

MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Your ability to not give in to fears, setbacks, or circumstances.

WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

LOW

Athletes at low levels will:

- Often make excuses for their mistakes or shortcomings.
- Only focus on the past and don't plan for the future.
- Give up when they are challenged or have to try a different approach.
- Often give in to fear of failure or simply cannot cope with pressure or pain.

HIGH

Athletes at high levels will:

- Display higher levels of persistence and grit.
- Avoid making excuses and find a way to adapt to the situation no matter what hurdles they see.
- Work toward greatness and not perfection.
- Rarely give in to pressure and can push past pain or pressure to excel.

HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

Coaching Tips

- **Connect Your Athletes to Their "Why":**
 - ✓ Understand that athletes will go through more hardship and pain when it is tied to a meaningful long-term goal.
 - ✓ At the beginning of the season, agree on a team purpose. Then reinforce that message throughout the season.
 - ✓ Reinforce optimism toward reaching long-term goals as a key driver of mental toughness.
- **Train in Unpleasant Conditions:**
 - ✓ Intentionally train in crummy weather, loud conditions, etc. to have athletes work through tough times.
 - ✓ Focus on training your athletes' minds that they can overcome. Tell them that the human mind is designed to avoid danger and seek protection. Training in tough environments helps overcome this instinct.
 - ✓ Stress the importance of planning for any condition they may experience in a game situation.
- **Do One Hard Thing Every Day:**
 - ✓ Encourage your athletes to practice mental toughness outside of practice (e.g., taking a cold shower, stepping out of their comfort zone socially or academically, going one week without processed foods, no social media).
 - ✓ Stretch your athletes a little more each practice so they can continually build their grit.
- **Reframe Negative Thoughts into Positive Outcomes:**
 - ✓ Stress a hyper-focus on the task at hand so that athletes have mental clarity without distractions.
 - ✓ Have athletes pay attention to daily bad habits that steal mental strength, such as feeling sorry for themselves, not letting go of things they can't control, or giving up easily in class or anything else.
 - ✓ Let your athletes know that mentally strong people don't give away their power by playing the victim.
 - ✓ Encourage your athletes to find the silver lining in hardships so they can refocus negativity into positivity.

Talking Points

- Discuss what daily habits each athlete is trying to break or create to increase mental toughness.
- Share examples of how the greats in your sport have showcased their mental toughness.
- Discuss how your athletes can build grit by becoming adaptable and letting go of things they can't control.
- Discuss the benefits of mental toughness in all phases of life... sports, school, work, relationships, etc.

Tools

- APP Lessons: Mental Toughness
- CORE Elements: Mental Toughness, Competitive Drive, Composure
- PRESSURE Elements: Self-Doubting, Short Fuse, Impatient

"I don't count all my sit-ups. I only start counting when it starts hurting because they're the only ones that count."
– Muhammed Ali, Boxing Legend –