Understanding the foundations of Mental Toughness – Control



As I wrote in a previous article (https://boblarcher.com/mental-toughness/mental-toughness-the-end-of-an-era), Mental Toughness is made up from four components, or pillars – Confidence, Challenge, Commitment and Control.

Each of these pillars is built on two foundations and it is the foundations that affect how you do at work, your relationships, how you handle setbacks, even how you reach your goals.

In this article I will focus on the Control pillar

The two foundations of the Control pillar are Life control and Emotional control.

Firstly, Life control, this is about having a sense of knowing where you're going in life and why. What some people call finding your "True North" or your "Big Why"

It's about feeling like you can make your own choices, even when there's pressure.

It's not letting other people's expectations or societal norms dictate your life. It's about being in charge of your own life.

If you've got high Life Control, you're probably the kind of person who's not afraid to take a different path to others, to

follow your own kind of internal compass.

It’s not about being egocentric and ignoring or walking over others, it is however about being guided by your values and your beliefs .

Those with very low Life Control tend to dwell on failure and see the negative consequences of their actions, they expect to fail and create vicious circles for themselves, and they do things simply because they are asked to while avoiding responsibility

On the other hand, those with very high Life Control tend to build on the positive results of their actions and create virtuous circles for themselves, they look for responsibility and feel that they can make a difference.

Emotional control, the second foundation, is about managing one’s own emotions and the emotions of others.

Let’s be clear, we cannot control our emotions, they just happen to us, we do not “decide” to be happy, angry, sad, disgusted, etc.

However, we can control how we manifest our emotions, our emotional behaviour.

It’s not about suppressing your emotions or pretending you don’t have them. It’s about being aware of your emotions and learning how you express them.

We all have those moments where we get triggered, someone cuts you off in traffic, you get bad news, someone attacks your work.

Emotional control is about being able to pause, acknowledge how you feel. And then choose how you want to respond, instead of yelling at the person who cut you off.

It’s not about ignoring your feelings. It’s about choosing to

deal with them in a way that works for you.

Which is useful, especially in high pressure situations, if you can stay calm and focused when you're making a big decision, it can make a huge difference.

Those with low Emotional Control show anger or annoyance when things don't go their way, they show discomfort when others "have a go at them" and they deal poorly with provocation.

They tend to be unaware of their own emotional build-up and miss the signs of emotional build-up in others. They can easily lose control, behave erratically and say things they regret.

Those with high Emotional Control on the other hand tend to be insensitive to others' remarks and ignore provocation, they spot the signs of emotional build-up in others, stay calm and choose their words and they remain consistent in their behaviour

Clearly both foundations are important

Those with both low Life and Emotional control tend to let others decide for them and it's often an emotional drama.

Those with high Life control and low Emotional control make their own life decisions; however, when it goes bottom up everyone knows about it.

Those with low Life control and high Emotional control tend to follow the flow and not show their emotions when things go wrong.

And those with both high Life and Emotional control decide & assume their decisions and very rarely allow their emotions to show.

So, the control pillar is all about being clear where you are going in life and choosing your emotional responses.

If you are curious to know more about Mental Toughness you can take a look at more articles here www.boblarcher.com/category/mental-toughness/.

And, if you would like to measure and start developing your Mental Toughness, do not hesitate to contact me at boblarcher@boblarcher.com.