

Episode 24 – No More Diets and Generic Exercise Plans – How to Effectively Personalize Your Plan for Healthy Living

PSA:

Whether you're starting the day off right with a healthy breakfast or fueling before a workout, the foods you choose can make a real difference. March is National Nutrition Month. This year, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics encourages everyone to go further with food. Planning meals and snacks in advance will add nutrients, save you money, and help reduce food waste. Learn more at Eatright.org, and follow [#nationalnutritionmonth](https://twitter.com/nationalnutritionmonth). A public service message from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

This is the TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T., episode number 24.

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

Hey, guys. Welcome back to the TD Fitness channel. This is episode number 24, No More Diets Or Generic Exercise Plans, How To Effectively Personalize Your Plan For Healthy Living. What's the question we're answering in this episode? I'm always trying to help you find ways to live a healthier life, and what I've found is that many people, most people actually lean towards something that has either worked for someone else, or quite frankly, something that is marketed well, so the question we're answering here is, "What will actually work for you?"

I want you to make healthy changes by forgetting what you've been told and doing what you know, and I'll explain a little bit later what I mean by that. This is important because the thing that works for you is the thing that is most sustainable, because if it's the most sustainable, then you're able to maintain it over time and stay consistent with it. We call that 'Lifestyle change', so if you're looking for ways to live healthier, not through fads or grasping for things that you hope will work, then this episode will be helpful to give you a few tangible steps on how to implement change that works for you. The takeaway here is that your personalized plan has to focus on making your positive habits healthier and more frequent or more consistent, and make your negative habits less harmful and less frequent. The roadmap we're going to kind of follow in this episode really involves three points.

The first is that everyone is different, secondly, it's the concept of incremental change, and third, I'm going to go over two pillars for personalizing your plan for healthy living. Point number one, everyone is different. I've said before that not all diets are bad, but we tend to focus on the wrong things when it comes to diets that we try to follow. We assume that diet was created for us, but it absolutely wasn't. Think about the popular diets today. Do you feel like that was created for you?

Do you feel like that was created for anyone person in particular? Most of the time, the answer is no. Diets are created and marketed so that they can be sold to a big group of people, a massive population because it's about revenue, so you have to understand. I mean, there's nothing necessarily

wrong with that, but you have to understand where they're coming from. I'm reading a book called the 'Blue Ocean Strategy'.

It's a business book, and it talks about how successful companies don't seek to compete with companies in their own market space if you will, but rather, they create new areas of the market all together. It explains that the competitive environment is deemed a red ocean when there's so much competition, and everyone is fighting for the same market shares, the same customers and things like that. The point of the book is to look for blue oceans. Meaning, try to look for something new that hasn't been done before. Create a niche or create an offshoot of something that there is not as much competition, because that's where you can excel and that's where you can make the biggest difference, and the point is to kind of chart your own territory and define your own waters, because new markets, equals new opportunities, and as the book puts it, blue oceans. I thought that as I read that, I felt like it was applicable to this topic as well because I feel like we've forced ourselves to stay bound and constrained by several existing constructs or systems for living healthier.

One is the construct or the system that says you have to lose weight. The other is that you have to cut calories. Another is that you have to eat this, and not that. When we step into these constructs, we inevitably have to play by those rules because that's how success is measured, but I go back to the point that everyone is different. Maybe cutting calories works for someone.

Maybe exercising six times a week works for someone, but what works for everyone is improving over where you are right now ever so slightly. Improve what you're doing right now. That will always be applicable no matter who you are, and it has to be personal and unique to you, and that is one way that I found that it can truly be personal and unique to you and your situation, your life, your diet. This is really what the Fit Life Program is all about. That's why I created it, trying to find a way to create a holistic system for lifestyle change that can be applied no matter what level you're at, no matter how good you think your diet is, no matter how good or bad you think your exercise habits are.

When you start with where you are right now and just try to improve, just try to make things better, that inherently creates a personalized approach to healthy living, otherwise, you try to follow the rules of the system of whatever diet you're following or whatever generic exercise plan you're following. You just try to follow those rules as closely as possible because you think, "It worked for so and so, so hopefully, it'll work for me too", but here's the thing. You are not your friend, and you're not the photoshopped model on the cover of the magazine, and you're not the bodybuilder that's paid to demonstrate that latest exercise machine on a late night infomercial. You are you, and you should start exactly where you are. You are exactly where you need to be.

That is one of the first things I tell people when we start with the Fit Life Program. You are exactly where you need to be. All of your experiences up until this point, whether you deem them successes or failures, they have helped to inform your worldview and really define where you are right now, and that's fine, because we're starting right here, so think about it. You're doing a lot of things correctly already. Whether you think so or not, you were doing a lot of things well, but there's always room for improvement.

Now, I know that there is comfort in having a system of rules to follow. I mean, that's why people come to me for exercise plans, right? Some people just don't want to think about what they need to do, but they would rather just be told what to do. Those aren't generic exercise plans. Those are personalized plans. Most diets are generic.

Exercise DVDs are generic. Again, they weren't made specifically for you or me. Now, I know that I've said before that for many of us, what you do isn't as important as the fact that you do something, especially if you're sedentary. I still stand by that, but once you're doing something, you want to make sure what you're doing is effective, and it will lead to the results that you're looking for. The thing is that everyone can personalize a diet or an exercise plan simply by improving the actions that they're taking right now, so think about it.

Does your diet lack vegetables? Maybe just add one serving a day. Guess what? That's your new diet. It doesn't have to be something you pay hundreds of dollars for with nutrition plans and so forth. Your diet is something that is catered to you, so it takes your current situation and simply makes an improvement one small step at a time.

Now, I also understand that we all like to measure progress, typically through numbers, but what I would offer is that diets that encourage you to measure progress by seeing how many pounds you've lost or how many calories you've reduced may not necessarily be the best approach. A better way to determine how well you're doing is to measure performance goals, not outcome goals. You've heard me say that before. Outcome goals are things that you can't directly control, things like, "How much weight did I lose?" You don't have any direct control over that.

You have inputs that hopefully result in weight loss, but there are a lot of variables that actually go into weight loss. Performance goals are things that you can control, so, "Did I meet my goal for servings of vegetables today?" That is something you have direct control over, and by giving yourself control, it changes your mindset and allows you to better measure progress, because those performance metrics become habits, and habits endure over time and lead to a healthier life. Now, the initial discomfort if you will of creating your own plan, some people get a little anxious when they think about, "Okay. I'm going to be out here on my own. I'm just going to kind of wing it and try to make things better where I can."

I can see how that can be a little discomfoting, but really, the discomfort is in just the initial thought of doing that. You'll see how easy and how effortless your plan can be because it's your plan. That's the whole point. It's catered to you, and you really didn't have to do anything, but think about improvements, think better. You can still measure progress, but the basis of comparison moves away from that system that you are following, and over to the changes or improvement in your current state, and that's precisely because it's catered to you. Point number two, incremental change.

In the last episode, I talked about completing a long distance endurance event, like a triathlon for example. I talked about whether or not you are starting at barely being able to walk a mile, or whether your goal is to do a 5K, or to run a half marathon or a marathon, or maybe to complete a triathlon. It really doesn't matter because the fundamentals are the same, so let's just say that your goal is to walk or complete a half marathon, and right now, you are at, you are able to walk a mile, and that's it. The way we go about reaching the goal of a half marathon is through this concept of incremental change. Think little by little.

Now, If you can walk a mile, then I would probably program something like a mile walk until you're comfortable with that, and then you can move up to maybe 1.2 or 1.5 miles, and then you can move on. Once you're comfortable with that and you can adequately complete that distance, then maybe you'd move up to two and a half miles, but as the miles grow, the increments that you have to increase or that you should increase don't just stay small. They grow over time, so bigger changes

become easier over time. When it comes to training for a triathlon, I tell people, "If you can swim for 30 minutes, then you can swim for 50 minutes", because you're doing it the right way. You're not exerting more effort in doing that.

You're simply maintaining a technique, and if you can run for 10 miles, then you can run for 20 minutes more and go 12 miles, and if you add one fruit or vegetable to your diet each day, and you do that for a few days, and then add two, and you do that for a few days, practice that, and then add three and so on, when you get up to adding five or seven, it becomes easy because you've already established the habit patterns. You're no longer bound by the small increments and change because now, you have a solid foundation, a solid habit to build upon, and the bigger changes, the bigger improvements are made so much easier. The fact is that incremental change builds on itself. I'm reminded of a quote by Seth Godin, who you know that I quote rather often, and 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 changes until you've done a lot more. I came across a quote in an article I read recently by an individual by the name of Brian Grasso.

It was in an article called 'Eliminate Your Limits', and it's in a magazine that I subscribe to called 'Personal Fitness Professional' or 'PFP Magazine'. He says the question he's never been about understanding how to succeed, it's been about understanding why they aren't succeeding. You can't build your home on quick sand, and you can't build successes on limitations. See, often, we ask, "How do I succeed?", but another way to look at it is to ask, "Why am I not succeeding?" In other words, "What can I improve?", and this does two things.

When you ask, "What can I improve?", it personalizes it for you. That's the first thing, and secondly, as I talked about before, it changes the measurement from that system or construct that you were using to your own measures of improvement, which is based on past performance, and if you're making things better, than you are improving on your performance. You're making things better, not perfect, and not compared to someone else's scale. Point number three, I think there are two pillars for personalizing your plan for healthy living. Initially, I had this in five steps, but as I thought through it and kind of reworked it, really, it comes down to two broad pillars for healthy living that you can use to personalize your plan for healthy living, I should say.