

Balance Work and Fitness – Part 1: It Starts with Mindset

Life is a constant exercise in competing priorities. There are so many important things that we can do, should do, or must do. And oftentimes, there's tension between what we consider urgent and what we consider important. The balance between work and your health is no different. So, in this episode, my goal is to share with you the things that I consider when approaching these competing priorities in my life. And I'm here to tell you that you can absolutely put the required time in for your job or career and still maintain your health and fitness. I've done it for over 26 years, in a demanding profession, and I've been able to not just stay employed or maintain a minimum level of fitness, but to excel in my career field and get healthier despite the years of age ticking away. So let me share some helpful insights from what I've learned.

Now, this episode is part one of a three part series on effectively balancing work and fitness. In the next episode, we'll get into some of the practical methods for making this happen and provide examples of what it could look like in your life. But in this episode, we're going to start with the foundational piece. That is the mindset required for making this goal, or any goal for that matter, something that can indeed become a reality. You can absolutely balance your health and need to work.

But before we get too far into this, it's helpful to define what, in my case, constitutes "work" and what I mean by maintaining fitness. I've been in the military now for over 26 years. And many people may think, "well of course you can maintain fitness in the military...exercise is mandatory." Well, to set the record straight, yes, a certain level of fitness is a requirement for everyone in the military. But depending on your job, your role, and even the branch of service that you're in, there are varying expectations of 1) your level of fitness, and 2) the time you're given during the work day to maintain your fitness level. I will tell you that over the years, there I've had varying amounts of time and flexibility in my schedule to be able to exercise during the work day. A lot of travel, a lot of deployments, and for the past 10 years or so, increasing levels of responsibility in command and leadership roles has made it increasingly more difficult to strike the appropriate balance. And when you add that to what I think many of us go through at this stage of our lives, which is the blessing of growing a family, providing for them, spending time with our children, and investing in our marriage relationship, it can all be a bit overwhelming for some. So, whether we're talking about a military career, a teacher, a nine to five, or anything else that takes up time during the day and makes it difficult for you to find time to exercise, then this episode is for you.

I'm in a unique spot right now. This is the first time in my 17 years of marriage that I am away from my family for the better part of a year. (This episode is being released around our anniversary date, by the way...happy anniversary, Love!) But what this assignment and time away has allowed me to do is to look at just the two variables of work and fitness to glean some best practices and see what works or doesn't

work. I don't come home to the family while I'm away. I only have the opportunity to speak with them on the phone or FaceTime a couple of times a day. My time is split almost entirely between work requirements and my own time, which I spend more or less how I want. I'm working about 12 hours a day on average, usually 6 days a week, and like everyone who has a demanding work schedule, I deal with being tired, exhausted at times, both physically and mentally. I deal with a lack of motivation to do anything after a long day's work. I deal with having to bring work home with me. I am literally always on call. And when you know that you are ultimately responsible for the health and welfare of thousands of people, and that the organization you're leading has an important mission to carry out, it can weigh on you. But again, although the specific stressors may be different from one profession to the next, the overall level of stress is comparable. I can't imagine being an accountant during tax season. I don't know what it's like to be a teacher at the beginning of the school year, or better yet, know what nine months of kids and stressors over the course of a school year feel like as you're nearing the summer. I don't know what it's like to have so much riding on a business merger that you're primarily responsible for. Every job has its own set of stressors. They're different, but comparable, because they can affect us in similar ways.

On the health and fitness side, because I have a background as a personal trainer and experience in training for endurance events, I have some very specific goals for myself from week to week. And these goals have changed over the years. I'm 48 now, not 28. I do a lot less strength work right now, and the strength work I do accomplish is largely done with bodyweight resistance. And I know that cardiovascular exercise becomes increasingly important as we age, so I work hard to get my 150 minutes of cardio in each week. And the thing that I have to do a lot of now, that I didn't have to do as much of when I was young is stretching. I spend about an hour and a half total, throughout the week stretching. It's important for my well-being and flexibility. But no matter what your fitness routine looks like, the thing we all have in common is that it takes time out of your schedule. There are no shortcuts to remaining healthy. But I'm here to tell you that you can indeed live a healthy lifestyle on the fitness front while doing the things that you need to do with your job or career.

So, let's jump into how one can develop a mindset for growth when it comes to balancing your work or your passion with the need to stay healthy through movement and exercise. I'll remind you of the four mindset principles that I continue to preach and coach others with. Those are, 1) determine the type of person you want to be, 2) believe in yourself and your ability, 3) be clear about your why, and 4) get out of your own way.

Let's start with the type of person that you want to be. I always start with the who as opposed to the what. When we start with what we intend to do, we skip so many fundamental steps. But starting with who you want to be, and envisioning the type of person you can be, it tends to fill in many of the gaps and seams when you question why you're taking a particular action or when you lack motivation to continue. So, the

'who' is important. And when I ask myself who I want to be, I would say that I want to be someone who is successful at my chosen profession, and someone who is healthy and fit. I want to do well at work. It's more than just a job for me. It's somewhat of a calling. It's service. It's important work. I need to set a positive example. At the same time, I want to be fit. I want to live a long life. I want to be able to do the physical things I want to do without being hampered by pain or anything else. I want to play with the girls. I want to be athletic. Perhaps you can relate to those statements. But as we've said, there's sometimes difficulty in trying to do both of those things. So, where do we go from there? Where do you go after you have an idea of the type of person you want to become?

Well, my question for you is this, "do you believe that you can be that person?" Do you believe that you can be the person that you envision? I mean, really. Do you think it's something that's achievable for you? Do you see yourself as the person you envision? I tell myself that I can do it. I tell myself that I can be fit and work a demanding job as a professional. It doesn't matter that I'm not in my 20s anymore. It doesn't matter that I may have a more demanding job than some. It doesn't matter that I have some physical limitations. All that matters is that I believe I can.

Man, I so wish that I could take this thought and instill it into everyone. So many of us underestimate the power of belief. And I can guarantee you that if you don't believe in yourself, success is extremely difficult if not impossible. Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can, or think you can't, you're right." Buddha is quoted as saying, "The mind is everything. What you think you become." And Essayist and literary critic William Hazlitt has said, "As is our confidence, so is our capacity." Man! Such powerful words, and so many like these were echoed by generations well before me, and much more accomplished than me. It's because it's a fundamental truth...belief in yourself is so important. So, again...do you believe? You should. I'm here to tell you that you can.

I realize that one of the things that helps with belief in ourselves is seeing an example of who we want to be embodied by someone else. Perhaps part of the reason why I believe that I can thrive at work and in health and fitness is because I've seen many people who stay fit and do well at their jobs. I've seen military Generals who continue to make time for fitness. I've seen CEOs who make fitness a priority. I've seen the dedication of shift workers who will not compromise their gym time, even after a long day's work. I've seen positive example, and people as living role models who make me believe that I can balance these demands as well. So, I absolutely believe that I can. I want you to believe that you can do it too. And when you believe, and you get a couple of wins in your corner, perhaps start to see a little consistency in your lifestyle, it's a snowball effect. Your belief grows and your ability to better balance, better manage and to thrive at work and in fitness...those things continue to grow as well.

So, we've talked about being the type of person that we want to be, and about believing in ourselves. Now I want to talk about your 'why.' Why do you want to be successful at work? Why do you want to be fit? There are some surface level answers to these questions, for sure. I need to be successful at work to keep my job and provide for my family. I want to be fit so I can remain healthy. But I'm going to challenge you to go a little bit deeper if you can. Do you work to live and to provide, or do you live to work? Is that healthy? Are you pouring so much into your profession that it comes at a cost to all else? Do you have to sacrifice so much of other parts of your life for your work goals? Does the monetary benefit of longer hours or possible promotion actually translate to a happier or more fulfilling life? Have you considered that dialing your work schedule back just a little bit can possibly allow you to live a life that's closer to what you truly desire?

What I'm getting at is balance. That's what this episode is about. That's what this series is about. Think about the competing demands you have in your life. Are you living a balanced life, or is your time and attention consumed by one or two things, such as work, or fitness? Is that what you want? Is that what those around you want? I want to challenge you here because sometimes we fail to ask ourselves these hard questions.

Let's go back to your 'why.' My why starts with my faith. Colossians 3:23 says, "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people." I love serving, in just about every capacity. Whether it's a life of military service, or through this podcast and TD Fitness, I am so thankful that God has given me gifts that I can use to uplift Him, and the blessings of using these gifts in my everyday profession and my passion of TD Fitness to fulfill His purpose. So again, my 'why,' the reason why I work and serve is to uplift Him. I want to be an example to others through my service. My hope is that your passion aligns with your work. And if it doesn't right now, my prayer is that you find an outlet that does allow you to express your passion, whatever that may be.

And my 'why' for health and fitness? I mentioned earlier that I want to be around for a while. I want to live a fulfilling life with my family. I want to set an example for my loved ones. I want to do things with them and not be limited physically. But my why here is also grounded in faith. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 states, "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So, you must honor God with your body." The way I read this is that your body is indeed a temple. This is why you should take care of it and treat it as such. "Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live in." That's a quote from Jim Rohn, and I think it's a good one.

So that's a little bit about my 'why.' Again, I hope it's helpful to you in understanding your 'why.' But once we understand our why, sometimes we just need to get out of our own way. This is the final point I want to

bring up here. Sometimes, we can get in our own way when it comes to envisioning the person we want to become, or believing in ourselves, or understanding our why. Whether it's limiting beliefs, negative self-talk, listening to what others have to say, or even dealing with fears or still holding on to our past, each of those things can serve to prevent us from seeing and being who we were truly meant to be, believing in ourselves, or serving out our 'why.'

You see, we influence our own reality by what we decide is possible. So, we can put doubt aside. Don't let others with the same job or profession and similar circumstances who don't make time for fitness determine who you will be. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't thrive at work and have a healthy lifestyle. And embrace the challenge to do both...well. Yes, it's sometimes scary. Yes, you're signing up for a commitment. And yes, you can live up to that commitment! It's only new until you get used to it...until it becomes a habit. And then your new normal just becomes...well, normal and routine.

And so what if you've tried or attempted to balance work and fitness before? So what if it didn't go the way you expected it would? What a gift! They knowledge of identifying something that perhaps didn't work before...you can now use that information and that experience to step into another attempt. Right now, in this moment you are more equipped to shape your future self than ever before. You are more equipped to define who you can be...who you will be than ever before. And you're the only one who can do that for you. It seems like every day, there's a new challenge for me in trying to balance the demands of work with the requirement for fitness. Perhaps I'm up later than I had anticipated the night before, and I don't want to get up in the morning to exercise. Or my workout is interrupted by an emergency with one of our people or the mission. Or some days, I just don't have it in me to do both...to give to the job and my personal fitness. But that's ok. I give myself a little bit of grace, but I try to anticipate possible challenges before they arise, I control what I can control and continue with my goals to be the best military leader that I can, the best performance coach that I can through TD Fitness, and to stay as fit as I can given all that's going on around me and the demands that are placed on me. That's all I can ask of myself. And that's what I try to do.

So, in closing, weighing the requirements of work or your passion with the need to stay healthy is another example of balancing the urgent and the important. I encourage you not to forget the importance of giving your health the attention that's required as you plug away at the urgent things that work brings. And remember that work and fitness are not mutually exclusive. You can do both. Not only that, when you're healthy and fit, you'll find that productivity at work increases. I think better and I'm more effective at work on the days that I exercise, or when I've been consistent with fitness. In the next episode, I'll give you some practical advice and tips on how to balance work and fitness. But like everything, it starts with mindset - with an understanding of the type of person you want to become, belief that you can be that

person, a true sense of your 'why,' and sometimes it requires you to get out of your own way. I hope this episode was helpful in that regard.

If it was, I have an ask of you. I'd ask that you please share this with someone who can use it. And if you're interested in the fundamental steps that I talked about here in developing the mindset to reach your goals, you can download my short checklist at <https://www.tdfitness.net/mindset>. It will also be available in the show notes for this episode at [tdfitness.net/131](https://www.tdfitness.net/131). And finally, if you're so inclined, give me a like, leave a rating, give me a comment or any other type of feedback that I can use to make the things that I provide for you even better.

Your takeaway for this week: You can effectively balance work and fitness...but it starts with your mindset. Mindset matters.

That's all for now. Have a blessed one. Coach T...out.