

Beyond Luck: THE SECRET TO FITNESS

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As a kid, I was teased a lot for being petite. Weighing barely 95 pounds in my senior year of high school, classmates were quick to mistakenly assume that being slight of frame was a gift that I had been lucky to win in the genetic lottery. But as with all situations, there is always another side of the story. I had difficulty finding clothes that were age appropriate since most things my size were in a children's department, I was easily overpowered in any physical sport I pursued, and my mom often jokes that if the laws were the same in the 90's as they are now, I would have ridden to prom in a car seat. Yeah sure, I was skinny and petite, but my frame offered its own set of challenges equally unfortunate as my larger counterparts.

In the mid-2000's, just out of PT school, I observed my first Ironman Triathlon and was astounded to see people of all shapes, sizes, and ages participating in the grueling 10-hour event. Like well-oiled machines, the participants tackled the 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, and 26.2 mile run, (yes a full marathon after the other events!) as I stood in awe of the beauty of their physical prowess. It forever shaped my perspective that fitness and health weren't necessarily correlative to body composition. I learned through that experience that the true "luck" in fitness was centered more around one's mentality and discipline, and less around waist size or age.

As a health and fitness expert, I spend my career teaching others how to optimize their bodies to perform in the ways they desire. I coach on topics like joint preservation, injury recovery, and endurance training, but, most importantly, I remind my clients that no matter the body they are working with, it is to be appreciated and respected. The real success comes when clients embrace their fitness and wellness with a positive mindset to achieve their goals rather than criticize or lament their current status.

So how can you build a positive mindset around fitness and wellness? Consider these tips:

- **It's less about size and more about function.** Try not to get bogged down with the number on your scale. Many

people set themselves up for fitness failure when they link their success to their weight. Weight loss may not even be a goal for many individuals. Instead, set goals around accomplishing tasks like increasing your lifting capacity, improving your endurance, or performing a task without pain.

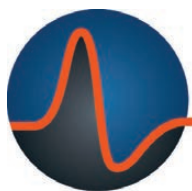
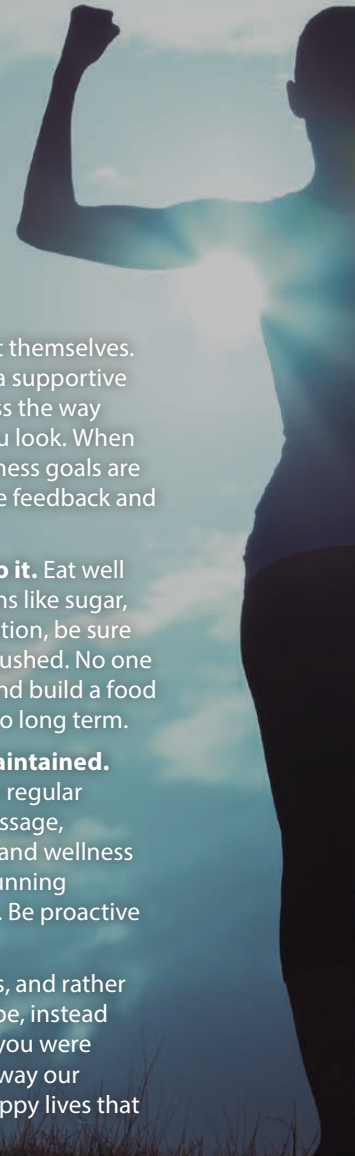
- **Surround yourself with people who champion your beliefs.** There are thousands of people in this world who get their joy from making others feel poorly about themselves. You don't need them in your life. Instead find a supportive community who embraces fitness and wellness the way you do and doesn't dictate success by how you look. When you're having a bad day or feeling like your fitness goals are plateauing, lean on your group to give positive feedback and encouragement.

- **Your body is as good as what you put into it.** Eat well by choosing natural ingredients and limit toxins like sugar, alcohol, tobacco, and processed foods. In addition, be sure to drink plenty of water to keep your system flushed. No one has a perfect diet, so understand your limits and build a food plan that is reproducible and easy to commit to long term.

- **Your body is a machine: It needs to be maintained.** Like you service your car, you need to perform regular maintenance and checkups on your body. Massage, bodywork, yearly medical and GYN physicals, and wellness screens are all geared to keep your machine running smoothly and identify issues before they arise. Be proactive and keep your body optimized!

This March, reframe your ideas around fitness, and rather than identify all the ways you wish you could be, instead embrace how lucky you are to have the body you were given. Working together, we can improve the way our bodies perform so that we can live healthy, happy lives that accomplish our goals.

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