

Episode 26 – Overcoming the Health and Fitness Fears You Never Knew You Had

This is the TD Fitness Podcast, with Coach T, episode number 26.

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 guys. This is episode number 26, and we are talking about overcoming the health and fitness fears you never knew you had. This topic of fear is important, because it rears its ugly head so often and we don't even realize it. So, if you've ever made an excuse, especially one related to healthy living, then I've got news for you. There was probably fear at the root of that excuse, and this episode is for you. The takeaway here is that fears exist even when we don't realize it, and they can prevent us from living healthier, but we have the power to overcome those fears.

So let me start here. I don't get excited about much. Well, I should say, I'm passionate about a lot of things. I'm passionate about my faith. I'm passionate about my family. I'm passionate about what I get to do at work. I'm passionate about TD Fitness and about helping and serving others. I just don't show a lot of excitement most of the time except during a particular time of year, and that's during March Madness. So, as I record this, we are about to kick off March Madness, and I am super excited, because the NCAA tournament is about to start.

In the tournament, different teams, different schools different athletic programs have the goal of winning an NCAA Championship, and the thing I like about it is that the good coaches know where to place their focus, and they know where to focus their players. I'll give you a couple of examples of that. So, Mike Krzyzewski who is the head coach of the Duke Blue Devils. I'm not necessarily a Duke fan, but I absolutely respect the program and him as a coach, because they're able to do tremendous things year after year.

But in a recent interview, one of the commentators asked, going into this March Madness, this NCAA championship tournament season, they asked, "Hey, what are you thinking about your first game in the tournament, and then more importantly, the game after that?" Because that game was going to present a challenge to the Duke Blue Devils. And Krzyzewski responded that he never looks past the next game, because he understands that if you look too far ahead, then you risk overlooking the things you need to do to get there.

And in a single-elimination basketball tournament, where if you lose one game you're out, then the only way to keep working towards the championship is to win the next game. Period. Nothing else matters. It's as simple as that. You can't advance unless you win the next game. I'll give you another example. Tony Bennett who's the head coach of the Virginia Cavaliers, my alma mater. Recently, I watched them play, and again, a commentator was interviewing one of the players after a game, and he asked, "What was it that you guys were able to do in the second half that you weren't able to do in the first half?"

The player commented that Coach Bennett is always telling them to play in four-minute segments, four minute increments, because he understands if you want a majority of the four minute segments of a game, then you're going to win the game. If you stay focused on that immediate goal without looking beyond it, then you have the ability to affect what it is that you can affect right now. Every action, every step is a move toward the overall goal, and whether you're talking about winning a majority of those four-minute segments within a game, or you're talking about eating better when you can, it turns into a majority of the time.

And guess what? Then you're a healthy eater. Not because you're perfect, because we're not, right? But because you practice healthy habits more often than not. And working towards those short-term goals whether it's winning the very next game or adding a certain number of fruits or vegetables or water, amount of water to your week, keeping those short-term goals at the forefront serve to make the greater task of living healthy, losing weight or winning the championship more manageable, if you break things down. I also get nervous during March Madness, and I think that's where part of the excitement lies from me.

I get nervous that my team won't make it all the way to the championship, because let's be honest, right? Even the team with the best chances of winning has the odds stacked against them. I mean, you're one in 64 or 68 teams, and you got to win six games in a row, and the competition gets tougher and tougher as you go along. I can't help but think, if I'm nervous and I'm sitting here watching it, then what about those kids playing? I used to play a lot of basketball. I played basketball in high school. I played at the collegiate level, and I remember being nervous at times, but here's the thing. That nervousness, for me and for most people, it's typically rooted in fear.

Think about it. A fear of not performing. A fear of not meeting the expectations that were placed on us or that we felt were placed on us. A fear of losing. A fear of not getting the job done. This concept of fear is one I want to dive into in this episode, because deep down, I don't know if you realize this, but deep down, one of the things that often prevents us from realizing our goals is fear, whether you're talking health and fitness or other goals in life. Typically, there's a fear, an underlying fear that's at the root of that.

So, continuing with the sports analogy. Philadelphia Eagles quarterback, and now, a Super Bowl champion, Nick Foles. When he was asked after the Super Bowl about the pressure to perform in the highest stressful scenario, the Super Bowl, right? That's what NFL players live for. He said that he trusted his teammates. I mean, they had practiced and played together so much and so often. They repeatedly practiced plays and practiced play routes, so that when game time came, they performed out of habit. He was more comfortable than most, because there's comfort in habits. There's comfort in repetition.

That's why we keep habits. That's why it's hard to break bad habits, because there's comfort in doing what we're used to doing. That works to our advantage when we're asked to perform those habits in stressful situations. The same is true for military operations. We practice through rehearsals and military drills, so that when we are called upon to perform, it's almost second nature to us. And whether you're talking military personnel, professional athletes, doctors, coaches, trainers, whatever your role is, we all get better through repetition, by habitually doing what it is that we do. Habitually means as a habit, right?

So, where does the fear that I mentioned come in? What are we afraid of and why? I mean, it's not the short-term tasks, right? We either do those or we don't. I either exercise a few times this week

or I don't. I either meet my daily goals for water consumption or I don't. I eat my five servings of fruits and vegetables every day or I don't. So, I either meet those small goals through my habits or I don't. And many times, I don't even think twice about them. If I do, it's either through a small amount of guilt that I have by not completing the task that I said I wanted to do, or I get a little bit of satisfaction if I do complete those tasks.

It's never fear that I won't get my five servings of vegetables today. But we do fear the end result, our longer-term goal. We fear not losing the weight, not meeting our goal, and why is that? Well a number of reasons. The first is that we choose to measure our success by whether or not we met that long-term goal. Another reason, because someone's told us that if we don't succeed at that goal or meeting that goal, then we're a failure. And another reason is because other people notice, and we care what other people think. It's natural because we're human.

I remember when I had set out to do my very first Ironman race, I had some fear, some anxiety, of that anxiety of completing that race. It wasn't necessarily because I thought I was going to get hurt or push myself too hard during the race, it was because I had a lot of people looking at me. I told a lot of people that I was doing this race, and I did not want to come this far through 10 months of training, get to race day and not be able to finish. It's because other people are noticing, other people are watching. So some of the things that we tell ourselves, things that are actually fears, disguised as excuses.

The first is I don't have room for healthy living in my schedule. I just don't have the time. I don't have the bandwidth. I used to worry that I wouldn't have time to complete all the work that I had to do. So, what I did was completed the work I had to do. I used to worry that I wouldn't have time to do this business, TD Fitness, on the side, if you will. So, I made time to devote to TD Fitness. I used to worry that I wouldn't spend enough time or devote enough time to my family. So, I devoted time to my family. You kind of get the picture here? I worried that I wouldn't have time to train for a triathlon, so I made time to train for a triathlon.

That's the point. Make the time. The human capacity is immeasurable, and we so often underestimate what it is that we can do. If you think you don't have time or room for healthy living, then you're right until you believe otherwise, and you decide to make time by making healthy habits a priority. Another thing that is a fear disguised as an excuse, I don't want to be labeled as a health nut. Well I'll tell you your perception of health nuts is probably inaccurate unless you've been one before, okay? Sometimes people think my wife and I are health nuts. I'll be at a barbecue or something and folks will ask, "Is there anything here that you can even eat?" as if I don't eat anything but nuts and berries all day.

Well I like pizza. I like burgers. I like beer. I like soda. I even like french fries as bad as that is, but I know I can't eat those things all the time. But we try to eat healthy most of the time so that we don't have to feel guilty about enjoying the things we like when we want them. So, you can label me however you want, right? But I enjoy life. Don't worry about the labels that other people are going to put on you. The point is, you define what you are and how you live. Just forget about how other people are going to label that, because there will always be people to throw out labels, but it doesn't even matter.

Another thing I hear is that, "I want to be a health fanatic. I want to be a fitness buff. I want to be a dieter, but I'm just not that. It's not in my DNA." Well you don't need to be a fitness buff, a health fanatic or a dieter in order to live healthier. You just need to practice healthier habits tomorrow than you did today. It's that simple. Another thing I hear, "I don't have what it takes. I don't have the

motivation. I don't have the willpower," or, "I have a sweet tooth." Well we will find any excuse to avoid possible failure. I mean, those thoughts are there to prevent us from taking action.

If you're a parent, you probably had doubts that you could be a good parent before your first child was born, but now, you're a good parent. When you started your job, you probably had some anxiety around how well you would do at the job. But now, you're probably an expert. There's no such thing as writer's block, right? Seth Godin uses this analogy that there's no such thing as plumber's blocks, right? So why do writers get a pass? If you want to be creative, you have to create through consistent effort. You don't wait for things to come to you; you make them happen.

There's no such thing as writer's block. There are people who write and eventually come up with content. And then there are people that wait for writing to come to them. You have to make things happen. So, all of these so-called things that prevent us from living healthier, boiled down to really a fear of failure, a fear of not being good enough and not reaching our goals. "I don't have time. I don't want to be labeled. It's just not me. I don't have what it takes." Well, it's not just you that feels that way. We all feel that way at some point until we realize that we don't have to be afraid.

I love the quote by Marianne Williamson. It starts out, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." You see, failure is literally a state of mind, and the good thing though is that we can change our minds. I'll tell you another quick story. When I was in high school, there was a local TV show called Battle of the Brains, and it was kind of a Jeopardy-like show, but it featured schools. And when I say a local show, I mean, it was like the surrounding counties of where we lived.

So we knew the schools that were competing. There were four-person teams that competed in an academic question type format similar to Jeopardy. You had to buzz in to answer the question, and if you answered more than the other school, your school advanced to the next round. So, we used to watch it, because it was cool. I used to watch it with my parents. It was cool to see schools that we recognized on there. Well our school was selected to appear on the show, and I was fortunate enough to be one of the four-person team members that was going to represent our high school.

So, I was excited, and my family was excited. The students at the school were excited, because this was the first time our school was going to appear on TV. That's a big deal. We had this one kid who was really smart. That was not me. But, I thought we had a pretty good chance of at least making it through the first round. So we get to the show. We filmed the episode, and I don't buzz in once. I mean not once. Didn't even hit my buzzer, right? And as I look back on that, my problem was fear.

What I mean is if you ever watched the show Jeopardy, you may wonder ... I know I have. You may wonder how is it that people can buzz in and then not have any answer to provide? They'll buzz in and not say anything. They don't know what the answer is. You think, "Do they freeze under the pressure?" And that's what it seems like until you understand that in order to win on Jeopardy, you have to leap. You have to buzz in before the answer, because if you wait, then you're too late. Someone has already beaten you to the punch.

So, on Battle of the Brains, I waited. I waited with every question that I knew. I waited until I was sure, and that caused me to miss opportunities. It caused me to miss every operation. Don't let your fear prevent you from leaping. Don't let your fear cloud your judgment with excuses. One of my five-year-old

daughters favorite movies right now is the movie Sing. It's an animated movie, and in that movie, a character called Buster Moon says, "Don't let fear stop you from doing the thing you love. Just go out there and start singing."

And I'll tell you, I want you to just go out there and start living a little bit healthier. These fears pop up in all facets of our lives. I have fitness fears. I have fears with what I'm doing right now. I'm not a podcaster. I'm not good on camera. I'm not good behind the mic, but I don't need to be, because what makes this medium effective is not how polished I can be, but rather, it's that I record and publish. I could say that I'm not a triathlete. I'm not an Ironman. You look at my times compared to other people's, mine are so slow. But because I do triathlons and Iron Mans, I am viewed as a triathlete and an Ironman whether I think of myself like that or not.

If you tell yourself that you are inadequate or incapable, you will fulfill that prophecy. Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can or you can't, you're absolutely right." So I'll leave you with a few things that can help in overcoming whatever area you have fears in, and I'm going to approach it from a fitness and nutrition standpoint, but it's applicable across many different areas. The first thing that's helpful is having company, having a team, having a partner, not being alone in your endeavor.

Nick Foles had his teammates. The teams in the NCAA tournament have their teammates. The thought that I'm not in this alone, that goes a long way. So, if you're looking for a teammate in your nutrition endeavors, Ashley and Rachel over at Better Nutrition are there to help you with that as registered dietitians. tdfitness.net/betternutrition. I'll link to them in the show notes. If you're looking for a partner in healthy living and implementing healthy habits, that's why I'm here. That's what I do as a health coach. That's why I created the Fit Life program, and I'll link to that in the show notes as well.

So having company is one way that you can overcome those fears, overcome those excuses. The next thing that helps in overcoming those fears and excuses is focusing on the short term and trusting that the long term will take care of itself. If you want to run a six-minute mile, then you better run each quarter-mile split in a minute and a half. If you make your lap splits, then guess what? Your final time is going to be fine. You want to win a basketball game with UVA Coach Jeff Bennett? Then win a majority of those four-minute segments of the game. You want to be a healthy eater? Eat healthy more often than not, but start just by eating a little bit healthier now. The same goes for fitness.

The next thing that can help overcome those fears is having an accountability mechanism, not the kind where your boss expects a product by the end of the week and your job or your salary is at stake if you don't deliver. That's negative motivation. I'm talking about the kind of accountability that an accountability partner or a coach can provide. That's what the Fit Life program is built around, the app that provides daily check-ins on whether you completed your healthy habit for that day. Another way to overcome those fears, those excuses, having a plan, a roadmap of how to go about things.

That roadmap leads to your ultimate goal, your strategic goal of healthy living. For some people, it's weight loss, but along the way, there are incremental and intermittent goals, those smaller goals that you hit along the way. So when you hear those excuses popping up in your head or you hear yourself verbalizing those excuses, consider where it's coming from, and what is the underlying fear that you're trying to prevent? Think about it. And then think about how you can get support in your goal, how you can focus on a goal that's closer and more tangible, or how you can incorporate accountability, how you can best lay out a plan for success, with incremental goals.

Will Durant once said, we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit. So with that, head on over to tdfitness.net/026 for the show notes, for this episode there. You can listen, you can watch, however you want to consume this content. You can grab the transcript. I'm going to provide links to better nutrition there and the Fit Life program. As always, I thank you for watching, for listening or for reading this. I want you to have a blessed one. Coach T out.

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.