

Episode 031:

Putting Weight Loss Principles Into Action

How I Lost 12 Pounds in 12 Weeks

This is the TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, episode number 31.

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, Coach T coming back at you. This is episode number 31, Putting Weight Loss Principles Into Action: How I Lost 12 Pounds In 12 Weeks.

You know about six months ago I did an episode titled, A Day In the Life: Healthy Habits I Practice Everyday and You Can Too. That was episode number 10, I'll link to that in the show notes. And what I found is that these types of episodes and posts are always among the most popular. And I think it's because I'm able to put some principles into action, and I show that I'm not perfect, even as a trainer or coach. And I also give details of how real life affects my health and fitness journey. You know this episode started as an idea that I would present you with a road map for losing weight and for keeping it off. In fact that was going to be the title of this episode.

You know the past few episodes have hit several facets of healthy nutrition, and incorporating things that can make you healthier and allow you to live a healthier life. And the plan was to put all of that together to kind of package it up and give you this nicely wrapped answer with a perfectly tied bow, if you will. But you and I know that it's not that simple, right? Because there is no perfect answer. Different things work for different people. No one size fits all. And that's what's unique about what I offer, versus what other programs offer, and that is that Fit Life, the Fit Life program that I created is unique to you.

Yes there are principles that you can apply to many people if not most people, but that doesn't necessarily mean that all of those principles, or all of those actions should apply to you. So I changed the direction of this episode. And I also feel like, you know I present these principles week, after week in some form or another. So in this episode, I am going to talk about how I lost 12 pounds in about three months. And I'm still gonna provide you that road map of sorts, and I'll do that as the episode freebie, so you'll be able to grab that and download it here on the show notes page. I'll talk a little more about that later, so stay tuned for that.

But in this episode, I'm going to discuss a bit about my approach, my practice in areas where I didn't do so well, and in some ways, you know I hate talking about this because I feel like it conveys the wrong message, right? I mean after all, like a lot of the infomercials, a lot of the product, a lot of the advertisements that we see, just in big bold letters say, "Hey, I lost X amount of weight in just this many days," and I think that's part of the problem. Because we have become a society of instant gratification. We want results and we want them instantly. But healthy living is far from instant. It's a long term way of life. So, I'm going to attempt this topic and trust that I can convey it through an approach that is more realistic,

more genuine, and better suited for healthy living, and I have to chuckle because when I say, "I lost 12 pounds in 12 weeks," you know that wouldn't be a very good sales line at all.

When you compare it to the sales, the infomercials, that doesn't really sound that impressive, but that's kind of the point, you know it's not something that happens overnight. It's not sexy like that right. So I'm gonna approach this in three different buckets. The first is nutrition, the second is fitness, and the third is what I'm calling environment, and I'll talk a little bit about what I did in each one of those areas, or each one of those buckets. And the takeaways from each bucket provide good examples I think, of those very principles that I have been telling you about. Those principles along the road map that I mentioned.

So let's start with nutrition. Like I said, I'm down 12 pounds since the beginning of the year, and frankly I didn't even notice that until last week. At least I didn't notice the amount of weight that I had lost. Because that was the first time that I've weighed myself since the holidays. It's now into April, and I just usually don't get on the scale. We have a scale in our bathroom but I rarely get on it, unless I'm actively tracking something as I get closer to a race for example. So you're probably asking, what diet did I go on here, and the answer is, I didn't. Not exactly. And weight loss was not my goal. My goal was to maintain a practice, a discipline, for a set period of time, and I think this is important because this is how healthy, lifelong change happens.

Small changes develop into lifelong habits. So I made a relatively small change at the beginning of the year, that change grew, and now it's a habit that I practice consistently. Not every day, but on most days. Five days of the week to be exact. And the change that I made, which you already know if you listen to the last episode, episode number 30, was that I started consciously incorporating a fasting period every day. Initially, that's what I did. I decided to experiment with 12 hours of fasting, or just not eating for 12 hours, and most of that 12 hours was over the course of the night while I was sleeping. And my rationale at the time was, I'm kind of already doing this. If I eat dinner around six or seven o'clock at night, and I'm finished eating or snacking by eight, I get up the next morning and even if I have a somewhat early breakfast, that can be around eight o'clock and I've already, it's been 12 hours since I've eaten.

So I did that, I practiced that for the first couple of months of the year, that 12 hours and I did it every day, and it seemed to work out fine. I just kind of wanted to experiment with it, and to see where it would go. And then we started Lent, and that's when I started stepping up the number of hours I was fasting each week by one hour a week essentially, and I made it up to 16 hours. That's where I ended on the final week, leading up to Easter. And I learned a lot from that. Like I said, you can go back last, the last episode, episode number 30 to hear some more of my thoughts and insight on that.

But my observation and my professional opinion, is that the weight lost was primarily due to fasting obviously, but I don't think it was all a restriction in calories. So as I stated in the last episode, I attributed the weight loss partially to a lower calorie intake, I mean I wasn't eating breakfast, I'm still not. I will have an apple or a piece of fruit around mid morning, typically do a salad for lunch, maybe some almonds mid afternoon, and then whatever we decide to cook here for dinner in the evening. But in episode number 29, I also discussed the hormonal effects on weight loss, and I really believe because there were fewer insulin spikes and less elevated levels of insulin continuously, which is caused by eating carbohydrates and processed foods and things like that, when you eat those things your insulin levels tend to rise.

I believe that because there were fewer insulin spikes throughout the day, because I ate less often, this caused my weight to drop at a consistent rate. So one of the things that

the fasting has forced me to think about is, limiting my sweets. And this is huge for me because, I have a huge sweet tooth, I mean no kidding. I love chocolate, dark chocolate particularly. And on days where I'm in kind of complete control of my schedule, I'll say those are like the normal work days, the days at the office while I'm not traveling, where I don't have a lot of traveling back and forth in and out of the office, and we don't have any evening events planned, just I get up, go to work, come back home, that's the day, right. You know I can appease that sweet tooth craving with five or six dark chocolate almonds, in fact that's all I take with me every day. I take five or six dark chocolate covered almonds and I'll have a small container of just some regular almonds. And then maybe at night, maybe a power smoothie or something like that. But that will usually contain my sweet tooth, usually. Not all the time.

But I still fall victim to hunger when the day doesn't go as planned. Yesterday, for example, it did not go as planned. I had a meeting, it started at 11 o'clock. It was supposed to last, I thought, for a couple of hours. We ended up being in there all day, and I didn't eat much all day, right. I didn't eat breakfast, because I was fasting. Then I did have my mid-morning snack, the apple, and ended up eating my almonds right around lunch time, and we worked through lunch. And before I knew it, it was four pm and I was headed home. So I was pretty hungry, and my willpower was at a pretty low state and I felt like I needed to eat. And I'm contemplating okay, do I wait to get home? We'll probably eat around five thirty. I don't wanna be cranky when I walk in the door, because that's one of the things that happens to me when I don't eat for a while.

So I stopped at McDonald's. It wasn't a good thing, but I knew that, that would satisfy me immediately. So one of the takeaways from that is that, if you plan your day and don't let yourself get to that point, you're less apt to make those types of decisions. Now that was essentially the only meal I ate for the day, which was a good thing. But again, it's not the healthiest thing at all. So it's not being perfect all the time, but it's being consistent over a period of time. So yes, I ate McDonald's yesterday, but over the course of the week, my days are pretty normal where I have a salad for lunch and a healthy dinner, and so forth.

So the takeaways from this nutrition bucket. The first is that short duration, small goals that are not weight loss goals work. Mine was fasting for 12 hours for a set number of weeks. Another takeaway, gradually improve on that habit. Either the length of time of the habit or the intensity of that habit. So I increased the intensity by trying to go, trying to do the longer fasts. And through that, I learned where my sweet spot was. The habit that I can actually maintain consistently, is about a 14 hour fast. Twelve is pretty easy, I can almost do that, no brainer, I can do that in my sleep, literally, right? And 16 is a little long for me, I tend to get a little cranky. Sometimes if I don't stay on top of the hydration, I'll get a headache. But 14 hours is just about right, you know. I can stop eating at seven or eight at night, and then eat mid-morning the next day, a healthy snack.

Next, use a habit based approach. That's essentially what this was, right? I set a small goal, tried to make it a habit, and it grew into a habit. Also another takeaway, do not strive for perfection. So my goal is not to fast for 14 hours a day every day of the week now, it's to do it five days a week, and then I have two days where I don't have to worry about that. That allows for, if we wanna go out to breakfast one morning on the weekend, or if we wanna hang out with friends pretty late and have some drinks or something like that. It allows for that, it allows me to live, basically.

Next, plan. Regular days made it easy for me to plan and control, but unplanned events caused lapses in my dietary approach. Certainly I did not plan to eat McDonald's yesterday, although it was pretty good. Not gonna lie, but it's because I wasn't able to stick to the plan that I had, and that's life, that's what happens, right, so you have to have the ability

to flex with that. And finally, consistency overtime, which is kind of the takeaway there, is better than perfection all the time, because none of us are perfect, we can't be. I'm not, you aren't, we're not going to be. We don't beat ourselves up for having minor flaws or minor lapses. So that's the nutrition bucket.

Bucket number two is the exercise bucket. And I'll be honest, I have not been exercising more since the beginning of the year, yet I still lost 12 pounds. I actually exercised a whole lot less than I usually do, particularly less than I do during training for a race season. And that's a good example I think of how much influence your diet has on weight loss and weight control, and how little of an effect your exercise habits have on weight loss. Also, this is an example of what exercise is good for, because I will tell you that I have more lower back pain right now, more frequently than I've ever had in my life, primarily because I sit for most of the day, I haven't been consistent with my weekly core exercises, and I haven't been as diligent about stretching regularly, particularly the hamstrings.

So I'll do an episode on lower back pain in the coming weeks, because this is something that, my pain has forced me to do more and more research on this. It's always been something that I've kind of been interested in, because it's a pretty prevalent problem amongst Americans. So I will address that at a later date.

But what I had to do was recently, was I made movement and stretching more of a priority, using the habit tracking software that I use in the Fit Life program. So that is one area where, again an example of where exercise isn't that good for weight loss, it's okay for weight maintenance, but it's definitely a benefit when it comes to making sure you reduce pain, maintain adequate mobility, and essentially feel better. Now, when it comes to the weight loss piece, to be fair, I don't think all 12 pounds of my weight loss came from fat loss. A good percentage did come from fat loss, and that's evidenced by my noticeably smaller waist. I can tell that I have a lot more room in my pants. I can go another belt loop or two. And I have a lot more definition in my abdominal area.

But I've also lost some muscle mass. Remember muscle is dense, and weighs more than fat. That's one of the effects of not exercising as much over the past few weeks. And as an endurance athlete for most of the year, I usually don't carry a lot of muscle. I don't have a body builder physic obviously, in fact I'm somewhat of a hard gainer, which means it's hard for me to put on muscle mass. But I do think weight training is important, and my workout plan, when I follow it, includes weight training, resistance training. I just haven't been following the workout plan. But I'd estimate that about a third of the weight loss is muscle mass, so that's about four pounds, and that would make about eight pounds of the weight loss fat loss. Again, that's just kind of my educated guess. I did not measure it like that.

But some of the takeaways here, when you devote attention to a significant change in your life, like fasting or any other dietary plan or approach, or a new exercise regimen for example, you have a smaller capacity to make significant changes in other areas of your health and of your life. So my diet was pretty good but I was not consistent with exercise. This is why experts, including myself, do not recommend making more than one big change at any given time. A typically New Year goal is to start a diet and exercise. That's not a good idea. Try one thing new and just do it a little bit better and continue to build on that. Pick one thing to focus on.

Similarly, when you know you won't be able to maintain healthy habits in an area of your life, then you can increase your efforts in another area. So for example, if you're traveling, and you know you won't be able to exercise consistently because the weather's gonna be really cold, or you don't have access to a gym, then focus on eating well while you're away. Or, make it a goal to get seven and a half hours of sleep every night, which is may not

be something that you do at home. It's hard for us to do here, because we have two small children. But the point is, you can improve what you can, where you can.

Another takeaway, core work and flexibility are important. They're so important, in many ways they are preventative exercised. You don't realize how important they are until the pain hits. Believe me, I'm telling you that, because I'm speaking from experience. So those are the takeaways from the exercise bucket.

Bucket number three, the environment. So realize that most of the decisions we make in life are automatic. The brain creates shortcuts to make us more efficient and to keep us safe. As a result, we don't consciously think about a lot of things when it comes to our daily routines or habits. That's why they're called habits. When I have a normal workweek for example, I know that there's a great salad place right next door to where I work, and I look forward to going there. I don't even think about what I'm going to eat for lunch. It's the same everyday, literally. We can make our environments work for us though.

We don't keep a lot of junk food here in the house. When it's here, I eat it, so we make sure we keep those to a minimum. We keep a lot of fruits on the counter, because when they're here, we'll eat them, and that's what we'll give to the kids. And things in sight are what you're more apt to eat. Another part of your environment, stress and stressors. Now I will say that, my stress levels have not really felt elevated since the beginning of the year. Generally I have a, what some would describe as a stressful profession, but I don't necessarily feel stressed all the time.

I feel like we have a good home, a good family life. I definitely have a supportive wife, and a support system is important when you're trying to make a significant change in your health and fitness practices. My wife would remind me of events we had on the calendar so I could kind of plan my eating around those schedules. Now of course, I can't talk about stress without addressing sleep, because sleep for me over the past three months has been pretty good, I mean it's been average. Not bad at all. I do sleep well, and that is, you can attribute that generally good sleeping, you can attribute to a good bed, kind of a good temperature range in your bedroom, somewhat a little bit cooler.

I averaged a little less than six hours of sleep for most of the past few weeks. Six is about my sweet spot. If I can get seven and a half, that'd be great. Again, I try to stick to those hour and a half increments on the amount of time that I sleep. Again, that's something that I've alluded to in the past and I'll talk more about that in a sleep episode in the coming weeks. But the stress and sleep relationship is somewhat of a downward spiral, because the less you sleep, the more stressed you are. And the more stressed you are, the harder it is to get quality sleep. When you experience stress, cortisol levels remain elevated. We talked about that in episode number 29. I also talked about how research has linked increased cortisol with weight gain, and by the way, we tend to make poor diet choices and diet decisions when the stress is weighing down on us.

So you wanna take steps to reduce your stress level. There are a number of ways to do that, but a key way is to get enough rest each night. So again, I'll do a sleep episode at a later date, but for now, just know that sleep and rest are an important part of healthy living.

I'll leave you with a final thought. You know no matter how many times I tell you that weight loss shouldn't necessarily be your goal, that practicing healthy habits should be the goal, I know that, that's hard. And I also know that you're probably gonna set a weight loss goal. Even some people in the Fit Life program try to set weight loss goals and the entire program is about establishing healthy habits so I get it, all right. We've been wired to do that

for so many years, it's a hard habit to break, and weight is the thing that's on the forefront of our minds.

So here's what I'd offer. If you set a weight loss goal, number one, just be realistic about your goals. Weight loss can and should be relatively slow. The slower it is, the greater the chance of keeping it off, okay? You should aim to lose about a half to one percent of your body weight per week, or I like to use the rule of thumb, 10% over a six month period. Usually that equates to somewhere between two and four pounds a month, depending on your weight obviously. And this helps maintain muscle mass as well, so faster weight loss tends to result in more muscle loss, without the extra fat loss. Faster weight loss can also wreak havoc on your metabolic system. I'm again going back to episode number 29, where we talked about your hormones and your metabolism, so go slow when it comes to weight loss.

So that brings us to the freebie. The Fit Life road map. You know as I started jotting down the healthy living approach, that road map that I was kind of trying to provide or map out in my mind, I noticed right away that I was essentially producing what could have been used as a table of contents for my Fit Life program. I was trying to create something that I have already created. So what I did was, I abbreviated that to give you the road map that you're looking for. And there are three areas on this handout.

The first is adding healthy habits to your life, that talks about kind of the mindset and some of the just the habits that you should consider incorporating in order to make positive lifestyle change. The second section is making healthy nutrition choices. There's a lot of good info in there. And then finally, being healthy and fit, and this talks to the exercise and fitness aspect of it. So what I want you to do with that is, download it, choose one of the bullets in one of those areas and just simply try to improve upon that aspect of your life.

It is that simple. And if you're ready to learn the entire process on living a healthier life for good, then I invite you to join the Fit Life program. I'm gonna provide more on that in coming weeks, but until then you can sign up for the notification list as I plan to open it up here very soon. And maybe by the time you listen to this, the program may be open indefinitely, so I'm still working a couple of kinks out with that, to give you what I call kind of an evergreen opportunity, so that it's always open, but more on that later.

I feel that the road map is the Fit Life program, so I want you to go grab that freebie at tdfitness.net/031download, and you'll get it delivered to your inbox. As always, the show notes for this episode can be found at tdfitness.net/031. There you can listen, you can watch, you can read, you can grab the freebie, and you can get the links to all the references that I mentioned in this episode. I want you to live healthier, I want you to feel better. I know you can, and I am happy to help you with that, so with that, thanks again so much for tuning in. I want you to have a blessed one.

Coach T out!