

Episode 22 – The “Minimalist” Exercise Routine That is Working for Me!

This is the TD Fitness podcast with coach T, episode number 22, the double deuce.

Welcome to the TD Fitness podcast. Giving you ways to live a healthy lifestyle without giving up the things that make life worth living. And now your host, certified health coach and personal trainer, Coach T.

Hey, what’s up guys? Coach T here from TD Fitness coming at you again on the TD Channel. This is episode number 22. In this episode we’re talking about the minimalist exercise routine that is working for me.

There’s so much data, so much information out there on how to exercise, on what to do for exercise, how much to do, when to do it, what types of exercise are best. For all of that information that’s provided by multiple sources, some better than others, there still seems to be twice as many questions. I think the reason is because there are a number of different answers.

There’s no perfect workout or exercise routine. There're many routines that can and will work for you. What I aim to show here is an example of my routine, but more importantly, I want to explain how and why I settled on this particular routine at this particular time of my life. I think this is important because exercise and physical activity is such an important component of your overall health, no matter who you are. The take away here is that you have to get personal with this. Much like your diet, what you do needs to be right for you.

Of course, there’s a freebie associated with this episode. It’s a sample week of my exercise routine. You can download that at tdfitness.net/022download. I think the best way to start out with this topic is to break down the title. The minimalist exercise routine that’s working for me right now, because each part of the title really speaks to a different portion of what we’re trying to answer here.

I call it the minimalist exercise routine, but in reality it’s not necessarily a minimalist routine but rather what I feel has been, it’s a routine that’s been scaled back to an extent because it’s such a busy time in my life, and we’re all busy. We have competing priorities. Many of us have full-time jobs. My family is in full swing ring now with a five-year-old and a two-year-old. They absolutely keep us busy and keep us moving, and that’s a good thing, it’s a blessing.

We like to travel for both work and leisure. In fact, we just returned from a leisure trip this past weekend. We’re very active in the church. We like to socialize with friends and family. By the way, we’re running this business called TD Fitness. It creates some busy times.

For me, it comes down to prioritizing the things in life that are the most important to me at any particular time. Exercise is always an important component of my life, but there are times when I intentionally move exercise lower on the priority list because there are things that can and will come before that. My family will always come before exercising or going to the gym for example. I also

understand that the long-term effects of exercise will ultimately make my family life much better because hopefully I'm around longer to enjoy the family. That's the little bit of the minimalist portion of this topic.

This is an exercise routine, the minimalist exercise routine. We've talked about exercise many times in the past here on the TD Fitness podcast, and it gets to this point of how important of a role exercise plays in your life. If you think back to episode number 13, where I talked about, the title of that episode was 'the surprising truth about exercise for weight loss'. What exercise doesn't do and what it's good for. Listen to that and really listen to the portion where I talk about what exercise is good for it.

There are so many benefits to exercise: heart health, strength, mobility, stability, less pain. There are so many things, those are just a few, but so many positive benefits from exercise. Again, you can check out that episode at tdfitness.net/013, that's episode number 13. It's important to incorporate exercise into your lifestyle. In this episode I also want to point out that this is what's working for me, and this is really an important point. What we're talking about here is, the fact that it's working for me because it fits my life.

For example, one of the things that I try to do with all of my exercise routines is, meet the minimum recommended amounts of exercise set forth by the department of health and human services. A general guideline is about 150 minutes of low intensity exercise each week or 75 minutes of intense exercise each week. Those recommendations, I feel are fairly good standard, something good to shoot for. You may have your own goals, and in order to achieve those goals, it requires that you take some time to plan.

One of the things I've learned over my career as a personal trainer and health coach is that, being smart about the type of exercise you do is just as important a part of how much you do. It's just as important as how much you do. Next week when we talk a little bit more about a particular component of my exercise routine, you'll understand just what I mean. I think that exercising smarter can reduce a lot of the time you may feel you need to devote to exercise, so working smarter not harder and not longer.

Finally, wrapping up this titled description, this is the routine that's working for me right now. There are different times, different phases in my life where I know I need to change up my routine. I change it up from time to time, and what I'm presenting to you here in this episode is again, what's working for me right now. It will change in the next couple of months, but right now this is what's working. I want to give you some insight into how I determine what I do, and where my routines fit in my overall plan and my current lifestyle.

In order to understand my philosophy, you have to have an idea of how I frame my goals, because that's going to determine ultimately the types of exercise that I perform. I have a pretty clear goal form one year to the next. Really, it's like two goals but it's driven by the first one, which is to complete one long-distance endurance race every year. For me that takes the form of a 70.3-mile half Ironman race. I try to do one of those every year.

My training plan for that is only six months long. It's a plan that I developed, but for the other six months of the year I'm really what you would call maintenance mode. I want to maintain an adequate level of fitness, so that when I start training for the triathlon, I don't have to start from scratch.

The maintenance mode season, those six months of the year where I'm not actively training for the race, provides a bit of a break for my body. I'm not getting any younger. I still exercise regularly during those maintenance months, but the workouts are shorter. There are no four-hour bike rides, for example.

These two seasons of the year mean that I have to have two different exercise approaches. Depending on the time of the year it is, during triathlon season, notice I don't call it race season because I am not racing, I'm just exercising. A lot of people in the race are racing, that's not me.

In the next episode, we're actually going to talk about the triathlon training I do and I'll explain how you too can complete a long-distance endurance event. I think you'll be surprised at just how attainable and achievable that goal is. Be sure to check out the next episode, episode number 23, next week when I release it.

In this episode we're talking about what I call the off-season or the maintenance period. My goal for these six months where I'm not actively training for a long race, is to maintain a level of fitness that keeps me fit for one, keeps me feeling good and meets the recommendation set forth for exercise. It keeps me feeling good, but it's also a balance between exercising on a regular basis and making time for all those other things that I have to fit in my life, those things that I mentioned earlier.

Within each of these two sessions or these two seasons I should say, these two seasons of the year, I break my exercise routines into four-week increments. Then, I'll add an intentional fifth week for downtime, for rest and recovery. All I try to do is complete what I call a good week of exercise followed by another good week, and another one and another one for four weeks in a row. Sometimes I'm successful with that and sometimes I'm not.

That fifth week I can use to either catch up on a workout or two that I might have missed that I really wanted to get in, or I can take some time to just focus on mobility or stretching. Many times I try to make that week a recovery week by getting a massage. In fact, I just did that last week. I find that having that week where there are no planned workouts also allows for just the events of life. Maybe I'm travelling or I'm planning to have a busy week, I can move that recovery week and live guilt free, because I don't feel like I'm skipping workouts. That fifth week is really meant, for me, for adding some breathing room and promoting rest and recovery.

If you go back to episode number nine, it was called 'Rest and Recovery: Effective Strategies to Healthy Living and Longevity', I talk a lot about rest, recovery, breathing room and intentional downtime, some white space if you will in your schedule.

One of the guiding principles of my workout routines is that nothing is continuous. I don't want to feel like I have to exercise week after week without a break. If I feel like I have to stick with either the same plan, or that there's just no end in sight, that just demotivates me. That's just how my mind works. That's the type of person I am.

I try to operate in short blocks, those shorter spats towards my long-term goals. You've heard me talk before about goal setting and breaking down those long-term goals into shorter more manageable bit sized pieces. That's exactly what I do with my exercise routine. I will work for four weeks on, I'll take a fifth week off and start again with four weeks on, then a week off and that's how the cycle continues.

Ecclesiastics chapter three says, "To everything there is a season." I have a training season and a maintenance season. I have a four week on season and a recovery week season for muscle and mind recovery. These things are all seasonal. I also don't plan to exercise every day even during the four weeks that I'm on. I aim to workout on the majority of the days of the week. Typically, my goal is five days a week.

Sometimes I'll combine workouts, sometimes I'll split them up, sometimes they're intense, sometimes they're lower intensity or just stretching and many times they're really short. I don't bind myself to the same types of workouts over and over again. I try to break it up, to change it up, to keep it lively and to keep my motivation high.

Now, as you may have already noticed, I tend to think in single weeks or week by week when it comes to my exercise goals. That's an important point, because it speaks to the personalization of my particular approach. My approach to scheduling and completing my exercise sessions.

I like the weekly approach, I really do because I find that my calendar is best planned from week to week. Because of this, the things that fit into my calendar to include exercise, it's just easier to plan for, it's easier to schedule, it's easier for me to accomplish because a week at a time is not so far out that I can't plan for it, but it also allows for a bit of planning as things start to get firmed up on my calendar.

From week to week our schedules are so packed here in this household that it's really hard to tell what we're doing. Typically, on the weekend or on Sunday night, I'll take some time and look at what I have planned for the week and then try to fit in those exercise components where I can. Again, sometimes I'm successful at this, sometimes I'm not but at least I have a goal. A very short and near-term goal that I can work towards.

That brings us to exactly what it is that I incorporate into my exercise routine. Just like I have to prioritize where exercise fits in with respect to the other things going on in my life. I also prioritize what I do for exercise. How do I do that? How do I prioritize? What types of exercise do I view as the most important?

Well, when I can't necessarily accomplish all the things that I want to do from an exercise standpoint from week to week, I do have a general idea as to the types of exercise that I feel are most important for me. Again, at this particular point in my life. The first one, you may be surprised to see this, but the first one for me is going to be some type of stretching or mobility work.

The importance of adequate mobility and flexibility I just can't emphasize this enough particularly for those who are sedentary, who don't exercise at all. If you incorporate some stretching or mobility work a couple of times a week, you'll start to see pain subside, you'll start to feel better,

you'll move better, you'll be more limber. The benefits of stretching and having adequate mobility, it really is key. It's fundamental.

Mobility has to precede stability. Mobility has to come before stability. That's one of the tenets from Grey Cook, who is a physical therapist, author and creator of the Functional Movement Screen. He discusses that in his book entitled 'Movement'. It's the fact that mobility has to precede stability. What that means is, if you want to be stable in your movement and exercise patterns, then you have to have an adequate range of motion first. Otherwise, you're going to compensate and risk injury. That's why stretching is so important.

If I can't do anything else for a week because of business, or because of other things competing for my time, what I try to do is incorporate some solid stretching into my week. The way I do this in a normal week is to have a dedicated day for stretching or some type of mobility workout. Typically, it's about a 45-minute stretch session or a yoga routine, something like that. Then at least one other shorter day during the week of stretches and mobility work. Typically, that workout or that stretch session will occur after one of my workouts, when my muscles are loose, limber and warm.

One resource that I've been using lately is a site called ROMWOD. It stands for Range of Motion Workout of The Day. You can check that out at romwod.com. It's a subscription service. They offer a seven-day free trial, and then I think it's 14 dollars a month after that. For me, that's a pretty nominal fee and they basically provide a stretching workout every day. They're only about 15 to 20 minutes long on most days and then they provide one longer routine each week, which is more of like a 45-minute stretch session. You should check that out if it's something that interests you.

I just feel so much better from week to week by doing some of those stretching workouts. Again, I'll do that ROMWOD routine or some type of yoga, either a class or just a yoga routine that I download on the internet or watch on YouTube. All of those fit the bill for me. All of those things benefit me because I am not the most flexible individual.

Again, mobility has to precede stability. Stretching, mobility and flexibility work is so important. You can check out more or hear more information on that in episode number seven, where I talk about some of the things that relate to having adequate flexibility. I just find that as I get older, flexibility, mobility and stretching is so important.

Now, after stretching, the next most important thing to me is going to be cardiovascular activity, because you have to take care of the ticker, you have to take care of your heart. What I will typically aim for is at least an hour of, at least a half hour I should say, of intervals and a steady state cardiovascular activity workout. With the intervals, you don't need a lot of time here. Intervals are taxing and they take a lot to perform especially if you're not used to doing them. If you're performing a pretty intense interval workout, you'll understand very quickly that you don't need a lot of time to do that and you will need adequate recovery.

I try to include at least two cardiovascular sessions each week, one of which is an interval session, and another of which is a steady state cardio session. Typically, the cardio session will be 30 to 45 minutes, sometimes I even go up or towards an hour. Again, this is during the maintenance months, my off season, not when I'm training for the triathlon.

After cardiovascular work, the next most important thing to me after stretching and cardio is going to be core work. What I do each week is one very short dedicated core session per week. I'm talking short like in the 10 to 15-minute range. I wrote a post a few years back about training your core the right way. That's one of my favorite posts, and that one is one of the more popular ones on the TD Fitness site. I talk about how core stability is achieved by training your core as a whole the same way it acts as a whole to provide stability during activity. I'll link to that in the show notes.

You don't need to spend hours doing crunches train your core, in fact you don't want to do that. Again, refer to that article, training your core the right way. There's some very good information in there. Essentially, when I created my E-book, it's called TD Fit. A complete fitness blueprint for time-crunched individuals. When I created that E-book, I also created a six-month series of workouts to accompany it. Part of that series is a core sequence consisting of four different core routines. I use that. I alternate those four core routines and perform one each week. You can do most of them at home without any added equipment. There are a lot of plank and bridge exercises and symmetric work in there, which is good for the core. It's a good way to train it.

Finally, I'll perform strength training when it's important, which is important I should say as well. When it comes to prioritizing strength training with stretching, and cardiovascular activity, and your core, I think strength comes in at the bottom. I'm not trying to minimize the importance of strength and resistance training, it certainly has a place. There are definitely times in life where strength training is going to be important than other times. For me, strength training is a component of my overall plan, it's not the entire focus of my plan like it is for some people.

An important thing to remember is that, strength training doesn't necessarily mean you have to go to the gym and lift a lot of weight. Most of what I do, particularly during the triathlon season, is calisthenics work. It's just body weight exercises. Things like body weight squats, pushups. I do a lot of that, and you don't need any extra equipment or material. You can knock it up really quickly and you can usually do it at home.

I want to incorporate a couple of resources here for you when it comes to the different types of exercise that I use in my routine. I mentioned the Fit Life program, I've mentioned it several times before. The Fit Life program is my signature program when it comes to behavior change, implementing healthy habits and really the health coaching service that I provide. Part of that program, along with the habit tracking and the habit implementation portion, is a course that I developed.

That course consists of four different modules one of which is a fitness, physical activity and exercise module. That particular module has seven lessons that I created and recorded that are dedicated to each of the areas of flexibility and mobility, intervals, core training, strength and resistance training, you name it. If you do want more info on that, I'll include a link in the show notes to the Fit Life program. You can go to tdfitness.net/fitlife. We go very in depth on a lot of these things that I'm mentioning here.

Then as I mentioned earlier, my E-book called TD Fit, a complete fitness blueprint for time-crunched individuals, that breaks down each one of these types of exercise and the importance of each. You can download that for free. I'll link to that in the show notes as well.

As I wrap things up here, really the big takeaway as I stated in the beginning of the episode is that, whatever you chose it has to fit your lifestyle, otherwise you're not going to do it. Whether you like to workout early morning, or during the day, or at night, the length of time you have to devote to exercise, the number of sessions that you plan to get in each week, it's all personal preference. Do you have access to a gym? Do you want to workout at home? Do you prefer working out by yourself, or do you want a partner to go with you? Do you prefer classes or not? Here I've provided an example of what it is that I do, but the real takeaway is that you have to personalize your approach. That's the one thing I want you to remember from this episode.

Before I sign off, I want to remind you that there's a freebie associated with this episode. It's the sample week of my exercise routine. You can grab that at tdfitness.net/022download. The show notes for this episode will be hang at tdfitness.net/022. Those show notes will include links to all of the references that I mentioned in the episode as well. As a final reminder, if you do like the content don't hesitate to share it. Once again, I thank you all for tuning in. I want you to have a blessed week. Coach T out.