

# MARK'S CORNER



## 10 Mental Toughness Exercise for Resiliency

Mental toughness is always important. It helps ensure that we don't fly off the handle when things don't go our way, that we don't shy away from physically and emotionally challenging situations, that we don't continue to escape into behaviors because we can't handle facing our emotions. In short, mental toughness is the ability to endure difficult situations and there are plenty of exercises you can do to strengthen it.



### Take Cold Showers

Experts correlate mental toughness with the ability to tolerate being uncomfortable, whether mentally or physically. Starting or ending every day with a cold shower is a simple, though not an easy, but a way to get more comfortable with being uncomfortable. When we take cold showers, we boost our endocrine function, lymph circulation which boosts immune system, and blood circulation.



### Wait a Few Minutes to Eat When You're Hungry

Another simple tactic to build tolerance for being uncomfortable is to allow yourself to feel hunger pangs without grabbing a snack. Tolerating an extra five-to-10 minutes of hunger builds patience. You can accept that it's okay to wait to be hungry, you know you're going to eat. This ups your tolerance for being uncomfortable. If you're able to do that, you'll be able to tolerate more difficult challenges.



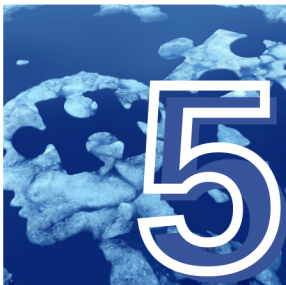
### Do the Thing You Don't Want to Do (For 10 Minutes)

When there's something you really don't want to do like a workout or a boring report, tell yourself you only have to do it for 10 minutes. When the 10-minute mark rolls around, permit yourself to quit if you want to. (You're likely to keep going and starting is usually the hardest part.) Starting something you don't want to do trains your brain to know that you don't have to respond to how you feel.



### Work Out Without Music Or TV

Working out is obviously a great way to boost your physical and mental strength. But when you're doing it while listening to music or watching TV, you're distracting yourself and limiting your opportunity to experience and build tolerance for being uncomfortable. Be present with your discomfort by switching off the iPhone or tablet and paying closer attention to your breath and physical sensations.



### Sit With Your Feelings

The next time you start to feel lonely, mad, anxious, sad, scared, or jealous, pause for a moment. Notice if you were about to grab your phone to scroll through Instagram or check your email, or about to turn on the Xbox or grab a beer. Fight the urge and instead, sit down or lay down (face down is helpful) and close your eyes. See if you can locate a physical sensation in your body.

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## Name Your Feelings

It's sometimes hard to put a name to your feelings. It might even be tough to admit to yourself when you're nervous or sad. But research shows labeling your emotions takes a lot of the sting out of them. So, check in with yourself a few times a day and ask yourself how you're feeling: set alarms on your phone for morning, afternoon, and evening.



## Breathe Deeply

Whether as part of formal meditation or on an as-needed basis, deep breathing is essential for developing mental toughness. It allows you to better regulate your thoughts, feelings, and, well, breathing through situations when the going gets rough. Deep breathing helps reduce cortisol levels in the brain and body that are blocking your cognition, allowing you to decompress.



## Talk To Someone

There's a big difference between being strong and acting tough. Acting tough is about pretending you don't have any problems. Being strong is about admitting you don't have all the answers. While it might feel uncomfortable, talking to someone can help you develop mental toughness and become better. So, make a concerted effort to reach out and talk to your friends and family regularly.



## Practice Gratitude

Studies show grateful people enjoy a host of benefits, such as a boost in immunity, better quality sleep, and more mental strength. Look for things you can be thankful for every day, and you'll boost your mental muscle. Make thinking about what you appreciate as a habit, but either do it before you get out of bed in the morning or before going to sleep. Finding the silver lining shapes how we think about the world can be a big part of becoming more mentally tough.



## Admit Mistakes

Mentally tough people never try to pretend their mistakes didn't happen. The default stance people take when they know they've done something wrong. Instead of just owning their error, many people attempt (unsuccessfully) to defend their position. This only digs the hole further and leads to lost trust and deterioration of relationships.