Q for Gaz Parry

I'm breaking these into three categories. As you said, we'll have a general chat around the topic of training but here's some things I want to try to cover as we go along (focussing on the mental as well as the physical side of trainin). I want to go break it down and revert to basics – as I'm guessing that the more advanced climbers will generally have more of a clue ;) although hopefully there will be useful tips in there for them too.

Firstly.... Frustration, anxiety, and guilt

For many people this will be the first time they've been told they can't climb and to have that be for an indefinate period of time. How do you cope with this? (I'm thinking of instances when you've had time out for injury). What are your top tips for getting yourself through it or do you just give yourself a mental slap and walk the dogs?

According to social media, by the end of ISO we should all be able to do 400 pull-ups, a one-armer (on both sides) and a front lever. Rather than feed our insecurities, it's important to maintain perspective, not be sidetracked by FOMO and focus on doing what we can do. So what exactly should training away from the gym entail? Apart from fingerboards/pull-ups/homemade circuit boards but what else can you do to keep you psyched, fit, and stop you going insane? The current situation is, of course, unprecdented, and access to the outside is also limited so people have to get creative but sensibly. Simple things like running or cycling – what else is useful, especically if you can't do these?

It's important to remember that, despite what social media would suggest, some of us are busier than ever handling new routines, home-schooling, longer queues in the shops etc and will likely be finding it hard to find time to train and feeling anxious about that. What would be the key thing you would suggest it would be good for people to focus on if they really don't have much time but are worried about losing all their climbing strength etc?

Now more than ever, having the right mindset is crucial, as our moods are likely to be somewhat prone to more downs than ups. So I guess it is important to start by asking what you are training for and to consider the difference between between training with focus and training because you feel your should be because everyone else is. What are your tips for getting to this point? Is it a case of working out what your goal is - short term/long term?

Many will also have been starting to train/think about training for the summer season etc. which adds another level of frustration/desperation. How do you handle the prospect of not being able to get out and climb/get on what you had planned to get on this year? Is it just a case of telling yourself that the rock isn't going anywhere (apart, maybe, from bits of Portland)?

The general rule of thumb is that some rest from climbing is good but complete extended rest is not. This will also be the first time that many have had to subsitute training for climbing so I think a few pointers on this would be useful. Realistically, what do you NEED to do? How much of a break can/should you give yourself? Is it just about maintaining a basic level of fitness? Or should people be panicking about loss of finger strength and power?

When you are injured everyone always says, oh it will come back really quickly, but how quickly it does it all comes back? What are your tips for and dealing with being a bit s**t when you get back at the gym/on the rock? (I mean, my level of s**t and yours are pretty different but it's all relative!). It does come back pretty quickly but we all need a bit of reassurance. To that end, do you have a go to plan that you use for when you are back climbing – to get you through those first few sessions / weeks?

Secondly....planning

If you don't already have one, do you need a training plan? What is a training plan? At the gym it's seems to be a cross between owning a little notebook full of arcane markings and campussing or doing weight-assisted pull-ups. I'd probably just wing it, cobble together stuff I've seen on the internet/people doing at the wall, overdo it and injure myself (which I have done previously). What is the best way to go about fixing yourself up with a plan? Where should people look for guidance for home training?

Many people will already have some sort of training plan but one which they use either at the gym or to supplement their climbing so now that they can't get to the gym and all training has to be at home, what would your advice be for plotting out the next few weeks?

What are the key things your average climber should focus on - i.e. - not everyone needs (currently) to be able to hang of off a 2mm edge. There isn't a one size fits all (plus most pros very experienced climbers are likely to have recourse to set themselves up – like you – or already have). Are there any standard/generic/across the board (no pun intended) things that people can/should do? For example, at the gym, you advised me to do 4 sets of 1, 3, 5 or whatever - counting to 50 with feet on. That's my go-to return to finger strength exercise (as it is for a few people at the Castle, including some super strong folk) and I can see progression on that quite quickly where I move to smaller ledges but I can't do that at home. Is it possible to mimic this in some way, safely, but keeping good form.

What does your plan look like? What are you working towards?

Everyone's home set-up will be different - some will have a bar; others just a doorframe; some a board; others a beastmaker etc etc. Some folk will even have/be building a circuit board. There are so many options out there and if in the throes of desperation, people haven't already blown a load of cash on a load of weights, therabands, pull-up bars, fingerboards, holds etc etc. Do they need to? what kit do you need – or rather what kit would you suggest it's a good idea for people to get?

There must have been times when you have had to improvise around this – e.g. you can't travel with a circuit board and a full set of weights. What are the best tips you have for improvising/training without all the gear?

If you can't rig-up a fingerboard or similar and your want to maintain finger strength, what can you do (I'm not the fun police but I'm trying to steer people away from climbing around their kitchen cabinets and ending up in casualty – literally the last place you want to be right now)?

It's not all about fingerboarding though, right? What else "should " people include in their plans? Is it better to consider that climbing involves the whole body and you should focus on training the whole rather than just pull ups/deadhangs?

Are there any programmes you admire and would recommend? I'm guessing people from the wider pro-climbing world will be coming up with something for home training programmes people can access.

Are there any useful websites that you recommend for reliable (ie promoting the best form) for using a fingerboard, TRX, rings etc?

Thirdly... handling business

First and foremost, the do's and don'ts.... Borrring – I just want to get my fingerboard session overwith; *starts session*; eugh I don't really want to do it I just want to climb!! How do you get focussed for training that doesn't involve climbing?

It's imperative you take some time (which we, most of us, have) to warm up before you train, right?

Given that fingerboarding can be kind of dull and we have no idea currently when we will be able to climb again, how do you keep focussed on training? What are your tips for sticking to a plan, particularly when we don't know how long this will all last and especially when hanging off a board / doing pull ups isn't exactly the most exciting thing to be doing as these offer very limited moves as opposed the variety that climbing offers. What are you tips for varying your training, given that some people's set-ups will be pretty limited?

Let's also touch on the concept of how easily guilt can tip over into obsession (because you don't want to gain weight and also because you are subbing it for your normal obsession, climbing). How do you know if you are training enough? How do you pace yourself and not overdo it when you are unable to see results translated into gains on the rock. Obviously you can see that your fingers are getting stronger if you can hold a smaller edge for longer but then what do you do, add more weight? How do you know when to add more weight? What if you can't get hold of any weights?

Let's also talk a bit about progression and the importance of not over training and guttering into negative gains. How much time should you have in between sessions?

How can people resist that negative chatter? Taking into account that you won't suddenly put on 4lbs because you had a rest day but your mate posted on instagram that the've been working their one-armer every day for 4 weeks.

Finally, form. The last thing you want to do is to throw yourself into a load of training at home only to find that you've injured (or re-injured) something and need physio. It's more easily done than many would think. Check yoself before you wreck yoself etc. If you aren't certain how to do a move/hold a position, who would you recommend people watch online? Or I guess people could maybe train with a friend/s or via skype/zoom etc – they can check your form and they might also help spur you on a bit too. Depends on how you prefer to train.

Do you have a top ten of tips that people absolutely must remember when it comes to training with good form (i'm thinking here in particular of how to do a pull up, how to use a fingerboard correctly, how to wear a weight belt for weighted deadhangs – you get the idea). I'm conscious that it's not until you injure yourself that you realise that you've been doing something wrong all this time, particularly if you are hypermobile/super flexible,which a lot of folk are. The takeaway message is to train sensibly and improvise sensibly and if you do want to nail a front lever, make sure you have the correct beta for this.

Also - important message - if it hurts - do NOT continue, right! And, if you are carrying an injury, consult a physio/coach before attempting anything. Many of them are still working so reach out online.

Do you have any suggestions for other useful climbing related stuff that people could be getting on with? Time to clean those ropes, sort your kit, learn new knots, get your shoes mended (plan your next trip, if it's not too painful) or just do something else non climbing related entirely.

Finally, 5 light-hearted finishers:

- Weirdest thing you have done during ISO/Lockdown.
- What else is on your Covid to do list, apart from training?
- Most surprising thing you have discovered during ISO/Lockdown.
- Best climbing film/video recommendation for those long summer evenings.
- First place you are headed when we can climb again.