

Momentum, Part 2: I've tried. No results. Now what?

This is the TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, episode number 68.

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, hey. What's up guys? Coach T here from TD Fitness. This is part two of a two-part mini series on momentum, how to gain, regain your momentum, which was the topic of part one, the previous episode, and then what to do when you encounter the most common issue preventing you from gaining that momentum you seek. That's the topic of this episode.

So real quick, just to let you know, hang with me for a bit here and I'll provide a link for you to grab a freebie, which is my four keys to making healthy habits stick. I'll talk more on that a little bit later, and a quick recap from last week. So in case you missed it, I would highly recommend taking the 15 minutes or so to listen to that one because I talked about the two things that you should do to get your mojo back, to gain that momentum in whatever aspect or component of your life that we're talking about. So, a couple of takeaways from that episode were the truly exponential effect of positive momentum in our lives and how that has a natural tendency to create further unimaginable progress, really, in our lives and how it has a natural tendency to spill over into the other aspects of our lives as well. Success leads to even more success, if you will.

I also noted that in the beginning, when you're looking for momentum, what really creates that momentum is an upfront investment, that initial effort at a time when you don't see results in the beginning, but once the train leaves the station, then you're well on your way. So, the topic of this episode is an extension of that, specifically what happens if the train never gets out of the station. You do what it takes to get some momentum. You're consistent with it, sacrificing to do what needs to be done on the diet front, or the nutrition front, or with exercise, or, again, whatever category in your life, but the habits just won't stick. You can't make yourself like it, right? And it's more of a burden. And for what? For the results that you still don't see.

You know, I've worked with, and coached, and trained a number of people who legitimately try and put forth effort on the health and fitness front. And maybe this has happened to you. You try, and try, and try what you think should work without success. And then you start to reach for the solutions that promise quick results, but you know deep down that it's really just hope at that point.

Some, unfortunately, get to the point of hopelessness, accepting that they cannot and will not change because it's perceived as being too hard. I mean, after all, you gave some significant effort, right? You may have tried several times over the years, but just as I mentioned in the last episode ... Remember how confidence comes from past successes? Well, hopelessness can just as easily spring from past failures. And really, this is what truly breaks my heart, when people feel like there is no answer, no way out, no way to improve, and they just decide to accept the state that they're in.

TDFit068 (Completed 03/09/19)

I could talk for hours on end on the effects of that kind of hopelessness. But here in this episode, I'd rather give you some practical advice for getting your train out of the station and on the right track to success, to winning, and to working toward your goals. So, let's cut to the chase here.

Why is it that despite our best efforts at positive change oftentimes we stagnate? Why is it so hard to keep the momentum going when you legitimately put forth the effort? Conventional wisdom would tell us that we didn't try hard enough. Maybe you've heard that before. Maybe you've heard it from your trainer. Maybe you've heard it from your friends. Maybe you've actually said it to yourself. And that disappoints me in a sense that those who are supposed to help us change, those trainers, our friends, those who are there to support us in our change put the blame right back on us when things don't work out the way we had hoped, right? That's really frustrating to me.

I tend to think that the effort isn't the problem at all. I'm going to assume that you're really trying, right? Because I know you are. You wouldn't be listening to this if you weren't interested in change and dedicated to it at some level. So yes, change is a little uncomfortable, otherwise it wouldn't be change, right? So, there is a challenging aspect to this, but that's something that can be overcome.

So, my belief is that there needs to be a component of challenge, but I don't believe that it needs to be hard. So, let's zoom out and think about this simply, right? If it's too hard, then you're not going to stick with it, at least not over the long-term anyway. That's point number one. Number two, if it's too easy, then it's likely not challenging enough to change you, right? So the answer's got to be somewhere in the middle. And it resides at a place that is not easy, but it's not hard either. So, let's dig into that.

Now, you may have heard me say before that actions become habits not when we override our behaviors with effort, but when those actions become effortless. Let me say that again. Actions don't become habits by overriding our behaviors with effort. Habits are effortless.

Do you brush your teeth in the morning? Yes, right? Is it hard? No. That's an effortless habit. When things are effortless, you'll continue to do them. So, how do we build on that? How do we take something that's effortless and get true lasting benefit from it? So, this is really the meat of this episode. It's four things. I want you to ... You can write these down or you can just download the freebie. It's a single PDF that I created. Just go to tdfitness.net/068download, and you will get the four keys to making healthy habits stick. And I'm going to run through those right now. So, these are the four keys to making healthy habits stick.

The first, personalize your approach. It's got to apply to you and your situation. It has to be personal. Just because your friend is following some popular diet, that doesn't mean that you have to. And frankly, she probably shouldn't be either. Mean, what makes you think that something that's created for the masses is right for you? You know, so many times we think, "Oh, this is a popular diet, so maybe I should give it a try." I mean, there's no car that's right for everyone. There's no school that's right for everyone. No person that's right for everyone. And there's no diet or exercise plan that's right for everyone either. Why? Mainly because we're all starting at different levels, and we each have a different capacity for change.

So, here's an example, and this is straight out of my Fit Life Program. A common habit for someone who doesn't drink an adequate amount of water is to increase the amount of water they drink, right? So if you're consuming three cups a day, then that's your baseline. If you're not drinking any water each day, then that's your baseline in. That's why some type of assessment is important, even if it's just you thinking about where you are currently.

TDFit068 (Completed 03/09/19)

Additionally, the person who's drinking no water may be completely capable of adding four glasses to his or her day. But on the other hand, the person that is already drinking three cups of water already may be at a point where they can barely get those three cups in. So each of them is not only at a different starting level, but they also have different abilities when it comes to adding more water to their diet right now. If you don't consider your current level and your capacity for change, then you'll find yourself taking what seem to be drastic approaches because they're just too constraining for you, and that makes it unsustainable. Tell me if that sounds familiar.

So number two, start small and then add. Use the building block approach. I know you want results. I know you want results now. But remember that you didn't get to your current state overnight, so don't think that you can change it overnight either. There's an expectation management component to this, right? But real quick on expectations, I want to encourage you to take the long view. That doesn't necessarily mean that results will take a long time. What I'm saying is to look beyond the current short-term goal and towards that longer-term goal of a healthier lifestyle.

The other important part of starting small and then adding on is the psychological aspect of continued success. So, here's a peek behind the health coaching curtain, if you will. I tell you this because it's important for you to understand. Quick wins lead to continued effort. That's exactly what I talked about in part one of this momentum mini series, right? When you can get some early wins, your confidence grows, and that's important because the number one thing you want to avoid when you're trying to make a healthy change, the number one thing you want to avoid is quitting, right? No big surprise there. Small wins keep you in the game.

Now, you may be saying, "All right. That's fine, but I'm not getting any large or small wins early on." Well, that brings me to point number three. You need to track your performance, your effort, not your outcomes, okay? Now, what am I talking about here? All right, look, here's an example. When your six-year-old is learning to play soccer, do you determine how well they did based on whether they win or lose? No, of course not, because they're learning. You measure their performance, and I don't mean how many goals they scored, I'm talking about their effort, their sportsmanship, and the other things that they can control. That's what you give them the pat on the back for at that age, at that stage, because it's a learning stage. Well, guess what? You are learning how to change. You are in the learning stage, too, so you need to track your performance, the effort you put forth, not how much weight you lose. Weight loss is a byproduct of your performance, and there are so many other things that can affect how much weight you lose.

So when I'm talking about when I say track performance, not outcomes, here's what I mean. Instead of tracking a number on a scale, I want you to track the actions you take to get that number on the scale lower, okay? And the previous rules still apply, right? You still need to personalize your approach. So if you hate running, don't set a goal of running three times a week. Set a goal of some other type of exercise. If you literally can't stomach brussels sprouts, then don't opt for the beet and brussels sprout salad. Do the things that you can do that you actually don't mind doing. You don't want to go to the gym? Then add some steps to your day in other ways. You don't like veggies? Then try hummus or start by simply adding more fruits to your diet. Personalize it, and start small, right? That was rule number two.

Don't try to add too much too fast. Don't try to cut things out cold turkey either. If you drink three sodas a day, I'd love for you to stop that right now, but it's a much more sustainable approach would be to cut back on six or eight ounces a day initially. So, those are the types of things you track, the actions and the effort you put forth. How many times did you plan to exercise this week? How many times did you actually exercise? How many servings of veggies

TDFit068 (Completed 03/09/19)

did you plan to eat this week? How many servings did you actually consume? How many fast food meals did you plan to replace with healthier food options this week? And how many times were you successful? Track your performance regularly, okay? Track your outcomes very seldomly.

And then point number four, you can probably guess what this is if you've listened to the TD Fitness Podcast for any length of time. Point number four is to be consistent. But guess what? When you personalize your approach, which is point number one, when you start small with the building block approach in mind, that was point number two, and when you measure your performance and not your outcomes, that's point number three, then consistency is almost effortless.

And when I tell you to be consistent, realize that I'm not saying to be perfect. Consistency and perfection are two different things. If you look up the definition of consistency, you'll find the phrase over time is written there. So with perfection, there's no room for error. There's no room for slack, no breathing room, no provisions for what I call real life. So, the goal isn't to be perfect all the time, it's to be consistent over time, to be able to look back over the week, look back over the month or the year and say, "I did this regularly." Regularly could be five times a week for you. It could be four or three. It all depends on where you are right now. But, regularly can grow if you follow these four principles of making healthy habits stick.

So, I've given you a lot of information here, so let's recap here really quickly. When you try to change a habit for the better or you try to pick up a brand new healthy habit and you have a hard time maintaining, you're not seeing results early on, the answer isn't necessarily to work harder. The answer is to work smarter and to be deliberate with your approach. Of course there needs to be some component of a challenge, but I'm telling you that the change doesn't have to be hard, so start easy. If you start small and add to your effort as you get more comfortable with the new change, the difficult becomes easier and that resets your baseline for continued growth. So, personalize your approach. Change doesn't always happen on a linear trajectory. It may start slow. It may then ramp up, or it may start fast and then level off. And it's different. It's a different path for everyone, right? So, be aware of that and make change suit you, not the other way around.

And then finally, understand that that disappointment and discouragement often come because we don't see the results we expected. But, I want you to consider this: If your expectations are flawed, as in expecting a certain rate of weight loss, something that we can't control, then measuring ourselves against that flawed expectation is just going to lead to frustration. So instead, measure how you perform on the road to your goal. How many times did you take an action in the right direction? How you measure success is determined by what lens you look through, so make sure you're focused on the right thing, all right? My experience has shown over the past 12 years or so of training that if you put forth a reasonable effort consistently over a period of time, then you will see results. So, keep your head up, all right? Work smarter, not harder.

Before I sign off here, a reminder that these very principles help form the foundation of the Fit Life Program that I created. So, you can go to tdfitness.net/fitlife for a little more information on the program and to be notified before the next round of the Fit Life Program begins. And don't forget to grab your freebie for this episode, Four Keys to Making Healthy Habits Stick. You can get that at tdfitness.net/068download. The show notes for this episode can be found at tdfitness.net/068. Thank you guys so much for tuning in. Don't forget to show some love with a comment, a like, or a rating in iTunes. Until next week, Coach T out.