

Mental Toughness

As Socrates once said the beginning of all wisdom is the definition of terms. So what is mental toughness? Mental toughness is the ability to drive forward and accomplish your intentions in spite of opposing forces – be they internal ones like fear /anxiety, or an external force such as a person opposing you. Fear is usually the main “opposing” force.

What is fear?

Fear is the name we have given to a “bad” emotion that we all experience from time to time. But what is it really?

But how do we know that fear is a bad thing? Let’s talk about this for a moment. It’s a very interesting topic.

How do you know that feeling that you have in your body when you’re in danger is a bad emotion? Who told you? Society? TV? Movies? Your parents? How do you know it’s a bad emotion? Are you sure it’s a bad emotion?

You probably agree that when you’re facing danger, you should feel something. By nature, by evolution... You are supposed to feel something. Long ago even in the caveman days, having the gut-level response to danger helped make sure that we could get away from the danger much faster than if we simply tried to logically process our situation and then take action... but what if what we call fear, is actually not something bad at all?

People are always talking about fear as if it’s a bad thing and what it means if you “have fear” and how we |should| or shouldn’t react to “fear”.

But in reality, anything our body feels is simply a message to do something... To take some form of action. That’s the only reason we have these kind of feelings at all. The problem really starts when people start to look at fear as a bad thing and then freeze because they think it’s bad, and they shouldn’t be feeling it, and so on.... Once you start to realize the secret... that these feelings are simply an indicator to take action – to do something PREFERABLY intelligent – fear is not something to be “feared” at all.

In fact, that adrenaline dump that accompanies massive and sudden “fear” is unparalleled in enabling you to run faster, hit harder and choose the most effective counter attack in the fastest possible way.

So allow yourself to feel fear. It’s not something to be scared of after all, now is it?

Since this is being considered in the context of defending yourself and your family, the concept of mental toughness you can use immediately is to exert your force of will. The way to do this is covered here.

The first thing to consider in this light is...

Moral Authority

When you feel that you are in the path of “the right”, that you are the one that is “right” in a situation. That you are on the side of the “good”, that you are the one that is morally superior in this situation, you will be imbued with a sort of superior mental mindset, and with that comes the intention to act in spite of any situation, and speak and move commandingly, so that people follow your will. This is not the end-all be-all of mental toughness, but it is a massive factor in controlling a situation and having the outcome shape to your will.

How do you have moral authority? Do what is right.

If you are just walking with your family down the street, and someone tries to rob you, there is no question you are not in “the wrong” in this situation, no matter what the excuse someone may try to confuse you with. (You walked into my turf, now you must pay”, etc.)

Act righteously. Put your family behind you and the attackers first, and then, if possible, talk your way out of the situation, and if that’s not going to be an option, defend yourself, and your family physically.

You are only doing what is right.

Always try to talk your way out of a situation, as the attacker probably really down’t want to be hurt physically, and that is what he/she is in for if they attack you. Save everyone the unnecessary pain if at all possible.

Next up...

Tenacity

Tenacity is a basic undercurrent of mental toughness. Some people even say it is the same thing, and in some situations, it is. But it’s more of a fundamental principle of mental toughness. If you have the habit of always being tenacious about DOING what’s right, you will have a mental position of being unswayable in doing what is right, whether that is finishing a project you took responsibility for, or protecting yourself and your family.

How To Develop Tenacity

1. Track your progress. What gets measured gets improved. Buy a notebook, write a column on the left with the things you want to do everyday, and put a checkmark beside them every time you

do it. Look at it everyday. It feels great to build a chain of unbroken progress, and horrible to break the chain. This will allow you more progress than you might imagine – if you want a FREE web-based resource for doing this - <http://www.42goals.com> is fantastic, well designed and extremely easy to set up and use consistently.

2. Be consistent. Do you exercise? (You should, for energy, productivity and health reasons not just safety and tenacity) - Don't miss a workout, especially when you don't feel like doing it – that can be when you receive the greatest benefits. – See the Family Fitness bonus or the Family Defence Fitness Program for more information. Being in a state of prime physical fitness gives you logical reasons for having a mentally confident state also.
3. Work on the highest things first. Whether in life or in business – whatever the biggest, most important thing you can possibly do is... do that. It keeps you focused on what is important, what is the best thing you can do, and builds the habit of always doing the most effective and important thing. It makes it so much easier to decide with lightening quick confidence that the reaction you have to the situation you are presented with is the right one and to take action on it without a seconds' hesitation.
4. Set goals and work on them consistently. I'm not talking about the New-Year's resolutions kind of thing that almost no-one continues with after 30 days.

Have some simple, very achievable goals and make even the tiniest bit of progress on them daily. Don't start with something like "lose 100 pounds" or "make a million dollars", unless you already have a very proven track record of setting and reaching goals already.

It is just like a muscle to train, and it doesn't come about any easier than a physical muscle's ability to lift a large weight. I'm talking about steps smaller than baby steps.

If you want to meditate for an hour a day, but don't do it with any consistency at all right now, set a goal to do it for 3 seconds a day... And after you've been doing it for about a month, you will have deeply ingrained habits. Once you have the habit, increase it to something like two minutes a day. After another month of that, increase it to something you feel comfortable with.

The point is you need to build the habit first, and you want to make that a smooth and as easy as possible.

Succession is the key here.

It's like those huge metal chains you see holding gigantic cruise liners to the dock. One person can't lift one of those links and move it from the boat to the dock as is. What they do is throw a thin rope, someone catches that and pulls it in, and attached to that rope is a small chain, which is attached to a thicker chain, which eventually pulls that giant metal chain which is strong enough to hold the boat there. Habits are built the same way. Start small, or else they will drift away.

Emotional self-control

For many people, this isn't a problem, but some people feel they aren't in control of their emotions. To get over this, you simply need to understand that you are in control of most of your emotions most of the time, and practice putting this into action.

Right now, you have 3000 emotions inside you, and believe it or not, it's been proven that you can pull out and experience anyone of them anytime. You are not a slave to your environment unless you choose to be. Aside from someone with serious mental sickness, you can control your emotions after only a few seconds of feeling them, and usually, before they manifest.

This manual isn't meant to be therapy. If you are mentally troubled, or depressed. Go see a good, professional psychotherapist. But before you run to the land of pharmaceutical solutions, give "talk therapy" a try. A talk with a professional that you really get along with, can give you solutions that are very helpful to you.

As for responding emotionally to a situation, realize that someone can't "make" you mad. All they can do is act in a way you believe to be contrary to your personal beliefs and value system – contrary to what you believe is the right way to act, and then you decide that you don't like that, and you should feel mad. It's simply a learned behavior, that can, with practice, be un-learned.

I'm not saying you shouldn't feel sad when a relative passes away or something like that. It's genuinely an event of loss, but you decide how you are going to react to it, be it sad for an hour or a year, to dwell on it in suffering, or to be grateful for what that person have given to you and the world, and you can decide to help others move on, and carry on honoring this person's legacy, kindness, virtues, etc.

Be able to handle Pressure

This is a gradual process of acclimatization to situations in which you currently PERCEIVE pressure. Be it speaking in front of large groups, or going to talk to a stranger you feel attraction towards at the coffeeshop in front of many other people.

Again, you feel this pressure because of the meaning you've attached to it, so letting that go solves this problem, but if you haven' reached that stage yet... gradually acclimating yourself to situations that hold pressure for you will build your confidence BECAUSE you will know that you have faced this situation and these feelings before and moved forward in spite of them. So go talk to that stranger... It's ok, you're not a kid anymore.

Give that speech. Ask your "silly" question in front of a group, and if some of these things are too hard for you at first – again – take baby steps. Go talk to some clerks working at the clothing store or to a barista at the coffee shop that is being paid to talk to you and be nice to you, and see if you can make them smile or laugh or make their day a little brighter.

This will not only make it easier to do what you are trying to do, but help you be more dynamic in the face of uncertainty.

Affirmations and Visualization

This one may seem a little “out there” for many people, but it has been proven thousands of times over in the most rigorously controlled scientific studies. It is no longer in the realm of pseudo-science, but rather, cold, hard, clinical fact.

Olympic athletes – who compete at such a high level that fractions of a second often if not usually determine who goes home with millions of dollars and their face on the breakfast cereal boxes and who goes home with relative obscurity... they all spend over 50% of their practice time visualizing themselves performing their actions instead of actually performing them. They wouldn't do this if it wasn't proven to be the most effective training method known in the world, so do it.

Visualize yourself reacting quickly, effectively, and with complete confidence to any unexpected situation. If you don't know what a confident reaction looks like – watch a few James Bond movies, or some action movies in which the hero acts in a calm confident way to master the situations thrown upon him or her.

Affirmations are simply a verbal form of visualizations. Not nearly as powerful, but still effective. Use only positive words, and keep it short – start with only 10 seconds of affirmations a day until you have the habit. You must use only positive words. Don't say “I don't crumble under pressure” rather say it in its positive opposite phrasing. Say: “I always step up and perform in the highest and most inspiring way possible when challenged.”

That's it. These secrets may seem simple, and they are. That's partially why they are secrets. Many people believe it can't be that easy. But it is. It does take work though. Do these things consistently and you will have impeccable mental toughness.

Read and re-read this manual over and over again until it's ingrained in your memory and actions.

Often, coming from a place of so much mental confidence and toughness with dissuade anyone from messing with you as soon as they get the inclination to try, and if there will be unavoidable violence, it will help you in more ways than most physical toughness training (although again, that helps).

Now you know.

Practice, practice, practice.

Frank Bell