

Personal Growth Part 1 – Believe in Yourself

Hey TD Fitness Family. This is episode #113 of the TD Fitness Podcast and today's topic is envisioning your future self and believing in yourself. And we'll explore these concepts through six different lenses – fitness, nutrition, stress management, marriage, parenting and spiritual living. This is a part of my expanded approach to personal growth that I want to give you in 2022.

So the first question we'll tackle within these topics is this, "who do you want to be? What type of person do you want to be? You see, our goals are defined by keeping in mind the type of person you want to be, but you reach those goals by starting with who you are and working on *your* change. So we must determine our goals and then reframe it into the type of person each of us wants to be.

You see, in our never-ending efforts to improve, to get better, and to enhance our personal growth, we tend to start with what we want to do. I will exercise more. I will eat better. I will be a better husband or father, wife or mother. I'm going to go to church more often. But there's a better way. We want to improve ourselves, not just improve what we do. That's why improvement should start with *who* you want to be, not what you plan to do. What type of person do you want to become?

In his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey writes about the Be-Do-Have concept. See, we typically approach things from a Have-Do-Be mentality. For example, we think, "this is all of the time I have right now," or I only have this much motivation, therefore, I'm limited in what I can do at the moment, and because of that, I'm limited on who I can be." We think, "this is all I can be," or "this is who I will become." Have-Do-Be.

But, if we flip the order and start with the person we seek to become, who you want to be, the result is different. The internal dialogue goes more like this. "This is who I want to be." This could be someone who exercises more regularly, or has healthier eating habits, is a better parent or spouse, or someone who is more faithful in your religion. Then we say, "and these are the things that people who have those habits do. These are the types of things that I need to do. And when I do those things, I can HAVE the results I seek." Whether that's a healthier life, better engagement with my family, or more faith in my beliefs. Be-Do-Have.

Determine the type of person you want to be – *who* you want to be. And begin to grow in those areas of your life that you seek to get better in this year. Seeing those resolutions come true, reaching your goals has to start with a vivid picture of who you want to become.

Let's start with applying this question to fitness in your life. Once you achieve your fitness goals, what type of person do you see yourself as physically? What will you be able to do that you aren't able to do now? How will your physical size or ability be different? When I was a young lad, I used to love to watch college basketball. I still do. I remember watching UNC, Duke, UVA and all of the other ACC teams battle it out on TV. During the commercial breaks, I would run outside to our back yard and pretend that I had the ball and the last shot as the game clock approached zero before the buzzer went off in my head. Little did I know that those dreams of playing basketball on a college court in the ACC would take me through getting cut from the JV team in my first year of high school, to later playing JV the next year, two years on the varsity team in high school, and ultimately walking on to the JV basketball team at the University of Virginia. I wasn't a superstar by any means. But I think back to the power of that vision I had as a young boy, and how it materialized later in life. Belief is strong. Vision boards work because we can see our future selves. I knew who I wanted to be, what I needed to do to get there, and I was able to have that life.

A more recent example. I have no idea what made me think that I, a non-swimmer, and someone who had never ridden a bicycle for distance, and who could count on one hand the number of times I had run more than six miles in my life...why I could even have a chance at completing an Ironman distance triathlon consisting of a 2.4 mile swim, a 112 mile bike ride and a full 26 mile marathon. I can tell you that neither my physical ability nor my belief in this goal was something that came overnight. But I had a vision of being someone who completed this goal. I gradually increased my distances, and in doing that, I started to change how I saw myself. But without belief, none of that happens.

What's your physical goal? Once you think about that, ask yourself what type of person you need to be to meet that goal. You reach your goals by starting with who you are and working on *your* change. Think about who you want to become, then determine what you need to do to become that person. That will frame how you manage the time, energy and abilities you already have. Be, do, have. Who do I want to be? What do I need to do? How can I use what I have to get there?

When it comes to nutrition, each of us have some vision of what it looks like to "eat healthy." But is that vision the same as what it looks like for you to eat healthier? It may or may not be what you see on TV, or what your friends are doing. What does your healthier eating look like? What does [insert your name here] do when he or she is eating healthier. When Coach T. is eating healthier, it looks like me fasting through the morning on most days of the week, enjoying a good salad for lunch, eating a sensible dinner, and limiting the amount of sugary sweets I have throughout the day. That's not necessarily the perfect day on

a diet commercial, but it's my perfect...right now. It's way better than what my perfect used to be, and it will continue to improve in the future as I get better at living my "right now perfect." What I envision for my better self is having more and more of a mindset of food as fuel and nutrition as opposed to food as satisfaction for my desires. I'm not there yet, but I continue to be more cognizant of this because I am constantly coming back to that thought of the type of person I want to be with respect to what I eat. Who are you when you think about the type of person you want to be with respect to what you eat? Are you someone who starts to add one vegetable or fruit per day to your current dietary consumption? Are you someone who starts to drink more water? Are you someone who counts calories or better manages portion sizes? Are you someone who opts for the medium instead of the large soda or sweetened coffee every day? Who do you want to be with your nutrition habits?

Moving on to stress management, this is an area where we have to think about reducing, not eliminating stress. Not all stress is bad, but too much stress, that continuously weighs us down is bad. So, who do you want to be with respect to stress management in your life? Do you want to have fewer stressors? Do you want to have less overall stress? What does that person look like in your mind? Think ahead to what are you no longer worry about after you reach your goal. Maybe the amount of stress is the same, but you have improved the actions you take to manage it. Perhaps your sleep habits are better. Maybe you're better at planning, organizing your time, saying 'no' to certain commitments, or maybe you're eating better or exercising more to manage stress. Whatever "less stress" looks like for you, that's your goal. That is the type of person you desire to be. And the vision of that person will be your guidepost as you seek to lower stress in your life.

Next, marriage...do you want to be a better husband or wife? What exactly does that look like to you? Does it mean you want to be a better communicator or listener? Do you want to be more open to giving or receiving affection? How about being more forgiving or more patient? More trusting, maybe? And you also have to consider what "improvement" in your eyes looks like in your spouse's eyes. When it comes to personal growth in the areas of marriage and parenting, we can't just consider what we think is a win. It doesn't do me much good to perform more acts of service for my wife if she's wanting more quality time. We both need to understand each other's love language and then act to improve or grow within those languages. For me, as a natural introvert, I have to be more open to social engagements and events due to my wife's extroverted nature. That's something that fills her love tank, so I step out of my comfort zone for the good of the marriage. Maybe you, like me, know that you can improve in the way you give feedback sometimes. At times I can be a bit blunt and neglect the emotional side of what I'm trying to convey. Whatever it is, think about what a "better you" looks like in your marriage. This is the "who" you want to become.

In parenting, this is perhaps the area where I am tested the most on a day-to-day basis. As an engaged parent of two young girls, ages nine and six, my wife and I get constant practice in working toward becoming the parents that we ultimately want to be. Young kids will do that for you. I think each of us would say that we want to be more patient. Maybe some would say they want to be more loving. Or maybe you want to give your children more of your time. So if you want to be a parent with one or all of these qualities, what is something you can do to start to get there? What can you do this year, this week, today? Once you take action in one or all of those areas, you can realize your goal of personal growth in parenting. And your children can *have* the parent that every kid deserves. Be-Do-Have.

And finally on this question of who do you want to become, many of us can stand to improve in the spiritual realm. For example, I and other believers strive to live our lives in a way such that we can mimic the way Jesus lived here on earth. We all want to be like Him. Now, this isn't necessarily an attainable goal because we are all sinners at heart. But how does our goal translate into the best version of ourselves, or into being the person that we want to be...the person that we envision spiritually? Living more spiritually is an attainable goal. And the truth is that God sees the beauty and goodness in you, even if you or others don't. Your future self is your current self. You didn't have to do anything to earn your place at His table. All you have to do is believe in him, because he already believes in you. So, as I think about who I want to be, the type of person that I want to be...a better person, the types of things that I need to do are those things that God would have me do. The types of things that Jesus did. The patience, caring, grace and faith that Jesus showed. And by practicing those things and that way of life, by *doing* these things, I can have and experience all that God has in store for me. Who do you want to be? More importantly, who does God want you to be? And what do you need to do, how do you need to live to be that person and to have a more fulfilling life?

Now, the next thing to consider in envisioning your future self and believing in yourself is controlling your limiting beliefs and negative self-talk. The single most important factor in personal growth is believing that you can. It's having confidence in your ability to succeed at the particular thing that you're striving for. This type of confidence, confidence in being able to reach a goal or to improve in a particular aspect of your life is called self-efficacy. But self-efficacy isn't automatically there for everyone in every instance. You may feel very confident in your ability to improve your nutrition habits, but less confident in your ability to exercise regularly. Or you may be confident about being a better spouse to your partner, but apprehensive in the parenting arena. This is normal. We each have strengths in some areas and the need for growth in other areas. And the areas where we're usually strongest are those where we're typically most confident.

So, when you find yourself seeking growth in an area that you're not so confident about, try this exercise. Think about something that you're good at now. Perhaps it's your career, parenting, volunteering, or maybe you're good at listening or hosting social functions. As you think about those things in your life that you're good at, whatever those things are, ask yourself, "have I always been good at this?" Probably not, right? You had to learn. You had to practice. And over time, you've gotten comfortable and even good at those things. See, we often tend to compartmentalize our positive traits and think that we can't apply those traits to other areas of our life. You didn't become successful at work by being a poor planner or by being inconsistent. You've certainly shown skills at planning and consistency in some areas of your life. If you consider yourself a good parent, I'm certain that you've grown to be more patient and understanding, right? I certainly have. It didn't come overnight. And this type of growth can happen in any area of your life.

But there are forces that are constantly working against us as we seek to grow. These things that work against us are limiting beliefs, negative self-talk, and either real or perceived negativity and doubt from others around us. Sometimes we let these things define our reality. But the truth is that we define our reality, simply by how we think. If we think, "this is how I can" instead of "this is why I can't," we define our reality. And when we define our reality, we can do things to shape that reality.

For example, let's start with overcoming self-doubt in the area of fitness. One of the most dangerous thoughts to improving physical health through fitness is the thought that you can't do this. It's because that thought can be debilitating, and it can have a lifelong effect in terms of what you think about yourself, the actions you take (or don't take) and what you accept. It pains me when I work with individuals who have essentially given up on future health efforts because they feel like they're so out of shape, or the road to fitness is so long that they don't even try. And those thoughts don't pop up overnight. They become more and more ingrained in our psyche over time. But it always starts with one negative thought. It starts with a little bit of self-doubt. So, when those self-doubts arise, we must aggressively put them down. If you think you're just not someone who will ever be fit or in shape, I'm challenging you on that right now. Because I know you can live a healthier life. You can exercise more. You can be more fit than you are now. Despite the negativity you've heard, internalized or believed up to this point, positivity and belief in yourself can turn that around. Don't think about why you can't. Think about how you can.

Nutrition is another area where we tell ourselves that we can't. When it comes to practicing better nutrition we tend to let challenges turn into excuses. "I don't have the willpower. I don't have the time. I'm too busy. I don't have the patience. I like to enjoy my food. I don't have the money. It's too hard to eat better. I don't understand what I need to do." These are all limiting beliefs. But you do have the willpower. You do have the patience. You've shown those traits in other areas of your life. And you can make the time for it. We make time for what we prioritize. I like to enjoy my food too, but my habits are just a little bit healthier now

as I enjoy those good foods. And eating healthier isn't always more expensive. And you're right, it can be difficult, but it's not the eating healthier piece that difficult...it's change, period. But you can do this. You can make today a little bit healthier than yesterday was. You can drink more water. You can manage your calorie intake a little better. You can add more whole foods to your diet. You can start to cut back on added sugars. Are these things challenging? Yes. Impossible? No. Healthier eating is possible. And you're closer to success than you think. You just have to believe that you can, not focus on why you can't.

Now, how do you go about believing in yourself when it comes to stress management? I mean, stress is everywhere, right? And you're probably dealing with more stressors than anyone around you knows about. At least that's what it feels like. And there's some truth to that, actually. Because the effects of stressors in our lives are largely dependent on how we perceive them and on how we deal with them. It's common to feel like the stressors in your life will never go away...like you're stuck with it all. But once again, our attitude toward the challenges in our lives, to include stressors, determines our ability to deal with it all. We may feel like it's impossible to manage the stress, but the truth is that we manage things all the time. In fact, our time is one of the things that we manage most, even though it often feels like the things around us are managing us! But we are actually in control, and when we realize that and believe it, our outlook changes our perspective on things. Over the years, I've come to believe that just about anything is possible as long as I embrace the reality, prepare for it (as best I can), and then own it. For example, those of us with kids probably remember a time before children when it seemed like we were always busy. Well, now with a child, you wonder what you spent that time on before, because now it feels like so much of your time is spent on your child. The same is true when you have more than one child, right? When you have two or more, you wonder where all of the time was when you had just one! Another thing I think about is this...what if the current me could go back in time 20 years or so and ask the old me a question? In my case, that question would be, do you think you can run a small business that includes producing weekly videos and a podcast, work in a demanding leadership position in the same career field you're in now, maintain a fruitful marriage, actively raise two children, race in long-distance triathlons, and write a book...all at the same time? My answer would have likely been a laugh out loud followed by a resounding 'no.' Well, guess what, I'm doing all of those things now, and I'm not even the busiest person I know! Here's the point. You have the ability to manage your time and not have the things in your life manage you. But it starts with the belief that you can. I wasn't able to do any single one of the things that I'm doing now until I believed that I could. There are challenges, for sure. But believe that you can handle those things. You are more capable than you know.

So, how does belief in yourself apply to marriage? Well, do you ever feel like marriage is just too tough? I'd venture to say that about 50% of married couples do. That's based on the latest census bureau divorce rates from 2021. Fifty percent...that's half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Now, there could be several reasons for this, but another interesting statistic is that almost half of those marriages

that do end in divorce (43% to be exact), are due to what is deemed as "incompatibility." Now, I won't attempt to use this forum to speculate on what specifically drives these statistics, but what I will do is offer some insight from my and my wife's experience as a married couple. We have only been married once...to each other. Though sometimes I jokingly introduce her as "my first wife." But the truth is that marriage *is* tough. You take two individuals who grew up with different rules, in different environments, with differing beliefs on many things, then put them together, and then for many, ask them to do one of the most stressful things known to man, which is to care for and raise children! The odds are NOT in our favor! But honestly, there are things that you can control. This goes back to believing in yourself, specifically in your actions, your attitude and in your ability to communicate. When I talk about your actions, what I'm saying is that love is a verb. It's not a noun. It's something you do, not something you catch or stumble upon. Meaning you don't fall in and out of love, you choose to love or not to love. You choose to show love or not. You choose to act in a loving way or not. This one is a punch to the gut for some...love is not a thing that ebbs and flows, it is based on your actions. And your loving actions affect your attitude. It's not your attitude that should affect your loving actions. Speaking of attitude, sometimes it's just the decision to love that we need to embrace. So, she did something that upsets you...how will you decide to react? With love and forgiveness or with revenge? Or, he did that stupid thing that he always does...again! How will you respond? This leads to the third piece on communication. More often than not, arguments are founded in a lack of communication - unstated expectations that weren't met, underlying assumptions that weren't verbalized, or unstated feelings that are never brought up. We have to communicate. Your spouse is not a mind-reader. So, as we talk about believing in our own ability to be a better spouse, understand that our attitude and our actions are paramount. Choose positivity. Choose to love. And make an effort to communicate better with your spouse.

A lot of the same applies to parenting. The interesting thing, when it comes to believing in yourself is that your kids believe in you. So you should believe in yourself too. But I get it. It's common, for me at least, to get caught up in the difficulty of the parenting situation of the day, whether it's an issue at school, apathy on behalf of our kids or a lack of motivation at home, or them just failing to listen. Or it could just be the typical problems that come with the various ages of boys and girls. Well, the tendency could be to handle these daily difficulties like we handle challenges in other parts of our lives. For example, at work, when a small emergency pops up, my experience tells me that if I give it just a little bit of time before springing to put out the proverbial fire, it will usually start to work itself out or at least not be as big of a deal as we first thought. And while that approach may work at home too, what I can't afford to "just wait and see what happens" with our kids, right? Parenting is an active sport. And they need me and mommy. Unfortunately, when I looked for the degree in parenting or the "how-to" book, I came up short. And that's when I realized that what our kids need isn't the code or the pathway to growth. It's *our* code and *our* pathway to life. And it's at that point that you realize as a parent that you should trust yourself and your spouse to do what you

know...from experience. And that is to be the parent that is you. And believe in yourself, because your kids certainly do.

Wrapping up this topic of self-belief, in my life, self-belief comes from spiritual belief. For example, it's amazing at times to see and sometimes have the opportunity to meet highly acclaimed and accomplished individuals throughout my life. And when I ask, "where do they get the confidence, the belief to do that...to be that person that is so positive and productive," the answer I often come to find out is that they are grounded in faith. From coaches I look up to, like Clemson Football Coach Dabo Sweeney and Virginia Basketball Coach Tony Bennett, to some of the most elite military special operators that I work with, doing seemingly impossible things, many would tell you that the "special thing," the "secret sauce" if you will, is faith. Now, I don't claim to be accomplished or elite like these individuals that I'm talking about, but what I will tell you is that any of the things in my life that the world defines as success, is absolutely attributed to my God and my faith in Him. And there are so many things in my life that I see as possible vs. impossible, because He has proven over and over again that nothing is impossible. Philippians 4:13, one of my favorite Bible verses, says "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I truly believe that. So whether its health, fitness, nutrition, stress, marriage, or parenting, God's got my back in those things and in everything else I do. There's a song by Colton Dixon titled, Made To Fly. That song is a song of hope, and in it he reminds us to "don't stop walking when you were made to fly." This is a reminder of how capable we are, through Him. So, believe in yourself. Believe that you can...that you can be better in any area of your life that you choose. I believe that I can. I can believe in my ability to improve and to grow...because I believe in Him.

Putting a bow on this idea of self-belief, you know, having a mindset that looks toward the future with hope and belief is fundamental to personal growth. But sometimes we don't even give ourselves a fighting chance at success before thoughts about why we can't succeed take over. So, here's what I want you to do. I want you to listen for and squash the negative self-talk and limiting beliefs as soon as they pop into your head. Squash that voice in your head that's telling you that you can't do this. That initial belief in our ability to do something, to change something, that very first thought and those thoughts that immediately follow, have a huge impact on the outcome. And the unfortunate reality is that this is where many of us fail...before we even start. We kill our goals, our visions for a better self, our dreams before we even start. Before the thought even has time to develop! But again, our reality is shaped by what we believe.

You've had the ability to do this, to be better, to live better, and to grow within you all along. Start with the belief that you can and start moving in that direction. Focus on how you can, not why you can't. You define your reality through what you decide you can or can't do. You can grow and improve. And the beauty is that once you're successful in one area, that successful mindset has no choice but to spread.

Ok, the third and final concept within this topic of believing in yourself is to make the leap, despite your fears. Let me start with a question. What are you afraid of when it comes to personal growth? If we're honest with ourselves, we have to acknowledge that fear is real. And unless we address it and face it, that fear can consume us. Fear does exist, and it's something that we have to address. Each of us has fears, and these fears can hold us back at times. So, what exactly are we afraid of when it comes to personal growth? Well, depending on the individual, there could be a number of things, but what I'd like to do here is highlight three categories of fears that I've noticed in my years of experience as a trainer and health coach, parent & husband, marriage mentor, and as a person of faith.

The first, and maybe the most obvious, is a fear of failing. I've certainly been afraid that I wouldn't succeed or that I wouldn't complete something that I set out to do. Because there is risk in trying. There's risk in the attempt. I mean, if there was certainty, it wouldn't necessarily be an attempt. It would just be something that you do and complete. But the fear of failing hits a nerve for many of us, especially when we are less confident in our ability, or when we have doubts about our success. And there's a tendency to feel as though failure at this thing that I'm attempting would just be added to the long list of things that I didn't do or didn't accomplish, thereby reinforcing what some of us think we know about ourselves...that we can't succeed. That's fear of failure.

The next type of fear is fear of discomfort. This is the fear of trying or starting something new because it will take us out of our comfort zone. We are creatures of comfort, and intentionally seeking or embracing discomfort goes against our very nature. The reason why we have many of the unhealthy habits and fewer healthier habits is because comfort often trumps the sacrifices needed to grow and improve. It's certainly more comfortable for me to stay in my warm bed in the morning than it is to get up and exercise in the cold. It's more comforting for me to eat ice cream than salad. And for many, it's even more comforting to remain busy than to take time to sit down, reflect and spend time with loved ones. Change is truly hard. It takes us out of our comfort zone. We ask ourselves questions like, "what exactly am I signing myself up for? I'm pretty comfortable now. Why would I change that?" It is this fear of discomfort that creates that strong gravitational pull that works to keep us stagnant...to keep us where we are without moving forward. And the truth is in just about everything in life, if you're not moving forward, you're actually moving backward because the world is changing around us. That's fear of discomfort.

And the final category of fear that I'll mention is fear of success. This sounds strange, I know, but sometimes we're afraid of the uncertainty and commitment that comes with succeeding in our goal. "What if I'm successful at exercising 4-5 times a week? Will I have trouble keeping that up all year, or forever?"

What if I do well with more veggies in my diet? Will I have to worry about eating like that forever? What if I am able to lose the weight? What's to say I won't gain it back again? How can I be sure? What if I make a commitment to be a better partner to my spouse? A better parent to my children. Stronger in my faith and beliefs...am I ready to sign up for that? This subconscious fear of success holds many of us back because we're afraid of commitment. That's fear of success.

So whether it's fear of failure, fear of discomfort or fear of success, it's all fear, right? But here's the thing...in order to change, to improve or to grow, we must face our fears...each and every one of them. If you let fear of failure grip you, you'll never try. And if you don't try you certainly won't succeed. And when it comes to fear of success, try to embrace the long-term commitment that comes with being successful by taking it one day at a time. If your goal is personal growth, that's a long-term goal. The point is to change for the better...for good. Yes, it may mean that you have more of a responsibility to maintain your healthier state, but isn't that what you want? And by the way, over time, it actually gets *easier* to maintain. And finally, regarding our fears of discomfort, I think James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits* said it best. He said, "Many people delay taking action because they hope to avoid suffering. They keep searching for a path that won't involve tradeoffs. But some form of suffering is always inevitable. The process of taking action is the process of choosing your pain." And while I wouldn't necessarily call it suffering or pain, I certainly agree that discomfort is part of the deal. That's the very reason why change is hard. The classic example of choosing your pain that James Clear mentions is regular exercise now, or dealing with health issues later. Do you want to invest in your marriage now, or invest in counseling later? Do you want to sacrifice to be a more engaged parent now, or try to mend relationships with your children later? So, whether it's fear of failing, fear of success or fear of discomfort that's holding you back, turn and face those fears, and claim the change, the victory that you deserve.

But how exactly do we face our fears? We already said they're real, and we have them for a reason, right? I think it's in making the leap. In jumping before you're ready. In not waiting until you feel like you're fully prepared. You may have heard that the opposite of fear is courage, but courage is actually moving forward *despite* our fears. A quick story from my youth...when I was in high school, I was selected to be a part of a four-member team that represented our high school on a local PBS show called *Battle of the Brains*. It was a trivia question show, similar to *Jeopardy*, but you competed as a team so anyone could ring in after the question was asked. We were to compete against another school on air. I was excited, my family was excited...I was going to be on TV. That was a big deal in the small town where I'm from. Well, the eagerly anticipated night came, the questions started coming, students from both sides were ringing in and answering questions. Can you guess how many times I rang in to answer the questions that were posed? Not once. Not one time did I get a chance to even see if my answer was correct or not. I knew a number of the answers, but I was never quick enough with my buzzer. And at the time, I just thought it was because the questions were hard, but I later understood what really happened. As I said, I knew the

answers to some of the questions, but others on my team or on the other team simply beat me to the buzzer. I didn't know then what I know now...that in order to compete on Battle of the Brains, or Jeopardy, or in life, many times you have to leap first. You have to ring in, push that button and trust that the answer will come to you. Raise your hand in class before you've fully developed your response. Start eating better before you think you're fully ready. Start walking before you begin your exercise plan. Say "I love you," or "I'm sorry" and start to mend relationships in your family before you think you're ready. Just start...and trust that you can deal with what comes next, because you can. That's how you overcome fears. You make the leap time and time again. When I became certified 15 years ago and started TD Fitness, I remember worrying about what I would write on the blog from week to week. A friend told me to just start. I'm glad I did. Later I worried that I'd run out of podcast topics. Well this is episode #113...I'm glad I made the leap. I worried that I wouldn't have time to produce FitVids consistently with my busy schedule and the demands of my career and family. Here we are over two years later still going strong. I worried that I wouldn't complete the 140-mile Ironman triathlon and that all of my training would have been wasted. Now I rock my Ironman shirts with pride. I wasn't sure I'd be a good father, but having kids brings things into perspective. Now I wouldn't trade being a #GirlDad for anything. The impossible is possible once we look past our fears. But sometimes we need to pull ourselves along. We do that by making the leap.

So, what are the typical fears associated with improving our fitness? Well, I think when it comes to improving our fitness habits, fear of failure, fear of success and fear of discomfort are all things that we have to contend with. Some are afraid that their efforts won't yield results. That's fear of failure. Some fear that they're signing up for a lifetime commitment of having to exercise. That's fear of success. But most avoid fitness because it's uncomfortable. That's the fear of discomfort. So, the question is "how can we make the leap" when it comes to improving our fitness habits. How should we proceed to exercise or move more, or to add more stretching and mobility into our routine? Well, one way is to start small. I'm not asking you to run a marathon. I'm just encouraging you to do a little bit more than you're doing right now. Don't make it a big deal. There's no need to fear success, failure or discomfort. Just improve a little bit. Make tomorrow a little better than today. That's all I'm asking, and there's no need to fear that.

Now, what are the typical fears associated with improving our nutrition habits? How can we make the leap in drinking more water, managing calories, eating more fruits/veggies, and reducing the amount of less healthy foods we consume? The typical fears associated with better nutrition are fear of success and fear of discomfort. You may feel as though you'll be limited or constrained in social settings. You may feel like you'll be judged when you're around others. You may feel like it's all or nothing, like you can't just dip your toe in, but that you have to jump all the way in the pool. Remember, it's not all or nothing. We're looking for better, not perfect. And the barriers to entry here are relatively low. You just have to start. Start by adding some water to your diet. Start by buying a smaller soda (if you drink soda), or by adding a few vegetables here or there. Add a piece of fruit each day or every couple of days. There's no need to fear

failure. Don't think of it as starting a new diet. Rather, improve your current way of eating. These are ways to make the leap.

Now, let's talk about work stress and underlying fears. A stressor for many of us, especially if you have a busy lifestyle, is our work, or job or our career. One of the biggest issues I see in today's society is that we live in a busier society now and there is this unstated or perceived expectation of having to do more, particularly at work. We observe those around us working longer hours. It's not uncommon for us to bring work home. The boundaries between work and home life are becoming increasingly blurred. The perception is that our culture values working harder. So maybe we're concerned with being judged. This falls into the fear of failure category. Not real failure but perceived failure because we think others will judge us. Or is there an unstated fear here...maybe a fear of being irrelevant if we don't work a certain amount? There could be a fear of being fired, I suppose, but more of what I see in my circles isn't a fear of being let go. Many feel like we have to work more or work longer hours in order to continue to progress at work. But I often question this. I mean, do we really have to be a part of that? We have to ask ourselves, what's ultimately important here...our work or our quality of life? Do we have to bring added stress into our lives in this way? When will enough be enough? There's always more progression, more to accomplish. There will always be the next promotion or the next job or position. When does it end? When you retire? Your kids are probably grown up then. Years of your marriage have passed by then. So how do you address the fear of being outpaced or judged at work? Well, I feel that this one comes down to priorities. How we spend our time is a reflection of our priorities. So, what I'd ask is what's important to you? And as you answer that question, try not to let perceived fears determine what's truly important to you.

Let's change gears to marriage. So if you're married, you've already made a commitment to your spouse. But there's another fear of commitment that I'd like to address here. It's the fear of committing to being a better husband or wife. Oftentimes when I talk about growth in your marriage, I focus on three things. Your actions, your attitude and communication. But there are times when we're hesitant to act because we feel as though we'll have to maintain that standard or those commitments indefinitely going forward. There are some, perhaps even some listening to this, who chose not to do as much for their spouse today as they could have on Valentine's Day (which was just a couple of weeks ago as of the time of this recording) because they didn't want to set a precedent that they'd have to maintain for Valentine's Days and other holidays going forward. Our actions, one of the most important things in marriage, are affected by fear of commitment. But this approach is also indicative of an attitude...an attitude of not going all in. Marriage is not 50/50 as you've been led to believe. Marriage is 100/100. You give all you can to your spouse. Don't hold back...I mean, this is your lifelong partner. And with that third important focus area, communication, open up. Be more vulnerable. Share what's on your mind. Don't let the fear of vulnerability prevent the person who is closest to you from getting closer.

Now, parenting...when we become parents, we take on several obligations. One of those obligations is to love, care for and provide for our children until they reach adulthood and they can care for themselves. And that's a long journey, even if we only have one child. And it's a lot to ask. But again, it's an obligation. So, what I want to bring up here is a fear of discomfort that we sometimes bring into our roles as parents. Because the parenting journey is so long, and when we don't have healthy ways to provide breaks for our spouses or ourselves, there can be a tendency to seek comfort in other life activities that are more comfortable at the time. For example, have you hung out with friends in excess as a way of avoiding the parenting demands at home? Have you worked longer than you should have because it's easier to be in a quiet office than at home with the kids? Are there other areas of your life where you spend more time than you should when you could be spending quality time as a parent? Don't misread what I'm saying here. We need breaks as parents. There are certainly times when I just don't have the energy or the right mindset to flip to parent mode and I take some time to myself. But I go back to our obligations as parents. We can't avoid our parental duties altogether. So yes, take deliberate breaks. Go on that girls' trip or that guys golf getaway. But don't consistently hide from your role and your duty as a parent. It's sometimes uncomfortable, but we can't fear that. We must embrace it. So, four things I think about with parenting and fears...1) Our children need us. 2) We chose this, they didn't. 3) The time goes by faster than you think. 4) We're not just raising our kids...we're raising our grandchildren's parents.

Ok, I'm going to conclude here with overcoming fear through a spiritual mindset. If you don't know God, one of the seemingly scariest things you could do is to come to Him. To ask for Him in your life and to accept his blessings. What keeps us from the blessings He has for us are our very own thoughts and beliefs about our own insecurities and inadequacies. These are our fears. But when you come to God, you're not only comforted and relieved of those fears, you're also better prepared and equipped to handle fears in other areas of your life. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 6 Verse 11 he writes to "put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the strategies of the devil." I have felt this "armor" if you will time and time again as it has allowed me to step confidently into numerous uncomfortable and sometimes downright dangerous situations, particularly as a military member. And I made it through those things, often thriving, because of God. Paul also writes in 2 Timothy, Chapter 1 Verse 7 that "God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, of love, and of self-discipline." This means that God is not about fear. He is about empowering you to live fulfilled. To bring all of yourself into the world, and to thrive. And finally, in his letter to the Philippians, Chapter 4 Verse 6, the Apostle Paul writes, "don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything." I still have fears. Everyday there's something that gives me pause, that causes uncertainty, that makes me apprehensive, or scared. But what's also in my life every day, multiple times a day, is prayer. The devil's greatest weapon is fear, but when I trust in God, none of that matters. The author Napoleon Hill wrote and encouraged us to "transform your thoughts from fear to faith." That's not necessarily easy to do, but it is absolutely possible...through God.

So, wrapping up this episode on envisioning your future self and believing in yourself, I want you to think about who you want to be, let go of negative self-talk and doubt, and make the leap, despite your fears. You can do these things in any and all areas of your life.

Alright, that's it for now. Again, a reminder that if you like this, please leave a rating or comment, and spread the word! And as always, I'd love to hear your feedback as well. My goal is to give you what you need to succeed.

Finally, if you're interested in the principles and concepts to apply to any area you want to grow in your life, head over to tdfitness.net to download my "Principles for Personal Growth." It's free. It's a single-pager, and I created it for you.

As always, thank you for your support of TD Fitness and this podcast. Stay safe. Be blessed. And continue to grow.

Coach T, out!