

THE DISCIPLINE OF FITNESS

HOW TO BUILD A CONSISTENT AND SUSTAINABLE

FITNESS HABIT

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO LIFELONG FITNESS, ENERGY, HEALTH, AND CONFIDENCE



By

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Calling out the greatness in you

YOUR LIFE 3 MONTHS FROM NOW

*We treat the body rigorously so that it will not be
disobedient to the mind.*

_____ *Epictetus* _____

Visualize this.

You're sitting at this very spot 3 months from now and looking back. You've worked out consistently for the past three months. Not once did you completely drop the ball. There's not a day that you totally failed to put in some form of exercise.

Even on your busiest, most tiring days, when your mind whispered, "just skip it", you showed up. You did something—ten push-ups, 2 minutes of deep breathing, 30 arm lifts. Or you went for a short walk/run under the morning sky. Or you rested intentionally and did some meditation later.

Why? Because you've understood this isn't only about your body. It's also about your mind. You've trained yourself to keep your word to yourself. To do what you said you'd do. To not be ruled by your fleeting feelings. To start it and finish it. You have built grit, staying power, and resilience.

And the result?

Your physical and mental fitness are on a new level. You are energetic, uplifted, and uplifting. You walk taller. You step into rooms, roles, and conversations that once intimidated you with quiet, grounded confidence.

You look into the mirror and love what you see. You look amazing and feel amazing. The person looking back isn't just fit—they are alive, energetic, and vibrant.

In just 3 months!



And the beauty? It happened not because you chased a number on a weight scale or the imaginary summer body. It happened because you committed to this one simple discipline: **showing up daily**.

Not for short-term weight loss, but for lifelong fitness — for mobility at 60, for sharpness at 70, for vitality at 80.

It's about your entire life because you are a visionary leader whose perspective of the future shapes your actions today. In your mind, you see clearly what you want your later years to be. And you're working it out—one day at a time with the discipline of fitness.

Fitting in that dress or shirt will be just a byproduct, a bonus, an icing on the cake of your well-baked fitness. But your eyes are not fixed on the observable results. Rather, your mind is trained on the daily steps of the discipline of fitness; showing up, doing the work. You've grown from only looking at your body to listening to it and feeling it.

Fast forward a few decades. You are 70 or 80. Yet, you feel and move young. You are still fiercely independent, capable, and exuberant. To your grandkids, you are the coolest granny ever. They call you Grams!

Whoever thought that you would never be fit was wrong. Whoever thought you were stuck in a body that would always betray you—wrong!

Wait. That was you?
Well, you were wrong.

You're the main character in your lifelong masterpiece movie called **The Amazing, Unstoppable <Your Name>**.

In every episode called **TODAY**, you show up, and you work out. On some days, life gets busy, and it looks like the episode will end without the discipline of fitness, but in the end, there you are, deep breathing and stretching for 2 minutes before bed. It is your commitment. You wait for no one because you already know... No one is coming. You became your own coach, and living life to the fullest is your only motivation.

This is who you're becoming. Now, let's go step by step and make it your reality starting tomorrow.

SET A LASER-FOCUSED FITNESS GOAL

You don't fail because you lack motivation.

You fail because you lack clarity.

James Clear

Most people set unclear wishful goals: “I want to lose 10kg in three months.” That’s not a goal. It’s a dream, and most dreams don’t come true.

A good fitness goal must be the simple action you’ll take—not what you want to see. It must be action-focused—not outcome-based.

A good fitness goal must answer the basic questions: what, when, where, and for how long?

And further answer the important questions: In what situations and under what conditions will I give myself a break? I call this “Acceptable excuses”. What situations or conditions will I not allow as excuses? And finally, what will I do when, for any valid reason(s), I can’t do my usual routine (base routine)? I call this “The fallback”.

Let’s answer each of those questions to set a fail-proof fitness goal:

What will you do for fitness?

- Running? Cycling? Swimming? Weight training? Aerobics?
- Be specific. Don’t just say “weight training.” Say: “30 push-ups, 20 pull-ups, 30 squats, 10 bicep curls with 25kg dumbbells, 2 sets.” Clarity is the key. No ambiguity.
- State the exact actions you’ll execute and in what sequence.
- There should be no decision left to make when the clock strikes “Go Time”.

My what: mainly cycling (but I also play tennis and do body weight exercises at home)



When will you do it? When is Go Time?

- Every day at 7 am? or
- Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, beginning at 5:30 am?
- Every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday after work from 6:30 pm?
- Daily is best if possible, even if light. That's the habit.
- But if not possible, aim for at least 3 days a week.

Where will you do it?

- Home, gym, park, pool, road, basketball court, tennis court?
- Most people default to the gym, but focus on what works for you that you can do daily, not what is popular.
- Personally, apart from cycling and tennis, I do every other exercise at home. The only thing I need is my body.

For how long (can be duration, distance, or repetitions)?

- 20 minutes, 30 minutes, or 1 hour?
- 3 km, 10 km, or 20 km?
- Choose a target that you can do daily.
- The aim is consistency, not intensity, not endurance (these can be occasional).
- Start small and improve. But always try to push yourself to the edge of your comfort zone.

Unacceptable excuses

What will you not use as a reason to give yourself a break? What excuses will you not allow?

- For me, "I don't feel like it" isn't allowed. Feelings are fleeting. I ride my bike whether I feel like it or not. And guess what? Five minutes in, the energy always comes. And every time without fail, I am glad I went out. I also try not to let the weather stop me. It can influence or change what I do.

Acceptable excuses and fallback

What excuses would you accept? "I'm tired," "It's raining," "I'll be late," or no excuses. Decide now as you set the goal and be logical about it.

- "It's raining/snowing" is not a logical excuse if your routine can be done indoors. Sometimes, depending on the situation, the rain can be an absolute thriller, especially when it catches you already in flow.
- "I'm tired." This one has to be treated with caution because there will be days on which you are flat out exhausted. But there will also be days when your brain will be looking for excuses, and "I'm tired" is an easy one. Are you really tired, or is it a cop out?

- I have one rule: I don't allow myself to skip a workout because "I'm tired" if the tiredness came from indiscipline. If I stayed up late watching plane crash investigations on Wonder YouTube, that's on me. Rewarding indiscipline with more indiscipline is unacceptable. How will you learn if you don't pay the price? Let the child burn their hand on the candle, and the flame will not look so enticing again next time.

The Fallback

Whenever you decide not to do the usual/base routine for any reason that you decided ahead of time, **the fallback** routine is automatically activated (we'll discuss this in the next chapter).

Putting it together

Let's put together the pieces of the enduring fitness goal using:

The laser-focused, fail-proof fitness goal formula

I (*what*) every (*when*), setting out no later than (*time*), at (*where*), for (*duration/distance*), without fail, whether (*main unacceptable excuse*).

The goal must be written in the present tense. It is what you do--not what you will be doing. Let it be present with you always.

Here's my own goal from 5 years ago, when I committed to a fitness routine.

"I *cycle* every *day*, setting out no later than *7:00 am*, for *at least 12 km*, without fail, whether *I feel like it or not, whether it's raining or not.*"

(I've updated it a few times. Here's the 2025 version):

"I *cycle* every *day* (*excluding Sunday*), setting out no later than *6:30 am*, on any one of my *five pre-selected routes*, for *at least 17 km*, without fail, whether *I feel like it or not.*"

Notice the clarity. The only decision left each morning is choosing what to wear and which route to take. Most people fail because they need to make many decisions every morning: what to do, where, how,... Remove that burden by deciding now. The rest is one or two choices and then execution like clockwork.



“If you pre-decide and inform your brain that this is non-negotiable, it will always figure out how to succeed in executing what you decided.”

Clarity removes inertia. Our brains don't like deciding. But when something is crystal clear, they are good at executing.

OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD DECIDE AHEAD OF TIME

Choose your workout clothes and shoes: Set aside a few options you'll always choose from. Get workout fits that you like to see yourself in. This is low-key motivating sometimes.

Choose how you'll track your workouts: Tracking your workouts unlocks staying power and resilience. No one likes to break a streak. Choose an app that you'll use to track your workouts.

I have used Relive since 2020 when I started cycling. I love it. I can easily look back and see how far I've come and how well I'm sticking to my goals. It has that added push of showing you your streak.

What I find hard to track are my home workouts and tennis. In seasons when I do more of those, my tracking app looks like I'm checked out of life. But it's not too much of a problem for me because my fitness habit is pretty much locked in my body's operating system, and it keeps tabs on me.

CREATE A FALLBACK ROUTINE

Doing less is infinitely better than doing nothing

_____ *Unknown* _____

Let's be real. Life won't always cooperate with your fitness goals. Travel, late nights, deadlines, emergencies, exhaustion—they'll come.

There'll be days when you'll be so tired that it would be counterproductive to work out as usual. There will be days when other things encroach on your exercise time. What will you do in these circumstances?

When you can't follow the usual routine as defined above, what will you fall back on? Do totally nothing? Not you!

That's why you need fallback routines. Decide your fallbacks now!

Fallbacks are things you can do with limited required resources: limited time, limited energy, limited space, limited freedom, limited/no access to your usual tools or spaces.

Examples of some fallbacks I use:

- I cycle a fraction of my regular distance. I take an 8 KM path when I have limited time or energy.
- I do 20 - 50 push-ups (with rest) and 40-60 squats
- I do deep breathing, stretching, and meditation (talk with self, reflect on the goodness of God) when too exhausted.
- Or, if my body truly demands it within reason, I sleep in. E.g. When I am exhausted but know I have to return to work fresh enough to be focused.
- Are there days when I totally do nothing? Yes! They will come, but with this system, those are rare and far between, and they keep getting rarer the more committed and conscious I am. What I hate is to feel like I slid into an inactive lifestyle without consciously choosing that, "Today I will do X instead and not workout"



Fallbacks are so important because doing something keeps your routine and identity intact. You're still the person who shows up, who keeps your word to yourself.

Skipping completely? That's how streaks break. That's how your fitness train can come to a standstill. It is easier to keep a slow-moving train moving than to get a train at a stop to start moving.

When life gets crazy, still try not to lose momentum completely. Do less. And if you do skip a few days, when the conditions return to normal, don't let inertia keep you dormant. Spring back into action as if you could not wait. Just get up and go outside

BUILD SUPPORTING HABITS THAT MAKE FITNESS STICK

Nothing stands alone; everything affects everything else.

Jim Rohn

Fitness doesn't stand alone. It's connected to everything else: sleep, rest, food, mindset, drive, confidence, presence,...

Some habits and behaviors are very hostile to a consistent fitness routine. To sustain a fitness habit, you must stop doing things that sabotage or stand in its way and start doing things that support and nurture a fitness habit.

#1. Sleep Well

Your fitness routine lives or dies on sleep.

From now on, forget alarm clocks that rudely interrupt the calm at dawn. The key is not a wake-up alarm but a go-to-bed alarm. But when should you go to bed? Well:

- How many hours of sleep do you need to be well rested (6? 7? 8?)
- What is your ideal wake-up time?
- Walk backwards from that wake-up time by the number of hours of sleep you need.
- That's your bedtime. Set an alarm for it. You may need to add a buffer of 20-60 minutes to accommodate your bedtime routine.
- What's your bedtime routine? Here's a great one that supports deep rest and energized wake-up: shut down devices, brush/floss, dim the lights, pray/reflect with gratitude, stretch with deep breathing in bed, lights out, sleep.

You need to customize this to create one that works best for you. Always adjust any recommendations to suit and serve you.

When you'll hit the right fit, you'll find that you wake up naturally, rested, energized, and ready to tear into the day like a brand new Tesla. No rude alarms needed.



#2. Rest Well (Recuperate & Reinvigorate)

Sleeping is not always resting. You can rest without sleep, and you can sleep without rest. Rest is not passive. Scrolling mindlessly on social media is not rest. True rest is an intentional action. It's active recuperation and reinvigoration. Anything that doesn't end with you feeling revitalized, refreshed, and strengthened is not rest or is inadequate rest.

What activities help you to truly revitalize?

- Drinking tea quietly out on the porch?
- A good conversation with a friend or with a large group?
- Turning off screens and sitting in stillness?
- Taking a nap when your body demands it?
- Singing to yourself by yourself?
- Reading or discussing scriptures or other uplifting literature?
- Getting lost in your imaginary worlds/ideas/memories?
- Listening to uplifting music, or to some sounds of nature like rain, birds, or insects?
- The options are vast. Intentionally choose what works for you.

Here's something you can do to help you rest intentionally. Simply say "*I am going to rest by _____.*" Then do it, and at the end, check in with yourself. "Do I feel rested?"

Good rest replenishes and invigorates. Fake rest (scrolling endlessly) only drains you more. Good rest tells you when you've had enough; fake rest can go on endlessly. <<

#3. Relax Well After Workouts

One of the worst mistakes you can make is starting and ending workouts abruptly. When you push hard and then stop cold, it leaves you sore and dreading the next session.

Instead, cool down slowly and relax

- Stretch the muscles before and after you have worked out.
- Breathe deeply to flood your body with oxygen.
- Before bed, do 1–3 slow stretch-and-hold positions. Just 5-10 seconds for each position will greatly enhance your sleep, especially on tired days.

Relaxation through stretching and breathing is the glue between today's workout and tomorrow's readiness. <<

THE FUTURE YOU

Only the disciplined are FREE. (rephrased)

_____ Eliud Kipchoge _____

Discipline today is your freedom tomorrow.

What will happen if you actually do this for three months? You'll be stronger, sharper, calmer, and more present and confident. You'll like the person you'll become so much more.

But here's the best part: it won't stop there. Because you won't let it.

By the end of 3 months, you would have changed a basic paradigm and have irrefutable evidence that you can transform yourself. You can keep your word to yourself. You can build discipline that rules over feelings. You can do what you set a clear, laser-focused goal for. You can ride this fitness horse for as long as you want.

As you look ahead to your 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s, you'll see a future self who is mobile, healthy, vibrant, active, and laughing hard at the naysayers.

This is fit for life. This is you. You are the example of what it means.

How? Because you chose not just fitness, but the discipline of fitness. In this journey, you'll celebrate the process and who you're becoming because of it. If you just keep showing up and updating your goal targets as you grow, you will see possibilities unravel that will amaze you. Remain a student on the journey. Learn, change, become more.

Conquering fitness is just the beginning of many big life-changing wins. Your high aspirations and dreams will also be yours by the same discipline of showing up and working on them one day at a time.

Now that you have laid a stable and rooted foundation, keep building on it. I am with you in spirit, and I have a great deal of respect for you and the person you're becoming. I look forward to the excerpts from **The Amazing Unstoppable <you>**. You are a champion. Live it out!



SOME OF MY GUIDING PRINCIPLES SUMMARIZED IN QUOTES

If it ain't fun, don't do it.

If you are going to do something every day, make sure you have fun doing it. Fitness is not always easy, but it can always be fun. Choose what you enjoy. And if you don't know yet, explore.

When you fall off the wagon, do not beat yourself up. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and climb back on it so that it doesn't leave you behind. Mind you, the wagon keeps moving.

You need to have grace and tender love towards yourself when you drop the ball. You must love yourself enough not to beat yourself down when you fall. Speak to yourself as you would a loved one who is putting in all the effort but slips and falls from time to time.

The pain of working out fades faster if you keep coming back. Don't make the first pains you experience when you start a retreat signal.

Push through the pain till you come out the other side. Most people try fitness and give up because of the pain at the beginning. Work out through the pain. That's much better than trying to sit it out. And believe me, it will soon disappear if you just get up and do it again.

Take the path of soft discipline. Discipline that is determined but not rigid.

It is not about doing it no matter what. It's not about going hard all day, every day. It is about holistic, gentle, and wise discipline. It's about taking many small steps and decisions that align and reinforce your goal of living well. Sleep well, rest well, work out well, eat well, love well, and take a break when you have an injury or deep fatigue. Discipline is not punishment. ***Discipline is the highest expression of self-love.*** Discipline focuses on doing what is beneficial for you holistically; beneficial today, but also decades from now. Discipline is the greatest gift of love you can give your present and future self.



Do not fail today because you failed yesterday or all of last week.

Decide to win today, even if you failed yesterday or all past 5 days in a row. When we fail to do something once, or do something we had said we would not do again, we often feel like we've messed up and ruined everything. That's a trap to a downward spiral. Don't fall for it. What happened happened. But what happens now, today, and going forward is totally your decision. Decide to win today, even if you failed all week. Choose the upward spiral. You will have to make this choice a lot. Perhaps more often than you'd like. But never get fed up with rising, dusting off, and staying on course after you fall. That's the hero's arc. She never gives up on herself.

Going from zero to one is difficult. That's where all the pain is concentrated.

All of us are horrible at everything when we just get started. For working out, you are bad at it, and then it hurts like crazy. I remember the pain in my butt and thighs when I started cycling. Everyone you admire began somewhere, and they went through the same pain, struggle, and sucking. It doesn't last if you just keep showing up. Your body gets the memo and readjusts. So don't let your mind project that pain into the future and convince you to retreat. The pain always, without fail, goes away. To lessen the pain, do a lot of stretching and deep breathing after your exercise from day 1.

The path of the full and abundant life is narrow. We drift off course easily and often. Commit to always bring yourself back on course.

Sometimes, you will find yourself 5 days without having done any exercise or any of the good things you committed to. I've been there, done that. What do you do when you've drifted 8 days without doing the things that you committed to doing daily? Or worse, doing the exact opposite; the things you committed to not do, to never do. When we fail to honor our word to ourselves, the temptation to keep drifting is very strong. But what you do on the day you finally face your failures is what's important. What you do today is what counts, not what you did or didn't do 8 days prior.

I leave you with an emphasis on discipline, and one of my best friend's favorite quotes, a powerful lesson from Kenya's long-distance running legend Eliud Kipchoge:

"Only the disciplined ones are free in life." <<

Self-discipline is not restriction. It is the only path to true freedom.

Choose discipline!
Choose freedom!
Choose the life you want!

Cheers to the discipline of fitness!
Cheers to the discipline of everything!

THE END

Thank you for the compliment of reading this



Kizito Nyuytiyimbiz is the founder of Leader Upp, a leadership development firm based in Kigali, Rwanda. His passion is driven by the conviction that we are all born to be leaders, and his life's work is dedicated to helping leaders build the capabilities that make them effective in their pursuit of purpose. He believes discipline and fitness are a fundamental requirement in that regard. That's why he wrote this short guide to share some of the lessons and thoughts he has on the subject, drawing from his personal journey and curated wisdom from some of the best leaders in the world today. To know more about his work:

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