

Mental Toughness

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In wrestling we learn through physical conditioning to become physically tougher through the sport. You learn to work through pain, muscle soreness, and fatigue. In essence you become a tougher person through the sport of wrestling by never quitting. By definition the word toughness means strong and resilient and able to withstand great strain without tearing or breaking. Wrestlers that endure are tough by definition, so the next step is to turn this physical toughness into mental toughness to optimize one's potential on and off the mat.

Everyone goes through life with adversity and strain. Coping with these life adversities can make the difference between optimizing not only your wrestling performance, but your life. Remember in your life and wrestling the phrase "If its gonna be its up to me" holds true. You are ultimately in charge of your life successes and or failures on and off the mat. So let's cover the proven methods to help you stay mentally tough in the sport of wrestling and then you can apply them to all aspects in your life as well.

Mental toughness is a learned skill that can be acquired through habit and practice. It involves using your mind to achieve victory over your environment. Mental Toughness is essentially giving yourself the right messages in critical times stress, hence allowing you to withstand great strain without breaking. Losing composure or breaking during a long practice or tough workout is never a good idea. I suggest wrestlers never lose control of themselves in practice or a match as this is not a habit of developing composure. Swearing and throwing punches are a sign of breaking and a loss of composure and control. In essence they are a sign of breaking. This is something I heavily discourage. The idea is to develop your ability to handle more physical stress and strain while maintaining composure. Being able to withstand great strain and/or pain on the mat without letting it distract you from your goal is essential characteristic to success on the mat and in life. There are many things that could come into play during a match to add strain or cause a mentally weaker opponent to become distracted. The key to remember is that while nothing is ever perfect; you can just keep on going for excellence in your own life. You may have poor officiating, a coach who doesn't know how to keep quiet, or your girlfriend may break up with you. Coping with these experiences is mainly a matter of attitude. You can either dwell on them and blow them out of proportion to their significance, or you can accept them and work and work on things within your control. Your reactions to these events are entirely up to you. Think positively and know that you can perform well despite distraction. Sometimes just having a sense of composure and control of your thoughts is half the battle and can give you extra confidence when you come to the next stressful event.

You can develop this confidence that will allow you to face pain and struggle with the resilience of an ancient gladiator. Remember to keep in mind the following:

Use only positive statements in your personal affirmations: Change thoughts of "I can't" to "I can", never allow yourself negative self-talk while training, change from "I have to" to "I want to" thinking. Through positive thinking and suggestion say to yourself "I feel good" or "I can feel energy pouring into my limbs" you can overcome times in the match or competition when you feel sluggish. Never run away from a wrestler who may be better than you, they will only bring out the best in you. Correct your mistakes and don't protect yourself from mistakes. Analyze your losses and mistakes learn from it and move on. Don't take losses or criticism personally. Your identity in life is much more than that of a wrestler. Being a wrestler just enhances your identity in life by making you one of the toughest individuals on the planet! Realize that life is not always fair and that success will not come easy. Always have a purpose in your actions. Come to practice with a purpose what do I want to get out of it. If you come to practice, the classroom, or almost any situation in life with a purpose, it is much easier to stay focus when distracts come into play. You will know what you want to get out of it and then make actions to ensure that there is a purpose to every event. I have my wrestlers write down at least one goal of what they want to get out of practice everyday. Not only does this give them a purpose and make them more accountable for their success in that practice, it gives them mental confidence. No matter what happens in that practice they will come away from that practice knowing they added at least one more weapon in their battle armor. If you practice daily never ending in your improvement in your wrestling and in life you will become more confident in yourself.

Again a lot of mental toughness training is learned through training. Your mind is an evolving sporting machine, much of the process of growing tough is in the process of organizing the vast chaos in life and turning it into an organized useful action. So next time you are feeling down or have a low motivation before practice use your positive thoughts and think of all the good in your life to overcome those obstacles. Even using body language can help. Put on a smile, walk straight, shoulders back, head up, get in a position for the neurons in your brain to think positive. Many elite athletes use acting to help they act how they want to feel. If you're tired in practice but are smiling you have just acted your way into a successful mindset. Remember you're too tough, too resilient, and too focused to lose control. No matter what the situation, no matter what your coaches throw at you, or what your opponent does, nothing can break you.

You are able to withstand the great strain in life without tearing or breaking. Toughness is being able to create those positive emotions upon command, thus enabling you to bring all your ability to life in that moment. Good luck this upcoming season: and remember that thinking successfully leads to acting and living successfully.