

Building Mental Toughness

Mental fortitude is a necessary element of success. **Mental fortitude** is defined as the ability to focus on and execute solutions when in the face of uncertainty or adversity.

We are what we think we are, its true to this day. 25 years after graduating Marine Corp. bootcamp I still know when I walk into a room I am the toughest man in that room. Why does every Marine believe that? What is the difference between you and I mentally? As soon as we arrive at bootcamp the mental toughness (some say brainwashing) drills begin. We are rushed off a bus onto yellow footprints in the middle of the night while drill instructors start to tell us how worthless we are and that we don't have what it takes to be a Marine. As bootcamp progresses they continue to break us down until we know we are worthless. Then it happens, they start building us up with slogans like "Marines don't die, we just go to hell to regroup" or "one shot one kill, prepared to die but never will" and "Marines never quit, they never surrender" the drill instructors force us to identify as Marines, the toughest fighting force on the planet. Thats just one aspect of the mental reshaping that happens another aspect is our physical conditioning, and constant training to reenforce our mental toughness. Our drill instructors push far beyond anything we thought we were capable of. When we don't think we can do one more rep they force us to get that rep. Do you have to become a Marine in order to have mental toughness? No you don't, but you do have to train your mind to be tougher and constantly reinforce it for it to grow.

5 tips and tricks to building mental toughness

1. One more rep! Seems easy enough but this is where elite athletes set themselves apart from average gym goers. Look at Ben Fraser, CrossFit games champion, Fittest man on earth. He seeks out daily in his training, "What am I bad at? How can I pound this weakness until it is a strength?". It is easy to give up on things we aren't good at, it's easy to not do that last set or that last rep but it's there where we find out our mental toughness. Can we do one more rep or are we quitting on the last rep? Before doing that next set tell yourself you are going to finish it no matter what because your approach is how you will achieve success. If you walk up to the bar doubting yourself or giving into the "I worked all day I am tired" or whatever the excuse is that day, you have to push it out of your mind and fill it with "I GOT THIS SET!"
2. Create a habit! Creating a habit is life changing. Creating a good habit born from discipline is even better. Building mental toughness while building a habit gives power to both. It can be as easy as reading your bible for 5 minutes a day, eating 1 serving of vegetables at every meal, going for a daily walk, you name it and you can turn it into a way to build discipline which builds mental toughness.
3. Be productive! During the stay at home order its easy to watch Netflix all day and lay around and do nothing. This type of behavior leads to mental weakness and self loathing. Why? As humans we are wired to work and to work hard. That's why so many people find the gym to be a therapy session after a long day of sitting in a cubicle working on a computer. While you are home make a daily to do list (could be the start of your next habit) putting items on it you like, don't like, things you hate but know they need to be done. Your list can be: Home workout, Chores, cooking, your habit that you're creating, play time with the kids, alone time with your spouse, shopping items and so on. The more intentional you are at completing the list the greater reward of satisfaction you will receive

4. Taking Control! Giving in and giving up are very destructive to your Mental toughness. When we feel overwhelmed by something we start to talk negative to ourselves, saying things like, I will never be strong enough, or smart enough to take control. So we need to go on the offensive. We need attack what's overwhelming us. We can start by identifying the main conflict in us that's holding us hostage. Here are a few possible reasons why it is hard to take control: it could hurt someone else's feelings like disciplining your children or speaking up in a relationship, being afraid to fail, lack of knowledge, believing you don't have the ability to take control of it. Once the reason is identified it becomes easier to take control of the situation and will lead you to victory. Now victory doesn't mean the problem is solvable. It means you have done everything you can to understand the problem and have taken action to remedy it.
5. Be responsible! Learning to accept responsibilities for your actions, being accountable for your actions, and taking ownership of your actions builds mental toughness. I remember being a kid and my mom would ask if I had done something I wasn't supposed to, my first instinct was to lie. Even when I knew beyond a doubt that she knew I was guilty I would still try to lie to get out of it. While in the Marines I learned those hard lessons of lying and that no matter what the situation was it always ended up being better by taking responsibility and owning up to it (taking the punishment as well). Eventually it became easier, being honest and accepting the consequences because I could hold my head up high. I could be proud of who I was. When you take responsibility for your actions you are building your character and how those around you see you.

