

JOE WICKS IS NOT THE MESSIAH

Words Joel Snape Photography Steve Neaves

...but he might be the saviour fitness needs. *MF* meets the man revolutionising the body transformation industry, and gets his 15-step plan for salvation - as tested by 30,000 true believers >



If you've seen Joe Wicks online, you might not even recognise him in real life. When the camera's on, he's all intensity, all the time - crooning songs to his window boxes, flinging Uncle Ben's rice into the microwave (and across the room) with a 'Wallop!' or asking pedestrians if they're 'keen to get lean'. The sorts of people who commission TV shows and sign publishing deals are calling him the Jamie Oliver of the Vine generation, a labrador-haired charmer bringing fitness advice to the masses in six-second bursts.

In person, he's a little bit more quiet. Well, actually a *lot* more quiet.

'It's a character,' says Wicks, between dangling off a scaffold pole and doing Superman press-ups on the floor at the MF shoot. 'I'm not mental all the time. I started out quite quiet and shy,

WICKS TIP #1
PREP LIKE A BOSS

'It's the one thing you can do to take control straight away. Just spend half an hour to an hour a night cooking your meals for the next day so you never have to grab stuff on the go.'

WICKS TIP #2

TWEET YOUR PROGRESS

'It's like having a community behind you.'

and then I realised that people like the catchphrases, "Bosh!" all that.'

Whatever it is, it's working. If he isn't already, he's going to be a multi-millionaire by the end of this year.

LIKE HEAVEN

Wicks is the leader - popularity-wise, at least - of a new generation of trainers and nutritionists democratising fitness by posting advice for free, producing content daily and racking up 'Likes' in the thousands. Other people do workouts, training tips or selfies: the Wicks signature at @thebodycoach is the #LeanIn15, a healthy recipe that takes under 15 minutes to cook, delivered via 15-second video, and accompanied by Wicks' signature high-energy instructions.

His catchphrases, 'Get your nuts in', 'Guilty!' and, of course, 'Midget trees!' (Wicks-speak for broccoli) are already the stuff of internet legend, and his use of Lucy Bee coconut oil is so well-established that he's signed a deal with the brand. It's exhausting to watch, but easy to remember, and share, and Like. And in certain circles, that's more valuable than money.

FOLLOW MAN

People are calling Wicks an overnight sensation, but that isn't entirely fair. He did a degree in sports science almost a decade ago, spent some time planning to be a PE teacher, then started his personal

training career in 2010, running a boxing boot camp called Rumble In The Park. He's been on Twitter since 2013, hashtagging his first workouts #TeamLean13 - but it's on Instagram that he's exploded.

He got serious about the photo-sharing service in January 2014 when it started allowing video content, posting the high-speed recipe and workout videos that have become his signature. It took him, he says, around six months of relentless content-sharing, putting out three videos a day while his friends told him he was wasting his time and 'nobody was listening', to hit 50,000 followers. As we go to press, he's got 388,000 - a decent chunk of whom have already upgraded to his 'Shift, Shape and Sustain' plan, a tailored 90-day programme that costs £147. Right now, he's selling 200-300 copies every day.

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WICKS TIP #3

EAT MORE FAT

'You should get most of your energy from it - it's got more per gram than carbs. Stock up on grass-fed butter, nuts and avocados.'



HOW TO MASTER INSTAGRAM

By a man on the fast track to a seven-figure follower total



BE REGULAR

'Post at the same times of day, and post every day. I post three times a day.' It doesn't have to be complex: Instagram lets you edit your videos in-app, so you can shoot your breakfast prep and post the video before you take the first bite.



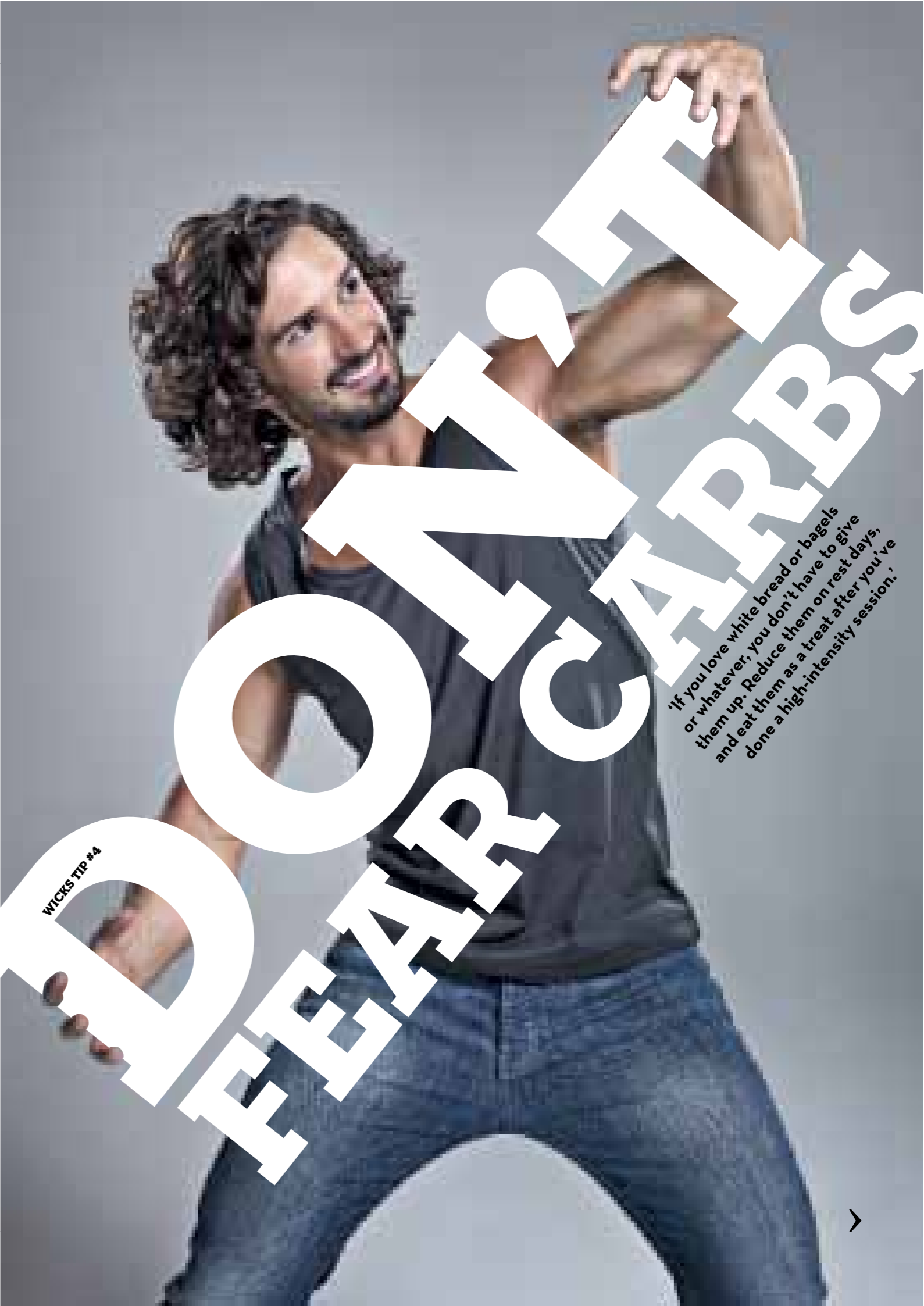
KEEP IT FREE

Posting things on Instagram is not a get-rich-quick scheme. 'I was doing free content for six months before I started asking people for money. Keep putting stuff out there, keep it consistent, and then when you ask people for something they'll be more likely to respond.'



BE YOURSELF

Wicks might be high-energy on-screen, but it's not make-believe. 'My personality on Instagram is an exaggeration of the real me, but it's stuff I care about. Make people laugh, don't preach at them.' If you're pretending to care about something you don't, it'll be obvious.



'If you love white bread or bagels or whatever, you don't have to give them up. Reduce them on rest days, and eat them as a treat after you've done a high-intensity session.'

WICKS TIP #4



WICKS TIP #5

TRAIN WITHOUT BREAKFAST

'I train fasted a lot - it gets you burning fat at the start of the day, and you can refuel with breakfast afterwards. Try overnight oats - put some porridge oats, almond milk and whey protein in a shaker, let it soak overnight and then whack it in the microwave in the morning.'

WICKS TIP #6

GO MAD FOR COCONUT OIL

'I've cooked almost everything with it, ever since university. It's full of omega 3s and it's a stable fat, so it's perfect for stir-fries.'

WICKS TIP #7

KEEP A FOOD PLANNER

'Plan when to train and when to eat. If you're having a night out, either train that day or plan to go low-carb when you eat.'



WICKS TIP #8

TURN UP THE VOLUME

'I like German Volume Training - ten sets of ten reps - because it's a good, structured way to get a lot of work done. People usually do it with bench pressing or deadlifts, but depending on your strength levels most moves will work - do it with press-ups or lunges.'

WICKS TIP #9

DRINK MORE WATER

'I ask clients on the 90-day programme to drink anywhere from two to four litres a day. It keeps you energised and keeps all your body's processes online.'

WICKS TIP #10

EAT MORE

'If you get your food from good clean sources, you can eat 2,700 calories a day and still burn fat - and you'll have enough energy for the rest of the day. Don't starve yourself.'

LEAN AND CLEAN

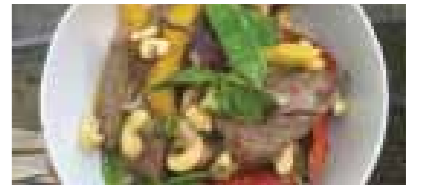
Keep it simple in the kitchen with a day of eating Wicks-style



BREAKFAST Protein Pancakes

1 banana / 1 whole egg / 1 scoop of whey protein / 2tbsp Greek yogurt / Berries / Squeeze of honey / 1tsp coconut oil

- Put the banana, egg and protein in a blender and blend to make batter.
- Heat the oil in a pan and pour batter in.
- Cook each side for one minute.
- Serve topped with yogurt, berries and honey.



LUNCH Beef and cashew Thai red curry

1tbsp coconut oil / 1 red onion, sliced / 2tbsp red Thai curry paste / 200g sirloin steak, sliced / Mixed peppers, sliced / Mange tout / 100g coconut milk / 30g cashew nuts / Fresh basil, torn

- Heat the coconut oil in a wok.
- Add the red onion and red curry paste and cook briefly.
- Add the steak and cook for two minutes.
- Add the peppers and veg, then add the coconut milk and simmer for four minutes.
- Serve topped with cashews and basil.



DINNER Chicken and pesto tagliatelle

30g tagliatelle / 1tbsp coconut oil / 200g chicken breast / Handful of baby tomatoes / 2tbsp green pesto / 20g pine nuts / Fresh basil, torn

- Boil the pasta in a pan.
- Heat the coconut oil into a wok, then add the chicken, season and cook for three to four minutes.
- Add the baby tomatoes, then combine with the pasta and stir in the pesto.
- Serve topped with pine nuts and fresh basil.

WICKS TIP #11

**KEEP
WORKOUTS
SHORT**

'I'm all about intensity over duration - less than 30 minutes is fine. You can do the most simple stuff at home: do 30 seconds of burpees, rest 45 seconds, 30 seconds of sprint high-knees, rest 45 seconds, then repeat the whole thing for 15 minutes. Done!'

WICKS TIP #12

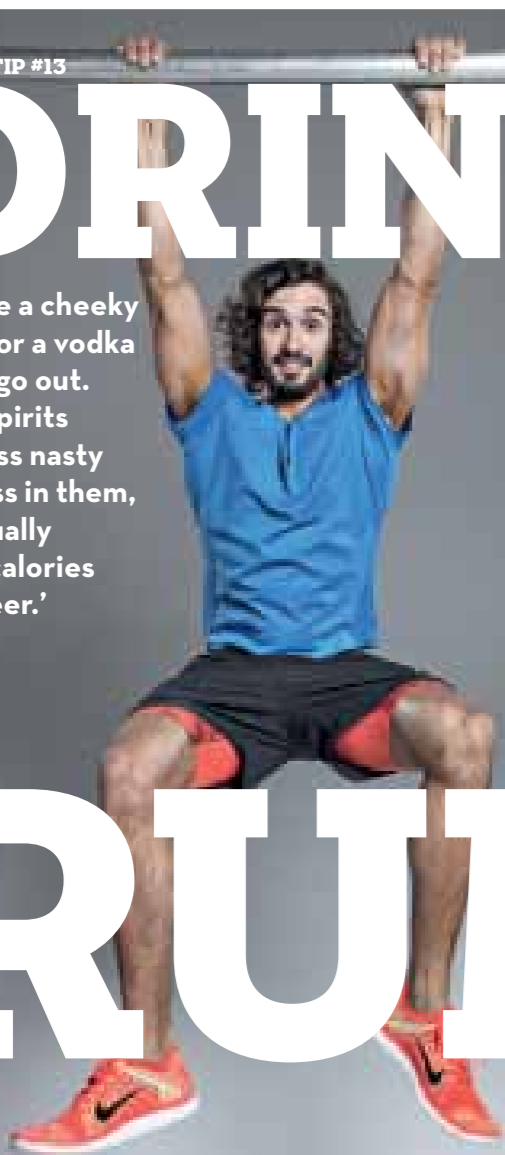
**GET OFF THE
SAD
STEP**

'That's what I call scales. They're so negative. You can do everything right all day, or wake up feeling full of energy, then you step on the scales, see you've put on a kilo, and it totally changes your mood. Get rid of them.'

WICKS TIP #13

DRINK

'I'll have a cheeky mojito or a vodka when I go out. Clear spirits have less nasty business in them, and usually fewer calories than beer.'

RUM

WICKS TIP #14

**HAVE
DAYS
OFF**

'If you're an athlete then, yeah, I don't have a problem with you training every day, but for most people it makes more sense to train four or five days a week. Have a couple of days off a week to recharge, do your shopping and prep your food.'

'People take about four to six weeks to convert,' says Wicks, who's oddly calm for a man bringing in Premier League footballer money. 'They follow for a while, get some advice, and go "OK, this guy's legit", and then they take the plunge. A lot of them are referrals - mums and daughters doing the plan, or people being encouraged by friends. One entire office of 60 people did it.'

THE NET RESULT

The key, of course, is that people get results: as well as recipes, Wicks' social media feeds are jammed with side-shots of people on their fourth, eighth or 12th week of the plan, usually in *much* better shape. 'Most of them have done diets before,' says Wicks. 'But diets just don't work. This is supposed to be different and enjoyable. I'm about getting people to eat more, but eat better, and getting them to do exercise that makes them feel good about themselves. When I trained as a PT, all the information was so out of date, old science, the Food Pyramid - it's not stuff that works. This is about letting people know that they don't have to give up the food they like. I'll go to Burger & Lobster or Nando's, I'll have a mojito. I'm getting people who have

tried 1,400-calorie diets to a point where they're burning fat eating 2,600 calories a day. It's a lifestyle, not a short-term thing.'

Wicks isn't doing anything revolutionary or unsustainable. What he's done is repackage up-to-date training and nutritional theory for the masses, combining German Volume Training and high-intensity intervals with nutrient timing and entry-level cookery to excellent effect. It's not rocket science, or even intermittent fasting - it's simple, effort-efficient stuff that works for people with normal lives. Next up, says Wicks, is getting the rest of the world involved.

Unsurprisingly, he and his team are already having meetings with TV production companies. He's been offered a lot of guest appearances, but he's holding out for his own show. 'I'd like to do something with different

demographics - obese people one week, ballet dancers the next.' It's the sensible evolution of Wicks the brand, and you get the feeling that - considering how much money he's already making - spreading the word is more important than getting rich and famous.

FUTURE PROOF

'I used to work as a teaching assistant in Surbiton,' he says. 'The packed lunches there were a joke. Nutella on white bread, Kit-Kats, crisps. If the parents don't give a shit, then the kids haven't got a chance. But if you can get to parents, then there's going to be a trickle-down effect. If you can make the kids laugh, get them involved, send them out of school knowing how to cook, that's a start.'

Next year, he says, he wants to do more meet-and-greets, talking to fans and the

mainstream media about health, getting the message across. 'I can understand it from other people's point of view,' he says. 'A lot of people just don't want to do exercise, or don't want to be preached at, and that's fine. What I want to say is: "Don't give up on yourself. Don't just resign yourself to being overweight, to this life that's not as good as it could be."'

That's for the future. Right now, though, Wicks is spreading the word just fine, reaching his audience in a way that was impossible just a couple of years ago. Can a generation of Instagram experts solve the obesity crisis where successive governments and thinktanks have failed? It's too early to say - but if they do, then Wicks will probably be leading the charge, one energetic recipe at a time. Bosh!

WICKS TIP #15

TAKE PHOTOS REGULARLY

'This isn't about vanity. If you look in the mirror every day, it's easy to think you aren't changing shape, but when people take photos they're always amazed by the difference their work's making. Take one progress shot every four weeks, using the same angle and the same lighting so you can see the difference.'