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WAYS TO



DEVELOP
MENTAL
TOUGHNESS



A DAY-BY-DAY GUIDE
TO LIVING A MORE
RELAXED, HAPPY
AND SUCCESSFUL LIFE



EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO
MANAGE STRESS
AND PRESSURE



PENNY
MALLORY



1 Control your emotions

Developing your mental toughness will require you to keep your thoughts and self-talk positive and avoid the habits that lead to negativity and unhealthy behaviours. The strongest people are not those who show strength in front of us but those who win battles we never see them fight. Champions are made when no one is looking! Help yourself to prepare for whatever comes your way by maintaining your capacity to stay objective and deliver the same level of performance regardless of what you're feeling.

Find some time today to take stock of just how your uncontrolled emotions are affecting your day-to-day life. This will make it easier to identify problem areas and track your success. Your healthiest emotional state will be when you have found some balance between overwhelming emotions and no emotions at all.

2 Your compelling reason

Do you have a compelling reason to take action? Always look for the motive because it's far more powerful than the intention.

Let's say you want to lose weight to look and feel healthier. Losing weight is the intention, but looking and feeling healthier is the motive. Your motive – your compelling reason – will encourage you to resist the temptation to eat unhealthy foods in a way that the intention will not.

Today, lean on your sets of values and motives to brainstorm ideas that will help you delay immediate gratification. Your goal isn't to completely steer clear of pleasurable things – that would be a dismal way to live – but rather to develop a habit of delaying gratification.

The most effective way to develop any good habit is to take small steps. Each step you successfully take deserves a small reward and trains your brain to repeat the rewarded action.

3 Take responsibility

You are responsible. It's as easy and as complicated as that.

You're responsible for your choices, the work you put in, the work you don't put in. The wins and the losses. You're responsible for building your endurance. You are a product of your decisions, not your circumstances. Taking ownership and responsibility for your actions is an important part of a healthy life and healthy relationships.

Taking full responsibility is a powerful reminder that you have control over the role you play in all your achievements and relationships.

Taking responsibility creates trust and dependability. You'll be able to improve your decision making, solve more problems and become more confident.

How can you take more responsibility today?

4 Embrace the unknown

By stepping out of your comfort zone you expose yourself to unfamiliar situations. It means you're moving into uncharted territory. You're trying things that you've never tried before and learning things you've never learned before. It's only by doing this that you discover that unfamiliar situations

rarely warrant fear. On the contrary, they offer opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. They give you a chance to surrender your need to control your circumstances and learn to adapt to new ones.

5 Get a sense check

It can actually be hard to recognise the things you feel most passionate about, and sometimes your purpose is more obvious to others than it is to you. It's highly likely you're already displaying your passion and purpose to the people around you without even realising it, so ask your

friends and family what reminds them of you, or what they think of when you enter their mind. If you get a compliment or an observation from someone, write it down and see if any patterns emerge.

Hearing what other people notice about you might help crystallise things for you or reinforce some of the passions you've already been engaging in.

6 You're stronger than you think

It's a shame that you may never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have. You are far more capable and able than you realise. You can cope with far more than you think you can. You have the ability to dig deeper and find courage and strength you never knew you had. Your capacity for coping is vast.

7 You're a winner

What separates the winners from the losers is their mental toughness, and their mindset. A loser sees that the world is unfair, whines and complains but does nothing to improve their lot in life. A winner sees that the world is unfair but continues to struggle to improve their standing.

A winner ends up failing many times over and over but that does not stop them from getting up and persisting. What often brings you down and keeps you there is not the way you look, how rich you are or how much talent you have. What brings you down and keeps you there is your own mind.

Today, focus on the most positive aspects of every situation and adopt an optimistic, hopeful mindset

8 You're a product of your decisions

Everyone faces drama, trauma, tragedy and obstacles in their life. It's all part of the journey, and it is rarely easy or straightforward. But it's the challenges you have faced, and are yet to face, that provide you with opportunities to grow and learn.

Even when faced with pain and sadness, you have the ability to think and behave in a positive, productive manner. The way you respond to the challenges determines the quality of your life and the achievements you make. Don't complain, don't wallow and don't feel sorry for yourself. None of these is helpful. Instead, take action because action is the only thing that can make your situation better.

Remember, you are a product of your decisions, not your circumstances. Take time out

When your stress level exceeds your perceived ability to cope, take some minutes or hours of calm, reflective thought. Take a walk outdoors and breathe in the fresh air deeply. Look around you and start to notice things you've never noticed before. Your brain will welcome the extra oxygen you inhale and you'll start to think more clearly and develop a deeper sense of courage.

9 Avoid the over-optimism trap

It's good to be optimistic, and it's critical to developing mental toughness. On the flip side, if you're over-optimistic you might fail to anticipate potential obstacles and challenges, and even develop a blind spot for them.

There's no way to reliably predict everything that might go wrong, but you can guard against over-optimism by starting out with the expectation that things can, and often do, go wrong. That way, you can be prepared to respond to challenges in a productive, purposeful manner when they occur. This alone will help you to resist the impulse to give up when times get tough.

10 You can tolerate it

Successful people tend to have a much higher tolerance for pushing past discomfort and doing what needs to be done. Your ability to develop tolerance will play an important role in you achieving the success you desire.

Anything you can do to practise tolerating discomfort will help you develop focus and determination. It might be taking cold showers every day or holding a plank position for a minute. Whatever it is, when you're able to push through the initial discomfort and come out the other side, you are increasing your level of tolerance and developing your mental toughness which you can bank for the next time you have to do the hard yards.

11 You are the company you keep

They say 'you are the company you keep', so what is it that draws you to the colleagues and friends around you?

Surround yourself with positive people – choose to spend your spare time with inspirational folk who spark creativity and energy in you. Avoid people who drag you down and require you to change. It's hard to feel passionate and purposeful when you're surrounded by people who aren't making a positive contribution to your life. Talk to people in real life. Start conversations with people you don't know and be curious about what inspires and drives them. Their enthusiasm will rub off onto you.

12 Work from your point of strength

Your path to success is based on the determination you have developed and engrained within yourself. Determination is about what you're willing to do to achieve your goal. It aligns your energy and attention towards your focus.

Unhelpful distractions lead to a dimmed focus, so spend some time identifying what distracts you and stay committed to avoiding those things. This will help you become much more focused on your goal and determined to reach it. When you remove distractions, your mind has fewer choices to make it wander around, so set some boundaries and rules for yourself.

13 Who you become along the way

Setting a goal is important, but don't overlook the daily process you need to follow to get there. If you spend too much time focused on your endpoint, you risk missing the opportunities all around you.

So to achieve your goal, focus on the process of getting to it. You can't control the outcome as it involves external factors outside your control, but you can control your daily practices, actions and disciplines.

Remember, setting goals is not so much about where you end up, it's about who you become along the way.

14 Life begins outside your comfort zone

Stepping out of your comfort zone can be difficult if you don't have a compelling reason to do so, but developing mental toughness is about never settling for what you have and always looking for ways to grow. How much do you know about the edges of your comfort zone? Are you consciously aware of what you move away from and avoid? It may not be that you avoid taking a step into the unknown and more that you don't know how far you can push yourself.

Take the time to think about what it would be like to stand on the edge of the things that create discomfort in you and take that step into uncharted territory. It will never be as bad as you anticipate. Marinate that idea long enough to build solid momentum that propels you into inspired action.

Life begins where your comfort zone ends.

15 You're right

Having self-confidence is essential to developing mental toughness.

After all, it's only possible to press on during crises and adversity, to overcome the fear of uncertainty, when you trust in your abilities.

Henry Ford famously said, 'Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.' He didn't dismiss the role of talent and skill but instead highlighted the role of confidence. He recognised that your self-assuredness is critical to success and that its absence can result in failure.

16 Where are the holes?

Winning is all about completing a challenge and coming out with the result you want. It's not about taking the easy way out.

Take on challenges that fit well with your beliefs and values. Wins are most likely to come when you take a slow but detailed route through the process of exploring why it's important and why it flicks your switch. Think about what a win looks like to you. How are you going to complete this challenge? Look for the holes in your plan and think about what smart solutions you might need. Build a plan that fills those gaps.

17 Stress can be a great thing

Your mental toughness is your capacity to deal effectively with stressors, pressures, setbacks and challenges so you can perform to the best of your ability, irrespective of the circumstances in which you find yourself. Of course, it's worth remembering that not all stress is bad. In fact, stress can often help you accomplish tasks more efficiently and can even boost memory.

Stress is also a vital warning system, producing the 'fight or flight response'. When your brain perceives some kind of stress, it starts flooding the body with chemicals like epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol. We need good stress to stay motivated and productive. The best starting point to deal with the stress you're experiencing is to make sure you have the correct balance between good stress and bad stress.

Try to take a step back from the stress you're feeling and assess the situation. React to the situation rather than to the feeling of stress. That way, you're able to handle the situation and it doesn't become stressful.

18 Find your vision

When you've identified the point to your existence here on planet Earth, your life's purpose, it will be easier for you to focus on what truly matters. You'll be better equipped to avoid the distractions that threaten to stop you achieving your vision.

Once you know your purpose, you'll see the benefits at home, at work and in social settings, but to stay focused on your goals, they have to be important to you. Your subconscious will try to trick you into believing that you want one thing, when in reality it will do very little to help you live out your purpose.

There's probably no bigger question, so spend some time thinking about this today. What vision do you have for your life?

19 What's the worst that can happen?

Even when life is good and everything is going right, self-doubt can creep in. You might begin to second-guess your decisions and hesitate before acting, in fear that you will make mistakes. Self-doubt is a natural and healthy part of your psychology. It helps you to make decisions, encourages you to do your best and protects you from negative outcomes.

The problem is, it can also paralyse you. Self-doubt can consume your thoughts, promoting fear and indecision. So, ask yourself: What is the worst that can happen if things don't go my way? The answer will reveal that mistakes are rarely disastrous. It reminds you that you can take action without fear, confident that doing so won't lead to catastrophe. The more often you can do this, the less you'll hesitate when faced with uncertainty.

20 Do what you truly love

If you're trying to define your reason for being, look back at your past and see glimpses of things that you did as a child just for the sheer fun of it. As you reflect on your life, you can start to pick up on certain patterns that tend to repeat themselves or some trends in the activities that you did. These patterns may hold clues to your purpose. What have you found enjoyment in for your entire life? You may have lost touch with the things that you loved as a kid. Growing up, adolescence and life generally will have dealt you a fair share of pressures that may have stripped certain passions away from you. You might believe that you should only do things that you are somehow rewarded for. The transactional nature of our society can leave you feeling disconnected from doing the things that you truly love. What is it you truly love?

Penny Mallory
mental toughness›