

Being the Best - One Man's Experience with Steroids: An Interview with Josh

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Abstract

This article describes one man's experience with weight lifting and steroid use. Men may engage in heavy weight lifting and steroid use in order to change their bodies, possibly developing behaviours associated with eating disorders and muscle dysmorphia. Previous research has examined the risks associated with steroid use and exercise abuse, however, very little research has used qualitative methodologies to investigate men's actual lived experience with this phenomenon. The purpose of this article is to present the transcript of an interview with a man who is currently weight lifting and using steroids to gain an insiders perspective into his lived experience, and demonstrate how a qualitative methodology may add depth and richness to our understanding of this phenomenon

Research is beginning to reveal that more and more men may attempt to achieve greater muscle mass and lower body fat through lifting weights, dieting, and the use of anabolic steroids (Anderson, 1999; Klein, 1993; Marzano-Parisoli, 2001; Monaghan, 2001; Phillips & Kastle, 2001; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). These practices may lead to the adaptation of maladaptive beliefs and obsessive-compulsive behaviors that consume excessive amounts of time, money, and energy (Pope et al., 2000), and contribute to disruptions in one's social and occupational functioning. Men's pursuit of an ideal masculine body may be considered "reverse anorexia" (Andersen, p. 73). Despite the research touting the risks of

steroid use (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness, 1997; Copeland, Peters, & Dillon, 2000) and risks of exercise addiction (Davis, 2000; Pope et al., 2000), very little research has used qualitative methods to inquire into men's personal stories of their experiences with weight lifting and steroid use. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine men's personal experiences with weight lifting and steroid use by using a qualitative methodology.

This study was based on a qualitative research design which utilized a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology (for a complete description of the study, see Bardick,

2003). Phenomenology is the study of individuals' lived experience (Jardine, 1990; Van Manen, 1990). Obtaining descriptive accounts of actual lived experiences through phenomenology allows us to more fully and deeply comprehend human behavior and experience (Von Eckartsberg, 1998; Jardine; Van Manen). Examining the lived world experience allows us to become conscious of and reflect on a phenomenon, in this case, the phenomenon of weight lifting and steroid use in men. Hermeneutic analysis may be considered a natural extension of phenomenology. Hermeneutic analysis involves describing, interpreting, and understanding the individuals' lived experiences (Nixon, 1992).

This paper will illustrate how the use of hermeneutic-phenomenology reveals the richness and complexity of the phenomenon of weight lifting and steroid use in men by providing excerpts from an interview with Josh [pseudonym], a 23 year old man who has used steroids since the age of 16. Josh started using steroids to be the best at hockey, however, he was caught using steroids, and subsequently banned from playing hockey. After a suicide attempt, Josh turned to weight lifting and steroids in an attempt to "be the best." The transcript presented is from a two and a half hour interview Angela conducted with Josh regarding his experience with heavy weight lifting and steroid use. The transcript is presented in chronological order, however, due to the length of the interview, excerpts were specifically selected and organized into topics for ease of reading. Although Josh's story cannot be representative of all men who use steroids, it may provide some insight into the phenomenon, and illustrate the depth to which qualitative methodology may be used to enhance our understanding of an individual's lived experience. In this interview, Josh goes to great length to describe the validation and

attention he receives from other people for his body building, yet at the same time describes how weight lifting and steroid use has been helpful in working through his depression. The transcript of the interview with Josh elaborates on his perceptions of motivation, identity, image, the importance of mirrors and magazines, feeling small, looking good, being a "freak", taking risks, and a reflection of the interview.

Transcription

Motivation

Josh: I was 16 when I did my first lift. And the reason? I just want to be the best. I was playing hockey and had the scouts looking at me so I just wanted to be the best. I had to be the fastest. I was the golden boy in my family so I couldn't let anyone down. That was the biggest thing. So just be the best. Take the needles, get big, get strong, get fast, be the best. That was the bottom line. I was willing to do it.

Angela: Why were you willing to do it?

Josh: Well, because I was the golden boy and everyone looked at me like 'you're doing so good in hockey and the junior scouts are looking and you and, maybe, pros,' and it was almost tangible. So it was so close so I thought that this little prick, this little needle, it's so close that this won't hurt me. This will just help me. I didn't look at the long runs of getting busted. I got banned from ever playing any juniors; no Junior B, no juniors all across Canada, because I was caught in the lower levels. Like my last year of Midget AAA I got piss tested and it was cool because I had a janitor at the hockey rink pissing for me. He did it for me twice. But I got busted. And my whole family just freaked right out. But now it's different. The reason I do it now is because I still want to be the best but it's not my job, and it's still

such a physical job. We work on a coil tubing rig and so it's all about speed sometimes when you can do three holes in a day in a 12-hour shift. It's insane. So if you're running faster and pushing harder, and pulling harder, you're going to do your job so much better than the next guy. And I don't want to let my driller down. He's almost like the big brother I never had, and he's a juicer [steroid user] too so he picks me up, takes me to the gym, and he's a big influence and I want to be just like him. I do. Because he's got everything going for him and the bigger you are the more you get looked at, the more things seem to just go like that.

Angela: Can you tell me more about that?

Josh: When I walk into a room or into a bar everyone just, the attention just comes to a bigger set guy. Always.

Angela: From girls or guys?

Josh: From girls or guys. Either one. People just notice you more. And I like being noticed. Some of the reason I go to the gym now is because I'm more into myself. When I was younger I used to look to girls for happiness. If they weren't there I wasn't happy and there was something wrong with me. But now it's kind of switched. I don't look for them to make me happy, I want to make myself happy, so that why I go to the gym and that's why I want to be big. Because it makes me happy. I supposed to actually be on Zoloft, and I've tried Paxil and I've tried Prozac, and I'm a hard core depressed. Either I could get a hard on or I couldn't even perform. Or then I couldn't sleep and I was also agitated, and then I couldn't eat and like these antidepressants are junk, junk. I feel inner strength is what a person needs. He's got to just get rid of all the shit and find out what makes him happy and then just make yourself happy. Now

going to the gym is making me happy so I don't need this. I don't need those drugs. I don't need my head all mixed up where I can't sleep. That was the biggest thing was being depressed all the time. And now I'm not depressed anymore. I'm always smiling. Maybe it is the steroids. Maybe it is the gym. But they go hand in hand. I'm not going to go halfway. I'm not going to work so damn hard and then plateau my body so it doesn't even grow. You're looking at yourself after two years unnatural. That's two years I've wasted. In two years I'd better be bigger. You know. So I'm not going to waste my time on something that I enjoy doing so much.

Angela: How often do you spend time at the gym?

Josh: One and a half hours a day. Two hours sometimes. It all depends on what we're doing and how bad we hurt ourselves the day before.

Angela: In the gym or at work?

Josh: At work or the gym. I was putting on this chain tongue one time and hurt my back and I didn't want to tell [my boss], so I just kept on going to the gym, with a sore back and everything.

Angela: Just pushed through it?

Josh: Yup. And you're taking the steroids so you think well, "Maybe it will fix it." Even if I didn't rip something or tear it you're building yourself that much faster....And that's another reason I do steroids right now. I just don't want to ever not be the best. Just can't happen. And if I'm not the best I'm always going to try to be the best. So if I don't know something I'll study up on it or watch how it's being done and always listen and pay attention, and that

goes hand in hand with being strong. Just because you're strong, you see I'm big and I'm strong and I'm running all over the rig and I don't know what the hell is going on and I'm a big ogre falling in the mud, slipping and falling. Well, you're not a good hand. So just because you can lift 300 lbs. and push this around you're not a good hand. You still have to be agile in your mind. That's like these kids who go to high school. They get so wide and fat from the steroids because they think this is the easiest. Once you take this needle everything happens. Wrong. Dedication and read. They do not read on their supplements and they do not read on how to take the steroids and why they are taking certain steroids at certain periods of their cycle. And they get so fat and so bloated. I get a little jealous of them because of them push way more than me. You know he's like 17 and the gym's like "Holy shit kid" and they're just all huge. But, whatever, some people want different things. But I'm big now and I'm going to get bigger. That's all the way I just look at it.

Angela: How big do you want to get?

Josh: I want to weigh at least 260 lbs. by the time I'm 26 years old. I want to do a cycle every five months until I'm 30.

Angela: Where did you come up with that goal?

Josh: Just by magazines.

Angela: Yeah?

Josh: Because you look at these guys, these professionals, and it takes them 15 – 20 years to reach that professional level and I look at some of these magazines and I look at some of my frame and my genetics and I know that I can look a certain way in 10 years and I can look a certain way in 5 years

and by Christmas I'll look a certain way. Education is looking how your body works and how people's bodies work and how mine is building and what I need to work on.

Angela: So what is building and what do you need to work on?

Josh: I need to work on arms....They won't grow. My shoulders will grow retarded but I still have little arms. I can grow a massive chest and massive back but my legs are a little small too. I can get big calves, just not big quads. I pay more attention to those things. Like I've never had triceps growth and they are started to grow now but I'm over-training them, I know that. And that's wrong too.

Angela: How do you know you're over-training?

Josh: When you're way too sore and you're not growing at all. You're super hard but you're not growing. You know you need to sleep and you need to rest. A lot of it has to do with your diet too....I try to do everything by the book but then I try to figure out what I need. Basically I'm only supposed to have 20 mg of glutamine a day. I think that's wrong. I think you should take 20 in the morning and 20 by 3:00 in the afternoon when it's depleted in your body and you're body's used it up. Because glutamine is used for muscle sparing.

Angela: How did you figure that out?

Josh: Two years. It took me about 9 or 10 months to figure out how things work in my body. I'm just training in the future in every day for years on end. Or not even that. Say you take like 2-3 months off and then go hard for six months and educate yourself and read and look at your body and touch and feel. "This isn't growing". If you figure

how stuff is working and even just your movements in the gym. Like bad form. It is not going to help your muscle grow; it's going to inhibit your movement. It's going to actually hurt your muscles. It's using proper form; knowing how your body moves. Always watching. People think that's vanity. No. I want to be the best so I got to watch how the best works.

Angela: So, what you mean is always watching in the mirror?

Josh: Yes. Watching in the mirror. Even [my training partner], when we go back into the change room we always pose and show each other shit. You just got to see how the body works.

Being Misunderstood

Angela: Tell me, like just circle back about a little bit about your parents didn't understand you anymore.

Josh: Well they didn't understand. I had a lot of pressure on me to perform in hockey and I tried to talk to my dad about that but my dad used to drink and he would always put in on me "You do it for yourself, you do it for yourself." At that time, with my depression, I didn't know how to do it for myself. I was doing it for him so when he was happy, then I was happy, right. When they were happy things were going good between us then I was happy. I didn't know how to make me happy. That was the biggest thing. So I was like, "No dad, I'm really actually playing hockey for you. When I crush that guy, I knock him out or assist that goal, you freak out and go wild, that's when I go wild." Oh hell, yeah, that's how I feel good about myself. And they didn't get it at all.

Angela: By making other people happy you feel happy?

Josh: Yeah.

Angela: And they didn't get that?

Josh: No. Because I really wasn't playing hockey for me cause I started looking at girls and there was partying going on and so I really didn't want to play hockey anymore. But I tried to stick it out and I tried to pull it through for dad. There was so many things going on in my life as far as social life and what I wanted to do and, I don't know, I was getting pulled everywhere and the arena wasn't my center of attention anymore. And my dad didn't get that either.

Angela: What about your mom?

Josh: Mom. I don't know. My mother, when I was growing up, she was a great mom. She used to pack the hugest lunch. Me and my brother growing up I had 3 sandwiches cut in half, that's like 6 sandwiches. And I was only like 10 years old and that's a lot of sandwiches. I don't know how they supported me and my brother. And mom was like all into that so whatever dad said that's how it just went. Mom put her foot down but dad made the calls. But my dad wasn't a very loud person....My mom used to discipline us. She broke a lot of spoons over my ass. And dad didn't talk a lot but dad called the shots. You know what I mean? My dad wouldn't come downstairs and give a licking to me if he didn't have to. So, it was weird. Mom always listened to dad, always did whatever he said. That's just how it was because family rides on my dad. That's just how it worked. Find your pecking order I guess. I don't know. I almost freaked. I was an emotional kid and I'm still an emotional person. You know it's either up or it's down, you know, dealing with the pressure. And you know when I get excited I'm always loud, very hyperactive. I was diagnosed with ADD as a child. I wasn't allowed to have

Tang at my grandmother's because I was a right out of control retard. So, mom had to deal with that. And I'm so glad that she didn't turn to like Ritalin. Great thing, eh. Let's drug the kids up when they're young and then when they're really still depressed or really depressed because they're brought down by Ritalin, let's say, "Oh yeah, you're depressed so we'll give you more drugs." I love this society. Just lazy friggin' parents is all it is. Lazy parents. So like hockey, being such hyperactive kid parents threw me into hockey. Hockey was going good. Like I'm hyperactive now. You can see me fidgeting and not sitting still and so the gym helps me sleep. I could focus that hyperactivity. And that's the same as the rig....So if I just keep on going with the flow here, try to get big...you know, things will work out for the better. I'll be able to own a house and I will be able to give my kids the best things. Cause I'll never settle for second best. If I'm always trying to be the best they won't get nothing but the best. And that's what I want. I'll never have second best. I'll never be second best. And if I am, damn. It won't be too long before I'm first.

Identity

Josh: I was a preppy hockey player who was totally into himself. There's a lot of us out there. But I got past that and found out that the skating rink isn't all it's cracked up to be. But in high school when you're growing up and you're a hockey player and you're a good hockey player, you're going places with women and the social life of the school. And our school sat up high because I grew up in [name of city], so the high schools down here and you walked up two flights of huge stairs on this big terraced hill and there was the arena right there. So that's great. Hockey, hockey, hockey non-stop. If I wasn't in the gym working out or playing floor hockey I was doing public skating, hanging out with the little kids, learning to

drive Zamboni, run the boilers, so I was getting paid to be at the arena, then I'd go practice at the arena, and go play at the arena. It was all about hockey.

Angela: So then you were a preppy hockey player?

Josh: Yeah.

Angela: And now what are you?

Josh: Me. I'm me. I'm, what can you say about me? I never fit a category. That's what I love about me.... I don't need a psychologist and why I am who I am, why I do what I do. I don't need a psychologist to know why I'm angry at the world and violent. It's because my biological father was abusive and an asshole. So we got that past. The fact that I'm addictive disorder, they say I'm addictive disorder, I don't know. I think everyone's addicted to something. That's just floating in the air bullshit. Those doctors aren't gonna tell me something about myself that I don't already know.

Image

Josh: I like having a six-pack. The chicks like it too.

Angela: How do they know? I mean you're wearing a shirt.

Josh: Well see cause I'm all into the water, and I own a jet ski and I own a sea-doo and I always have my shirt off and I wear, they're called rash guards, to the water. Rash guards for a surfer it's like a spandex shirt, you pretty much have to peel on, but I look like Superman with it on. It's cool. Like you just peel it right off. You know big Quicksilver or O'Neal or Bear, they're just for surfing and I wear them in the bar. So that everyone knows.

Angela: And you like it that everyone knows?

Josh: Yeah.

Angela: What comments do they make to you?

Josh: Well cause one time I got really huge, I was 275 lbs. and I was really fat and watered up but I just wanted to see how big I could actually get from as many steroids as I was taking at the time. And so it was really hard to shake that fat. It took me almost a year because I was a really massive guy but there was no definition. And then the last time that I fell apart with a girl she broke my heart and completely wrecked me emotionally. Like my head, I actually turned a lot to the narcotics, lots of them like, “You got it, I will do it, whatever it is let’s just messed up so that I don’t have to think about her.” And after I sobered up and turned to the gym again I started taking the fat burners and re-educating myself on how to look. You know just re-educating myself and then it just started shredding then. I don’t know. The weight came off and I felt so good about myself, started going back to the bars....when I show up I always look better and bigger...

Angela: What’s it like for you not to have a girlfriend?

Josh: It doesn’t happen. Going to gym and making myself look good, sweating my balls off to look this way better have results with women. And it does. I don’t put a lot of value into it because I’m not one of those muscle heads who will go into a bar, hit on a girl for a little while and then say, “Well I’m leaving now”. I expect her to be right there because of my frame. I just act like a moron. Then if you take it or leave it that’s great. And this body comes with a package. So

you’re really getting it all baby. Like that’s just how I look at it. I don’t know. Chicks are always there. I never have a problem with women. I don’t. Right now there’s too many.

Mirrors and Magazines

Josh: Well, I read this once in a magazine. Like you got to look at yourself, you got to think you’re growing because when you’re doing that exercise and that mirrors in front of you, you’re pushing and posing and pumping. If you’re looking at yourself it’s supposed to help you grow. I put a lot of faith in that, I do. So I watch myself all the time while I’m doing the exercise, with all weights doing slow movements just so I can watch my muscle, just think grow, grow, grow, grow, grow, grow. Because I have small arms. I want my arms to grow so I’ll really look at them and pay attention, visualizing the growth. And just knowing how your body moves is absolutely formatic, because if you’ve got bad form you’re hurting yourself in the gym or you’re pushing all that big weight and having bad form you’re going to hurt yourself. And then sometimes you can tell if they’re [??] exercises, so, like what is it called, the Arnold press? Yeah, Arnold press comes up, and it’s a shoulder press and a chest press to top your chest so it works all in here. Like Arnold designed that just by watching how his body his working and thinking, “Oh yeah, well my arms are already going up with one press, why can’t I just twist it, down nose and come in another way?”

Angela: How much time you spend looking at yourself in the mirror? Is it primarily during a workout or after?

Josh: After. If your muscles are pumped up with blood and they’re ripping, you’re hurting, you might as well pose them. And Ar-

nold said in his book that posing is a big part of bodybuilding. It is.

Angela: Have you ever competed?

Josh: No. I want to be big enough to compete and then laugh at those guys who do. Because I like my tattoos, and I do have a really big scar from barbed wire across my chest, and so right then and there...they want a perfect body. They want, you know, a silhouette of a perfect image of muscle. And I'm not that. I'm tattoos and scarred. I've got this beauty here [pointed to scar on forehead]. That's a nice one.

Angela: What's that from?

Josh: Fighting

Angela: A long time ago or recent?

Josh: In the summer. I don't know when, June, July, or August. Just they want a perfect body and I just want to be a freak. That says in the magazines, you're a freak. If your legs are double the size of mine, you're a freak. If your neck is popping out with veins and you can't even get rid of the veins in your shoulders, you're a freak. There is no other definition that you could be put under. And I want to be one of those freaks. I want to have my veins popping out but have sleeve tattoos and a huge back piece on a massive back.

Angela: Why?

Josh: I don't know. I don't know why I like tattoos so much. I have a lot of them and I'm going to get more. That one, I don't know. They're addicting. But I want to be a freak, I don't know why. I want to be big enough to be in everybody's face. You can't miss me. I don't know. Maybe I should have been a rock star.

Angela: Can you tell me what magazines you read and where you got your education from?

Josh: I bought the Arnold. That's my bible, the Arnold Encyclopedia, or whatever. I read that all the time. That is my bible. And then Muscle and Fitness all the time, and I like Muscle Mag...Muscle Mag has right in there it gives pros and cons and doesn't let anything up about steroids. Full out. It gives you the steroids on the market...And there's, Muscle & Fitness sometimes does that, I just read a research article about a product called Trenbol, they call it the King of Steroids. It's supposed to be a secret within the professional ranks. I just found out about that, got my hands on that, so that's going for me good. And I know it works. But it says in there too that aggression is commonplace with steroids but with Trenbol it's inevitable, so again I don't want to go to the bars. I don't want to start drinking, wrecking my physique, getting angry, beating people, getting arresting...My life is going too good to get thrown in the clink for something dumb like a guy taking my drink.

Feeling Small

Angela: Here's a question for you. You want to be really, really big. Was there a time in your life when you felt really, really small?

Josh: Only when I was in the hospital cause then you were super weak, right, cause that's why you're there man. That's why you're in that place. They lock you up in [the psychiatric ward] with all the other suicide attempts and all the other freak shows and people who, you know, mentally can't function in society, and that made me feel really fucking like weak. You are not a person. I was looking at myself as I wasn't a

person cause I was in there. And that's when I was like, this is not for me, man, what was I thinking with these fucking pills? That was the only time I ever felt, just...that was bad seeing my dad cry, seeing my mom cry, I was supposed to actually die...that was an eye opener. Show stopper.

Looking Good

Josh: If you can love yourself, man, and you can pose and think “Holy fuck, do you look good!” you know, that's the inner high right there. That's what I love now.

Angela: So you think you look good.

Josh: I do. I think I look great. I could look better, and I'm always going to have to be objective, because if I want to be a freak I have to train like one. And I have to be very objective. If my shoulders lack, you gotta put more time into your shoulders and you can't just like “you're the shit”, you're not that shit, put your time in and then maybe you will be the shit. Try and be the best, always want to be the best.

Angela: Do you think you're the best?

Josh: No way. I seen this guy the other day, throwing four plates a side. There's no way I can do that, so how can I be the best? In the gym I'm not, at work, damn right. I'm the best motor-hand on the rigs for being 23 years old I take that with honour. And I never want to let my driller down either, cause I do love him like a big brother. We were friends before that, and now we work together. So at work I am the best.

Angela: So you're the best at work and you're not the best in the gym.

Josh: No. That helps a guy in the gym though. If you see a bigger guy putting out some crazy weight, well, you gotta just, you

know, use his energy sometimes when he's pushing or look at him and push. Or say I guy comes into the gym that I've fought earlier in life, I'll see him in the gym so I'll want to intimidate him again. So I'll try extra hard on the exercise I'm doing now, or let's throw on another plate right now, and use that aggression, that anger inside to push that weight so it's more of an intimidation to him. It's all “hey, remember me?”

Being a “Freak”

Josh: My body is naturally supposed to be a certain way and grow a certain way, and I want to grow faster and bigger. I am trying to cheat genetics. And be a freak.

Angela: What does it mean to you to be a freak?

Josh: I don't know. To be a freak...

Angela: Does it mean to be so unique from everybody else that they can't help but admire you?

Josh: I think so. A freak can be many things, like those people who pierce their ears, wear crazy hairdos, pierce their nose. I don't know, that's one way of saying that you are a freak deep down inside. I just want to show it off in different ways. Instead of getting my neck tattooed I want my neck to be so friggin' huge that you can't miss it. Just like a big gaudy, cause I don't ever want to have gaudy tattoos that just stick in your face and are insulting, they're always pieces of work, like sleeves, I want.

Angela: Is it more to be an individual?

Josh: Maybe, but I want to be a personality that gets noticed. I don't want to be a sheep. Cause there's a lot of sheep out there. When you go to high school and shit there's a lot of guys who dress the same, wear the same

shit, and look alike, I'm not ever going to be a sheep. They're carbon copies of each other. They're Tommy Hillfiger clones. I think that's why the different style of clothing I do. Just because I'm myself. Like I'll wear big baggy khakis with my Ropers just because this is me. Know why? The mud doesn't stick to these. I want to be an individual but I want to be, stand out.

Angela: You want to stand out.

Josh: That's a good question though. What does it mean to be a freak? Cause there's a lot of people out there who say they're freaks. No, if you're cheating genetics and you're shits popping, you're a freak. Definitely. A freak would be anything that's not normal, not that status quo.

Man size

Angela: You said you're young and you're yelling at men. Are you a man?

Josh: I don't think I am. I don't think I'm man size yet. I'm waiting for that to happen. You know how bodies are working, you know how men are growing. You're going to the gym all the time and you see that man, that 40 year old man, with the little t-shirt, and he takes that t-shirt off and just b-bam, b-bam, shit's popping all over. There's a certain age you reach you become a man, man size.

Angela: But you said some of these men are smaller than you and you're still calling them men.

Josh: Well, cause genetics. When you're thirty you should be about a man, man size then. Technically in society I'm a man, I pay my own rent, I feed my two dogs which I treat like my kids. Technically I'm a man, but I'm not. Cause I love my fruit loops, and I eat sometimes out of the garbage, and I

love my cartoons. I don't think I'm a man. I am not mature enough to be called a man.

Angela: You said something before, man size is about 30, and you were going to do steroids until you're 30, until you're man size.

Josh: Then once you get bigger, you might as well keep training and trying to keep all that you have. But when you do become older and your testosterone levels become depleted in your body you should do a touch-up cycle every couple years. I don't know what that's going to do for my living. At one point a guy has to decide, okay, this has got to stop, I want to do something else with my life. I think I'll still always be physically active and always wanting to do something and maybe be a coach or something later on in life so I'm involved in sports or involved in something...

Angela: So you're helping others and training others.

Josh: Doing something like that but I don't think I'll put so much into my muscles later on in life. But I want to get to that point. I want to see how big I can get. But later in life, maybe my dogs will become more important, maybe my kids probably will become more important so I'll be spending less time in the gym. But even, I don't think I could ever go away from the gym. Even a half hour a day just to get in some kind of muscle building. I think cardio's junk, I really do. If you are training hard enough and super-setting a couple muscle groups, you don't need cardio, you should be jamming good. And be all about business. Don't go to the gym and chat with people and hang out and read, go there to work out. Be all about business. Get down to business. That's my motto. My shirt's usually soaked by about 45 minutes, and at that point I take my

shirt off, sweating all over the gym, shirt off, I don't care whose face I'm in about me having my shirt off. I look good, I'm sweating, I can't have my shirt on, forget it. I hate those people that go there to hang out. That's why I like guys who train by themselves too. Put your music on, focus into yourself, start thinking about yourself, don't even think about how many reps you're on right now. I used to work with really low weights and just think about stuff. Just go until muscle failure and then snap out of it. Ok, now we're getting down to business because I can barely move my arm with this 10lb dumbbell, it's only 10 lbs.

Food

Josh: I'm supposed to eat 200g of protein a day...

Angela: Who told you you're supposed to eat that?

Josh: It's common knowledge that if you want to grow you have to take in so much. Cause protein will flush you, you'll get diarrhea a lot of times, but it also, your body doesn't use it, you don't need that much, so your body's only using like 15 to 20 percent of the protein you're taking in but then you're flushing it all so you're also dehydrating yourself. So that's bad so you've just got to keep on the consumption of the water and the protein, and I mix all my protein with water and not milk because dairy's a lot of fat, so I cut all the dairy out. Just choices in my life.

Angela: Do you get this from magazines?

Josh: Magazines and just, you know what your body needs. So if my body's hungry and I want to stay lean I'll pound back a bunch of yogurt, drink some water and eat some fruit. It's just educating yourself. You know what's fattening and what's not. And

what's good and what's not. And now it's a part of my lifestyle. I don't even second guess, French fries, they're not on the menu, they don't exist. Not saying I won't eat them, but if you want to look a certain way and, I don't want to do anything half assed. I don't want to go to the gym and beat the shit out of myself and not know how to repair myself.

Angela: So how many meals a day do you eat then?

Josh: I only eat 5 and I should be eating more. And I supplement my, well, I think, well, I don't think this, I'm noticing that I might be developing an eating disorder. Because I like my 6 pack and I like to be lean, instead of eating a full meal I'll do what I said, eat yogurt, fruit, and then water because you're hydrating yourself, and then protein, building yourself, and the fruit is fructose and sugars so you can run. Those are the three things. Honest to god, that will make you run, I believe. No pastas, no carbs, nothing that will retain water. Carbs is great for putting mass on but crappy for being ripped and having a six pack.

Angela: What did you mean you think you're developing an eating disorder?

Josh: Drinking more drinks than eating now. And taking meal replacements now instead of eating a meal and that's not right, that's not good for growth. Cause I want to stay ripped. I believe you have to bulk up and then rip down, but I want to try to keep ripped and grow, and I'm struggling with it right now. I've only grown 5 pounds in the past three weeks. I'm really chapped.

Angela: Do you weigh yourself every day?

Josh: Every day.

Angela: How many times a day?

Josh: Twice.

Angela: Morning and night?

Josh: Morning and just after I work out. Because people weigh themselves all the time before they workout, and I don't think that's right. I think you should weigh yourself after because you're burning off all that extra water, all that extra fat, all that extra whatever, toxins, whatever, so I usually weigh myself after. And also your muscles are swelled with blood, everything's swelled so they're pumped up as much as they can get so you're going to get the most growth you're going to see, so if you weigh yourself in the morning when you just woke up after rest, you're say like 220, and then weigh yourself after you work out you're 223, you'll fluctuate 2-3 pounds, that's good, that's good.

Taking Risks

Angela: At any point in time were you worried about yourself doing all this?

Josh: Oh yeah. Your heart's a muscle, right? So I'm addicted to ephedrine because I use it as an extension of a fat burner so if I'm pumping my heart out like a son of a bitch with ephedrine and then taking steroids that might enlarge my heart, I'm a stroke victim waiting to happen for sure. I know this.

Angela: And you're willing to take those risks [**Josh:** yeah] to get big [**Josh:** yeah].

Josh: It's a risk I'm willing to weigh because I've educated myself on how not to abuse. And I have toned down my ephedrine. They used to be in 25 mg those pills, and I used to take 10 a day. That's 250 mg, that's retarded! Now I take 4 in the morning

but they're only 8 mg. You know, so they almost equal 1 of those old ones I used to take. So I have toned it down. Not taking as much ephedrine 'cause I'm worried about my heart. Having a stroke. But I take aspirin as well, the ECA stack— aspirin, caffeine, ephedrine. And so I take the aspirin which thins my blood.

Angela: What do you take for pain after working out?

Josh: Advil.

Angela: How much?

Josh: One or two, depending. I don't get a lot of pain anymore. Get home, take your protein, relax. You don't really have anything else to do that strenuous. Why should you be hurting yourself after the gym? And just resting. If you fucking hurt yourself, take two days off from the gym. Don't be a hardcore and try to over-train because you're not doing your body any justice. Dorian Yates once said, and he was Mr. Universe, he used to do one set per exercise and work on one body part every seven days. That is so fucking dumb, I wouldn't even know how to do that. That was when he was massive and super huge. But Dorian Yates knew the value of rest. So you just worked on your biceps, and went so crazy on your biceps one day a week putting out all you can, now you rest your whole body. You don't do any exercise on any other body part, no fucking squats, no shrugs, no nothing. You just worked on your bicep, you just worked your body, shut down, you rest. And he was Mr. Olympia. How can Dorian Yates be wrong? So he knew all about rest, rest and recovery. I guess your diet has a lot to do with that too. Take more protein in if you just ripped and tore all them muscle cells to shit you're using that protein to help repair that, let it work. Relax. Have a protein

and relax. You gotta relax more. Cause they'll work out in the mornings, then they go to their stressful freak show jobs where they're running all over the office and their head's not right. And they're not relaxed even if they think they're relaxed sitting in their chair, you're not relaxed, that is not relaxed. People who work out in the morning before work, man, they're my heroes, cause I can never do it. After work, after the day's gone retarded and I'm already pissed off at the world, I can take my aggression out on [name of employer] and just want to pound his head in at work, I go to the gym and use that aggression and that steam and that fucking hate-work-and-hate-life, and I'll go to the gym and I'll come out smiling. Now I can go home and relax. People who work out in the mornings are my heroes.

Reflecting on the Interview

Angela: Is there anything else you can think of that I've missed?

Josh: No, it's been a pretty good interview.

Angela: You enjoyed it? What sticks out at you most?

Josh: I don't know. I think the fact that I don't know you from a hole in the ground and I just opened up so easily to you. I thought that was pretty cool.

Angela: Especially after being worried that I was a cop.

Josh: Yeah, I was a little stressed out 'cause a couple guys at the gym "You'd better ask her if she's a cop or not."

Angela: What's the most important thing for me to know about you?

Josh: I just don't do my job, I do it better than the next guy.

Summary

This interview provides valuable insight into one man's experience with weight lifting and steroid use. These detailed insights would have been difficult to obtain through quantitative research methods. This interview with Josh outlined a number of motivations for engaging in weight lifting and steroid use, such as perfectionism, involvement in competitive sports, family issues, physical abuse, drug addiction, mental health issues (e.g., depression, ADHD, eating disorders), appearance, and media influence (e.g., professional bodybuilders, body building magazines). This list is by no means exhaustive of the many possible motivations for lifting weights or using steroids. However, Josh's example is meant to alert the reader to the complexity of this issue and the helpfulness of a qualitative methodology in obtaining a rich and impassioned life story

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