



Episode 51 Transcript

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Pauline Nordin - Lessons from 20 Years of Hard Training

Nick Collias: Hello, everyone. Welcome to the one and only Bodybuilding.com Podcast. We're thrilled to have you. I'm Nick Collias. She's Heather Eastman. And we're also thrilled to have our guest today. She is the one and only [Pauline Nordin](#). Fitness model, founder and creator of the Fighter Diet. Author of a whole lot of fitness books including "The Butt Bible" and most recently "Fat Loss by Mind Power," which is a great title. It sounds like an old 1940s... Kind of like Bodybuilding.com for a lot of people, she's synonymous with transformations, transformation challenges. She's way ahead of her time, and preaching the gospel of muscle and strength training for women. And we're just happy to have you here! Thanks for coming.

Pauline Nordin: Thank you so much for having me come, yeah.

Nick: Based on what I've read. You're also coming up on nearly 20 years of consistent training, right?

Pauline Nordin: Yeah. It's February 19th, 1999. That's when I started with my first workout, and I decided at that point that I would be a professional bodybuilder.

Nick: You just decided right away?

Pauline Nordin: Without even having first ... Like I actually went to the gym with that goal before training.

Nick: Today...

Pauline Nordin: I saw Arnold on the cover of a magazine and I walked back in and before that I was starving myself for five years, and I tried to find that kind of the discipline, but I was lost. And I walked by a magazine store and I saw Arnold. I knew him as an actor, but not like that. I was like, "What is that?" And I saw all the muscle, and it felt like I was watching some kind of porn magazine cover because all that naked...

Nick: All that skin and...

Pauline Nordin: I know, but that really intrigued me. I got back the next day, bought the magazine and I started to pick up all this about nutrition and training, and that it required discipline and strictness and all that. And that is something that I needed. I needed to take my destructive behavior and turn it into constructive.

So, I always wanted to come to America. I said, "Okay, if I become a pro at this, I can actually be granted an American green card." So, I decided that day that I was going to allow myself to train for three years. I was never in a rush. Some people are like, "Oh, three months, it's too long." I was set in stone. I competed after three years and kept on competing for three years until I was granted an IFBB Pro fitness/figure card. That's how I started. That was 20 years almost, training.

Nick: So this first workout. You go in. You're inspired by Arnold. You weren't inspired by the Jamie Eason's and things that we hear about.

Pauline Nordin: Not about his body. That's the thing too. People always ask me that. "What did inspire you? Did you have a female model?" No, I never had. This is what's so weird. I'm not one who's very shallow. I don't care about physiques. I'm in a sport that is all about the body, and the better body you have the more of a hierarchy you have. I'm never been interested in this.

I didn't do this to have some kind of sexy-looking body. This was for me. It was like a spiritual journey, kind of a therapy for the soul. That's what got me hooked. Arnold was not about his body. Yeah, all the muscle. But it was his mindset, his drive, his determination to come to America. That was what I liked, it triggered me.

Nick: His early books, "Education of a Bodybuilder." I love that book. And the Modern Bodybuilding Bible too. But especially Education of a Bodybuilder. It's a really interesting mental journey that he goes on through that thing for sure.

Pauline Nordin: And we have so much in common there because he's from Europe. He wanted to come here and he chased his dreams. So I really related to him. The best compliment I ever got by Skip LaCour in 2004 when I was working for AST Sports Science. He gave me a picture with a sign, he says, "Little Arnold." He called me that. That's the best compliment ever. That was really like, "Okay, wow."

Nick: Did you start by doing Arnold workouts? What was your Day One workout when you said, "I'm going to be a pro." What was the number one thing you did to start on the first day?

Pauline Nordin: I didn't know there was such a thing as free weights.

Nick: Of course, plenty of people don't.

Pauline Nordin: I know! So, I went to a Nautilus gym and I told the trainer to set me up on a muscle-building program. So he started with this, like 20 reps, one set, all throughout the machines. And I started to question, like I saw, "What about the squat racks and the pull-ups and that?" And he's like, "Well, we don't have that." So I asked him, "Do I really have to train light to first learn it?" He says, "Well, you're supposed to." And I'm just like, "Okay well, I'm just going to train heavy."

So, I found another gym. I was fantasizing about doing real squats. I found another gym and there were powerlifters who took me under their wings and they showed me how to do it.

Nick: Okay, so heavy lifting was part of it from the early going. With that, comes some pretty serious soreness if you don't have a lot of experience. Did you rethink your mission in the early days? Or you're like, "This is part of the deal. I love it."

Pauline Nordin: I like the pain. Having had horses my whole life, my body was used to heavy lifting and training. I had an athletic body. I just had a lot more body fat, too, because my diet sucked. You know who, [Marika Johansson](#) who was from Bodybuilding.com, she was the bodybuilder at that gym where I started after that. I saw her and met her back when I was 17. That's pretty cool because she trains at Gold's Gym now, too. It's a small world.

Nick: That's great, though. It's pretty important to have somebody show you, "I'm this much ahead of you. This is where you're headed." That can be pretty crucial for people. I think a lot of people get that from you, obviously.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah. And I changed my mind when I ... in 2003, I came to America for the first time, and I was all about the bodybuilding. And I didn't have the kind of reality about seeing how big these girls are. I was small like typical fitness. So I went to America then and I saw that these girls are way too big. I changed there to, "I want to do fitness." Pretty much it's the same training. For bodybuilding, you're just going to be smaller.

So, I saw that and then at that point that's when fitness/figure took off. I was lucky to come right in where I fit in.

Nick: Go ahead if you have a question.

Heather: Early on you got right into the heavy weights, but you said your diet sucked. How quickly did you realize that you needed to adjust that and recalibrate that?

Pauline Nordin: It took me many years. I think my first, from 1999 to 2005, those years were when I did the typical one everyone else does. I was dieting with fish and broccoli, fish and broccoli from Monday to Thursday and half Friday. And then I gave up. And said, "Well, everyone else has a cheat day, so I'm going to have it, too." I didn't understand why I got fatter. So, I ate junk food from Friday afternoon to Sunday night, and I didn't understand how could I... How can that make sense? I'm dieting for four days.

I was completely in denial and naïve and didn't understand. And did typical this. You eat for your workouts because you're lifting so much. The thing is, it doesn't require that much energy. But I really wanted to. My heaviest weight on my little frame was 135, and I'm 5'2" and now I'm 110.

In 2005, I got cast for the Biggest Loser show in Sweden and I realized at that point that I was going to be on TV every week. I don't want to look fat. I just like said, "Okay, I'm going to get started here and just eat better." Took out all the crap and all the junk food and the inconsistency of dieting, and of course I leaned out and I liked it. After that I just got better and better each year.

Then in 2007 here in America, I start to get really grumpy with competing and being hungry all the time. I was so mad. I want to eat but I also want to be lean. How do I get those two equations together? I was lucky there. Because I was running on the beach and all of a sudden I got this epiphany from whoever force who just gave me a whole concept that was Fighter Diet. How to actually do this is a catch-22.

I've never in my whole life ended a workout prematurely, but I did at that point. I actually ran home and I just write on my blog that I got it, like a genius idea. I trained clients at that time and I also had a blog. Everyone started doing this what I did, and I got really good feedback. And I suddenly lost my cravings.

I'm like, "I'm eating all this food, and I can have the cocoa powder, because I love chocolate." I did that with everything. That's how it all started. I feel like I stole something, but it was I guess all problems, they just solve in your brain, and I had runners high, and then all of a sudden I got it, but I'm really happy about that.

Nick: It's interesting that was a real departure from the way that bodybuilding was done at that point. Do you feel like you have a love/hate relationship with just the idea of bodybuilding and the way bodybuilding is performed over time, has that changed, you've gone back and forth?

Pauline Nordin: First of all, they broke my heart in 2003 when I saw how far they'd taken the sport. It's not about health anymore. It's all about the looks and not about the inside. I've always been very concerned and passionate about health. I don't care about the outside if the inside is not there. It was almost like your first love and then you see that was not really what you thought. Then I just, like, "Okay, what about if you just do it the way you want and show people that you can do all this and be healthy, and it's nothing that you do for a year and then you are washed out and can't do it anymore."

So, I decided I wanted to be like a Jack LaLanne, but a female form. To show that women can be strong, we don't have to look like a man. You can lift hard. That's been my mission all day. Because women think, for some reason, even knowing our testosterone is this little compared to guys', and you can lift until the cows come home and nothing will happen. But girls still want to do high rep and tone because they think that they're going to be so big. And then they come to me after 15, 20 years training and say, "I don't want to build so much, Pauline. I just want to be average, just like you." I'm like ...

Nick: After 15 or 20 years...

Heather: "Average just like you."

Pauline Nordin: I know. All right, let's do it. And then they get frustrated that they can't see results. I try to make women... if it doesn't feel like you're working hard, it's not working for you. I don't know why women have that kind of... I feel it's anti-empowering that women keep on holding this want to be small and tiny. I'm trying, like, "Embrace your shape. Be strong and healthy, whatever that is. If

it's size 0 or size 10, it doesn't matter." That's my message, overall.

Nick: No, that's great.

Heather: We encounter that story more and more often where the girl was going through the bikini phase and then all of a sudden she figured out, "If I lift heavy, I can actually stay smaller, have more muscle, and it's awesome." You kind of touched on the whole idea of the washed-out bodybuilder. I've noticed, just in interviewing athletes and people who have clicked in and figured out, "Ah, it's not about doing a show, gaining 20-30 pounds and then trying to lose that again." Kind of maintaining that steady fitness and never really reaching that wash-out point. Do you feel like that's something that is starting to actually come up higher in the industry to those top-level athletes?

Pauline Nordin: Well, I hope so, because I've always made it my number one to always be in shape. I don't want to have ... someone wants me for a photo shoot or something, "Oh, I have to diet for three months." Why do I want to look great one day, it makes me completely demotivated. I think that the more people who actually embrace this lifestyle instead of having that, the happier I am, because that's all that I preach. It's good to do shows and competitions, to make a goal for it and stick to your goals, but it has to be something you want to do long term because it doesn't matter how much time you're putting in here, it's not worth it if you don't love what you do. Why would you spend so much time of your life spend on complaining about being hungry, complain, "But I can't eat whatever I want. Boo hoo me, I have to go and train." You know how many people would love to go and train but they can't do it? People who are paralyzed, in a wheelchair and all that. They would love to.

We shouldn't have the luxury of complaining about something that we choose to do. It's like something's wrong with you if you're like, this is what you chose. For me, I don't complain about being hungry. Of course, I've got cravings like everyone else. But I have principles. What weighs more? Right now, I want the gratification or do I actually want to have a long-term reward? In today's society where everyone needs to have, now now now, if you don't get the message in three seconds, you're gone.

I like bodybuilding because you can't just buy it. And if you buy it you're going to lose it fast. The harder you work for it, the longer you do, the better more successful you're going to be. It's like the perfect anti-aging routine, because it's the only thing that keeps regenerating cells if you build up, and so on. It's the only thing. And what is best is you can't buy it. You can't. It's very fair and square for everyone. Doesn't matter if you have high income, low income. If you train, you eat somewhat good or healthy, you're going to be a winner. And I love that. It's very fair.

Nick: I think that's great. It reminds of this idea I've heard of, they talk about a training age sometimes. It's an idea I see sometimes where it's your age for how long you've been consistently training. For you it would be coming up on 20 years. But I think it's an interesting idea because it makes you stop and reflect like, "Alright something changed there. Everything that's going on in my body is a little different after that point." So for somebody who, hears that and thinks, "Well, jeez, my training age is two months, two days or two years." How does that compound over time? How is it different at five years, 10 years, 15 years?"

Pauline Nordin: I think first of all when you're a fitness toddler when you start. I always argue with these guys online. They're like 18 and they start with the bench and want 200. And they do a linear progression, and they...

Nick: And they think it'll last forever.

Pauline Nordin: And in three months they're going to be world champions. That's how they see it. They calculated and scientifically it makes sense. I'm like, "Well, wait around. Because you're going to have a typical halting pause and it's going to drive you nuts. That's where everyone falls off." I always tell people, "It's going to be fun and a honeymoon for the first six to 12 months. After that you got to love it because it's going to be much slower." And people are like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." They think they're special case every time, like they are a genetic freak.

That comes. You're struggling with small, small, small changes. After the three years you've reached a kind of potential. After that it's about pushing the limit and beyond your genetics and all that, and keep on. And it's going to be harder every year to see changes. For me, I enjoy that. I enjoy the eating and the training. I don't care about the results, per se. And I've asked myself several times, "If you didn't look the way you wanted, if it didn't do anything, would you still do it?" I'm like, "Yeah, I would."

That shows it's true love. It's not about having a body that I can't keep up or something.

Nick: Is it more about just how you feel, then? You just feel different, I imagine?

Pauline Nordin: Yeah. It's about how I feel. But I feel better when I feel I'm in shape. Where I have chiseled my body the way I want to. And for me I have lousy genetics when it comes to fat loss. I have a slow metabolism. I have hyperthyroidism. Everyone told me that a woman who is short like me and natural and a slow metabolism, you can't look the way I want. Oh, really? You can, you just have to be a turtle. You're going to have to work harder than everyone else. A lot of people come to me too now when they know that it took me many years before I admitted to people that I have a thyroid condition because so much stigma about it. "Oh, once you have that, you can never really reach any goals." Like you can't be into some kind of lean thing. You can, so I take all those people that have that as an excuse and I just, "So, I'm doing it, what's up for you? Why can't you do it? I'm not a better person than you. You can show it."

Nick: That is an excuse that you hear from a lot of people. Like this is what I have.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, don't make yourself a victim. Also, this is all you have. You can't replace your body. You can't change it. So what are you going to do, just settle for less than you want? I try to get all these people who sell themselves short and just say, "I, with all my crappy stuff, like I'm short, like I'm almost a midget. And I'm doing this. And you have perfect genetics. Why can't you push yourself better?" I don't like laziness overall, I guess.

Nick: Thinking of, you know, bodybuilding as opposed to other sports like powerlifting, you said you started out in a powerlifting gym. One thing that I do like about bodybuilding and bodybuilding culture, even though I have no background in it before this job, is that it does kind of find a way, right? A bodybuilder comes into a gym and he or she will use everything in there for something. They're not afraid of machines, not afraid of barbells. We use really everything for what it's good for as opposed to somebody who's going to be more narrow, super-performance focused. There's more of a ritual, it's definitely a long-term play. Does that appeal to you? Because you could've been a powerlifter if you wanted to, right?

Pauline Nordin: Absolutely, and especially when it comes to injuries. Like right now I am three days out of a surgery. I have torn my hamstring right off the sit bone. It's like two out of three muscle tendons through the muscles I have torn. And one of the tendons has retracted this much down. That was my first tear that I really hurt was in 2002. I was stupid and young. Cold and I did splits and boom, I heard in the room. And that was the first one. And I didn't know what to do at the time. I went to emergency room. And in Sweden if you can walk, you're fine. So they don't send you to the MRI, it's just like go home. I didn't know what to do, and that's the worst thing after an injury.

Nick: And that hamstring can just haunt you.

Pauline Nordin: Hamstrings, they stop everyone's career. I didn't know so I thought I was going to show that hamstring who's the boss. So I went to the gym trying to deadlift. And it didn't work. So, I was kind of, like I didn't move for several months. Scar tissue and so on. Fast forward up to 2015, I had another tear in the same spot. I had a really strong day and I felt like I was invincible and then bam, I fell to the side. That didn't teach me enough, I was going to show that hamstring again who's the boss.

Nick: So did you go in at that point, even and...?

Pauline Nordin: I didn't, and I even tried to do sprints. And I felt the warning from the hamstring said, "Don't do it again, Pauline." But I wanted to do it. So then I tore my left one. At that point I had to jump off the treadmill. So stupid, I know. From me to you, I thought I was smarter. But apparently not. Stubborn. Then, a few weeks ago I had a photo shoot where, I had been training around this for two years. I had a photo shoot and I was standing in the deadlift area, standing in the position, not lifting. And that set it off. And I knew I had to check this out.

Nick: After 15 years.

Pauline Nordin: I don't want see what's on there, but I can't train. I don't want to lose my muscle mass, either. Of course the MRI showed what I don't want, tears in both and all that. So for a long time, frustration and despair, going through all the stages. And then okay, I have to do this and then show how it's done. People are like, "Oh, now you can eat ice cream and all that." Are you kidding me? Do you think I'm going to be on crutches for six weeks, not knowing when I can come back and get fatter, too? No, this is when discipline is going to show.

I've taken this as an opportunity to show people there's no excuse, that if you can't workout, you can still get lean. And I'm going to ride on that to show people how it's done. I like to show and lead people and show them how it's done.

Nick: I was listening to one of [your podcasts](#), and I really like that you don't hide from the injury. You get completely fascinated about the injury, and you're going really in deep leaning into it. Which is interesting because to hear you describe it now, you avoided this for a really, really long time, right? Which is really easy for somebody to do. And say, like, "I know something's wrong, but I don't want deal with it."

Heather: And common. We talk to a lot of athletes that have that same issue. It's their shoulder and they just kind of worked around it, worked around, worked around it. Until...

Nick: Just part of who I am, my bad shoulder.

Heather: ...something happens and you even touched on it earlier, that there are people that can't work out. There are people who are in wheelchairs and on crutches, bedridden. You're going to be one of those people here in a little while.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, five days.

Heather: And you're taking it and flipping it on its head and not doing the poor little me.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, no, I hate that. I don't want people...

Heather: You're actually going to show people that you can work around it and...

Nick: So, have you been out for a forced period of time really in the past?

Pauline Nordin: First I tried. So, in my whole career, I'm a training alcoholic, like a train-oholic. I had one repair for hernia in 2008. I was born with it, it wasn't through the training. I was out 11 days, and they said "You're going to have to be out for three months, at least. Because it's such a central thing."

Nick: Right, sure.

Pauline Nordin: No, I went in and I deadlifted and everything went well. I have very minimal, I have always underestimated rest. That's something that I've always been working on trying, but it's like my drug. I have to. It keeps me sane, keeps me from work and being productive. It's like my whole life is around it.

So, with this thing that scared out of me because, what am I going to do with this? I tried to train around it and didn't know how bad the injury was. I thought it was referred pain, maybe glute or something. But I was driving and my typical cramp in my glutes over and over. I couldn't do it. But for some reason, you minimize it or you think this is just part of training. I also thought ... also you're going to laugh. I've always taking pride in not working through injuries. I'm just like, "What the heck? What am I selling?" But I actually didn't realize. I thought, "I'm overdoing it a little bit," but I don't think you can do what I do with that much torn capacity.

But what had happened was that my adductor has really been overworked.

Nick: Oh, okay.

Pauline Nordin: So, for a while I started to do glute thrusts and it worked great. I went up to almost 300 pounds, and then my bod just said, "Nah, it's enough," because I started to recruit muscles that you're not supposed to, and I'm like, "I have to do something about it. If I want to train until I die, I'd rather do it now than..."

You see those biceps, when the tendon is all the way down here? I don't want to have it that far. I'm trying not to show people. First of all, pay attention to it, because I always tell people don't train around injuries. It could've been for me that on the MRI it showed nothing was wrong. That would be really bad, because it would show it's a disc/nerve problem. So I was lucky in that way. And it's just a sucky thing. I'm just happy I'm not an MMA fighter who has to go back and then tear it up again.

Nick: Sure. And have a really unpredictable sore, where you don't know if somebody may know your weak point...

Pauline Nordin: Exactly. They know my hamstring's been pulled. "So she's going to go for that one."

Heather: And we're trained to think that if it's soft tissue, it's not a big deal. If it's muscles, tendons, nah, it'll fix itself. If it's a broken bone, you have to fix it.

Pauline Nordin: I know, yeah. That's the worst.

Nick: Especially, you made a great point there. You were talking about hip thrusts. Well, you think a movement is doing something, right? You look online and say, "What does this train?" Or somebody says, "You do glute or hip thrusts for this." But once you're really affected, it's training a whole different pattern, a whole different set of muscles.

Pauline Nordin: You get fatigued.

Heather: There's a lot of redundancy in the musculature.

Nick: All you're doing is reinforcing dysfunction at that point. You're getting worse.

Pauline Nordin: Exactly. And I realized that, because I saw, I got into the gym and I'm like, "I'm tired. I'm mentally drained." And I didn't know why. Is this overstraining a little bit?" I think now in hindsight just seeing how the body's trying to cope, because I've been lifting so heavy and I'm very determined. Since my start, I was threatening myself, if I don't do this rep, "Pauline, you won't get to America." If you don't do these reps you won't get the green card. Like I don't want it enough. And I've always been like that. Push my limit to the max. This is now. Now when I went online, "Okay, this is what's going to happen. I'm going to be grumpy for a while and so on. Just don't pity me, because I have the luxury that I can have a surgery. And I have it diagnosed. And I'm in good care. I'm living with my own demons. That's going to be the problem."

Nick: Sure.

Pauline Nordin: When people, they like to see someone fail and then see them go up again. I'm like, "Okay, sure, we can show you that." 'Cause I always had to work against the people who don't see me face-to-face or who don't meet me think that I'm a bitch who doesn't care about others, who's very cold. And I can understand because the photos that we document that present me, they look mean.

Nick: Yeah, there are some mean-looking photos.

Pauline Nordin: So I understand that. If I saw that, "She's not nice." That's why all these challenges transformations to the people, actually I call them up and we talk to them. It has got me closer to people. I think this is going to be, even though I think it sucks and I'd rather train, have it non-interrupted, I think this is going to be a blessing in disguise, where actually I see that all the things that I emphasized my whole career, which is the mental part, not about the body. That I always make fun of people, too. Like, I go out and instead of having these perfectly posed picture all the

time, I was the one who started this. "Okay, this is what you look like when you're not posing." And I put my stomach out there and just stand like everyone else. And then after that it came like a trend, and I see people do that. I'm like, "We've seen this."

I think this is going to be really good for people to relate to me in another way. I can show that I have walked the talk, too, in this way of having not being able to do what you want with my body, and also show how much you can maintain. That's my goal at least.

Heather: It flip flops, because not only will people be able to relate to you, you will be able to relate to those people that have gone through that kind of injury. And that's a big deal.

Pauline Nordin: No, exactly.

Nick: There's also this question of control in there, right? You had control forever, and now you're having to give up control, give up authority to a certain degree. A lot of people, people in your challenges, people that work with you, you are their authority. But were you just your own authority? When I think about somebody who's really doing compensatory movement patterns on squats and deadlifts and things like that, a good trainer like you would look at that and say, "What are you doing? What are you doing?" Was there somebody over your shoulder saying, "Hey hey hey, what's going on?" Or was it all you guiding it because you've been doing it so long for yourself?

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, I'm one of those stubborn rats that I never ever take an order from anyone. Even though people can say that to me, "You have to get this checked and so on". All these Olympic weightlifters, I have like National Champions and all the girls that train, and I see how they train and I talk to them all the time. I just don't listen, like it would be better for me if I did or if I had a coach or if it was for a sport they would have taken me out a long time ago. But when you're on your own and you can do whatever you want with life, it's good in one way. You're your own boss, so nobody tells you what to do. But on the other hand, nobody's stopping you, so you can really keep on pushing beyond what you're supposed to. And that's where I am.

Nick: Sure, yeah but on the other hand you get to say, "Guess what? This was all me, I built it myself. I know exactly what I was doing."

Pauline Nordin: I thought it was just a little tear, I didn't think about this tendon and so on. But looking back now, it has really been an issue for so long that I just don't know how I could be training that heavy. I feel bad for my body in hindsight, like I had you lift 250 lbs deadlifts with a torn hamstring. I'm sorry, I didn't know, you should have told me. I'm just like, "Arg." My hamstrings just like, "I told you, I told you." But you know, I guess I mean people are worth to have like one shoulder that's not working at all and they still work out, so it's just, you know.

Nick: And you're also somebody who has done a lot of free weights training, you've been big on things like deadlifts and squats for a really long time. Other people when they start to feel those twinges, they go for the machines. Right now, I feel like we're in this interesting place in fitness where because of CrossFit, because powerlifting is so popular, everybody is so pro-barbell, anti-machine these days. But looking at the workouts that you're doing for Bodybuilding.com while you're here, there's definitely a balance of those. How do you find that balance, and how has that changed overtime?

Pauline Nordin: Well, actually I think the free weights are always going to be the foundation of it. I

know too much that machines take away some of the load, and I want to overload my body. Machines have really been helpful for me with injuries now, like as long as I could actually train around it. Like I could do calves and stuff like that, and I think both has its place. I don't really subscribe to the theory that you should teach beginners machine moves, because that's bad. Just let them do very little weight and show them so you can actually establish. What I didn't do, I didn't learn the correction. I was talented so I got the hang of it, but still I think it's important to do that and not be a lazy personal trainer. Just put them on a machine and the work happens. Because if you've been training for years and you can't even do a squat, something's wrong with your training. So I think that it's important.

Heather: And those open chain movements are designed for rehabilitation exercises, like that's really what they're meant to do. You'll see a bodybuilder on the leg extension just because they're trying to really target the quads but for 90% of the population, that's what a machine is for, is for rehabilitating or working around an injury, or isolating just one part of the muscle, and that's really what rehabilitation is. It's not about building muscle. So, and then, going back to that balance of free weights and what you were talking about, so chances are you're going to have to come back a lot lighter. And you talk about this in a lot of your videos like, leave the ego at the door and that kind of thing, so talk to me a little bit about your mental preparation for that.

Nick: For not training hard.

Heather: Because I think that a lot of people want to just jump right back into where they left off.

Pauline Nordin: I would do that too if I didn't know it's going to be an expensive surgery, and I have learned a lot more by pretty much trying to find evidence that I don't have to do what I'm supposed to do. I've Googled so many different protocols on rehab and what to do and expect the timelines, and I see okay 6-12 months. So I'll be there in 3 months, and then I realize. So I have this stupid theory that it's not true, but I tell myself, "Pauline, you're never giving your body rest for your whole life. This is going to have a mega, super compensation effect here." So it's just, it might happen actually, like for once it actually got to rest. And now with it being suppressed for 20 years, it can actually heal up, so who knows.

Nick: You're gonna get huge.

Pauline Nordin: I'm gonna come back bigger than before. Because I had one year back in 2010 when I actually cut off 10 lbs of muscle that took me 10 years to build. That was because I had a photo shoot and we took a right angle where, if you took that photo today it was like, "Wow, I look jacked, great." But at that time I felt like I was actually a little too big, and it was weird because I was just 120 lbs. and I talked to Pavel, the photographer, and was like, "do you think I look a little too big, like too muscular?" He says, "yeah" so at that point I said I'm going to cut it off, I'm very determined.

So, I did that, it took me one year and I stopped training weights and the legs kept on being there. I cut my protein in half and I remind myself now that, "Pauline, even though you're trying to really take off weights, it's going to take some time." Now after 6 weeks, I'm going to be sedentary so I made sure that I trained as much as I could up to that point. But it's going to be lighter and the reason why I'm not scared of this is first, any little thing of stimulation in muscle you can have after time off, it's going to stimulate it. Muscle memory, thank God for that. I'm going to have to do the rehab with a physiotherapist because I don't want to come out of this and then mess something up, it's not worth it. And also, a tendon takes a long time. This is the only time that I'm allowing myself and I'm going to

follow doctor's orders, I've never done it before. It's about time.

Nick: Okay so I imagine you probably did a lot of studying of things like detraining and what happens when... you know how much, you give almost 20 years of muscle memory and of muscle mass built up, how does it chip away and does it come back or is it sort of asleep?

Pauline Nordin: So what I saw, for 3 weeks I stopped training, did the surgery and I lost like 3 lbs but I got shredded so the thing is that when I can't train I get even more disciplined in my diet. I don't have any treats, I don't have any rewards, I lower my calories a little bit, like 200. People always say, "Oh, so you're going to eat much less now?" Not really because my workouts maybe take 200 calories, so it's going to be very little.

Nick: Right, 200 calories is not that much.

Pauline Nordin: So that's what people always overthink that you have to either starve yourself or you have to eat so much. Because, a person like me who's so small, I don't need much so unfortunately, I wish I could eat more. So I saw how the muscle glycogen goes down, and standing in a mirror one night, I told people like my followers that I felt like a skeleton. Like I had jeans and loose top on, and I know I should know better that if I just pose, like strip down naked, I will look buff again. But I look at that and I'm like I'm going to have a hard time with this.

So, I remember, because I'm not one of those crybabies that just cry to show tears. When I cry, it's for real, and I didn't plan on it so I had that podcast one morning and I started to cry because I just felt like a skeleton. And I have my whole, like it's my castles, this is my expression, my self-expression, my art and it's taken away from me soon. And I have to be okay with that, but then I train legs like around it, pumping up and stuff and had electro-stim and did all these weird moves that I made up. And the muscle pump came back, so the next day I looked normal, and I'm like, "Okay, you got this Pauline." I did a voice recording for myself, "Pauline, remember now that it's just about the pump first."

But anyway muscle, if you're completely down, sedentary, not moving around it's going to take about 3-5 or 6 weeks before something's actually going to happen. And the longer time you train, it's not going to be ruined overnight.

Nick: It's hard to believe that, though.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, if you built your whole body with steroids in 3 months, of course you're going to lose it. But that's because you didn't really build it you know? So yeah, it's going to be smaller but I think I'm going to be able to train the upper body. And probably will build more there because I saw the last weeks when I didn't train legs that I actually got stronger because it was more time off.

I don't do any cardio, I don't do any weight for legs and I'm still getting leaner. So, I've shown people to kind of do that on their nose, and just say, "Okay, you say you can't do cardio like that? I'm not doing cardio." And not that cardio isn't healthy but at some point it might be that you can't do it. And I don't want people like, "Oh, you're gonna swim?" And I'm like swim? I don't want to be an endurance trainer.

Nick: The hand cycle.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, I don't want to convert my fast muscle fibers to actually slower, that's not what I want. So, I'm actually saying that I'd rather do very little so that I can get more of the fast fibers to stay, than to change them into slow.

Nick: No, that makes sense.

Pauline Nordin: That's just my way of trying to cope mentally.

Nick: But then you have to figure out, "What else do I do with all the time that I used to train?" That's got to be the hardest part.

Pauline Nordin: Oh yeah, right.

Heather: You could write another book.

Pauline Nordin: I know. Well, the good thing for me is that I'm a work-a-holic, so I work 24/7, I love doing that. And it's all social media, and product development and all of that. I have a team to lead, so I'm not out of work, and all of this I usually do from home anyway, so I'm not a movie watcher. I don't have the attention span for that, but I like to study science so I do like certifications and I study for those things that I'm on a deadline. I love science, I don't have any formal education. So everything that I do is self-studying. Self study and I go to ISSN and I pick up on those so I...

Nick: And not everybody goes to those sorts of things for fun and for professional development.

Pauline Nordin: No I know, but I have to.

Heather: So I was really looking forward to sitting down and chatting with you because you're a female who has been in the fitness industry for almost 20 years. And we're kind of in this interesting phase of femininity 2018 and all of that, and how has that changed in your experience from when you first came here, first started being a fitness person, guru, model all of those things and how is it shifting now that you've noticed?

Pauline Nordin: I'm a feminist in the way that I feel like it's equal, fair and square like men and women. I'm from Sweden so that's when you go to restaurants, it's going to be paid half for the women, half for the men. So that has called on me a lot here in America, and that's where I see like a lot of like you would say when there's cultural differences.

When it comes to fitness I think I see that just with that in mind. I feel that women are doing ourselves a disfavor because you're selling us out, it's all about sex, look like a little bunny that anyone can just do whatever they want to do with, and they don't have anything to say. They put everything into looks and it makes sense in a sport that's fitness, but do you want to do this for one year or do you want to do it for a long time?

So, when I started, I felt women were more about strong and they show regular pictures. You don't have to be in lingerie in a set on a workout video. Which I feel it's out of context, if you want to do that, go to Playboy, there's nothing wrong with that. But you put everyone else into fitness like we're kind of weird, kind of half glamour, half fitness. And I think for instance I don't have any kids but for people who do have, imagine then they show the kids to go into fitness and they see all these girls dressed down.

And every time I'm on a plane or something when I open up my Instagram, I always end up with a picture where there's a naked girl doing stair stepper. I'm scared, like I have a big phone and everyone's looking. Like no I didn't look at this on the plane, you know but I don't understand that like why women have to show everything to feel like they have a worth.

And who are you selling this to? To men. So I feel like companies should also take responsibility. A lot of those, like shady companies that haven't been around a long time, they do whatever. So they just sell it with naked bodies, sell with sex, sell with females. As long as the female is shut, and that's why I would never be a good one of those. Because I can never keep my mouth shut, I stand up for what I believe in and I'm not scared of getting criticism for what I believe is right.

Then I would just say like a big applaud to companies who do respect, and they show with good manners. Like Optimum Nutrition, for instance, I worked with them in 2006. I was a sponsored athlete, and they've always been very good and conservative in a not boring way, with how they present their athletes. The men and the women are the same. Do we ever see the men in a little thong in the gym that is for a neutral market, not a gay market but just regular. They don't sell like that, they're full clothes on or like a shorts or something. But a woman she has to go in and be almost naked for that kind of attention.

So, the girls who do that, who sell nothing, they don't expire they just tell all the other girls or women that this is what you have to do. You have to dress down, kind of like prostitute yourself and not put attention to your inside or what you have to say, what you can contribute to. Just do this and you will be popular, and that works on social media because the more you show sex, sex, sex, the more followers you get. And then the company's show, "Oh, she's got 500 million followers" and that's what you get rewarded for. So, I think it's going into that extreme more and more.

And I try to be a counterweight, so I try to show there are no naked photos of me online. There's nothing weird you can find, because I've always known that it's nothing that I want to do. It's not going to help anyone to transform or change from an unhealthy lifestyle. It's not going to motivate for the right reasons, I want to drop 300 lbs. To see me naked or not, I always tell people, "Why would you see me naked? I look like everyone else, like something average." There's nothing to see, instead of trying to ... like all the models I can't stand it, their life is presented as it's completely perfect, and they're always perfectly made up. "Oh, I woke up like this" and they have full make up like who do you think you are, like show people the real you instead.

And for years I was bullied in the fitness industry that I was never tanned enough, I was never made up enough, my hair was always a little weird, or something like that. I just owned it like this is what I am, I'm not going to go out there and get sun damage so I can have muscles and be tan because you know you always have to have both of those. So, I think I've always been avant garde when it comes to that, you're trying to lead people that there is an alternative. You can be in this industry being healthy, being strong, you don't have to dress down if you don't want to or be naked, and don't sell fitness as a sex thing, sell it as a lifestyle. So that's it.

Heather: Well and I watched your videos on how to date a fit woman, and I love that. Because you directly address some of the push back that fit women get from men, where it's like, "Oh, do you really need to do it this way?" Or where they try to knock you off course. And do feel like now the point where you're at, do you still get that or is it...?

Pauline Nordin: Oh yeah, because since my business and everybody's business nowadays to reach out worldwide is to be online. And when there's online, there's people behind private accounts that stalk you and they are obsessed with you, but they say all this weird, hideous stuff. So I either, I just think, or I get a rise out of it because I like to banter back. And I'm witty when I want to, and even if English is my second language I know how to get them by the balls. So I do that, and everyone on my side they say, "Okay this guy" like I like to get them to see my point. So I'm not mean I'm just trying to, like sometimes they get this guy who tries to make everyone else angry there, to just take him on my side and neutralize him. But with men, and women who lift, it's always about that "Oh, she takes steroids. She takes steroids." Because if you do this pose and a bicep, you're going to look jacked, you lose the way.

So, for instance my boyfriend, he's like 6' ... he's very, very tall, and he's like this taller than me. It's good for me to just show how small I am, because not that I should have to, but since everyone says "Oh, steroids", if someone has 1 lb muscle more than you then, "it's steroids, it's steroids, it's steroids". There's a whole market that's about that, and I'm just tired of that. And I guess people just want to pretend that someone is doing this and that's why they have results. And it's one of the things that I don't like in the industry, because I feel in all sports there's going to be cheaters or not. Will that change what you're going to do? Like I've never changed, I know people do this but that's not what I'm interested in so take responsibility instead of blaming like that.

It's like that junk food was not what made you fat, like "no, no because it's steroids." As a woman with muscle and I was always saying that like I am a naturalist, what do you want me to do? Lie, you know? It's weird.



[THE 8 RULES OF BUILDING NEW MUSCLE](#)

The muscle you have now was earned one way. The muscle you don't have yet might play by a different set of rules entirely. Here's what they are!

Nick: Yeah, the steroid dialogue online is so obnoxious on both sides. Both the prevalence of steroids and just that instant urge to label somebody as if that explains everything that a person has done.

Heather: And you still have to lift even if you're taking steroids, you know that's the part that bothers

me the most is that yeah, whether or not they are, you still have to go and move the heavy weight.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, "Well don't you know that to be Mr. Olympia you just have to lift in 3 months and take some drugs, then you're there," you know the typical guy to say that, just like you don't have the symmetry for it anyway and probably not the genetics. So there's a lot of things that have to line up, but I always tell people like why do you even discuss this? Like it's always brought up, and I'm trying to say like it's not what I'm interested in, I'm not saying that you should do it, I don't care about it so let's talk about something else. Like why are we talking about something that won't even be something that I'm going to do. That's how I feel, so I wonder why people are so obsessed with it.

Nick: The name calling. Yeah, it's really strange and a lot of what we've been talking about is really talking about the long game, and really focusing on long-term progress but you also are well known for shorter-term fitness challenges, 8-12 week things like that, like Bodybuilding.com does.

Pauline Nordin: How does it work?

Nick: Yeah, and what value do you feel that provides for somebody who's really trying, they want to live a 20, 50, 80-year fit life, what is that 8-12 week crucible provide for somebody?

Pauline Nordin: So that's a typical catch-22, since I'm always about sustainability and lifestyle. And people say like, "Can I get this resolved in 12 weeks?" And me as a company, I'm always very transparent, I tell people that most of these candidates or contenders, they're actually doing 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, there's people that have done 10. All of my challenges back to back, and I tell them that the 12-week, now if you're a beginner, this is your first journey. It's like your first steps to get started and you're going to have this lifestyle. And when the women get upset that they don't have the results of someone who has been training for several years, I tell them okay this is why, you think that you're so special that you're going to get the results that took me 5 years. You're going to get those in 3 months?

And people don't want to listen to that, but I also have picked up on that people feel like it's not about this pressure, it's not about showing who lost the most weight, because it's not about that. It's about the accountability and the consistency. That's why I have coaches in my challenges who help them, lead them, and so on. So, I am really down to earth and explain, I didn't build this in 3 months and anyone who says that is a liar. You're not going to get the results exactly that you want, but if you keep on doing this it's going to add up, accumulate. And that's what I love about fitness is that, how many things are like the more you do the same thing over and over the better the results? Like very few things.

Nick: Right, yeah, and that's the one thing you can do in 8-12 weeks is you can build behaviors.

Heather: It's enough time.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, exactly and that is what's going to translate over your whole life. And that's my specialty, like training, yeah great, but I don't see it as a sport I see it as an art. And then we have nutrition, which I also feel like is more of a religion rather than you just consume something. So those two are so powerful, and when you get people to understand that, and not that this is a diet I'm going to do this instead. No, no, no, see how fortunate you are, you can eat healthy you can take care of your health. Not everyone has that kind of privilege. And you know these complaining things,

I'm just like stop it okay? Instead, see the positive, because if you are wiring your brain and conditioning it to say this is not what I want to do, I hate it and all of that. You're going to see that you're going to rebel and you can't do it anymore. So, you have to embrace it.

Nick: You have to find your level.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, exactly, find what goals do you want, and how much am I willing to work for it? And if you see, I'm willing to work this much but my goals are here, you're never going to be happy. So, take down your goals, and not everyone has to be an elite fitness model-looking person. I always tell them, "Do you think it's going to make you happier?" That you wake up one day and you're going to have a six pack and you pull up and great, next day, great, and then you're going to see if there's nothing else you like from the results. If you don't like the lifestyle, the food, the training, all of that, you're going to see that you're starting to not appreciate it. And it goes, like "Okay six pack, so what?"

And so, I'm like really trying to get people to ... even though it's such an aesthetic and superficial kind of what we do, because we see the results in the mirror or on the scale or something, it's about the insides. Like even if I was blind, I would still do the same because I can feel how my body is lean or not. And it's very empowering, I love that.

Nick: Yeah, but it was interesting to hear you say that you still get upset, you look in the mirror sometimes and you go "Oh, my God, I'm a skeleton" right? So, you're not immune to it, like that's the thing about appearances. Sometimes it changes dramatically, day by day but until you're actually judging yourself, boy, it's hard for some people to grasp. Even for you.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, no I know and I tell them like I'm in the same boat. Like one day if I get really lean I feel like I lost a lot like I'm skinny. And if I'm a little off or I gain a little muscle, yeah my butt looks better but I also don't feel as lean so my abs disappear. So, the typical question for women that are coming to my challenges is to say, "So Pauline, how can I keep my boobs and my butt but I want to have the six-pack abs."

Nick: That's the ultimate Internet ideal, right?

Pauline Nordin: I tell them okay, get implants, get really lean and then just, okay you're going to have a small butt but work it as hard as you can. But just understand you can't pick and choose, it's going to be what your body is primed to do. And that's nothing, with all of the Photoshopping and people putting implants everywhere. You know like breast implants, I have them, it's normal like if you're lean, you're going to have to lose them. And I was born with the kind that were really droopy, too, so it was a lot of volume but I lost it. So, what am I going to do with that?

So, but with social media and Photoshop, people who are in their teens they see this girl with the butt that is muscular but this big and the waist is this, and I'm like don't you see that that is not healthy and it's not normal. It's Photoshopped, but they don't know because they don't have any difference. So, then they think that all women are subscribing to that kind of ideal. So, guys are telling you [your butt is too little](#), and I'm like I'm not trying to look like a porn star, this is an athletic body that I want. It's not going to be the big, big butt. But that's [Kardashian](#) and all of that right now, that's I guess the trend, but...

Heather: Yeah and there is no way to spot reduce but the cool thing about lifting is that there is a

way to spot add. So, if you want to sculpt your body you do actually have to lift weights. And that's the, getting people to come around to that mindset is huge.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah and not always going for what lighter and smaller, like you can be bigger or you can get stronger and you can get small. So instead of thinking that everything has to be lose weight, like a negative thing, like you said, you can gain muscles it's positive and it's just the way you word it will then present itself in your brain.

Nick: Sure, and then you can also start to gear your nutrition toward that goal as well.

Heather: Yeah, you can eat more, it's so much fun.

Nick: I wanted to talk with you about nutrition and about protein since you just went to the ISSN and you had [Jose Antonio on your podcast](#), we had [him on ours](#). And I was wondering you know, the thinking on protein has changed a lot over the last 15 years or so. I've talked to a lot of bodybuilders who, now that they're in their 30s they say, "I've actually cut down on my protein a lot." And you talk to guys like Jose Antonio, Doug Kalman, who say everybody's got to get it up a little bit, to that 1 gram per body weight or something like that. How has your thinking on protein changed overtime, if at all?

Pauline Nordin: I'm really happy that they've shown with these studies and so on, all of the kidney function, liver function, that there has been nothing wrong with that. I had that issue when I started to actually monitor blood work in 2008. I had like a TV show that was coming up, so they put me through all these tests. And they showed that I had liver enzymes that were really elevated like really high, and of course doing bodybuilding they thought I was taking steroids, so I took all these other tests for testosterone and all of that. And, of course, there was nothing.

That was years, years later, that was actually a sign that my thyroid wasn't working properly. So, the liver was occupied by that. No doctor could show me, so I was going to all of these liver specialists that said, "Yeah, your liver is really angry but there's nothing wrong with you, so we don't know." I looked, because I was so disciplined with my food and diet, it didn't look like I had a thyroid problem, because usually you should be heavy, right? So, my protein intake has always been really high, like I'm up there with those studies like the 3.5 to 4 grams and so on, all of my career.

My creatinine is very low, like 1.69 all the time and I monitor. So, I have those studies but I've done it to myself. I'm happy that this stigma about high protein is bad for your kidneys, bad for your bones, and all of that. Even the American Heart Association says that you shouldn't eat that much protein. How did protein become the black sheep? On the other hand, you have people that think they can just eat protein and not eat vegetables, not eat any potassium, so I tell them, "Hold on there a little, because your acidity level there is going to be bad in that way."

So, it's not about the protein, it's what you add to it, so of course, a protein diet with only protein wouldn't be healthy. You're going to convert some of the protein into glucose so why not just eat carbs maybe. But no, I'm really happy about the people start to be scared of that. So, no I haven't cut down on protein unless I did that year when I tried to cut it down. I think people just have to find a diet that they want to do for lifestyle instead of just trying something that is a fad. Like right now everyone is paleo or they are keto diet, and I'm just like, "There's no reason for you to do keto diet and mine is definitely not keto diet. [Carbs](#) will not make you fat." It's about consistency and somewhat reasonable, so I'm very discipline and strict but it's not needed for regular people to do

that. It's just my priority.

Nick: Sure, and I imagine you have people that you work with all the time with their protein levels down here and you bring it up here to a level they never thought they would go, and they just are like, "Oh, my god, it changes everything." What happens to somebody who is getting serious about training and they really do push the protein level up a little bit?

Pauline Nordin: They see their metabolism go up, they can recover faster, they feel hotter because the protein increases the thermic effect of food.

Nick: The meat sweats we call that.

Pauline Nordin: Right, so usually when they do my program they also have the huge bowls of food, because my number one rule on Fighter Diet is to prevent overeating by overeating. We know one thing, that's why nowadays when everyone is fasting every other day, or something. People always say should I do this? And I'm like did you have a problem to stay away from food or was it that you actually overate? They say they over eat, and I say well how do you think that you're going to have the discipline all the sudden to try to starve yourself for a whole day? You're setting yourself up for problems. Some people do it well, others don't.

I usually don't eat throughout the whole day, I have protein before training, I eat most of my food at night or eat in the morning. But it's the whole thing of having to go 16 hours and people think this must that everyone has to do this. So, with my diet they get to eat so they're satisfied and that is number one. Because if you're satisfied and you have a big belly that will be flat in the morning, so don't worry. People are upset like, "Oh, my god, I'm so full what am I going to do?" Like good, now you won't see you going tripping over to 7-Eleven getting Ben and Jerry's so, mission accomplished.

Nick: Sneaking into the freezer, yeah.

Pauline Nordin: So, it's about if you starve your brain and all the hunger hormones in your body will just start to act up, and good luck then. Because I know with my discipline how hard it is. How could I then expect someone else to stay on these small portions of food for meal prep? So, I kind of changed that, you know that's why my contenders are so successful and why they want to keep on doing it. Because it's not about starving yourself or half starving yourself. It's about eating a lot so you can stay on it, so it's volume.

Nick: You need to be satisfied for sure.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, because if you say I'm never going to have this, and that's another warning sign. When I see contenders come in and every week I have this Q&A live, and I bring up stuff because I monitor what they say and so on. And I get the coaches telling me what's going on. So, I usually see, this is what people do, they overeat and they binge and they feel really bad. And after that, that's when you see they're highly motivated and they are extra strict, and then after that they show very good behavior. Then they fly under the radar for a few days, and they restart.

So, I always call those people out, not in person but just like I gotta know. There's some people here and you're not going to see results. Because it's so strange so when someone is extremely motivated, we know and I know what happened right before there? Something went wrong, so I'm trying to get away from this yo-yo, up and down. It's better to have a little bit and say, "Okay, what

did this do for me?" And kind of have a conversation with yourself and say, "What do I want out of this special treat?"

And that's another thing, I don't do cheat days, but I do treats. So, what's the difference there? Treats have a positive wording to it, it gives it as a reward for doing good behavior. If you didn't do good, you're not going to get rewarded. Cheat means, first of all you're not cheating anyone because you're not going to get away with it if you overdo it. And cheat has a negative ring to it, it's not good for your brain. So, I'm all about this trying to optimize your brain and how your brain's actually interpreting what you're doing.

Nick: Sure. And I've always disliked the word cheat, too. It feels like an explosion. A cheat has to be huge, whereas a treat can be any size, right?

Pauline Nordin: Could be an apple.

Nick: Right, portion control in this country, we're completely bizarre about portion control. But yeah there's nothing wrong with having a small piece of something delicious, what's wrong with that?

Pauline Nordin: "What, are you dieting?"

Heather: Chocolate?

Nick: Yeah, but at the same time I got to eat at my grandmother's house or something like that, the portion comes out and it's like this. It's a cheat built in, and I have no desire to eat something that big, I know it's going to make me feel like shit the next day.

Heather: You're going to feel terrible.

Pauline Nordin: Have you seen the trend on social media again, especially Instagram, where it's all about the girls that are very shredded after a show or the fitness photo shoot. The guys are even worse, and then we always see them first in the bikini, then we see them eating 10 hamburgers, ice cream, typical binge eating disorder. And I'm just like, wait you're showing this for public, you're not even embarrassed that you actually have a problem. Because if you have to eat that much, it's not healthy and psychologically you have an eating disorder.

Like you are not satisfied, and that kind of message you are putting to your followers who don't understand. So, then they come back, well she eats that, why don't I get the results? Because she's not eating like that, she's either posting with it, and then she has one hamburger. Or she's actually starving herself for weeks after that. And I think it's extremely unhealthy, and it's not good for young women in particular who are very sensitive to these kind of patterns. To kind of justify like, I feel that because I'm one of those people where I don't eat junk food. Yeah, I eat like chocolate chips that have no added sugar, or if I go out I have a 20 oz. steak. I have no problem with that, but I don't go and have hamburgers and french fries. I've had one hamburger my whole life, so I don't come from here, that's why. I love candy.

So, I get this like somethings wrong with you, like why don't you eat this? Why don't you have that junk food? Well I have value in my body, I don't think that my liver has to digest that. I don't want to put that through my pancreas and all of that, like it's just my priority. I know it won't affect me on a scale. It's not about that, it's about how again my accountability to myself. It's about the principles,

like can I get away with it? Sure, I can get away with it, but I don't want to get away, I want to have a clean record.

So, it's about principle, I'm very firm on that because if you don't have firm principles to yourself, you're going to see your brain start to negotiate when you have a weak moment. And if you start, if the brain is getting in there and it's just like "Yeah, we know you gave up last week, why aren't you going to do it now?" And then try to renegotiate and just think I'm going to wait for that and the brain just knows because it's so smart and has gone through evolution knowing how to get you to eat.

So, I tell people, what your brain and your fat cells do, is they're just trying to get you to fatten up because that's what you're programmed to do. It's nothing wrong, you actually are doing what you're supposed to do. Be sedentary, and eat you know, but it's not good for us, accept that.

Nick: You're preparing for winter that's never going to happen.

Heather: So, most people when they start on a diet plan, they want to hear you say, "Oh, this is what you can get away with" and they want you to justify that you can keep doing the same thing you've been doing and get totally new results. So, how do you coach people to overcome that initial mental hurdle of, you actually have to change what you're doing if you want to have different results?

Pauline Nordin: Training is very easy to do for people, they go and they kind of kick themselves hard and "Now I can eat whatever I want or it won't affect me" or "I sweat a little so now I can eat it." So, I just tell people again, I explain to people why I am strict with my diet, why I stick to my beliefs. Because I can't, I won't get the results I want if I don't have any special pattern. So, if they're super sold on doing keto for instance, and they come into my challenge where they have a typical diet plan and it's not keto. And I always tell them, look you can keep on doing what you want, I'm not going to force you to do this. Because I know if I force them, it's not going to come from them.

It has to be intrinsic motivation, and I just wait them out until they see it's not working for them. And I say okay good now you can come over to my team. So sometimes people, just like me, I have to get the epiphany myself. I would never take an order, like if you told me to eat a certain thing then I won't do it. I know myself, I know others, I just have to present, "Okay, do you want to starve all the time or do you want to eat like me?" And then I usually take pictures of me eating my big bowl of 4 lbs of cabbage, stir fried with chicken and I show them my big belly after that. Then I go to bed and show them in the morning, it's flat again. Don't worry about that, but it just keeps me happy and sleeping and people are scared of eating at night. And I'm like really? That's where I eat most of my food and it's been like that for how long.

Nick: Just eventually they just come around.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah usually, I'm like a turtle but I win them over when they have something. Like if they've done... typical, the competitors and they've been on that kind of starving diet where they've been on 1,000 calories a day. I'm like, 1,000 calories, you can't build muscle on that. So, I always have to reverse diet on them non-stop, over and over like everyone comes in there. I'm like okay you think dropping calories will do it better? Like no, because you're not getting results, your body right now will just keep on holding.

So instead of having them then regain too much fat by losing control, I say if you lose control, and

rightfully so, if you're going to on a binge feast ... first of all your metabolism is lower, you have all of your cells waiting for that moment when you're going to overload and they're going to be more efficient to get it in. Just like muscle memory, like if something is taken away, they're going to come back. So, you're going to get fatter with that and you're going to feel miserable, and then you're going to repeat it and then you're going to starve yourself. I show them this up and down, how it's not helping. And then I show them in comparison to people who are very consistent and strict. And that you can eat more. And that's usually what get women hooked, "Oh, I can eat."

Nick: Right, finally I'm allowed.

Pauline Nordin: Your whole life, you want to starve? Like, hell no, I'm not going to do that, I have a big appetite, I'm not going to do that. So pretty much, like why would I want to be angry and hungry all the time if you don't have to, that's not life quality.

Nick: You said something interesting in there, you said, the training is the easy part basically. Someone on the front end they think, the training is the hard part, what do I do for training? I'll just eat, I know how to eat. I don't know how to train. But you're saying, no the training, someone just has to show you basically.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah like first a trainer shows that and then also a thing that stops people who eat really well, they don't understand that it's not about going into the gym and doing 10 reps. Every step you have to ask yourself, "Okay could I do more, can I do more?" Like always going back to notes, because we are creatures of habit, we're going in and doing the same thing over and over again. And since bodybuilding and fitness is already regimented that way, you keep doing the same, to explain to people that this will work for so long and then you have to change it. And one thing that I see there is that people are always scared of going from lift heavy to total time under tension or total load.

So, they think that, wait, lifting let's say a deadlift for 3 reps weighing 200 lbs, that's 600 lbs total in load there. So, I'm going to do 10 reps with 60 lbs, no wait, 300 lbs, what did I say? Or 600 lbs, it's 300 lbs with 200 lbs, it's 600 lbs. Now I do 10 reps with 60 lbs, it's going to look very light on paper, but I say the total is the same. So just explaining to people that, and I suck at math so I can understand that.

Nick: On paper it's a little bit easier.

Pauline Nordin: Right? But usually this kind of motivation, I want more, that could be a stopping ... because bodybuilders are known to train extremely hard and I'm one of them. But it's not really what you have to do, and those people I really like them. Because they are the ones who will embrace rest, who will take orders when I say, okay your shoulder feels bad right now, okay let it heal for a week. Because I tell them, I've done all these things, don't do it too. I want you to be better than me, and they usually get better results.

Nick: Yeah, and I like the idea of that total work load too, there are a lot of smart lifters out there who make that work. Because it is the way to compare apples and oranges. It's really the only way to do that. And one other thing I wanted to ask you about, because one thing that people don't associate with discipline a lot of the time is marijuana use. It's not something when someone thinks this is a disciplined person, they don't think that goes hand in hand with that. And I was wondering how, because you're a proponent for medical marijuana and recreational marijuana, how does that go

hand in hand with leading a disciplined lifestyle?

Pauline Nordin: So, for many years I was against it because I thought first of all it was going to give me the munchies, and I always saw pot heads that are slow and you see them in Venice Beach bums, and I saw all of this and I was scared of it. I thought like, "Oh, I don't want to be like that," of course I'm not going to do that kind of drugs. But my whole life, ever since I was a little kid, I've always had problems with sleep and stressing down. With my work being a work-a-holic and never wanting to stop, it's real hard. I've always worked on it, and now the last few years I'm like I'm going to shut off social media at 7pm, I'm not allowed, and all that. But then I'm going to have a boyfriend who doesn't do that, so it kind of messes me up there. So, with marijuana then I started, like I don't like sleeping pills because they are not good for you and I don't want to have the medication for that.

Nick: Right, it's easy to get dependent.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah and also I tried them but I'm very resistant. I happen to be one of those who for instance, if I drink vodka I come from Sweden so of course, four shots no problem. I actually tried one day I was so desperate, I had a third of a vodka bottle I remember, I called Pavel I was like okay I can't do this, it's going to be bad for my liver. So that was right around when medical marijuana came out, I was like okay I'm going to do this, and I went to the doctor and got a prescription. I told him, "Okay, I'm an insomniac I need this." I was so excited about that vape, I went to the store at first I was like "Oh my god, what am I gonna do with this, I'm gonna get so high." I didn't get high at all.

Nick: You didn't feel a thing.

Pauline Nordin: I was like what is this everyone is talking about, there's nothing. And I tried different things and so on, and apparently again my brain I guess it's like a control thing like it's very hard to let go of. So, then I realized that edibles are better, these are the cookies. And those worked better, so they are the most potent way of marijuana. So, what I do then is I only take it at night, I'm not one of those who smoke pot throughout the day. And I don't smoke joints, I tell people, there's good ways and bad ways with marijuana. There's one, do it all day for no reason, it's bad because it does lower your whole and what you're doing.

Nick: Right and you're just escaping at that point.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, like would you drink whiskey all day? No so treat it the same way. There's of course CBD which is the non-psychoactive part, it's good for many different kinds of pain or injury or something.

Nick: Good research on insomnia for certain people with that as well.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah and anti-cancer and so on. Has it done anything for me? Nothing. So, I'm a THC person, so what I do then is I educate people about responsibility. First of all, I have all those cookies at home, I don't over eat them, I have them at night only. You have to be responsible like any other drug. And I tell people, don't mess it up now, we got it legalized don't do something now so it's taken away again. And I think marijuana is much better than alcohol because first of all you don't get all the calories and also you don't get the same kind of ... you're not going to die from marijuana anyway.

Nobody as far as I know has died from marijuana itself, so it's very safe that way. But I also tell

people this is nothing for teens, because if you're an adolescent your brain can actually be impaired by marijuana. That is very concerning for me right now, when I see all the recreational, how easy it is to get. I'm happy I'm not a teen growing up with that, so I'm on both sides here. I think it should be stricter in one way, I want everyone who is an adult to be able to get it. But somehow, how do you protect the youngsters? I think by taking away this whole, let's say marijuana would be like, "Oh yeah, it's just another one, not really getting high." Because if you're getting high, well I'm getting sleepy, so what kind of high is that? I'm not jacked up like this you know, it's not like...

Nick: You may be laughing a little bit.

Pauline Nordin: I know right, you're only making... you're a happier person, right? So, I don't go out there thinking this is going to be the holy grail for everyone. They always do that like Vitamin D and probiotics, like this is going to save the world kind. It's going to be peace on earth now because we have the gut biome ready. So, it's the same thing with medical marijuana, it's not going to work for everyone and again like don't use it as something that is 24/7. It's only supposed to be for what you have, so I don't do like if I'm having a bad day I'm going to just chill. Like never, ever I've not done that, I'm really strict with that.

Nick: Oh, okay that's interesting.

Heather: Well and you draw the obvious comparison between marijuana and alcohol. And, of course, that's what anyone that's against it, they point to the problems with alcohol and you're saying, well yeah, there's going to be people that abuse everything. But if we can all agree to come together and use this responsibly just as with alcohol, you're not taking shots at 8 am before you go to work. So, if you're using marijuana in a responsible way, there's no reason why it couldn't be a beneficial addition to your lifestyle.

Nick: Well and especially if we're talking about sleep enhancement, right? Which as you've transitioned more into using that on a regular basis, do you feel like because of that it has helped your training and things?

Pauline Nordin: Oh, it has helped my training as in actually now I'm not restless all night long. Like I had a habit that I went to bed at 2 and I went up at 5 for many, many years. Now I have a sleep IQ because I have the sleep number bed. So, I get rewarded every night that I see, oh I was in bed for 9 hours, I slept 8 hours of those with sleep. I'm just like, "Yes!" So when I wake up I'm not groggy, but a lot of people are. So, you know, most people only take a little pot like my body is just resistant to everything so I have to have more.

My liver is very efficient so I know it gets out of the system, but I think it's the same thing like we wouldn't really prohibit wheat, and we use that for instance let's say beer or something like that. So, it's the same thing with marijuana then, like okay you want to take it away completely but it's always going to be around because we have the drug lords and you're going to get it. So, I believe long term, it's going to be numbed out. We have marijuana, but not everyone's going to use it.

And right now, everyone's hyped out about it and that's bad because I see that there's no fitness person, and that's why I'm talking about it, there's no fitness person who goes out there who doesn't look like a pot head who's actually like me, a regular business woman who's known to be sharp and educated. And not someone who's out drinking, like I'm not a party animal. That I try to tell people completely sober then because I'm not going out there like all those people smoking weed, that's not

the message you want. Do that in your home privately, I feel like why do you have to do that all around people?

Heather: And the use of psychotropic drugs at high levels of business and innovation is a known thing. Like that's been around, but it's always responsible usage and you know there's stories of in the 1970's and 80's, a lot of these people had their ideas because of micro-dosing LSD and things like that. So, I think the real issue is not, should it be available, it's how do we train people to use it responsibly?

Nick: Like sugar, like anything else.

Heather: Yeah, just like sugar and that's the other thing that drives me absolutely bonkers. And tell me if you agree... Sugar is completely legal and what is, 8 out of the 9 leading causes of death are directly related to overeating and especially the overconsumption of sugar.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, I think that has really exceeded what it should be about, because they're always demonizing one macro nutrient. Okay so we didn't do well with protein, okay. Fat wasn't popular either because it showed it was wrong. Now we have the sugar, so I'm like of course if you're eating junk food, or fast food or a lot of sugar, it's going to be bad for you. You don't have to have scientific evidence about that, but of course all the industries are trying to numb down that it's not sugar.

Would I want personally to have all sugar bad? Hell, no I don't want to, I think it's part of life. Like if I don't want to have broccoli and chicken for every meal. I think it's about responsibility again, like let people have a choice. I don't want to have a Russia communism like back in the day, where this is what we're going to make for people to eat and that's it. I like to have a choice, and I think more about educating people and take back the PE and nutritional education for people, and empower people so they have a choice. Instead of most people, I believe are very sad and depressed so they don't want to get any help, they have no friends, and who's there? Oh, Mr. Sugar. That can't always help you.

If we take care of people instead, what they're doing with in their life, and make them happier, they're going to get more responsible about their health. And say like okay it's really tasty for this but I don't want to have a smoothie with 100 grams of carbs, drinking it and don't even recognize that it's calories. So instead of just taking away, because I know if you take away something people want it. So that's why I think legalize everything. And not guns like anywhere, someone's mad and they're just going to shoot you, but I don't think about this illegalize everything for no reason.

A sugar, like everyone's like, "Oh, it's the sugar, it's the sugar." Like no, it was the excess calories that came from sugar maybe, but I don't know why they keep on trying to find the scapegoat that's going to be bad. But I mean, sugar, what is next? I'm going to stop having vegetables because they have natural sugars? Where are you going to draw the line? I think it's dangerous, I like to educate people and I think that big companies should do that like the FDA and so on. But when it starts to say everything is causing cancer, like let's say eating meat and they don't forget about the whole processed thing or eating it every day. Or sedentary people did it or something, to put that in the same category as smoking tobacco. I'm just like, but that's not really true about that.

And the same thing like the USDA put pizza as a vegetable because it had tomatoes on it. So, I think more people who are nutritional savvy, like one of my favorites Layne Norton, he's really calm and

stands and explains like it's not sugar per se, it's what people eat, the sum of the sum. So, I think it's just more about education and psychological counseling. Like people show them that yes, we all get cravings, we drive by some kind of place here, Dairy Queen, like of course it would be tasty but wait a little. Like what do you gain from this, and then is it worth it? So, I've read a lot of studies about that, the rational brain versus the spontaneous impulses.

Nick: Right, just a pause, that's all it takes.

Pauline Nordin: They're not working together, so people who have a problem with that, they only see that this is tasty. And imagine if there's nothing inside you that says, hold on you just did this work it's not worth it, don't, don't, don't. And you just go in there, but it's not about the sugar or that it's there, it's about the person. So, I don't think you know, like... how do we give so much power to food? That makes no sense to me.

Nick: But it seems like training can be a place to get that sense of control at the same time. Like, I know that I'm building rituals here, I know that I'm making choices here that are intentional, and it's a laboratory maybe that you can use to apply some of that.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, and training overall, a body that doesn't train or workout or exercise is not a happy body, we know that. And I think also it's easy for people to... If you work out you're kind of like "Oh, I had an hour of hard work, I don't want to undo it, so maybe I should eat a little bit better." But it's about that first step for people in general, they just have to see and kind of that instant reward. They have to get a little bit, like see the light at the end of the tunnel like, "Oh, I see a little weight goes off." So, when I for instance have clients who are 300 lbs and they want to lose to 150, I just tell them, "Okay, how long did it take for you to gain this?" They say 10 years. Alright, so give it at least, like I say don't feel bad if it's going to take you 5 years, because you're on the way here.

I feel in general that people feel embarrassed that it takes them time to get results. And I'm trying to tell them that it didn't happen for me overnight, so take it down. You're doing hard work, you should not be embarrassed that you're trying to improve. Because there's all this pressure, you're a 12-week challenger why don't you look like that? Imagine then you keep on eating your food and people are making fun of you because you can't see it. So, I try to empower them like just put headphones on, don't listen to them.

Heather: Right, well, we're so conditioned to see those transformations, and this happened in 12 weeks or this happened in 3 months. And people don't realize the amount of work that comes with losing that much weight, and it doesn't happen overnight. And to your point about working out being the laboratory in which you kind of train that logical brain, and that brain that's able to say, "No, you're not going to like how that's going to end up on the back end." And you can't eat a ton of calories or foods that are fast foods that make you feel sluggish and sick and then go work out the next day and feel great. Your body will show you that that doesn't work, so you'll eventually learn through working out, that okay I have to change how I'm eating to make me feel better.

Nick: To feel better during a workout, absolutely.

Heather: And so they both go hand in hand, same thing where if you eat better, you'll feel more motivated to work out. So, I always tell people, you can spiral down but you can also spiral up. So, if you stop eating these things...

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, no I completely agree with that, and I always tell people to put the gold star in their little journal every time they do something right. And for me, for instance, I'm one of those people who would rather eat more vegetables and forget about my fats, so I give myself a gold star, then I write "Good job, Pauline" when I put olive oil in it like I'm supposed to. Trying to do that, like one little step every day and that kind of positive, like give yourself a pat on the back. You did a good job.

Nick: A little shot glass of olive oil?

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, well like in the vegetables, but you know it's important to show people there's nothing wrong with rewarding yourself as in showing good behavior. We are our own biggest enemy when it comes to that, and people think it's such small things. No, it's not. Like if someone who chooses a salad over a hamburger, that's a huge step. So, make sure that you recognize that, and own it and be proud of it.

Nick: Talking about fat loss and weight loss, it reminded me of a great line that I saw in one of your old articles was that you can't lean out what's not there, right? Muscle must be built first, and I think that's, for women that's a real problem. Like "What is your goal?" "My goal is to lean out." And I think that's such an interesting message you've been putting out there for a long time. There's a value in adding before you subtract.

Heather: Yeah, they want to lean down first and then build muscle.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, it's very hard to convince women that you don't have anything there. And I know how to trick question them so they understand. So, I say, "What size do you want to be?" And they're like, "Well, I want to be the way I am now, but I want to be lean." Okay well that's about 10 lbs of muscle, and they're just like well how am I going to get that? Like give it 3 years maybe, and I tell them like when I started, I had lot of muscle from my athletic training with horses and stuff. And I had my genetics that come from being strong, not lean but strong. So, I already had that for me, you may be skinny like skinny fat for instance, which is like light weight and [high body fat percentage](#). And you're not strong, you have that against you. So, you're going to have to build and you're going to feel swollen, you're going to feel a little big.

So, when I see a girl who's 100 lbs and she says, "I feel so swollen", I'm like you're in the wrong sport then, you know. You've got to accept what everyone has to do, you don't have a special ticket. Just because you're skinny doesn't make you... you're probably going to have a longer journey than someone who's chubby. And I tell that to them because they have not, when you are overweight you're stronger because you have to carry all of the weight and your metabolism is faster. You burn more calories. When you're lean and small you're actually the opposite, your body doesn't need much, your bones are not that strong so it's actually going to be sometimes like a longer road. And it's hard for people to understand that you're not going to be better off because you are skinny.

Nick: Or healthier. It does not mean healthier.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, no definitely not. They think skinny or thin is the same as healthy and I'm like, no, not in many ways. And then also I try to tell people, can you squat your own body weight? And they can't and it's like okay well you don't have [the muscle you need](#). So, this impatience, it's a problem when it comes to fitness and for women. And stopping this, again it has to be the lifestyle, the life you like, to enjoy doing it. So, going into a training being skinny and thinking that you're going

to start leaning out, it's not going to work.

Nick: So, at what point does somebody earn the right to be lean 365 days a year? Because that's a big thing that you value is being lean all the time. At what point does somebody earn that?

Pauline Nordin: I think first of all, you have to be happy with the muscle mass you have. And also know that if you want to be real lean or stay lean, you're going to compromise the big gain muscle because you don't have the surplus daily that is needed. And I tell people too that when you're gaining muscle you have to accept a little bit of fat gain. It's going to be there, you can't feel embarrassed that you're not lean. Because if you're real lean it means that you don't have any excess at all and that means you're not building muscle either. So, explain that first of all, like building means surplus okay? And cutting means deficits, so how is that going to work out? Do you know that, like can you do mathematical equations and get that work? And, of course, they can't.

So, I would say, I know how long it took for me, I dieted down after 3 years and I was still very, very small. So, I just tell people, I got 3 years before I told myself I could even diet down. I didn't do it, I didn't touch it, I tried to eat good but that overeating just helped me build muscle. I was a little chubbier than I wanted to but it was a good reason. So, when you have those first years it's actually better to have a little fluff on top and not trying to look at people who are lean. Because it didn't happen overnight, so it's hard to get... people always want to contribute, or attribute if you train now, you think that your body has been made with the last months of work.

Instead of seeing what happened the last 15-20 years. So, I always say this is not what built my body, this is what has been going on for a long time. So, again, when people actually understand and you take the time to explain to them, and show them the message that they understand. Because it's like if I want to prove my point, I can't talk Swedish to you and think you're going to understand. It's the same thing, like you have to find a way that they get it. It's not about you don't want them to look good, because they can change. Like "Oh, you don't want me to look good", well of course I want this, this is my brand, I want everyone to get first. But I also want to sell a healthy message, that people don't have these... The worst thing that can happen is that people have all these dreams and goals and you come in and it makes them fail.

And a lot of companies do that as a business model, they do it because they want people to fail so they come back and buy more. And I said that is the opposite of what I want. I want longevity, I want clients who have been with me for many years. That is how I feel that you build a brand that people take pride in. So then when I see people writing, and they say that I've always believed in you, I've always been a fan to you, and you never sold out and all that stuff. It's like that is the best part, because I know when I say something people will say, okay I might disagree, I might think she's weird or crazy but she says what she thinks. And I think that is important.

Nick: Well, Pauline Nordin. Thanks for coming and talking with us this was great.

Pauline Nordin: Thanks for having me.

Nick: You can find Pauline all over online, right? Fighterdiet.com. Where else do you like people to find you?

Pauline Nordin: I have the "[No BS with Pauline Nordin](#)" podcast on iTunes and also on YouTube. So, [YouTube](#) is "Fighter Diet Official." So, Fighterdiet.com and then all the [Facebook](#) and all of that. I

just want to say that I started to write for Bodybuilding.com in 2003 when I was in Sweden so it's almost like that's why I have a special relationship with Bodybuilding.com because we kind of... I don't know...

Nick: Grew up together a little bit.

Pauline Nordin: Yeah, right, because it was kind of an underground thing and then you can still order stuff. So, I just want to say thank you so much for what you're doing and it's an amazing journey with Bodybuilding.com.

Nick Collias: Great, we're really honored to have you here.

Heather Eastman: Good to have you here.



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