

# WILD TRAINING

MONTHLY ARTICLE FROM JAMES GRIFFITHS  
INDUSTRY INSIGHTS - EDUCATION - PERSONAL TRAINING



## THIS MONTH'S FEATURES

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**Cortisol**

**Blood Sugar**

**Liver Function**

**Calorie Deficits**

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## LOSING THE BELLY

### IS IT ENOUGH JUST TO LOOK AT DIET?

In a nutshell, no. Belly fat is down to a mixture of other factors such as;

**Cortisol** - avoiding chronically elevated cortisol levels

**Blood sugar** - maintaining a balanced blood sugar level

**Liver** - optimising the liver function

**Calories** - sustaining a healthy calorie deficit

Cortisol is the body's main stress hormone. It's something we need so we aren't talking about eliminating or boosting it. What we want is to create a balance where our body's cortisol level is managed effectively for our health.

It's made by your adrenal glands and works with parts of your brain.

## "MOSTLY YOU ASSOCIATE CORTISOL WITH YOUR 'FIGHT OR FLIGHT' RESPONSE, BUT CORTISOL AFFECTS A LOT OF FUNCTIONS IN OUR BODY"

How we utilise macro-nutrients like carbohydrates, fats and protein, regulating your sleep cycle, managing blood pressure, so as you can see, cortisol is a big deal.

If we are talking about losing belly fat, then we need to talk about cortisol, as it is one of the most mismanaged aspects of our body through modern diets and lifestyle. Cortisol plays a big part in our blood sugar by elevating the levels in order for us to deal with stressful situations. But what goes up, must come down, so if our blood sugar goes up via cortisol, eventually it's going to come back down and this yo-yo effect makes us crave sweet foods.

The other problem is not only does this process encourage our body to store fat, but chronically elevated cortisol gets our body storing a disproportionate amount of fat around our belly.

If you don't manage your cortisol properly, then expecting to lose belly fat is an unrealistic goal, even with exercise. Having your cortisol levels up all the time through non-stop stress is a problem for other reasons too. Elevated cortisol is also linked to anxiety and depression, heart disease and problems with digestion to name a few.

The reason I say modern diets and lifestyle are causing a lot of problems with our cortisol levels is you can see how they can affect a lot of the following.

Here are some examples of simple ways you can help to manage your cortisol level:

- Dedicate time to good sleep. Create a routine around your sleep and try to get 8 hours. Hours before midnight are worth more than hours after so bed by 10:30 is a good shout. If you are short of sleep one night, do your best to make up the hours the next.
- Don't eliminate carbohydrates from your diet (50% daily calorie intake)
- Eat every 3 hours to help maintain blood sugar
- Drink more herbal tea and less coffee
- Drink more water and less alcohol (It's called a beer belly for a reason)
- Within 15 minutes of finishing all your workouts, eat a high GI (Glycemic Index) carbohydrate like a banana, Natural sourced energy drink, fruit smoothie.
- Consume a balanced meal 90 minutes before and after a workout (Carbs, Fat and Protein)
- Avoid simple sugars after dinner. If you aren't going to burn it off, don't eat it. This means no sweet treats, dried fruits, cookies/biscuits, ice cream.

## "WE ARE CONSTANTLY STRESSED THROUGH LEADING BUSY LIVES. IN TERMS OF PHYSICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND EMOTIONAL STRESSORS, THERE IS A LOT TO DEAL WITH, WHICH CAN CREATE DEMAND FOR HIGH CORTISOL LEVELS"

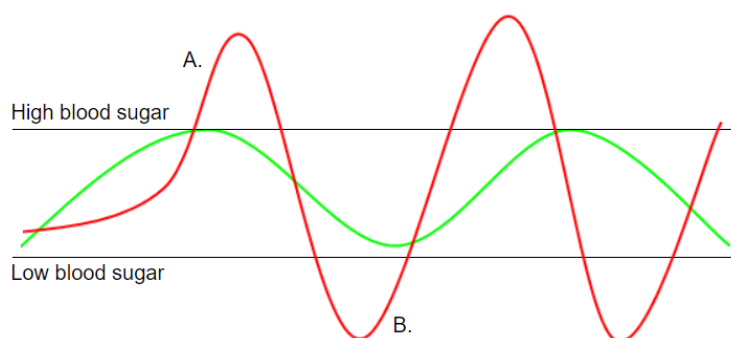
Modern diets often break a lot of the rules above. So, whilst they can help to drop fat, I'd argue they impact the balance of our bodies in a negative way that means long term, the impact of modern diets is negative on both our body shape and our health.

**Blood sugar** managing your blood sugar is one of the most important things to get right for our health. Blood sugar is something that is talked about in nearly every diet book and most health books, and for good reason. Imbalanced blood sugar can be a huge factor in many health issues, including being overweight.

Normally people that don't control their blood sugar will either suffer from insulin resistance or hypoglycemia. Insulin resistance causes chronically elevated blood sugar, which is bad for your health and completely disrupts your metabolism, slowing down fat loss.

Hypoglycemia is where you will have very low blood sugar followed by high blood sugar. It causes increases in adrenals like cortisol to elevate your blood sugar and again disrupts your metabolism, slowing down fat loss.

Below is a graph to represent a well balanced blood sugar level, unbalanced and spikes and drops in blood sugar levels.



Point A represents a spike in blood sugar levels. High GI Carbs spike blood sugar levels, which results in an insulin kick that rapidly drops blood sugar levels in order to avoid organ damage.

Point B represents the drop sugar levels, causing fatigue, low mood and sugar cravings to list a few symptoms. This extreme up and down cycle encourages fat storage.

To control blood sugar levels:

- Eat little and often
- Eat foods with a lot of fibre
- Eat low GL foods
- Avoid refined carbohydrates

The old adage, breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, dinner like a pauper will play a good helping hand in maintaining a balanced blood sugar level throughout the day.

**Liver** optimising liver function is about helping manage your hormones. Thyroid, sex and adrenal hormones are all managed by your liver so making sure it is functioning properly is a big deal.

Your liver will also help you get rid of stored toxins, so if you are trying to reduce water retention and lose weight putting some effort into liver health makes a lot of sense.

This is why we talk about supplements that can support liver health in article 006 - Nutrition 101.

Physical, environmental and emotional stress affects your liver function. Eating clean, natural foods and drinking lots of water is a good place to start. Avoiding toxins like alcohol, smoking and refined foods will also help to reduce the workload on your liver.

Environmental stress comes in lots of forms like radiation, exposure to dangerous chemicals, air pollution to name a few.

Hard to combat in modern life but something we can do is seek out positive energy. Spend more time in nature. Woodland walks. Climb a mountain. Go to the seaside. There are some amazing outdoor spaces in the UK and it's well worth spending some time in them to get the physiological benefits of being outside. These benefits are well documented and impact everything from your mental health to your hormone balance so don't underestimate the power of seeking out nature.





## "EMOTIONAL STRESS IS ANOTHER HARD THING TO MANAGE, AND OF ALL THE THINGS THAT STRESS OUR BODIES IN MY EXPERIENCE, THE EMOTIONAL STUFF HAS THE GREATEST IMPACT ON OUR HEALTH AND OUR BODY SHAPES."

The head is a tough thing to crack and whilst there are some great books, motivational speeches and amazing life coaches out there, I don't think any professional would disagree with the fact that exercise is one of the most powerful tools we have in managing emotional stress.

We have all heard about positive endorphins that exercise gives us, that make us feel good, but what does that really mean? The fact is there's solid science that shows chemical changes in our body after exercise. We create molecules after exercising that specifically help us deal with stress, anxiety, depression and other forms of emotional stress.



Your body is wired to reward you physically and emotionally for exercising. This makes sense because if we don't stay active and healthy in a raw sense we aren't going to survive, which is always your body's priority. So don't put too much rubbish in your body, spend time outside having fun in nature and stay active to help your body manage the emotional stress we all have to deal with. Don't take your liver and your adrenals for granted.

I've written about cortisol, managing your blood sugar and liver function, and left the **calorie deficit** till last. Not because the calorie deficit isn't important, without a calorie deficit you will not lose weight, just like without a calorie excess you won't gain muscle size.

Ideally to lose weight we are looking at a deficit of 200-500 calories per day.

200-300 calories per day is a nice deficit if you want to do your best to maintain lean muscle while you lose fat. If your goal is purely weight loss then going up to a 500 calorie deficit is suitable

If you go above a 500 calorie deficit you start to risk losing a decent amount of lean muscle, and that will have a knock on effect to your body shape and metabolism.

Remember that if you focus on weight loss then losing lean muscle will achieve this result. Muscle is heavier than fat, so in your head the scales will say you are doing really well. The fact is that if you lose a lot of muscle, you lose shape and you won't look the best.

So if your goal is aesthetics and looking good, this extreme weight loss through big deficits isn't the best strategy, isn't good for your health and isn't something you can sustain. The other problem with losing your lean muscle is your metabolism will drop, which means it will be even harder to maintain your weight loss or maintain a lean body shape.



The one guaranteed response your body will have to a big calorie deficit is your metabolism will slow down to ensure you survive.

## "SLOWING DOWN YOUR METABOLISM SHOULD NEVER BE THE GOAL"

This is why we stick to the 200-500 calorie deficit rule. It works well and you can sustain it long enough to see great results in a healthy way. If your diet isn't good for your energy and health, short term or long term, you have to question what you are doing. There are healthy, effective ways to lose weight that will have you feeling energetic and healthy. That's what the guide above and all the other Wild Training nutrition advice is about. Feeling great first, the results come after that.



“ YOU ARE AN EXACT MIRROR IMAGE OF YOUR LIFESTYLE.

YOU LOOK EXACTLY THE WAY YOU DESERVE TO LOOK.

IF YOU WANT TO LOOK FIT AND HEALTHY, THEN YOU NEED TO LIVE FIT AND HEALTHY. ”