

Fit at Last

Fit at Last

LOOK AND FEEL BETTER

ONCE AND FOR ALL

Ken Blanchard

Tim Kearin



BK

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a BK Life book

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*We dedicate this book to all of you who struggle
to be as healthy as possible but run into occasional
trouble behaving on your good intentions.*

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Introduction: Keeping Your Commitment to Your Commitment

Have you ever made New Year's resolutions that you didn't keep? My experience is that all of us have had good intentions to do things over the years, yet we didn't follow through. We usually start out enthusiastic about the change, and then after a while our enthusiasm goes by the wayside. Why is that?

It's my contention that the old adage "The road to nowhere is paved with good intentions" is probably more true than we want to admit. My friend and colleague Art Turock, author of many books—including a classic on health and fitness entitled *Getting Physical*—argues that the problem stems from the difference between *interest* and *commitment*. For example, when *interested* exercisers who have started a jogging or walking program wake up and find it is raining outside, they lie back down and say to themselves, "I think I'll exercise tomorrow." However, when *committed* exercisers wake up and find it's raining, they get out of bed and say to themselves, "I think I'll exercise inside today." People who are *interested* in doing something will do it if all goes as planned—but give them a hiccup or two and they don't follow through. People who are *committed*

to do something will continue to do it, no matter what. In other words:

They keep their commitment to their commitment.

So let's get real. What have you been wanting to do for a long time but just haven't been able to accomplish? Maybe it has to do with fitness—physical activity and weight control—which I had procrastinated about for a long time. Or perhaps it's more about improving yourself on the inside or other aspects of a healthy lifestyle, and you'd like to focus on becoming more resilient, creative, generous, or empathetic. You might want to push yourself to improve your communication skills, get organized, do volunteer work, or spend more time with your family. Maybe you've been making excuses for years instead of sitting down and writing that novel or learning to speak French. This book may help you move from being *interested* in doing it to being *committed* to doing it—*no matter what*.

Beginning January 1, 2011, the Boomer generation began turning 65 at the rate of 10,000 per day. This rate will continue for 19 years. Research shows that many in this generation intend not to retire but to continue to work and play hard. Many others can't afford to retire because of unfortunate circumstances or poor retirement planning. Either way, it is imperative that adults maintain their optimal health and fitness no matter what their age.

Every year in January following a New Year's resolution, thousands of people begin an exercise program with the idea that it will change their lives forever. By the end of March, about 90 percent of those who started are no longer

participating—not because they have changed their minds about the importance of exercise, but because exercise is hard work and they are not seeing the immediate results they had hoped for. Whatever the reason, they don't follow through.

This book follows my journey from interest to commitment about my fitness. The western heroic legend of the lone wolf who succeeds at lofty goals based solely on strength of will and sharp wit is strong with many people. This “John Wayne myth” isn't dead—it's just not effective. As you'll learn, I could not keep my commitment to an effective fitness plan alone. I needed help. That help came from my coauthor Tim Kearin, a health and fitness coach who had been patient with me for many years.

Each year Tim listened to me make an announcement about what I was going to do about my fitness that year, and then he watched me not keep my commitment. Year after year we went through the same routine: Tim would receive a call from me early in the year—usually February, since I didn't want to join the New Year's resolution crowd—to begin a fitness program. I would get underway with enthusiasm, but after a month or so I would gradually become too busy to keep my commitment to my commitment. The process would start again at the beginning of the next year.

So follow along and see how Tim and I broke this ineffective cycle. I know *Fit at Last* will help you behave on your good intentions and keep your commitment to your commitment, no matter what issue you are working on.

Ken Blanchard

Coauthor, *The One Minute Manager*®

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A Joint Commitment



Ken's Story

Think about an exciting story. Doesn't it always have an interesting character who wants to make something important happen in their life, but first has to overcome conflict to accomplish the goal? Well, the interesting character in this story is me. What I want to accomplish that is important is to become fit again so I will feel better and live longer. To do that, I have to overcome conflict—my past patterns of behavior and how I dealt with the ups and downs of life.

As I tell you my story, I'm probably going to tell you more about the ups and downs of my life than you want to hear. Why? I've found that a lot of people think that because I've been fairly successful in my life, everything has gone along smoothly and all the breaks went my way. This was not always the case.

I was born in 1939 and grew up in New Rochelle, New York. My mom was a very nurturing person. Unfortunately, one of the ways she nurtured us best was by feeding us. If we were happy, we ate. If we were sad, we ate. If we were worried, we ate. Whatever

happened, we ate. One of the ways Mom self-actualized was through the food she gave my father, my sister, and me. As I grew up, I used to fantasize about being locked in our local Jewish delicatessen overnight. I can smell a piece of cheesecake a mile away.

Given that reality, you might ask—with the pattern of eating I got from my mother and my love of cheesecake—why I wasn't obese. Actually, the first 25 years of my life, even though my mom fed us well, I was pretty fit and exercised a lot. But it didn't start out that way.

I was born with flat feet. In those days, the belief was that kids with flat feet wouldn't be able to live normal lives in terms of exercise and activity, because they would get tired and need to rest. My mother accepted that belief and continually was watching that I didn't overdo things. That worked until I was six years old, when my dad put a basket in our basement and I fell in love with basketball. It became my passion. I would shoot by the hour. I led our elementary team to the city championship, played in a number of different leagues in junior high school, broke the junior varsity scoring record my sophomore year in high school, and was cocaptain of our league champion high school team my senior year. What did that mean in terms of my fitness? I was in good shape. I used to run cross-country in the fall to get ready for basketball season. So fitness and weight control were not a problem the first 18 years of my life.

When it came to choosing a college, I decided to go to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. I tried out for the freshman basketball team there and made the squad, but since I had not been recruited by Sam McNeill, the coach, he seldom played me. I remember one night when we were

playing Auburn Community College in a small band-box gym. They played a two-one-two zone defense that made it difficult to score except from the outside—my specialty. Our starting team was struggling so I got off the bench, kneeled by Coach McNeill, and said, “Put me in, Coach. I could break up this zone in my sleep. After all, I have the hottest hands in the country.” He laughed and started calling me “Hot Hands” but still didn’t play me much, although we became good friends.

Rather than realizing the potential of gathering more splinters on the bench, I decided not to go out for the team my sophomore year and instead became a cheerleader. You might think that would have been good for me, with all the gymnastics. Wrong. In those days, cheerleaders didn’t do gymnastics—and since we were the only co-ed school in the Ivy League, we weren’t allowed to have women cheerleaders. The only criteria for being a cheerleader was (1) you had to drink and (2) you had to know a lot of people. I qualified on both counts, but it didn’t do my fitness any good.

During my senior year at Cornell, Coach McNeill was promoted to varsity coach. He asked me to help coach the freshman team because we had kept in touch and he knew I understood the game. This was a thrill for me and got me reenergized about basketball.

The summer after my graduation in 1961, Margie and I began to date. Our romance blossomed that fall as I continued my studies at Colgate University, where I began a master’s degree program in sociology while Margie was finishing her senior year at Cornell.

In June 1962 after I had completed my first year at Colgate, Margie and I got married. We spent the summer honeymooning at a well-known canoe tripping camp in Algonquin

Park on Canoe Lake in Ontario, Canada. To get a snack, you had to walk uphill five miles or canoe three miles. So I returned to Colgate in probably the best shape of my life, weighing 167.

That didn't last for long, though—Margie was a great cook, and working on my master's thesis required long hours sitting in the library. My basketball coaching did help prevent a complete downward spiral, as I was asked to work with the freshman team at Colgate for the 1962–63 season.

When I was nearing completion of my master's program, I told my Student Personnel Administration mentors at Cornell that I was ready to become a dean. They suggested it would be better if I first got my doctoral degree. Through a former professor at Cornell, I was accepted into the doctoral program in educational administration there. That began my three-year Ph.D. journey.

Basketball was still a major interest, so as a player-coach I organized a team that was sponsored by Hal's Delicatessen in downtown Ithaca. We competed all over central New York against other town teams made up of former high school and college basketball players. We even got to play the Cornell freshman team as the preliminary game to Senator Bill Bradley and his Princeton Tigers' last visit to Cornell in 1964. They opened the doors for the game at 6:00, and by 6:30 they had the largest crowd in the history of Cornell: over 10,000 people poured into our arena. So all those fans had to watch our preliminary game, which we won.

While I continued to play ball, I didn't go at it with the vigor that I had when I was younger, and I began to gain weight. Why? With Hal's Delicatessen as the sponsor of our team, my fantasy of being locked overnight in a deli unfortunately began to become a reality. Hal's had the best cheese-cake imaginable.