

Episode 063:

The Gold Standard for Self-Improvement

How It All Comes Back to...You

This is The TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, episode number 63.

Welcome to the TD Fitness Podcast. Giving you ways to live a healthy lifestyle without giving up the things that life worth living. And now your host, certified health coach and personal trainer, Coach T.

What's up folks, Coach T from TD Fitness here. In this week's topic, the gold standard for self-improvement. How it all comes back to you. So one of the things that I love about what I do and my position, if you will, in the military is what I'll call the mentoring aspect and what we refer to as professional development. And they're really two components to that. The first is having the opportunity to share with others, to share past experiences, to share lessons learned, to share things that where I made mistakes so that others can benefit and grow into the leadership roles that we try to groom them for, if you will, so that they can ultimately lead others in the military.

But the second part of that is kind of being on the receiving end of that mentoring and professional development. And I really like that because I love to learn. I love to hear advice from those who have gone before me, those who have experienced things that I haven't. So recently I attended a mentoring or professional development session. It was a senior military individual speaking to a group of us. And one of the takeaways, one of the gems that I got from this session, this individual said that the best teams judge themselves or measure themselves against themselves. Not just against standards or against others but against themselves. And I thought that this was a great observation and really some good advice.

And I immediately started thinking about how the same thing is true of individuals. So the most accomplished, the most successful individuals measure themselves against themselves as well. Ernest Hemingway said, "That there is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man. True nobility is being superior to your former self." William Faulkner said, "I always dream and shoot higher than I know I can. Do to not bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself." And finally, Muhammad Ali. He said, "The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses, behind the lines, in the gym and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights."

You see Ali, Faulkner, Hemingway, they understood that the fight, the race to betterment and improvement is not against an opponent, but rather it's against ourselves. So how can we apply this to you, to your journey to your life? How does this concept of self-improvement play out from a health coaching perspective? Well, let's think of self-improvement, if you will, in in three broad phases. We're just going to keep it simple. The beginning, the middle and the end. So in the beginning when you set out on yourself-improvement journey, whether it's to lose weight, to eat healthier, to exercise more. One of the first things that I tell those that I work with, in fact, I state this literally within the first 10 seconds of the welcome video of the Fitlife program, is that you are exactly where you are supposed to be. You're where you're meant to be. So that's where we're going to start from. We'll start from where you are.

Any goal to get better or to be better has to begin with your current positioning and your current ability, not where you wish you were or where you were yesterday or a year ago. It has to start with you right now. Next, people talk a lot about motivation, about finding motivation, about getting help with motivation from others and about external motivators. But the truth is that motivation must come from within. See, I can teach you how to tap into that internal motivation, that intrinsic motivation, but it starts with a belief that you can improve. Now, another part of this and one of the realities of life is that there will be roadblocks and other things that tend to get in your way along the journey, right? But over time you get better at anticipating those things and overcoming them by planning what you will do.

Again, you have to plan and you have to act. So in this beginning phase of change, of positive change, there are three things to remember. You have to realize that it has to start with your current position and ability and where you are right now, not ahead of where you are, not with your past self and not with your friend's weight loss plan or her approach to dieting. The most effective plan is a personalized one and you know yourself better than anyone. That's the most personalized plan that you can get. You know where to start with your current self.

The next piece of that is the inner motivation and a belief that you can make the change and then finally it's your plan and your actions that are going to get you there. So that's the beginning phase of your journey. That's how to start, right? Face to that middle phase is all about putting those actions in place. How do you do that? Well, you do it by being better, not perfect. [inaudible 00:06:01] our better nutrition partner uses this better, not perfect as a fundamental approach in what she teaches and the services that she provides as a registered dietitian.

But what does better not perfect actually look like? Well, for one, it takes the form of small improvements to what you had been doing, not broad sweeping changes and not trying to change too many things at one time. Again, the key here is in knowing yourself and knowing how to make improvements by setting short term goals that are challenging enough to stretch you but not so difficult that you continuously fail to meet them. And again, this is different for everyone. I'm working right now with someone to increase their water intake and when she started she wasn't drinking any water daily. We set a goal for two to four cups a day on four days of the week. It's not that she does that consistently ... I'm sorry, now that she does that consistently, we can up that to four to six cups a day or try to get two to four cups on five days a week instead of four. Those are just some examples of kind of the better, not perfect mindset, the better not perfect approach.

Our goal isn't 64 ounces per day every day. That's what perfection would be for someone who wasn't familiar with where you are right now, and just give a broad brush approach to water intake, but that's not what we're looking for. We're looking for better, not perfect. It's got to be based on where you are right now.

Better not perfect also typically include some form of self-monitoring, some form of accountability or tracking, and this can be done through by writing down how much time you spend exercising, by tracking your food intake or even through or with an accountability partner. But even though you might have a partner or a coach or someone to keep you honest, it still comes back to you. Because these are just tools to help you take the next logical step. So that's phase two, kind of that middle period where you're taking action.

And phase three, the final phase is measuring your success. So the first and most important thing here is to think about how you actually define success. Because if success, if your definition of success, if it's ill defined, then you can't really measure against that. And this is

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where many people get confused. They'll start off well in the beginning with some internal or inner motivation and do well with taking action like we talked about, but then they'll compare their current weight to some arbitrary number that the world says should be their weight. Or that some chart says should be their weight.

If we're saying that we should start the improvement process with ourselves and that we should go about improving with the focus being on better not perfect, then our measurement of success has to be against ourselves as well. It's not the bikini model, it's not the buff guy or the flat stomachs we see on TV. That's what the world tells us is success, right?

In fact, if you're going to use any visual reference or picture at all to define success along your journey then it should be a before or after picture, or even a waist measurement from then to now. It's got to be about you. What I'd offer though is that you don't base your success on your physical appearance at all. What I like to tell people is that your appearance, even your weight, is a byproduct. It's a byproduct of what you do, what you actually measure, okay?

I want you to measure success by counting the actions you said you would take toward your goal. This is how habits are formed. This is how healthy habits are formed. They start with small improvements over time and those things lead to long-term success. In those short term successes should be measured by how well you do at those small improvements. So measure yourself against yourself. Great teams do it this way, and you should too. Successful people don't wait for things to occur, right? They take action, so if you take action and measure yourself against your previous actions and attempts, again, either at weight loss, diet, whatever you decide is your goal, your discussion in the mindset changes from how can I be like them to how can I be a better me? It changes from how can I be her size to how can I improve my size? And it changes from how can I be like the superstar, this mogul, this health nut, this fitness buff to how can I be a better version of myself? And how can I be my best self?

I'm not advocating lowering your expectations at all, but rather I'm seeing set those expectations, work towards them and judge performance with your starting point and your end game in mind. Let's move away from the mindset that we're hamstrung by things beyond our control. You have the power to change, you have the strength to improve and you have the ability to get better and to reach your goal.

Thanks for listening. The show notes can be found at tdfitness.net/063. have a blessed one. Coach T, out.