

THE BIG IDEAS

10-Minute Workout

A quick look at the basics.

6 + 2 + 7

= A magic formula.

Thought Replacement

Swap out the - for a +. Every time.

MT Goal Goodness

Seven key ideas.

Be Solution Focused

Relentless.

+1 Game

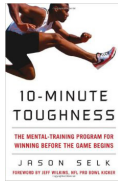
Improvement over perfection.

Ready, Fire, Aim

Just shoot!

Two Rules

Never, ever (!) give up.



10-Minute Toughness

The Mental-Training Program for Winning Before the Game Begins

BY JASON SELK · MCGRAW-HILL © 2009 · 198 PAGES

“While other sport psychology books do a good job of telling you *what* to think, 10-Minute Toughness will teach you exactly *how* to develop the mental toughness needed to formulate and maintain these productive thoughts. It provides individuals with the details needed to accomplish the development of mental toughness. If you complete the mental-strength program provided here, you cannot help but become mentally tougher...”

I have presented the 10-Minute Toughness mental-training plan not only to athletes and coaches but also to business executives and corporate teams, performance artists, and many other types of clients. This book will give you the tools to customize the program for your own needs. Whether you’re an aspiring athlete, a middle manager looking to connect better with your team and get ahead, or someone striving for personal fitness, mental toughness is the common source for the drive necessary to bring your goals within reach. I use athletes and competitive sports as my primary examples in the pages that follow, but the principles of mental strength training are the same for competitors on and off the field.”

~ Jason Selk from *10-Minute Toughness*

Mental toughness.

If we want to optimize our lives and actualize our potentials, we MUST get our minds strong!

This book is a *great* look at how to go about doing that. It’s a quick-reading, engaging look at [Jason Selk’s](#) practical, 10-minute plan to mental toughness. (Quick link to get the book [here](#).)

(And: If you’re looking to really feast on mental training, check out our Notes on [Mind Gym](#), [With Winning in Mind](#), [Attainment](#), [Unbeatable Mind](#), and [The Art of Mental Training](#).)

As with all great books, this one’s packed with wisdom. Let’s jump straight in!

We’ll start with a quick look at the 10-Minute Mental Workout:

10-MINUTE TOUGHNESS MENTAL WORKOUT

1. **The Centering Breath.** A fifteen-second deep breath designed to control arousal states.
2. **The Performance Statement.** A specifically tailored self-statement useful for increasing training and competitive focus.
3. **The Personal Highlight Reel.** An advanced form of visualization allowing athletes to increase skill refinement and consistency.
4. **The Identity Statement.** A concrete self-statement proven to enhance self-image and performance confidence.

“The 10-Minute Toughness program is simply about identifying and utilizing a handful of mental tools that are proven to help people perform more consistently.”

~ Jason Selk

5. **The Centering Breath.** As in step one, a biologically established relaxation technique used to increase the potential to perform well under pressure.”

That’s really solid.

Combine that with some goal setting mojo and you have the basic structure of your 10-Minute workout. Check out the book for more specific details on all that.

For now, let’s have fun with some great Ideas!

6 + 2 + 7 = A MAGIC FORMULA

“Remember that when you are in a pressure situation, you will feel like rushing the breath. This is when you truly need it the most. If you can’t maintain the full fifteen seconds, that is a sure indication you need to take another one.”

~ Jason Selk

“I have tried to simplify diaphragm breathing by qualifying a good centering breath as one that lasts fifteen seconds. The formula is 6-2-7: breathe in for six seconds, hold for two, and breathe out for seven seconds. Individuals under the age of twelve should try to have the centering breath last eleven seconds (4-2-5). I have found that if players take a deep breath that lasts fifteen seconds, they will in fact get air into the diaphragm, and the heart rate will slow. My personal findings indicate that attaching time to the centering breath is more effective than monitoring oneself getting air into the diaphragm. It is much easier to count to fifteen than it is to determine whether the air has entered the diaphragm.”

6 + 2 + 7.

That’s the magic formula for a great centering breath. Let’s try it right now.

Inhale to 6.

Hold for 2.

Exhale to 7.

(Seriously. Take a deep breath or three right now!)

We’ve played with different rhythms of breathing in various Notes (such as [Kelly McGonigal’s](#) 4-6 from *The Willpower Instinct*; [Mark Divine’s](#) 5-5-5-5 box breathing from *Unbeatable Mind*).

I *really* like this one—both the timing and the fact that, by focusing on hitting 15 seconds via counting to 6 then 2 then 7 we simultaneously focus our minds (taking it OFF of whatever is stressing us out) while re-setting our nervous system with the truly deep breath.

This centering breath is Step #1 in Jason’s 10-Minute mental-training program. If we want to get our minds right, we need to start by getting our PHYSIOLOGY right.

And, there’s simply *no* better way to do that than via our breath. Period.

ALL the great teachers—whether we’re talking about sports psychologists, Buddhist meditation teachers or cognitive therapists—come back to this fact again and again and again.

It’s a super (!) powerful tool. Yet, for some reason we forget to do it. (Hah! And d’oh!)

The next time you’re in a pressure situation—whether that’s performing on Broadway or pitching at Fenway or giving a presentation in a board room or diffusing an argument at the dinner table—TAKE A DEEP CENTERING BREATH.

6 + 2 + 7 = Magic.

THOUGHT REPLACEMENT

“The key to using thought replacement in sports is to identify what thought is most helpful for performance. If you determine what you want to accomplish in any given situation then lock your mind on what it takes to achieve that goal, you will have a much better chance of reaping the rewards. This is true in any setting—business, sport, or even social. As often as possible, choose to think about the path to success rather than the obstacles in your way. You have to

“From a mental standpoint, the most tried-and-true way to increase performance is to improve confidence. Self-talk is one of the most influential agents for honing self-confidence. Extensive research in the sport psychology world confirms that an athlete’s internal dialogue significantly influences performance.”

~ Jason Selk

"In my opinion, the essence of mental toughness is the ability to replace negative thinking with thoughts that are centered on performance cues or that contribute to improved self-confidence."

~ Jason Selk

decide what you want and then put your energy into acquiring it. Don't wait for good luck to find you. Go out and create your luck.

The only reliable method for overcoming self-doubt and negative thinking is to supply something else for your mind to process."

Thought replacement.

That's another HUGE key to mental toughness. A few key points to reflect on here.

First, know that self-confidence is the fastest way to boost performance. One of the key drivers of self-confidence? Self-talk. We need to ensure our internal dialogue supports our highest performance.

Know this as well: Our minds cannot hold two different thoughts at any given time.

That's an exciting fact.

And, if we're committed to peak performance, it's an invitation to REPLACE negative thoughts with positive ones. Quickly and consistently. Jason calls this "thought replacement." It's big.

Notice how often your mind drifts to thoughts of worst-case scenarios or the obstacles in your way to success (in any domain—whether it's entrepreneurially or relationship-wise!). And DISCIPLINE yourself to focus on the outcomes you WANT rather than the things you think are getting in the way.

Part 2 of Jason's Mental Toughness workout is repeating what he calls your "Performance Statement." Jason says it "is a type of self-talk designed to help athletes zoom in on one specific thought to enhance performance consistency."

Basically, a phrase that helps us stay focused on who we are when we're most on.

Examples from his clients include a baseball pitcher who, rather than stressing out about how he hates pitching to left-handed batters, thinks: "*Stay back, pitch for contact.*" A hockey player struggling with his shot may say, "*Relaxed and smooth; my shot is compact and powerful.*"

I'm currently playing with: "*Calm and confident. Breathe. Smile. Trust yourself and let it rip.*"

How about *you*? What's a little phrase that'll help you perform at your best?!

P.S. You know the whole, "Don't think of a pink elephant" thing? Once someone says that, it's hard to get it out of your head, eh? But it's easy to beat. If you don't want to think about a pink elephant, just intensely focus on SOMETHING else—maybe a blue elephant or a green tree or the ocean or whatever!

You just need to replace one thought with another one. We can escort that pink elephant out of our minds. Just like we can usher out the negative thoughts! (Let's do that!)

MENTAL TOUGH GOAL GOODNESS

"Once you have blocked out your goals and your personal vision, you owe it to yourself to give your best effort to meet those challenges. Giving your best effort means doing anything that will help you become the slightest bit better, and the research clearly confirms the benefit inherent in using goals. The 10-MT goal-setting program relies on seven principles for optimal effectiveness. Here's a recap:

1. **Process over product.** Each day, focus on your process goals, or "what it takes" to achieve your product goals.
2. **No excuses.** Take full accountability for growth by not offering excuses for underachieving.
3. **Go public.** Write your goals down, and tell others what they are, to increase your consciousness of your goals and your accountability for reaching them.

"An Olympic gold medal wrestling coach once told me that there are two principal types of athletes, those with talent and those with work ethic, and the greatest possess both."

~ Jason Selk

4. **Keep goals alive.** On a daily basis, fill out your Success Log to enhance motivation and results in practices and competitions.
5. **Vision integrity.** Choose goals aligned with who you want to be and how you want to live.
6. **Personal reward preference.** Attach rewards to your goals to burnish motivation and commitment.
7. **MP100 + 20.** Let goals embellish and control your work ethic by aspiring to follow 100 percent of training plans and committing a further 20 percent of your energy into outworking the competition."

Jason has some really cool goal setting wisdom and exercises that are worth checking out.

If we want to be mentally tough, we need goals that inspire us and that are aligned with our highest vision for ourselves.

What are *your* goals?!

(We're going to leave it at that for now. :)

BEING RELENTLESSLY SOLUTION FOCUSED

"When we think about problems, our problems grow. When we think about solutions, our solutions grow. Thinking about solutions makes life much more enjoyable and allows us to become much more successful."

~ Jason Selk

"I recently had a client ask me, "What does it really mean to be solution focused?" Being solution focused means keeping your thoughts centered on what you want from life and what it takes to achieve what you want, as opposed to allowing thoughts of self-doubt and concern to occupy the mind. The difference between a solution focus and a *relentless* solution focus is how often you commit to replacing negative thinking with solutions.

Personal research tells me that most people achieve solution-focused thought about 40 percent of the time, while individuals with a *relentless* solution focus replace 100 percent of undesirable thinking with thoughts emphasizing solutions."

Another key to mental toughness: We want to be *solution focused*—focused on what we want and what it will take to get there. NOT focused on all the things going wrong.

But not just kind-sorta 40% of the time. 100% of the time. We want to be *RELENTLESSLY* solution focused. As in ALL.THE.TIME.

Got a challenge in your life? As Jason advises, ALWAYS have a solution on the board!

He tells us to ask ourselves: "What is one thing I can do that could make this better?"

ONE thing! Not 72 or 389. Just one little thing.

Don't allow yourself to say, "I don't know what to do." Come up with an answer to that question! It doesn't have to be perfect—just *one* thing that moves you in the right direction.

So... Any challenges in your life? What's one thing you could do to make it better?

Here's to being *relentlessly* focused on solutions!

THE +1 GAME: IMPROVEMENT OVER PERFECTION

"Put the +1 concept into action to prevent feelings that plague your mind with unnecessary stress. The best way to climb a mountain is one step at a time..."

Gradual improvement over time brings about vibrant and sustainable growth. I have observed that when individuals emphasize improvement over perfection, their progress accelerates. We frequently get confounded by how much work it will take for our problems to be completely resolved. We become paralyzed, unable to take action toward improvement. You do not need to arrive at perfection; you need to slowly but surely make things better."

"Believe in yourself and your ability to make gradual improvements, and the results will follow."

~ Jason Selk

This is good.

Jason calls it "The +1 Concept."

Basic idea: Take things one step at a time. Focus on small, incremental successes and KNOW that, OVER THE LONG RUN (!!!) those small successes will add up to excellence and outstanding results.

Reminds me of some gems from [Darren Hardy's *The Compound Effect*](#) and [Joe De Sena's *Spartan Up!*](#) (See Notes on both.)

Hardy's formula? He tells us: *"The Compound Effect is the principle of reaping huge rewards from a series of small, smart choices. What's most interesting about this process to me is that, even though the results are massive, the steps, in the moment, don't feel significant. Whether you're using this strategy for improving your health, relationships, finances, or anything else for that matter, the changes are so subtle, they're almost imperceptible. These small changes offer little or no immediate result, no big win, no obvious I-told-you-so payoff. So why bother?"*

Most people get tripped up by the simplicity of the Compound Effect. ... What they don't realize is that these small, seemingly insignificant steps completed consistently over time will create a radical difference."

Formula → "Small, Smart Choices + Consistency + Time = RADICAL DIFFERENCE."

And De Sena reminds us that if we focus on the enormity of our challenge, we're going to paralyze ourselves. We need to focus on the next telephone pole. Genius wisdom: *"The way to get through anything mentally painful is to take it a little at a time. The mind can't handle dealing with a massive iceberg of pain in front of it, but it can deal with short nuggets that will come to an end. So instead of thinking, Ugh, I've got twenty-four miles to go, focus on making it to the next telephone pole in the distance. Whether you're running twenty or one hundred and twenty miles at a time, the distance has to be tackled mentally and physically one mile at a time. The ability to compartmentalize pain into these small bite sizes is key."*

Remember: We're not looking for leaps into perfection.

That's an extraordinarily efficient way to paralyze ourselves. Just play the +1 Game. Focus on little successes.

"Improvement over perfection."

Just get a little better. Take the next baby step. Knock over the next domino. Get to the next telephone pole. And then the next... And then the next... And then... EXCELLENCE! :)

READY, FIRE, AIM!

"Emphasizing the +1 concept helps people get started. An old riddle asks, "What is the best way to eat an elephant?" Answer: "One bite at a time." Lanny Bassham, an Olympic gold medal shooter calls this handy precept the "ready, fire, aim" principle. Lanny claims that in sports and in life, people spend too much time aiming at the bull's-eye and not enough time shooting at it. Rather than placing so much emphasis on getting ready and aiming, go ahead and take a shot. Taking the shot gets you started and also lets you gauge how far off the mark you are. Make adjustments, but keep shooting until you get closer and closer, and eventually you will hit the bull's eye."

Ready, fire, aim. Another really good one.

And, I love the fact that an Olympic gold medal SHOOTER provides the advice. (Hah!) Check out our Notes on [Lanny's OUTSTANDING book, *With Winning in Mind*](#) for more goodness.

We come back to this a fair amount. Because it's huge.

"Being a giant in any field is not supposed to be easy, but the status is available if you want it. You can choose to be permanently successful by maintaining the relentless solution focus."

~ Jason Selk

As I've mentioned before, I was first introduced to this idea by John Mackey, co-Founder + co-CEO of Whole Foods. When I interviewed him, he told me that he actually prefers "FIRE, Ready, Aim." (Another Hah! Here's the [full interview](#) + the [snippet](#) of that part of our chat.)

We can aim at the target alllllll day long. And never *do* *anything.* Much better to take a shot, see how we're doing, adjust, and take another shot, eh?

Ready? Fire!

TWO RULES

"Anytime you are in the presence of adversity, ask yourself, "What is the one thing I can do that could make this better?" Force yourself to give a substantive answer. ("I don't know" is not an answer that will help.) You do not need perfection; all you need is improvement. Keep asking yourself the question until your problem is no longer an issue. Follow two simple rules to ensure success—Rule number one: Never, ever give up. Rule number two: Follow rule number one.

You and only you decide how successful you will be in sport and in life. If you will commit yourself to staying focused on what you want and being relentless about going and getting it, you will be in control. It starts with your belief in yourself, the belief that you can accomplish anything."

Love it.

Remember our key question: "What is the one thing I can do that could make this better?"

Always (!) be *relentlessly* solution focused. And NEVER give up. Ever.

You got this. Let's do this!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.