

# May 2020 Fit Clips

This is the TD Fitness podcast with Coach T. Episode number 96.

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, what's up guys? This is Coach T, and welcome back to another episode of the TD Fitness podcast. So this is another collection of the fit vids from the previous several weeks and the topics over the past three weeks. The first was really about your belief in yourself. And this is the first of my 12 principles of healthy habits. And belief in yourself is so important. So I talk a little bit about that, about how belief matters and how you shouldn't let your "this is why I can't" attitude step in front of a "this is how I can" attitude or feeling. And then another topic I covered in a subsequent week there of the TD Fitness podcast was really letting the past go and thinking about how we have to let it go in order to move forward. Really, you are exactly where you need to be in your health and fitness journey. No matter where you are right now, you're exactly where you need to be.

And then we talked about how the past should inform how you move forward, but it should not, your next outcome should not be determined by your past attempts at success. And then finally, we talked about how taking stake in where you are right now is so important as you look to move forward. So you want to consider, for example, where you are with certain stressors in your life, how ready you are for change in your life right now. And be honest with yourself there. And then expand on your strengths, and don't try to make your weaknesses or your perceived weaknesses perfection. So that's what we talked about over the past several weeks. That's just a quick recap, but I'll dive in deeper here. You guys enjoy, hopefully this is beneficial to you as you continue to work to improve your healthy habits so that you can have an even healthier lifestyle.

All right. So let's talk a little bit of science. Placebos work. I mean, the placebo effect is real. And why is that? Well, it's due in very large part to the power of our beliefs and how the brain can affect functions of and perceptions from the body. And there's a lot that we can take away from this. Whether you're a scientist, a doctor, a chemist, a patient, or a health coach or personal trainer. What I take away from it is that belief matters. It does. And I'd go so far as to say that it is the most important thing as you look to start, continue, or improve your healthy habits. Your can-do attitude should not be underestimated. In fact, I'd tell you that it's a requirement. I mean, this is the key component in the very first of my 12 principles of healthy living.

That principle is to believe, believe in yourself. Now, if you struggle with this, it may not be that you actually struggle with belief in yourself. It may be that you're choosing the wrong areas to focus on or to try to improve in. And the difference between overall self confidence and what we call self efficacy is that self efficacy is the belief in your ability to do something in a specific area. For example, some people have no problem with regular exercise, but that same individual may struggle with healthy eating. That's high self efficacy, or belief when it comes to exercise, but low self efficacy in the area of better nutrition. So how do we address that? Well, that's where another component of this belief principle comes in and I'll actually get into that a little bit later this week.

How many times have you thought about starting something new, a new habit, a healthy action or something else that could benefit you, and then you quickly realize that it won't work for one reason or another? I mean, we do this all the time. We let reality set in and kill our dreams before they really have time to take root. So I'd like to encourage you today to put reality on hold just for a second. Don't let the "this is why I can't attitude" step in front of your "this is how I can" feeling, because when we do that, we put out that little flame that could start the fire of motivation. I want you to believe that you can first. Don't worry about reality at that stage of the game. It's like brainstorming, right? The brainstorming technique that we all learned in middle school. Just get your ideas down on paper, and don't worry about whether or not they make sense yet, but just get the ideas flowing.

And now years later, I'm asking you to take that same approach. The person who loses 50 pounds doesn't start by saying, "There is no way that this will work." And the person who runs a marathon doesn't think, "This is stupid. Why do I even think that I can do this? It's a crazy idea." No. Extraordinary accomplishments start with extraordinary ideas. The only difference is that in those instances of success, the extraordinary ideas are allowed to take root and to grow. And if you can do that with an extraordinary idea, how much easier then, how much more realistic is it that you can change just a couple of simple habits in your life for the better? Believe that you can before anything else, and then work toward making that your new reality. Don't let your current reality kill your belief.

A couple of days ago, we talked about self efficacy and the belief in your ability to do something in a specific area. And I asked, how do you gain self efficacy and that belief in an area where it may not exist? You might be very confident in your ability to maintain an exercise routine, for example, but not that confident in your ability to improve your nutrition habits. But what we find is that success in one area of our lives often increases the chances of success in other areas of our lives. And the synergistic effect of success in just a couple areas gets the ball rolling in your overall healthy state. Growing up, pretty much every member of my family loved listening to music. My parents being a little bit older, they lived through the fifties and sixties and they saw the heyday of the barbershop quartets and eventually the groups of Motown as they rose in fame and popularity.

And then when I was younger, I remember a group called Boyz 2 Men and a number of other harmonizing groups producing some really good music. And I think about those groups from the past, and even some current groups from the present. And every member of the group could sing, right? And each sounded very good in their own right? But when you put the different components together, the soprano, the alto, the tenor and the bass, the sound is something different. It's remarkable. And it's the same on a sports team, a basketball court, for example. Though each player may have individual talents, the team functions best when each player fills a certain role. And it's no different in your life. When you can maintain a healthy nutrition habit, you gain confidence in your ability to do something similar with exercise and then with sleep. And then in other things that can improve your healthy state. And when you face challenges in one of those areas, your progress and success in the other areas can make up for that. But it all starts with the belief that you can change in a single area. Small steps combine to create long journeys.

As a pilot in the Air Force, or really a pilot anywhere, actually, there are periodic evaluations that have to be accomplished to ensure your skills in the airplane and the knowledge of the flight rules are up to snuff. If you've ever flown in an airplane, then I'm sure you would agree that it's important to make sure that those who are actually flying know what they're doing. It's not like they can pull over and take a look under the hood, right? So this periodic evaluation, it's called a check ride, and it's a way for your evaluator, the individual that's grading your performance, it's a way for them to check your ability. And as someone who's taken a number of check rides and administered a number of check rides to others as an evaluator, I can tell you that the person being evaluated is always looking for or striving for that perfect flight. The flight when everything comes together and you fly your flight profile flawlessly. But I'll also tell you that that seldom happens.

At least for me. Frankly, it's not difficult to do very well on the check ride, but it is difficult to be perfect. I mean, there are so many variables, so many things that you can't predict. Other aircraft, air traffic control, the winds, the weather, how the aircraft is going to perform, engine or maintenance issues. I mean, you name it, right? But here's what I know. Again, as both a student and a grader. And that is that when that minor misstep or mistake occurs in flight, the number one quality, the number one characteristic that you can demonstrate as a pilot in that case is to move on quickly. If you perform a procedure incorrectly, there is no time to dwell on it in the airplane. You've got to get over it and talk about it later on the ground. Because you can't afford to be distracted by mistakes while you're still flying the airplane. So why do I tell you all of this? Well, mistakes happen. In the airplane, in life and certainly in our efforts and attempts at better health and fitness. And when they do, you've got a couple of choices. You can let it get to you, or you can get over it relatively quickly and move on. So my advice to you is to learn from it and move on. The past does not define you. Oftentimes you can't move forward until you let the past go.

When you think about your present state of health, and as you possibly consider how you can improve your health, it's important to remember that it took time to get here.

Whether you practice healthy habits daily or you hardly have any healthy habits at all, your current health status, that took time. And guess what? If it took time to get here, it's going to take time to improve. And that is the difficult part. That's the part that's hard for us to swallow. It's easy to understand that. I mean, I know I didn't gain extra weight overnight, right? It took time. I know I didn't become a smoker overnight. It took time. I know I haven't always survived on four hours of sleep a night. It took time. That may have become your new normal over time. But when we think about what changing that new normal looks like, it's hard to accept that it will take time to get where we want to be.

So here's the deal. We can't control the past and what's happened. However, we do have control over our future, but not necessarily as much control over how long it takes to reach that new you. And this is hard, because we live in a world where we can control so many things about our lives and so much about our timelines, but when it comes to living healthier and getting results on the timeline we want, we can't control that. But here's what I want you to think about. Difficult journeys, they serve a purpose. They make us better. Think about it this way. Are you more appreciative for something that you worked hard for or something that you didn't have to work hard for and that was really given to you? There's value in the difficulty of things. You want it to not be easy. Trust me.

And the second point is that our past experiences, our successes and failures, the ups and downs, they make us who we are. They give us an insight into what makes us thrive and into what makes us stumble. So right now, your present state of health, whether we're talking mental, spiritual, or physical health, you are exactly where you are supposed to be. And you are more prepared than anyone else to accomplish your goals. You've studied those things that prevent you from moving forward because you've lived them. Now use that, learn from it, and move forward on who you desire to be. It's a journey. And it's for a reason.

Earlier this week, I talked about letting go of your past mistakes, letting go of your failed attempts. But I also want to point out that there is value in that history, if you will, and it serves a purpose. It serves an important purpose. That purpose is that it should inform your approach going forward, but it should not affect your attitude and your belief in yourself. Those are the two things that we have to separate. We must separate those two. Past performance versus past experience and what you think of yourself. The most important thing to understand here is that what allows us to move forward to be better versions of ourselves and to be our best selves, really, is our thought and our belief about our ability to do so. And that can be fragile, especially when we dwell on the negatives. So use the past, and learn from it. But don't dwell on it.

All right. So this week's theme gets at your starting point for a healthier new you. So I want to talk about determining that starting point. How often do you think about where you are on your health and fitness journey? And I'm talking about taking an unemotional objective look at it. This week I want to talk a little bit about assessing where you are. So when I was

regularly meeting with clients for physical training, the first session would usually consist largely of a fitness assessment. Assessments serve as the baseline for where we are with respect to measurements and possibly your goals. But I don't do as much of the in-person training anymore. Back then I was solely doing personal training, but now that I focus more on the health coach aspect, I've been able to gain a better appreciation for the importance of the assessment as it relates to improving your health overall.

It's not just a physical piece. It's also the mental and psychological piece. But the assessment is the starting point, really. And if you ask someone for directions, for example, they can only tell you how to get to your destination if they know where you're starting from. Or to state it like one of my senior military leaders has said it, "You have to navigate from where you are, and not where you wish you were." But here's the deal. Sometimes we're not completely honest with ourselves about our starting points, or we don't fully understand where we're starting from. And here's what I mean by that. I think there are three important things to consider as you look to get an assessment for a starting point for a new healthy habit. And the first one is your environment, the second is your readiness to change, and the third is your ability to change.

So I'll hit the first one briefly here and talk about the other two later in the week. But first, your environment. So this one gets overlooked often. We'll watch a documentary about healthy living. And we see the testimonials from folks who are maybe going through some of the same challenges that we're going through. So we go out and buy that exercise equipment, or we grab the workout gear, or fill the fridge with healthy foods, and we get ready for a fresh new start. And then the momentum is nowhere near what we expected it to be, and we don't understand why that is. We were so motivated and we thought we were so prepared. Well, the truth is that there are some things that are just simply beyond our control, and the most common culprit here is stress.

And that's really what I'm talking about. It's stress, because it distracts us. It requires attention, even when we don't know that we're giving it time and attention. Stress is the main reason, external stressors are the main reason why we can't get a new habit to stick, because we simply can't devote attention to two places at once. And stress takes our attention. It lowers our ability to self regulate and to control our actions. We have a significantly, significantly reduced chance of starting a new habit during stressful times in our lives. So the way to approach this, you can wait for a particularly stressful time to pass. And the example that I've used before here is if you're an accountant, for example, it's probably not a good idea to start to try to implement new healthy habits during tax season, which may be one of the busiest times of the year for you.

So you can wait for that time to pass. Or if you have the ability, you can remove those stressors from your life. Or another option is you can choose a habit that doesn't require as much willpower or as much effort. So since we only have a fixed amount of bandwidth to

devote here, we have to use what we have, okay? Either consciously or subconsciously, there's only so much we can give due to the stressors that are in our lives. So as you objectively think about and assess where you are in preparation for positive change in your life, I want you to consider the external effect of stressors on your ability to change.

So continuing with the theme of understanding the true starting point for your healthier living goals, perhaps the most overlooked component is your readiness for change. A true self assessment must include your motivation and the will to continue. How bad do you want it? How prepared are you to go just a little bit further, to do a little bit more in the vein of better health and fitness? Is this your goal, for example, that you're working toward? Or is it somebody else's, like your doctor's? Your readiness for change cannot be determined by anyone other than you. If you're high on the readiness scale, the greater your chances of making longterm positive change. And if you're lower in readiness, then the less chance you have of sticking with those long term healthy habit changes. The point here isn't necessarily to wait until you're completely ready for change. I don't think any of us are completely ready all the time or ever completely ready, I should say. And you'll certainly have to take somewhat of a leap. But you have to be somewhat willing and somewhat ready. And depending on how ready you are, that should determine how big or how little of a goal that you aim for.

So as we wrap up this week on how to move forward from your proper starting point, I want to give you an approach to consider. And I stress the word your for a reason. This is something that I'll come back to in the coming weeks as we talk about the fourth principle of healthier habits, which involves truly personalizing your goals. And what I'd tell you at this point is this. Instead of jumping straight into the areas that are the hardest for you to change, or will be the most difficult for you, how about if you look to make your strengths even stronger, or your weaknesses just a little bit better? For example, if you have a sweet tooth that keeps you eating sugary treats often, perhaps you start with cutting out one sweet a day or three sweets a week. Make it a very minor, almost imperceptible, change because that's exactly where change starts.

And if there are habits that you find easier to maintain, think about how you can make those just a little bit better. Exercising three days a week, then try four. If you're walking 2.5 miles consistently, then try three miles, or try adding a few stints of a light jog throughout your walk. The goal is to get a little bit better in the areas of your life where there's a readiness to change. Let me say that again. The goal is to get a little bit better in the areas of your life, where there is readiness to change. So focus on that instead of trying to perfect all areas of your health and fitness habits.

All right. There you go, folks. That's the latest from the collection of fit vids. Hopefully that is helpful to you as you try to figure out ways to better maintain or start and maintain your healthy habits. These principles, these 12 principles that, typically we'll tackle one per week and kind of share some thoughts on each of those from different lenses,

different perspectives. So that's kind of the overall goal here, is to provide you, to equip you, with some other ways to think about how you can attack and get after some of those healthy living goals that you've been trying to get after for so long. So hopefully, again, hopefully this is helpful for you. Please join us for the next podcast, where again, I'll recap the next series of fit vids. You all stay safe, stay healthy, and I look forward to coming back to you soon. Take care.