

Top Trainer's Top Longevity Tip: No Days Off is Bad Advice

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Kelsey Heenan's struggles taught her that perfection isn't necessary; consistency is key.Â She's bringing that message, and her game face, to the Super Age Games

Despite helping hundreds of thousands of people to get fit as a top trainer, Kelsey Heenan hated cardio. Or â she used to.

âIâve been doing basketball skills training â it kind of tricks me into doing more cardio,â the 37-year old says. She hired a coach, Ed Estavan, and joins him each week for âshooting drills and dribbling drills â itâs essentially a basketball practice, but you donât have to prepare for any games.â

As a trainer to celebrities like Dan Levy and Kenan Thompson, and a featured fitness personality on Bodi (the company behind P90X), and in her own app, **Workout Buddies**, Heenan knows that to get the benefits of exercise, youâve actually got to do the work. But that doesnât mean it has to *feel* like work.

âIf you hate running, you donât have to run a marathon,â she says. âFiguring out what things feel more fun allows me to stay consistent.â

Despite the fun and consistency, Heenan, a onetime college basketball player, doesnât usually compete. If she went from skills training to pickup games or a league, sheâd risk an injury that could keep her out of her day job, where she coaches clients live and films workout videos for online clients.

“But when I read about what the Super Age Games was, I was like, “OK, this is a competition I can get behind,” she says. “It’s not about going as hard as you can and dying at the end. It’s about feeling good for the long term.”

So she signed up: At November’s inaugural Games, Heenan will join the Timeline Longevity team as a Founding Athlete.

What she’s learned: No days off is no way to get results

As she was pushing to improve as a member of Vanguard University’s basketball team, the healthy habits that helped Heenan make the team turned against her.

“When I was playing basketball in college, it was a complete jump from what I’d been doing, and I needed to work harder in order to get more playing time. I started working out more. I started trying to eat more nutritiously to be able to perform better,” she says. “It quickly spiraled into something that was completely unhealthy, and eventually turned very restrictive.”

Heenan began struggling with anorexia. Instead of spending more time on the court, she had to leave the team and enter treatment. There, she says, she learned a key lesson about her body and fitness that she now passes on to her own clients: There’s no such thing as perfect. And if there was, you wouldn’t need it, anyway.

“Now it’s a huge piece of what I communicate with the people that I work with. You don’t have to #no days off,” she says. “If we’re pushing as hard as we can every single day, it’s a recipe for injury. So a part of longevity is understanding that we do need to be healthy for the long term.”

Giving up for perfection for consistency is also crucial for her own training. With Heenan’s weekly schedule of filming workouts for her app and teaching others, she can’t always do the same number or type of exercise sessions each week. So she commits to being consistent with the essentials, performing 3-4 strength workouts per

week to build as much muscle as possible in the time she has.

“They’re usually about an hour,” she says of her strength workouts. “I love the basics, like squats, deadlifts, hip thrusts, pull-ups. I incorporate those a few days per week.”

After those key sessions, Heenan sprinkles in as much activity as she can. That can include one to two basketball skills sessions with her coach, a weekly hike in the hills around Los Angeles, and high-intensity cardio finishers to her strength workouts to build endurance and boost her VO2 Max. For these finishers, she’ll pick a handful of exercises—sometimes a trio like lunges, pushups, and dumbbell squat thrusters—and perform them as a circuit for three to five rounds of 40 seconds of work, alternated with 20 seconds of rest.

Bringing her message of consistency to the Super Age Games

Those high-intensity sessions and her consistent strength work have Heenan feeling prepared, in some ways, for November’s Super Age Games: She’s confident in her functional strength and her grip strength.

“Endurance and balance might be most challenging for me,” she says. In the gym, she says, she’ll tell herself, “OK, I need to work on my balance. Girl, you’ve got to work on that.” “This is a fun way to kickstart some of those habits.”

Improving on the Games’ key metrics, she says, is bringing out her inner athlete.

“I haven’t done a competition like this in forever, and so I think there’s a part of me that’s really excited to just do my best to give 100 percent,” she says.

As part of Team Timeline, Heenan says she’s excited to connect with her teammates, but also with other Super Agers who are trying to live better. And she wants to spread her message that showing up a little bit every day beats a big effort

that's more sporadic.

It can get overwhelming trying to create the perfect potions, take the right supplements, and all the things," she says. "For me, [longevity is] about focusing on the foundational, simple things, and doing them consistently."

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