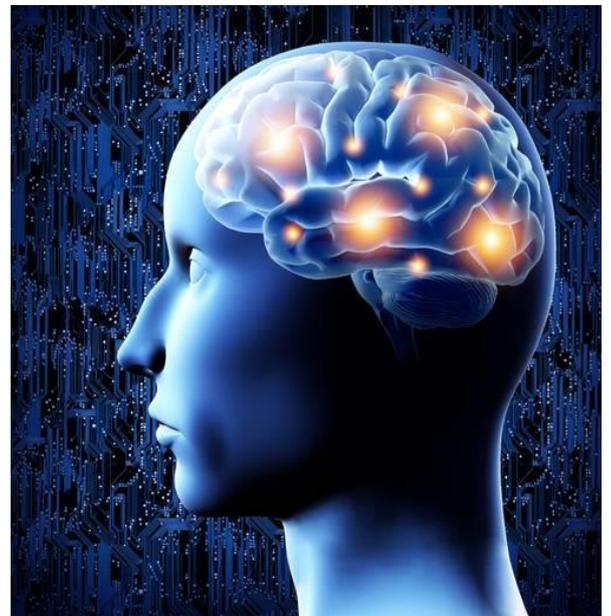


Mental toughness is "Having the natural or developed psychological edge that enables you to generally, cope better than others with the many demands that life and work places on you; specifically, be more consistent and better than others in remaining determined, focused, confident, and in control under pressure." (Jones, Hanton, & Connaughton, 2002)



## Building Mental Toughness



Jeremy Scuse

<b>The Importance of Resilience .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Essential Elements .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Attributes .....</b>	<b>2</b>
The Reality – We All Fail Sometimes.....	3
<b>Building Resilience in the Workplace .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Thought awareness.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Step 1: Calm Yourself.....	3
Step 2: Identify the Situation.....	3
Step 3: Analyse Your Mood .....	4
Step 4: Identify Automatic Thoughts .....	4
Step 5: Find Objective Supportive Evidence .....	4
Step 6: Find Objective Contradictory Evidence.....	4
Step 7: Identify Fair and Balanced Thoughts .....	4
Step 8: Monitor Your Present Mood .....	5
<b>8 Ways to Build your self-confidence.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Tell people you will finish a task.....	5
Turn personal attacks into a change agent.....	5
Speak your mind.....	5
Increase your knowledge.....	5
Bounce the criticism .....	5
Smile.....	5
Walk with a bounce.....	6
Find people who will boost your confidence .....	6
<b>Ways to Combat Rudeness (inspired by Emily Post).....</b>	<b>6</b>
Rudeness Is Different than Harassment or Bullying .....	6
<b>Personal Goals.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Starting to Set Personal Goals.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Step 1: Setting Lifetime Goals.....	7
Step 2: Setting Smaller Goals.....	7
Staying on Course.....	7
<b>SMART Goals .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Further Tips for Setting Your Goals.....	8
Achieving Goals .....	8
<b>Example Personal Goals .....</b>	<b>8</b>

## Mental Toughness

Mental toughness, as originally conceptualized by Peter Clough at the United Kingdom's Manchester Metropolitan University, divides into four main components:

- ☀ control,
- ☀ commitment,
- ☀ challenge, and
- ☀ confidence.

Control means the ability to control your emotions, especially when faced with conflict, as well as what happens to you more generally. Commitment involves setting goals and then achieving them; challenge means continually testing yourself to do better and confidence includes your belief in your own abilities and in your ability to influence others.

The original mental toughness questionnaire for athletes is worth trying :

<https://www.competitivedge.com/athletes-%E2%80%99Chow-tough-are-you%E2%80%9D-0>

## The Importance of Resilience

Resilience (or resiliency) is our ability to adapt and bounce back when things don't go as planned. Resilient people don't wallow or dwell on failures; they acknowledge the situation, learn from their mistakes, and then move forward.

### Essential Elements

According to the research of a leading psychologist, Susan Kobasa, there are three elements that are essential to resilience:

**Challenge** – Resilient people view a difficulty as a challenge, not as a paralyzing event. They look at their failures and mistakes as lessons to be learned from, and as opportunities for growth. They don't view them as a negative reflection on their abilities or self-worth.

**Commitment** – Resilient people are committed to their lives and their goals, and they have a compelling reason to get out of bed in the morning. Commitment isn't just restricted to their work – they commit to their relationships, their friendships, the causes they care about, and their religious or spiritual beliefs.

**Personal Control** – Resilient people spend their time and energy focusing on situations and events that they have control over. Because they put their efforts where they can have the most impact, they feel empowered and confident. Those who spend time worrying about uncontrollable events can often feel lost, helpless, and powerless to take action.

Another leading psychologist, Martin Seligman, says the way that we explain setbacks to ourselves is also important. (He talks in terms of optimism and pessimism rather than resilience, however, the effect is essentially the same.) This "explanatory style" is made up of three main elements:

**Permanence** – People who are optimistic (and therefore have more resilience) see the effects of bad events as temporary rather than permanent. For instance, they might say "My boss didn't like the work I did on that project" rather than "My boss never likes my work."

**Pervasiveness** – Resilient people don't let setbacks or bad events affect other unrelated areas of their lives. For instance, they would say "I'm not very good at this" rather than "I'm no good at anything."

**Personalization** – People who have resilience don't blame themselves when bad events occur. Instead, they see other people, or the circumstances, as the cause. For instance, they might say "I didn't get the support I needed to finish that project successfully," rather than "I messed that project up because I can't do my job."

### Attributes

There tend to be several attributes that are common in resilient people:

- ✨ Resilient people have a positive image of the future. That is, they maintain a positive outlook, and envision brighter days ahead.
- ✨ Resilient people have solid goals, and a desire to achieve those goals.
- ✨ Resilient people are empathetic and compassionate, however, they don't waste time worrying what others think of them. They maintain healthy relationships, but don't bow to peer pressure.
- ✨ Resilient people never think of themselves as victims – they focus their time and energy on changing the things that they have control over.

### The Reality – We All Fail Sometimes

How we view adversity and stress strongly affects how we succeed, and this is one of the most important reasons that having a resilient mind set is so important.

The fact is that we're going to fail from time to time: it's an inevitable part of living that we make mistakes and occasionally fall flat on our faces. The only way to avoid this is to live a shuttered and meagre existence, never trying anything new or taking a risk. Few of us want a life like that!

Instead, we should have the courage to go after our goals, despite the risk that we may fail in some way or other. Being resilient means that when we do fail, we bounce back, we have the strength to learn the lessons we need to learn, and we can move on to bigger and better things.

Overall, resilience gives us the power to overcome setbacks, so that we can live the life we've always imagined.

### Building Resilience in the Workplace

Even if you're not a naturally resilient person, you can learn to develop a resilient mind set and attitude. To do so, try incorporating the following into your daily life:

- ✨ Get enough sleep and exercise, and learn to manage stress. When you take care of your mind and body, you're better able to cope effectively with challenges in your life.
- ✨ Practice thought awareness. Resilient people don't let negative thoughts derail their efforts. Instead, they consistently practice positive thinking. Also, "listen" to how you talk to yourself when something goes wrong – if you find yourself making statements that are permanent, pervasive or personalized, correct these thoughts in your mind.

### Develop strong relationships

With your colleagues or at home with friends, people who have strong connections are more resistant to stress, and they're happier in their role. The more real friendships you develop, the more resilient you're going to be, because you have a strong support network to fall back on.

### Thought awareness

Cognitive restructuring is a useful technique for being aware of and understanding unhappy feelings and moods, and for challenging the sometimes-wrong "automatic beliefs" that can lie behind them. As such, you can use it to reframe the unnecessary negative thoughts that we all experience from time to time.

Follow the steps below to see if it helps. This framework is based on the 7-column Thought Record copyrighted by Christine A. Padesky, appearing in "Mind Over Mood," which is well worth reading for a deeper understanding of this technique.

#### Step 1: Calm Yourself

If you're still upset or stressed by the thoughts you want to explore, you may find it hard to concentrate on using the tool. Use meditation or deep breathing to calm yourself down if you feel particularly stressed or upset.

#### Step 2: Identify the Situation

Start by describing the situation that triggered your negative mood. Write it down, in as clear a sequence of steps as you can. Highlight the point at which you began to feel bad or low.

### Step 3: Analyse Your Mood

Next, write down the mood, or moods, that you felt during the situation.

Moods are the fundamental feelings that we have, but they are *not* thoughts about the situation. Drs Greenberger and Padesky suggest an easy way to distinguish moods from thoughts: you can usually describe moods in one word, while thoughts are more complex.

For example, "***He rubbished my suggestion in front of my colleagues***" would be a *thought*, while the associated moods might be humiliation, frustration, anger, or insecurity.

### Step 4: Identify Automatic Thoughts

Now, write down the natural reactions, or "automatic thoughts," you experienced when you felt the mood. In the example above, your thoughts might be:

- ✨ "Maybe my ideas aren't good enough."
- ✨ "He hasn't liked me since..."
- ✨ "No one likes me."
- ✨ "This undermines my future with this company."
- ✨ "Have I failed to consider these things?"
- ✨ "He's so rude and arrogant!"
- ✨ "But my argument is sound."

In this example, the most distressing thoughts (the "hot thoughts") are likely to be "Maybe my skills aren't good enough," and, "No one likes me."

### Step 5: Find Objective Supportive Evidence

Identify the evidence that objectively *supports* your automatic thoughts. In our example, you might write the following:

- ✨ "The meeting moved on and decisions were made, but my suggestion was ignored."
- ✨ "He identified a flaw in one of my arguments."

Your goal is to look *objectively* at what happened, and then to write down specific events or comments that led to your automatic thoughts.

### Step 6: Find Objective Contradictory Evidence

Next, identify and write down evidence that *contradicts* the automatic thought. In our example:

- ✨ "The flaw was minor and did not alter the conclusions."
- ✨ "The analysis was objectively sound, and my suggestion was realistic and well-founded."
- ✨ "I was top of my class when I trained in this area."
- ✨ "My colleagues respect my opinion."

As you can see, these statements are fairer and more rational than the reactive thoughts.

### Step 7: Identify Fair and Balanced Thoughts

By this stage, you've looked at both sides of the situation. You should now have the information you need to take a fair, balanced view of what happened. If you still feel uncertain, discuss the situation with other people, or test the question in some other way.

When you come to a balanced view, write these thoughts down. The balanced thoughts in this example might now include:

- ✨ "I am good at this sort of analysis. Other people respect my abilities."
- ✨ "My analysis was reasonable, but not perfect."
- ✨ "There was an error, but it didn't affect the validity of the conclusions."
- ✨ "The way he handled the situation was not appropriate."

✨ "People were surprised and a little shocked by the way he handled my suggestion." (This comment would have followed an informal conversation with other people at the meeting.)

### **Step 8: Monitor Your Present Mood**

You should now have a clearer view of the situation, and you're likely to find that your mood has improved. Write down how you feel. Next, reflect on what you could do about the situation. (By taking a balanced view, the situation may cease to be important, and you might decide that you don't need to take action.)

This will also help you to learn from your mistakes and failures. Every mistake has the power to teach you something important.

## **8 Ways to Build your self-confidence.**

Remember, resilient people are confident that they're going to succeed eventually, despite the setbacks or stresses that they might be facing. This belief in themselves also enables them to take risks: when you develop confidence and a strong sense of self, you have the strength to keep moving forward, and to take the risks you need to get ahead.

### **Tell people you will finish a task**

Confidence often starts when you state your intentions.

Let people know you will take on a task and *finish it* – if you can, set a specific time to finish it. Then finish it and tell people, without bragging, that you did what you said you would so.

By voicing your goals to everyone, you gain confidence because you are holding yourself accountable. Speaking it out loud helps you build credibility with others and gain more respect. It also models behaviour for others.

Having stated your finishing time, you can look at colleagues and ask them what theirs will be. So the team begins to support your actions by copying them.

### **Turn personal attacks into a change agent**

It happens to everyone. Personal attacks are meant to push you down and make you lose confidence. Don't let that happen. If you get attacked personally, dismiss any anger or resentment behind it and look for how you can change and grow. It works. If someone attacks you and says you need to speak up at meetings, accept the feedback. Speak more. The process of growing when you hear negative comments is what can build confidence.

### **Speak your mind**

A lack of confidence is often a bottleneck that keeps you from saying what you really think. By stating your view in a meeting, you are building confidence because at least you can see the reactions to your viewpoint and adjust as needed. Having stated yours, ask others for theirs, to show interest in team thinking.

### **Increase your knowledge**

It might seem obvious, but you can also build confidence by learning more. Read more books, attend more seminars. It's easy to go overboard, and spouting your knowledge too often can be a confidence killer when people who have greater knowledge on the subject start debating with you, but knowing what to do about a complex issue or problem can help you gain confidence. Confidence grows when you act on what you know.

### **Bounce the criticism**

Here's a technique to try when you face criticism that hits your confidence. If you hear something negative that just isn't true, before dwelling on it and letting it destroy what you believe about yourself, just reject it out of hand. Try thinking of something more positive and remind yourself about the skills you do have. The reason this works is because it's the time you waste on something negative that tends to lower confidence.

### **Smile**

People with confidence tend to smile more, but it's a learned skill. If you walk around the office and greet others, smile first and ask about their day. The change in attitude about what is going on around the office

builds your own confidence because you realize you need to have a better outlook--and that's highly contagious. Confidence is reflected.

### Walk with a bounce

No, really. This works. How you move around in the office can determine your mood. Shuffling down the hall to your next meeting creates a reaction with other workers. Add a little bounce and energy, and you can gain more confidence when people notice you. It's also self-perpetuating - the more bounce you have in your step, the more energy you generate physically and the more you will feel like getting to that meeting a little faster next time.

### Find people who will boost your confidence

I'm convinced the best way to build confidence is to find people who know how to encourage you and build you up. The best example of this is a partner or respected colleague, who can have a little compliment for how I'm dressed or on a project I've completed. If you tend to hang out with people who criticize you too much, that's going to kill your confidence. It might be time to find new friends.

## Ways to Combat Rudeness (inspired by Emily Post)

**Equanimity.** When someone's rudeness upsets you, count to ten, take a few deep breaths, and ask yourself: "Is it really worth losing my cool over this?"

**Size Up the Grievances.** Is it a waste of your emotional energy to let this get under your skin? Or does the rudeness cross the line and need to be addressed face-to-face with equanimity?

**Empathize With the Rude Person.** Don't take rudeness personally. Maybe the rude person is just having a bad day and taking it out on the world? Oftentimes, you can break the cycle of rudeness by empathizing with the root of someone's cantankerous behaviour as a sign that he or she is unhappy, and be kind.

**Lead by Example.** Rudeness begets rudeness and is contagious. i.e. If you speak rudely to a waiter, don't be surprised if you get the same treatment in return.

**Let It Roll Off Your Back.** If you can't come up with a witty joke or laugh it off... just shrug your shoulders, let it go, and walk away.

### Rudeness Is Different than Harassment or Bullying

Obviously, when someone's rudeness crosses the line and becomes bullying or harassment, you must be a proactive "whistle blower" and alert others to the details of your hostile work environment. Sometimes being 'polite' is not an appropriate response to disrespectful treatment.

When dealing with rude people, always stay even-keel and use common sense. Trust your gut instincts and intellect when deciding whether to let rudeness roll off your back in an attempt to create an upward spiral of more empathy and kindness by "not fighting back." In some instances, we all need to put our foot down and make it clear, in the spirit of 'ferocious equanimity,' that we won't tolerate rude or insulting behaviour anymore.

99% of the time, it's more effective to disarm rude people with politeness.

## Personal Goals

Setting goals gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation . It focuses your acquisition of knowledge, and helps you to organize your time and your resources so that you can make the very most of your life.

By setting clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in their achievement, and you'll see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. You will also raise your self-confidence , as you recognize your own ability and competence in achieving the goals that you've set.

### Starting to Set Personal Goals

You set your goals on a number of levels:

First you create your "big picture" of what you want to do with your life (or over, say, the next 10 years), and identify the large-scale goals that you want to achieve. Then, you break these down into the smaller and

smaller targets that you must hit to reach your lifetime goals. Finally, once you have your plan, you start working on it to achieve these goals.

### Step 1: Setting Lifetime Goals

The first step in setting personal goals is to consider what you want to achieve in your lifetime (or at least, by a significant and distant age in the future). Setting lifetime goals gives you the overall perspective that shapes all other aspects of your decision making.

To give a broad, balanced coverage of all important areas in your life, try to set goals in some of the following categories (or in other categories of your own, where these are important to you):

- ✦ Career – What level do you want to reach in your career, or what do you want to achieve?
- ✦ Financial – How much do you want to earn, by what stage? How is this related to your career goals?
- ✦ Education – Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to have in order to achieve other goals?
- ✦ Family – Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner or by members of your extended family?
- ✦ Artistic – Do you want to achieve any artistic goals?
- ✦ Attitude – Is any part of your mindset holding you back? Is there any part of the way that you behave that upsets you? (If so, set a goal to improve your behaviour or find a solution to the problem.)
- ✦ Physical – Are there any athletic goals that you want to achieve, or do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?
- ✦ Pleasure – How do you want to enjoy yourself? (You should ensure that some of your life is for you!)
- ✦ Public Service – Do you want to make the world a better place? If so, how?

Spend some time brainstorming and then select one or more goals in each category that best reflect what you want to do. Then trim again so that you have a small number of significant goals that you can focus on.

As you do this, make sure that the goals that you have set are ones that you genuinely want to achieve, not ones that your parents, family, or employers might want. (If you have a partner, you probably want to consider what he or she wants – however, make sure that you also remain true to yourself!)

### Step 2: Setting Smaller Goals

Once you have set your lifetime goals, set a two-year plan of smaller goals that you need to complete if you are to reach your lifetime plan. Then create a one-year plan, six-month plan, and a one-month plan of progressively smaller goals that you should reach to achieve your lifetime goals. Each of these should be based on the previous plan.

Then create a daily To-Do List of things that you should do today to work towards your lifetime goals.

At an early stage, your smaller goals might be to read books and gather information on the achievement of your higher level goals. This will help you to improve the quality and realism of your goal setting.

Finally review your plans, and make sure that they fit the way in which you want to live your life.

### Staying on Course

Once you've decided on your first set of goals, review and update your To-Do List on a daily basis.

Periodically review the longer term plans, and modify them to reflect your changing priorities and experience. Try scheduling regular, repeating reviews using a computer-based diary.

### SMART Goals

A useful way of making goals more powerful is to use the SMART mnemonic.

- ✦ S – Specific (or Significant).
- ✦ M – Measurable (or Meaningful).
- ✦ A – Attainable (or Action-Oriented).

✨ R – Relevant (or Rewarding).

✨ T – Time-bound (or Trackable).

For example, instead of having "to sail around the world" as a goal, it's more powerful to use the SMART goal "To have completed my trip around the world by December 31, 2027." Obviously, this will only be attainable if a lot of preparation has been completed beforehand!

### Further Tips for Setting Your Goals

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective, achievable goals:

**State each goal as a positive statement** – Express your goals positively – "Execute this technique well" is a much better goal than "Don't make this stupid mistake."

**Be precise:** Set precise goals, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you'll know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.

**Set priorities** – When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by having too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.

**Write goals down** – This crystallizes them and gives them more force.

**Keep operational goals small** – Keep the low-level goals that you're working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward.

**Set performance goals, not outcome goals** – You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. It can be quite dispiriting to fail to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control! In business, these reasons could be bad business environments or unexpected effects of government policy. In sport, they could include poor judging, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck.

If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals, and draw satisfaction from them.

**Set realistic goals** – It's important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (for example, employers, parents, media, or society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions.

It's also possible to set goals that are too difficult because you might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.

### Achieving Goals

When you've achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so. Absorb the implications of the goal achievement, and observe the progress that you've made towards other goals.

If the goal was a significant one, reward yourself appropriately. All of this helps you build the self-confidence you deserve.

With the experience of having achieved this goal, review the rest of your goal plans:

✨ If you achieved the goal too easily, make your next goal harder.

✨ If the goal took a dispiriting length of time to achieve, make the next goal a little easier.

✨ If you learned something that would lead you to change other goals, do so.

✨ If you noticed a deficit in your skills despite achieving the goal, decide whether to set goals to fix this.

Feed lessons you have learned back into the process of setting your next goals. Remember too that your goals will change as time goes on. Adjust them regularly to reflect growth in your knowledge and experience, and if goals do not hold any attraction any longer, consider letting them go.

### Example Personal Goals

For her New Year's Resolution, Susan has decided to think about what she really wants to do with her life. Her lifetime goals are as follows:

**Career** – "To be managing editor of the magazine that I work for."

**Artistic** – "To keep working on my illustration skills. Ultimately I want to have my own show in our downtown gallery."

**Physical** – "To run a marathon."

Now that Susan has listed her lifetime goals, she then breaks down each one into smaller, more manageable goals. Let's take a closer look at how she might break down her lifetime career goal – becoming managing editor of her magazine:

✨ Five-year goal: "Become deputy editor."

✨ One-year goal: "Volunteer for projects that the current Managing Editor is heading up."

✨ Six-month goal: "Go back to school and finish my journalism degree."

✨ One-month goal: "Talk to the current managing editor to determine what skills are needed to do the job."

✨ One-week goal: "Book the meeting with the Managing Editor."

As you can see from this example, breaking big goals down into smaller, more manageable goals makes it far easier to see how the goal will get accomplished.