



Hope

is Not a Viable Health Strategy

5 Steps to Create Your Fittest Future Self

Kathleen Trotter is a fitness expert, media personality, personal trainer, writer, life coach, and overall health enthusiast. She is the author of *Finding Your Fit. A Compassionate Trainer's Guide to Making Fitness a Lifelong Habit*. Kathleen's passion is motivating others to "find their fit." Kathleen does this through writing, regular TV and media appearances, working with clients (ranging from athletes of all ages to individuals living with Parkinson's and osteoporosis), and speaking engagements.

Kathleen started her work as a fitness writer at Chatelaine in 2010. Shortly after, she started blogging for The Huffington Post and filming and writing for The Globe and Mail. Her work at the Globe includes over 50 online fitness how-to videos, inclusion in the Globe's online book on running, over 30 "Stealth" exercises, an "Ask the Trainer" column, a "Sweat Test" column, and a "Health Advisory" column. Kathleen has also published articles in magazines such as Canadian Running, Glow, Alive, Today's Parent, Healthy Directions, Impact Magazine, and Sharp, and for ParticipAction.

Since 2016, Kathleen has made monthly appearances on Breakfast Television Montreal and Rogers Ottawa, and she is regularly asked to make TV and media appearances for outlets including CTV News, CHCH Morning Live Hamilton, the CBC, Global Montreal, ABC News 7, and Rogers London.



Notice the word create. Your “fittest future you” doesn’t just happen — you have to take clear and intentional action today to create the future you that you desire. Health success is “made not found.”

Five steps to create the future you that you desire!

Step 1. State clear, realistic goals

Establish one or two long- and short-term goals. Make sure these goals respect how much time, money, and emotional resources you actually have versus the resources you wish you had. Thrive in your own lane — analyze your past injuries, your age, your stage of life, and what you realistically can achieve versus what you wish you could achieve.

Be patient. Don’t go after all of your goals at once. Rome was not built in a day; you can’t change a lifetime of habits overnight. Break down goals into manageable parts so that the change feels attainable. Get a few little wins under your belt — these will spiral into further wins. Little wins keep you motivated.

Step 2. Create an action plan

Script the critical moves needed to ensure you reach your goals — what I call the WWWH (when, where, what, how) of your goal. When will you work out? At lunch? Before work? After work? Where will you work out? Will you get a gym membership, set up a home gym, train at the office gym? What will you do? Will you run, do

Zumba, take a dance class? How will you make it happen? What accommodations do you have to put into place? Do you need to arrange childcare? Shift your work hours slightly so you can train in the morning? Create systems that allow you to follow through — get a fitness buddy, arrange childcare, book off your lunch breaks, etc.

Step 3. Get buy-in from BOTH your elephant and your rider

The elephant and rider — a metaphor originally from the poet Rumi, made popular by books such as *The Happiness Hypothesis* and *Switch* — represent the constant tug-of-war inside all of us between our emotional brain (our elephant) and our rational brain (our rider).

To actually create change — versus think about creating change — you need both your elephant and rider on board. Too many of us commit to a goal with only our rider on board — we don’t get “buy-in” from our elephant. Without the elephant you understand the goal, but lack the motivation required to follow through. With no rider you have passion, but no direction. The rider’s position is precarious. Think how small a rider is relative to an elephant. The elephant often overcomes the rider.

Reaching a health goal requires consistency, but too often the rider can’t keep the elephant on track long enough to reach the destination — one never completely consistently makes healthy choices.

Stop putting off 'til tomorrow what you can do today. This moment is the only moment you have direct control over. Stop thinking. Start doing. The fitter future you is created through action.



An example. Your rider states a goal: “Starting tomorrow I will cut out sugar because it is healthier for me” — “healthier” being the rational reason to make the choice. When we inevitably feel (ie., our elephant gets involved) that we “deserve” a sugar-filled treat, we are sad and crave comfort in the form of food, or the sugar is just there and easy to eat, our elephant “wins” and we indulge.

Step 4. Create “systems”

Our rider can overpower the elephant ... until it can't. You need to create systems that save yourself from your future exhausted, sad, frustrated elephant self. Embrace that just because you are motivated when you make your goal doesn't mean you will always feel motivated. Create environments where your rational side can outsmart your emotional side. For example, don't keep crap in the house that your emotional elephant can indulge in at 11pm, meal prep so healthy food is as convenient as unhealthy food, and read restaurant menus online and decide what you will eat before you arrive.

Step 5. Embrace a “progress not perfection” mindset

Perfectionism is the enemy of getting

things done — since perfect doesn't exist it allows for self-sabotaging self-talk. Become okay working through the “grade levels” of fitness, of becoming comfortable being new at something.

Ditch perfectionist goals. Embrace the goal of progress. Of course you feel awkward lifting weights and are sore post workout — you just started lifting. Of course your taste buds don't love healthy food — your body is used to existing on sugar. Of course hill walking kicks your butt — you don't regularly do hills. Too many of us expect to reach our goals overnight, to magically have healthier eating habits or to jump on the treadmill and just start effortlessly jogging. Unrealistic expectations are — at best — the seeds of discontent and are — typically — a recipe for failure. You don't need to be “perfect” to start. Just start. You will get better with progress. You will feel more comfortable as you progress.

Final thought

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YOUR FITTEST FUTURE SELF
 Making choices today for a happier, healthier, fitter future you
 Kathleen Trotter

