

Episode 058: Three Pillars of Positive Self-Change

This is the TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, episode number 58.

Welcome to the TD Fitness Podcast, giving you healthy living insights for your physical, mental, social, and spiritual well being. And now, your host, certified health coach and personal trainer, Coach T.

I'm gonna let you in on a secret. I know exactly how long it will take for change to begin to occur in your life, and I'm not a psychic. I'm not a mind reader, and I can't predict the future, but what I do know is this, the amount of time it'll take for change to begin to occur in your life is exactly the same amount of time that it takes for you to decide to change. We often overlook the power of self-belief, and that limits us from self-change, change for the better. I'm here to tell you that you can decide to change right now, but here's where we sometimes misstep. We tend to think we have to be ready for change to occur before we can improve our state of being, whether it's in health, or relationships, or financially, but don't think you have to be ready for change. You just have to decide to change. Those are two different things. If you wait until you're ready for change, you'll never get there, because change is hard. It goes against our human nature to be comfortable or ready for that.

That's what human nature's all about. It's about protecting us from uncertainty and from doubt. If you wait for change, it will never find you. But you can decide to change before you're ready. That is how you make progress. There's a saying that says, behold the turtle who doesn't make progress unless he sticks his neck out. I had the honor of giving a commencement address at my high school alma mater a few months ago, and one of the things that I talked about there was taking a leap in order to make progress. I remember reading, or listening to, an example that Seth Godin used some time ago where he explained how those who are successful at the game show Jeopardy aren't necessarily the smartest ones. They're not really those who can come up with the answer the quickest, but rather those who are successful at Jeopardy are the ones who hit the button and ring in early with the hope and confidence that the answer is gonna come to them in time.

I think that's a metaphor for life. Positive change requires that you take that leap. Again, you just have to decide to leap. Throw your hand up before you're ready. Speak up at a meeting before your mind convinces you to stay quiet. Most importantly, though, decide to change for the better right now, and let the rest take care of itself.

In my experience, there are three pillars of self-change. This is important as we face the turn of the new year, and we all hope, at least on some degree, some level, to be better versions of ourselves next year. The first pillar of positive self-change is hope, being optimistic, believing that you can, being confident, or at least having self-efficacy, which is a belief that you can accomplish something in particular, or you can excel in a certain area. Guess what? Optimism, belief, confidence, none of those alone are enough to instill hope. As our pastor pointed out just this past weekend at church, hope is having that optimism and confidence and belief, and knowing how to get from point A, which is where you are, to point B, which is your goal, how to achieve what it is that you're actually hoping for. Hope consists of a belief and a plan of action, because hope without a plan is a mirage, and a plan without hope is stagnation.

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The second pillar of positive self-change is habits. Time Magazine recently published a journal issue on habits. A friend of mine recently recommended I check out an interview of Mel Robbins, who is rather popular on YouTube. She promotes the habit of what she calls the five second rule. My Fit Life Transformation Program is all about helping you instill healthy habits in your life. The point is that this is not a new concept, to focus on habits for change. If hope is a belief plus a plan of action, then habits are the points along the way within that plan. They say the best way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time. The best, in fact, the only way to run a marathon is one step at a time. If you're reading a 700-page novel, one page at a time, I'm sure. Habits are what make us who we are. I know they say you are what you eat, right? I tend to disagree, because you are what you eat consistently. You aren't what you eat once or even occasionally.

See, when it comes to making our lives better through healthier habits, we tend to forget, or at least minimize the value of the step-by-step approach. We tend to overestimate what we can do in the short run and underestimate what we can do in the long run. Step by step. Drip by drip. Not over night, but rather over time. Habits, good or bad, by definition, are consistent actions over time, which brings us to the third and final pillar of self-change. That pillar is accountability.

It's no secret that habits and long-term healthy change are what I study all the time, right? I mean, it's what I practice, promote, teach, read about. I recently came across a resource with data showing that more than three-quarters of U.S adults care about being in shape and looking good, but only 31%, for example, make exercise a regular habit. So, what's the solution to ensuring that we can commit, or stay consistent with exercise, or practice consistent healthy dietary habits?

A number of studies point to this concept of accountability. In fact, in 2018 Stanford University put out a study that put accountability to the test by comparing the exercise habits of those who received an accountability phone call and those who were left with no form of accountability. They did over the course of 12 months. The group that received accountability phone calls exercised an average of 78% more minutes per week than when they started. The control group that did not receive accountability calls exceeded their original minutes per week by only 18% to 28%. Another study, Indiana University, they measured accountability by comparing married couples who worked out together, versus singles who worked out alone. The singles had a 43% dropout rate over the course of a year, while the couples who hit the gym together had only a 6.3% dropout rate.

What we see is that social support, dietary intervention, supervision, each have a significant impact on the adherence of weight loss programs. Programs without those attributes have lower adherence rates, which means more dropouts and poorer results. The effect of accountability has been measured on digital weight loss communities as well. One study finding social support played a prominent role in participants' weight loss efforts. In fact, the study identified encouragement and motivation as two components of that social support that members valued the most.

The bottom line is this, it's that adherence to and accountability for healthy habits go hand in hand. Accountability is key. It's key to your results and successes. My job, then, is to educate and to help hold you accountable. That's is why I created the Fit Life Program.

Wrapping up with this three pillars of hope, which is that belief plus a plan of action, habits, which is how we take the action, and then accountability, which helps you maintain consistent action. We find that you have to take the leap before you're ready. This is how change starts. Change is achieved through habits, and accountability is what keeps you

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consistent with your healthy habits. Are you open to change? Are you willing to take a leap? If, and when, you decide to do so, your healthy living journey is then set in motion. Again, referencing Seth Godin, sooner or later, all motivation is self-motivation, and the challenge and opportunity is in finding the external forces that will soon become internal ones. I'm Coach T, and you are capable of change.