

Reduce Stress. Live Healthier. Part 2

This is the TD Fitness Podcast with Coach T, episode number 102.

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, guys, Coach T here. Welcome back to the TD Fitness Podcast, this is episode number 102. This is also part two of a four-part series where we look at reducing stress and living healthier. In this episode, we are going to essentially examine principles number four through seven of my principles for healthier living. We're specifically looking at those principles to see how we can get after reducing the amount of stress that we have in our lives.

The first principle that we hit in this episode, and this is a compilation of my FitVids on these very topics for the past month or so, but the first principle is really in leveraging what works for you, so asking yourself what can work in your favor. The first thing we point out there is that rest, rest can work in your favor. Then we talked about how positive people can work in your favor. And finally, how accountability can work in your favor. Because all of these things add up to help you figure out the things that actually help with your desire to live healthier.

And then the next principle is the opposite of that, countering what works against you. One of the things that can work against you is doing too much, so we'll talk a little bit about that in this episode. Another is just the amount of busy-ness that we have. So looking at a way to organize that busy-ness in a different mindset, specifically as we look to manage the amount of rest we get, how to work with the amount of stress that we have in our lives, and how to approach doing some of those things that we can't get away from, that are obligations that we love to do, which are things like spending time with our kids and caring for our kids but that can lead to excess stress if you don't handle it appropriately.

Those principles, number four and five, leveraging what works for you and countering what works for you, those are the things that are in your environment that you can look to control a little bit better. But there are a couple of things that you can actually do yourself as we think about setting ourselves up for success. The first, and this is principle number six, and that is really making things about you. What I mean by that is asking yourself questions

like, "Who do you really want to be?" That should be your end goal. Ultimately, I think we all want to be someone who lives healthier. So we tackle that question about who you want to be.

Then we talk about how you should start where you are. You don't need to take someone else's starting line, you need to take your starting position and start from there. That's the first step to success. And then finding your true motivation. Again, not someone else's motivation, not what motivates somebody else, not what someone tells you should motivate you, but finding your own true motivation. That's how you make it about you, okay? And then finally, principle number seven, being involved in your change. This one sounds a little ironic, but you might think that, "Well, of course I'm involved in my change." But what I'm talking about is, first of all, determining what problem you need to solve and attacking that, and then investing in yourself, so initiating that change in your life. Because when you do that, you have buy-in, you're invested in that change. It excites you and you can work towards it easier. And then finally, when you hit those missteps along the way, don't look at those as failures, but look at them as learning experiences. And then use that to feed back in to your process, to your systems for making your habits better.

Those are a brief overview of the topics that we hit in this podcast. I'm really excited to bring part two of this series to you. So without further ado, I'll stop there and let you get to the FitVid. So here we go. Thanks for listening.

What's up, guys, Coach T here. Stress management is important for healthier living. It's hard to do when you're busy, so it's important to stack the deck in your favor. But where do you start? Well, we talked about choosing the right time to act as part of our third principle of healthier living, and now we have to think about what we can do to increase our chances of success. This week, we'll do this by asking the question, "What can work in our favor?" In fact, that's our fourth principle of healthier living. What has worked for you in the past? What do you know will help you out now?

Well, one thing that I'd offer when it comes to stress management for healthier living is adequate rest, specifically adequate amounts of sleep. For busy people like you and me, an adequate amount of sleep is often the first thing to go, right? But a productive month is made up of productive weeks, and productive weeks are made up of productive days, and productive days start with a good night's sleep. It has to be restful, and it has to be long enough. I know that the demands of life tend to force us to prioritize our time and our efforts, and sleep becomes the area where we often compromise. I'll tell you, the National Sleep Foundation reports that six out of 10 Americans have sleep problems.

Did you know that getting less than six hours of sleep a night increases your risk of cardiovascular disease by almost 50%, and the risk of stroke by 15%? Lack of rest affects the immune system too. It makes our bodies more susceptible to illness, and that's something that's particularly important today as flu season rolls around. But a lack of sleep also increases stress and negatively affects our hormone levels. So, what can work in your favor? It's adequate rest. The benefit is increased energy levels, clearer thoughts, alertness, and better memory, but most importantly, lower stress. The busy-ness of life will continue, but it is important to make an effort to give yourself rest. Rest enables us to cope with the busy-ness of life, and it leaves us healthier and feeling better. Just start small. Gradually increase the amount of sleep you get, and you'll notice that these small changes add up to hours of more rest over the longterm.

This week's healthy living principle asks the question, "What can work in your favor when it comes to stress management and living a healthier lifestyle?" One thing is positive interactions with others, largely your friends and the people you surround yourself with. Maybe you have someone that just makes you feel better, possibly that light of positivity that you look to whenever something's on your mind or you're feeling down. It's amazing how your mood almost instantly changes when you have the opportunity to talk to or see them, right?

You probably have someone, unfortunately, that drains your energy, for lack of a better word. They may not intend to make you feel that way, but the result is a negative mood for you. Look, our lives are filled with positives and negatives. My point to you is that your mood matters. It matters because stress is real. But it's also a state of being, and that state is affected by your surroundings and who you're around. Think about that. It's healthy to be around positive people, so surround yourself with them as often as you can. By the way, try to be someone else's positive person, it's contagious.

So wrapping up this week's healthy living principle of what can work in your favor is the idea of accountability. The theme over these next couple of months is reducing stress. You're probably saying, "Well, it's stressful when I'm held accountable." Well, here's the thing, it's chronic stress that's the killer. We have little things in our lives every day that stress us out. But those things aren't all bad. Cortisol is a naturally-occurring stress hormone that is released in our bodies to handle stressful situations. It's responsible for the fight or flight response. It's the reason why our ancestors before us knew when to be stressed for a good reason.

The same is true now, we all need at least a little stress in order to move ourselves forward. We need to pay the bills. It's stressful, but that ensures that the lights stay on, which leads to less stress. We need to do that project at work. It's stressful, but it ensures that we

keep our job, which leads to less stress. We need to feed, change, and bathe the baby. It's stressful, but it ensures that our child is taken care of, which leads to less stress. Stress is naturally occurring, and it's necessary. But living a stressful life is not. When it comes to practicing healthier habits, to be healthier and ultimately reduce stress, having a method of maintaining accountability is key. So just like your landlord holds you accountable for the rent and your boss holds you accountable at work and your family holds you accountable in raising your child, you need a mechanism for accountability in your healthy habits as well. What system do you use? Who's your accountability partner? How do you track progress? I encourage you to find something or someone to hold you accountable to your healthier habits.

Hey, what's up, guys? Coach T here from TD Fitness. What works against you when you're trying to reduce stress in your life? I can tell you what has worked against me in the past, and that is really doing too much, committing to too much, not saying, "No, not this time, I've got a bit too much on my plate." You see, for those of us who lead busy lives, stress is often caused by the busy-ness. But it's easy to say, "Okay, remove some of the things that make me busy. Let's see, what part of my life would that be? What can I remove?" You can't remove your family, right, not your job, or maybe the need to travel for work, your exercise routine. Which of those things could you remove from your life to be less busy? The answer is none of them. None of those are good options.

So how do we approach this problem? Well, I'm going to offer two possible solutions. Actually, it's one solution with two parts. The solution is in being deliberate, in being deliberate with planning and in being deliberate with your time by incorporating white space. We'll talk more about each of those later this week.

Okay, so what is it that works against your efforts to reduce stress so you can live a healthier life? The main thing is in being busy. But busy-ness isn't just a function of how much you do. Your busy state is also characterized by how your time is organized. Let me use a metaphor to provide some clarity here. My wife and I are blessed to have a five-year-old and an eight-year-old, both daughters. So my life is filled with kid examples, so you'll have to bear with me for a minute here. But my daughters have no less than probably 10 or 15 Lego sets. If we were to dump each of those Lego sets onto the floor in a big pile, it would seem rather disorganized, a bit mixed up or messy, out of order, and stressful.

But there are a couple of things that we can do here. We can sort them. We can sort them by color or by size or by the different sets that each piece came with. And then all of a sudden there's order. They can choose to make something either pink or white. They can choose to make something big or small. They can choose to build a house or an airplane. So those Lego pieces represent the many facets of your life that serve to stress you out, those

things that define your busy status, the things that lead you to feeling disorganized, mixed up, messy, and out of order. But when you can organize the pieces in a way that suits you, you can literally rebuild the chaos and disorder. It's still the same number of pieces, but it's not as stressful because they're ordered in a way that works for you. So we'll talk practically about how to do this in my next posts, specifically about how to get more rest, how to work less, and how to get some time for yourself when you have kids.

All right. So there are three common areas of my life that contribute to being busy, and therefore being stressed. They are the amount of rest that I get or that I don't get, the amount of time that I spend at work or doing work, and the attention that we give to our kids. So let's start with rest. The key question here, who is responsible for the amount of sleep you get? If you have a newborn, then that's one thing, but otherwise, you're probably the responsible one. Do you stay up late to unwind? Sometimes I do. Do you sleep until the last possible moment before you absolutely have to get up? Sometimes I do this too. But when you do either of these things, in many ways, you're just along for the ride. But when I'm deliberate about my sleep habits and my rest, and when I go to bed, I get up earlier. And magically, then there's time to exercise or to plan, to think and time to decompress a bit.

In my life, that is the first step to stress management. A good day, a productive day starts with the decision that's made the night prior. Don't stay up late every night because you need to unwind, get some rest and rise early. That way you can face and tackle the day on your terms. The next category, work. So whether you work by the hour or if you're a salary employee, let go of the mindset that working longer is better for the organization or for your co-workers and your career. It will never stop unless you stop it. It's certainly not better for you or your family to work longer hours. What I found that works for me is, again, in being deliberate, being deliberate about getting some of that time back, getting your life back. We have to ask ourselves the question, "Do I live to work or do I work to gain freedom in my lifestyle?"

So certainly show up one time or early, since now you're probably waking up earlier, right, if you take the previous advice. But when the day draws to an end, leave. If you're teleworking these days, then set boundaries. Be deliberate about after-hours work so that you can protect time for yourself and with your family. We deserve what we accept, right? It's your life to live, so don't accept undue intrusion. Knock it off when the work is done. And it may not be done, but you can save some more for the next day.

All right, the third category, final category, kids. I'm a parent. My wife and I have to constantly remind ourselves with this question, and it's a hard one. The question is, who is training who? Are you training your kids or are they training you? Because these loving, little

humans and balls of energy and joy can cause an exorbitant amount of stress for new parents, for young parents, and for seasoned veterans alike. Books have been written on this, so I'm not going to go too deep here. But think about those areas where you've lost a part of your life, a lot of time. Don't get me wrong, okay, parenting is a sacrifice and it should be. We go in with eyes wide open. We have to parent, and we love to parent.

But it's okay, in fact, it's in your best interest, in your spouse's best interest, and your kid's best interest to take some time back. Take time for you and your spouse, because a healthy marriage is the best way to care for your children. Take time for yourself by putting the kids in their bedroom, not yours. If you're not rested, you aren't much good to them, right? And when they're old enough, let them eat what you cook for yourself. Don't cook separate meals for everyone. These are just examples of the things that have worked for us and things that have challenged us in the past. They may not be easy in the beginning to implement, but they definitely pay off in the long run, okay?

The takeaway here is that you can say no. You can say no to the things that contribute to your stress. Because being a stressed-out parent is neither sustainable nor is it optimal. Love your kids, but protect some time for yourself. It doesn't mean that you love your kids less, it means that you're parenting and kids are learning to adapt to the rules, just like they'll have to live with as they grow into adults. So, control your rest, take some time back from your work schedule, and again, some freedom in your life as a parent, so you can be an even better one. I'd love to hear your comments and feedback on this one.

Hey, guys, Coach T from TD Fitness here. The running theme for these several weeks is to reduce the amount of stress in our lives. Why? Well, because chronic stress is unhealthy. It affects our mood, our hormones, and it causes us to retain excess weight. But if I just tell you to reduce stress, that's somewhat of a nebulous term, right? I mean, how do you actually do that? How do you actually reduce stress? What do you need to do? Well, all too often we stress the wrong word in those questions. We ask, "What do I need to do?" when we should be asking, "What do I need to do?" It's not about what worked for others, it's about what will give you the best chance for success. There are three things that I consider here as we talk about how to truly make your goals about you.

So, as we look to answer the question, how can I reduce stress to live healthier? I'd encourage you to look at the destination, that's your goal. Look at your starting point, or I should say your starting point, and finally your drive, what's going to get you there. Today I'll briefly hit your goal, and later this week I'll address your starting point and your drive. So think of your goal not as a destination or an accomplishment or a point you necessarily reach or achieve, but rather think of it as the type of person that you eventually want to be or want

to become. Looking at this from a how-to-lower-stress standpoint, I would reframe my goal to be the type of person who lives a life of lower stress. Now, why is it helpful to reframe the goal in that way, to say, "I want to be a person who," in this case, "leads a life of lower stress."?

Well, it's helpful and important because when you make your goal the type of person that you want to be, you're able to fill in a lot of the blanks when questions about, what do I do in this case? when those types of questions arise. For example, we've talked about getting more rest in recent weeks as a way to reduce stress. Suppose you set a goal of getting eight hours of sleep on Tuesday night. Well, when your boss hands you a project that's due on Wednesday or your kid needs some help with a project that's due on Wednesday, your plan for eight hours of sleep on Tuesday night may have to change.

But if your goal is to be someone who is less stressed overall, and who looks to reduce stress by incorporating more sleep into your busy schedule, you realize that staying up later to work on this night or helping your child on this night isn't going to detract from your overall goal, but it's actually going to help you by allowing you to do some things that need to be done. And that will probably probably reduce stress when you actually have them done. So by focusing on the type of person that you want to be, it allows you to focus on the bigger picture when things pop up that seemingly contradict what you're trying to achieve.

Now, before I go, you may be thinking, "Well, I thought my goal was supposed to be somewhat specific." Well, it does need to be specific, and I'll tell you how to address that in my next post.

All right. So keeping in mind that your ultimate goal is to be the type of person who, in using our previous example, is someone that has a lower amount of stress in their life and understanding that your first approach to that is to incorporate more sleep, how do you then make that goal more specific to you? Well, the key is in your starting point. You see, the traditional approach is to hop on the internet and google, "How much sleep should I get?" And then try to sleep that amount more often. But that neglects the biggest factor in all of this, which is where you currently are.

When I google, "How much sleep do I need?" the search results are seven to nine hours a night, depending on who you are. But if you're averaging only five or even six hours a night, there's probably a reason for that. There's a reason why you're only able to sleep that amount right now. So is adding another hour or two of sleep each day really feasible? If you're sleeping four or five or six hours a night, your starting point matters. So start from where you are, and add to that. Maybe add a half hour to your night's sleep three nights a week rather than shooting for the amount that's recommended for the masses, i.e., the seven to nine hours in

this case. Making your goals about you means starting where you are and working from there. It's not starting with someone else's goal and struggling to achieve that.

Wrapping up this week's principle of making your goals about you, we've learned that the destination should be who you want to be, the type of person that you want to become, and the starting point should start with where you are right now. But how do you get from your starting point to your goal? This one gets to the heart of motivation and it requires some hard questions of ourselves, really. It's one thing to say, "Coach T said that I need to get more rest," or that, "The doctor says that I need to get more rest." or, "My family tells me I need to get more rest." That type of motivation may keep you going for a week or two, but what really drives you over the longterm is what's called intrinsic motivation or this motivation from within.

You have to want to change. Many times, that starts by understanding your deeper why. In our get more rest example, perhaps the deeper why is that you want to be more rested so that you have energy to play with your kids after work, or perhaps it's to be more alert during your conversations with your spouse or at work. If you keep that deeper purpose in mind, it will take you farther and then successes toward your goal will keep you going. So focus on your true why. It's a necessary step in making your goals truly about you.

Just about everything that I teach and coach on involves you taking action, taking action toward living a healthier life, taking action to be deliberate, and to plan your healthy habits. Let me say that last one, again, taking action to plan your healthy habits. So continuing with our theme of managing stress, I want you to ask yourself two questions, first, whose excess stress problem will you solve for them? And secondly, who's going to solve your excess stress problem. The answer to both of those questions is obviously no one, because no one is familiar enough with your problem to solve it for you, and you aren't familiar enough with anyone else's problems to solve theirs. So that leaves you to solve your own problem.

Now, that may sound obvious, but if it's so obvious, then why do we complain and hope for less stress at work? Why do we wish we had more time to relax? Why do we keep adding things to our calendars? If you're looking for the answer on what to do to make you or your life less stressful, I can't give you the best answer there. But you can. You know you better than that anyone else on this earth. I can recommend that you get more rest or stop taking on so many things, or whatever it may be. But those recommendations are based on my experiences and what's worked in my life and what I've observed maybe for other people. But you have to decide what's going to work in your life. Be involved in your change, that's the only way to make it lasting.

Okay, so you're at work and your boss gives you a project that you're not so excited about. So you trudge through it for weeks, doing your best, but not really looking forward to working on it each day. And when the project is done, you are relieved. Compare that scenario to a new idea that you come up with at work and you pitch it to your boss. And with some convincing, she gives you the green light and resources to work on it and see it through. Every day, you're excited about it. You see it through until the end. And even then, you're always looking to make that idea, that thing that you thought of and created a little bit better.

When you initiate change, you have buy-in. You're invested in that change. So this is applies to that project at work or the healthy living change that you seek to make in your life. To decide what you can and need to improve, you could do that. You're more excited each day when you work toward that change. You don't want it to end, you just want it to keep getting better. That is what being involved in your change is all about. It's about being invested in the actions and the habits that go into it from day to day.

All right, let's say you've listened to some of the advice that I've offered over the past few weeks on how to reduce stress and get some time back in your life. Maybe you're trying to go to bed earlier, or you're being more deliberate with what you say yes to when it comes to adding things to your schedule. Maybe you're making more of an effort to not work so much. Whatever the case, let's say you've attempted this and it's just not working out. How do you view that? Were you unsuccessful? Was that strategy or method just not for you? Were there things beyond your control that prevented you from making progress in that area? If you can merely answer any of those questions, then your attempt at change was a win. You're probably wondering what on earth I mean by that, but if the strategy wasn't for you, then why do you think that? How can you make it better for you?

You now have insight on how it could work for you the next time. If there were things beyond your control that prevented you from making progress. Then good, now you know, and can adjust somewhere else. You see, it's not winning or losing, it's winning or learning. Learning is also a win. We never expect to get everything in life right the first time, so why do we want to give up on the first sign of struggle when it comes to changing our behaviors for the better? It's about the process. And if you continue to make your process better by improving your actions and your habits in a way that's sustainable, then by definition, you're getting better and you're living healthier.

All right, guys, there you have it, that is the collection of FitVids from the past month, and this wraps up episode number two or part two of our four-part series, I'll say, on how you can reduce stress to live healthier. Hopefully, you found some value in some of the tips that

we brought to you today. And as always, you can check us out at tdfitness.net. We'll be back in the next episode with part three of this series, as we look a little bit deeper into healthier habit mindset, how you create those healthy habits in your life, and how you practice healthier habits. that's really where the rubber meets the road. Thanks for listening, guys. This is Coach T signing off.