# Your Physical Fitness Is More Important Than Your Work

*Shôn Ellerton, February 24, 2024*
*You can be the ultimate workaholic, but if you have poor physical fitness, than your work is going to suffer big time.*



OK! You've hit your mid-forties. Feel like shit half the time. Gained some weight. No energy. Pissed off with your managers. Overworked, or working excessively with the vain notion that somehow or another, that because you're working so hard, it will come across as some admirable feat.

Nobody cares. Nobody fucking cares.

And I'm going to tell you why.

Nobody else that you work for wants you to succeed above your expectations. Not really. They do it to keep you motivated and you might be rewarded with a Red Letter voucher worth fifty bucks or something ridiculously trivial. As for promotion? I've seen many others being promoted not because they've exceeded themselves, but rather of simply filling in a hole or someone new coming in to the business. You're just expected to do your job. That's a fact of life.

I made the mistake of trying to exceed myself at work by working long hours and times where I shouldn't be working. For example, weekends and evenings. I'll make a caveat here for those working for their *own* businesses, but working for others where you don't have any ownership or stake in the business? Forget it.

Now let me tell you something.

Never, ever, let get work get in the way of your physical fitness, because if you do that, your mental state will deteriorate, which, of course, will affect your work, your relationships, your family and friends, and in general, interaction with others.

Let me tell you my story.

During my last year of my civil engineering degree in London, I went on some atrociously low-caloric diet which reduced my weight from 120 kg to 90.

After having graduated, I secured a job in a lonely regional office doing civil engineering consultancy work in a regional town in England. Specifically, Ashford, Kent, a real market town with not much in the way of culture except for drinking and admiring the neighbour's cows.

I rented a shitty flat in a line of terraced housing along some god-forbidden busy arterial street flooded with those horrible bright orange street lamps. It was truly horrible.

I was single and I had time to kill. Sure, I went to work, but I hated the work. It was boring, dull, and tedious.

But I decided to make a new change to my persona. First of all, I had a hair problem. Or more specifically, I was losing it. Funny, that I can talk about this now, but at the time, I was so alarmed that I was losing my hair in my late twenties. I tried all these shitty and scam-ridden treatments that might regrow my hair. They didn't.

So, I said to myself. Screw it. I shaved all of it off.

Went to work the next day and got reprimanded by my manager that what I did was a little severe. I ignored him. But hey. He got used to it.

I went further into changing my persona.

I got into this crazy fitness regime. I started to wake up early in the morning. Jog five to seven kilometres every morning before going to work. Then went to a local gym on the high street twice a week and to top it off, went to play squash and badminton with one of the younger and fitter guys at work.

It got so far that my fitness was exceptional and I was ripped and jacked most of the time. I was so good in my gym that I was teaching circuit training classes as well. I then went on to some rugby training, which left me, unfortunately, bruised

a third of the time, leading to some awkward questioning from my superiors at my engineering consultancy. For those who have done rugby training, you know how utterly brutal it is. I didn't survive long with rugby training and gave that a miss.

I was running half marathons, weighed 75 kg, tonally trimmed, and basically being a bad-ass during circuit training. Whilst sparring with boxing gloves, I was cited as a wiry bad-ass not to be trifled with. Finally, I had a judo session on a Friday evening in a horribly small and stuffy dojo which I seldom attended because Friday's a shit day to do stuff after work which doesn't involve winding down and anyway, I was near-damned exhausted by the end of the week.

Then it was time to let loose. Friday night started off the weekend. Weekends were the time I let my hair down. Pubs, nightclubs, curry houses, that sort of thing, but hey, that's ok. Oh yes. We played hard. I had colleagues and friends come around to my rented flat. We'd down a bottle of whisky and let loose in the local pubs and clubs. Life is not fun without its vices, huh?

But doing the week, I was back into the physical fanatical lifestyle again. Not only exercise, but what I ate as well.

But it gave me a massive amount of positive energy at work as well. That feeling that I am better than most other mortals. I could conquer anything. And damned to say. I looked good as well.

I was wearing 32s trousers, wore nice-fitting suits, had that Grant Mitchell look being bald and all, and had not an ounce of fat on me. I was the dude! Any girl in that nightclub was mine, should I have opted to. But, I was too conservative fearing that I would have been considered a crude cad for attempting such an advance.

I would like to point out from my experience that when one becomes more attractive, one's expectations becomes higher as well. That's why there's this bullshit idea that if one become more attractive that they can find anyone they want. Not true, because when one works and earns that right to become more attractive through hard work and discipline, they become far more choosy in who they are looking for.

OK. So I was living this lifestyle as a late twenty-something or another. It was great, but then I thought I needed a career boost.

I moved jobs and worked for the next twenty-two years in the telco business. I won't bore you with the details, but I worked in many countries around the world in the world of building up various mobile phone networks.

I became lost in the world of one of UK's largest mobile phone networks. I was determined to make a name for myself. I wanted to be recognised. I did this. I did that. I was a brown-nose. I was highly protected towards my work. I wanted the glory.

I worked days and nights. I worked weekends. I took my laptop home or at my dad's and cranked it on, working and working.

For the next twenty odd years, I was a workaholic.

I became the European manager of data for hotspot usage for T-Mobile in Europe. I moved to Australia and worked my way up to becoming the regional manager for a business rolling out telcos in central Australia. I became the telco business development manager for another outfit after being poached.

Did a lot of travel for work. Endless number of hotel visits. Endless quantities of meals including ample time downing pints of beer and glasses of wine.

Towards 2017, it suddenly dawned upon me.

What happened to me?

I was 95 kg. I was anxious, depressed and unstable mentally. By this time, I had a family to look after as well. I was a mess.

Why?

I lost my roots of being in that state of supreme physical fitness.

After 2017, I decided to make one hell of a paradigm shift to my lifestyle. Fitness before work. It was going to be hard because, as most of us know, it gets harder and harder when you age. At fifty, I could not maintain the same level of exercise intensity as I once could. Plus, there were many other important family commitments to attend to.

But no excuses.

I changed my diet radically and then made a course correction to my physical well-being to committing myself to going to the gym on a regular basis. On top of this, I resumed some routine of jogging as well.

More recently, I re-joined the big world of martial arts, enjoying the addictive world of jiu jitsu, which I hold dearly in my heart, despite the occasional and frustrating injury.

Work, to me, is second place. In fact, it really doesn't have a place for me except to be with new and fresh people to connect with. Moreover, I enjoy mentoring others at the workplace with my skillsets, most of which, is data related.

Sure, my employer needs me to assist them with their projects. That's what they pay me for. But equally so, that's as far as it goes. They get my assistance, and they pay me accordingly. They get one-hundred percent of me for the time allotted to me. But I won't go over and beyond giving that one-hundred-and-ten percent nonsense.

My fitness comes first because without that, my efficacy is greatly reduced.

And this is something I want to talk about.

Your physical fitness is more important than complying with inflexible and strict guidelines at work which makes it difficult to spend time at the gym or attend some regular sports activity.

One usually needs to free up time to exercise around the work day, especially for those who need to contend with rush-hour traffic.

For example, I wake up early before 6, go to the gym near to work, start work at 7:30 and leave for home around 3:30. Road traffic is greatly reduced and the type of work I'm doing doesn't require me to be there between the core hours of 9 to 5. If your employer does not appreciate this and can give no logical reason why you can't work with a more flexible arrangement, give them the proverbial third-finger and look elsewhere, because, if you do not, you will become a casualty like I had become in 2017.

For those who come to work early know all about the so-called 'walk of shame', that moment when you quietly pack up to go home while the others are still working. The fact that you were there two hours before any of them makes no

bloody difference because nobody sees you there when you arrive apart from a couple of others who do exactly the same thing.

Now, in my mid-fifties, I feel fitter than I had been for the last twenty years. I'm under 80kg, got better muscle tone, go to gym regularly, do martial arts, enjoy my work, still enjoy my vices, namely whisky and wine, and feel more energetic than ever.

But the most two important things of all in order of priority before work.

First. Your physical and mental health.

Again, I reiterate. If your employer wants you, for example, to come to work at inconvenient times of the day which makes it more difficult for you to work out at a gym or some other form of exercise. Then just say, no thanks. If you'd prefer to come at an earlier time or later time, then most employers will be okay with this. Just make it clear in your own mind that your health is more important than their bottom line. In general, if you physical health is great, your mental health will improve as well. Which is great for the business as well.

Second. Your family.

Yes. That's right. Emergencies aside, your family comes second not first. Why? Because if you can't take care of yourself, you will not be able to take care of others.

To cap it off.

Why do airlines always ask you to put on your oxygen mask before helping others? There's a damned good reason for this thought process.

If you become unhealthy, how on earth will you be in a position to help others or be useful in society?

This principle is used for life, in general.