherers have always generally worked fewer hours and have had more leisure time than the average 40-hour-plus American worker. Once the day's catch was complete or the roots, shoots, nuts and berries had been gathered, our ancestors spent hours involved in various forms of social interaction that we might categorize today as "play." Young males would chase each other around and wrestle, vying for a place higher up in the tribe social strata. The males might also practice spear- or rock-throwing for accuracy or chase small animals just for sport. Young females might spend time grooming each other. To the extent that play was considered enjoyable, the net effect was to solidify social bonds and to prompt the release of endorphins (feel-good brain chemicals) and to mitigate any lingering stress effects of life-threatening situations.

## **7. Get some sunlight every day.**

Cavemen weren't really men (or women) who lived their lives in caves all the time. Most of the day, they were in the great outdoors pursuing their various survival tasks. Regular exposure to sun provided lots of vitamin D, an all-important vitamin which they could not easily obtain from food and which their bodies could not manufacture without direct sunlight.

## **8. Avoid trauma.**

Our ancestors required an acute sense of self-preservation matched with a keen sense of observation. Always scanning, smelling, listening to the surroundings, on the watch for danger, aware of what immediate action needed to be taken, whether it was running from a sabre-tooth tiger, dodging a falling rock, eluding a poisonous snake, or just avoiding a careless footfall. Remember that a twisted knee or a broken ankle could spell death to anyone who couldn't run away from danger. In fact, it was probably trauma (or a brief careless lapse in judgment) that was most responsible for the low average life expectancy of our ancestors, despite their otherwise robust good health. Avoid trauma and there was a very good chance you could live to be 60 or 70 – and be extremely healthy and fit. Modern day hunter gatherers maintain strength and health often well into their 80s.

## **9. Avoid poisonous things.**

Man's ability to exploit almost every corner of this earth was partly predicated on his ability to consume vastly different types of plant and animal life. But moving into a new environment and trying new foods posed a danger that the new food might contain potent toxins. Luckily, our liver and kidneys evolved to handle most brushes with novel-but-slightly-poisonous plant matter – at least to keep us alive anyway if the stomach didn't regurgitate it first. Our keen senses of smell and taste also helped us sort out the good from the bad. The reason we have a sweet tooth today (dammit) is probably an evolved response to an almost universal truth in the plant world that just about anything that tastes sweet is safe to eat.

## **10. Use your mind.**

Obviously, one of the most important things that separate man from all other animals is his intellectual ability. The rapid increase in the size of our brains over just a few thousand generations is the combined result of a high-fat, high protein diet (see rule #1) and a continued reliance on complex thought – working the brain out just like a muscle. Hunter gatherers all around the world have developed language, tools and superior hunting methods independently. The fact that some haven't entered the industrial age doesn't mean they don't possess the same ability to process information rapidly and effectively (try living in a jungle where you need to catalog thousands of different plant and animal species, knowing which can kill you and which can sustain you).

# The Modern Primal Blueprint® – The Rules of Living Today:

## 1. Eat lots of animals, insects and plants.

Focus on quality sources of protein (all forms of meat, fowl, fish), lots of colourful vegetables, some select fruits (mostly berries), and healthy fats (nuts, avocados, olive oil). Observe portion control (calorie distribution) week to week more than meal to meal. Eliminate grains, sugars, trans- and hydrogenated fats from your diet.

## 2. Move around a lot at a slow pace.

Do some form of low-level aerobic activity 2-5 hours a week, whether it is walking, hiking, easy bike riding or swimming. Ideally, and when possible, find time to go barefoot or wear as little foot support as possible. Low-level activity is necessary (especially if you find yourself chained to a desk every day). The combined effect will be an increase in capillary perfusion, fat-burning and overall integration of muscle strength and flexibility. For endurance athletes using the Maximum Aerobic Function (MAF) technique can be useful to keep in the correct heart rate zone (180 – age).

## 3. Lift heavy things.

Go to the gym and lift weights for 30-45 minutes, 2-3 times a week. Focus on movements that involve the entire body and in wider ranges of motion – not just on isolating body parts. Emulate the movements of our ancestors: jumping, squatting, lunging, pushing, pulling, twisting, etc. This will stimulate your genes to increase muscle strength and power, increase bone density, improve insulin sensitivity, stimulate growth hormone secretion, and consume. These can include Primal Essential Moves (PEM) and Maximal Sustained Power (MSP) Training. A form of resistance weight training ideal for athletes.

## 4. Run really fast every once in a while.

Do some form of intense anaerobic sprint bursts several times a week. This could be as simple as six or eight (or more) short sprints up a hill, on the grass, at the beach... or repeated intense sessions on a bicycle (stationary, road or mountain bike). These short bursts also increase Human Growth Hormone (HGH) release (HGH is released in proportion to the intensity (not the duration) of the exercise). This can include High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) like Metafit.

## 5. Get lots of sleep.

Get plenty of quality sleep. Our lives are so hectic and full of things to do after the sun goes down that it's often difficult to get enough sleep. Yet sleep is one of the most important factors in maintaining good health, vibrant energy and a strong immune system.

## 6. Play.

Spend some time each week involved in active play. In addition to allowing you to apply your fitness to a real-life situation, play helps dissipate some of the negative effects of the chronic stress hormones you've been accumulating through the week. Maybe try zip lining or Stand up Paddle boarding?

## 7. Get some sunlight every day.

Contrary to the "Common Wisdom" dispensed by dermatologists (who suggest you shun the sun), the Primal Blueprint would insist that you get some direct sunlight every day. Certainly not so much that you come close to burning, but definitely enough to prompt your body to make the all-important vitamin D and to support the mood-lifting benefits. A slight tan is a good indicator that you have maintained adequate Vitamin D levels.

Natural sunlight also has a powerful mood-elevating effect, which can enhance productivity at work and in interpersonal interactions.

### 8. Avoid trauma.

Eliminate self-destructive behaviours. These concepts are self-evident to most people (wear seat belts, don't smoke or do drugs, don't dive into shallow water) yet so many of us live our lives oblivious to impending danger. Develop a keen sense of awareness of your surroundings. Stress levels (mental and physical) can be measured using techniques such as recording Heart Rate Variability (HRV) using a heart rate monitor and App such as Elite HRV.

### 9. Avoid poisonous things.

Avoid exposure to chemical toxins in your food (pesticides, herbicides, chemicals, etc) and on your skin. But also try to avoid the hidden poisons in foods like sugars, grains, processed foods, trans and hydrogenated fats, and mercury in certain fish.

### 10. Use your mind.

Exercise your brain daily as our ancestors did. Be inventive, creative, and aware. If your work is not stimulating (or even if it is), find time to read, write, play an instrument and interact socially.

As with the Original Primal Blueprint, this list is very general, designed simply to allow you to understand that everything our ancestors did can benefit us as well. Except that we can do it having fun, enjoying every aspect of the lifestyle and without worrying about our survival! In future blog posts (and to a much greater extent in my book) I will be going into much more detail as to how and why these behaviours work and exactly what foods to eat, what exercises to do and how to otherwise find ways to allow your genes to recreate you in the healthiest, fittest way possible.

## THE PRIMAL BLUEPRINT FITNESS PYRAMID

Functional fitness, stress/rest balance, anti-aging benefits

