

Believe and Be the Person You Were Meant to Be

What do the hills of Western Virginia and the plains of Central Oklahoma have in common?

It was in each of those areas where I learned more about dealing with success and apparent failure. Hey, I'm Coach T, and this is episode number 121 of the TD Fitness podcast.

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, team, welcome back to the TD Fitness podcast. This is episode number 121, where we're talking about mindset, mental attitude, and dealing with stressors. And it goes beyond just having balance in your life with so many different areas that cause us stress to really thriving in each of those demanding and ultimately important areas of your life. So let me start with a couple of stories here.

In the mid 20-teens, I can't remember exactly which year it was, I signed up for a 100 mile bike ride, and this bike ride was to take place starting near Charlottesville, Virginia, so in Western Virginia.

And I remember at the time we were living in Northern Virginia and like with anything, an endurance race of this type, you know, want to spend the appropriate amount of time training and putting in the work, putting in the hours so that you're prepared for race day.

Well, in this particular event, I didn't really have a lot of access to the types of terrain, the types of hills that would be present in Western Virginia. I didn't realize this at the time. I thought that some of the rolling hills and small climbs there in Northern Virginia on the bike trail would prepare me for this.

But when I got to the race, when I got to that ride, there were several options. You could do a 25-miler, a 50-miler, there might have been a 75-mile option and a 100-mile option. And I got to that race pretty confident in my ability to finish. I had never ridden that far before. I'd come close to it in training, but had never actually broken the a 100-mile barrier. But we started on that race and not too long into it, I think there were maybe 20 or so of us that had signed up for the 100-mile portion.

And not too long into it, about half of those had dropped out or stopped at the 25-mile point, or turned around at the 25-mile point, the halfway point there. And then about five or six more turned around at the halfway point, of the 50 miler. And then there were just a handful of us left to do the 100-miler.

And after a while, I look around and I am literally the only one on the course, and I'm also the final person. So the last person in the race, and the reason I know this is because the chase car vehicle that is there to make sure that the last rider is okay, was right behind me. So why do I tell you this? I went into

that race feeling pretty prepared. I wasn't as prepared as I should have been, but I was confident that I could finish, but it took me a while.

So put a pin in that one. Let me tell you another story, and then we'll come back to that one.

So in 1998, after graduating college in 1997, I entered the Air Force with aspirations of becoming a fighter pilot. And I grew up in... Much of my childhood was in the '80s, Top Gun was all the rage, the first Top Gun, and there was a lot of excitement around flight, and space exploration and those types of things.

So one of my goals... My goal in life was to become a fighter pilot. I knew that I wanted to fly fighter aircraft. I came into pilot training, and ultimately I think I was pretty confident in my ability, but I knew that I had a lot to learn, because I didn't have any experience in flying or flight or any of that stuff.

So about halfway through pilot training, you're placed on different tracks. It's called track selection. Those who are going to fly fighters, continue with the fighter curriculum on that track. Those who are going to fly helicopters, continue on the helicopter trajectory on that training track, and those who are going to fly the other aircraft, typically your cargo or heavy aircraft go on the other track.

Well, at the halfway point, I was not high enough in my pilot training class to go on the fighter pilot track. So I ended up going on the Heavy and Mobility aircraft track, and ultimately looking back on it, if I could script it any differently, I wouldn't change one thing. I honestly wouldn't. That's what led to my starting in special operations and the career that I've had in the Air Force doing that. So I've been extremely happy about that.

But the two things that I draw from those two examples, that bike ride in Western Virginia and then pilot training in the middle of Oklahoma, that's where the planes of Oklahoma come in.

I went into both of those with a belief that I could. And although I didn't finish first in that bike race, in fact, I finished last, I finished the race though, while others dropped out or didn't complete the distance that they said they were going to.

And while I didn't necessarily reach what I thought was my goal of becoming a fighter pilot in the Air Force, I did graduate a pretty demanding training syllabus and curriculum through pilot training and part of the training with the Navy there, ultimately to have a career as a pilot in the Air Force.

So I go back to this theme of belief and how important it is that we believe in ourselves and in the goals and aspirations that we have. Believing is a prerequisite of success. It doesn't guarantee success by any means, but I will tell you that you can't have success without it.

So what I have for you today is a statement and a question. The statement is, "Yes you can." Yes you can. And the question is, "Who will you be?"

The single most important factor in living, not just a balanced life, but one in which you thrive in every key area is believing that you can. It's in having the confidence in your ability to succeed at that particular thing that you're striving for. And this is called self-efficacy. And self-efficacy is a little bit different than self-confidence.

You see, self-confidence is a general feeling that you have faith in yourself, in your ability to do whatever it is. Self-efficacy automatically there for everyone in every instance. It's more refined. So you may feel very confident, for example, in your ability to improve your nutrition habits, but maybe less confident in your ability to exercise regularly.

Or you may be confident about being a better spouse to your partner, but maybe a little bit apprehensive in the area of parenting, or being a new parent. You may be pretty confident as a player in your flag football league, but if given the opportunity to play football with some NFL players, then the story might be a little bit different about how you feel about yourself, right? And this is normal.

I mean, we each have strengths in some areas and the need for growth in other areas, and the areas where we're usually the strongest are those where we're typically most confident. But what about those areas where you're not necessarily confident, where you don't feel as confident about your ability?

Well, one of the questions that I like to ask folks when we talk about personal growth and improving from a health and fitness standpoint or from a life coaching stand standpoint is ask yourself this: "What are you good at now?"

And then follow that question up with, "Were you always good at that thing?"

Because the best way to get good at something is to be bad at it first. I mean, this is what practice is all about. This is what dedication's all about. This is what putting time in to your craft, or whatever thing that you were trying to improve on this, that's what it's all about.

This podcast is the perfect example. So I'm reticent to tell you to do this, but if you go back and listen to episode number one of the TD Fitness podcast, that was my very first time going live on a podcast, putting it out there for people to see, knowing it's going to be out there forever for people to either stumble across or come back to. That was 121 episodes ago. And I cringe when I listened to that first episode of the TD Fitness podcast because I feel like it was so raw, I don't feel like I came across naturally.

Compared to now, and maybe you think the same thing about episode number 121, I don't know, it's for you to judge, but I will tell you that I feel a lot more comfortable podcasting. I feel like I can provide my message in a way that resonates. I feel like I'm better at presenting the information that can ultimately help you, but I wasn't good at it in the beginning, right? I've had to evolve over time.

Also in high school, I got cut from the JV basketball team. Ultimately, I went on to play at the college level, but I got cut from the high school basketball team. By the way, Michael Jordan also got cut from

the high school basketball team. Michael Jordan's one of the best basketball players, if not the best of all time, right? He had to get better. He had to start by being bad, and then work to improve.

I just recently listened to an interview with LeBron James, and one of the questions posed to him was, how has he grown in the NBA since first coming in? LeBron James wasn't born a great basketball player. He's certainly grown in his game, and his ability to understand and ability to take care of his body and to work as a team player. All of those aspects of his game have grown right over the years.

So you go back and watch game one of his NBA debut and watch him now, and there's a world of difference, right? Experience is part of that. But dedication's another part of it. Last year or two years ago, I finally learned how to solve a Rubik's cube, came home and decided to show my daughter. I figured I'd be the coolest dad in the world if I could show my daughters how to do this.

Well, my daughter's quickly picked it up and my oldest daughter now solves a Rubik's cube in half the time that I do. Just takes her a couple of minutes. So I can see it in our kids. Same thing as they're working to improve on the piano. Our youngest learned to ride a bike last year and now she doesn't need me to hold the seat or to give her a push to get her going. She's got that all on her own. You have to be bad at something before you can get good at it.

And the same thing applies to us, even in adulthood and at this level. So what are you good at now? Were you always good at that? Probably not. So that should let you know that if there's something that you're trying to get better at, something that you're trying to improve, it's okay if you're not good at it right now. You can actually improve. And it starts with belief.

See, over the years, I've come to realize that that just about anything is possible as long as I embrace the reality of whatever it is that we're talking about, like I'm never going to go to the moon at this point. I'm probably not going to play in the NBA, right?

But you have to embrace the reality and you have to prepare for it as best you can, and then own it. But it starts though, with that belief, it really does. I go back to the parenting example as a new parent, or as new parents, my wife and I, we didn't necessarily know what to do. I don't know that any parent does, any new parent does.

But you learn throughout the process, you look back on it and you're like, "How did I have so much free time on my hands before we had children?" Well, it didn't seem that way, but it's a new normal.

Now, I also think what if the current me, the current Coach T could go back, I don't know, 20 years or so, and ask this question, "Do you think that you can run a small business that includes producing weekly videos and a podcast all while working in a demanding leadership position after a career in the military while maintaining a fruitful marriage, actively raising two children, racing in long distance, triathlons, writing a book all at the same time?"

I probably would've laughed at myself than if I had asked that question.

But now in looking back, I can see that it's the belief, the attitude, and the actions that we put into it, no matter what it is in our life, in our lives, that it all comes together to make us more capable. And you are more capable than you know. You are. You've had the ability to do this, to be better, to live better, to balance the demands of life and to thrive within each. You've had that within you all along, but it starts with the belief that you can, and you can start moving in that direction.

In the leadership position that I'm in now, I talk oftentimes to our younger military members who are just joining the organization. And one of the things that I point out to them is the difference in my opinion between the organization that we are a part of and other organizations that I've experienced or seen from different lenses.

And what I point out to them is that the thing that makes us unique is that we say, "This is how we can, versus this is why can't." It's a bias for action. It's a belief in knowing that you can accomplish something and finding a way to do that. So if you focus on how you can and not why you can't, I think we can apply that to the personal level as well.

You see, you define your reality through what you decide you can or can't do. Henry Ford is quoted as saying that "Whether you believe you can or you can't, you're absolutely right." You can live the life you seek. And the beauty is that once you're successful in one area of your life, that grows, it expands to other areas of life. And that successful mindset has no choice but to spread.

So again, the statement here is that yes, you can. I'm here to tell you you can, it starts with belief.

Now on to the question, "Who will you be?"

So let's talk a little bit about goals and goal-setting.

The typical way that most of us are used to approaching goals is we try to... we think of what we want to do. So I want to exercise more. I want to eat better. I want to run a marathon. I want to be a better father. Right? We tend to think of it in terms of what we need to do, but here's what I would offer. We should think about who we want to be. So the question again, who will you be? Each one of those words is deliberate. Who do you want to be?

Will. That implies that it, is it going to happen? Yes, you can. We've talked about that. You. Who will you be? It's individualized. You're not asking who is someone, who are the people around me going to be? But who are you going to be? And finally, going back to be the future, the certainty, your future self. So who will you be? What type of person do you want to be?

We tend to start with, again, what we want to do. So I use the example of exercising more or eating better, but we want to actually improve ourselves, not just improve what we do. That's an important distinction, and that's really one of the things that sets apart those who are successful in achieving their

goals with those who fall off on the road to achieving their goals. Because those who achieve their goals tend to think in terms of the type of person that they want to be.

We want to improve ourselves. Again, not just improve what we do. That's why improvement should start with who you want to be, not what you plan to do. In his book, the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Steven Covey writes about the Be-Do-Have concept.

So we are used to thinking of, have-do-be, instead of be-do-have. So we think in this way, "This is what I have right now. Therefore this is all I can do, which really means that this is all I can be."

So for example, "I only have a little bit of time in my schedule to exercise, so I just can't be that healthy." Or "I really don't have a lot of motivation. I've always suffered with motivation. So I know that there's only a certain level, a certain limit that I can get to."

See how we typically approach things from a have-do-be mentality, right? "This is all of the time I have right now. I only have this much motivation. So this is all I can be. I'm limited."

But if we flip the order and start with the person that we seek to become, who do you want to be, right? The result is a little bit different.

"This is who I want to be and these are the things that people like that do. Therefore, this is how I intend to use what I have. So I want to be more healthy. Healthy people tend to be more active and more aware of what they eat. Therefore, I will use the limited time, limited extra time that I do have to incorporate short stints of exercise each day. And I'll try to choose the healthier option of what's available to me." Right?

So you start with who you want to be and that determines how you proceed. Who do you want to be? Begin to grow in those areas of your life that you seek to get better in this year? Because seeing those resolutions come true, reaching your goals, it has to start with a vivid picture of who you want to become.

So I have a few questions for you. Who do you want to be? Do you want to be someone who is more consistent with exercise and fitness? Do you want to be someone who is more cognizant of what you eat? Do you want to be someone who performs better at work? Do you want to be a more loving partner to your spouse? Do you want to be more patient with your children? Do you want to be more deliberate about your acts of faith and acts of service? Do you want to be someone who is less stressed each day?

I can tell you who I want to be. I want to be someone who is able to handle the many demands of life, not just handle them, but again, thrive in each one of those areas. It speaks to the resiliency that I think we all seek. I also want to be someone who others can rely on and who makes a difference in the world. I guess that's another way of saying I want to serve however I can.

I'll tell you for me personally too, that servant mindset, it stems from my faith and in being a follower of the greatest servant that ever lived, and I know that many of you want to serve too, many of you are servants, your parents, your caregivers, your leaders in your workspaces. And with this comes a bunch of stressors, and this is what we talked about last week's episode, and the theme for the year.

When we take on all these things of serving in whatever capacity it is, there's a lot to balance there. And we have to be careful because we have to look out for ourselves, our own health and wellbeing in order to best serve others. Put your mask on first, right?

So those stressors, though, can pile up and that chronic stress can become unhealthy. And that unhealthy stress affects our mood, it affects our hormones, causes us to retain weight and a host of other health issues.

Typically, the biggest stressors for most people are work, as in the amount of time that you're putting in at work or the demands of work. Family as in the responsibility that you have to your family. And again, there's a time component to this too. Relationships, money, health, those are the big things that continue to stress most of us. Many of our stressors today can be binned or bucketed into one of those five broad areas.

And I've talked before about ways to approach these stressors. You can counter the stressors by taking action. You can remove those stressors just by getting them out of your life altogether, sometimes. Or you can manage the stressors, right?

And I won't go into each one of those things right now. We will hit that in a subsequent podcast. But all that to say that stress is a fact of life, being stressed, feeling stressed, acting out in response to stress, all of that is a choice.

Let me say that again. Stress is a fact of life. But being stressed, and feeling stressed, and acting out in response to stress, that is, in many ways, a choice. This is a bit of a stoic approach, stoic philosophy, if you will. I tend to ascribe to that approach. I read about it every day. And being a person of faith, I also put many of those... Many of my stressors in God's hands.

For me, it starts with a foundation of faith, practicing discipline whenever possible, and having patience that's promoted by both my faith and my discipline, and this study of stoicism and stoic philosophy.

So despite the busyness of life, and the challenges, and the many hopes and goals that I have, it's really because of my faith in the grace of God, that I'm able to live this fulfilled content and rewarding life. To me, personally, that's my personal assessment, and I'm able to prioritize. And that's been that way my whole life, even though I didn't realize it all the time, even when I wasn't as attuned to my faith as I should have been.

So whatever you see in others that you deem as possible successes, those things are attributed to certain things with their lifestyle. So whatever you see in me that maybe the world may define as successful, I will tell you that in my life, all of that is absolutely attributed to God and my faith in him.

And there's so many things in my life that I see as possible versus impossible, because he's proven over and over to me again that nothing is impossible. Philippians 4:13 is one of my favorite Bible verses says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and I truly believe that. But whatever type of person you desire to be, I will tell you that the vision of that person, that'll be your guidepost as you seek to lower stress in your life.

So as we start to wrap up here, a healthy mindset and the ability to remain positive and to deal with the stressors of competing demands on your time and your life, it all starts with your attitude. It's realized through your actions, but the very first step in that attitude is believing in yourself and believing that you can.

So remember that attitude. Yes, you can. Remember those actions. Who will you be? That's the message for today.

Hey, before I sign off, I do want to give a shout-out really, really beyond a shout-out and a heartfelt thanks to my virtual assistant who I have worked with now for five years, since the beginning of 2018. Allie is moving on, she's going to pursue some other things in her life. They're expecting, she's newly married, expecting a new baby here. So I want to wish Allie the best of luck and say thank you for so much dedicated service. Thank you for helping me to bring not only this podcast, the newsletter, and so many of the things that we're able to provide to folks, the followers that listen to and follow TD Fitness. I just want to say thanks. It's been an ultimate pleasure and honor working with you, and I wish you the best of luck.

And I also want to welcome Mariana, our new virtual assistant, and I'm really looking forward to working with Mariana, and looking forward to all that she'll bring to the team here at TD Fitness.

So that's all I have for you now. I want you to continue to think about those things that we talked about, belief in yourself, and think about who will you be.

Okay, Coach T signing off. Have a blessed one.