

# EMPOWER BUILDING



A NEW STEP BY STEP PROGRAM TO  
PAIN FREE GOLF AFTER 50

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**EMPOWER  
BUILDING®**

# A NEW STEP BY STEP PROGRAM TO PAIN FREE GOLF AFTER 50

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## INTRODUCTION

Within the pages of this book, are the blueprints of an original program, “Empower Building,” that I have created that will give those who follow it the opportunity to reinvent their golf game. This program is the product of more than two decades of tinkering, experimentation, trial and error, and discovery. This program is progressive and affects the body at a deep level. Each exercise, level, and phase build upon and complement each other. The program uses many principles that I have learned over the years and are discussed in more detail in the following chapters. I have taught this program locally for dozens of years and after countless successes from my students, I thought it time to share my knowledge on a broader level, so golf-lovers everywhere have the opportunity to make drastic improvements in their game. Fore!

# CHAPTER 1

## THE HERO'S JOURNEY

I walked up to the tee box and pulled out my driver. My eyes scanned the sky above. It was bluer than a robin's egg, with not a cloud to be seen. A soft breeze danced across the hair on my arms, but the wind was not enough to affect my game. It was summer in Wisconsin, and boy, do we love a nice change of pace from our brutally cold and snowy winters. This was an unusual hole on a particularly unique course.

My golfing friend, Mike and I headed out to this course, which we had never played before. It was a two-hour drive but well worth the trip. The course was charming and picturesque, but challenging, to say the least. The first hole was on the top of a hill looking over the green. It almost seemed like you could chip the ball down from the tee, but when I glanced at the yardage sign I reached for my driver. My thoughts turned to my all-time favorite golfer, Jack Nicklaus. I have always liked Jack's philosophy on golf. I have played his teaching videos, *Golf My Way*, until they were worn out. The same swing with the same tempo and the only thing that changes is the length

and angle of the club. Imagine a stake being driven down the center of your spine (painlessly, of course) and you rotate around that stake. That sounds simple enough. One of Jack's philosophies was that he probably took a thousand swings on the practice tee for every swing he took in a tournament.

\* \* \*

I once met Jack at the Greater Milwaukee Open in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He came out of the clubhouse to a crowd size I had never seen before or after in that tournament. As he strolled over to the driving range to another crowd, my group and I decided to wait for him on the practice green. We walked over to the putting green and waited. Unfortunately, a lot of other people had the same idea and so we had the same problem. After a bit, sure enough Jack came over and the crowd was there to meet him. It was a massive putting green and Jack was way on the other side of it. My friends rushed to the other side of the green to get a better look, while I stayed put because I had given up. I looked around and I was all alone. I kept a close watch on Jack putting for awhile, then something happened that made my heart skip a beat. Jack picked up his balls and started walking toward me. It was like he was coming up to meet me and only me. I expected him to change course at any moment, but he kept coming toward me. My knees started to grow weak. As he approached me, his eyes

went down, and he dropped three or four balls at my feet, then started to chip. I watched him chip the first ball and then leaned over and whispered to him that if he moved his right foot back one inch, he would have a straighter route to the hole. He took my advice, and the ball went into the cup from twenty feet. Jack thanked me for the advice and headed to the first tee to begin his round. Okay... so, that last part about giving him advice did not happen, but the rest of the story did.

I once played in a tournament and had listened to Jack's golf tapes so much that I could replay them in my mind and did. On that day, everything he had taught me came together and I shot a round that was seventeen strokes under my normal game and won the tournament easily. I had to put up with being labeled a sandbagger (someone who claims to be worse than he or she really is), but that was fine with me. One guy who was in my foursome, got so frustrated he tore up his card and threw it in the wastebasket after the round.

Besides Jack's golf tapes, I had always looked for other ways to improve my game. There was a program called Sybervision. Two guys were watching a bowling match on television and got so exited after the match, they raced down to the nearest bowling ally and bowled way beyond their normal scores. They decided to take advantage of this new discovery and put out a program where you would watch a golf model

(professional golfer, Al Gieberger) swing in slow motion so your mind could build the neuro-connections and try to duplicate it. I not only took part in this program, but rented a camera and filmed myself driving, chipping, pitching, and putting. I then edited out all the bad shots and watched myself hitting nothing but my good shots.

\* \* \*

With my friend Mike looking on, I pulled out my driver and set up my stance. I lifted the driver and started to bring it into my back-swing as if in slow motion. When I reached the farthest point, I gradually shifted my weight forward— uncoiling the feeling of power beginning to build in my swing. As my swing came through the ball, I felt a sharp pain in my lower back. I finished my swing and fell to the ground in agony. My back had gone out again. Into the car we went for the three-hour drive home. I was not only done for the day, but it was back to the chiropractor and three weeks out of work.

Can you relate to my frustration—your golf game hindered by a physical limitation?



## **In the Beginning**

My name is Jim Crane. In October 2018 I will turn sixty-nine. I have a resting heart rate of between 38 and 44 which is below what is considered “athletic.” My legs have not seen a treadmill in thirty years. I take no medication, and do not run. I play pickleball (a paddle sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis, and table tennis), volleyball, sometimes swim, and when it comes to golf—I practice what I preach with Empower Building.

I do not have PhD or any other significant letters after my name. I do, however, have thousands of hours of training. I have experience and lots of it. I have trained thousands of people using Empower Building, including golf teams, swim teams, and soccer teams. In this book, we will focus exclusively on golf.

I am going to share my story and insights with you in the hopes that you will connect with the experiences I have had— helping you to discover solutions to the obstacles that are keeping you from reinventing your golf game

Although much of what I will share is based on science, I am not going to bore you with a lot of jargon and references to studies and white papers (I will encourage you to research these things on your own if you’re curious enough to do so). I want to keep things as simple as possible using everyday

terms everyone can understand. And I hope you will put this program into practice before you judge it as useful or not. Going forward, I will address four components of the golf game and show you how we will strengthen each.

**The Setup:** we will strengthen your core muscles and the muscles that connect to your core creating a connective strength throughout your body. This will give you core stability resulting in greater control of your swing.

**The Back Swing and Follow Through:** we will create a smooth swing from the back to the front by lengthening the muscles around the thoracic (upper back and abdomen) and lumbar (lower back) areas of the spine. This will allow for more trunk rotation resulting in more power and more swing speed.

**Better Shift in the Swing:** we will greatly improve your balance creating greater control as you move from one side to the other when you swing.

**Develop Deeper Breathing:** this will help keep your muscles and the central nervous system relaxed, keeping you out of flight or fight so the signals from the brain to the muscles will flow freely. This will be a great aid in your putting.

For those of you who have never heard of Neuroplasticity, it is the brain's capacity to adapt to new experiences. As we use the Empower Building exercises to create these new experiences, the brain creates new Neuro-pathways, the roads in which the signals are sent to the muscles from the brain.

The more we perform these movements, the stronger these pathways become.

\* \* \*

Give me a sun-filled, clear sky and a nice, temperate day, and there is no place better to be than walking down the fairway to a freshly cut green. The crisp smell, the beauty, and good friends make up for a great outing.

When I started playing golf, I became voracious almost instantly. I didn't want to stop playing. My friend, Mike and I bought a golf card called the Cancer Car, which gave us discounts on over thirty courses in Wisconsin, my home state. We spent every weekend touring Wisconsin and enjoying many great courses including the old Playboy Club in Lake Geneva, a course that I was told had a different designer for each hole. The hole that stands out in my mind was one that had a big silo in the middle of the fairway. When they bought the farmland, they must have simply kept the silo and designed the hole around it. As you walked up to the tee, there it was, staring you in the face about 175 yds down and right in the middle and signaling a dogleg left (when the fairway goes left) at the silo.

Then there was Century World. This course had a hole that had a green surrounded by flowers that not only went around the green, but they were three feet deep. There was a path just

small enough that you could walk through to get onto the green.

The owners were so afraid of anyone damaging the flowers that they put a big bowl of golf balls on the edge of the green with a sign that read, “If you put your ball in the flowers, please leave it there and take a ball out of the bowl.”

When talking Wisconsin golf, I have to mention Arrowhead, another unique course. This one had a sand base to it under the sodded fairway. I know this is not usual in itself, but for a Wisconsin public course, it was incredible when you could take a divot two inches under the ball and still get a good shot (not that you would plan to), but sometimes those are the breaks in golf. Arrowhead was a two-hour drive for me. My group and I loved that course so much that once we went up with two foursomes, driving through the pouring rain— hoping and wishing the sky would clear by the time we got there. We all sat in the club house for four hours before we had to admit defeat and go home broken hearted.

In 1985, I started working with a golf club called the distance builder. The club was invented by a fellow Wisconsinite William P. Wendt. The club used weights that you would add on as you built strength in your golf swing. I was so excited to use the club that I burned through the weights and called William to make me some more. The weights were added incrementally so your muscles would adapt slowly to the increased weight. William and I even talked once in a while.

He had an idea about expanding this concept to regular weights and since I was a weightlifter at the time, I was intrigued. But not being a weightlifter himself, I do not think he understood the principle of leverage and control and unfortunately neither did I at the time.

It is incredibly exciting to use something you learned in the past and reuse it in a different way. What is something you've learned outside of golf that might be applicable to your game?

## The Principle of Leverage and Control

When I was young, my grandfather offered to help me build a pigeon coup. I may have been a little guy, but I had to pound nails into boards. After a few minutes my grandfather told me I should not be choking up on the hammer, so I moved my hand down toward the end of the hammer and started pounding again. After a while my grandfather stopped me and reminded me to quit, “choking the hammer,” as he put it and I once again moved my hand down the handle. This went on, back and forth until the coup finally got done. Years later I thought about that experience and realized that my grandfather was trying to teach me about leverage. Move the hand down the handle of the hammer and you increase your leverage. When choking up on the hammer, I was showing my grandfather my lack of control. When I had moved my hand up toward the handle, I could control the heavy hammer. It was a great lesson in understanding the relationship between leverage and control. The ideal way for me to use the hammer at that time would have been to move my hand down the handle slowly as I got stronger and more experienced.

I don't think Bill understood this principle. He thought everyone *should* be able to put all the weights on the club— not so, anymore than everyone *should* have the ability to

bench press 300 pounds. If you are 280 pounds, twenty-five years old and have been lifting weights for several years, you should be able to do it easy. But if you're 130 pounds soaking wet and have never gone near weights—it's a near certainty you won't be able to bench press your own weight, much less 300 pounds.

When you extend a golf club out in front of you, much like a hammer, the weight on the end of the stick actually becomes heavier. This would prove to be a valuable lesson to me later in life, and an important component of Empower Building.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL**

One day I was throwing a softball around warming up for a game. I was on a hill. It was a balmy day and you could almost taste the sweetness in the air. We were doing well in the tournament and looking forward to the upcoming game. I was relaxed while warming up letting one leg drop below the other. I reached back to throw the ball and as my arm moved forward I felt a sharp pain in my back. On the way home, it kept getting worse. The next day I could not sit up without pain and I could not stand. I went to a chiropractor every day for the next three days. It would be weeks until the injury seemed to heal, and I was able to go back any sort of athletic activity, including lifting weights. I thought everything was normal again and I was squatting 450 pounds when I caught a glimpse of a friend out of the corner of my eye. I tilted the bar slightly and pain shot down my leg. I was out of commission once again.



It would take numerous trips to the chiropractor and the doctor until my back finally healed.

One day during my recovery, I ventured into the aerobics room where I was taking a class and I noticed something different. The mat which covered the inside of a 440-yard running track was different. They had replaced the old track with a much harder one.. I took the class which included a lot of jumping around, then went and did my swim, then hit the weights.

I did aerobics every other day and returned for my next class. This time as I began the class pain shot up the back of my legs. It was concentrated in my calf muscles and it got so bad I had to quit.

I took some time off, maybe a week, then came back, and experienced the same thing. This kept repeating until finally I had to quit doing aerobics.

My back problems continued, going out a couple times a year and each time I would be out of work for weeks. I never knew what would trigger it. I was at work one day and had to pick up a tube of plastic. I thought I would test the weight of it before I tried to lift it. I grabbed it by one hand and lifted slightly. The pain shot into my back and I was out again. I

could not lift anymore and could not do aerobics. I could only swim.

I was only forty-eight and could not imagine giving up golf and all the other things that were fun in my life just because of my back issues.

I knew there had to be a solution. The chiropractor said I had the worst back he had ever seen, and I needed regular adjustments. Of course, the doctor prescribed muscle relaxers and said corrective surgery could be in my future. I did not like either prognosis and decided I would search for something else. Thus began a three-year search for an alternative solution.

If I knew then what I know now while sitting in the Chiropractors office looking at the X-rays—I was actually looking at the symptoms and not the cause. The herniated disk and the pinched nerve were not the cause. The cause was compression of the spine and the cure I would eventually realize was decompression.

Over the next three years I tried all kind of things like Rolfing—a system of soft tissue manipulation, physical therapy, and many other remedies I hoped would work.

One day while at work, my boss told me about some inversion boots he had gotten. Inversion had become a popular fad at the time because of a movie called *American Gigolo*. In the movie Richard Gere is seen hanging upside down wearing the boots. I thought I would give them a try. I ordered a pair and went down to my basement and hooked them onto some water pipes in the ceiling. I hung for about ten minutes and when I got down I thought I was going to pass out. I was dizzy and nauseated from the blood rushing to my head. I took off the boots and put them in my closet.

Isn't it disappointing to think you found a solution to a problem and then to not have it work out? Might it be a case of timing and be worth revisiting at another time? Could there be a variable missing within the solution you thought you've found? In my case, my "solution" was both bad timing and missing an important variable...

## **The Principle of Incremental Adaptation**

What is incremental adaptation? For the purposes of Empower Building, it means introducing change a little bit at a time, so the system can adapt to the change.

One day, while laying on a table, going through the process of Roling a potentially brilliant idea hit me. Distance building. Slow change over a longer period of time, so the body adapts. What if I used that idea and applied it to inversion? It was worth a try.

I got the inversion boots out of the closet and came up with a plan. I would invert for just thirty seconds but would do it every day. At the end of one week, I would add thirty more seconds and go another week, then I would add another minute per week going forward. As the weeks went by I intuitively felt this would help my back if I stuck with it. Weeks passed, and then months. One thing I noticed was the blood from my legs was draining into my upper body causing me to lose the strength in my legs, so I rigged up a rope with knots hanging down next to me, so I could climb up to the pipe I had installed in my closet. From there I would let myself down at the end of the session. That was the only drawback, but for the most part it worked. I had no dizziness or ill effects

from hanging upside down. In fact, I got so used to it, I would read books upside down while inverting just to pass the time.

It took many months, but one day as I inverted, I felt an unbuckling in my lower back—a feeling of release that I will never forget. After that I would feel that release every session. Finally, during a several sessions, I felt a sharp jerk in my lower back—a little unsettling, but it my back problems were gone.

## CHAPTER 3

### A NEW JOURNEY

#### **Releasing the Tension in my Back Muscles**

I began to analyze what might have happened during my inversion sessions. After a long period of reflection, I realized something my chiropractor had never mentioned. I wonder if he even knew.

During the period of time that I had been doing inversion, the muscles in my back had stretched, then, my spine started to elongate and the impingement that was causing all the problems was released.

The important principle I learned through that experience: when the muscles around the spine are tight they keep the spine compressed. Once the spine and muscles are lengthened we need only maintain that length because we have what we call muscle memory and the body remembers

where it has been. To this day I only invert a few minutes a several times a week to keep my spine stretched and of course I also do Empower Building.

## **Compression and Decompression**

At the time of writing this book, it has been twenty-three years since I sat in the chiropractor's office, desperate and dejected at being told I had the worst back he had ever seen.

After being twenty years, symptom free, it had become apparent to me was how my back got that way in the first place. Besides genetics and any kind of physical trauma, we have gravity pushing us down every moment of every day. And quite frequently we are walking around on cement floors and sitting on hard chairs. This is like putting the body in a vice and slowly turning the handle. It naturally creates compression of the spine. And in my case, add the fact I lifted weights, and was doing squats, putting up to 450 lbs. on my back added to the compression of my spine. Since compression was my problem then the solution had to be decompression.

## **The Next Step**

With my back finally stretched out, I began to wonder about my other muscles. How could I stretch those as well? As luck would have it there was a yoga class starting at my local YMCA. When I mentioned it at work I got a lot of eye rolls. But I did not care what they thought. I only wanted to feel better and get rid of the pain that was still in my legs.

The class was much rougher on me than I thought it would be. My muscles were much tighter than I thought, and these stretches made that very clear. Unlike exercise, yoga focuses on what you are feeling inside instead of an external focus. After taking the yoga for about nine months I returned to the aerobics class I had quit. This time the pain in my calves was gone. It was then that I realized, the pain I had experienced was from extreme tightness in my calf muscles. Because I had lengthened them the pain was gone.

It is of the utmost important to look at pain, and not only see it as a symptom or an annoyance; but see it as the body telling us there is something that needs to be addressed. This of course may be easier said than done.

My interest in yoga grew. I discovered there were many different styles of yoga and I wanted to try as many as



possible. At one point, I was doing three different styles a week and had to keep track of which one I was doing so as not to be corrected by the teacher, because each one had its own way of doing things.

I did this for about three years, until a group of yoga teachers told me about a new studio about twenty miles away. They said they tried the yoga there, but did not like it, because it was too challenging. However, they thought I would love it, and I did. It had everything I wanted—arm balances, head stands, hand stands, and it was done in ninety-degree temperature. It was called Baptist Power Yoga. It was hard work, especially doing six classes per week, but in the end, I felt stronger, more balanced, and looser.

Can you visualize a stronger, more balanced, looser *you*? If you can—wonderful. Read on and you'll learn more about how to create these possibilities for yourself. If you can't yet see the possibilities for yourself, I ask you to take a risk, have a little faith, and read on... greatness lives inside you even if you can't see it yet.

# CHAPTER 4

## MORE PIECES TO THE PUZZLE

I had never thought about teaching Yoga, but I felt the benefits I was getting needed to be shared. So, after eight years of practicing yoga I decided to take the teacher training in Baptist Power Yoga or Vinyasa Flow as it is formally called.

I completed my training and started to share what I had learned. I continued to take numerous other trainings as I accumulated more knowledge. What I did not realize until I started instructing was that the teacher (me) was actually the student. I probably learned much more from my students than they from me. I saw how the movements affected them and how the bodies they came to class with would shift over time

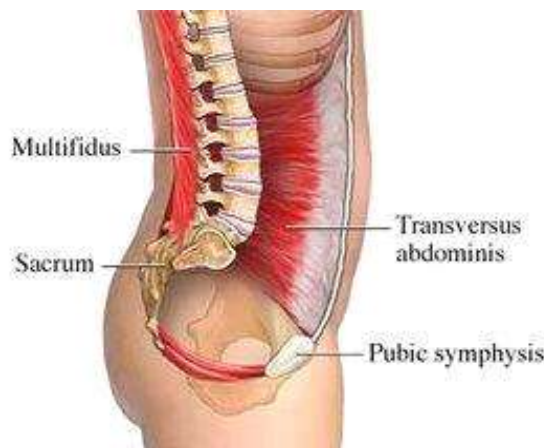
### **Awareness Training**

One of the things found in yoga more so than other types of exercises is awareness training. When I walk into the workout area at my local YMCA, I see people on the treadmill with headphones or watching TV on a monitor. The people on those machines are focusing on performing the function (the external) rather than what's happening inside of them (the internal). The focus of yoga is internal, listening to the body and noticing how the muscles are reacting or where the tightness is. How can you perform at optimum efficiency if you don't know what is going on inside your body? Isn't that what we do when we go to a doctor? They run tests to see what is going on inside our body. The results inform us what our body is and is not capable of. I once walked outside to throw out some trash at my place of business. I didn't realize a forklift driver had popped a board up from a pallet and left a big spike sticking up. I stepped on the spike and the spike went through my shoe, but never penetrated my foot because I felt it and pulled back—more than likely because of the awareness I have of my body due to yoga.

As the years went by I started to feel that something was missing with Baptist Power Yoga. I did not feel like my core was strong enough.

## **A Journey to the Center of my Core**

I had done many years of traditional core work, such as reclined sit-ups with weights behind my head. I had worked up to a twenty-five-pound weight and had the six pack everyone told me you are supposed to have, but something was missing. After doing some research I discovered two things about the core. One, we have internal muscles called the Transverse Abdominis (see below). Two, in order to strengthen these muscles we must first isolate them.



## **The Porcupine Effect**

Do you know why the porcupine has those long quills? Because it wants to protect its soft belly from attack. Its belly

is its weakness. We do not have quills, but we do have protective measures for our belly. In order to develop the Transverse Abdominis muscle, we must do exercises that expose those muscles, so they can be strengthened. I began to search for exercises that would assist in this.

## **A Journey to The Center Of The Core**

### **The Janda situp**

Czechoslovakian exercise physiologist Vladimir Janda, MD was a major figure in the 20th century rehabilitation movement. He was known in many circles as the world's foremost expert on back problems and discovered that people were incurring back problems because of the hip flexors that are engaged while performing standard sit-ups.

Janda surmised that by contracting the muscles on the opposite side of the hips—the hamstrings and gluts—the hip flexors would release. That's exactly what the Janda sit-up is supposed to do. According to Dr Janda, once the hip flexors are released, the deeper muscles known as the Transverse Abdominis will be strengthened.

## **Enter the Pavelizer**

I found a piece of equipment called the Pavelizer, which was invented by Pavel Tsatsouline, a fitness trainer from the former Soviet Union, who claimed his machine would replicate what the Janda sit-up would do. Before I tried the machine, I bought his book *Beyond Crunches* to learn more about his philosophy and soon bought the Pavelizer.

“The crunch belongs on the junk pile of history next to communism!” Pavel likes to say.

Both Dr. Janda and Pavel, agree the crunch does not isolate the abs and Janda admits the hip flexor engagement can not be completely eliminated during the standard crunch sit-up. Because tension naturally spreads from a contracting muscle to its neighbors. When doing a crunch style sit-up, the hip flexors are activated, reducing some of the stress off the abdominal muscles (according to both Janda and Pavel).

I found this idea eye opening and wondered if I could use this in other areas of my exercise program. If I put a heavier work load on various muscle groups, then it would make sense that other supporting muscle groups would be recruited to help perform the function I was giving them to do. The result

would be groups of muscles working together in a connective way.

How to make this happen?

By slowing down the movement which would then force this recruitment to occur. I started doing this in my own exercise program and it worked. I added transitions which are a way of linking static exercises with movement.

Pavel teaches that we relax the muscles opposite the ones we are contracting, and thus we can release the hip flexors by contracting the hamstrings and gluts.

## **Pavilizing or Punishing my Abs**

The piece of equipment arrived, and I put it to work. I thought I would use the Incremental Adaptation principle and start slow. The Pavilizer slid under a door, then I rested my calves on two rollers with my feet on the floor. It had two bungee cords that I held onto for support.

As I lifted myself up with the help of the cords, I could feel the pull on the back of my legs and the strain on my abs. I did three sets of five, gradually coming up and down. When I was done with the sets I rolled over to my side and lied down there.

My abs were on fire. It would be five days before I could use the equipment again. It was that intense.

Besides the Pavelizer, I started doing Pilates, a series of exercises invented by Joseph Pilates. Some of those exercises focused on strengthening the Transverse Abdominal muscles. As I continued those workouts, I began to get cramps in my legs at night. I went to the Pilates instructor and told her about the problem. She had been instructing for a long time and told me the cramps would subside as my core got stronger and that it would take up to two years for this to occur. It turned out she was right. It took me two years to achieve this, but it gave me a whole new appreciation for the core muscles.

I continued to explore other disciplines including Tai Chi, which is a Chinese discipline that involves slow controlled movements. It is purported that focusing the mind solely on the movements of the form helps to bring about a state of mental calm and clarity. I found that concept quite interesting. It brought me back to 1985.

How could a state of calm and clarity benefit you on the golf course?



# CHAPTER 5

## A Whole New Way

### Slow controlled movement

In 1985, I was lifting free weights at my local YMCA. I was working out with other power lifters and making some progress. One day I got this idea: I put a few weights on the bar and lie down on the bench and began to lift the weight down to my chest in a slow and controlled fashion. As I did this my arms felt like they were on fire. It was like every muscle fiber in my arms was being stimulated all at once. I did this on and off for a few weeks and then mentioned it to a fellow weightlifter. He started to laugh and told others about what I was doing and they joined in—not laughing with me but at me. I felt so embarrassed that I never did it again. I succumbed to the peer pressure.

### SuperSlow

SuperSlow is a trademarked form of resistance training made popular by Ken Hutchins. It is based on ideas from the 1940s called 10/10 “muscle contraction with measured movement.” It is implemented using fixed weight Nautilus machines (a fitness machine that accommodates human movement).

Wayne L. Westcott, PhD, fitness research director at the South Shore YMCA in Quincy, Mass and author of twenty fitness books ran two studies—one in 1993 for eight weeks and another in 1999 for ten weeks. There were seventy-five people in the studies with some doing the SuperSlow program using strength training and others not. Those doing SuperSlow in both groups experienced a gain in strength of over fifty percent.

According to Hutchins, the key to SuperSlow is to never let the muscle rest and “to remove the element of momentum from each exercise, making the muscles do the work instead of capitalizing on the tendency of a weight in motion to stay in motion.”

Half the people in Westcott’s group did ten repetitions of each exercise, pulling the weight up and lowering it over the normal amount of time in each direction. The other half did five repetitions, but lifted slowly, ten seconds on the upstroke

and four seconds on the way back down (Hutchins actually recommends ten seconds each way for a total of 20 seconds).

Learning about these studies, I decided to bring this methodology into my program and view the results over a fixed period of time.

I found that in my own exercise program I began to gain strength. Once again as I experimented with weights in 1985, operating slowly in my movements I felt all the fibers in my muscles firing and the groups of muscles learning to work together as a unit. As an added benefit, I finally felt my core working to control the movement, connecting to the supportive muscle groups around it. And this is what I teach as part of Empower Building. When we are learning something new physically, a new dance step for example, we want to move slowly until we have trained the body and mind to remember that movement, then we can speed it up. This is called muscle memory.

## **Breathing and Golf a Well-Kept secret**

There is an old joke that says you ask a golfer if he inhales or exhales on the back swing and that throws his swing off. There is some truth to that, but it has nothing to do with breathing. It has to do with him moving to the thinking part of his brain. He would have the same result if he thought about how he was swinging during the swing.

Once we set up and get ready to swing the club we move to the performing part of the brain and let it happen. This is sometimes referred to as “flow” or the “flow state.”

## **Flow**

By definition, flow is the mental state of operation in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity. Flow is characterized by complete absorption in what one does, and a resulting loss of awareness of one’s sense of space and time.

## **Breathing and the Flow State**

Imagine yourself on a Par-5 hole. You hit a pretty good drive and you pull out your 3 Wood club for your second shot. You hit it well and it is going right at the green. It bounces just short of the green but rolls on. As you approach the green, you see you have about a thirty-foot putt for an eagle (two under par). What are you thinking about as you approach the green?

This story reminds me of an interview Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers gave after the 2016 Packer-Cowboy playoff game. Green Bay drove the ball down with three seconds left to win the game. Aaron Rodgers threw a perfect pass to Jerod Cook along the sidelines to give Mason Crosby the chance to kick the winning field goal. After the game, they asked Rodgers what he was thinking about on that last drive and he said he was thinking about his breathing, trying to keep it steady, and the rest is muscle memory.

The sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress and prepares the body to either fight or run. From a primitive point of view this is the mechanism that increases heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar and dilates the pupils. It is termed a “fight or flight” response. Evolutionarily, it is necessary to be able to react quickly when facing immediate danger.

But what is danger? Danger is something that is perceived by the mind, so the fear of an animal can be seen by the mind as equal to that thirty-foot putt we talked about. When you are getting ready to putt that ball, you do not want to be in fight or flight.

## **The Yips**

“Yips” is a term most often applied to a putting problem that afflicts some golfers. The term describes a nervous affliction in which the golfer putting cannot make short putts due to the inability to create a smooth putting stroke.

Learning to move from “fight or flight” to a calm, relaxed state of mind can very well be initiated by long deep breaths. Since one of the symptoms of fight or flight is a short quick breath, we can do what is called a pattern disrupt by changing the breathing pattern. If we change the short quick breath by consciously taking long deep breaths, we may be able to change our state of mind and move out of fight or flight and rid ourselves of the yips.

Can you see how focusing on your breath could benefit you in your golf game?

# **CHAPTER 6 Adding To My Knowledge**

## **The Stretch Reflex**

The stretch reflex is a muscle contraction in response to stretching within the muscle.

Without getting into jargon or technical speak—basically what this means is that in order to lengthen the muscle, we have to move beyond the Stretch Reflex and that usually done with holding the stretch consistently over a period of time

## **Benefits of Stretching**

One of the main long-term effects of stretching is an increase in your overall flexibility or range of motion. When you make stretching a habit, you slowly stretch out the muscles and

connective tissues of your body. Over time, this improves the ranges of motion in your joints, and in turn your overall ability to move.

Stretching these muscles and connective tissue(s) can also help relieve muscle stiffness and reduce the risk of joint degeneration, according to the American Council on Exercise.

Recently, I was at dinner with some friends, and one of them was talking about how he had a pulled hamstring. He was quick to show me how he was stretching it out. I pulled up a chair and showed him how he could stretch the muscles around the hamstring. He looked at me with a blank stare. “Why would I do that? Those muscles are not hurting.”

I had to explain to him the benefits of the stretch reflex concept.

Do you see how increasing your range of motion would help your golf game?

## **Balance in the Golf Swing**



At the foundation of every good golf swing is good balance. Maintain your balance and you can deliver the clubhead to the ball with both speed and accuracy. Lose your balance and your swing loses its tempo, or rhythm, and falls apart.

In a recent study, different age groups were tested for their balance. The goal was to stand on one leg for up to one minute. While the average thirty-forty-year-old person came close to the one-minute mark, people in their fifties made it just 45 seconds. For people in their sixties, it was 40 seconds; for those in their seventies, it was 27 seconds, and for folks over eighty, it was 12 seconds.

Can you see how improving your balance would help your golf swing?

## **High-Intensity Workouts**

I noticed over the years in my own training that when I went at the more intense exercises after a short rest, I got a lot more benefit than when I tried to muscle my way through until exhaustion. I started to encourage my students to take rests in-between the more demanding parts of the workout. This

approach has become known as HIIT. High Intensity Interval Training.

HIIT is any workout that switches off between intense bouts of activity and periods of less intense activity, or total rest. It can lend itself to almost any form of exercise. This has also become known as Burst Training.

In one study at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Norway, volunteers did HIIT sessions over either three or eight weeks. This meant that each subject exercised for either three times per week or daily.

At the end of the appointed time, the subjects who had finished three HIIT sessions per week had saw an improvement in their endurance capacity by nearly 11 percent. In contrast, those who exercised daily using HITT exhibited no improvements. The study suggests that maybe less can be more.

Isn't it exciting to know that you can accomplish more with less time and effort?

## **Muscle integration**

I recently had the honor of listening to a lecture from Lawrence Biscontini.

Lawrence Biscontini, MA, is an award-winning group fitness instructor recognized worldwide for his innovative programming. Lawrence has created nutritional menus for spas from Manhattan to Mykonos and has appeared many times on national television.

One of the things Mr. Biscontini said was that all exercise programs should have the goal of muscle integration. Why? We want all of the muscles connected and working as a unit to perform whatever function we are asking it to do.

When we swing a golf club we may rely upon certain muscles to be more dominant, but there are other supportive muscles that are just as important to the movement. Muscle integration has also become known as Functional Fitness.

I do not agree with all of Biscontini's theories. I think some isolation exercises have their place, but they need to be combined with exercises that integrate. These types of exercises also emphasize core stability.

## **The Erosion Principle**

Have you recently been to a beach you have gone to for many years? Maybe the landscape has changed, but the rocks and the shoreline are pretty much the same. Maybe you went there when you were a child and you looked out over the water and you saw the water rushing in hitting a particular big rock. The rock displaced the water because of its density, but years later as you return to the beach you notice that the water has worn away some of the rock over time and has changed its shape. We can take this approach to our bodies in regard to gaining mobility, balance, and strength.

One of the draws of exercises like weight training and running is that the results are measurable. One can see the results measured in a heavier weight being lifted or a better time in a run and so we have a gauge of improvement.

In functional types of exercises, we may measure the improvement by such things as greater ease in movement or a feeling of connection to one's body, but I have found the greatest gauge in these functional types of exercises that I teach is when the results are transferred into daily activities, such as our golf game. You can actually notice how much easier it is to swing the club, how much more rotation you

have in your back swing, or maybe how control has improved with the added strength.

### **“I Can” vs. “I Can’t”**

When it comes to most exercises, most of us have the tendency to sum up the exercise with what we can do and what we can’t do. I can’t count the times when I was teaching a mixed level class and I invited the class to try a difficult exercise, I was greeted with a chorus of laughter. As I looked around, I always found someone doing the very thing I had suggested.

One of my favorite sci-fi movies is *The Matrix*. In it the Oracle points to a sign in Latin on her kitchen wall and says to Neo. “Do you know what that means? He says, “No,” and she replies, “Know thyself.” We need to approach any self-improvement program with a realistic view of ourselves, so we can build upon what we *can do* and not focus on what we can’t. The focus needs to be on the process not on the results.

How might focusing on process rather than results build upon previous concepts in Empower Building (focusing on the

breath, incremental adaptation, repurposing skills from outside golf and applying them to your game)?

# CHAPTER 7 Applying What You Have Learned

## Review

**The Principle of Leverage and Control** – finding a balance between the two to create strength and control in a golfer's body.

**Incremental Adaptation** – slow changes over time that allows the muscles to adapt to the change.

**Compression and Decompression** – keeping the spine long

**Awareness** – using awareness to make necessary changes.

**Core Training** – building a strong core as part of a strong foundation.

## **Slow Controlled Movement/Time Under Tension**

– by slowing down our movement we encourage the muscles to work together as a unit. This also increases the

amount of time the muscle is under tension which helps increase its strength.

**Breathing** – by practicing long, deep breaths we keep the muscles and central nervous system relaxed.

**The Flow State** – training our body to rely upon muscle memory as we swing the club.

**Mobility** – by lengthening the muscles we create a greater range of motion.

**Balance** – by improving our balance we create better transfer as we move from one side to the other.

**High Intensity Interval Training** – by using rest

periods between more demanding exercises, we achieve greater results.

**Muscle Integration or Functional Fitness** – exercises that are designed to encourage muscles working together to simulate the activities done in everyday life.

**The Starting Point** – finding a place where you can start and build from.

If there was a program that had all of the thirteen elements in it, would you be interested in knowing about it?



## Here it is: **The Empower Building® Program**

**The program is designed with different levels.**

Each level has a series of exercises

Each exercise builds on the other

Each series builds on the last one

- ☐ The videos are each about 10 minutes long. How you use the videos is explained in a video that comes with the program
- ☐ Once your muscles become acclimated to the exercises, you can move to the next series of videos, which could take up to a few weeks. Stay with it.
- ☐ The next series of videos become 20 minutes long as you progress with the program

## Explaining the Levels

**• Pro-Tip: It is not the goal to move from one level to the other. Instead the goal is to build strength, balance, and mobility at the level that you are best fitted for—finding balance between strength and control.**

The 10 minute videos is where we acclimate the muscles to the exercises. At first the body resists the new movements. Even athletes find this a bit surprising because the movements are simple, but the stretch reflex comes into play and actually contracts the muscle to protect the muscle from being strained. This is also the point where we start creating new neuro-pathways. The exercises themselves are basic, but we are building a foundation like you would if you were building a house. You would want the basement to be solid before you put up the frame.

The Empower Building Program is not a series of exercises randomly thrown together. It is a program consisting of exercises that are carefully put together with each exercise building on the next.

Note! Here is the good news. Once you have established where you need to be you only need to maintain that by doing a maintenance program.

### **It is time to take some small tests**

Let's do an exercise that will show you how to connect your  
breathing to your movement

<https://youtu.be/KHJmgDeySqY>

## **Test Your Balance**

Now let's test our balance. Start with Level I and continue to a level that works for you and stop.

□ **Level I**

<https://youtu.be/fEkFQOtyBc8>

□ **Level II**

<https://youtu.be/oPXs47PZL7Y>

• **Level III**

<https://youtu.be/sxEHPMfYHqU>

## **Test Your Strength**

### ☐ **Level I**

<https://youtu.be/4rYJnkPXhA0>

### ☐ **Level II**

<https://youtu.be/9zZh6fnixPk>

### ☐ **Level III**

<https://youtu.be/YmEVhfquuas>

## **Test Your Range of Motion**

### ☐ **Level I**

<https://youtu.be/wthXKp4GUus>

### ☐ **Level II**

<https://youtu.be/IDggbhNZC-4>

□ **Level III**

<https://youtu.be/PwXURZgOk1E>

Take a moment to scan the chart and see what muscles felt like they needed work.



I was playing in a golf tournament recently in a retirement league. As we were walking up the fairway of a par 4 on the 7th hole, one of the golfers, a gentleman who didn't look too old, pointed to a spot on the fairway and said, "that is where I hit my drives back in college. I've lost sixty yards on my drives."

This man was too young to have lost sixty yards. I had not lost any distance on my drives. Then it occurred to me: if you do not continue to work on your strength, balance, and mobility—much like a car that is not maintained—you will not continue to function on a high level.

## **Final Thoughts**

One last exercise. It is called "The Driving Range Lesson." It requires only the power of observation. Here is how it works: you go to a driving range and pretend to be getting ready to hit balls, but instead what you are really doing is watching other people hit balls. Watch how they move, and you will start to see where they carry the stiffness in their body. For example, if they lack range of motion in their turn, they will probably use more of their arm strength to hit the ball. You make the determination from your observation.

Walter Payton, the great running back in American football, used to talk about running hills instead of spending all his time in the weight room. He attributed his specialized workout to his lack of injuries and his longevity in the NFL. Walter Payton understood “Functional Fitness.”

### **The Oldest Living Golf Pro in the World**

**Gus Andreone** is a golf professional. He has hit a hole-in-one eight times and he is one-hundred-four years old.

His ability to still play golf is has a great deal to do with his lifestyle. He starts each morning with exercises, which



includes riding an exercise bike, swimming, walking, and stretching. Andreone still has a current driver's license.

### **Is This the End?**

I want to thank everyone who took the time to read my story and follow my journey. I hope you got something out of it. Golf can even be a great metaphor for life. I also hope some of you will try out this program, so you might experience some of the many advantages it has to offer.

Have you learned something from this book? Maybe you learned something that

You can apply outside of golf.

**This Book is just an appetizer. If you are hungry for more, you can find the main course on our web site**  
**[www.greatgolfover50.com](http://www.greatgolfover50.com)**

**Follow the Virtual Assistant When you get there**

Send me your questions and comments to  
[empowerbuilding@gmail.com](mailto:empowerbuilding@gmail.com)

*May your drives be straight and far, May  
your putts be right on Par. Until we meet  
again...*

-Jim Crane

## Questions and Answers

**Question:** Will this program work with a weight lifting program?

**Answer:** This program will not only work with it but will enhance it. We tend to isolate the muscle groups when we lift weights. This program will bring those groups together. It will also prevent the muscles from getting overly tight.

**Question:** How long before I see results?

**Answer:** It is different for everyone. Some people see results right away, while for others it takes more time. Give the program a couple of months doing it three times a week.

**Question:** What is the difference between this program and regular exercise such as running, biking, or aerobics?

**Answer:** Regular types of exercise builds stamina and increases your capacity for cardio. This type of program can change the way you move at a very basic level, so when and if you do this, other exercises you do become more efficient.