

# **Defining & Developing Mental Toughness**

**St. Charles East  
Athletics**



# ***Contact Us***

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# What is Mental Toughness?

- Performing at your best under pressure
- Staying composed despite adversity
- Focusing on what you can control
- Getting up once more than you have been knocked down
- Doing the best you can, with what you have, wherever you are



# Character Traits and Skills

- Confidence - in self and team
- Composure - in all moments
- Focus - on role and specific job
- Resilience - Failure is a lesson
- Motivation - What is the why?
- Gratitude - Be thankful for what we DO have, not focusing on what we DON'T have



# Individual Strategies

- 3-Step Reset: Recognize → Release → Refocus
- Visualization - See Success!
- Positive self-talk & power phrases
- Breathing ritual for calming
- Confidence - journal routines
- “Brush it off”
- “Flush it away”
- “Next play, not last mistake”



# Team Strategies

- “Next play” mentality
- Simulate moments in practice that bring “pressure”
- Team reflection huddles
- Accountability partners
- Positive communication
- Own pressure, not fear pressure



# Pressure Training Examples

- Free throws with consequences
- Adversity scrimmages
- Silent communication drills
- Individual goals/routines within one's role
- Add noise and situational/competitive atmosphere



# Coach/Team Implementation

- Model composure - What do they see?
- Praise mental toughness behaviors - What do they hear?
- Weekly mindset focus - Takes time!
- Consistency (such as weight training, morning routines)
- There is always an excuse **NOT** to do something





# Key Reminder

- Mental toughness **IS** trainable
- Mistakes = feedback, not failure
- Control the controllables
- Constantly battle the ***Twin Thieves***
- Let the **CHAMPION** overcome the **CRITIC**



# Messages to Share

- Pressure reveals preparation
- We each have a role in this
- Toughness is a choice
- Fear of failure and judgement rob you of opportunity
- Practice with pressure will make the “moment” easier
- Adversity **DOES NOT** discriminate
- *The greatest gift that athletics gives is the ability to deal with adversity*





Every Friday Morning @7:45am in the Studio Theater

December 14, 2025



# Buy-in vs. Believe-in

1. “This ain’t for me.”
2. “It might be okay for someone else.”
3. “I’ll give it a shot.”
4. “I can’t believe I did it any other way.”





# Physical Strength

Anybody lift weights  
once a year and expect  
great results?





# What do you see?

1 \* 9 = 9  
2 \* 9 = 18  
3 \* 9 = 27  
4 \* 9 = 36  
5 \* 9 = 45  
6 \* 9 = 54  
7 \* 9 = 63  
8 \* 9 = 72  
9 \* 9 = 81  
10 \* 9 = 91





# What do we look for?

## What does it create?

- Fear of *Failure*
- Fear of *Judgment* from others







# Is there a need?

**Most train the physical, but do not train the mental.**

**So, you end up with bigger, strong, and faster athletes that are still afraid to fail and still afraid of judgment from others.**







# PILLARS & PROGRAM

## PROGRAM

Passion

Respect

One

Grit

Reliable

Accountable

Mindful

## 10 PILLARS

1. Elite Mindset
2. Motivation and Commitment
3. Focus and Awareness
4. Self-Control and Discipline
5. Process over Outcome
6. Mental Imagery and Meditation
7. Routines and Habits of Excellence
8. Time Management and Organization
9. Leadership
10. Culture



# LIBERTYVILLE WILDCATS



**INSPIRE, INFLUENCE, EDUCATE & EMPOWER**

Remember this your lifetime through:  
Tomorrow there will be more to do.  
And failure waits for all who stay With  
some success made yesterday.  
Tomorrow you must try once more,  
And even harder than before.

— John Wooden —

AL QUOTAS

**LEADERS**  
**CULTURE**  
**BEHAVIOR**  
**RESULTS**

**Man In the Arena**

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the door of deeds could have been done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

**WILDCATS WILL**

**MENTAL PERFORMANCE**  
**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

**212°**  
the extra degree

**PUSH THE ROCK**

**SURROUND YOURSELF WITH**

**THOSE ON THE SAME MISSION AS YOU**



**PROGRAM - Passion, Respect, One, Grit, Reliable, Accountable, & Mindful**





# LIBERTYVILLE WILDCATS



**DEDICATION  
AND COMMITMENT  
ARE WHAT TRANSFER  
DREAMS INTO  
REALITIES.**



There is no such thing  
as a bad day;  
just bad moments  
that we choose  
to take with us all day long.



**PROGRAM - Passion, Respect, One, Grit, Reliable, Accountable, & Mindful**





# BFS

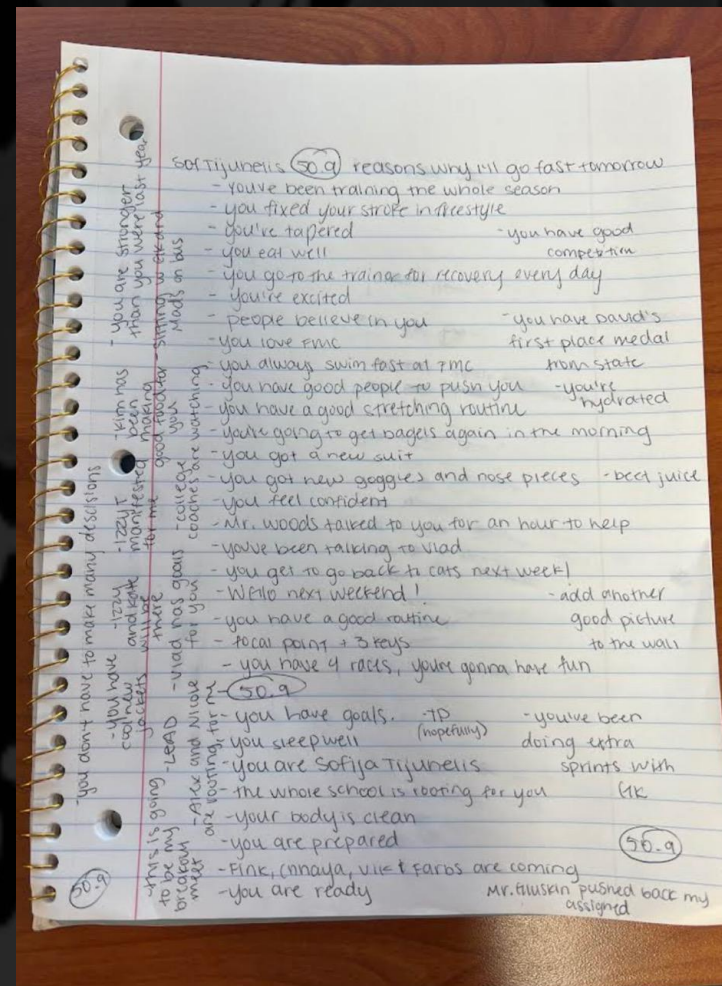
- **B**ody Language
- **F**ocus
- **S**elf-Talk
  - 3 Keys
    - Next stroke, breathe, I'm a speeding bullet







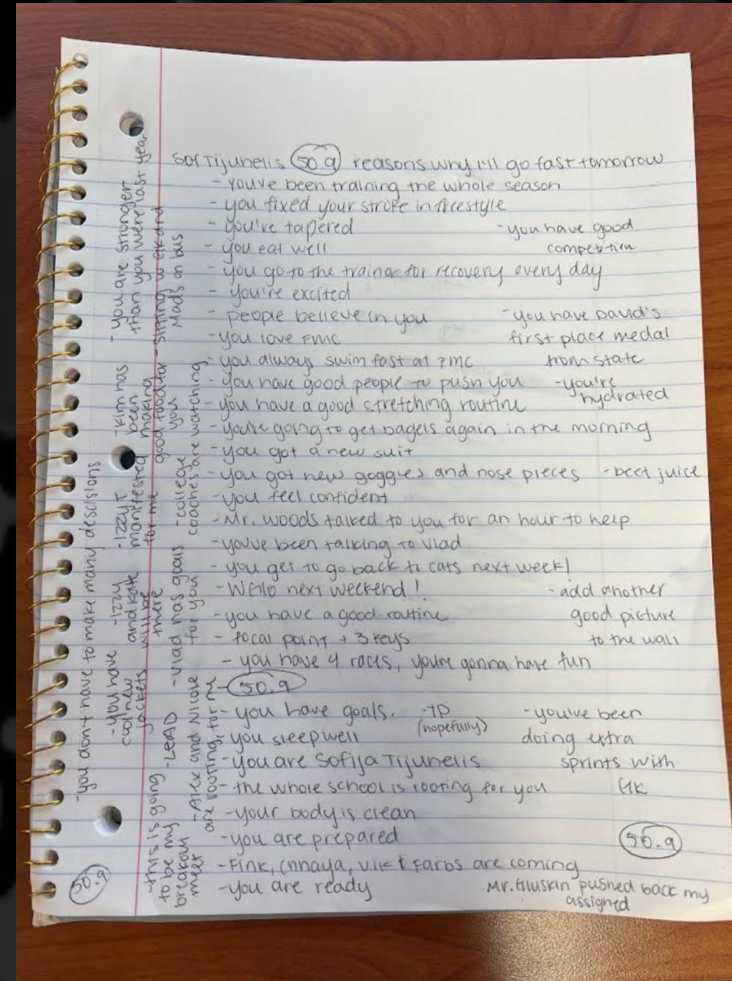
## BFS







## BFS







## Reasons I will swim fast @ OSU

- 49) Friends watching on livestream  
50) well-better-hows  
51) you've swam these events all season  
52) hype music playlist  
53) coaches from home following along  
54) crazy reaction time!  
55) Lane 1 legends  
56) your free is so much faster!  
57) 27 laps during fast 50 practice (and 25 mids)  
58) you know exactly what to do!  
59) you've always done this!
- 1) So, so, so much training and repetition of good habits
  - 2) Incredibly supportive team & environment
  - 3) PT has been making your knees stronger
  - 4) Michael and Zach are going to OSU (fun)
  - 5) Mom is coming to watch!
  - 6) Meetings with Michael all season long
  - 7) Improved underwaters
  - 8) Best times at ET meet!
  - 9) Best times at Texas Iwik!
  - 10) 1:49 broken 2 free on Tues.
  - 11) 1:59.1 broken 2 back Tues. at big meets
  - 12) Ohio State is a fast pool (pressure)
  - 13) New tech suit
  - 14) New dome cap
  - 15) New goggles
  - 16) Wearing new compressions on bus ride
  - 17) No time change
  - 18) Ice bath Thurs. morning
  - 19) Normatech Thurs. night
  - 20) Ahead of schoolwork (don't worry abt it)
  - 21) Automatic finals
  - 22) Body is clean & fueled (power stance)
  - 23) Built muscle (bod pods)
  - 24) Worked with Casey on nutrition
  - 25) TAPER!
  - 26) I'm excited!
  - 27) New warm up
  - 28) Dynamic routine
  - 29) You have goals written down (54.7, 1:59)
  - 30) People believe in me!
  - 31) I believe in myself
  - 32) Cute pink headphones I wear at meets
  - 33) you are ready!
  - 34) Warm and fuzzies
  - 35) I always do well
  - 36) it is going to be fun
  - 37) Cool new TYR Penner suits
  - 38) breakout meet!!
  - 39) long time between sessions
  - 40) Confident!!
  - 41) Stand tall
  - 42) you
  - 43) hydrated!
  - 44) week off after this!
  - 45) reviewing race vids
  - 46) cool gear
  - 47) Vlk bday home!
  - 48) cool gear

## Reasons why I will swim fast @ OSU <sup>P.2</sup>

- 86) I do weighted pull ups now!  
87) some super heavy clean reps  
88) Circuit at start of season  
89) Staff encouragement  
90) no mornings this past week  
91) longer cooldowns  
92) own row on the bus  
93) hard work during winter training  
94) Eide's relay start advice  
95) massages!  
96) good sleep habits all season  
97) nice hotel + close to pool
- 58) my aerobic has gotten so much better
  - 59) I can do NB 50's now!
  - 60) practice holding my breath in back B.O's
  - 61) I don't have to wake up super early
  - 62) I always sleep great at hotels!
  - 63) Going to do recovery with Dom during the meet
  - 64) weather is similar to P&H
  - 65) List of key points for prelim swims
  - 66) WCFY suit from ET!
  - 67) Team will be cheering loud!
  - 68) brought my foam roller
  - 69) brought my lucky PJ's
  - 70) brought my sweat set to be comfy during mid-day naps
  - 71) whoop data has been helpful
  - 72) SHAVE!!
  - 73) you are currently living a life that you used to dream about.
  - 74) "Find the hero inside yourself"
  - 75) "Dominate the day!"
  - 76) Funny group going to OSU
  - 77) no on-the-road exams
  - 78) GK birthday tomorrow!
  - 79) wed morning practices where my arms die
  - 80) Shack room!!! YAY!
  - 81) Boo, possibly?
  - 82) You've done well at meets even after getting sick
  - 83) protein grind
  - 84) Freshman year is so hard! I have handled it so well!!
  - 85) talking with Kiera
  - 98) eating healthy
  - 99) I love competing
  - 100) I am going to have fun.





Ever hear this?

“I need you to focus!”







# Texas Baseball





# Concentration Grids





$$E + R = O$$

Event + Response = Outcome



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