

10 Ways for Parents to Find Time for Exercise

This is the TD Fitness podcast with Coach T. Episode number 70.

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

Hey, hey guys, this is Coach T from TD Fitness and in this episode we're talking 10 ways for parents to find time for exercise. So with this episode I want to provide some tactical advice on how to get your exercise in despite the demands of parenting. So I'll provide some very practical advice, but also I'm going to touch on a few mindset shifts towards the end of the episode and they have less to do with the tactics and more to do with your approach toward parenting and really making time for yourself.

I see many parents fall victim to this, and essentially they end up sacrificing their health, which in the long run is bad for their families as well. So I'm going to dive right in. You know I have been there, I'm in it right now, right? We have two young children, and I know many of you are living the same thing, but I particularly see this topic pertinent to so many of the younger parents and those who have recently had children, particularly their first child, because all of us, as parents feel like we need to care for them, and we do.

But you can't forget to take care of yourself. It doesn't do either of you any good, if you're always stressed and your health starts to deteriorate, and you're always bound to that little bundle of joy or the toddler of joy. I know we all have other competing priorities too. For example, I work full time, and I feel guilty oftentimes trying to take time away to exercise because I'm gone for most of the day every day. So I'll try to exercise during the workday, but that's not always possible. My wife works part-time, but she's doing everything else for the family when she's not at work, whether it's groceries or kid drop off her kid pickup.

That's just the family stuff, right? We both have other obligations with our church and for extended family members and mentoring and everything else. We're no different than anybody else in that regard. We're not unique, right? But I know that based on feedback is that many of you listening to this can relate to what I'm saying about being busy and this is an important subject to broach. So this is important though for a couple of reasons. The first obviously is that your health is important, even if you don't have kids, but when you have children, that same responsibility that we feel to take care of them, to protect them, to provide for them, to put them first, to love them. Those are the very reasons that we need to practice healthy habits ourselves. Healthy habits like regular exercise because when you strip everything else away, at least for me, I exercise to stay healthy, but I really exercise so that I can be there for my family for years to come.

That is my core motivation. I teach this in the FitLife program about how we need to identify those core and underlying motivations, and that is certainly one of mine because it will not change, and I can always think about that even when the going gets tough. I don't feel like taking that healthy approach, especially when I don't feel like taking that healthier approach, I can always fall back on the real reason why I'm doing this, and that's important to

understand. So that's why I think this is important and our continuing efforts to care for others, namely our children, we oftentimes tend to neglect ourselves. So I want to give you a few ways to take care of yourself so that you can ultimately take care of your children as well. Number one, use the support system that you have. It could be your spouse, it could be other family members, but communicate with them.

So for example, with your spouse, it's an easy conversation to have, "Hey, are you going to be around? Can you watch the kids? I just want to go get a quick workout in." Other family members, we happen to live close by to my wife's parents at the moment and they are very helpful and caring for the kids when we need them. My extended family has done the same thing for us. Don't forget that older kids in the household can also watch the kids, particularly if they're close to babysitting age or if they have experience doing that outside of the home. But the thing I think to keep in mind with all of this is that you may have to alter your approach somewhat. If you're used to exercising for a couple of hours, then you may have to shorten that exercise or do your exercise in a different part of the day if you're reliant on others for help because kids change things, right?

That's part of the deal. It's part of the beauty of parenthood, but it's also part of the sacrifice. So shorten your workouts if you need to or change your timeline if that will allow you to get some help from others to watch the kids. The second point I'll bring up number two is similar to number one, you could get help, but instead of using family members or if you don't have any family members available to you, maybe you don't live near other members of your family, then you could pay for childcare. Now I know there are a couple of things that usually prevent us from using this option. The first is the trust factor, right? Again found that this tends to affect new parents more than others. I'm not going to try to convince you to trust someone if you're not ready to do that.

But just know that if you can find someone you trust or if you can bring yourself to trust someone else with your kids, it's going to free up a lot of the stress associated with the job of parenting. There are many childcare organizations, that you can go through to find babysitters that are more than qualified to watch your children. They've been trained adequately. They know how to respond in the event of some kind of emergency. They have experience with children. So those are the things to look for, and then obviously personal recommendations from friends or those that you know. But the second reason we hesitate to pay for someone is the monetary aspect. You know, on the one hand, yeah, it can be a bit pricey at times. But the other side I see of this monetary concern is that really we feel guilty paying for childcare so that we can exercise or relax or whatever.

We feel like it's our duty to do that. So why should we bring somebody else in to do it? So part of what I want to do here is to encourage you and support you and to tell you that it is okay to take some time for yourself and to pay for that. It's not only, okay, sometimes it's necessary. So babysitters are a good option. Also, if you're a member of a gym, sometimes gyms will have, in-house babysitting. You can take your kids with you to the gym and sometimes you have to pay for it. Sometimes you don't. But, you can drop your kids off there and you know, they'll watch your kids while you work out.

Number three though, if you don't have a support system, then next I want you to look at altering your timing because it's not an all or nothing approach. Okay? You may have to change your approach. It's not either, well, I want to work out, but I can't. Well, there's some in between in there. The inbetween is okay, how can I work out? What can I change to get this workout in or to change my schedule, right? For example, if you're used to exercising during the day, how about changing it to exercising in the morning before your children wake up or during their nap time or after they go to bed maybe. Younger kids typically need about 12 to 14 hours of sleep that's throughout the day, and that's age dependent. But toddlers and

younger, somewhere between 12 and 14 hours. So you can take advantage of this time to get some exercise in.

Then number four, following that same train of thought, altering your current approach, you could also consider home workouts. So you don't necessarily need a home gym per se. I mean there's plenty that you can do with minimal equipment or no equipment at all. I do body weight training for my strength training these days, primarily body weight training for several reasons. As I age it provides a great workout with a reduced risk of injury. It works the core, which becomes increasingly important as we age. And as we look to play with our kids and not injure ourselves, body weight workouts are usually quicker as well. You can do them anywhere without any extra equipment, and the same thing applies to flexibility work too. So I'm talking yoga or stretching. All of that is good for you and all of that is important.

Now I know cardio is probably at the forefront of your mind right now for many of you listening to this, and that leads us to number five. You can't exactly leave your toddler alone at the house to take a nap while you go for a quick jog, right? So here's what I want you to do. I want you to bring them along. Our kids have gotten some of the best sleep in during stroller rides and if they don't sleep, the benefits of being outside are huge that that goes for children as well as adults. So it's important to get outside, and they can get a chance to look at the scenery or play with whatever small toy they bring along in the stroller. It's just a good experience for 'em typically.

Now this does typically require a good jogging stroller, but you don't have to be jogging, right? If you're not a jogger or if you're not up to running, maybe you can go for a walk and in that case your kids can maybe ride a bike beside you or you can push them in one of the many outdoor carts or trikes or scooters that they have for kids these days. They have so many things available a lot more than when I was a kid for sure.

So that leads me to my next point, number six and that is making your kids a part of your exercise experience. So we all know that kids will mimic what you do more so than they will obey what you say. So, this is the perfect time really to set the example of exercise and to let them join you because this teaches them a number of things. Number one, it makes the concept of activity okay, and I can't overstate this. I think this is really huge because in a society where most of what we see around us is sedentary lifestyles, it's important to get your kid moving at an early age. It increases the bond too between you and your child. Anytime you can work out together, make them a part of that experience and anytime they were part of what mommy or daddy is doing, and they can be a big kid that helps with their self esteem and just as exercise is a stress reliever for adults, it also helps kids burn extra energy and could possibly lead to better or longer sleep for them.

We all know that longer sleep for them typically means longer sleep for us, right? So, but exercising with your kid or with your kids can actually be a lot of fun. I highly recommend it. Now moving on to number seven, I know that despite your best efforts, you won't always be able to find the time to exercise. So for those times when we can't exercise, here's what I want you to do. I want you to make up for it in other ways. For example, you could try focusing on better nutrition during that period or you could look for other ways to reduce stress and be sure to get adequate rest. Remember that there are many facets of a healthy living lifestyle. But when I say that, I don't want you to think of that as being restrictive as in men I have to do well with fitness.

I have to do well with nutrition and I have to do well with rest. Now instead, I want you to look at it as different options or avenues and paths for different periods and times of your life. If you can't find time to exercise this week, try focusing on eating better or sleeping more. So take other healthy living approaches when you can't find time for exercise. So that's

kind of the practical advice, that tactics, if you will or call them. But like I said, those first seven, being more tactical in nature, these next few, are a little bit different. So one through seven, they provide examples of some actual steps you can take.

Many times that's helpful for people. But for some of us, I know that you won't use any of those examples I just listed. Why is that? It's because we're up against some significant mindset, significant and ingrained mindset issues, I'll call them. So here are the three biggest mindset shifts that I think need to occur, the things that prevent parents from exercising, and I want to talk a little bit about how to approach those. So keeping a running list go and number eight, it stems from that all or nothing mentality that I mentioned.

So here's the reality, as a pre and post natal trainer, I know that your body goes through significant changes during pregnancy and after childbirth, right? But you don't have to be a pre and post natal trainer to know that it's just a fact. And whether you're mother or a father, you were probably realizing that you can't work out like he used to because before kids, maybe you were very dedicated and able to exercise six times a week. But this is where expectation management comes in, and the reason I brought up the pre and post natal training is because I want to use an example from my experience in doing that. So one of the most common things that I have to relay to expectant mothers is that their reason for exercise is not to keep weight down. It's not to stay trim and firm, and those are the typical reasons we exercise.

But when you're pregnant, that's not why you're exercising at all. You're exercising to provide the most healthy environment for the child that you're caring and to prepare your body for childbirth. So the focus, if you will, and the goal of your exercise changes. So if you look at things differently now that you have a child, you may not need to be as hard on yourself. Sure, you may have exercise six times a week before children, but now you have children and the expectation probably can't be as high as it was before. Again, that's just the reality. Now that's not to say, I'm not saying that you can't be fit and look like you did before giving birth. I'm not trying to say that at all. It just means that your priorities are likely different now and that is okay.

And that brings me to my next point. Point number nine. I want you to be honest with yourself about where exercise is going to fit in on your list of priorities because parents are just busier, right? Typically, think about the what discourages us. So typically we don't get discouraged just by failing to do something. It's really when we don't meet the expectation of doing something that is when we get discouraged. For example, if you didn't go to the grocery store today or you didn't put gas in the car today, you're probably not disappointed or worried about that. But if you meant to go to the store and forgot to or you didn't get a chance to, then you may feel some disappointment, right? We set expectations either subconsciously or consciously and we hope to meet them and we're discouraged when we don't. So you just have to be honest about your expectations for exercise and set them accordingly.

Exercise can still have a place in your life, but it's probably going to be further down on your list now that you have kids. Again, that's okay and that's normal. You have to understand, right? You're going to make time for what's important to you, and there can be several things that are important to you. I'm telling you that exercise is important. I'm also echoing that parenting is important as you know, but parenting wasn't something we had to do before kids, you probably had more quality time to spend with your spouse before kids too, Right? So it's important to understand and list those priorities. I mean, no kidding. Write them down and understand that the general order of your priorities. For me, for example, it's faith, family, then fitness, but that general order doesn't mean that I will always sacrifice fitness for time with my family just because fitness is listed last.

It provides just a general roadmap for me. So I may have to change the types of things that I do for fitness, for example. Or I may have to plan with my family for times when I want to break away for exercise, but be honest with yourself, okay? If your kid has strep throat this week, don't beat yourself up for not making it to the gym. Just be honest and set your expectations fairly for yourself. And then finally, number 10 is one of the most important things to remember, I think. And I really think this underpins just about each and every one of these items on the list, and that is I want you to give yourself permission. I want you to give yourself permission to relax, to distress, to exercise, to spend time with friends. You are not a bad parent for doing that.

It's necessary. It's necessary to keep your sanity. Yes, you do have an obligation as a parent and as a spouse, but you need to stay healthy for you and your child. So if there was one thing that I would want you to take away from this episode, I'd want it to be this and it goes back to the end versus, but mentality. I've spoken about it in previous episodes, most recently towards the end of episode number 65. A few folks have written about this concept by the way, but I describe it in kind of the way that Seth Goden presented it, which, I think I listened to it in one of his podcasts on one of one of the things that he wrote. But as parents, we have so many excuses for skipping exercise, right? So here's what I mean. Instead of saying things like, I want to exercise, but I have to take care of my child. Or I want to work out, but I can't find the time. Or I want to exercise, but I can't leave my child for any length of time.

Instead of thinking that way, I want you to change those butts to ands. So it would sound more like I want to exercise and I have to take care of my child. And that naturally leads to the question. So what will I do about it? Another example, I want to work out and I can't find the time, so how can I make more time or shorten my workout? And then finally I want to exercise and I can't leave my child for any length of time. So what are some ways I can bring her with me? See, when you replace the butts with ands, it changes your mentality and puts you in a problem solving mindset. You don't feel like you're relegated or trapped in some manner and that you have no place to go. So change that, but to and, and your inner voice, I guarantee your inner voice will follow.

So I'm going to wrap it up there, but before I go, I will leave you with a quote, which I like to do from time to time. This one's from Psalm 127:3-5. It says, children are a gift from the Lord. They are a reward from him. Children born to a young man or like arrows in a warrior's hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them? So that's how ... that's right. Children are a blessing, right? Let's just remember that it's important to take care of ourselves so that we can take care of them. The show notes for this episode can be found at tdfitness.net/070. I've included links to a couple of other podcasts and posts that I've done related to parenting and children's, so be sure to check those out. As always, thank you all so much for tuning in. I wish you all a blessed week. Coach T out.