



HANGIN' (MENTALLY) TOUGH

BY SAL CHAVEZ, MSED, LAT, ATC

Staying physically active and fit can have a positive impact on your life. Check! This is an expected adage from an athletic trainer, but how often do you consider your mental strength in tandem with your physical strength? Mental strength and toughness can be described as the emotional and cognitive skills of over-coming adverse circumstances and reframing from negative thoughts. Building mental strength allows you the ability to handle stress, have healthy relationships, learn well and work well, and balance our work and family!

MENTALLY STRONG

So, why should we prioritize a strong mind? Studies have shown that people with high mental toughness still deal with anxiety, stress, and pressure, but they're able to better cope with such situations and approach them as surmountable challenges. Here are a few benefits:

- **Stress Management:** Handling stress can be the most impactful method to enhance your overall well-being. Reduced stress levels correlate with a diminished risk of depression, anxiety, and other physical health conditions.
- **Motivation:** Individuals with strong mental resilience possess a heightened internal locus of control, signifying their belief in having command over their circumstances. This sense of control serves as a driving force, inspiring them to persist, evolve, and actively seek solutions.
- **Courage:** Our self-confidence is elevated, instilling a greater belief in our capability to discover solutions. Crucially, we hold the assurance that we can endure the worst-case scenario, should it materialize.
- **Adaptability:** Strengthening our capacity to seek solutions enhances our agility and adaptability.

It's good to note that mental toughness is a skill that can be developed over time and refined through practice, self-reflection, and learning from experiences. Though it may come naturally to some individuals, anyone can work on strengthening their mind for a more resilient, fulfilling life.



Sal Chavez, MSED, LAT, ATC || Sal was born and raised in the south side of Chicago. He enjoys finding and trying a new coffee shop as often as possible, reading books/comics, taming his plants, shooting three pointers in peoples faces in his basketball league, and staying physically active. Sal graduated from Northern Illinois University where he received his Bachelor's of Science in Athletic Training, and also received his Master's of Science in Sports Studies from Southern Illinois University.

Work Right NW is changing the way that companies view workplace hazards. Our focus is on educating the workforce to prevent injury. We provide access to Injury Prevention Specialists in the workplace to address the early signs of discomfort. We are changing the industry one company at a time by helping one person at a time.

#GYMR - GET YOUR MIND RIGHT

We all know that work can be stressful in multiple ways, so it should be an easy decision to improve skills that help us navigate the stressors we face when working in the industrial setting.

For the industrial athlete, a positive mental health state is likely to result in better enthusiasm and dedication to tasks. Workers with poor mental health can lead to reduced engagement at work and strained relationships, leading to a negative effect on work performance.

Here are some examples of how to get started:

- **Recognize your emotions:** Work can be taxing, so check-in with yourself and know your feelings are important.
- **Practicing Self Compassion:** Work on silencing your internal critic and treat yourself with kindness and gentleness, much like you would do for a friend.
- **Assess your challenge:** Sometimes, we perceive minor inconveniences as major catastrophes. Drawing that distinction can prove beneficial.
- **Mindfulness:** Engaging in mindfulness enhances your capacity to respond rather than react impulsively. Examples are breathing techniques like box breathing or one-minute meditation or yoga!
- **Work with a mental health professional:** A therapist or counselor can exponentially improve your mental toughness.
- **Healthy lifestyle:** Engaging in activities like regular exercise, maintaining a balanced diet, and ensuring adequate sleep not only contributes to a healthy lifestyle but also supports emotional resilience. 🌱