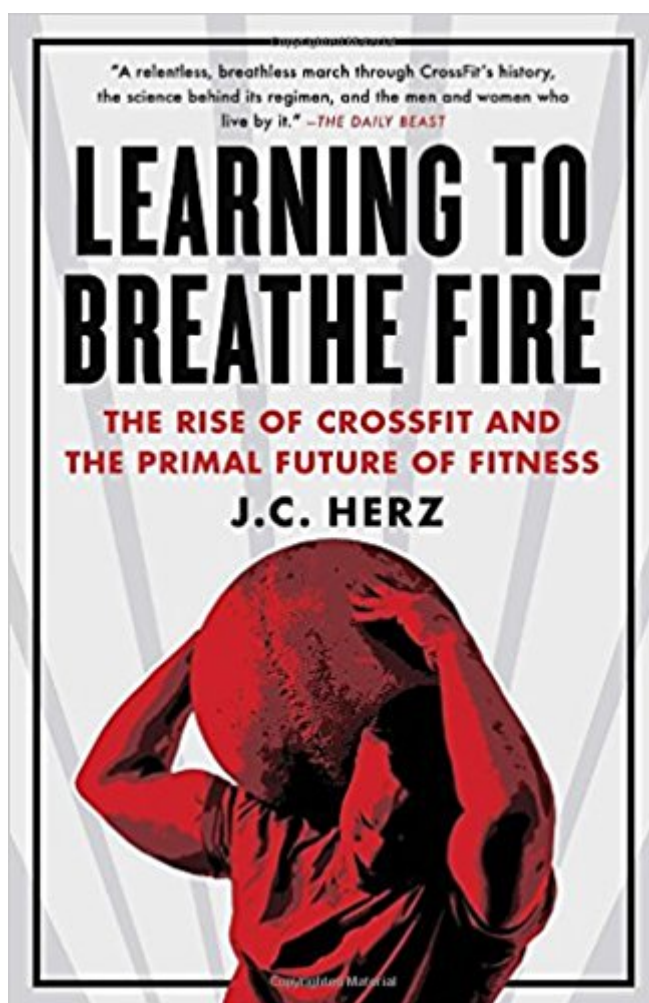


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# Learning To Breathe Fire: The Rise Of CrossFit And The Primal Future Of Fitness



## Synopsis

The absorbing, definitive account of CrossFit's origins, its explosive grassroots growth, and its emergence as a global phenomenon. "One of the most illuminating books ever on a sports subculture," *Learning to Breathe Fire* combines vivid sports writing with a thoughtful meditation on what it means to be human. In the book, veteran journalist J.C. Herz explains the science of maximum effort, why the modern gym fails an obese society, and the "psychic rewards" of ending up on the floor feeling as though you're about to die. The story traces CrossFit's rise, from a single underground gym in Santa Cruz to its adoption as the workout of choice for elite special forces, firefighters and cops, to its popularity as the go-to fitness routine for regular Joes and Janes. Especially riveting is Herz's description of The CrossFit Games, which begin as an informal throw-down on a California ranch and evolve into a televised global proving ground for the fittest men and women on Earth, as well as hundreds of thousands of lesser mortals. In her portrayal of the sport's star athletes, its passionate coaches and its "chief armorer," *Rogue Fitness*, Herz powerfully evokes the uniqueness of a fitness culture that cultivates primal fierceness in average people. And in the shared ordeal of an all-consuming workout, she unearths the ritual intensity that's been with us since humans invented sports, showing us how, on a deep level, we're all tribal hunters and first responders, waiting for the signal to go all-out. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

More of a life philosophy than an "exercise regime, CrossFit has skyrocketed in popularity over the last decade. Herz takes readers on a journey through CrossFit history, beginning with founder and gymnast gone feral Greg Glassman's idea of a highly intense, functional fitness regime that is measurable, observable, and repeatable. Today, CrossFit has thousands of affiliates and an international competition that is televised on ESPN. Herz intertwines the narrative with passionate descriptions of workouts that push participants to the brink of exhaustion, highlighting men and women who have reached the pinnacle of CrossFit competition. Ironically, some of the greatest personal achievements don't involve winning but simply completing the workout and using every bit of emotional and physical effort. CrossFit's workouts of the day are described throughout as well as the fiercely loyal subculture that has evolved from shared moments of agony and triumph. Although this book will appeal to the CrossFit faithful, general readers will find interest in Glassman's libertarian views on franchising and his scathing opinions of globo-gyms and machine-based fitness. --Craig Clark --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Herz takes readers on a journey through CrossFit history" "[she] intertwines the narrative with passionate descriptions of workouts that push participants to the brink of exhaustion" "Booklist" "Herz explores this exhilarating, addictive activity" "[and] adds a dramatic flair to her prose, igniting excitement and an uptick in interest" "A vigorously written must-read for exercise enthusiasts primed for the ultimate fitness challenge." "Kirkus" "Much like the workout it documents, [Learning to Breathe Fire] is a relentless, breathless march through CrossFit's history, the science behind its regimen, and the men and women who live by it." "The Daily Beast" "Learning to Breathe Fire is a must-read for every Crossfitter and fitness enthusiast, beginner or elite." "Dormiviglia.com" "A terrific new book that tells the CrossFit story better than anything I have read." "The Blaze" "Learning to Breathe Fire is one of those books that come along every generation or so that brings to life a sub-culture so vividly, so deliciously that it makes you want to run out now and become a part of it!" "Written with great verve, comprehensive research and a novelist's knack for deft characterizations, this is CrossFit's War and Peace." "Charles Gaines, New York Times bestselling coauthor of Pumping Iron" "A beautifully written mix of evocative vignettes and lucid explanations that shows us what we're capable of when we train hard and connect with our instinctive nature." "This is a book about digging deep, about kindling a spirit that allows us to

push past our wildest expectations. Whether your fitness habit involves going it alone or tunneling through an extreme workout as part of a group, you'll find this CrossFit journey thoroughly immersive.

—Marshall Ulrich, Badwater-146 Record Holder and author of *Running on Empty*

“CrossFit is a phenomenon, both as a radical way to confer fitness and as a virally successful business. Herz tells both stories with exceptional insight—plus the inside lore of a dedicated CrossFitter.”

—Stewart Brand, creator of the Whole Earth Catalog (and CrossFitter at age 75)

“The remarkable rise of the CrossFit movement is grounded and propelled by a great moral truth. Effort alone is all we may bring to life. Everything else -- our genes, our talents, and our teachers -- are gifts. J.C. Herz has written a compelling book around this truth as embodied in the CrossFit culture. As a society, we forget that we are evolved to realize our greatest strength when we are truly tested. The originators of CrossFit have rediscovered that, and proved it by becoming the fittest humans on the planet. In the view of CrossFit athletes the only possible sin is slacking off. Herz writes with sweep and depth about great characters, often racked with doubt, finding their limits and surpassing them. This is the ultimate chronicle of how they created a training method, a championship, a corporation and a loving community devoted to the sacred tenant of effort.”

—Kenny Moore, award-winning writer for *Sports Illustrated*, former American record holder in the marathon, author of *Bowerman and the Men of Oregon*, and co-screenwriter of *Without Limits*

“J.C. Herz expertly debunks many longstanding fitness beliefs and shows how high-intensity exercise can yield the greatest return on your workout investment. Her *Learning to Breathe Fire* chronicles the rise of CrossFit, showing it in a way that is always interesting and insightful -- how ordinary people have achieved extraordinary results following this program. A must read for anyone looking to maximize his or her potential.”

—Dean Karnazes, ultra-endurance star, New York Times bestselling author, and one of Time Magazine's “100 Most Influential People”

“I couldn't put this book down. J.C. spares no detail in helping us see into the heart and soul of a CrossFitter. Her description of what CrossFit athletes overcome is truly unbelievable. She captures the essence of the sport and what it represents, most especially the ability to push through barriers, whether physical or mental. This is about the gut-busting journey to the last rep, but it's also about life. Whether you've tried CrossFit or just thought about trying it, *Learning to Breathe Fire* is a must read.”

—Chrisanna Northrup, New York Times bestselling author, CrossFit Level 1 Coach, and former CrossFit Box owner

From the Hardcover edition.

I just started CrossFit recently and wanted to read more about my new obsession. This book is very well written and delves into the history of CrossFit and well as some of the amazing (and humble) athletes that populate the boxes (gyms). One of my favorite chapters is about the company that makes a lot of the equipment that CrossFitters use: Rogue Fitness. Their business philosophy should be a template for all American businesses; where craftsmanship, great customer service, and treating your employees well is the fundamental ethic. This book is about people who work hard, have a lot of heart, and, in my opinion, improve the human race with every WOD (work out of the day) they perform.

This is probably the best book on personal fitness currently available. Very well written exposition of the most current thinking on fitness. Pros and cons of traditional training and Crossfit. You do not have to join a Crossfit gym to incorporate the ideas contained in this book.

Astonishingly well written. There is the history of Crossfit, yes, and the inspirational stories of its early practitioners. But then pages on on far flung topics touching on anthropology, religion, Greek mythology, the 150 year history of the fitness industry, laundry service in Baghdad, and my personal favorite, the process of knurling a barbell. The author is intensely curious about everything Crossfit, and her enthusiasm for the sport is infectious. These books tend to be formulaic; this one was authentic and idiosyncratic in the very best ways. I can't believe I am saying this, but (i) I couldn't put it down and (ii) I was sorry when it was over.

This book is a cannonball dive into the phenomena that is Crossfit and it makes a splash felt by everyone who dares wet their feet. Not only does it preach the creation of the movement but it also spells out the history of the Crossfit Games, it's competitors, Box owners, equipment providers, etc. Learning to Breathe Fire is the book of CF Genesis. It explains the biblical references of Paleo. It explores the kneeling athletes who write scripture on their sneakers. It calculates the economic equation of what happens when an entire industry is redefined. Crossfit is exercising creative destruction on the way people used to measure fitness. It is science applied to athletes and its effects are still expanding.

An absolute "must" for those who go to Crossfit gyms, those who are friends or family of Crossfitters, or those who have heard of and are interested in this fitness movement. Ms. Herz writes in an easily understood style that traces the history as well as the practice of Crossfit. The

book dispels many of the myths and outright untruths about Crossfit that circulate in the fitness community. As the parent of two avid Crossfitters, and as a sixty-something man who enjoys the occasional workout of the day in one of my kid's gyms this book explained the background and clarified the fitness philosophy of Crossfit. That is, Crossfit prepares one for the game of ... life.

The best part of this book is that it is authored by a writer who knows how to write and also does Crossfit. Within the first few pages the science of how and why Crossfit works is revealed. A well written book and a must for anyone thinking about Crossfit or wanting to know more about the exercise/sport.

I, of course, drank the Kool-aid before I read this book, and have been doing CrossFit for 7 weeks now. This book is very well written, and really pulls you in to the stories and out some of CrossFit's most famous athletes. I found the discussion about the mental aspects of CrossFit training to be particularly interesting and relatable. A very good read for anyone participating in, or even just interested in CrossFit!

Anyone with an interest in fitness should read this book. Crossfit has disrupted an industry and this book details the journey. Crossfit may be approaching its second decade however the principles it is built upon have a rich and vibrant history well documented by Herz. Could not recommend it more.

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