

# FIT STRONG LEAN



MIKE DIEHL  
FELIX GREWE

**BUILD YOUR BEST  
CIRCUIT TRAINING PLAN**

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SPORT

**FIT – STRONG – LEAN**

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Meyer & Meyer Sport

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Your body is your temple!

What is the difference between a winner and a loser? In my opinion, it is primarily one thing: self-confidence. I have been working with professional athletes, actors, and business leaders for many years. I prepare them for competitions or specific roles, helping them to create a balance in their exhausting professional lives and achieve their athletic goals. However, one thing I notice again and again is that the more successful a person is in what he does, the greater his self-confidence, self-reliance and with a few exceptions - his athletic performance capacity.

Successful people have learned to regularly overcome their inner-couch potato. They are able to do this when it comes to exercise because they have also been able to manifest this in other areas of their lives, and vice-versa. They know how to overcome mental difficulties, and their conviction that nothing and no one will stop them from achieving their goals is able to lend them the critical

self-confidence required for exercise. A fit and healthy body significantly contributes to a person's ability to appear more self-confident, and therefore more successful in other areas of life than those that are overweight and experiencing health problems.

In this book, I will show you many effective and versatile exercises for your fitness training that will get your entire body into the kind of shape it may never have been in before. You will work out with your own bodyweight as well as some small aids – stability balls, resistance bands, and free weights. In addition, I will explain how you can change your attitude about exercise so radically that regular workouts will become a part of your life as much as brushing your teeth. Self-discipline is an important factor when it comes to continuously meeting new athletic challenges. In the chapter on motivation, you will learn what that means and how you can develop this ability.



Back in our first book (*Bodyweight Training mit Mike Diehl*), I compared the body to a temple. Yes, your body is your personal temple in which your soul wants to reside in good health and happiness. That also means that only you are responsible for how you take care of this temple, the home of your soul. If you allow it to decay slowly but surely, the day will come when it will no longer be inhabitable.

The following quote has shaped my life and me: *"Pain doesn't stand a chance against passion. It is about finding a goal for which you are willing to accept pain and hard work."* In my life, my athletic drive originated in my military service. As a member of the Special Forces, I had to literally train for survival and often had to fight for my life. Numerous deployments in conflict areas have changed my attitude about life and made me more aware of what is important. People living in poor countries of deployment made me realize that happiness and success are not measured by wealth, but rather satisfaction. To me there is nothing more important than self-satisfaction, and there is no doubt that the basis for this is a strong and healthy body.

When I was younger I had a major accident while parachuting and the doctors told me that I would never be able to properly

exercise again. However, I was not interested in their prognosis. I was wheelchair-bound but would still find staircases in the hospital and do pull-ups on the stair-rails. My legs were incapacitated, but why shouldn't I exercise my arms and upper body? Once I was—contrary to expectations—more or less recovered, I completed my first backpack runs and returned to parachuting as quickly as possible. It was a classic case of therapeutic confrontation.

Even today I can still feel some of the pain caused by my horrific accident. However, it never stood a chance against my passion for exercise and working out. Overcoming it had nothing to do with physical abilities, but solely my attitude and love for sports.

Why am I telling you this? On the one hand, it is to illustrate the seemingly unattainable goals that people can achieve. On the other hand, it is to also make you aware that you should appreciate your body. Be happy that you have it and seize that opportunity to keep it fit and energized long-term through healthy exercise.

The workout chapter in this book is very extensive, offering many exercises with lots of variations. You will work out without apparatuses, but rather with some aids. There is, however, one thing that won't change: all

of the exercises and circuits you will learn beginning on page 186 can easily be done at home. You will not need a fitness studio, and most definitely no machines. You will work out in front of the television or on the floor in your bedroom.

I am a big fan of the American KISS system – Keep it simple, stupid! In my opinion, simple workouts are the best way to success. Short and intense workouts that don't take more than 15-20 minutes per day, and without complicated exercises, are enough to bring the body up to a nice fitness level. I will therefore show you exercises that a top-athlete can use to push himself to his limit, just as much as a 40-year old homemaker or a 68-year old retiree can. Everyone works out at their own level and everyone structures his repetitions, sets, and breaks according to his own capabilities.

Only one thing is important to succeed: get the max out of every one of your workouts! How much of your potential -not just during exercise- do you think you meet on a daily basis? I'll tell you: when you think you've reached your limit, you still have a 20-30% reserve! It is often like that on the job, especially when it comes to exercise!

I hope you have lots of fun with this book and of course with your workouts. Begin by working through the individual chapters and familiarizing yourself with the exercises with the stability balls, resistance bands and free weights. At the end, you will find various circuits that are assigned a certain number of points per set. The **get fit with points system** allows you to review your performance each week or compete against your workout buddy. It is said that competition stimulates peak form.

And always remember: no one was born a pro. Anyone is able to achieve his personal goals by steadily working towards them.

*Mike Diehl*



## Fun is the best motivation!

I can clearly remember my first workout with Mike Diehl. I was lying on a thin towel on the dock of a Turkish beach and laboring in the hot midday sun. Bodyweight training was on the agenda. Back then, I was on an assignment as a reporter for *tennis MAGAZIN*. I submitted myself to a self-experiment with the fitness coach for the German Fed-Cup team. My incentive was to experience just how Angelique Kerber, Andrea Petkovic, Sabine Lisicki & Co. were working out.

The workout took all of 15 minutes but felt like two hours. Once it was over, I found myself lying on the floor for several minutes, almost like a boxer after a knockout punch, gasping for air and cursing my idea of training with this tough guy, who had insisted that I do pushups as a “recovery” between two exercises. Mike kept barking not to make such a fuss, making me feel like Rocky Balboa about to prepare for his final fight.

Our meeting in Turkey was the start of the ingenious idea of bringing together a workout book of Mike’s exercises and philosophy. The deal was that Mike would provide the content and I would put it into the correct form, and verbalize it while also taking care of the editorial process.

Our first collaborative work appeared in March 2015. We published the book, *Bodyweight Training mit Mike Diehl*. The book was originally published in German, and it is not available in English. After this book, we published *My Fitness Journal*, a great way to record your fitness goals and training for a year. Our work fills us both with pride.

With our first book, there were unfortunately some pitfalls that occurred during the publication process. Our story can easily be applied to everyday life and athletics. All of us are familiar with setbacks. They are a part of life, so when able to understand their hidden message, they become very helpful in our personal development. As a recreational athlete, I frequently have days where it is difficult to motivate myself to work out. This is mostly when other areas of my life are particularly draining, such as when stress at work or my private life are robbing me of the necessary energy, or I am impacted by the shortness and cold of fall and winter days.

However, what I have learned in the years of working with Mike is that it is helpful to stand up against your lack of motivation, particularly during these phases. When someone doesn’t perceive his regular workouts as a burden or obstacle, but rather as enrichment for

one's body and an outlet for irritation and day-to-day worries, he can quickly head off motivational lows. The attitude towards exercise determines whether we fluctuate between peaks and valleys like a wave, or whether we continuously and steadily train at a high level.

For me personally, gratitude is a major motivator. For example, the fact and remembrance that I am healthy and not wheelchair-bound like many other people, the fact that I can move my arms and legs. While working together, my conversations with Mike have also shaped me in that regard. I am now more often able to think: I don't *have* to go work out. No, I am *able* to!

In the fast pace of our daily life, we often take our own health for granted. Just turning on the TV at night to watch the news is enough to become aware of the suffering and cruelty in this world. How small are our problems compared to those of people living in war-torn regions? And getting back to fitness: how grateful should we be for being able to live in an oasis like Western Europe, where at most it is laziness and the daily grind that keep us from working out?

One important lesson I have also had to learn: we can only reach our fitness goals if we integrate our fitness training into our

lives so it becomes a part of us. With this book and its versatile workouts, we wish to help you do just that, and most of all, convey to you the joy of physical fitness. There is honestly no better motivation than fun and passion!

Just one last plea before you get started: we love feedback, especially on our social media platforms. Please, follow us on Facebook ([/fitnesscoach.mikediehl](https://www.facebook.com/fitnesscoach.mikediehl)) and Instagram (@Mike\_Diehl\_Training). And visit us on our website at: [www.mike-diehl.de](http://www.mike-diehl.de)

Have lots of fun and success with your workouts!

*Felix Grewe*



*The two authors during their first joint workout in the spring of 2013, in Turkey.*

### Acknowledgments:

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## 2 WORKING OUT WITH THE STABILITY BALL: PLAY YOURSELF FIT!

Back in our first book, I explained that working out at home using your own bodyweight is absolutely enough to reach a high fitness level and do health-oriented exercise. So why are we now using small implements like the stability ball, resistance bands, or free weights in our second book? Because they are easy to incorporate into your workouts at home. In spite of using these implements, you still do not need a fitness studio. They also add some variety. For many people, bodyweight training is an important alternative but it is not the only one. Someone who likes some variety can jazz up his workouts with small implements.

The *stability ball* was originally created as a toy in Italy in the 1960s. These balls were soon used for sports physical therapy, particularly to help treat back problems. The stability ball's unstable base forces you to use your deep muscles more to keep your balance during exercises.

The result: your core muscles get stronger, your posture more stable – the foundation for a well-supported and pain-free spine. Even seemingly easy exercises like the triceps pullover or shoulder-press with two free weights become much more difficult when you do them while lying on your back on a stability ball. You will be introduced to these exercises later.

The stability ball offers a near inexhaustible choice of exercises. It is therefore a must for versatile workouts. Many people also use it as an alternative to office chairs in order to improve their seated posture. However, studies now show that the stability ball is not better than an ergonomic desk chair. Sitting on the ball too long and without a backrest can cause an overuse of the muscles. My tip: if you don't want to give up the stability ball as an office chair, you should only use it periodically for 30-60 minutes per day.

### Why work out with the stability ball?

The stability ball is well suited for athletes of all ages. There are many possible exercise variations so being able to combine them with other implements like Deuser resistance and exercise bands or free weights, can offer suitable challenges for beginners as well as pro athletes.

Another factor: working out with a stability ball doesn't just bring variety to your workout, it's also fun. Many exercises may initially seem difficult, primarily with respect to balance. But the more you integrate them

into your workouts, the better you will be able to do them over time.

If you also engage in other forms of exercise that require good physical balance, you will benefit from your improved balance. However, we recommend some exercise experience and a certain fitness level as a foundation for at least the more ambitious exercises. The purchase price of a stability ball is definitely reasonable and much less than the cost of a membership at a well-equipped top-notch fitness studio.

### Which ball is right for me?

Stability balls come in different sizes. Choosing the right ball therefore depends on your height.

#### The following guidelines apply:

< 5 feet tall = 45 cm ball

5' – 5'5" = 55 cm ball

5'6"- 6'2" = 65 cm ball

6'3" – 6'7" = 75 cm ball

6'8" and taller = 85 cm ball



## **Practice tips for the stability ball**

1. If you are a beginning user of the stability ball, you should first get used to the implement. Keep both feet on the floor and use a wall for stability.
2. Advanced users should utilize the ball's possibilities and complete the exercises vigorously.
3. Make sure your "work space," meaning your workout area, is cleared of sharp objects. Other exercise implements and furniture should be far enough away so that you won't hurt yourself if you do happen to fall off of the ball.
4. Find out about the stability ball's maximum weight limit. Additional weights and vigorous exercises place more stress on the ball than standard exercises.
5. Make sure your movements are always slow, clean, and controlled.

You can find stability ball exercises starting on page 65 of this book.



Lunges with a stability ball – you will learn this and many other exercises later in the workout chapter.





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### 3 RESISTANCE BANDS: THE SMALLEST PORTABLE FITNESS STUDIO

Have you ever worked out with *resistance bands*? If not, I urge you to integrate them into your workout right away, regardless of any prejudices you may have. During my time as a commander of Special Forces in the German army, I bought a Deuser band for everyone in my squad. Those tough guys were a little skeptical at first. They thought those rubber bands were only for women and targeted rehab training. Back then, I had to listen to a lot of grumbling. But I proved them wrong with the first workout unit, and no later than when the toughest guys hit their limit, did I have my men convinced. By now the bands have long found their place in the side pocket of their combat uniforms.

Exercise bands aren't just a must for soldiers. I recommend them to anyone looking for a way to work out at home, or to those wanting to complete a good workout within a short period of time. They are also great for individuals looking to stay fit during business trips or vacations, or those wanting to supplement endurance runs through the woods with outdoor strength training,

regardless of whether they are young or old, beginner or pro.

Strength training with rubber bands was developed back in the 1960s with the legendary story of when Erich Deuser trained his national soccer team with bicycle inner tubes. In 1967, he developed the circular Deuser band, which quickly became very popular and was soon used by every ambitious athlete. Today there are many types of resistance bands on the market. Different manufacturers produce them in various colors, strengths, and lengths. I personally prefer the red and blue Deuser bands because the colors signify different levels of resistance, but there are so many other resistance bands you can use.

Since I often travel around the world with my clients and athletes, resistance bands have become essential to my work. They fit into any bag, regardless of how small. They also fit beside my personal "fitness box," i.e. my own body, and provide excellent support anytime.

### Why work out with resistance bands?

Of course you can accomplish a lot with just bodyweight exercises. It is common knowledge that I am a big fan of bodyweight training. But over time many athletes reach a point when effective muscle building without implements becomes increasingly difficult. Resistance bands allow you to set new, above-threshold stimuli.

Many strength-training experts consider the progressive load increase as the determining factor for muscle growth. While you can also achieve this with just bodyweight exercises, it is much more difficult than with the use of resistance bands. You can use different-strength bands and shorten your hold on the

band to increase resistance, or use multiple bands at one time.

Besides, the keyword variation is an unbeatable argument. If you work out often, resistance bands are an excellent alternative, even if you regularly go to the fitness studio. No one is able to do the same exercises forever. If you complete the same program week after week, you will eventually face two significant problems: one, you will lack motivation because monotony kills pleasure. And secondly, because you will no longer notice any progress because your body has gotten used to the workout.

### Optimal use of resistance bands

With a little imagination, any bodyweight exercise can be made harder with a resistance band. Even many classic exercises that are performed on machines at the fitness studio can be replicated with just one or two bands. You can find suggestions and exercises beginning on page 82 of this book.

Study results have long verified the extremely positive effects of resistance bands on health

and fitness. The following effects, among others, have been verified: Increased strength

- Improved balance
- Improved posture
- Reduced pain
- Fall prevention
- Lower blood pressure
- Increased strength endurance
- Increased functionality

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The steady increase of resistance during motion execution ensures that the maximum resistance occurs when the muscle is at maximum efficiency. Forgoing additional weights makes resistance-band training one of the safest types of strength training. In addition to building muscle, stimuli that improve movement coordination are also created. There are, however, critics that are skeptical about the effects of resistance bands. They believe that they don't substitute traditional weight training with heavy weights.

I suggest doing a biceps or triceps workout based on the *Tabata principle*. It is an interval method also known as HIIT training (high-intensity interval training). The ratio between athletic activity and recovery during a Tabata set is 2:1. That means you work out for 20 seconds and then rest for 10 seconds. These intervals are repeated eight times. It takes approximately four minutes to complete one Tabata set. They are, however, quite brutal.



With resistance bands, you can perfectly work all muscle groups.

### Practice tips for resistance bands

1. Heavy-duty resistance bands in particular can be hard on the hands. Women are especially sensitive to this. Wear workout gloves just like many athletes do during gym workouts and free-weight training at the fitness studio.
2. Never insert or clamp the resistance band somewhere with sharp edges or where it is able to cause damage. During most exercises, there is so much tension on the band that it can leave marks on, for instance, wooden chairs.
3. With the right care, the band will last longer without becoming sticky. Make sure that your resistance band is always in good condition. Check it regularly and exchange as soon as you notice tears.
4. Get over your initial skepticism and give resistance band workouts a chance. I speak from experience when I say: you will get used to it extremely fast and it won't be long before they become a regular part of your workouts. I cannot imagine my daily work with regular clients and pro athletes without the use of resistance bands.
5. Make sure your movements are always slow, clean, and controlled.

You can find exercises with resistance bands starting on page 82 of this book.