Vince Lombardi, 'Groundhog Day,' and the Pursuit of Perfection

By Russell Rawlings

What, pray tell, does legendary football coach Vince Lombardi have in common with the comedic actor Bill Murray?

The pursuit of perfection.

"Perfection," Lombardi famously stated, "is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence."

As for Murray, it wasn't what he said about perfection, it was what his character did about it in the movie "Groundhog Day."

The movie is set in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, the epicenter of this nation's annual observance of Groundhog Day. The main character, played by Murray, starts out as a thoroughly disgusting weatherman who ultimately wins the hand of his beautiful colleague, played by Andie McDowell.

Granted, this doesn't happen in real life, but for the sake of discussion and matters of health and happiness, let's look at how the fictional Phil Connors landed the girl of his dreams – how he turned the curse of living the same day over and over again into a blessing.

He began by changing his attitude. He established a goal and executed a plan. He addressed his weaknesses and eliminated his mistakes. He developed new skills and sharpened the ones he already possessed.

He pursued perfection. He built the perfect day.

While undoubtedly drawing far deeper meaning from this movie that its creators intended, I am convinced that this approach has merit. I am also convinced that you stick with what works for you, and the pursuit of the perfect day has served me well over the past 45 years in a never-ending quest to control my weight.

No two days are ever the same, but barring extreme circumstances, each day does have a beginning and an end. The time during which we are eating, drinking, exercising and working, for better or worse, is largely contained within those two points.

Our weight may well be the summation of all of the days leading up to the present, but what are you going to do about that? All of those days have come and gone, never to be lived again.

But today, whatever and whenever it may be, from the moment your feet hit the floor, is there for the taking. If things are going poorly, here's your opportunity to turn the ship around. If things are going great, keep the momentum flowing in a positive direction.

One day does not make or break a diet. But, as I have proven to myself time and time again, self-control and discipline should never be taken for granted. In other words, my autopilot has led me down the wrong grocery aisle on more than one occasion.

Vince Lombardi was right about perfection – it is unattainable. But the excellence that comes from its pursuit is a treasure unlike any other. Chase it, catch it and hold on to it for dear life.

It will serve you well.

Russell Rawlings serves as director of external affairs and communications for the North Carolina Bar Association and welcomes the opportunity to write and speak about weight and wellness.