Everyday Mental Toughness – Part 3: Challenge



This is the third of four articles concentrating on how to develop each of the four Mental Toughness "sub-components"

I work with the model developed by Professor Peter Clough and Doug Strycharczyk.

In their model the four sub-components are:

- Control – life control and emotional control
- Commitment – goal orientation and delivery orientation
- Challenge – risk orientation and learning orientation
- Confidence – interpersonal confidence and confidence in abilities

This article will look at some ideas for developing challenge

Challenge describes to what extent you see challenges, change, adversity & variety as opportunities or as threats.

There are two components in Challenge – Risk orientation and Learning orientation.

Risk orientation

Take the time to do something difficult & new. Doing harder versions of things you've already accomplished will certainly help you grow, but not on the same scale as throwing yourself into something new and unfamiliar. You can stretch yourself in small ways by trying a new type of food, talking with a

stranger, or watching a movie that is different than your norm. You can stretch yourself in big ways by taking on a big new and challenging project.

When you are looking for things to stretch your capabilities, start small; concentrate on doing things to grow – not necessarily the biggest thing possible. You can grow from putting yourself in new circumstances that have very little risk but get you slightly out of your comfort zone, some examples could be:

- Get into a conversation with someone you would normally avoid.
- Read a book or look at web site about something you know nothing about.
- Go to a social event where everyone is twice or half your age.
- Participate in an online discussion about a new topic.
- Go to a concert of a different style of music than what you normally listen to.
- Use a different operating system than normal.
- Watch a sport you don't understand.

Small steps out of your comfort zone will naturally allow your comfort zone to grow.

There are a lot of articles and posts about the comfort zone and how great, exciting, challenging, new, adventurous …. things happen outside of it; whereas inside the comfort zone life is dull, boring and repetitive.

Personally, I'm not convinced that one's comfort zone is such a bad place to be. Lots of good stuff goes on in our comfort zone; all those things we are really good at, our strengths, the things we master, the things we know how to do with our eyes shut – and they are not all dull & boring.

However, regular excursions into unknown territories can help you to discover unknown strengths.

Learning orientation

Accept reasonability for your mistakes

Accepting responsibility makes learning possible. Blaming others for your mistakes will neither get you anywhere nor do you any good. As soon as a situation starts going south, make the only mature and responsible move possible: stand up and own up to the mistake. Take 100% responsibility, accept the consequences and be part of the solution to the problem. The sooner you accept responsibility, the sooner the problem is identified, the sooner a resolution is possible and that minimises consequences.

Identify the cause of the mistake

Knowing why you made the mistake is key in learning from it. Identifying the cause will also help you avoid repeating it next time. Determine the specific action, or lack of action, that led to the mistake. Take the time to look into the events and if there are things that need to be improved, take some time to work on them. Make the necessary changes, to see the positive results.

Don’t chastise yourself

Don’t beat yourself up over the mistakes that you made. You are not expected to be perfect except by yourself. With every mistake that you make you discover more about yourself, about who you are, about your limits, your capabilities, about what you can and cannot do.

Perfection doesn’t exist

Perfection is very subjective, making mistakes makes you understand that, like all of us, you are not perfect It’s the mistakes that give you room for improvement, room for growth. Know that the lessons you will learn and master out of all the mistakes you make along your way through life are most

important.

Don’t dwell on mistakes

You cannot change the mistakes that are made in the past but you can take the lesson learnt and apply it when necessary. Don’t move forward through life with a sense of fear for making mistakes. The moment you see mistakes as lessons rather than mistakes, you will no longer have this crazy fear of encountering them along your journey.

Keep your eye on the big picture

You gain confidence, courage and experience every time you make a new mistake and in time you will get better and better at the things you love to do. When you know exactly what you want and when you are able to see this in your mind’s eye, nothing, not one mistake, can stop you from moving forward or stop you from achieving your dreams.

Mistakes are a part of being human. Appreciate your mistakes for what they are: precious life lessons. So, the most important lesson is to trust that while mistakes are inevitable, if you can learn from the current one, you’ll also be able to learn from future ones. No matter what happens tomorrow you’ll be able to get value from it, and apply it to the day after that. Progress isn’t a straight line and if you keep learning you will have more successes than failures.

The mistakes you make along the way will help you get to where you want to go.