



Acid attack survivor Naziran Bibi gets a kiss from her daughter Haseena Abid next to her daughter Alishba Abid at the Acid Survivors Foundation in Islamabad.

PHOTO: AFP

[HEALTH]

Get some (basic) training

The only equipment you need to follow the US Army's exercise plan for new recruits is a bar for pull-ups

BY DIANE COWEN
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, HOUSTON

Whether you're a regular working stiff paying big bucks to grunt and sweat your way through a boot-camp-style workout or you're a young person enlisting to do the real deal, US Army Drill Sergeant of the Year Michael Johnston has a little advice: Get into shape. Now.

The 26-year-old self-described "skinny guy" — he's 1.8m and 73kg — enlisted right out of high school and served his country in two tours in Afghanistan before becoming a drill sergeant.

After shepherding young men and women through basic training, Johnston, an Idaho native who grew up in Nebraska, competed against 5,000 others before being named Drill Sergeant of the Year in June. He was in Houston recently to be honored at a Houston Texans game.

"You've got to take care of yourself," Johnston said later about the importance of good health. "The older you are, the harder it is to get fit. So start as young as you can."

Johnston said he has nothing against gym workouts that push participants through grueling circuits, but they're much different from what happens on a military base. For starters, basic training is a 24/7 proposition for 10 weeks. (A day in the life of a private's schedule goes like this: seven hours of sleep and 17 hours of up 'n at 'em, which includes one hour of personal time and one and a half hours for meals.)

But there's much that anyone can take away from the exercises he leads his new privates through. For starters, you don't need a lot of equipment.

In fact, for anyone to follow the highly scripted US Army basic training exercise plan it's in a 5cm-thick manual called *Initial Entry Training* the only equipment you need is a bar for pull-ups.

In the Army, Johnston and others use words like "endurance" and "mobility" in lieu of "cardio" and "strength training," but the result is the same: stronger, fitter people who may be a little sore but are generally happier and healthier.

What Johnston refers to as the "Core Workout" is done for 60 minutes, six times a week. At your own gym, you may fudge on the time or sleep in on rainy days. In BT, compliance is not optional.

Every workout begins with a warm-up and ends with a cool-down. In between, soldiers build endurance and mobility with a key goal of avoiding injury.

The exercises done in real basic training are much like you see on TV and in movies complete with stern attitudes from drill sergeants. Anyone who's ever hired a trainer or signed up for a circuit-training class is familiar with sit-ups, pushups, mountain climbers and much-dreaded pull-ups.

All of these are done because fitness equates to strength and mobility, said Johnston. "On a battlefield you're not measured on how many pushups or sit-ups you can do. You're measured on mobility. That's what will get you through it."

Cardio is more inventive: try marching with a full backpack for three or four hours. Or run interval training, alternating slow and fast running speeds.

What you eat matters, too. Follow the simple rule of carbs before your work out to provide energy; lean protein after a workout to rebuild muscle, he said.

On base, he can't give nutritional advice. "If it was up to me I'd tell privates to eat steel and raw meat," Johnston joked. "But I can't tell a private what to eat. If it's in the chow hall, they can eat it and in any quantity. But soldiers burn thousands of calories before most people even get up."

While you're doing your workout Johnston urges you to track your progress with a stopwatch or heart-rate monitor.

And when you're done, you should be tired. Johnston's theory is this: "If I do my job right, they're 'out' at lights out."



A US Army drill sergeant scolds a recruit during basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Scarred but not scared

Acid attacks are on the rise in Pakistan, but thanks to a courageous struggle in the nation's highest court by one victim, activists are hopeful that this devastating form of violence can be curtailed

BY CHARLOTTE MCDONALD-GIBSON
AFP, ISLAMABAD

Naziran Bibi knows exactly what she would consider apt justice for the person who hurled acid in her face, burnt out her eyes, disfigured her beyond recognition and destroyed her life.

An eye for an eye, she says, her rage palatable in her small rooms at a charity's office in Pakistan's capital, her children scrambling over her as she gropes for a sewing box and twists thread around her fingers.

"If someone burns a face with acid, his face should also be burnt with acid. If someone blinds someone's eyes, his eyes should also be blinded," said Bibi.

"Yes, I want it done ... my life is over now." Bibi is locked in a complicated legal tussle over the attack and is fighting for custody of her young children, while learning how to live without sight and struggling with surgeries to rebuild her ruined face.

She is only 23 years old, but with no upper lip, a barely reconstructed nose, scar tissue where her right eye should be and a raw red socket where her left eye once was, her youth is impossible to discern.

Married off against her will as a second wife to her brother-in-law after her husband died, Bibi says she was treated abysmally. Then one night last year, someone poured acid over her as she slept, causing horrendous burns.

Confused, in pain and fearing for the safety of her two daughters, she was coerced by her husband into blaming a man she believes was innocent, and is now trying to retract her initial statement. Bibi thinks her husband was responsible, but he remains free.



"I was in a terrible condition. I had psychological problems. I was not normal mentally ... I simply want punishment for him. I want to throw acid on him. Not only on him, but on everybody who throws acid on others," she said.

The uneducated woman from Pakistan's cotton belt in rural Punjab province may want brutal justice, but activists are pressing for a change in the law to help prevent such attacks.

Thanks to a struggle in the highest court in the land by another acid attack victim — Naila Farhat — campaigners are hopeful that this devastating form of violence can be curtailed.

Pakistan is a conservative Muslim country, where women — especially in poor, rural areas — can be treated like commodities with little protection from the police and under pressure not to disgrace their families.

"Their families will say 'it's the wrong thing to go to the courts, what will society think about you?'" said Sana Masood, the legal coordinator with Pakistan's Acid Survivors Foundation.

The nation remains without a domestic violence law. It has been drafted, but lawmakers say it is still under debate as a senator from a hardline Islamic party raised objections and sent the bill back to parliament.

Acid attacks are rising, with the Acid Survivors Foundation recording 48 cases last year, and Masood says countless more probably go unreported because of social stigma.

That is up from about 30 cases in 2007, a rise Masood says could be blamed on increased stress in people's lives as inflation soars.

Farhat was just 13 years old when a man threw acid in her face in 2003 because her parents refused to let him marry their child.

The attacker was sentenced to 12 years in prison and ordered to pay 1.2 million rupees (US\$14,250) in damages, but on appeal a high court reduced the damages and said the man could go free once the money was paid.

Enraged, Farhat and the Acid Survivors Foundation went to the Supreme Court — the first acid attack case to be taken to the highest court — where judges overturned the high court ruling within minutes.

Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry took a personal interest in the case, and recommended that the government pass new legislation to control the sale of acid and increase punishment for acid attacks.

Masood says industrial-strength acid used in cotton processing can be bought by anyone

Above left: Naziran Bibi, center, takes lessons at the Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness, in Rawalpindi on the outskirts of Islamabad.

Left: Bibi learns to walk down stairs at the Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness.

PHOTOS: AFP



Above: Naziran Bibi attaches a handmade hair extension she knitted for acid attack survivor Naila Farhat at the Acid Survivors Foundation in Islamabad.

Left: Bibi goes through her daily physical therapy routine with nurse Nadia Zafar at the Acid Survivors Foundation.

PHOTOS: AFP

for just a few US dollars.

"Because of its easy accessibility to the general public, for very stupid domestic issues they will just throw acid on each other," she said. "It does not only destroy a person's face but it destroys a person's life."

Also key would be the introduction of a law requiring attackers to pay for their victims' painful and expensive treatment and counseling.

The Acid Survivors Foundation has been pushing for such laws for years, but now hopes a bill will be tabled in parliament this month.

"They should, with relevant amendments, pass it unanimously and we don't expect the government to unnecessarily delay the process or create any blocks," said parliamentarian Marvi Memon, acknowledging the process could take months.

Without Farhat, these steps may never have been made, and she remains dedicated to helping other victims, coaching Bibi through her treatments and helping her come to terms with her future.

"I encourage other acid attack victims and tell them that they should continue fighting for their rights and should not hesitate to come out of their homes, they should come forward," Farhat said.