



What is mental toughness?

What do you think of when you hear the words ‘mental toughness’? I tend to think about athletes who never quit or give up. I think about athletes who love working hard and welcome any challenge presented to them. Mentally tough athletes can deal with adversity and struggle in a way that ends in positive outcomes for the individual and his/her team. Athletes who set high standards for themselves and their teammates, then hold themselves accountable to those standards show mental toughness as well. The pitcher who can hit his spot in the bottom of the ninth, the goalie who makes the save on a penalty kick, the volleyball player who makes the serve on match point, the Olympic weightlifter who trains for 5 years to improve by 2 kg, the fullback who makes the block to allow his tailback to gain an extra three yards, and the shooting guard who follows her shot and scores off her own rebound, all show mental toughness as well.

To know the definitions of mental toughness are important, but what is more significant is to understand how to develop this ability in yourself and those around you.

1. Never accept failure (from yourself or anyone around you) without first giving *every* ounce of effort you have. If failure does occur, immediately re-set a goal to achieve whatever it was in a realistic time-frame.
2. Stop talking about how you *feel*. How you feel is generally not important to whether or not you achieve an athletic goal. The game must go on whether you feel great or not.
3. Get used to being *uncomfortable when training* to become your best. If you’re comfortable while preparing for your endeavor, your body probably isn’t adapting and improving.
4. Once you decide on a goal, *don’t change it*. Too often athletes change their expectations based on difficulty of the challenge. Don’t be beaten so easily. Be fiercely determined to achieve your objective.
5. Never *sympathize* with yourself or your teammates over a challenge or hardship. You can *understand* their tribulations and difficulties, but *sympathy* gets nothing but a loss of respect.