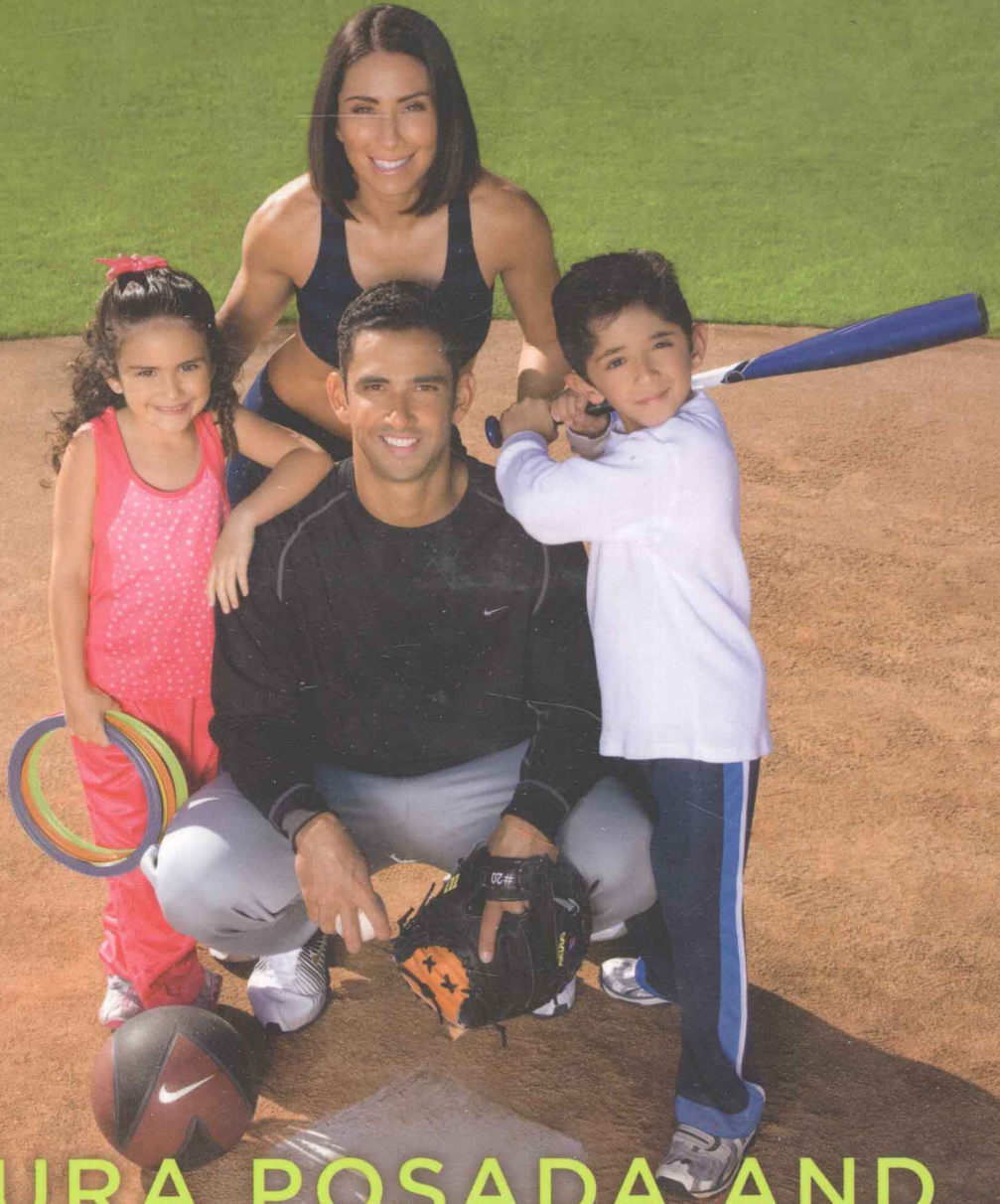


Fit Home Team

The Posada Family Guide to Health, Exercise,
and Nutrition the Inexpensive and Simple Way



**LAURA POSADA AND
JORGE POSADA**

Foreword by *BERNIE WILLIAMS*



DISCARD

Laura Posada and Jorge Posada

**FIT
HOME
TEAM**

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Photography by Chris Fanning

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FIT HOME TEAM





This book is for our children, Jorge Luis and Paulina, the two reasons that we want to be the best that we can possibly be. They are our future and a reflection of us, in the same way that we, too, are mirrors of our own parents.

Both of us come from strong families with marriages that have lasted for more than forty years, fathers who toiled long and hard but always pushed us to be the best; and mothers who always had a warm home-cooked meal waiting for us when we returned from a day at school, or after our games and practices—dicing the onions small enough day after day so that we wouldn't complain. Their love for us was truly endless, just as ours is today for our own.

Thank you, dear parents, for driving us all over Puerto Rico in pursuit of baseball, softball, and volleyball games and every other sporting event in which we decided to participate. It was always a blessing to see that smile on the sideline, even when we struck out or missed a serve. No matter what, we always felt like we were your little champions. We only hope you know that you were also ours.

Foreword

by Bernie Williams
of the New York Yankees

If there is any one thing about baseball that I can say with 100 percent assuredness, it is that the individual is only as good as the rest of his team, and that the group dynamics of any successful team essentially ride on all of the players' ability to collaborate unconditionally. There is a very special strength in the collective force, a sense of empowered unity born directly from the might of a group and its strong determination to prevail victorious. One of the most remarkable things about Jorge Posada, my longtime teammate and close friend, is his ability to apply this lesson about group dynamics to the very place where it matters most—*home*.

Instead of preaching to their son and daughter about the importance of fitness, Jorge and his wife, Laura, themselves participate in their children's experience of exercise—teaching the kids by example and, more important, creating a healthy and productive forum that fosters quality family time. In this way, they not only perpetuate an atmosphere of everyday well-being and vigor but they also instill a sense of personal and collective accountability in the form of fun.

Given the epidemic of obesity among children in the United States, the Posada family approach is one to admire and should also be one to inspire. After all, here is a family who understands firsthand the power of overcoming disease, having endured an eight-year battle with their eldest son's illness, craniosynostosis, a rare condition of the skull. With lionlike courage, the Posadas looked the disease dead in the eye and, with their strong determination, were able to overcome it. But they did not stop there: they consciously decided to make their

household one that cherishes wellness above all else, and have since dedicated themselves to this noble pursuit.

In baseball, the catcher is the one who sees everything happening on the field, a vantage point that provides a unique sense of perspective like no other. Jorge Posada, our esteemed catcher and friend, knows this better than anyone else, using his own perspective on life and its tribulations as tools for a greater good. Together with his wife and children, they teach us the power of being strong individuals, and even more so, the unwavering force of their strength as a team.



Introduction

When our son was just a tiny little baby, barely able to get himself from point A to point B, we used to (with no regard for our home décor) turn our living room into a sort of crazy funhouse-like obstacle course for him, a microworld of colors, shapes, sizes, challenges, activities, and surprises; each turn heralding a new challenge for our son, and each challenge teaching him something new about mobility, coordination, balance, and many more attributes that would become paramount in our teachings as parents. Little Jorge Luis was entranced by the playful trajectory that we carefully laid out before him, and we, as parents, remained transfixed watching him, at his desire and motivation to get through the game. We saw it as the finest quality time, enriched by the possibility of stimulus, education, and creative activity for our son; plus, it kept *us* on our toes about new and fun ways to entertain him. Those early months and years taught us time and again the invaluable lesson that every moment with one's children is an opportunity to impart some kind of wisdom. That cardinal rule has become the crux of our mission as parents, and so our time together as a family has evolved into a dynamic lifestyle of activities, games, laughs, and delicious food—the building blocks of what great memories are made of and also the building blocks of what strong, healthy kids are made of . . . which is exactly what *Fit Home Team* is all about.

We wrote this book mostly as a testament to our firm belief that our health and our families are perhaps the most important things humans have; and because we believe that, through our experience as this family, we have fine-tuned an interesting

balance of health, happiness, and the consistent and collective pursuit of optimal wellness—all through the eyes of our unshakable appreciation for life.

You see, things were not always so rosy: there was a time when we were not sure if our son was going to survive a rare craniofacial condition when he was only a few months old. We can tell you from the bottom of our hearts that putting a baby on an operating table is no easy task. We suffered in uncertainty for many years, and spent many a night not knowing what the next day would bring, if our eldest son would be able to have a normal life, if he would always be afflicted with some kind of pain. But nine years and eight surgeries later, our son prevailed and has fully recovered, growing up into a little warrior of a person—smart, sharp, loving, and strong. We feel it is precisely this blessing that inspires our own gratitude for life, and because of this special miracle, we have dedicated our own lives to raising the healthiest, happiest kids possible. In fact, by having to stay indoors so much in the early phases of his illness, we were forced as parents not only to come up with creative ways to keep him active and entertained but also with the challenge of having to get resourceful about our own workouts. We got ideas from each other, from the various things we had around the house, and even from the physical therapy exercises we picked up for our son as he worked through his recovery to rehabilitate the left side of his body. In this way, what we once considered to be our tragedy transformed itself into our total sense of healing and wellness—for all of us.

Fit Home Team for us represents the power of group effort for the sake of strong lives, and it is our pleasure to bring our

passion, experience, and insights to you. With this book we aim to show you how optimal health begins at the root level, with the basic elements of food and fitness at the base of that root—and with your family as the fundamental core of that base. This book is an impassioned invitation to get creative about your approach to total family wellness. It asks you to redefine your conventional sense of fitness, fun, and food by always putting *family* right next to all three words in your mind *and* day-to-day group reality. It aims to inspire you into a new attitude of collective wellness—one based on the principles of resourcefulness, motivation, creativity, love, and positivity.

One of the most disconcerting (not to mention tragic) phenomena we have noticed in this country is the obesity epidemic, especially among children. It is as if the whole nation has been sitting idly by as its children gorge themselves on junk, not knowing that there are healthy, and even tasty, alternatives; not knowing that *exercise* does not have to mean walking a treadmill tediously for an hour or begrudgingly jogging around the block. According to the Office of the Surgeon General, the prevalence of obese adolescents has nearly *tripled* in the last two decades, and overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. Worse, the risk factors involved in excess weight include heart disease and related conditions such as high blood pressure and cholesterol, which can lead to more grave problems down the line, including (but not limited to) premature death, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, stroke, gallbladder disease, respiratory dysfunction, gout, osteoarthritis, and certain kinds of cancers. Why would anyone tamper with their bodies and invite anything on this horrendous list?

When we begin to understand the concept of wellness as a two-headed beast, we begin to crack the code of optimal health. One of the heads represents fitness and exercise; the other, nutrition. The two work symbiotically, and when mastered in tandem, they can yield life-changing results.

Let's start with one head at a time. We see the pursuit of fitness tracing back to the ancient Greeks, who made it a defining tenet of their culture and philosophy. So why not get with the Greeks, and think of it this way: balance, coordination, strength, and flexibility—these are all words we associate with fitness. But aren't these also words that extend beyond the scope of exercise and fitness into a broader realm of health and wellness? Shouldn't we all aim to be more balanced, coordinated, strong, and flexible—be it on a sports field, in a relationship, or on the job? Today the gamut of exercise is opened up to all kinds of fun-filled possibilities, and so, as parents, our ability to keep our families active has become easier, more dynamic, and more exciting.

We will not only give you tips and suggestions about what kinds of activities to plan for your kids; we will also help you to *rethink* the possibilities, by looking at basic principles, such as the seasons, to help get your juices flowing. We will show you that you don't need much to keep the family active—and that all you really *do* need is a little creativity, determination, and the desire to improve as individuals and as a group.

But, as we know, fitness is only one half of the whole—food and nutrition being the other elemental half, and one that matters critically in your mission to run a healthy home. We will start from scratch with regard to nutrition—emptying refrigerators and cupboards of those items that have no role in

our master plan of optimal health, and learning how grocery shopping with kids can be a fantastic opportunity to educate them about their food. We will share how to make the entire life cycle of food a collective experience, with tips like family trips to farms, where you can pick your own produce as a team, and the always gratifying act of planting and caring for an herb garden at home together. Finally, we will look at healthy, quick, kid-friendly recipes that are easy on Mom and Dad and still bring on the smiles.

The bottom line is this: Kids learn from example—it's not “do as I say” but instead “do as I do.” If they see families who are healthy, active, joyful, and generally well, they will know that healthy lifestyles are a good thing. They will mimic. They will copy. They will imitate. That's why we, more than anything, need to *lead by example*. Plant the seeds of wisdom now, and your family will flourish into a group of strong, vibrant, powerful individuals—all fueled by the same desire to live well.

So we invite you to embrace our mantra—healthier families equal stronger individuals—and let the games and the gourmandizing begin.

Jorge and Laura Posada are not the kind of parents who say to their children, "Do as I say." Their parenting mantra instead is, "Let's do it together," and the Posadas have always made good nutrition and fitness a core element of their family lifestyle. *Fit Home Team* is their formula for getting parents and kids off the couch, arming families with key tools for optimal health, wellness, and overall balance by offering:

- **A simple guide to eating right**
- **Nutrition-packed kid-friendly recipes**
- **Tips for taking the "work" out of "working out"**
- **Inexpensive seasonal activities for staying fit**
- **An easy-to-follow family progress chart**

Sixteen percent of children age 2 to 19 are obese. To help face down this tragic national health crisis, the Posadas bring together everything they have learned from sports and athletics, along with caring for their own family, giving parents a complete lesson in fitness, nutrition, and the power of family unity, all at the same time. *Fit Home Team* is a durable lifestyle change that helps families get fit and *stay* fit.