

Episode 016: Habits for the New Year – What I'm Doing Differently in 2018

Hey, hey, hey, what's up guys! Coach T. here from TD Fitness coming at you again in 2018! This is the first week of the year and the first podcast of the year for TD Fitness, so I am excited. I will tell you that the weather here is kind of crazy in the Northern Virginia/DC area. It's pretty cold temperatures—down in the in the single digits, but we are staying warm and doing what we need to do here.

I am excited because I got to come home a little bit early today and take my oldest daughter out sledding for the first time, so it's been a good day! I'm excited about the weather, I'm excited about the year, and I'm excited for some big things happening in TD Fitness this year!

We are currently in the first week of the *FitLife program*, which launched on January 1st. So we have several participants there and things are going well. I just want to give a shout out to those folks continue to do well. Continue to progress through the program, you guys are doing great and I'm here with you all the way!

So, what I wanted to do tonight in this episode was to tell you some of the things that are “healthy habits” that I am ditching in 2018, and also give you some of my new habits for the New Year. I want to explain the why behind these things and maybe explain a little bit about how you can do those things—ways to help you incorporate some of those healthy habits.

I'll start by saying, it's typical at the turn of the new year to have resolutions. There are a lot of things that we want to change, right? It's a new start, a new beginning, a healthy start, and we have so much that we want to do.

But my advice to you, and my wife just reminded me of this before I started recording here, I wanted to relay that you shouldn't try to bite off too much. You should try to start small. If you try to do too much at any given time then it's really just going to be overwhelming. You're going to be overwhelmed with all of the things that you feel like you need to improve upon, and really, you can't focus on the one or two things that you *really* need to improve upon.

So, by cutting out some of the other chaff—some of the other things that can just distract you from your primary goals—you can actually be a lot more efficient, a lot more effective, and can reach those goals in a timelier manner.

So that's one of the things that I want you to consider. What I've done here tonight, when I talk about some of the things that I'm adding in 2018 in my continued quest for healthy living, is I've kind of broken it down into three

categories: I picked one in the category of mindset, one in the category of fitness, and one in the category of nutrition.

Again, you don't want to try to do too much. You don't want to have a laundry list of nutrition things or diet things that you want to try to improve upon, you want to just try to pick *one* thing initially and either build on that or, once you get it dialed in, move on to the next habit. That's the big premise behind the *FitLife* program when it comes to habit implementation, and that's what I try to teach people.

So, I'll start with my mindset change for 2018, and it really speaks to the mindfulness and meditation side of things. I've never been one for meditation. I've never done meditation—I'm not really schooled on how to do that. But, for me it really boils down to some kind of quiet time that I try to incorporate at least a couple of times during the week. The way I do that is I'm usually the first one to wake up in the house most days of the week. That is kind of some time for me to reflect, maybe think about some goals I have for the day or for the week, and do my daily devotional—typically in the mornings before the rest of the family gets up. But I want to be more intentional about being mindful and really incorporating some type of stretching or a yoga routine and do more of that this year, because it's important. Here's why: the more I learn about the effects of stress on being overweight and being obese, and the tendency to stay overweight or obese, and the way that stress kind of contributes to that, the more I understand that we need to work as hard as we can to reduce some of those stressors in our lives.

It's going to be impossible to get rid of all of the stresses that we have, I mean stresses are all around us and I think that we live in a time where literally there's more stress today than any other time in history. I mean, when you think about things that aren't even really obvious to us... Things like: your phone dings because you have a text message or an email. All of those little things that when you feel the need to check or get the urge to respond, those all add to the level of stress in our lives, even though it doesn't seem like it. You know, we are always tied to our electronic devices and there's always this need we feel to answer to others—to provide for others—whether it's at work, whether it's at home.

But stresses are a part of life, I understand that, and I'm not saying that we should try to eliminate stresses, because that's impossible. But, we can and should try to do what we can do to minimize stress in healthy ways.

There's an entire lesson devoted to this in the *FitLife* program and that lesson actually takes place this week in *FitLife*, so that's what some of the participants are doing on the back side—those who are enrolled in the *FitLife* program. It's that important. It's that important that I decided to put an entire lesson in the program related to stress.

So again, one of my goals for this year is to be more mindful and for me that's going to take the form of some deliberate yoga type stretching exercises, and the added benefit there is that you get the flexibility benefit. So that's one of the things that I want to try to do in in 2018 on the fitness side of things.

You know, I've never really had an issue with maintaining a fitness regimen, particularly during the times of the year when I'm training for a race. I'm usually able to stay pretty consistent when it comes to that, and even in the "offseason" I call it, I'm fairly consistent with exercise and working out. I enjoy it and most of you know that I've developed a series of workouts that essentially last for the entire year, workouts that you can pretty much do at home or anywhere when you're traveling: in a hotel, on the road, a lot of body weight type exercises and things just to kind of keep you going. So I will sometimes fall back on those even if I don't have time to make it to the gym to work out.

But if you remember, think back to episode number 6 of the TD Fitness podcast, that one was "Be Fit While You Sit." I talked about some of the inherent dangers in living a sedentary lifestyle, and for me that's where I am when it comes to work, because I'm at a job where I really don't have to get up to do anything, no one expects me to get up to do anything. I'm sitting behind a computer and I can essentially do everything from behind the computer.

Now, it wouldn't be very smart of me to do that because that's not the healthiest way to go about things right? So what I was able to do, and I'm very happy about this, was the place where I work has agreed to buy a stand-up workstation for me. So I'll be able to actually stand up for a lot of the day at work and do the things that I need to do on the computer. That's huge, because if you think back, if you remember in episode number 6, I talked about how one of the key risks that's been identified in healthy living and one of the indicators or factors that leads to being overweight and being obese, is not just a lack of exercise but it's a lack of a movement period. So when we're hunched over our computers sitting at a desk all day without taking breaks every hour or so just to stand up, just to walk around a little bit, that can be very detrimental to your health.

So I'm glad that I was able to get a stand up workstation at work. I don't have it there yet but I'm told it's on the way! Also, I will say this: my wonderful, wonderful wife Maria got me a great gift for Christmas, and that is a stand up work desk/stand up workstation here at the house. I'll post a link to this particular one because it's a smaller model. It's not the big robust one that costs you somewhere around a hundred dollars that you'd have on a desk at work or something like that. This one's smaller, more compact, and I can actually move it around to different locations in the house. My laptop fits perfectly on it and I've got plenty of room for a mousepad and so forth, and I can rest my hands.

So I have a stand-up desk at work, and one here at the house. I am all set on the fitness front for being healthier and more productive when I'm working. I'm not standing up right now...I'm actually sitting at the desk because that just works better for the recording and the camera angles and so forth, but I've absolutely been using this stand-up desk here at the house and I'm excited about it.

So, moving on to nutrition! All right, for this one I decided to replace coffee with green tea. Now, before I go too much further another thing I want to say about all of these habits is it's not all or none. I'm not cutting out coffee in 2018. I'm sure I'm going to drink some coffee in 2018. My point is that I am going to try to replace coffee with green tea more often than not. Here's why.

So coffee is not bad for you, let me start by saying that too, Coffee contains antioxidants. There's a lot of goodness in there and the caffeine is not as bad for you as we once thought. So coffee is not bad for you. It's got some cognitive benefits and some research shows that it even guards against disease. So coffee in itself, again, not bad.

But for me, coffee tends to be a mechanism for consuming more sugar. Alright? Because I am NOT the guy that's going to grab a medium or tall black coffee and just drink the whole thing. I have done that, but I don't prefer to drink it that way. I do like espresso, but I can finish a small cup of espresso in like a minute, but I like to sip some hot drinks for a while...you know? Especially in the cold weather like we're having here now.

So that's why I decided to go back to green tea, and I've always liked tea. I just kind of got out of the habit of drinking it, but green tea is good for you too. Very good for you! It has several antioxidants and some studies have even shown that green tea contributes to weight loss, albeit minimally, so don't think you're going to just drink green tea and lose a lot of weight. But, it does have a lot of positive attributes, so that is something that I'd like to do on the nutrition front when it comes to improving my healthy habits in 2018.

Now for some things that I am going to cut back on or eliminate in 2018. At the top of my list is added sugars. It's not because of what I once thought was the negative behind added sugars, and what many people still think is the negative. It's not just that it's added calories—I have an entire episode plan where I'm going to talk about the hormones insulin, cortisol, and the other hormones that kind of regulate our appetite and tell us whether or not we're full. That episode is coming up, that's an exciting one! I think it's going to be very beneficial. But for our purposes here tonight I'll tell you that added sugars raise insulin. Okay? And it's enough right now to understand that continued levels of high insulin contributes to insulin resistance, and that's a bad thing, okay? I won't get too much into the details here in this episode, but I'm going to reduce my added sugars.

The way I've tried to do that is to make at least one mindful sacrifice each day. I consider myself as someone who has a sweet tooth, so I do like sweets. I like ice cream, for example. I don't eat it every day, but you know that's something that I would try to minimize. So, the past couple of days there have been cravings for things like that, and right now I can opt for something healthier, like some chocolate-covered almonds or something like that. *Dark chocolate covered almonds, which are very good for you! But added sugars is one thing that I'm definitely trying to cut back on in 2018.

The next thing, actually the next two things, are kind of interesting because these are each things that in the past I have practiced and have told you to practice or recommended that you practice as well. The first is eating breakfast every day. If you guys have followed me for any length of time, particularly in the 2012 to 2015 time period, you know that I've preached that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It literally breaks the fast, right? And the premise behind that—or the thought process behind that—and what I thought, was that a lot of the research showed that if you can break the fast, then you're less likely to overeat at lunchtime or whenever your next meal is. But there have been numerous studies to rebut that, okay? And as it turns out, those who eat breakfast simply consume more calories per day than those who don't eat breakfast.

Now again it's not about the calories, if you go back to one of the previous episodes episode, number 13 I believe was where I talked about nutrition, you know that it's not just about the calories. But when you eat breakfast or when you snack, which is also something that I want to cut back on. that also contributes to elevated levels of insulin. It all comes back to these hormones here, so what I'd like to do in 2018 is to make breakfast optional for myself. Okay?

So, if I'm hungry, yes I'll eat something. But I really have not felt the need to eat something as soon as I wake up in the morning. I can typically—typically I'm fine until mid-morning as a matter of fact. So I no longer feel the need to put something in my stomach just because I've just woken up in the morning—just because it's breakfast time. So that's one of the things that I want to kind of be more cognizant about, and the second thing I alluded to, or the third thing I should say, is snacking—even healthy snacks throughout the day.

It's still possible to overeat even if you're eating completely healthy food, so the big thing is that I'm just going to kind of let my appetite be my guide, and over time what you find if you're eating healthy foods—you know a lot of plant-based foods: fruits, vegetables, fibrous foods, those types of things—you'll find that your desire to consume more and more starts to subside. So that's the thing if you reduce. Not “if I reduce snacking then I don't feel the need to snack as often” if that makes sense?

So those are the things that I'm going to try to cut back on in 2018. Number one being added sugars, number two being breakfast if I don't feel like eating breakfast, and the third thing: just snacking for the sake of snacking. Again, the breakfasts and the snacking pieces I think are interesting because those are both things that in the past I've said I have recommended people do: eat breakfast and snack between meals to keep the metabolism fire burning as I have explained it in the past. But the science actually supports something different, so I wanted to be sure, number one to tell you guys that, and also use myself as an example of how I'm going to change some of that in 2018.

The other thing I'll bring up too is—and this isn't as intentional, but I just noticed that I was kind of doing it already and that's this idea of a 12-hour fast. I really didn't want to use the word fast here because I don't feel like I'm educated enough on the intermittent fasting debate to advise you online yet, but here's what I'll say: when I make the decision that I don't really need to eat breakfast as soon as I wake up, what I find is that there's about 12 hours where I haven't eaten anything and don't really feel the need to eat anything except for maybe some tea or something like that, so let's say if I don't eat anything after 9:00 p.m., which is typically a good thing in my life not to eat anything after 9:00 p.m., I can go until mid-morning the next morning before I eat something for “breakfast” and before I know it I'm already at 12 hours without even eating anything.

So the benefits there for me are number one: I feel like I can get more sleep. Well, except on nights like this when I record because I have to wait till the kids go down to do this, but if I can get things done after the kids go down, which is around seven—no later than 8 o'clock—then by 9 o'clock I try to get some rest. I can get up at my normal time 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning and still get a good night's sleep. But I found that a lot of times I would just, you know, stay up and either watch something or do some work, and I'd be snacking while I was doing that. But I didn't really have the need to do that, so that's something that I wanted to try to cut out and be more deliberate about. So not eating too late at night—that 12 hour period—again it's not about reducing calories, but it's about improving my habits and being more thoughtful about what foods I consume and which foods I consume when and why.

Though, you know this, I'm not currently in the on-season—in the training season—for a race. So, I know that my calorie requirements will go up when I'm training, so I'll see how this all plays out and I'll try to keep you guys posted on how I'm able to do this, particularly when it comes to breakfast and that 12-hour period.

Again, I just wanted to share some things—some of the mindset—behind what I'm thinking as we move into 2018 and encourage you all to live your best life as well and to attack those goals that you have. Break them down, start with small incremental goals and then work up to the big ones, all right?

I know we're all busy and change is hard, especially healthy change, and especially when you're trying to change your lifestyle because you're talking long-term change in that case. But the way to do that, again, is to start small and to go little by little. One of my favorite quotes is by Seth Godin. He says that "Each of us is capable of just a little more, and, if you can do a little more, then, of course, you can repeat those things until you've done a lot more."

If you go back to episode number 1 of the *TD Fitness* podcast, I talked about how behavior defines your habits, your habits shape your lifestyle, and lifestyle determines how healthy or how unhealthy you are. So it all goes back to the habits, those small things that we do day in and day out even when we don't feel like it, *especially* when we don't feel like it. It's those things we do day in and day out that will eventually lead to long-term success.

Guys, I just want to welcome you to 2018, I wish you success in your health and fitness goals for this year, and your life goals! It's going to be a great year! I got a good feeling, all right? So that's all I have for you. You all have a blessed one, Coach T. out.