

Better Nutrition Part 1 - A Mindset for Better Nutrition

Alright, welcome back to the TD Fitness Podcast. I'm Coach T. and I am excited to be back on the podcast circuit with you! Some of you may know that I made a deliberate decision at the beginning of this year, 2021, to take a four-month pause on the podcast production while I worked on my Healthier Living training videos for you all. I appreciate your patience...that was some very much-needed time that I needed to get off to a great start on that tool and I hope to make it available to you soon.

This episode is Part 1 of a four-part series on Better Nutrition. In this episode, I'll focus on your Mindset for Better Nutrition. And I'll do that by stepping through the first few of my principles for healthier living.

Now, with any change for the better, a simple way to think about it is like this, you're either adding something positive that's not currently a routine in your life, or you're cutting back (or eliminating) something that you're doing that isn't altogether healthy. Things are no different when we talk about nutrition. Whether you're adding more water, fruits, veggies, fiber, protein, or healthy fats...or if your goal is to limit calorie-dense or processed foods, unhealthy fats, added sugars, sodium or alcohol...your specific habit goal of adding or taking away is likely different than what you're doing now. That's the reason for the change, right? And because it does require change on some level, this is difficult because change itself is difficult. But the catalyst for that change has to be grounded in what is arguably the most important aspect of this or any other change in your life...your mindset. That's why this episode is all about your mindset. It starts with what you think of yourself, and what you think of your chances to improve...it's basically your belief in your ability to live healthier.

I like to think of mindset as having three temporal components. I view it through the present lens...that's what I believe right now. Next, the future lens, asking "can I be successful?" And finally, I look at the past and how my past experiences can and should affect me going forward. But the first takeaway here, the primary thing to focus on is this: a "yes, I can" mindset.

So let me give you a personal example from when I decided to incorporate intermittent fasting into my nutrition routine. In 2018 I embarked on what I thought would be a somewhat short-lived experimental journey to learn more about what it takes to practice intermittent fasting. I didn't really feel a need to do it from a health perspective, but like many things I try, it came from a desire to learn more about intermittent fasting and really to be able to better answer questions I received from clients and followers. I had never intentionally practiced intermittent fasting before, and frankly, I had never really been good at sticking to any type of diet per se, so this was going to be a change for me. And I had to be honest with myself about whether this was something I wanted to try and if it was something I was ready to do. But, I think because I went into it with a "let's just see" mentality, that took a lot of the pressure off. And that's another takeaway message for you...it didn't matter what I had or hadn't done before. It didn't matter, for example, that breakfast is my favorite meal of the day and I was planning to skip it on 5 days a week. It didn't matter that I was in the habit of eating something for breakfast every day, and that I had lived that way for most of my 43 years of life at that point. None of that mattered for me...and those types of things don't matter for you either. What I mean here is that whatever type of change you seek to make, despite how you view your journey up to this point, right now, in this moment you are more equipped to shape your future self than ever before. So, I want you to use the tools you have, those things that you've learned through the ups and downs of life to live healthier. Remember, you are exactly where you're supposed to be right now. So, give change a try with no pressure and no stress. You really don't have anything to lose!

As I look back on the time when I was considering whether I was "ready" to try intermittent fasting, something interesting stands out to me. Our perceived level of readiness is actually related to the perceived level of commitment. At least it was for me. If I had gone into that experiment with the mindset and pressure of having to make this work for the rest of my life, I'm almost certain that I would have never gotten started. But because I looked at it as just a month-long experiment, I was willing to give it a try. Well, that month turned into a year, then two and three years...and yes, I'm still going. So, take a look at whether you're ready to start your change, but maybe it's better to view it as a short trip rather than an

endless journey where you feel like you're permanently leaving your place of comfort. Permanent things oftentimes start out as temporary things. Some long-term employees started as temps. Auto purchases started as loaner vehicles. Trial samples led to lifelong use of a product. And marriage starts with dating. It doesn't have to be permanent right away. This is an important thing to remember, and it can work in your favor. But once you realize that, it's easy to understand that the same concept can work against you too, right? Small indulgences can lead to more permanent bad habits as well. Either way, remember to separate the permanent from the temporary. Try healthy change without the pressure of an initial commitment, and moderate those less healthy practices you may have so they don't become more permanent.

So those are some thoughts on your readiness for change in the present. Be confident in your ability to improve right now, and don't let the concept of permanency keep you from even starting.

FUTURE:

As I look at a healthier nutrition mindset through my future lens, one thing I've seen affect a lot of people I work with is initial or recurring doubt. Here's another personal example. I like sweets. And vegetables aren't necessarily my favorite type of food. So, a question I could ask myself as I look to live healthier...a question I HAVE asked myself, is this – “what makes you think you can do this?” Said another way, “who am I to think I can overcome these deeply ingrained habits?” And I justify those thoughts by thinking that not really in your DNA to eat more veggies (in this case). I mean, growing up, almost all of the vegetables I ate were highly seasoned. (I grew up in the South and I love the down-home southern cooking.) And I could have stopped there. I could have let that overriding belief about what I couldn't do determine my way forward. I could let it limit me and my intentions for healthier living.

That's exactly what a limiting belief is. We have a million things in and outside of our minds telling us that we can't succeed. And so, we stop. Or worse, we never even start. So, another takeaway message here is a simple one. Start. Simply start. But in order to do that, you have to believe in yourself.

Don't let those limiting beliefs get in the way. They will keep us stuck in the mindset of "I can't change."
But you can. You can eat healthier. You can be healthier.

But there's something else here too. When I started to become more conscious about improving my diet and adding more vegetables, it was not just those limiting beliefs that I had to overcome. Truthfully, it was the reality that this was going to be harder to practice. Eating healthier is typically more expensive. It usually takes more time to prepare food when you eat healthier. Your options are limited if you're on the go. And for me, I found that I had to think more about what I was going to eat later in the day or about what I was going to eat the next day. In other words, I couldn't just wait until I was hungry to look for options. I had to add yet another planning factor to an already busy schedule and busy lifestyle. And those were all real challenges for me. And honestly, they still are. But I realized that I could either let those challenges, as real as they are, prevent me from thinking I could succeed, or I could accept the fact that this was going to be a little more difficult, and start making change anyway. The human brain is so opposed to change that we often slew to those very real challenges immediately, and view them as legitimate excuses to stay where we are. It quells our confidence. But we have to remember that they're *challenges*, not barriers. They're speed bumps, not roadblocks. And you can tackle those things by saying "This is how I can" vs. "this is why I can't." Believe it or not, we influence what's realistic and achievable in our lives by what we decide to do or not do. So, it has to start with belief.

The final thing I'll add here in looking through the future lens at a healthy nutrition mindset is something that has prevented me from starting positive change in the past. And that is a fear of what will happen. And strangely enough, it's not always a fear of failing that gets me. It's fear of success. What do I mean by that? So, in my example of trying to incorporate more vegetables into my diet, I wasn't as afraid failing to meet my goal. I mean, if I didn't succeed, I would just go back to the way I'd been eating up to that point. There may be a little disappointment, but I'd get over it, right? I'd just go back to the status quo. But what if it was successful? Would I then have the pressure of feeling like I needed to eat vegetables at every meal? I certainly didn't want to "be one of those folks" that had to eat broccoli and cauliflower from the fruit tray while everyone else had cake. I had fear of committing because of what I thought the

expectation would be. And I felt like I was going to miss out on some, albeit small, indulgences in life. But what I realized was that by starting to gradually add healthier items to my diet, I didn't have to take anything away. And over time, as my habits started to change, the proportion of healthier foods I consumed grew larger, and the proportion of less healthy foods started to decrease. And I did it by choice, not out of a perceived need to eat like someone else or to meet a certain expectation. I started to build new habits. And I don't feel like I miss out at all. I enjoy life. I indulge when I want, but it's a lot less frequent than the amount I would indulge when I started this journey 20 years ago. And because I made that choice then, I'm healthier for it now. Looking back, that was the best time to start. So, for you, looking forward to the future, the next best time to start is right now.

PAST

So, as I start to bring things to a close here and consider how the past affects my healthier living going forward, I often like to point out that the past has a purpose, but it's the past and it needs to stay there. For example, I used to drink a lot less water. I used to rarely eat fruits or veggies. I used to not even think about the macronutrients of proteins, carbs and fats in my diet. I used to always have sugar or some form of sweetener in my coffee. I used to eat the entire portion of food the restaurant provided, even if I was full. Sometimes I still do these things. But the question I'd pose here is this...what bearing do my past habits have on my ability to act differently now? The answer is none. They don't. Those past habits don't affect what I can or will do next. I revel in the fact that what I've done poorly in the past has no bearing on what I *can* do in the future. What does have an effect on my future self is what I start doing now. You see, you define who you are and how you view yourself. You can change who you are and how you interact with the world immediately...by simply shifting your mindset to keep the past where it belongs...in the past.

There's a song by the group Tenth Avenue North called You've Been Remade. The chorus of that song says, "You are more than the choices that you've made, You are more than the sum of your past mistakes, You are more than the problems you create, You've been remade." I love the message here. Each and every day is a fresh start for us. But in order for it to be a fresh start, you have to let the past go.

You have to let the past go in order to move forward. The funny thing is that the people around you likely never think about your past. It's likely that you are the only person truly living in your past. So, let's move on. Again, you are exactly where you're supposed to be right now. The path that brought you here, and the stumbling blocks that tripped you up before no longer matter. Let those things go. They don't define you. Just like the song by Tenth Avenue North, you've been remade.

You know, one way to view the past is as a gift. All of your past experiences, those attempts to eat healthier, to exercise more, to get more sleep, whether you were successful or not, they're all gifts. They're gifts from your previous self to your present self. And what you decide to do right now is a gift to your future self. That's because we learn a little more about ourselves with every attempt at improvement, every attempt to change and each attempt to live healthier. Whether the outcome is what you want or not, there's always benefit in the attempt. The more we try, the more we learn, and the closer we get to meeting our goals. So, view those past attempts as learning experiences, not as failures that define who you are. Accept the gifts that you've given yourself. And realize that today, you're wrapping the gift for your future self.

That wraps up my thoughts on having a mindset for healthier living. We talked about achieving the right mindset in your present state of health, a mindset for envisioning your future self, and the importance of keeping the past in perspective. I hope this is helpful in your continued efforts to improve your nutrition practices, and that some of my personal stories and perspectives challenge you to think differently or encourage you to be your best self.

If you like this, please do me a favor and leave your thoughts through a rating or comment. And tell a friend! Even if you don't like it, I'd like that feedback too! My goal is to help you improve, so I want to make this as beneficial for you as I can. If you haven't already checked it out, head to tdfitness.net where you can download my "25 Healthy Habit Ideas for Busy Lifestyles." Take care, be blessed.

This is Coach T., signing out!

