

Play Poorly Well. How to Have *Good* Bad Days

Ken Wood, Bronson Wellness Center Personal Trainer

So you've started a new resolution to get fit and healthy. You're working out and eating better... Until you're not. Life happens. You get super busy and you're not feeling it. You have a bad day (or days).

At this point, you're at a fork in the road. You can get back on your new, healthy path... Or, you fall back to your old comfortable one. Our egos tell us that we'll jump back on our healthy one, but data and experience suggest we often quit at this point. So how do we, as golf legend Jack Nicklaus says, "play poorly well"?

Awareness. Know, and expect, bad days. Champions, in sport and life, know there will be bad shots, bad performances, bad days. It's part of the deal. Accepting this in advance lets you mentally plan for it. So when it happens, it's no big deal.

We're taught that our thinking brains guide our choices. But it's what some call our "dog brains" (*our emotional, "I want what I want", side*) that is pushing our buttons behind the scenes. By planning ahead, we control our dog brain (*our emotional response... "I blew it"*) and allow our higher brain to work. Watch for danger signs that your dog brain has sent you failure messages.

Have you ever said any of these things to yourself?

- "I'm just too busy right now."
- "It costs too much."
- "I'll try it again at a better time."

This is often our thinking brain justifying what our emotional brain saw as failure. We protect our self-esteem by coming up with reasonable-sounding justifications for giving up. **This is human!** It is no cause for blame. But knowing this, we can release our self-judgment, and shift into solutions mode.

Have a system. Your healthy resolution needs a system to support it. Small, daily actions that move you forward. Ones that are easy enough, quick enough, to turn into habits. When your day tanks, you work your system. The more you've practiced it, the more ingrained it's become and the better it sticks when you have a bad day. As author Jim Afremoh says, "Be ugly but effective".

Celebrate! When you do "Play poorly well", stopping the downward spiral, taking it from bad to okay, celebrate that! Be proud of what you did. Our minds love rewards (dog brain) and the next time a bad day starts, they will remember and repeat.

So the system is:

- Recognize and accept bad days as part of the deal. Plan for them.
- Systems. Lock in your system early, while you're still pumped up and crushing it. So it carries you when you crash.
- Celebrate.

Let's learn to have *good* bad days on the road to creating our best life!