

Mental toughness will get you through

Jamie Ford

Director
Foresight Institute



IF THERE was ever a time when mental toughness was an essential attribute in the workplace, it is now. Not since the depression of the 1930s has the quality of life, and the stability of business been at such great risk.

In the workplace, all manner of concerns are already playing on people's minds, becoming a distraction from the ability to perform at their best. There's concern about the security of jobs and income, paying the rent or the mortgage, keeping up with HP payments on the car and other items. For some there will be worries about maintaining a lifestyle, and ensuring that their children's education is not disrupted by having to sell the family home and move.

While some amongst us are maintaining a stiff upper lip, hiding the emotional impact and getting on as best as we can, others are letting the world at large know about their "problems". There will be very few among us who are untroubled.

In all kinds of setbacks and adversities, one thing is always observed. Some people and enterprises thrive, while others are crushed. Some weather the storms with minor damage, and are well-placed when fair weather returns, while others are overwhelmed and never recover.

Unpacking mental toughness

Let's start with the word commonly used for mental toughness – "attitude". On every occasion that I ask an audience for the word that best describes why some people do better than others, whatever their circumstances, the answer is invariably "attitude!"

With this in mind we can confidently predict that the people with the best attitude will do OK in this global financial crisis, and the businesses that invest in developing the mental toughness of their people will do OK, too. Some may even thrive.

Our attitudes are primarily caused by the way we think about the things going on in our lives. And our thinking habits have a



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huge effect on our moods and emotions. The actions we take are then motivated by our moods.

You see it every day. People who are in a bad mood act very differently from when they are in a good mood. If they change the way they are thinking about their circumstances, their moods and actions will change for the better, too.

The people who are in charge of their own thoughts, moods and emotions are the mentally tough and resilient. They are taking absolute ownership of the factors that affect their attitudes and are living above the line.

Living below the line is for those who hand over the responsibility for their moods and

emotions to others. Imagine what you would do if you had a sack full of remote controls for your moods and emotions. Would you hand them out at random to all kinds of people? Not likely, yet that is exactly what many of us do. We put other people in charge of our emotions.

What sort of thought library have you got? If we go inside the thought library of the mentally tough we find a valuable difference from the mentally fragile. What we find is that the mentally tough think about adversities and setbacks as:

Temporary – in other words, whatever is going wrong won't last forever, and may only have an impact for a short period of time.

They will be saying to themselves, "there have been financial problems around the world before, and eventually things have come right. It will be like that this time, too".

Specific – they treat setbacks as isolated events, separate from other parts of their lives. They will be saying to themselves, "the paper losses on my investments are just one aspect of life that is not looking good at the moment. I have a wonderful marriage. My kids are all doing well. The products we manufacture and the services we provide are all in demand. I'm not going to lose the plot just because one aspect of life is out of kilter just now".

Caused by a combination of personal and external factors – they will be saying to themselves, "the meltdown in the global markets has come about because of things controlled by others. I can beat myself up for my decisions on how I invested, but that won't help me find creative solutions. I'm going to focus my energy on what I have control over, starting with my own thinking". [\[ot\]](#)

Repacking mental toughness: three tips for developing your mental toughness

1. When things go wrong, check that you are thinking of them as temporary, specific, and caused by a range of factors. It's not all you.
2. Keep control of the remotes for your moods and emotions.
3. Be like bamboo. When the storms of life are battering you, bend, but don't break.

JAMIE FORD is a mental toughness and resilience consultant and director of the Foresight Institute, official suppliers to The Crusaders.