

Social Distancing Strength - Week 1 - Ben from Punch up community gym

Even though the UK's lockdown is being loosened, it will be a long time before things return fully to normal. This means lots of us have lost access to gyms, outdoor facilities and the places where we train our sports or martial arts. Developing our fitness can be tough in times like this, but both our physical and mental health can be improved by a simple exercise plan to practice at home. The basic ideas are suitable for everyone, whether you're totally new to recreational exercise or an experienced trainer. In this edition of the newsletter I'll describe some principles to bear in mind. In the next edition I'll describe the exercises to try, and the next one after that I'll outline two versatile programmes to work on.

Here are the three principles we'll follow to make our training fun and productive:

1. Practice, don't work out: most of getting stronger is about using your muscles effectively, which means paying attention and being strict with your form. For our day to day sessions we don't want to be punishing ourselves or going to our limits. Take long rests and keep yourself fresh for the rest of the day.
2. Maximise tension: even if an exercise mainly works one part of the body, the rest of the body should be held as tight as possible. This increases the effect on the whole body, protects the joints, and allows the working muscles to produce more force.
3. Keep it simple: work only a handful of exercises, but choose them carefully and do them perfectly. You won't need all day or a whole home gym of equipment.

If you're training already, try applying these principles to what you're doing already. Otherwise, look out for our exercise selection next time.

As the situation changes we are adapting!

Our base, The Warehouse Cafe is beginning to plan for reopening, and the governments furlough scheme is being rashly cut short forcing many of our participants back to work, so we are looking for ways to keep going sustainably.

We have already stopped taking new orders, so that the overall number of meals to prepare starts to go down. We will continue to support existing orders for as long as we can. From the end of June we have switched to preparing meals four days a week and doing double deliveries of food to make it easier in terms of participants needed in the kitchen and backroom/ The kitchen will continue to prepare the same number of portions overall though.

Over 12,670 meals delivered



SOLIDARITY IN SEPARATION



Aftermathematics - find the authors on twitter @aftermathematics

A tiny virus has exploded into a global pandemic. It's delivered a massive shock to a world that is already rife with injustice and inequality. The repercussions look set to last for years. To put it another way, we're facing a shit-storm on a massive scale. It feels like almost everything has changed. Overnight, things that we've taken for granted have just disappeared. Things that we were told were impossible have suddenly become very real. And the idea that "there's no such thing as society" turns out to be a big fat lie. Life has become much more uncertain. Thousands have died - many at the hands of an uncaring and distant elite. At the same time, this disruption is an opportunity. An opening.

The message of disaster is that anything can happen. But if anything can happen, that means anything is possible. The word "aftermath" originally referred to the fresh plants growing after a crop has been harvested. This pandemic, cutting through "business as usual" and throwing everything up into the air, gives us the space to try new ways of living together. There's space to question the assumptions behind a system that only favours a very few people who is a key worker and what are the key jobs? who does the care work? what do we value? can we build a better world based on mutual aid and sharing? The aftermath could be something positive, alive, growing - not a stale return to a deadening reality.

The aftermath is about looking at a different type of calculation. Instead of slicing up profits to pay dividends, we could be thinking about the divisions that exist in our society. This is about multiplying our power, subtracting ourselves from work, discovering a different set of equals. Rather than return to the misery and inequality of the pre-COVID world, how can we make a life that is better, richer, and more fulfilling for all of us? Another world is not only possible, it is on its way. On a quiet day, we can see it coming

Black Lives Matter

In the last few weeks, we've seen a historic global uprising against racism and police brutality. In Bristol, the statue of Edward Colston, a man who sent over 19,000 people to their deaths in the slave trade, was thrown into the harbour. However, with hate crimes on the rise, Boris Johnson has the nerve to say that Britain is not a racist country. This is a lie. Black people are twice as likely to die in police custody. Black people are over four times more likely to die of coronavirus than white people. We will not stop protesting until racism is well and truly a thing of the past.

Common People

Where should Co-operation Birmingham go next? What we have achieved collectively over these past few months has been monumental. From a small idea of repurposing a cafe we have grown into an organisation delivering over 10,000 meals and supporting our city in such a fundamental way have been inspiring. We know though from economic forecasts and from what we see with our own eyes that even as lockdown loosens we are faced with lots of other pressing matters affecting our community.

In the last decades, the idea of 'the commons' have gained ground around the world. In feudal England, the commons were shared areas (mostly woods and pasture lands) that people could access and self-manage to get basic resources such as firewood, foraged food or grazing for their cattle. In a mostly rural society, peasants were exploited by landowners and relied on the commons for survival. In a 21st century urban context, the commons need to be reinvented. However, they respond to a very similar problematic than they did centuries ago: the theft from working people of the wealth they produce.

Many of us face more difficult futures than ever. That is why we need to reclaim a new commons as a way to provide for ourselves. **Solidarity** is at the heart of the commons. We need to stand together with each other regardless of our race, gender or nationality; and support those who are worse off than us. **Self-organisation** is another important concept. Building a new commons means taking control of our lives... **Democracy** is the third pillar of the commons. But a form of democracy in which we all have the possibility to be part of decision-making and where we ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to being part of the process.

We have been thinking about all this in Co-operation Birmingham and trying to work out collectively where to go next. Food is such an important part of what we do but there's more to it than just eating, there's soil and growing and there's the delivering and sharing too - how can we link these together and form a new commons in the city?



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