



Coaches Guide

**To The Mental Toughness
Certification Course**
by Craig Sigl



Dear Coach,

This is the teacher's guide I've put together for you to assist you in using the Mental Toughness Academy lessons to get the most out of it for your athletes.

You can be confident that the lessons, techniques and strategies your athletes are learning in this program are born out of my work with thousands of athletes and evidence-based psychological principles.

I encourage you to keep an open mind as you go through it with your players and to feel free to add your particular flavor to it as well. Nobody has all the answers and your athletes will pick and choose what can work for them from your advice and the training.

My advice for mental game meetings would be to have short discussions about the concepts with your main intention to just get the kids to talk about them. You'll find that some kids participate more than others but you can be sure that even the quiet kids are learning from the discussion.

One final thought I want to impart to you is to let go of any expectations of what you think this training might achieve or result in for the kids. We, as teachers and mentors, have to be satisfied that our work sometimes does not bear any fruit until long after our work together is done. I cannot tell you how many times I have worked with a young athlete who I thought I was not getting through to, only to hear from them 2 years later that the lessons were the most profound thing they have ever done for themselves.

I have also heard countless stories from these athletes of how a particular coach positively influenced and inspired them years ago and I'm sure that coach never got to hear that in person.

I really applaud you and the time and energy you spend with these kids and it's my sincere desire to assist you to expand the opportunities you have to mold your kids into winners through the mental game.

Let's do this,

Craig Sigl
MentalToughnessTrainer.com

P.S. I have continuing additional insights for coaches in my FREE mental toughness email letter.

Go to: MentalToughnessTrainer.com and sign up. Make sure and select "Coach" after you enter your email to get coaching-specific information.



Module 1 - Achieving Your Potential

1. This section introduces what we mean by “Mental Toughness” which is:
Focused, Confident, Determined and Resilient, especially under pressure.
Most athletes know what Focus and Confidence are. Go over Determined and Resilient by telling stories of athletes you know or pro athletes who never gave up despite long odds and/or adversity. (Module 8 teaches Determination in depth.)
2. I covered the idea of “Believing You Can Achieve” using Roger Bannister who broke the 4-minute mile when doctors said humans could not. Ask them why they think Bannister was able to do it. Isn't a belief just a choice? What belief could they choose?
3. In my office, I spend time with athletes discussing the “ability to change” which is mentioned here. The worst thought for an athlete who is struggling or not playing to potential is something like: “That’s just who I am”
The belief in the ability to change is the key to breaking through problems and going to the next level in sport or anything.
4. Unlimited Potential - everyone can do more than they think they can.
5. I would definitely cover the idea of the Power Mind. This is your subconscious mind, the part that operates your body. When athletes are nervous and tell themselves to calm down and the body doesn't calm down, that's because of the natural block between thinking and power mind. Guided visualizations help to reach that part of your mind to make changes for improvement in sport and everything.

Possible questions to stimulate discussion for this module:

Who can tell us about a time in competition where more mental toughness would have been extremely helpful?

Let's come up with some Mantras or Affirmations. Pick one for yourself today.

What kind of thinking do you think those kids had to do those amazing achievements? (climb Mt. Everest, sail the world, fly airplane and helicopter at age 14)

Who can tell us what they think the mental toughness trainer meant by:
“You can fake and pretend beliefs and it still works” (In the wrestler story)

When you are struggling, what is the one thing you think about that keeps you going?

Your experience using the guided visualization audio? Suggest downloading to phone.



Module 2 - Motivation & Focus

1. It all starts with a decision and then a declaration. Declarations are to help those around you support you. When you make a declaration, if you really mean it, it will benefit you to tell others HOW they can best support you.

Can you tell your supporters (parents) to remind you of things you need to do to get to the next level? Will you allow them to give you feedback on your performances? Really courageous athletes invite such feedback.

What's the difference between a decision and a declaration?

2. Take control of your life. Just because you're a kid and don't control all aspects of your life doesn't mean you can't control your mind and actions. Even kids as young as 8 years old can do this and have done this with me.

This also means taking responsibility for your life. It's never too early to learn this. Blame = B-LAME.

Control the controllables. Go over with the athletes what each of them can and cannot control in a game situation or in a practice and training environment.

3. Boosting motivation.

There was an exercise in 2.3 to help you evaluate your motivation. On a scale of 1-10, where did you think you were before this module and where are you now? Why?

What things motivate you to work hard to improve yourself? Generate a list for group. Can teammates remind you of your motivations when things get tough?

See if a participant will volunteer a goal and talk about it as if it is reality now.

Does anybody have a greater goal than just doing well in sports?

4. Change your reason and focus for playing your sport.

This section simply requires you as the coach to generate a huge list of all the things the athletes love about playing their sport that DO NOT have anything to do with winning/losing or performing well/bad. Write it down, type it up and share with team.

Get commitment from the team that they can remind each other of this list, especially during game time. This technique alone can make an athlete totally fearless.



Module 3 - Intensity Without Nervousness

1. It's an "And" World. This is a tool to overcome nervousness. Take athletes through pressure situations in your sport where they can tell themselves or their teammates that they can be nervous AND play brilliantly while being nervous.

You can get commitment from members of the team that if they hear the word "But" they can call them out on it to turn it into an AND. This is a mental practice that, just like physical practice, conditions the mind to be Ok with being nervous.

For proof of this concept, solicit participants past successful experiences of having been really nervous and still performed well in sports or academics or anywhere.

2. Confidence. Explain to the athletes that it is a survival mechanism for us to look at where we are bad at things. We have create a mental habit, from scratch to start thinking about how we are GOOD at things.

Solicit and generate a list of the skills, abilities, talents and resources that your players have. Print out and use the .pdf on module 3.2 if needed. Do not accept general answers like: "Skills" You want to ask specifically WHAT skills you used to create that success. The more details the better. The bigger the list, the more powerful it will be in creating confidence. Find out what specific things the team is good at. Type up and share the list with everyone.

Confidence comes from constantly reviewing: 1. what you are good, 2. have accomplished and 3. what you truly believe you can achieve. It's not a random thing or an accident.

Ask the group: "Who thinks if you had more confidence, you would play better?"

Ask the group: "Can you see how reviewing those 3 things above MUST improve confidence?"

Ask the group: "Is there any reason you can't do it?" Answer their questions.

3. Focus & Concentration I take the athletes through an exercise in focusing on the present moment in this lesson. I would do this as a group. It's calling attention to all the things their senses are taking in.

When you play in the present moment, fear does not exist. Fear is what tenses us up and holds us back from playing our best.



Module 4 - Optimizing Practice & Training

This module is about getting the most from practice and training. Ask the group what this quote by John Wooden means: “Never mistake activity for achievement”

1. Great practices begin with MOTIVATION to dedicate yourself to them. Athletes need to connect their motivations in their mind to the moment they begin to practice and train. Discuss those and how to connect them. Can the team create a ceremony that initiates this at the beginning of every practice? A yell or cheer?

2. Eating and drinking to support the body for high energy during practice.

3. Pre-performance routines. Guide your athletes to create them for your sport. Use them in practice! Routines are what lead athletes into the zone at game time. Routines are something you can always rely on and direct your focus to in order to not think about negative things.

4 The value of discipline (for sports and life) through practice and training. Doing things that aren't always fun in the moment but have big paybacks later. Everyone has used discipline when they get up and go to work/school when they don't feel like it. Use that same thinking over in sports practice. Solicit what that thinking is from the players.

5. Bring pressure into practice to simulate game time - instill the value of loving challenge and pressure. If you don't want any challenge, then athletes should go out and play some 2nd graders. I often use that sarcastically to make the point that athletes already WANT challenge. You either want it or you don't in sports. There's no middle ground.

Ask players what they have done for themselves or told themselves that helped them get through pressure situations. Call out players who have come through under pressure before.

6. Goal setting - Discuss why this is important. The power (subconscious) mind needs them to generate motivation and energy to take action.

Goals are most effective when they are:

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reach (tough), Timed

3 different types of goals. Do all 3 and write them down.

A. Long term - 1-5 years

B. Training - parts of skills, being focused, # of drills, etc. Helps improve focus.

C. Game time - should be process-oriented based on fundamentals, not outcome-oriented.



Module 5 - How To Think Positively

This module is about getting control of our thinking. This means conditioning the mind, through awareness and being held accountable by others. There's 2 parts to this:

1. Self talk and 2. Reframing.

I ask athletes these 2 simple questions to get them started on understanding the importance (The Why) of this module:

“Who wants to perform better in sport?” (all hands should raise)

“So, do you perform better when you feel good or feel bad?” (make them say ‘good’)

“Most of you wait around hoping and praying that you will perform well and THEN you feel good. Mentally tough athletes MAKE themselves feel good FIRST which increases their odds of performing well.”

The lessons in this module are very simple: clean up your self talk and start looking at the good side of things. That's essentially it. You, as the coach, are the one that needs to lead this charge and delegate this to team leaders as well.

You need to model it. If you are negative, they will be negative. Like a corporation, attitudes flow downhill.

1. Self talk - Explain that this is a reflection of how you feel. And if you feel negative, it can hurt your performances. Change your self talk and you change the way you feel.

I've given a simple tool, the rubber band, to make this change. It works, I've tested it on thousands of athletes. Pros use it. Those who take it seriously get tremendous benefits. Some kids think it's silly and “not cool.” If you want the benefits of this for your team, make it cool!

2. Telling yourself useful stories - This is about destroying the idea that “Failure” is a bad thing. When athletes don't fear “Failure” then 95% of all fears are eliminated.

Elicit past “failures” from athletes and assist them to turn their story around to why that event was a good thing in the long run. Once they get the hang of it, ask other players to do this for their teammates stories.

3. The mistake maker technique - This is a specific way for athletes to clear mistakes from their mind. You set up a part of you that makes mistakes to help you learn. When the mistakes come, you blame it (to release the emotion) and then you forgive it. This contributes to being courageous about mistakes and destroys fear.



Module 6 - Visualization & Mental Practice

Visualization and Mental Practice are two words for the same thing. The act of doing visualization is actually easy and uncomplicated.

1. Getting athletes to actually do it is the hard part and so the first video is all about convincing the athlete of the benefits. As a coach, this is where you can have a great impact following up with the lessons here. You've got to use your best stories or just some conviction in your voice and words. You should know that about 20% of the population is not visual...they can still do it by just thinking and imagining their way.

Here's an actual exercise you can do to help convince athletes of the real benefits:

- A. Have them all stand up with space between each other so they don't touch with their arms outstretched.
- B. Have them outstretch one arm and point straight ahead.
- C. Tell them to twist around at the waist, one way as far as they can, keeping their arm straight, and to notice where they are pointing when they have gone as far around as they can.
- D. Tell them to unwind, go back to relaxed with arms at their side.
- E. Still standing, have them close their eyes and you guide them to imagining that their arm is outstretched and pointed (like they just did). "Imagine that you are twisting your body around just like you did before...slowly, easily...and your body is so flexible...so very flexible that you are now pointing directly behind you.... twist and twist and you are 3/4 of the way around you...so flexible that you are like a rubber band, easily twisting around so that you have made a complete circle and are pointing straight ahead. Hold that for a few seconds and feel the flexibility...(pause). And now, easily and slowly unwind...back to 3/4 twisted...back to 1/2 way...1/4 and now pointing straight ahead with your very flexible waist relaxed"
- F. Then have them repeat "C" above and tell them: "Notice how much farther around you can go this time than the first time you did it."

2. The steps to do mental practice. This is not specifically mentioned in the video but additional lesson for you to teach:

- A. Have an idea for something **very specific** that you want to improve in your sport.
- B. Get your body comfortable
- C. Take 1 minute or so to breathe a little deeper than you normally do and a little slower. As you inhale, allow the belly to expand. Send air into the belly.
- D. Imagine with words, feelings, visions or any combination of those doing that one small movement correctly. Or, imagine thinking and feeling how you want to be right at game time or other situations. Challenge yourself to keep your focus on this.



Module 7 - Advanced Fearlessness Owing Emotions

I would really recommend you go through the videos in this module in advance. Here's the punchline to it all and how I help all athletes. Follow the logic, it starts with this formula:

Performance = Potential - Interference

**90% of interference in athletic performance is fear.

**There's only 2 kinds of things we, as humans, experience fear about

1. Physical harm to the body
2. Emotions

**If we can get the kids to not be afraid of emotions, then 90% of what holds them back is eliminated.

**All emotions are good. Emotions are nothing more than chemicals. The chemicals always go back to where they came from.

When I do workshops, after explaining the concept, I ask them as a group:

“So, if you're feeling nervous and tense about this next opponent/game/performance (make it specific to your sport), then what is it that you are really afraid of?”

The answer from your athletes should be: “Chemicals”

“And you hold yourself back in your performance because your scared of what?”

Get them to say “Chemicals.” Then I usually say, “Isn't that silly and lame that we do that?”

I have had mental blocks dissolve in minutes from this teaching alone. Contact me if you need more info on it. The way to not be afraid of your chemicals is to be able to deal with them when they hit you. I give a 6-step method to deal with difficult emotions and feelings.

This is mostly for older kids, the younger ones are to just tell themselves: “And World”/ “They're Just Chemicals” / “The Chemicals Will Go Away, They Always Do.”

1. Be in the emotion. Don't fight it. Go with it
 2. Observe yourself in the emotion. Talk about it to yourself
 3. Learn from the event that caused the emotion, plan of action to fix it, come to a story about the event that it is good for you in the long run...everything always is.
 4. Say this to yourself: “Well at least _____” (fill in the blanks)
 5. Breathe deep into the belly like the exercise in the last module
 6. Listen to your favorite music or sing or talk to someone
- Use any or all of the steps above to change your chemicals to feel better and never fear emotions again!



Module 8 - Bigger Perspectives & Determination

As you can see, I try to avoid terms kids don't get such as "Perspectives." Instead, I find metaphorical terms are understood easier and sink in to the inner mind faster.

1. Use "Get some height" to teach the kids how to transcend being stuck in their small-world problems. Use this term by asking the kids questions like:
"Who can tell me a problem they've noticed about our team?"

And then see if a participant can come up with a new story that makes that problem teeny, or even disappear by "getting some height" on it. Always try to draw out answers from athletes FIRST, but don't keep them hanging. Give them your ideas if they don't come up with any.

Talk about "height" on Winning. Winning doesn't come by pressuring yourself and TRYING HARD. It comes from getting good at your skills in practice and mastering mental toughness. Your best performances will just happen, automatically, when you master physical AND mental skills.

Review with them getting some height on: parents, you as a coach, their teammates, not getting playing time, choking, not making a team, opponents, etc. Get some specific events in their lives or make up typical stories to use for your sport. Offer to help them with this in the future and strongly invite them to ask you for this help.

2. Determination - Heart, work ethic, never give up. The harder you work, the harder it is to give up...that's where it all begins. In order for determination to really take root:
A. A decision has to be made to achieve a goal
B. You have to have a strong, emotional "Why" you want that goal
C. Clear the fear and negativity. This is what destroys/prevents determination.

You might draw on a whiteboard a tree seed being planted (Decision), in good soil (No Negativity or Interference), then watering and fertilizing the tree (The Why), taking out the weeds around the plant (clearing Fear). Metaphors like this are 10 times better than just words.

**Discuss using determination to bounce back from mistakes, chokes, losses.

**Discuss using determination to get your game face and attitude on when it's time to compete.

**Discuss using determination to PRACTICE these mental skills just like other skills!