

3E Team Huddle Sheet

Mental Toughness

Get The Team Thinking

"Champions have to have the skill and the will. But the will must be stronger than the skill."

- Muhammad Ali, *Boxing Great*

**Write this or one of your own on a board*

Get The Team Talking

1. Explain that being mentally tough means having focus, grit, and a never quit attitude when faced with an obstacle. Athletes who are mentally tough find ways to change their plan when things get rough.
2. Mentally tough athletes have a **vision** for what they want to accomplish and do not quit until they get it.
3. Ask the team "Who are the mentally toughest people in the world?" or "What is the mentally toughest job?"
 - o Often people say surgeons, military people such as Navy Seals or Special forces - after all they operate in life and death situations
4. What are some characteristics of mentally tough people in pressure situations (write these on the board)
 - o Ability to control emotions, ability to stick with it when things get tough, flexible and willing to adapt, persistence, positive attitude, vision for success, confidence, etc

Make It Relevant

1. Share a story of a time where a mentally tough athlete played a key role in a win or a loss or a mentally tough person overcame a tough situation. If you don't have anything use the example on the following page
2. Explain that mental toughness is a skill that can be built over time. If you find that yours is lacking, there are several steps that you can take to improve your mental toughness. Mentally tough teams are a nightmare for their competitors because they never quit or back down.

Get Better Every Day

1. After you share your mental toughness story stop and ask the team to share their own examples of mentally tough athletes or people. A great comeback story in sports is usually a good example.
2. Ask the team for ideas of what they can do to build mental toughness both as individuals and as a team:
Some things to look for...
 - o Train your athletes to do something hard or unpleasant every day to build toughness- extra reps, take a cold shower, no snacks between meals etc. This will up their tolerance for "pain"
 - o Train in tough situations - noise, bad weather, etc. Maintaining a laser focus when tired so they can triumph when things get tough. Part of this is learning to plan for the unexpected.
 - o Reframe negative thoughts into positive outcomes. Recognize what they can control (attitude, effort and how they treat others) and stay focused on the task at hand. Let go of the other stuff.
 - o Visualize success. See the goal and encourage them to remember why they are there.
3. Adopt a "next play" attitude when something bad happens. Forget about the past and focus on what is next.

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..... *Mental Toughness*

Huddle Meeting - Story Sample

Noah Lowry was an all america pitcher at Pepperdine University and the San Francisco Giants drafted him in the 1st round of the 2001 MLB draft. In 2005 he started the year 7-0, the longest win streak of any pitcher in Giant history. He also has one their best ERA's ever over a stretch of 3 years.

While he was a great player and had tons of fans, his 5 year career was known to be injury prone. He often talks about how his father taught him that he can overcome and persevere when things are not going well. However, he also talks about when he was in high school and college, he really struggled with confidence in baseball and just in general with his personal life.

Noah explains that in his mind, he had to live up to all the big expectations that people put on him. That contributed to the extra pressure that he felt and put on himself, but he did not realize it at the time that it was all in his mind. He battled through it in high school and did well enough to make a college team. In college, his coaches saw that the talent was there but he struggled as a starter first couple years. He got pulled as a starter his sophomore season and it had a huge negative impact on his confidence.

At that point, he had this self awareness moment. He realized that he had to change something. His way of thinking and his approach to training were not helping. He decided to let go of the thought that he had to live up to others expectations and began training differently to try to build his confidence. His coach gave him another chance to start his junior year and with this new more confident mindset, he went out pitched to a 14-2 record. He continued to build confidence and had success.

What changed? He did not change much physically. His coaches didn't change. The ball is the same. This distance to the plate is the same. That opponents are the same. He says that the main difference was his thinking and approach that increased his confidence.