

# January 2020 Fit Clips

This is the TD Fitness podcast with Coach T episode number 92.

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.

What's up guys? Coach T here back with you for episode number 92 of the TD Fitness podcast. And this episode is another collection of sorts. It consists of all of the fit vids that I recorded over the past month or so. And as we enter 2020, as we enter the new year, my hope is that some of the content here will help you in your goal for implementing healthier habits in your life and really living a healthier lifestyle in 2020. So have a listen. Hopefully this content is helpful. And without further ado, we'll go ahead and kick it off with the first post.

I talk a lot about the concept of perfection, and more specifically how we shouldn't strive for perfection all the time. We shouldn't be wedded to a constant goal for perfection because it can be crippling, especially in a self improvement initiative, like better health. So here I'd like to kind of double down on that and say it a different way, if you will. And it's a way that author Seth Goden has stated it, and you've heard me quote Seth Goden many times before, but he says, "The imperfect is an opportunity for better." So we're all imperfect, right? We all seek opportunity and better is a better approach than perfection.

So then it makes sense that our focus should be on improving, not on perfection. I can improve my current habits, both the good ones and the bad ones as I work towards being someone who eats healthier, who exercises more, who gets more rest, who manages stress more efficiently. Maybe you can improve your current habits in fitness or exercise or rest or stress or flexibility or stretching, you name it. Think about that though. Think about all of that opportunity. And it's there because we're imperfect. That's a fact. So what are we going to do about it?

So it seems like we're always searching for the answer, and it's no different whether we're talking about health, about our career, about love, education, everything really. But the answer is a misnomer, particularly when it comes to our health. There is no single right answer. There are a number of wrong answers, and that certainly hasn't changed. But what has changed in modern society is that there isn't just one right answer. There are many. A hundred years ago, or maybe 150 years ago, if you asked someone how to lose weight, and I acknowledge the fact that the percentage of those who were overweight or obese back then was drastically lower, and that weight loss just simply wasn't something that people talked about most of the time. But if you asked that question back then, you'd probably get a single answer, a single formula of sorts. And it would say something like, well, avoid sweets, starchy foods and overeating.

And that advice would probably have come from the single person in the town who knew something about that. And that would be the local doctor. But now you have immediate access to hundreds of experts, most of whom likely have valid inputs on that same question of weight loss. And many of whom can provide a partial answer that is right for you and right for your body type right for your current habits, your environment, accounting for your work schedule, maybe accounting for the amount of access that you have to different types of healthy foods or your ability to cook or not. And the list goes on and on.

So when people ask me what diet I promote or when they ask me how to lose weight, I typically provide an answer that no one likes to hear. It depends. And the reason is because it does depend. There are a number of different approaches that could work for you and even more that probably won't work for you. So what is the answer? Well, how about if we ask a better question? What's an answer that I can sustain and maintain and that fits the many variables of my life? Now that is a question that I can help you answer.

So as we transitioned through this holiday season, it's appropriate I think to address a topic that was inspired by a recent church sermon that I heard on advent. And if you look at the origin of the word advent, it stems from two Latin words, ad and venire, which is literally translated as to come. And the point of the sermon I'm referring to drew the connection between the advent and the concept of waiting and of patience.

So let me hit this briefly since we're in the advent season and as we look toward the new year with hope and ambition and expectation and waiting in our healthy living efforts. When I think of waiting and patience, I'm reminded of another quote that says, "Patience isn't necessarily the ability to wait, but rather it's how you act and the attitude that you have while you're waiting." And this is ironic because when it comes to better health and our goals, we are usually pretty impatient in those areas.

Partly because, as a culture, we're more conditioned now more than ever to get results instantly. We can shop for products and get most of them on the same day or overnight. If we're looking for the answer to a question, it's usually only a quick internet search away. But we get ourselves into trouble when this conditioning leads us to think that we can speed up healthy living or the results from it. So let me be clear, there are no overnight fixes or solutions. There are overnight answers that may provide a temporary result, but these are far from healthy and nowhere close to being actual solutions. Think of it this way. If you've accumulated excess weight over time, then why would we expect to lose it overnight? If an unhealthy habit, for example, has been a part of your life for quite some time, then quitting cold turkey is probably not a good strategy.

If you've become sedentary and you move less and less, the answer is not to run a marathon tomorrow. The way to true lifestyle change is to address the underlying issue behind the unhealthy habit or trait, and that can only be done through consistency over time. So yeah, let's take a positive step towards healthy living, but continue to do that again and again and again and be patient throughout the process. And wait. I know that's one of the hardest things for us to do. It's hard for me too. But it's easier when you shift your focus away from the end result that you seek to the positive change that you're making for the better right now. There are no overnight solutions, but there are overnight decisions. What will you decide to do starting tomorrow?

I have the privilege of working with a group of people, I call them my action takers. They're the individuals who are part of my monthly member program, the Action Taker Academy, and I have to give them a shout out because, like you, they are all very busy with work, with family, with career, with school and they're representative of each of us, of each of you really. They're trying to figure out a way to live up to obligations and expectations while fitting in healthy habits like nutrition, like exercise and rest. And there are many ways to define success, right? But, but we define success in the Action Taker Academy as doing a little bit better today than you did yesterday, by doing better this week than you did last week, by making 2020 better than 2019 from a healthy habit standpoint. So we can learn from these action takers.

They've been successful because they understand how to turn goals into action and we can learn from all of this. How do you ensure a healthy family life? Well, by doing the things each

and every day to build it with your spouse and with your children. How do you have a successful career? By showing up, by being competent and working every day on a consistent basis over time. So it makes sense then that in order to be successful with healthy living, you have to take consistent action. Running a marathon is really no different than writing a book in one sense. Because you don't sit down to write a book, you sit down, you write a sentence at a time that leads to paragraphs that lead to pages and that then lead to a book. And the marathon isn't a 26 mile stint. It's a series of steps that lead to a mile over and over again.

And that's how we need to view our habits. Whether it's weight loss, lower cholesterol, better heart health, flexibility, strength, endurance, you name it, right? None of this happens overnight. So turning goals into actions is simply a matter of performing the small steps toward your goal on a consistent basis over time. You've heard me quote Seth Goden many times before. He says, "People like us do things like this. Action takers take action toward their goals for healthier living." So ask yourself, who do you want to become this year? What types of things do healthy people do? Let's start with a little bit of that and add more of it over time. Let's try that approach this year.

So I'd like to address this all-or-nothing mentality. And as health and fitness professionals, we are often guilty of promoting this mindset. So let me set the record straight. Better health is not an all-or-nothing formula when it comes to fitness, to nutrition or having a healthy living mindset. In 1965 a music group called The Birds put out a song called Turn, Turn, Turn. And the message from this song states that there is a season for everything. And this song, this message is actually grounded in scripture, which comes from the third chapter of Ecclesiastes. So what's the point of all this? Well, whenever I work with individuals who are looking for a better health, we always plan downtime, intentional white space, if you will. We don't strive for perfection in the sense of eating vegetables every day or exercising every day, for example.

But I help them set goals that allow for slack in the system. Exercising four times a week, for example, or getting seven hours of sleep on three nights of the week. Think about the psychological difference between one of those goals and a goal to get seven hours of sleep every night or a goal to eat vegetables every day. Each of those goals makes us feel a certain way. So my advice to you then is to look to improve your habits, but not to be perfect with them. To everything there is a season, a time to work, a time to rest, a time to focus on health and a time to live. So choose your time wisely. Make healthy habits a part of your life more often than you do now. But don't forget to live a little.

I'd like to read to you a quote by Mark Levy. He says, "If you want to know the value of one year, just ask a student who failed a course. If you want to know the value of one month, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby. If you want to know the value of one hour, ask the lovers waiting to meet. If you want to know the value of one minute, ask the person who just missed the bus. If you want to know the value of one second, ask the person who just escaped death in a car accident. And if you want to know the value of one 100th of a second, ask the athlete who won a silver medal in the Olympics." This quote speaks to our frame of reference. Are you focused on short term goals or the long view? The day trader mentality if you will or the buy and hold mentality.

The story of the tortoise and the hare comes to mind here, right? Having the long view. And if you haven't already guessed it, the point here is that healthy living is a long term proposition. If we aim for short term goals, we undersell our capability and we do things that don't necessarily pay off in the long run. So be aware of your frame of reference. Seek better nutrition over fad diets, focus on longterm health versus the amount of weight you lose in a week, for example. Keeping the long view in mind creates the proper mindset for healthy living.

Couple of years ago I took my daughter to one of my Ironman event races and we signed her up for, it's called an iron kids. It's about a quarter of a mile run and I think she was probably three or four years old at the time, but she was pretty excited to be taking part in a race, kind of like daddy. But the funny thing was, so the kids' race was held the day before. And you imagine all these kids at the start line and the go whistle sounds and our daughter just starts running full speed, like a dead sprint. And then after about 60 yards or so she stops because she's tired and then she goes again into a full sprint and then she stops again because she's tired and she continues this for the rest of the short circuit, the short race that she was a part of.

But you know, that got me thinking about pacing, particularly as we, as we move toward our goals for the new year. So it's not hard to tell the experienced folks from those who are motivated yet inexperienced because it's experience that tells the marathoner, for example, or the racer or the individual who practices healthy habits, experience tells them not to sprint out of the gate. That phrase is literal here. It's a marathon, not a sprint. So yes, it's January of a new year of a new decade and it can be the beginning of a new lifestyle for you. But the way to make it a lifestyle is by not trying to do everything in January. You have to pace yourself. January is one month. Hopefully it's the first of many, many more where you're a little bit healthier today than you were yesterday.

Do you ever think about how effective we are at actually reaching our goals? I mean we tend to beat ourselves up over the smaller things when we fall short of what we had hoped to achieve, for example. I wanted to exercise five times this week, but I couldn't find time to exercise even once. That's a good example. And you could consider yourself a failure in that instance or you could look at it as an experiment. An experiment where you learned something.

Maybe your goal was too aggressive given the type of week that you had with family obligations or with work obligations. What prevented you from actually meeting that goal that you had to work out, in this case, five times a week. In that example, the fact that you didn't exercise could be considered a win if you learn from it. Now you have another data point and you can work to do better the next time, learning from the things that perhaps prevented you from reaching your goal this week or before. So be kind to yourself. And as I pass on something that I recently read, it said, "Rather than treating your mistakes as failures, think of them as experiments."

As a personal trainer and a health coach, I work pretty closely with a registered dietician. Her name's Ashley Koff and she runs The Better Nutrition Company. But I work with her to provide nutrition expertise for those who seek to work with me and those that I have the honor and the privilege of working with. And what I love about Ashley and her team and what they do at Better Nutrition is that they focus on improvement, not on meeting some unattainable standard. And she and I are aligned completely in this concept of improving what you do, starting with where you are right now, and simply looking to do a little bit better than you are right now. One of the things that I point out to people that I have the privilege of working with is that you are exactly where you are supposed to be in your health and fitness journey.

Everyone's at a different place, I fully understand that. But each of you is exactly where you should be right now. You shouldn't feel any shame because of any weight that you've gained, for example, or your past, perceived failures, all of that. Every instance, every example in your past has served to inform who you are right now. You are where you are. It is what it is. There's no judgment there, so let's simply improve on that. Wherever you are with respect to the goals that you seek to achieve, start by building on the positives. And by improving on some of the negatives that maybe you're practicing. Your mindset should be in this case to get better, not to be perfect.

Do you ever think about the fact that we are constantly putting the urgent over the important? We tackle the inbox instead of sitting down and putting thought into a longterm strategy for improvement. We run from one appointment to another instead of taking some time to decompress. We're fighting and judging ourselves based on the numbers on a scale. We're counting the calories at each meal instead of working on a plan for longterm sustainable nutrition practices. So what if, what if just for today, we focused on the important instead of the urgent. And this means focusing on what actually matters. How does that change your outlook? It's worth pointing out that urgency is only possible because of a perceived lack of available time, but realize that health isn't a short term goal. It's a longterm lifestyle, so we have to treat it that way.

Why is it that we use other people's priorities when it comes to self improvement? I mean that's pretty ironic, isn't it? We ask ourselves, which of these, this menu of weight loss or exercise or diet or stress reduction strategies should I use? And I know why we do this. And there are a couple of answers. First, it's easier, right? So and so said, I should do this. So that's what I'll try, even though I have no idea whether or not this is helpful or appropriate for me. But another reason is that we're sometimes ill informed or even misinformed, we lack all of the information to make an informed decision, or what we've been told is flat wrong. So consider this as you prioritize your actions and your game plans for your health, I want you to stress the you in this question over the what.

So the question is, what should you do? Think about stressing the you in that question, not the what in that question. And here's what that could look like. It could look like you making improvements over what you're doing right now. It could mean a little more movement. It could mean a few more vegetables in your diet. It could mean a little less sugar. It could mean more rest in your schedule. They're called your priorities for a reason, so don't try to force other people's priorities to fit your lifestyle.

Since being certified as a personal trainer, I guess about 13 years ago now, and as a health coach around six years ago, I've come to develop a better appreciation for the true causes of our pain and what contributes to it and what can be done to help alleviate that. My mother, who passed away almost three years ago now, she would sometimes complain of back pain and I would encourage her to walk because I know that walking is a great way to improve core strength. And a lack of core strength is oftentimes what causes our lower back pain. So I would encourage her to walk.

And she would tell me that her back hurts when she walks and I would tell her that her back may be hurting because she wasn't walking. Cause and effect. One of our friends recently mentioned to us that she would exercise if she wasn't so tired. Of course, my thought is that you're probably tired because you're not exercising. Again cause and effect. Many times we don't need a chiropractor. We need exercise. So think about the effects of your actions or inaction for that matter and understand that the cause of your pain may not necessarily be what you think it is.

Here's one of my favorite quotes from Benjamin Franklin. He says, "Tell me, and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn." The thing that many of us fail to realize about health and fitness habits or life habits really for that matter, is that what you learn from your experiences, no matter how small or how great they are, that is so important in your journey and to your longterm health. And that's why my goal is always to have you learn how to live a healthier life. Actually not a healthier life, but your healthier life. And it involves your participation in the process and it needs your involvement. My action takers, those in the monthly member program, they choose what habits they will focus on each month.

They determine their monthly goals based on where they currently are, how busy they plan to be over the next couple of weeks and any other work, life or family challenges that they anticipate in coming weeks. They are involved in the process and you should be too. That's why I always choose personalized plans over canned plans and fad diets. They just don't fit most of us. But even more important than the goals we meet, or that we fail to meet, is what we learn from our trying and our involvement. In one of the continuing education courses that I took a couple of years ago, the creator of that course, her name's Amy Porterfield, she stated that people quit because it takes too long to see results, but the truth is that learning the process is the real result. It's all about learning the process, folks. Learn what works for you and what doesn't and then you won't be guessing at solutions.

I listen to a lot of Christian music, and one song that comes to mind is a title called Even Louder by an individual named Steven Malcolm. And in that song there's a line that says, "The bigger depression hits the louder my praise gets." And as I listen to this, I think about some other things that I've read recently, namely a book by OS Hawkins entitled The James Code. And I think a lot about the purpose of stress. Oftentimes we just accept stress, either through worry or by trying to relieve it, but we don't think about its purpose. So what I'd like to highlight here is that stress actually has a purpose. What does this have to do with health and fitness? Well, put simply, I view health and fitness as a mix of our actions in three areas that we can actually control.

One is nutrition, one is exercise, and the other is stress. We may not be able to control the stressors that arise in our lives, but we can certainly affect how we react to those things. And it's important to understand that stress exists for a purpose. It's often viewed negatively, but it can serve us well. We just need to recognize and manage that. So going back to that song Even Louder and that line in the song, "The bigger depression hits, the louder my praise gets." This is an example of thankfulness, if you will, for the trials and the stresses that we endure. And I think it's a great example. Like so many of the messages in these types of songs of how our outlook on things can affect our outcomes. And that's really the takeaway here. Whether it's spirituality, life, health or fitness, just understand that stressors exist for a reason, but it's how we react to those things that determine our way forward and whether that way forward is going to be positive or negative.

Many of you know that I follow an individual by the name of Seth Goden and a lot of the literature and publications that he puts out. He puts out a blog every day and a few weeks ago he published one called Get What You Want Without Compromise. So I'm going to read most of that short post to you. And he says that, "Get what you want without compromise. That is the call of our times. Run a marathon without getting tired, lose weight without dieting. Go ahead or get ahead without working hard. Earn big money without risk. When you expose it this clearly, it's obviously nonsense. Compromise is precisely what's called for. You can't have everything you want, but if you care enough and trade enough and work hard enough, you might be able to get some things that matter. The real question might not be what do you want, it might be, what do you care enough to compromise for?"

So I thought that just that short blurb pretty accurately describes this notion of compromise that we think about either consciously or subconsciously so often. And I really think a lot of what he's saying here is true, especially when we talk health, fitness and diet. But what I don't want to confuse here is this. So often we hear, "Well he would be in better shape if he was willing to do what it takes" or, or we hear things like, "Well she wouldn't have that problem if she exercised more". But here's what I'd offer. I'd offer that those types of thoughts are absolutely the wrong mindset. The focus should not be on whether or not we're willing to compromise. Yes, compromise is required. We do this in everything in life.

My wife and I can attest to that. We have a seven year old and a four year old, so we are intimately familiar with the notion of compromise. And what I just read by Seth Goden lays it out pretty well. But my point here is that we often choose the wrong things to compromise on. We choose things that either have very little chance of actually being able for us to compromise on, or we choose things that we can easily compromise on, but that won't actually matter in reaching our goals for better health. So here are a couple of quick examples.

If your new year resolution is to exercise for an hour a day, Monday through Friday, you might think that that's something that's doable. But life kids, family, work, that may dictate otherwise, that may not be a compromise that is doable, even though you may think it is. And on the other extreme, you can compromise and perform sit-ups every day in hopes of getting those six pack abs, but I'm here to tell you that that won't get you to your goal because sit-ups don't determine the abs you see, your diet does.

So here's the takeaway. Change the things that you have the ability to change, the things that fit your life and your schedule and your unique situation and be sure to focus on areas that will actually make a difference. It's not a question of whether or not to compromise. It's a question of really choosing what to compromise on.

All right. There you have it guys. Those are all of the fit vid posts that I did over the last month. I hope that they are helpful for you as you seek to live a little bit healthier tomorrow than you did yesterday. As always, you can find more information on TD Fitness at [tdfitness.net](http://tdfitness.net) and be sure to check us out on social media as well. You all have a blessed one. Coach T out.