

A few years ago, at the start of 2019, I set a huge goal: to get into the best shape of my life by the end of the year.

I had in mind a total fitness overhaul: strength, endurance, mobility, and the best diet I could eat.

How cool would it be to have it all at once? I spent a long time thinking about how to quantify “best shape of my life.” And I made a lot of plans on how I was going to do it.

And by the time 2019 was in the books...

I hadn't done a damn thing.

The pandemic in 2020 only made matters worse for my fitness (hello, fresh pasta), and by the end of the year, just before my 40th birthday, I was in something closer to the WORST shape of my adult life.

If you've ever let yourself get out of shape, you know how overwhelming it can seem to have to come back.

And if you're there now — or even if you're doing alright, but you're just not where you want to be

Then I want to help.

Because this past year, I made the comeback. A week before I turned 40, I bought a 35-pound kettlebell and a book, and started doing a short, daily practice at home.

At first I wasn't strong (at all), and I got winded easily.

But the routine stuck.

Soon, as I began to see the strength changes and the smallest of physique changes, my kettlebell practice led to slightly better diet choices.

Then a focus on improving my sleep. Then even an occasional hill workout, and eventually, to signing up for races.

And here I am now, stronger than I've ever been, and having completed a trail half marathon just yesterday (a tough one that took me 2 hours and 45 minutes!).

In other words, that "best shape of my life" picture is slowly coming into focus... in a totally different way than I had planned that it would.

Part 1: The Better Way to Set Fitness Goals

I told you about my epic failure of a New Year's resolution to get into the best shape of my life a few years back.

But there's even more failure to that story. At the end of that year — a year of doing very little in the way of physical activity — I turned 39.

I went out to celebrate with my friends at a bar, and when I woke up the next morning (feeling not quite 100 percent), I distinctly remember saying to myself:

"It would be really nice to be in better shape next year when I turn 40."

But although I did a little better than the year before, I didn't get far. Covid hit, and that made it really easy to be lazy again.

For the second year in a row, I had failed to do much of anything to get in shape.

And we all know that if you're not getting in better shape, you're probably going the other way.

Which, like a lot of people in 2020, I undoubtedly was. But at the end of that year, just before I turned 40, I had a thought — only slightly different than the one I'd had a year before — that changed everything. "What if I could be in really great shape 10 years from now when I turn 50?"

Since then, I haven't looked back. And I can tell you for certain that this year, I won't be thinking about "getting in shape," and instead I'll be celebrating all that I've managed to accomplish so far. So why did this little change make such a huge difference?

For one, it removed the pressure. A one-year path to the best shape in your life feels... well, intense.

Better get started, because the clock's ticking. Sign up for that same old gym, since it's what you know sort of works.

Redo that diet that worked really well (once).



Miss a day — or worse, get injured and miss a week — and you might as well give up. It sounds silly, but this isn't that far from how we really think.

But when I started picturing the fittest version of myself a decade from now, all of that disappeared. Suddenly I was free to think much bigger than before.

Sure, I pictured the usual stuff of fitness fantasies: lots of muscle, six-pack abs, incredible endurance.

But I also thought about flexibility and mobility, something that's been on my list to get ahead of before it's too late.

And then I thought about lifestyle. If I were to be in truly incredible shape at age 50, then what would fitness have to look like for me? Well, it wouldn't be an intense grind doing the same old stuff I've always done.



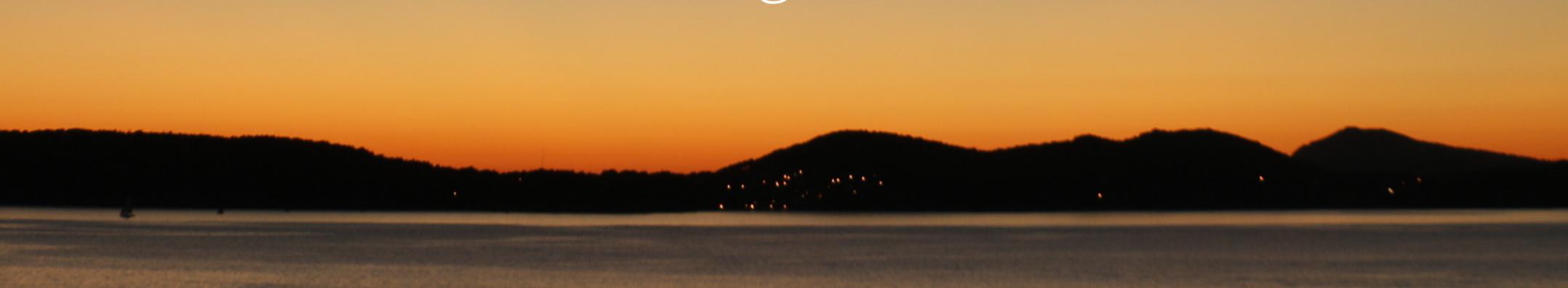
It would be new sports all the time, some hobbies that keep me in shape but don't even look like exercise, and a passion for healthy food and cooking like I had when I was brand new to a plant-based diet.

Suddenly it didn't seem at all wasteful for me to spend two months learning a new skill (my kettlebell practice) before I started to notice fitness gains.

Because when you've got 10 years, there's plenty of time for new things.

With 10 years to work with, you can even imagine all the crazy accomplishments you used to dream about: the ultramarathons, the Ironmans, the running across the country... whatever it might be for you.

The point isn't that you're going to do these things right now. In fact, it's that you're NOT going to do them right now.



But they can serve as the motivation for the steps you ARE going to take in the coming days and weeks.

Oh, and the flip side works in your favor too: when you picture the outcome of NOT paying attention to your health and fitness for 10 years, it's a lot uglier than just kicking the can down the road for another year.

Finally, the decade-long timeline did one more thing for me: it allowed me to feel like I could turn back the clock.

We all have to deal with getting older. I don't have many regrets, so I don't feel too anxious around these birthdays with a zero at the end.

But still, 40 and 50... these numbers feel different than 20 and 30.



So to imagine that when I turn 50, I could be in better shape than when I turned 40? That felt like I was beating the system somehow. And for me, that was pretty exciting. So as we approach the holidays and another new year, if you're stuck in the same cycle of hope and inaction that I was, I hope you'll consider changing your timeline to something longer. No need to wait until a milestone birthday, or even until December 31st.

Matt Frazier

