

## Episode 39 - Getting Into Exercise?

### Here's Where to Start

This is the TD Fitness podcast with Coach T, episode number 39.

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, welcome back to TD Fitness, this is episode number 39. If you're getting into exercise, whether you're starting something new or trying to get back into exercise, this episode is for you. I'm going to give you some guidance on where to start. Where should you focus? What type of exercise is important when you're just getting back into things? I usually tailor my advice to those who are either looking to start or get back into healthy habits, that's where I feel like I can do the most good from a health coaching perspective. But, in this episode, I'm also going to touch on some considerations for those of you who already have an exercise routine. So if you're consistent and you need to maybe refocus, stay tuned, because there's something in this one for you too.

Back in episode number two, early on in the TD Fitness podcast, I talked about assessing your diet, because assessment is a good place to start when you're beginning or restarting any endeavor. I believe the analogy I used was that of planning a trip in your car, I think prior to GPS, right, where you actually had to plan a trip. You had to plot it on a map, but you couldn't do that unless you knew where you were starting from. Assessing your diet is no different, and guess what? The same goes for your exercise and fitness goals. The assessment gives you an idea of where you are, and that is a key piece of information in determining what you need to do, what path you need to take.

Many times we start on the change journey only to find limited or no success, but sometimes the issue isn't with how much we're eating or how much or little we're exercising, but rather the problem could be that we're doing the wrong things altogether. Remember, results come from consistent behaviors, but only if those behaviors include the right actions. Now, I am very much a systems, check list, process guy, right? And what I had learned, actually as my wife was studying for her personal trainer certification, was a model. I was introduced to a model created by the American Council on Exercise, and that model that they created provides a recommended training approach for different levels of fitness and different goals. That was one of the things actually that convinced me to seek a health coach certification through that agency, the American Council on Exercise.

And what I found was that the concept ... I knew that the concept of different approaches was not something that was new, right? That wasn't new to me. Of course, everyone is different in terms of their health and their fitness goals and abilities, and the services that I or any other trainer or coach, the services that we provide has to reflect those differences, that's just common sense. But the way the American Council on Exercise, or ACE for short, the way they break it down is, it's extremely clear and so easy to implement, for trainers, for coaches, and even, I feel, for everyday gym goers. So that's why I wanted to introduce you to this model, because I think it can truly be beneficial to you as you seek to maintain or restart a health and fitness routine. So I'm going to run you through the entire model, and then kind of double back and focus on those who are starting or getting back into exercise.

So it's called the ACE Integrated Fitness Training model, or the IFT model for short, and there are two primary training components. The first is functional movement and resistance training, and the second is cardiorespiratory training. And within each of these components there are four phases that you can essentially progress through. The phase you're currently in is used to determine the areas you should focus on for continued or improved health and wellness.

So our family recently celebrated our daughter's graduation from kindergarten, and it was awesome. It was a great day. I mean, it was complete with the cap and tassels and all of that. Pomp and circumstance, you name it, it was just great day overall. But throughout the school year, the students had blocks of instruction in reading and math for example. So the ACE Integrated Fitness Training model, or the IFT model is similar to that. Instead of reading and math, you have functional movement and resistance training in one category and then cardiorespiratory training in the other. And, as you progress through the different training phases just like the students progressed through different blocks of instruction, the same is true in the ACE IFT. You progress through those different phases of training, because your focus is different depending on the phase of training you're in.

So the point is that, if you want results with minimal chance of injury, then you should follow a proven methodology, all right? So I've told you about the two components of physical health, the functional resistance and movement training, that's one component, and then cardiorespiratory training is the other component, but what are the four phases that I mentioned? So the four phases are function, health, fitness, and performance. So let me talk a little bit about each one of these. So first when it comes to function or phase one. Functional movement and resistance training in that category, the primary focus in phase one is on mobility and stability. So you want to correct, for example, the muscular imbalances that you might have. You want to address any asymmetric weaknesses before you start training with weights. You want to address those things and make sure your foundation, your base is solid, otherwise you're asking for injury, or you're looking at hampered results possibly.

When it comes to cardiorespiratory training in phase one, the function phase, you really want to build an aerobic base. This is going to improve your capacity for cardiovascular endurance. So if you're not accustomed to exercising, then you should seek to reach some kind of baseline, some standard before you push yourself too much. So the function phase, or phase one is meant to focus on those baseline parameters, the things that should be in place before you start to expand into either the resistance or cardio training categories. Now, once you have a solid foundation, then you can move into phase two, the health phase, and the goal here is really to improve overall health and to prepare you for improved fitness. So you're prepping for phase three in phase two.

So phase two, the health phase, on the functional movement and resistance training side, the focus is really on movement patterns. Remember, you addressed muscular imbalances and asymmetric weaknesses in phase one, so now that you have an adequate range of motion and balance between your two sides, you can focus on movement and proper form, and you want to do that before you start adding weights or resistance to your movements. In the cardiorespiratory component, we could start to introduce some mild intervals or extended periods of cardio here. So building on that aerobic base that we created in phase one, and prepping you for the next phase, which is going to be the fitness phase. So in these first two phases, phases one and two, often times we tend to rush through those phases and go straight to the fitness phase, but that's just asking for injury and delayed results, so you need to focus on the basics first.

After you do that, then you can start to progress into phase three. This is the fitness phase, phase three. In here, we're adding weight or resistance to our movements and we're hitting

the higher levels of that aerobic threshold. So in the last episode, if you recall, that was episode number 38, we discussed the talk test and different zones of cardiovascular work. So in this fitness phase, in phase three, the cardio component may touch on that zone three that I mentioned in episode number 38, the episode on your cardio zones and the talk test. You may touch on zone three here in the fitness phase from time to time, meaning you're working very hard, albeit for very short periods of time.

So, finally, phase four is the performance phase, and this is where we focus on power. We focus on speed, on agility, and aerobic power. Now, it's okay to do power training, to do speed training, agility training, all of that. You can do that prior to phase four, there's nothing wrong with that, but the goal when you do those things isn't so much performance as it is health or general fitness, or the goals for phases two and three. I incorporated agility drills into fitness training, which is phase three. I've done that before numerous times, just to kind of keep things interesting and provide a quality workout, because those types of things are important in order to create a well rounded approach to fitness so that everyday people can address the activities of daily life. That's where I tend to focus and make sure people are prepared for that. But, again, the goal there isn't necessary to be the most agile from a performance perspective, but it's to create some baseline level of agility for example in phases two and three.

So, a couple of things to remember with all of these phases. Number one, I mentioned it before, but everyone is different, and different people are in different phases, so it's not necessarily in your best interest to take a canned workout plan from your buddy or your girlfriend and try to apply it to yourself, because you may be in a completely different stage or phases than they are. And just because you're in, I'll say, phase two or three in one component, that doesn't mean you're in the same phase in another component. Think about the typical musclebound weightlifter that you see at the gym. They may be able to push a lot of weight with proper form and a lot of power, but that doesn't mean that they have an adequate aerobic base in the cardiorespiratory training component. So they may be in phase three or maybe even phase four in the resistance and functional training side of thing, but in the cardiorespiratory side they may be in phase one, maybe phase two.

So it's also not uncommon to spend maybe your entire life in phase two or three. For some, actually, for many of us, there is no need to get to the performance stage in both categories. I, for example, will never be a power lifter, okay? Body weight training and training with moderate amounts of weight, that's adequate for me almost all of the time. And even my triathlon and endurance races aren't necessarily about performance. They're more about general fitness. That's why I approach them the way I do. That's why I have the outlook that I have on those things, and that's why I use somewhat of an abbreviated training plan that I created, so that everyday people can perform those long distance races.

So that's just some of the notes that I wanted to touch on on the four phases in general. I also want to touch briefly on the stages of life. So, again, keeping in mind that everyone is different, I'm going to share some personal insight based on experience, my own experience, but also on observation that I've seen as a trainer and as a health coach. So I'd say for me up to age 25 or so I didn't really think about phase one, the function phase much at all. I was not flexible. I never really cared too much about my aerobic capacity. I didn't even put much thought into general health really, phase two, the health phase. I jumped right into phase three, the fitness phase, because my goals at that point were to have more muscular definition, to be bigger, so that's why I jumped right into the fitness phase, not even knowing what the phases were, but that's just how I approached my workouts. And I thought that working harder and more often would keep me fit and allow me to perform, at those times usually on the basketball court. And that worked fine, until I got into my 30s.

And then the injuries became more frequent, and my performance plateaued, and I started actually to gradually decline. And that's about the time I started studying health and fitness, became certified, and thank goodness I learned to focus on the basics and the fundamentals first so I could back and address those things. Mobility training is very much a part of my routine today. Now I require, for example, longer recovery than I did when I was 25, so I have to take that into consideration. I'm telling you all of this because you can benefit from my mistakes and now my expertise and not make the same mistakes I did. The point here is that our stage in life affects our phase of fitness. As you move on as we move on into our more experienced years I'll say without ... I'll say as we get older, the priorities change, but typically or many times we fail to make the switch in our minds, so those things that we did as a 25 or 30 year old for training, there may be different areas that we need to focus on, different phases that we need to focus on, depending on our stage in life.

As you progress, for example, flexibility, cardiovascular activity becomes more and more important. Even the weight bearing exercises are important as we age, because that helps increase our bone strength, but these things all have different levels of importance in our lives, depending on where we are in our training cycle, and I mean the long term training cycle, so over your entire life, okay? That's just something to consider. So that is a very abbreviated explanation of the ACE Integrated Fitness Training model, that's it in a nutshell. It focuses on function first, and then follows the health, fitness, performance continuum. And this is based on the premise that exercise programs should follow a progression that improves health, then develops and advances fitness, and, finally, enhances performance.

Now, as a trainer, I can address all those phases, from function, to health, to fitness and performance, but I have deliberately chosen to focus on the health phase. Really, the phase one and two with a little bit of the phase three in there. That's why I became a health coach. That's what is closest to what I feel like what my calling is. I feel that it's so important to focus on health. That's one of the reasons why I developed the Fit Life program, which is a step by step approach for making healthy nutrition and fitness habits a permanent part of your busy lifestyle. So Fit Life is for those trying to make a change, whether it's fitness, nutrition or health habits. It includes all of these, because all of them are important. But it starts in phase one, helping you make the behavioral changes to progress through the phases, yes, but more importantly, to lay the foundation for lifelong health. Again, that beginning stage is so important.

So how do we put this into practice, okay? I'm going to use an example of coaching an aerobic progression as a health coach, so from a health coach perspective. So let's just say you come to me looking to make some positive behavioral changes and implement some habits that you can maintain, essentially, for the rest of your life. So understanding that although you cannot out exercise a bad diet, aerobic exercise is the primary fitness mode for facilitating weight loss and cardiovascular health, so we talk about that. And then the cardiorespiratory training component of the ACE IFT model, which I use based on the talk test, again, going back to episode number 38, we talk through some of that. So phase one, for example, you may start at phase one. We'll do a quick assessment and say, "We need to improve some flexibility here. We need to focus maybe on a muscular imbalance or two before we start doing too much in moving along this health, fitness and performance continuum."

So in the cardiorespiratory training component, we want to first develop an aerobic base, so I would encourage you to exercise at an intensity that really allows you just to talk comfortably, okay? If you haven't been performing any type of aerobic or cardiovascular exercise, you want to start with something that is just comfortable, because there are so many benefits to just that. Again, going back into episode number 38, I talk about that. I also want to try to create a positive experience that helps you, particularly if you've been sedentary, I want you to have a positive experience, so that exercise becomes a regular part

of your life. It may not be as frequent in the beginning, but you'll at least start to incorporate that into your life. So we're not really going to delve too deep into fitness assessments here, we're just going to focus on the steady, state, low intensity cardio, and then once you can sustain that steady state cardio for about, lets say, 20 to 30 minutes, then we'll look at progressing to phase two.

And in phase two, that's the aerobic efficiency training, we'll focus on increasing the length of time that you exercise. We'll maybe add some interval work. We'll progress by increasing the time of those intervals, and/or decreasing the amount of time that you rest in between those intervals. But these aren't super intense intervals, they're just barely getting into that zone two that I talked about, again, in episode number 38. That's why I did that episode before this one, because I wanted you to understand the different cardiovascular zones. So just getting into that zone two of work on the cardiovascular side. That's barely hitting the interval stages, but those intervals will become more intense as you progress in your ability within that stage. So, again, many, many individuals can stay in this zone for years, and that is okay. Just because you're not moving to the fitness and performance phases, that doesn't mean you're not making progress and that you're not being healthy. Again, this is the health phase, okay, so it's okay to stay here for a long time or indefinitely. You can still advance within that phase and be doing a good job, all right?

Now, if you do have an event specific goal, for example, of completing a race, completing a 5K or completing some type of distance, or you're looking for greater challenges or even more fitness gains, then you can move to phase three, but I really focus, as a health coach, I really try to focus on getting those who are not moving at all into some type of movement, regular movement, so that they can improve their health and fitness. If you're looking for the higher levels again of fitness or performance, that's phases three and four, those are the higher intensity, shorter duration intervals, we introduce those. You really want to develop an aerobic endurance capacity, and you'll work to balance that load in the training time. You spend about 70 to 80% in zone one, less than 10% in zone two, again, I remember from episode number 38, and then in the zone three, about 10 to 20%.

So refer back to episode number 38 for a more in depth discussion on the cardio training zones and the talk test, because I talk about it there. So I'll wrap it up there. I just want to give you a reminder that you can catch the show notes for this episode at [tdfitness.net/039](http://tdfitness.net/039). There you can listen to the podcast. You can watch on YouTube. You can read the transcript. You can basically do whatever you want to do, but the only thing I don't have there is this episode translated into other languages. But you'll also find links to all of the references that I mention here, so go ahead and check that out. Again, the show notes at [tdfitness.net/039](http://tdfitness.net/039), and, as always, thank you so much for tuning in. You all have a blessed on. Coach T out.