

## How to Gain the Perspective Needed to Reach Your Fitness Goals

What if I told you that the bad things that happen to you, the things that get you down, the things that get in the way of you achieving your goals and being the person you want to be, could disappear in an instant? And that you could make them disappear? Or that you could blink, and all of a sudden be where you want to be with your goals...for fitness, health, life, love, even money. You may be surprised to hear that all of this is absolutely possible. I'll tell you why and how in this episode.

Welcome back to the TD Fitness Podcast. This is the third episode in a three-part series on meeting your unbelievable fitness goals. And I've been explaining how you can do that through a story of my own...my experience in training for and completing a full ironman race consisting of a 2.4 mile swim, a 112 mile bike ride, and a full marathon of 26.2 miles...all in under 17 hours. Impossible? I thought so too...until I did it. And one of the things that the overall experience helped to drive home for me is that when you start with the right mindset, put certain disciplines into practice, and maintain the right perspective, you can accomplish things that you never thought possible. And for me, in addition to mindset, discipline and perspective, I stay grounded in faith, which shapes my attitude and approach to all of those things. So, two episodes ago in Episode #128, we talked about the Mindset for Reaching Your Dream Goal No Matter Your Fitness Level. In last week's episode, #129, the topic was How to Reach the Fitness Goals You Never Thought Possible. Now in this episode, we'll wrap up with the key piece that we often overlook...our perspective. That's the thing that can make that the bad things that happen to you, the things that get you down, the things that get in the way of you achieving your goals and being the person you want to be disappear in an instant. Perspective can put you where you want to be with your goals overnight, in life, love, money or health and fitness as we'll talk about in this episode. Your success starts with mindset, it's achieved through discipline and maintaining a healthy perspective. So, let's dive in.

Do you know the day that I became an Ironman? The race was on October 17th, 2015. That's when I crossed the finish line. That's when they placed a medal around my neck. That's when we took photos at the finish line. That's when the race results were finalized and became official. That's when I felt I had accomplished my goal. But that's not the day that I became an Ironman. The day that I became an Ironman is that day in 2014 when I decided to start this journey. That was also the moment when I had the most control of what would happen. I had made the decision...to train, to prioritize my time differently for the next 10-12 months, to be someone I wanted to be but had never been before. Before that moment, that is. Because in that moment that I decided to be an Ironman, I became an Ironman. Just like the moment you decide to be a runner, you become a runner. The moment you decide to walk a mile, you

become a mile walker. The moment you decide to quit smoking, you're not a smoker anymore. And you remain the person that you decide to be until you decide not to be that person anymore.

This is what I mean when I talk about perspective. You see, there are things in this life and on our journey that we can control. We can control who we tell ourselves we are. Then there are things that we will never be able to control. We can't control who others think or say we are. So, who will you choose to believe? Will you believe yourself...the person who has the most control over who you are? Or will you believe others who have no control over the person you are? I choose to focus on the things that I can control. Focusing on anything else just causes stress that you can't do anything about. You control what you think about yourself and how you respond to the things going on around you. I knew going in to this that things would pop up to prevent me from training, that injuries were likely to occur, that I could get hurt, that I could fail to complete the race, even. But because I couldn't control any of that, I chose not to focus on it. Instead, I focused on staying as consistent as I could given life's circumstances. I focused on getting a little better or going a little farther with each training session. So, my question for you is this...as you are working toward your goal, what do you focus on? When you decided who you want to be or who you see yourself as, what do you focus on? Do you focus on the things that you can actually affect, or on the things that you have no control over? Focus on the things that you can control.

I know that one of the things that prevents us from doing that is the measurements of success or achievement we tend to use. I mean, let's be honest. I can consider myself an Ironman all I want, but if I had never done one, it's really my own false perception of who I am, right? Well, this is why understanding what your ultimate goal is important. Whether you're training for a marathon or distance race, or whether you just want to go from a sedentary lifestyle to more movement a couple of times a week, each of those are really incremental goals on the road to your ultimate goal, which is to perhaps live longer or feel better. And once you understand that, then it's easier to talk in terms of what true measures of success are. Is my measurement of success my race time or is it the fact that I completed the race? Is it the fact that I completed the race or that I was consistent with exercise throughout all of my training? Is it that I was consistent with exercise over that 10 month period or is it that now I've overcome a mental block that will allow me to be consistent for the rest of my life? You see, we tell ourselves that we're training for the race, whatever your race may be. But my goal is to remind us all that it's not really about the race. I'll come back to that in a bit.

How we define success has an impact on our motivation, growth, and desire to continue. That's why I often cringe when I hear of people putting so much of a priority on what the number on the scale says. First, that's something that you can't control. We just talked about that. Second, it's not about the number. It's about what you do to make the numbers change. And third, that number is someone else's

mechanism for measuring you. Why not use your own? Why not use the snugness or looseness of your favorite pair of pants?

This is one of the reasons why I am a proponent of tracking and measuring the actions we take toward our goal, not the outcomes of the goals themselves. Remember, the thing we're focused on here is personal growth. Being better today than you were yesterday. Living healthier. None of those things involve comparisons to other people. Sure, it's ok to compete against others as a form of motivation to make yourself better, but never forget that it's about you, not them. If everyone got worse and you were the winner, you're still all worse off than you were. The goal is to better yourself. The way to get better, as we said in Episode #129, is to take consistent action. These are the things you should measure. It's something you can control, and you can see consistency or improvement over time.

So, the next time someone asks you, "how did your race go," expecting you to rattle off a finisher time, perhaps you can tell them, "it was great...it's the first time I've trained consistently for three months straight!" What does success look like to you? What should it look like? Are you better off than you were before? Are you better positioned? "Better" is the operative word here. Not a better time, but better habits, a better approach, a better outlook. Unless you are racing, don't worry about the time. Participating is just fine for helping you live a better life, a longer, more fulfilling life. And it comes with a lot less stress too.

Now, I mentioned earlier that it's not about the race. And what I mean by that is that developing the skill of improving is more important than the actual improvement you want to make. It's more important that you develop a habit of exercising than it is that you finish a race. It's more important that you learn how to incorporate healthier habits into your existing lifestyle than it is that you achieved a personal best. This comes back to a fundamental part of perspective that our right here, right now society overlooks all too often. That is the opportunity to look at things through a long-term lens. When we can measure performance with the bigger, long-term picture in mind, and understand that it's just as much about learning the process as it is about achieving a short-term goal, we set ourselves up for continued success. Instant results only last for an instant. We're working toward long-term lifestyle change, not short-term solutions. I want to help you learn through your process. That's the point.

James Clear is quoted as saying, "Improvements are only temporary until they become part of who you are. The goal is not to read a book, the goal is to become a reader. The goal is not to run a marathon, the goal is to become a runner. The goal is not to learn an instrument, the goal is to become a musician. Focus on the identity you want to build." And another quote by Mike Dooley, "The obsession with instant gratification blinds us from our long-term potential." Long-term thinking will bring much of what you do into perspective. It will highlight things as important that you never thought were important before.

And it will minimize things that you once thought important as you realize they're not as important as they once were in the grand scheme of things.

The final piece that I'd like to cover in this episode is the inevitable setback, or two, or ten. And remember that we're talking about perspective here, so you can probably guess where this is going. Setbacks can turn out to be roadblocks in our lives if we view them a certain way. Or they can be speedbumps if viewed differently. When I showed up for the Ironman in early October of 2015, many of us had checked in for the race a couple of days prior. I had driven from 3 states away. Others had flown in from different countries across the world. They had shipped their bikes. We had all worked our training plans to taper workouts in the final weeks in an effort to be at peak readiness come race day. What we didn't anticipate, what we couldn't anticipate, was a hurricane that was working its way up the East Coast that would cause the race director to postpone the race, at the time indefinitely. Imagine our disappointment. I remember thinking, "if I don't do this now, I will never do it. I can't sacrifice this much again for this long. It was all for nothing." Well, needless to say, it was a long drive back through those three states for me. I felt down. I felt defeated. And to be honest, I didn't necessarily have a healthy perspective that caused me to think, "at least you're healthier now." No, I wanted to compete and cross the finish line. I wanted that medal and that t-shirt.

Well, a couple of days later, after the storm passed through, we got word that the race would take place two weeks later. It was a speedbump, not a roadblock. But even during the race, I had a flat tire. My energy was depleted. I was being passed by people twice my age. Darkness fell. Many of the volunteers went home and just left the drinks and snacks at the nutrient stops on the table for us to take whenever we got there. And the clock was counting down. All of this happened throughout one race day, but it is certainly representative of the things that happen throughout a lifetime. You get injured, laid off, a failing grade, lose money in investments, your car is stolen, a family member falls ill. THE things that have served to get me through tough times in my life, and on that race day, are my faith and my perspective. You decide how those things will affect you. You decide whether they get to you. You decide how you will handle it. You decide how quickly you bounce back. You decide, because you can control that. You decide, because life's circumstances don't define you. You decide because it's not just about short-term grief, it's about long-term fulfillment.

Having a healthy perspective allows you to practice patience. I was forced to be patient when the race was cancelled and later postponed. I was forced to be patient while changing my flat tire on the course. I was forced to be patient through 140.6 miles of swimming, biking and running. Those things don't happen fast.

Perspective. It's the third and final piece of the puzzle that will allow you to achieve the possible and impossible. It starts with focusing on what you can control. And then measuring the right things, not just measuring things for the sake of measuring. And finally, long-term thinking and patience throughout. That's how you maintain perspective.

Before I wrap up here, just a quick reflection of hope for you all. In January of 2021, in the midst of Covid, I remember a message from Crosspoint Church in Florida. The title of the sermon was, "What to do when you don't know what to do." And the pastor offered that we should first believe. Then do the next right thing. And then wait. And as I think about my journey, my hopes, dreams and aspirations, I can't help but recognize that this message to believe, do the next right thing, and wait have played an instrumental part in so many instances of my life. My mindset is grounded in my belief, my faith in God. And when I talk about practicing the disciplines needed for you to grow and reach your goal, it essentially means to do the next right thing. That's the action we take. And finally, waiting, with the long view in mind and patience throughout. It was good advice from the pastor in 2021, and it's good advice for you to practice now.

I'll end it there, but before I leave, I'd ask that you help others, help yourself, and if you're so inclined, help me. Help others by sharing this message with someone who can use it. Help yourself by downloading my single-page guide to gaining the perspective needed for success. You can find it at [tdfitness.net/perspective](https://tdfitness.net/perspective), or in the show notes for this episode at [tdfitness.net/130](https://tdfitness.net/130). And you can help me by leaving a comment, review, rating or by sending me feedback. I use all of it to make what I provide for you even better.

Before I go, the thing to remember this week: Perspective matters.

That's it. Thank you, have a blessed one...Coach T....out!