

How Health Tech Can Transform Your Life



with guest columnist
Gracie Hunt



My Story.

To say I was born into a sports-crazed family is an understatement.

I was surrounded by professional athletes growing up – not to mention head coaches, assistant coaches, trainers, staff and executives. I spent my childhood traveling state to state, walking football stadiums, soccer fields, basketball arenas and beyond, absorbing all of the unique details of sports culture.

Sports are a way of life for my family. We work in sports. We talk sports. We schedule our lives around sports. Sports are woven throughout my family history, and they carry generational significance.

As a player, soccer was my favorite sport. My dad was my first soccer coach and playing soccer was a turning point for me. On the field, I felt powerful, unstoppable, free. The game gave me an

inexplicable feeling of purpose, and I committed to working as hard as necessary to be successful at the highest level.

My dedication was rewarded. I was named captain of my club team, and my school team won the state championship. And then suffering my fourth concussion ended my soccer career, changing the trajectory of my life.

I was devastated to lose my soccer dream after my injury, but the hard work and single-minded focus I learned on the field helped carry me to the next chapter. I'm still incredibly motivated by challenge, and this trait has been instrumental as I prepared to compete at the Miss Kansas USA competition. Pageantry has provided a perfect outlet to channel my competitive spirit and love for fitness.



Today, I'm more passionate than ever about sports, health, and fitness. I've received degrees in sports management and journalism at SMU and am currently working on a Master's in sports management at the University of Kansas. I have my nutrition accreditation and am a dedicated fitness enthusiast.

My fitness journey has allowed me to reach a healthy, strong, and maintainable lifestyle. I'm grateful for the accessibility of fitness platforms that have aided in empowering me, equipping me with knowledge, and enabling me to know my own body better. Hopefully you'll find them as life changing as they've been for me!



My Health Tech Platforms:

Today is an exciting day in fitness. More than ever before, there are products and platforms to help motivate you, help you stay consistent and track your progress along the way.

It's important to mention that everyone is different, but when it comes to a holistic health platform, one product stands out to me. In fact, I conducted my own case study to determine the best health tech product available today.

To start, I tested a Fitbit vs. an Apple Watch. I wore each product at length in a myriad of scenarios; reviewed each product's analytics; and checked the respective data against real-life health, nutrition and fitness stats. I found that, for me, Fitbit was more accurate.

I then compared two different models of Fitbit, the Versa 2 and the Charge 4, and interestingly, the Versa 2 provided more precise figures than the other.

Finally, I evaluated the winning Fitbit vs the Garmin Venu, finding the Garmin to be the king of my smartwatch study. I later introduced a Whoop strap to gain even greater insight into my overall health, sleep and recovery. I currently use both the Garmin and the Whoop.

If you're not familiar, Whoop is a smart wristband that pairs with an app, tracking a number of health and wellness touchpoints while also providing an overall picture of your body's current state. This includes registering sleep activity, monitoring physical activity, tracking recoveries, providing caloric output and even factoring in strain caused by mental, physical, or emotional stress.



I love Whoop because it helps me understand my own health in a number of contexts. If my body feels off, the platform can help me troubleshoot the underlying reason, be it disrupted sleep, poor recovery or a recurring trend, such as stress triggered by a specific source. I believe in cross training and high intensity-interval training, so Whoop is perfect for my needs.

When it comes to cardio, I'm an avid runner and my favorite



health tech product is the Garmin Venu smartwatch. The watch produces detailed, accurate run logs through Garmin's GPS tracking. Looking back at my run progress fascinates me – what months I was at my best, which locations yielded my fastest times, when my consistency ebbed and flowed – so Garmin's attention to detail is perfect for tracking my progress.

Getting my heart rate up in a spin class is always something I look forward to! I love the community that Peloton has built. They have an app with a wide variety of workouts, coaches, and classes to inspire, instruct, and help you reach your health and fitness goals.

Like Whoop and Garmin, Peloton provides analytics for tracking health and performance. But the real advantage is Peloton's ability to bring the in-studio group experience to the comfort of your home. That way, you have no excuse to find 20 minutes in your day to get moving. I promise — if you need a competitive yet enjoyable stress outlet like me, you'll love the fun and motivating atmosphere of Peloton.

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Gracie Hunt was crowned Miss Kansas USA 2021 on April 11, 2021 at B&B Live and Music Theater in Shawnee. She will represent Kansas for the title of Miss USA 2021.

How Health Tech Can Work For You:

When it comes to health and fitness, knowledge is power. Learning more about our bodies can help us understand the fitness routine that works best for us. We can use smart health tech platforms like Whoop, Garmin and Peloton to diagnose why we're not meeting our goals and then fine-tune our program to overcome those problems.

Are your workouts inconsistent? Do you struggle with motivation? Are you unsure what's working and what's not? I highly recommend exploring the world of health tech to help conquer these common fitness woes. Believe in yourself, and always remember that progress is progress.

Perhaps most convincing of all, health tech makes fitness fun!

Whoop lets you to create a competition group, allowing you to see everyone's strain output, recoveries, and sleep. This group dynamic can spark competitive juices, provide accountability and give you a tangible reason to wake up early and get to the gym.

Garmin encourages you to compete with yourself, to run farther and faster than last time. You can program it to send you motivational messages to stay focused and tackle your goals. Like Whoop, Garmin also has an option to connect with friends to challenge each other and monitor one another's progress.

Peloton provides the perfect ride, inside perfect conditions, with vivid outdoor imagery and music. On-demand and live instructors guide you through dynamic workouts that will get your body moving. The music will keep your legs going whether you're on a bike or the tread. And seeing how you're performing compared to friends will inspire you to keep moving.

Ultimately, no product will solve your fitness problems on their own. You'll need to put in consistent hard work to reach your goals. But I would encourage you to seek out a platform that sounds right for you and test it for yourself. If the product makes your workouts more consistent, dynamic and fun, I'd say that's worth the investment. Because an investment in your health can transform your body and mind, empowering you to feel strong, confident and ready to take on the world. ■