

# July 2020 Fit Clips

This is The TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, Episode Number 98!

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 guys. Welcome back to another episode of The TD Fitness Podcast. We're on episode number 98, and this episode is all about building better habits. Understanding that habits are the building blocks that we need to focus on. We tend to focus on the goal, but we really need to focus on the habits, because a lifestyle is made up of behaviors, and behaviors are defined by the actions that you take, and repeated actions are habits. So that's why habits are key. They define who we are and they can change the definition of who we are almost immediately.

So I have another compilation of a number of fit vids for you, and these all focus on building those better habits. The first few really relate to a healthy habit mindset as we talk about controlling what we can truly control and not striving for perfection, to being what I call perfectly imperfect, and then ultimately looking to be better versions of ourselves. We also talk about how to create better habits, how we need to make our habits relevant, how we need to make our habits specific, and how we should make our habits appealing. Then, finally, we talk about how to practice better habits, how to prioritize your actions, and how prioritization really is not just saying what you're going to do, but also saying just as much saying what you're not going to do. Then we wrap it up by talking about how small steps lead to big, big wins. So that's what we're talking about in this episode. I hope that you find value in it as you look to live a healthier life. I hope that this is truly beneficial to you as always. Thanks for tuning in. Here we go.

As a military leader, one of the things that I try to both practice and convey to others is to control what you can control. If you think about it, trying to control things outside of your span of control is really futile and frustrating and stressful. So why do we revert to that approach from time to time? Why do we stress and worry about things that we have no control over? Do you do this in your approach toward healthier living? Most of us do, and this gets to the concept of performance versus outcomes. When you seek to control in weight loss or adding muscle or sculpting a six pack, you should ask yourself, "Is this outcome really something that I have control over?" Let me answer that question for you. The answer is no,

you don't. You may lose weight or you may not. If you do, you may reach the goal you were looking for and you may not. It's the same with bulking up and the same with sculpting that six pack. If we really had control over those outcomes, most of us wouldn't be on a constant search for the answers to those goals.

But although we can't control these outcomes, we can certainly control our approach and our performance toward these outcomes, and others like them. If you can control your performance, then you can improve your performance. So when it comes to lifestyle change and improving those healthy habits, performance should be your goal. Performance should frame your approach and performance is what you measure. So for a healthier lifestyle, consider focusing on the actions that you take, not the outcome you seek to achieve.

Since entering adulthood, really, I can almost count on one hand the number of times that I've had a perfect week of nutrition or fitness or rest or in any healthier living category really. It's because once you enter adulthood, life happens, and it happens more. In fact, it probably occurs well before adulthood these days. I mean, our youth have schedules that are oftentimes just as hectic as their parents' schedules. Now, in my last post, I spoke about controlling the things that you can control, namely, your actions and performance, not necessarily the outcomes. Well, most of the time, my schedule, isn't something that I have complete control over, and when I think I do, something inevitably comes up at work or with the family or elsewhere. I mean, just by definition of being a parent of two young girls under 10, that alone means I have very little control over my schedule.

So what is a productive approach in accounting for those things that you cannot predict? I'd offer that one strategy is to plan for the unknown by building in slack. Plan for five out of seven days of healthier eating. Plan for four days of exercise out of seven. The imperfection mindset does a couple of things for you. It helps make your performance goals reasonable and sustainable, and it takes the pressure off of trying to be perfect. Would you rather be told that you must get all of the answers correct on a test or are you more comfortable with the expectation being that you have to score an 80% on that test? Well, I'm here to tell you that if you carried out healthier living practices 80% of the time, you'd be more active and have better nutrition habits than most, and you'd probably be a lot healthier too. So build in slack. It's a requirement for a better you.

Each week, my action takers are working toward their weekly performance goals. For those of you who don't know, the action takers are the TD fitness monthly members that I help with tracking their healthy habits from week to week, among other things. Some of them have goals to exercise a certain number of times a week. Some have goals for water or

nutrition intake. Some have rest or sleep goals. Personally, I'm currently tracking three goals for myself each week. One is limiting added sugars to less than 45 grams a day, one is exercising, and one is making half of my nutrition intake come from vegetable sources. My weekly goals are to do each of these things on four days a week. Not seven, four days. Not six, four days. Not even five days, four days.

Now, when those things get to be commonplace for me, then maybe I'll up the number of times a week, but right now it's four. I track my habits in the online habit tracker, just like I track the habits of my action takers there. The point here is that none of us are looking for perfection. I'm looking for a better me. My action takers are working toward better versions of themselves, and it's not about perfection all the time. It's about consistency over time.

So this week the focus is on what a healthier habit should look like. We get into the nuts and bolts of habit creation or creating a habit that is both effective and sustainable. So an effective habit must be both relevant and specific, so I'll cover relevance in this post. When we apply the concept of relevance, what I want you to think about is how your actions or habits are tied to your goal. Now, this may seem obvious, but in my experience, I've seen varying degrees of relevance when it comes to healthier living. I've worked with people who thought they could simply exercise their way to 40 pounds of weight loss, and that approach is neither the most effective nor the most feasible. I've seen attempts at intense core workouts to get those elusive six pack abs, but, again, it's not going to work.

So what actions or habits are you practicing right now? Ask yourself if they're truly the most effective way to get you to your finish line, and better yet, ask a professional. I mean that's what we do. I look not only at what actions are best suited for success in your physical goals, but as a health coach, I know that it's important to get some psychological wins early in the process as well. So, for example, we may work on something simple initially and build on that later with habits that are more applicable to your physical goal. So habits should be relevant to be effective at reaching your goal. If they're not, then you could just be spinning your wheels and none of us really have time for that, right? Thanks again for listening.

This week we're discussing the nuts and bolts of a habit. In my last post, the topic was about choosing habits that are relevant in order for you to be effective at reaching your goal. But another key to effective habits is specificity. The habits you choose have got to be specific enough for you to perform and measure. Let me say that again: the habits that you choose have got to be specific enough for you to perform and measure. This is the most common mistake that I see when it comes to creating habits for better health. It's common to use a general approach such as exercise this week or eat better this month. But what exactly

does that mean? The exactly piece is what I'm encouraging you to focus on here. Habits need to be more specific than that in order to put them into action. Make them clear and explicit. What exactly do you intend to accomplish?

So, for example, "I want to exercise more" becomes "I will exercise three times this week," and you could get even more specific than that by adding the length of time you intend to exercise or by stating the type of exercise that you intend to do. A goal of eating better becomes "I will eat two servings of vegetables on at least 20 of the next 30 days." You see, refining these habits is so important because they are literally what define your actions and shape the person that you strive to be.

So far this week, we've talked about making your habits effective by making them relevant and specific. But the other characteristic of habits is sustainability, because no habit is effective if you don't practice it. One way to make your habits sustainable is to make them appealing. Maybe you love eating salads at every meal or performing high intensity exercise every day. I don't. That is not appealing to me; therefore, it's not sustainable for me. So often we jump on the next promised solution to weight loss or better health, and we try to bend ourselves to fit into that solution instead of creating a solution that fits and is appealing to us.

But the truth is that the only truly sustainable solutions are the ones that appeal to us. It's simply not human nature to continue to do something that we don't enjoy. So while eating salads at every meal doesn't appeal to me, I do enjoy eating vegetables often and on most days of the week. This is something that I've grown to enjoy that has appealed to me over time, but I started small. So start where you are with what you enjoy, and then continuously look to improve the healthiness of those habits over time. That's how you keep them appealing. That's how you make them sustainable and, therefore, effective.

One of the principles that I talk about when it comes to living a healthier life really deals with prioritizing. If I asked you to sit down and to write down a list of all of the things that you could do to make progress toward a goal of living healthier, you could probably come up with a fair amount of things that you needed to do, things that you could improve upon. But then what do you do with that list? Do you move out on each one of those things, making progress in any and all of those as best as you can?

I was recently doing some coursework where the instructor highlighted the costs of basically jumping from one idea to another instead of picking a course of action and sticking with it. So here's what I'm saying. If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority. Attention, when it's spread too thin, is actually a series of distractions. So if your goal is to

make progress, then you should choose something to improve and make it better, and only after you've had some success in that area should you consider adding other things. My monthly members, my action takers, choose one or two things a month to focus on, not 10 things, just a couple. So I want you to prioritize the actions that you need to take and stick to that decision. This works at home, at work, in life, or in health and fitness.

So in the last post, I talked about prioritizing and prioritization, but oftentimes we have to ask ourselves, "What will we choose to do? Are we going to pick the thing that gets us closest to meeting our goal? Are we going to pick the thing that's easiest for us to implement? Are we going to pick the thing that we most enjoy changing?" For example, if I enjoy exercising, maybe I would want to focus on doing more of that versus changing my diet. Do we want to do the thing that's most productive towards reaching our end state? Any of those approaches, quite frankly, can work. They can work for you, but here's the thing. We tend to think about what we'll do and we spend a lot of time doing that, thinking about what it is that we're going to do, but prioritizing is just as much about telling yourself and talking to yourself about what you won't do. You're really choosing what not to do when you prioritize.

Jon Acuff wrote a book called *Finish*, and he talked about determining what you will do and what you'll decide to bomb. When you think about that, that's freeing. It frees up time. When you say, "Hey, I am going to intentionally fail at this," you're saying that when you say that I'm going to focus on something else that frees up time, it frees up commitment, and it's okay to say that you're not going to focus on these other things right now because you're focusing on something else that is more important. That is a priority. So decide what you're going to bomb, and when you do that, staying focused on the true priority is so much easier.

So we've talked about prioritization. We've talked about choosing or talking to ourselves about things that we're not going to do. The other part of this is that we have to choose small enough steps. We need to focus on one or two small things at a time. Again, that goes back into the prioritization that we talked about. So oftentimes we think we need to take these huge steps, but we don't, and the classic example is, "How am I going to ever run a marathon?" Well, the truth of the matter is you run a marathon by taking one small step at a time, literally. When I train for Ironman Triathlons, I don't go out and do long distances right off the bat. I can't do that. I simply add a little more, and a little more, and a little more, as far as distance, to each training period. So those are some physical fitness examples of how you can make small changes in order to affect a larger holistic change.

So you have to choose small enough steps. Small enough steps though that will allow you to create wins, but they have to be large enough to actually be challenging. Progress is

possible even with small steps, but if they're not challenging enough, then you don't have any skin in the game. It doesn't push you. Long-term changes start small and they develop through consistency. Small steps allow consistency and small challenging steps allow for progress. There's a quote that says, "People overestimate what they can do in a day and they underestimate what they can do in a year." I think that is so true. That quote has been attributed to a number of people.

So what if we took the long view? What if we stayed consistent with small manageable steps that provided the right amount of challenge each day? Where would you be in a month or two months? Where would you be in a year? Consider this in your approach for healthier living. Thanks for listening.

Okay, guys, so there you have it. Those are some of the more recent fit vids, and all of those relate to how we can build better habits in our lives, because, really, as I said earlier, that's where the rubber meets the road. I mean, habits define who we are so that's really where I want you to focus as you look to live a healthier lifestyle. So thanks again for tuning in. This is Coach T wishing you a wonderful next few weeks. I'll be back in the next episode with more fit vids and more ways that you can incorporate these healthy living habits into your lifestyle. Coach T, signing out.