

## MENTAL CONDITIONING

---

### I. DEFINITION

Mental Conditioning helps to build and strengthen our minds. Our accomplishments are not solely based on talent and/or hard work, but on mental strength. It is our thoughts or beliefs that guide to our emotions, which in turn lead to our behaviours and actions, and ultimately performance. Mental Conditioning can help attain the mental strength necessary to achieve the challenging goals you set for yourself.

Mental Conditioning helps you to create a clear focused vision of what you want, establish belief it can be established, and develop mental fortitude to achieve it. The first step in achieving a goal is believing you can achieve it. It can help in maintaining a positive focus on your objectives through imagery and visualization. Additionally, it helps you learn to stop any negative thoughts that arise and replace them with a positive affirmation. It also encompasses relaxation techniques that can help relieve anxiety and tension to improve performance through better concentration and focus.

#### **The 4 C's of Mental Toughness: (Turner, 2017)**

##### *Control*

Your feeling of control over your life, including your emotions and purpose in life, is measured by this metric. Your self-esteem is a component of the control component. To score well on the Control scale suggests that you are confident in your own skin and know exactly who you are at your core.

##### *Commitment*

Personal focus and dependability can only go so far. Having a high level of commitment means being able to properly create objectives and consistently accomplish them, all while avoiding distraction. High Commitment shows that you're adept at developing successful routines and habits.

##### *Challenge*

This is an indication of how motivated and adaptive you are. If you have a high Challenge score, you are likely to be adaptable and nimble because you are determined to accomplish your own best and perceive difficulties, change, and hardship as opportunities rather than threats. In order to be rated low on the Challenge scale, you may avoid new and demanding events out of fear of failure.

##### *Confidence*

This is a measure of your self-confidence and your conviction that you can have an impact on the lives of others. To have a high level of Confidence is to think that you can accomplish your goals and accept failures as part of the learning process. A lack of self-confidence indicates a lack of belief in one's own abilities and the ability to influence others.

### II. MENTAL CONDITIONING PROCESS

Mental Conditioning is a process of training your mind to modify your thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs to accept thinking patterns, tendencies, and/or mental states in order to optimize positive thinking and

ultimately optimize your performance. Mental Conditioning focuses on increasing self-awareness of your mental and physical states to allow you to best control and regulate your body and mind. Mental Conditioning helps you create a clear vision of what you want, know why you want it, and develop mental fortitude to achieve it.

Much like physical conditioning, mental conditioning can be increased through education and training. It involves learning a set of techniques designed to affect your thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs in order to maximize your performance. Learning these techniques can help you prepare and perform at your highest level on a consistent basis. Through this process you are able to learn to condition and control your mind so you are able to perform at your best no matter the circumstances. You learn how to maintain concentration, confidence, and motivation while in challenging and stressful situations. Mental conditioning not only helps you deal with potential obstacles in life, but is essential to reach your full potential.

### **III. MENTAL CONDITIONING IN PERFORMANCES**

The mind is a powerful tool. Like a muscle it can be trained and strengthened, but the difficulty comes in knowing exactly how to do this. Tom Dawson Squibb, a leader in the field of mental coaching and a panelist at the 2016 Powerade Performance Academies, understands this better than most. He exclusively shared his top five tips for mental conditioning and improving performance by boosting your self-awareness:

#### *1. Find your moment*

Be clear about what you want to achieve – spend some time creating a clear image along with the feelings you want to feel in that desired moment. Bring in as much detail as possible and use all your senses. See only the positive outcome of what you want to achieve. You don't need to spend ages doing this, but take time to do it in a still space where you can have razor-sharp focus.

#### *2. Meaning*

Take some time to understand what achieving your moment or goal means to you and use this as your energy source. You don't want to have to think about this while you are in competition or in tough training. You want to have internalized your motivation well in advance.

#### *3. Obstacles*

The realists survive. The people who are realistic about what they need to overcome in order to achieve their goals are the ones who are the most likely to succeed. It is imperative to take time to assess what these may be. From time issues, to fear or obstacles of self-confidence, the more you understand these, the more you can strategize to compensate for them. Write them down, understand whether they are based on facts or assumptions, and then plan to overcome them.

#### *4. WIN (What's Important Now)*

Take time to map out step by step the actions required to achieve your goals. Studies show that the more detailed you are, the more likely you are to achieve your goal. Determine when and where you will go to gym, what you will do when you are there and what you will do if you miss a gym session - these details are necessary if you want to increase your performance in the exercise space for example. The question

you need to ask when looking to achieve a goal is ‘what can I do now that is tangible and in my control to get me a step closer to that goal?’ – Then go and do it!

### *5. Check your space*

The environment you create for yourself is crucial for achieving your goal. There is a lot one can do to ensure that you make better decisions without even having to think about it. Since people are affected by those around them, surround yourself with people who lend themselves to attaining your goal. A study was done showing that people lost weight when they ate from smaller plates. The plates didn’t allow for big portions so people began to eat less. This is a small example of people changing what’s around them to ensure that their actions change.

## **IV. MENTAL CONDITIONING IN SPORTS**

Mental conditioning is broken down into five skill categories: learning to think right, engaging in positive self-talk, reaching optimal arousal, concentrating, and displaying confidence.

Athletes must use these skills from the whistle to the snap. Just like any other skills, these can be learned and improved with practice. The more you practice these skills, the better focused you will be. A better focused athlete is a higher-performing athlete.

### 5 Approaches to Mental Conditioning

#### *1. Learning to think right*

Starts with the simple understanding that wrong (negative) thoughts hurt sport performance and right (positive) thoughts help it. If you have negative thoughts, all you have to do is replace them with positive thoughts. Thinking right is a choice you can make. Keep in mind that no one can make you think anything; you are responsible for your thoughts.

#### *2. Positive self-talk*

A kind of conversation you should be having with yourself, which is the most important one of all. You have to control your own self-talk; if it is wrong, you have to change it. Positive affirmations are a useful tool to control your self-talk. Because self-talk affects your emotions and your actions, how you think affects how you play.

#### *3. The right level of arousal*

Requires having composure, which means being in control of yourself. Optimal arousal is reflected in a state of physiological and psychological well-being. An arousal level that is too high or too low will have a negative impact on your performance. Because optimal arousal varies by individual, you must determine your own level. Reaching your own unique arousal level is a skill that you must practice.

#### *4. Concentration*

It is about finding the right information and staying focused on it. Because most of the information available to you is irrelevant, you have to seek out the information that matters. You get information from what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Concentration is thinking right, and distraction is thinking

wrong. It is a choice as well as a skill. Establishing a routine can help. Confidence is about believing that you are going to deliver your best performance and not focusing on the outcome. It is the opposite of doubt, anxiety, fear and worry. It is a choice you make by becoming competent. Like concentration, confidence is both a skill and a choice, and it can be developed over time.

*This is an excerpt from [Complete Conditioning for Football](#), by Pat Ivey, MSCC, and Josh Stoner, MSCC. Their influence made its mark during the University of Missouri's run of bowl games and Big 12 North championships. The book is available through [Human Kinetics](#).*

**REFERENCE(S):**

<https://www.tonyrobbins.com/mind-meaning/imagery-training> <http://cscamonthly.com/5-approaches-to-mental-conditioning/> <https://www.goodthingsguy.com/opinion/top-tips-mental-performance/> <https://thepeakperformancecenter.com/educational-learning/mental-conditioning/> <https://positivepsychology.com/mentally-strong/>