

Episode 061: New Year Resolution Check Practical Advice for Staying the Course

This is the TD Fitness podcast with Coach T. Episode number 61.

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 here from TD Fitness. Today, I am calling you out. It's a New Year resolution check and I want to give you some practical advice for staying the course. As this episode is released, we're about three weeks into 2019 and I want you to take a look at how those New Year resolutions are holding up. I want to give you a little bit of strategy to keep you moving forward too.

So, as I record this, I typically record a little bit ahead of when I release these episodes. I'm actually celebrating my 44th birthday and if you're watching the video of this recording, you see my goatee in action here and you're probably noticing the same thing that I noticed when I started to grow it out. I usually grow a beard out about once a year around the holidays. I've a few days off now so I'm actually growing it out but what I'm noticing is that there's a little more gray hair in my beard and I think it's actually kind of cool so I'm going to embrace it, all right? At least that's what I'm telling myself as I turn 44. But, I bring this up because as each of us thinks about getting older, whether you're in your 20s or your 70s, you want to be your best self. Many times that manifests itself through goals and around this time of year, those goals take the form of New Year resolutions.

As I think about all of this, the word that comes to mind is intentionality. How can we be intentional with the things we do so that we can realize our goals no matter how big or how small? You know, my wife recently pointed me to an article she read in a magazine and the article is called You Can Have It All, kinda. It's a catchy title, right? It's a very short read but the author, her name is Randi Zuckerberg. She talks about balancing those things in our lives that are important. And her advice is to do this by deliberately choosing to focus on three things per day. The beauty in this approach as I see it is that you make a conscious decision to not focus on something else that day. And, if you do it correctly, what you get is a balanced approach over time. My Fit Life alumni and the current Fit Lifers understand exactly what I'm talking about here because that's a huge premise of the program, consistency over time.

And choosing one or two things to focus on at any given time. So, let me give you an example of what Randi Zuckerberg discusses in her article and I'll link to the article in the show notes so you can check it out. A quote from the article. "Guilt and wanting it all is nothing more than a stress inducing ulcer forming myth and a barrier to success." So, she says to embrace being what she calls, well lopsided and her mantra is work, sleep, family, fitness, friends. Pick three. I'll say that again work, sleep, family, fitness, friends. Pick three. So, she chooses three of these categories each day to focus on and she offers four pieces of advice to go along with this approach. Her first piece of advice is to stick to three things and I think this is great advice because it forces you to prioritize and focus because when we try to focus on too many things at once, everything suffers. In fact, I often encourage those that I coach to focus only one or two things as they try to implement healthy habits into their lives.

Her second piece of advice, lose the guilt. So, there are a lot of things competing for our time these days, right? There's so much that's important but our capacity to deal with all of this hasn't really changed over time. So, you shouldn't feel guilty. Just make what you neglected today, a priority tomorrow. Her third piece of advice is what she says, to make it awesome. What she means here is that if you're going to pick three things to focus on then go all in with those three things. There's no need to half step if you've prioritized those things as the most important categories for that day.

And, her fourth piece of advice is to track your choices. I feel like this is more important than we think because sometimes we think we're living balanced lives until someone points out that we aren't or until our health starts to suffer. But, by tracking your habits, you can take an objective look at the areas of your life where you're spending the most time and effort and the least amount of time and effort. This helps to view your goals over the long-term which is really what we want. So, hopefully that approach to pick three is helpful. I want to also tell you what I've been doing since the beginning of the year too just to kind of provide another example because I took this pick three construct and modified it a little bit.

I know that sometimes people find value in seeing what others are doing and why. So, some of this is similar to what Randi Zuckerberg writes about but I go about it a little bit differently. So, remember the categories from her article, work, sleep, family, fitness and friends. I changed that up a little bit for my life and I narrowed it down to just three categories of family, fitness and nutrition. I figure work was going to happen each day no matter what. So, I don't need to add that to my priorities and friends and social engagement, that's always going to be present in our families' lives. So, I didn't feel I needed to add that either. But, again these are my focus areas for 2019, at least the ones that I feel I need to be more deliberate about. Again, they're family, fitness and nutrition. That is a key takeaway here too.

You can choose whatever categories you want for your life. Intentionality starts with understanding what's important to you. But it's not just enough to have the categories, right? I mean what will I do in each of these categories? Those, my friends are the habits I want to work on. So, your categories have to have some well-defined actions that you're going to take. I coach on all of this, smart goals and things like that in the Fit Life Program. So, in the family category, one of my weekly goals is to spend some quality time with my wife and that may sound like a no-brainer but for those of you with kids and busy schedules, you know that that is sometimes easier said than done.

So, for me, that can take the form of maybe dinner with my wife or a movie, maybe even a date night or just some quality time talking to one another. I also aim to make the kids a priority over long work hours at least three days of the week. So, that can mean going in later one morning to take the kids to school or leaving work early enough to pick the kids up from school or anything else where I make a conscious decision to not let work override or interfere with my role as a father. I also shoot for at least one family day each week. This is usually on the weekend and usually involves some sort of family activity. So, that's the family category.

In the health and fitness category, one of the things I'm focusing on, actually, the primary thing I'm focusing on is sleep. What I've done is simplified my goal for sleep just to get 45 hours of sleep per week. That's an average of 6.4 hours per night and that's just a guideline. What that probably looks like or a general construct, if you will for that is to get three nights of seven and a half hours of sleep, three nights of six hours of sleep and one night of four and a half hours of sleep. You may notice that I try to plan for the one and a half hour intervals and I do that to align with the typical human sleep cycle of 90 minutes. I talk about that in

episode number 37. I also wrote about it on a blog post. And what I'll do is I'll link to both of those in the show notes as well.

But the takeaway here is that a lack of sleep equals increased stress, imbalanced hormones and a stronger likelihood of weight gain and that's why I want to focus on sleep in 2019. Also, in the health and fitness category, I'm tracking the number of workouts and stretch sessions that I perform each week and I felt like I needed to go back to tracking that because that's one of the first things to go when I have a lot on my plate. You guys know I'm a trainer and a health coach but I'm not perfect, right? I struggle with those healthy habits at times too and sometimes we need to refocus and come back around and relook at some of these things. So, I know I need to refocus on this. My goal is five exercise sessions each week.

In the nutrition category, I'm tracking the number of days I do my 14-hour fast and I try to get five fasting days per week just like I did last year. That seems to be doable and it seems to be working pretty well for me. That fast typically occurs from dinner through the night and into the next morning. I talked about all of that in episode number 30 and what I'll do is link to that episode in the show notes as well. I talk all about how I go about that 14-hour fast and why I do it.

Also in the nutrition category though, I'm tracking my added sugars. Man, I feel like I went like, a little crazy basically from Halloween entirely through the holidays with all of the sweet and the cakes and everything else that was in the house and all of the events and family gatherings we went to, there was just a lot of sugar around. Honestly, it was awesome but I know I can't continue to sustain that. So, I'll tell you that the dietary guidelines for Americans recommends keeping added sugars to 10% or less of your daily caloric intake. So, for a 2500 calorie diet for example, that's 250 calories that you should limit your added sugars to. That's what I use as a guideline. If you run the numbers on that, that equates to about 62 grams of sugar. That's just a ballpark for me, right? Your numbers may be different. But, you can basically take your daily caloric intake goal, divide it by 10 to get your 10% of those total calories and then divide that number by four to get the number of grams of added sugar per day because that's typically how you'll see the added sugars listed in the nutrition labels.

So, then you look at all the added sugars in those sugary drinks, sodas for example or sugary coffee drinks. Look at the added sugars in candies and desserts and you try to keep the total number of those calories below that number you came up with, right? Try to stay below that if you can, add them up throughout the day. But, again it starts with performing your calculations, take 10% of your total calories and then divide again by four to get the grams of added sugars per day and that's the goal that I use each day. I also try to get five servings of fruits and veggies on four days of the week. Honestly guys, this is the one I'm having the most trouble with right now. So, I'm really dialing in on that one and trying to focus on it.

So, I know that seems like a lot but here's how I look at it. If you go back to the article by Randi Zuckerberg, her approach was to take, focus on three items per day. So, that would be 21 total items each week, right? Well, as I have all of my "tasks" for the week, they add up to 24 items and I've been in the habit game for a number of years now. And I'm a checklist kind of guys. So, this is just what works for me, okay? Keep in mind too that it's not something that I try to do everyday. None of my habits are every day habits. I usually aim for four or five days of the week. So, again, consistency over time, not perfection all the time. What I'm going to do though, is provide a copy of my current focus habits in checklist form, if you will as a freebie for this episode.

You'll be able to find that at tdfitness.net/061download. Now, while my checklist may not be exactly the one that you'll use, you can use it as an example of how to track your habits. I

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refer to it daily and at the end of the week, I also look at it to see how I did over the previous week and to plan for the coming week. I will literally put days next to the days that I plan to get seven and a half hours of sleep for example. Just looking at my schedule, I can kind of tell that. I'll also plan which days I intend to exercise. I can plan that based on my schedule. I do it week to week because my schedule changes pretty fluidly and week to week basis is typically something that's doable for me.

But, I also write down the areas where I was delinquent on certain weeks so I can go back and see trends over time. Now, if you're interested, I'll also add, if you're interested in the tool that we use in the Fit Life Program, it's a coaching app that I use to ask daily yes or no questions for your habit check-ins. Just drop me a line via the contact page on tdfitness.net. That's tdfitness.net/contact and I can give you some info on that because not everybody is a checklist person. Some people are very much into the phone apps and that's an easy way that you can track your habits from day to day and from week to week.

One other thing that I do want to point out though. You might be asking, all right, what's the end game here? So, I track these habits. Do I track them forever? And then what? Well, notice that I don't track things like my water intake which I'll tell you is one of the first and most important habits that I recommend for those that I coach and that's because I've tracked it before and it's to the point now where it is truly a habit. I don't need to track it, okay? It's a normal part of my life. The same thing with my daily devotional. Those are things that I do daily. But, it starts with tracking in order to make it a habit and then you get to the point where you don't have to track that anymore, okay?

That's where we're trying to get with all of this. It starts with tracking what you're doing initially. So, I'm going to wrap this up. There are many approaches to reach your goals, to hit those resolutions and to be intentional with your actions. So, these strategies, the one from Randi Zuckerberg's article, the example that I provided on how I go about this, these are just a couple of examples, right? The point is that you do need to be intentional and you do need to have a plan because without a plan, it's all just an idea and ideas alone never got anyone to the goal line. You need to act and you need to act with consistency over time, all right? I'm going to leave it there. Hopefully this is helpful as you set out to reach your goals in 2019. Remember to grab your freebie, my habit checklist for 2019 at tdfitness.net/061download.

Also, you can find the show notes for this episode at tdfitness.net/061. There you can also grab the freebie. You can listen, you can watch, you can read the transcript of this recording and you'll find the links to all of the references I made there. Thanks for tuning in again, guys. You all have a blessed one. Coach T out.