

A full-page photograph of Chris Powell, a very muscular man, in a gym setting. He is wearing red shorts and is in a squatting position, holding a barbell with weights. The background is a grey wall with horizontal lines. On the left side, there is a large white text overlay.

**CROSSFIT
FOR THE
MASSES**

If you want proof that anyone can do CrossFit, look no further than ABC's *Extreme Weight Loss*. For the past five seasons, trainer Chris Powell has used CrossFit to bring broken people back from the brink. That's no accident. By his own admission, Powell has drunk deep of the CrossFit Kool-Aid and has used it exclusively in his personal programming since 2008. We sat down with him to hear the details of his own fitness journey.

BY JORDANA BROWN
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CHRIS POWELL

believes passionately in two things: the ability of the human mind and body to transform and CrossFit. He came by these beliefs over the course of a long career in the fitness industry and now envisions them to great success on ABC's Extreme Weight Loss, the show on which he and his wife Heidi Powell guide morbidly obese people through what they call a transformation journey, a grueling experience that involves a lot of exercise, learning an entirely new way of eating and dumping a ton of emotional baggage.

The result is that people who once could barely move lose close to half their bodyweight — often upward of 150 pounds — in the span of a year. And at the center of that process is CrossFit.

CrossFit is very much at the center of Powell's life, too, but it wasn't always that way. His own fitness journey began in high school.

I was without a doubt the tiniest kid in school growing up, and we're talking from kindergarten through high school. I didn't hit my growth spurt until junior year of high school, and that lent itself to a fair share of bullying and created image issues for me when I was growing up. But it really made an impact when I tried out for football my sophomore year. I loved football more than anything, but I was the smallest kid on that field by at least 25 or 30 pounds, and within two weeks, these kids quickly let me know that I was not going to be a part of their team. It was my first year at a new school, we had just moved, and I wanted to be part of that crowd, I wanted to be popular, I wanted to play the sport that I was so passionate about. So my parents would drive me to camp every day, and every day I would come home just beat up. I spent half my time at football camp on my back, looking up at the sky trying to count the stars. After two weeks of that, I quit. That's something I still regret to this day — that I quit football.

On about the third day of

school, I came home and all the furniture was cleared out of our living room and there was a weight set right there in the middle of the floor — and the TV, thank goodness the TV was still there. So I found creative ways to sit on

the weight set and watch my favorite television shows for a couple of weeks until I was like, *Well, I might as well give this thing a try.* I found myself underneath the bench press, you know, struggling to get the bar — just the bar — up. After a couple of weeks, it became a challenge. I tried to do five, I'd try to do eight and then I'd try to do 10. And sure enough, it became easier and easier, and then the challenge became how much more can I do every single time and it just became this progressive overload. It was wild because after about two months of that, I was looking in the bathroom mirror, you know, scrawny 10th-grade kid, and I'm flexing in the mirror and I saw a muscle.

And that was it.



