

A photograph of Chris Powell, a muscular man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing a grey three-button vest over a light blue dress shirt and a patterned tie. He is standing against a dark, textured background, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. His right hand is on his hip, and his left arm is slightly bent.

BELLO

SPORTS

CHANGING LIVES WITH
CHRIS POWELL

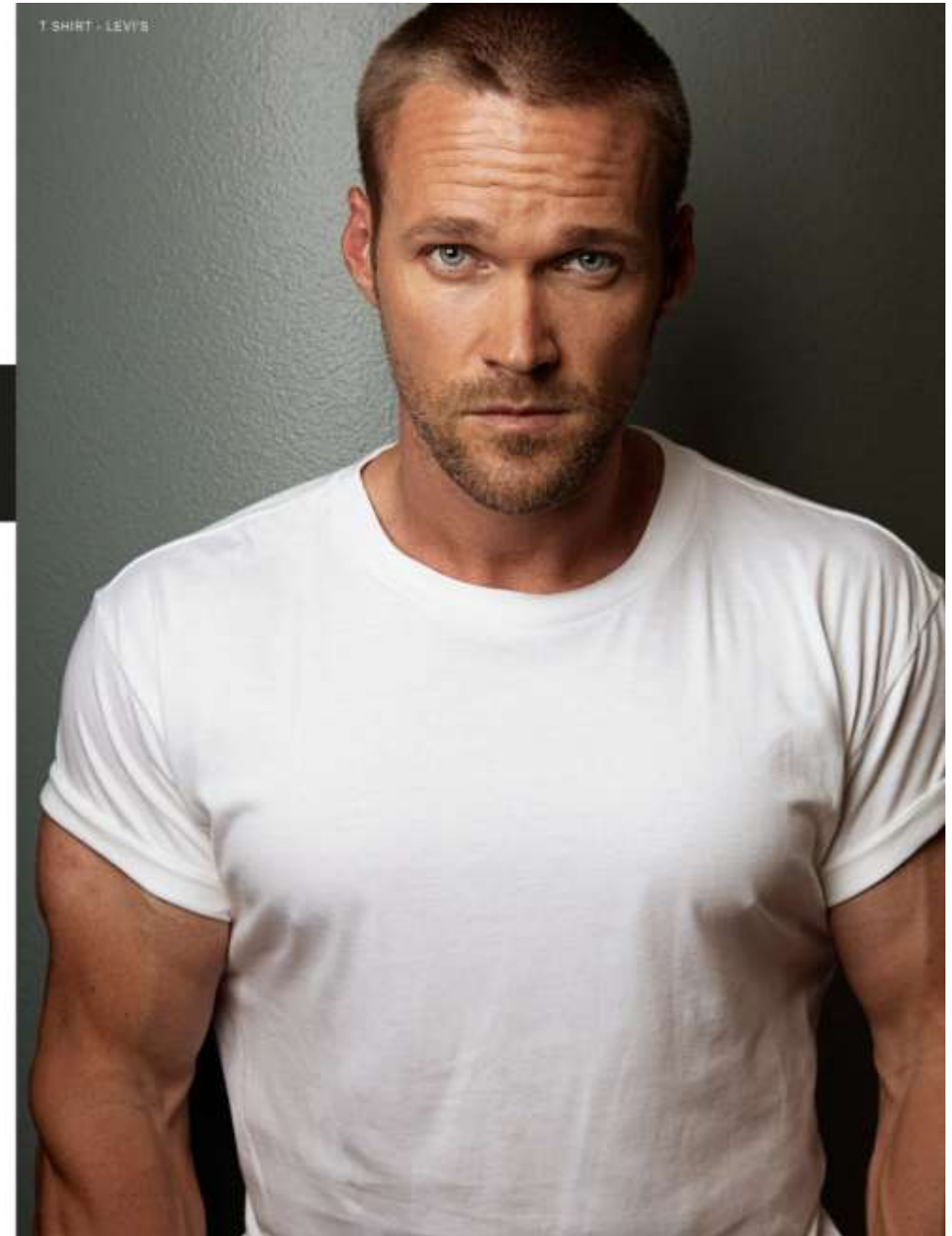
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CHANGING LIVES WITH CHRIS POWELL

PHOTOGRAPHY ALEKSANDAR TOMOVIC

By John Cullen

As a child, Chris Powell had his sights set on playing football. He tried out for his school's squad and quickly discovered his smaller body frame was no match for the bigger intimidating kids. After this disheartened realization, Chris' parents tried to encourage him by putting a weight bench in place of the living room couch. He wasn't initially attracted to the idea, but curiosity eventually got the best of him. Years later, while working at a local television station as the resident fitness expert, Chris received a plea for help from a viewer by the name of David Smith. What resulted was a TLC documentary entitled *The 650 Pound Virgin* in which David's staggering 401-pound weight loss journey was chronicled. The documentary went on to receive mass public attention and ultimately lay the framework for what would become Chris' future...





Chris is currently the main star and Transformation Specialist from ABC's Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition, which is in production on its third season. The concept of the show is a familiar one to Chris in that he coaches individuals to remarkable feats of weight loss throughout the course of a year. A believer that transformation happens within and weight loss is only a by-product, Chris can be seen displaying a never-ending amount of positive and upbeat energy, support, and encouragement in each episode. He feels this approach resonates deeper with his people and yields greater long-lasting results. And as I soon discovered, this is something that comes quite naturally to Chris.

On the day of our photo shoot, Chris was set to arrive to our Santa Monica location fresh off a flight from his home near Mesa, Arizona. Aware of the brutal schedule involved with his television show, I had some initial concerns about how the traveling may take its toll and whether or not Chris would be able to tame that frequent smile of his. Those concerns were quickly tossed aside once he and, surprise guest, wife Heidi arrived. The extremely fit duo stormed our set with a welcomed and infectious energy in tow. What followed were two and a half hours filled with stories of perseverance and hope with the main theme of passion resonating throughout. A clear example of this was evident when I asked Chris about the tattoo along the right side of his torso. With a very serious and committed voice, he explained that during a transition point earlier in life, he made a self-commitment to change one million lives. His tattoo serves as a reminder (and checklist, of sorts) in that each of the seven roman numerals (ranging from one to a million) is to be crossed off when that marker is reached. He recently crossed off M, which represents 1,000 lives changed, but after his photo shoot was a wrap, that total should be 1,001.

Your success on Extreme Makeover: Weight Loss Edition has inspired so many people across the country. Who, or what, has been an inspiration throughout your life?

Growing up, my father was my greatest inspiration. I looked up to him in every way. He treated everyone with utmost respect and was loved by all. In the last several years, my best friend (and wife) has been my source of inspiration. Her pure compassion for others has been my guide and constant reminder of our vision to make a difference in this world.

What does the title Transformation Specialist mean to you?

I have come to the realization over the years that transformation doesn't happen through diet and exercise. Weight loss happens through diet and exercise. True transformation happens in the mind...weight loss is the byproduct. I realize that some of the people I've worked with in the past truly transformed, while others just lost weight. I have spent the past few years learning the distinguishing factors between transformation and weight loss. As a Transformation Specialist, my sole objective is to coach the distinguishing components of transformation and change in the mind...and when the participant is ready I will then introduce diet and exercise. I am convinced that this approach can and will yield long-lasting results and a sustainable lifestyle for the individual. However, I am a perpetual student and continue to learn something new from everyone I work with.

What kind of structure do you and your wife, Heidi, have in place to ensure your children are living healthy and active lifestyles?

In our house we live by several rules:

- 1) No food is restricted. Restriction of foods can most likely lead to feelings of deprivation and ultimately obsession over the restricted foods.
- 2) Before any junk foods are eaten, they must eat a meal of healthy food first. Most of the time they are so full, they only eat a few bites of the junk food and their cravings are satisfied. We usually must leave to get any junk foods since we don't keep it in the house.
- 3) We teach the children openly and honestly about their food and the effects it has on their body, and then we let them make an educated decision to eat it or not...with NO guilt or judgment about their decision.
- 4) Before any video games are allowed, they must first play outside (or workout in the gym) for 60 minutes.

Trainers often have a reputation for being loud and in-your-face, but you're known for having an entirely different approach; why is that?

Transformation is about communication. Although there may be a very appropriate time to be in someone's face and personal space (especially if you are helping them break through a mental barrier), for the most part I have found that people respond best to good old-fashioned encouragement and positive reinforcement. For long-lasting change, however, there must be education when training. We need to know the 'WHY' to motivate us when the coach isn't there to push!

In your book, Choose to Lose: The 7-Day Carb Cycle Solution, readers will be happy to find what incentive waiting for them on the 7th day?

When we are following a structured nutrition regimen with restricted calories, we NEED an emotional and psychological release at least once a week. Mentally, it is SO important that we do not restrict any foods. Just knowing that at least once a week we are allowed to indulge gives most of us a great sense of emotional relief when it comes to 'dieting', and gives us something to look forward to and reward ourselves with.

On the physical side, while a consistent calorie deficit leads to consistent fat loss...it also leads to a slower metabolic rate. Increasing calories one day per week helps to boost metabolic rate and in essence, 'reset' the body for continued weight loss when the deficit is imposed again.



DENIM JACKET AND T-SHIRT - LEVI'S

BELLO

VEST, PANTS, SHOES AND SHIRT- REISS
TIE, TIE PIN & POCKET SQUARE- GENTRY





HENLEY AND JEANS- LEVI'S
DENIM SHIRT- ALLSAINTS SPITFIELDS

How do you manage proper nutrition intake and exercise while balancing the demand of heavy travel and ever-changing daily schedules?

Believe it or not, living a healthy lifestyle on the road doesn't have to be difficult. You just got to prepare for it! I always carry a shaker bottle and bag of whey protein with me, so I'm sure to get my protein needs every 3 hours. For healthy fats, I usually grab some raw almonds or other nuts in the airport terminal, and for healthy carbs you can't go wrong with fruit (you can find apples and bananas at nearly every deli stand in the airport). As soon as I land, my first stop on the way to the hotel is a local grocery store where I stock up on everything I need in less than 15 minutes: produce, peanut butter, oatmeal, and some canned tuna or low sodium deli meat. I request a microwave and refrigerator in my room (most hotels will accommodate), so I can steam my veggies and keep the almond milk cold. Living on the road this way allows me to eat for just a few dollars each day, stay completely dialed in to my fitness program, and I feel amazing.

Most hotels have fitness centers with a treadmill or two, a bike and maybe dumbbells through 50 lbs. I will play with a ton of different bodyweight exercises, from burpees to handstand push-ups, swing ups to air squats, and incorporate the dumbbells and treadmill every few workouts to keep challenging my body. Fortunately, I have access to quite a bit of equipment when I'm staying with my peeps (since we build them a gym!), so I'll usually do my heavy barbell powerlifting and Olympic weightlifting at their homes.

What recent fitness trends (CrossFit, Kettlebells, P90X, Insanity, Plyometrics, etc.) do you incorporate into your personal workouts?

If you could tell from my answer to staying fit on the road, I am a huge fan of Crossfit. I've been into it for almost 5 years now and absolutely love the programming, the fun factor of it, and the community. Although circuit training has been around for decades, I truly feel that the Crossfit style of programming and training is the future of fitness. Kettlebells and plyometrics are great tools for the arsenal in my programming, and P90X and Insanity are amazing in-home solutions for fitness with minimal equipment. I like it all.

Why is breakfast the most important meal of the day?

Breakfast does exactly that - it breaks the fast. During fasting (and sleep), the body slows metabolic rate and releases the stress hormone cortisol (which stimulates the accumulation of fat around the abdomen). At [the] risk of getting too 'sciency', a good breakfast with carbohydrates releases sugar into the bloodstream that is absorbed first by the liver, releasing hormones that stimulate a rise in metabolic rate. In other words, a good breakfast jump-starts up your metabolism! In addition to waking up your metabolic rate, the rest of the carbohydrate from breakfast stimulates a release of insulin, which drives cortisol down. This prevents the body from storing your lunch as fat in your belly!

In your experience, what is the correlation between strength of the mental, and of the physical?

Without a doubt, mental strength leads to physical strength. However, it is so exciting to explore your mental barriers through physical exertion. The only way to do this is to have realistic expectations of the inner dialogue you will experience as you push your body into uncomfortable situations. It's a crazy ride!

What is your favorite underdog movie (or story)?

Gladiator has always been my favorite movie of all time!!

If you're not in the gym, filming a television show or spending time with your family, what are we likely to find Chris Powell doing with a day off?

A day off? What's that? Haha.

Photography Aleksandar Tomovic
www.alekandstepb.com

Fashion editor Warren Alfie Baker

Grooming Leslie Alejandro (executive editor)
Interview John Cullen

