

Episode 062: Motivated and Misdirected Common Approaches to Fitness that Do More Harm Than Good

This is the TD fitness podcast with Coach T, episode number 62.

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. This week's topic, motivated and misdirected. We're talking about some of the common approaches we take to better health with the best of intentions, but that actually cause more harm than good.

So, a quick story. I recently provided some coaching and advice to someone who had to take a military PT test in a week.

So, this individual was worried because his fitness test kind of snuck up on him, and he wasn't sure that he was adequately prepared, and in the military or in the Air Force, you have to take your test essentially, once every year or every 12 months.

Now, mind you, this individual has never scored less than 95% out of 100 on his test, but he was still worried. So, his plan was to try to get a couple of runs-in to prepare for the timed 1.5 mile run that's a part of the test, and he also planned to do some push ups and sit ups for that same reason, to prepare for those events of the test.

Now, you might be surprised at the advice that I gave this individual, but I'm going to come back to that. All right? Let's continue with another military example with, if you will.

So, as a pilot in the military, I was taught early on how to fly a mission. It could be an hour long or more, and you fly and land at the landing zone at a precise time, a preset time.

It's something that we practiced all the time. We practiced it quite a bit, because in the military, timing and precision are everything, right? So, we learned to make timing adjustments and route adjustments literally, on the fly.

As we went in an effort to reach that landing zone within, at the time, it was a plus or minus two minute buffer of our scheduled time. And if you don't practice this, if you don't train to it then, it can be pretty difficult because you can't just stop when you're flying an airplane.

You can't pull off on the side of the road, right? And you're limited to how fast that airplane will take you.

Well, one of the rules that we're also taught is that, as critical as it is to make that landing time on time, there's a point along your route where you're just gonna have to accept the time that you're going to land, even if it's going to be earlier or significantly later than the time that you had planned for.

And that point along your flight route begins essentially, with that final segment of your flight. Usually, in just a few minutes or a few miles before your landing zone and the reason

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is, because when you're trying to land an airplane, we call this one of the critical phases of flight because it's the most difficult part of the mission.

And you don't wanna be changing your speed drastically on your final approach, because it's just not safe, and any speed changes that you make that close to landing, won't noticeably affect your arrival time anyway.

So, go back to the individual who has his fitness test in a week. He wants to run, he wants to do push ups, he wants to do sit ups, he wants to change his diet all of this to try to improve his score on the fitness test that is less than a week away. So, what did I tell him?

I told him that the shape that you're in right now, the size of your waist right now, because they measure your waist as part of this test. It's not gonna change noticeably in a week, whether you take your test today, tomorrow or a week from now. You're essentially looking at the same performance and likely, the same score.

So, he's motivated to do well, but his intentions in this case, are misdirected. So, what I did advise him to do however, was to get adequate rest over the week, stay hydrated all week long, and then spend some quality time stretching and working on mobility over the next few days.

The result was a 99.8% score again, over 100%, right? The highest score he's obtained in his military career, and this is someone who didn't feel that they had exercised enough to prepare for the test.

So that advice not to run, not to diet, not to crank out a bunch of push ups and sit ups over the next few days in preparation. That seems counterintuitive. It's kind of crazy talk, right?

You're telling me that I'll do better if I don't prepare for these portions of the fitness test? No, I'm telling you that when you're a week out, that's absolutely true.

Now, for the other 11 months leading up to your test, that's a different story and you should absolutely train for those specific events. So, let's zoom out here. What does all this have to do with misdirection and motivation?

So, this is the problem with our mindsets as I see it. The fact is that, we as humans simply don't do well with the long term, particularly in this day and age statistics and divorce rates, the amount of time spent in jobs versus the jobs and careers that our parents had.

And as I spoke about last week, New Year's resolutions, all of these things are shorter lived in this day and age. And it's not a flaw that we're focused on the short term. We're just human. I mean, that's just kind of the pace of society these days.

We're living in a time where there's much more instant gratification, and we tend to get used to that and tend to expect that.

If I tell you that I can help you lose 15 pounds in a month, I am much more likely to get your attention than if I say, "Hey, I can help you lose 15 pounds gradually and steadily over the course of a year."

But in fact, that weight loss fallacy that you should try to drop weight rapidly, that's a bad approach, right? And you're much more likely to fluctuate in weight or worse, gain the weight you lost. Gain that back, and more when you try to lose too much too fast.

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Gradual and steady weight lost is sustainable weight loss, but it doesn't happen overnight.

Another approach we take to better health is too much exercise. There is such a thing as over training, and it can come in the form of no days off, it can be overdoing it at the gym with either weight or with intensity. It could even be mental burnout from repeated, tiring and stress-filled exercise sessions.

You don't push your car at red line speed without any stops for fuel or oil, and you shouldn't do that to your body either. The benefit is often in the rest, in the time in between the workouts. That's when the rejuvenation occurs. So, don't miss that important part of your healthy living strategy.

Starvation diets are another approach that are generally a bad idea. When we take this type of approach, we assume that that our willpower, and our desire to be healthier will over ride any urges to eat and that's simply not true.

In fact, too often we neglect the mental component of living healthier, and that's something that I hit really heavily in the FitLife program.

Another thing that I've seen from time to time is that, we tend to focus too much on the details. So, today we can measure steps, we can measure heart rate, we can measure calorie burn and a host of other things simply by looking at our watch or looking at our phone.

We can track all of our caloric intake, we can measure our output and get a pretty comprehensive picture of how we're doing from a health standpoint, right? But to me, this approach is like the tourist that's so busy taking pictures of the scenery with their phone that they fail to stop, and absorb the view and the scenery of the moment.

So sure, some measurement is good from time to time, but when you get caught up measuring all the time, you lose sight of some simple approaches to healthy living that worked long before we had the ability to measure performance.

Another common approach to living healthier is going big with your goals. And what I tell you here is, that goals can be as big as you want them to be, but they have to be realistic.

30 pounds in a year, that's a significant amount of weight. 30 pounds in a month, that's just unrealistic and definitely unsafe. But even with the 30 pounds in a year goal, you reach that by setting smaller, more tangible goals like, two to three pounds a month.

So, if you achieve your smaller, short term goals on a consistent basis, then your larger or your big goals will take care of themselves.

And the final misguided approach to healthy living that I see often is trying too hard to be perfect. Setting goals for each day with no planned deviation. So, Olympians don't exercise every day, right? So, why would you? You can't eat perfect all the time either.

Consistency over time, you've heard me say this before, beats trying to be perfect all the time. So, some takeaways on better ways to approach healthy living and healthy habits.

Number one, take breaks. I talk about this in episode number nine of the podcast. You wanna plan periods. Plan days when you don't have to follow your plan. This gives you a glimpse of light at the end of that tunnel.

Number two, don't get so involved in measuring your fitness that you neglect your overall health and number three, you wanna set incremental goals that help you work toward your larger goals.

But the biggest takeaway, the biggest takeaway is that, you should embrace the long game, because just about everything today drives us to the desire for instant and overnight results.

The most valuable things in life are those that you spend the time diligently pursuing, and working towards and those are typically, the things that last.

Thanks for joining me here. You can catch the show notes for this episode @tdfitness.net/062. There, you can listen, you can watch, you can read the transcript of this recording, and you'll find links to all of the references that I made there.

You all have a blessed one. Coach T, out.