

# AUSTIN FIT

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## MAGAZINE

# Win the Day!

How You Can Achieve Optimal  
Health and Boost Your Immunity

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# Let's Win the Day

**Author Todd Whitthorne shares his advice on how to stay healthy and boost immunity during COVID-19.**





**M**ike Tyson, the former heavyweight boxing champion, once said, “Everybody has a plan ‘till they get punched in the mouth.” Well, guess what? You, me and everyone we know have been punched in the mouth. Sometime in March, our world changed, and it continues to change almost daily. Eight weeks ago toilet paper was a thing. Now, with that problem solved, much of our energy, while still focused on our health, seems to have shifted to the economy and what impact it will have on our standard of living and psyche.

We didn’t ask for it, we certainly don’t like it, but we have been forced to deal with it.

It’s interesting, because while virtually everyone on the face of the earth, almost eight billion people, have been impacted by the exact same thing, we all have been impacted in a different manner. Corona is a global problem but it’s really a *local* issue. What’s happening in Austin is far different than what’s happening in New York, Seattle or Singapore.

Our challenges, as a result of the virus, are also unique. A working couple with young children has an entirely different set of challenges than a retired widower who

lives alone. We all have the same enemy, but we are all dealing with varied circumstances. This is important to remember. For some of us, the past three months have been mildly inconvenient while, for others, it’s been devastating.

Now, I’m done with the doom and gloom. Let’s look forward and get started on what we can do to make things better.

### **Epictetus Was Right**

The Greek philosopher, Epictetus said, “It’s not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.” This has never been more relevant than right now. Rather than get wrapped around the axle over things we can’t control, I suggest we take a breath, look around and ask how we can make the best of our current situation. It’s not the environment we ever envisioned, but here we are, so let’s take control of what we know will be of benefit.

Our primary concern should be limiting our risk of catching the virus. By now we are well versed on what that means: wash your hands thoroughly and often,

continue to social distance, wear a mask (even though it might not be mandatory), disinfect common surfaces, etc.

Here are some simple things to remember to lower your risk of infection:

- In general, outside is safer than inside
- Small groups are safer than large groups
- Short bouts of exposure to high-risk environments are safer than longer bouts

Now, the fact is, even if you do *everything* within your power to avoid infection, it still might happen. That means you have to prioritize proven ways to super-charge your immune system. None of what I'm about to share with you will be a big surprise — but I do encourage you to double-down on your efforts.

## The Big Three

It's important to remember *you cannot outsource your health*. No one has more impact on your health, emotional well-being and your future than you do, so if you're going to "get punched," let's make sure you don't get knocked out. That's why it's now critical for you to get selfish, especially regarding The Big Three — sleep, exercise and nutrition. Please recognize that if you want to stay healthy and strong, and be in position to help and serve others, then **you have to focus on you**. No one can do it for you.

## ZZZZZZ

At the top of your list should be sleep. Even pre-Corona, many of us were short-changing ourselves on what is one of the most important factors related to immunity, not to mention quality of life. The recent studies indicate that, on average, we are getting about 12 to 30 additional minutes of sleep per night than before shelter-in-place took hold. Hopefully, you fall into that category. If not, reevaluate. There aren't many things more detrimental to your immunity than sleep deprivation.

Focus on the importance of consistency as it relates to when you go to bed and when you get up. As sleep guru, Dr. James Maas says, "Your body does not have two biological clocks." Having a Monday through Friday sleep schedule and a different Saturday/Sunday routine will not serve you well. Be consistent and never settle for less than seven hours per night. More is better, but draw the line at seven.



## Move It

Since you are reading *AUSTIN FIT* then I'm guessing you will appreciate this next priority. Make it a point to get regular exercise. I realize I'm probably "preaching to the choir" but there are literally hundreds of benefits associated with physical activity and fitness. You already know the *physical* benefits but don't forget about the well documented mental and emotional payoffs. Now, more than ever, you have to be mindful of your emotional health (more on this in a bit). Just an intentional 10 to 15 minute stroll (i.e. brisk walk) around your neighborhood can serve as a terrific level-set. Fresh air and blue skies are powerful mood enhancers. Consider listening to an uplifting podcast or your favorite music during your outing (I personally recommend *Earth, Wind & Fire*. I dare you to listen to *Sing a Song* without smiling and swaying to the beat).

Gyms and fitness facilities are now reopening which is great but if you're headed back be sure your location is following all of the best practices as it relates to sanitization. Also, since summer is already upon us, if you are exercising outdoors, consider working out early to avoid the heat. This also helps to "set the tone" for the day and decreases the odds of something, or someone, derailing your intentions.

## Cut the Crap

Pardon my French, but unfortunately the Standard American Diet (SAD) leaves a lot to be desired. I often hear that, "nutrition is complicated." I don't believe that to be the case. For the most part, we all know right from wrong as it relates to what we put in our gas tank. A fantastic place to start,





especially now, is to simply cut the crap. Stop, or at least limit, putting highly processed, sugar-laden garbage into your amazing, beautifully engineered body. You deserve nothing but the best and while healthy food is often more expensive than junk, there are still ways for you to eat well while on a budget. A good place to start is with beans. Much like sleep and exercise, a healthy diet is directly tied to a powerful immune system. Of course, as you know, this is *always* the case but it's especially critical right now.

Besides high-quality nutrition we also need to be mindful of our portion control and weight. Pre-COVID, the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported last year that almost one out of two American adults (48.9 percent) will be obese by 2030. Since-COVID, there has been much talk of the "Quarantine 15" and that's now proving to be an issue for many. Emotional/stress eating, decreased activity and increased alcohol consumption can all contribute to weight gain.

My "day job" is serving as a senior executive for Naturally Slim, a digital weight and metabolic health solution. We have hundreds of corporate clients nationally and we are finding that the past two months, while difficult for some, have actually been helpful for

many from a weight perspective. Remember that gaining weight is much easier than losing weight so I encourage you, or at least try, to "tread water" during these trying times.

Here are some other things to consider:



### Be Grateful

David Rast, a 93-year old Benedictine monk, is fond of saying, "It's not joy that makes us grateful, it's gratitude that makes us joyful." While these are obviously extremely challenging times, I'm convinced, we all can find "nuggets" to be grateful for. For me, it's become a very intentional way to start my day. Instead of focusing on the multitude of issues and inconveniences, I make it a point to find at least one or two things that I am grateful for. Remember, prioritize the things that you can control. It will help your sanity.

### Limit Technology and Social Media

The "business" of all media, including television, radio, print and all social media, is to capture and keep your attention. Period. ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, FOX, Netflix, *USA Today*, *NYTimes*, *Washington Post*, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, etc., ALL want the exact same thing, your eyeballs. That's the way they



make money, and to no surprise, it's a very competitive landscape, especially now.

Reed Hastings, the CEO of Netflix has said his three biggest competitors are, "Facebook, YouTube and sleep." Think about that! There are hundreds of companies, some small, but many REALLY big, that spend all of their effort and energy trying to get you to pay attention to them. And here's a little secret, fear and uncertainty keep us tuned in. That's *really* good for their business but not very good for our emotional stability. Psychiatrist Paul Conti claims, "We are living in a state of hyper-vigilant discomfort." I couldn't agree more.

So here's my question: Do you control your technology (i.e. phone, tablet, laptop, television, etc.) or does your technology control you? It's very easy, during times like this, to feel compelled to make sure we know exactly what's going on in the world. Remember though, what's happening in New Jersey or Wuhan has very little to do with you, unless you have friends, relatives or business in those locations.

My suggestion is to pick a specific amount of time, say 30 minutes, and a few select, trusted sources that can help you stay informed regarding what's happening in your particular community. Don't spend hours upon



hours watching and listening to “pundits” speculate as to when the world will end. Get what you need and move on. Remember, be selfish. This alone can have an amazingly positive influence on our blood pressure and peace of mind.

For the past several weeks I have made it a priority every morning to “delay technology.” Instead of getting up and immediately checking my phone, I go to the bathroom, feed the dogs, pour a cup of coffee, then I sit down and think. That’s all, just think. No email, no texts, no headlines. Sometimes it’s five minutes, sometimes it’s 25 minutes. My intention is to start my day by thinking about what *I want* to focus on as opposed to allowing someone else, or *something* else, to dictate my thoughts and emotions. I know this may sound a bit nutty but, if you’re willing, I suggest you give it a shot. It’s very empowering.



### Let’s Just Win the Day!

Folks that are active and fit are often goal oriented. We like to pick a race or event, develop a training regimen and then spend weeks or months preparing for “game day.”

We time, measure and control the process and environment so we can maximize our performance.

If the last three months have taught me anything it’s that there’s really not a great deal I can control right now. While I certainly don’t advocate burying your head in the sand, or curling up in a ball, I do encourage you to give yourself some grace and simply take it a day at a time. Don’t try to win the month or win the week, just try to *win the day*. Do what you can to manage the unusual nature of what we are going through and simply control the things you can. If today doesn’t work out the way you planned, no worries, just recognize that tomorrow offers you another “at bat.”

We’re all running in the same race right now. We just don’t know when it will end. That’s okay. I encourage you to manage your pace, be kind to your fellow racers and mindful of the direction you’re headed. Be sure to rely on proven strategies to improve your health and performance, and enjoy the journey.

Stay well! 



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**Todd Whitthorne** is an author, speaker and corporate wellness executive based in Dallas. He serves as the Chief Inspiration Officer for Naturally Slim and is the author of *Fit Happens!...Simple Steps for a Healthier, More Productive Life!* Todd also hosts a twice-weekly podcast, *In Less Than a Minute*, which you can find on his website, [toddwhitthorne.com](http://toddwhitthorne.com) or where else you can find and listen to podcasts.