

Mental Toughness – its importance in the new world of apprenticeships

*The key to Performance, Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour
MTQ48*

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What is MENTAL TOUGHNESS?

“A ***personality trait*** which determines in ***large part*** how people deal with challenge, opportunity, stressors and pressure
irrespective of circumstances”

It's universal – it's applicable in many walks of life.

Think of it as “Mindset” or “Attitude”

What is MENTAL TOUGHNESS?

It is not about being

....

Macho

Domineering

Aggressive

It is about being

- The best that you can be
- Comfortable in your own skin
- Accepting that life can be challenging but that it is full of opportunities as well as threats

**There is a strong positive
theme in MT**

Is it important? Yes!

- **Performance** – explains up to 25% of the variation in attainment
- **Behaviour** – more engaged, more positive, more “can do”
- **Wellbeing** – more contentment, better stress management ,
- **Aspirations** – more positive about opportunity, open to learning

Transition – Managing Change – Leadership – Career Management
Employability - Attainment – Retention - etc

All remarkably well evidenced

Is it important? Yes!

“Soft Skills” are now identified as important – alongside skills and knowledge. This is about employability – attitude!

These are the skills that most employers want to see. They include:

- Creative thinking
- Independent enquiry
- Reflective learning
- Team Working
- Self Management
- Effective participation

These reflect Mindset ... mental toughness ... “how we think”

The Four C's

Mental Toughness has 4 components:

- **Control**
- **Commitment**
- **Challenge**
- **Confidence**

Which combine to provide an
overall measure of Mental Toughness

Think of these as aspects of mindset.



Control

“Can do”. Describes to what extent you believe you control and shape what happen to you

There are two components :

Life-Control

Emotional Control



Someone with a strong sense of Life Control

Believe they make a difference

Happily multi-task

Is good at planning & organisation

Their cup is half-full. Everything is possible.

Work hard to clear blockages

I might not understand it right now but I can master it

Those with good emotional control

Manage their emotional response to situations

Influence the emotional response of others

Are difficult to provoke or annoy

Deal well with difficult people

Mask anxiety – maintain poise

Deal well with bullying behaviour

Commitment

“stick-ability”. Describes to what extent you will **“make promises”** keep those promises. Two elements:

- **Goal Orientation**
- **Achieving**



Those who are goal orientated

Like working to goals and targets

Targets **motivate** them – a source of drive

Set personal bests and seek to better them

Visualise success and feel it

Like being tested – an opportunity to show what they can do

Those who do what it takes

Will work hard

Focus and concentrate

Will self sacrifice to get there

Conscientious

Abhor failure

Will keep promises – to selves and others

Are focused even if they didn't set the goals

Challenge

“drive”. Describes to what extent you challenges, change, adversity & variety as opportunities or as threats. Two elements:

- **Managing Risk**
- **Learning from Experience**



Those who manage risk

Will stretch themselves

Like trying new things

Not afraid of change – they embrace it

Readily volunteer for new activities

Like meeting new people, places,

Seek out challenging opportunities – opt for the difficult over the easy

Those who learn from experience:

See setbacks as opportunities for learning

Enjoy learning new things

Have an optimistic view

Aspirational

Try anything once

Reflective

Confidence

“Self Belief”. Describes to what extent you believe you have the ability to deal with what you will face There are two components :

Confidence in Abilities

Interpersonal Confidence



Those with Confidence in Abilities

Don't need others to tell them they can do it or to encourage them.

Have that inner belief in their abilities

Will use their abilities

Happily to engage in discussion even if it takes them into the unknown

The Interpersonally Confident

Will ask questions to check understanding

Wont allow others to orally dominate

Will often provide a full response to questions

Will show their abilities

Will argue their corner – especially if they believe they are right

The Four C's – a summary

Mental Toughness Scale	What this means ... what does MTQ48 assess
<i>CONTROL</i>	<i>Life Control</i> – I really believe I can do it
	<i>Emotional Control</i> – I can manage my emotions and others' emotions
<i>COMMITMENT</i>	<i>Goal Setting</i> – I promise to do it – I like working to goals
	<i>Achieving</i> – I'll do what it takes to keep my promises and hit my goals
<i>CHALLENGE</i>	<i>Risk Taking</i> – I will push myself – I am driven to succeed
	<i>Learning from Experience</i> – even setbacks are opportunities for learning
<i>CONFIDENCE</i>	<i>In Abilities</i> – I believe I have the ability to do it – or can acquire the ability
	<i>Interpersonal Confidence</i> – I can influence others as much as they do me.

Together these give rise to **Mental Toughness**

How does this fit into current thinking

Surprisingly well!

The last 15 years has seen more focus on this area. Including:

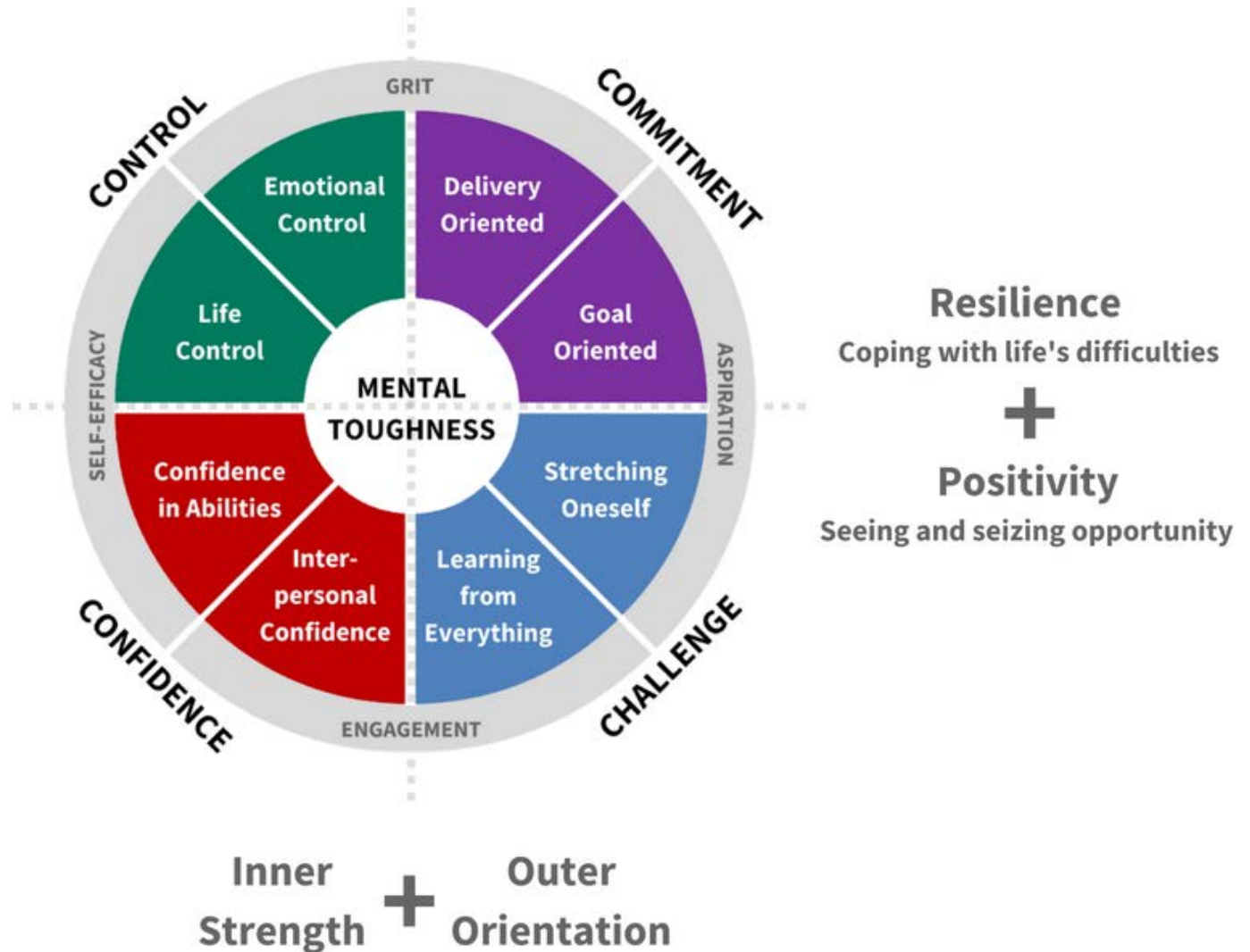
- **Carol Dweck**
- **Martin Seligman**
- **Angela Duckworth**
- **Paul Tough**

They all say the same thing!

- **Jim Collins – “Good to Great”**
- **Maslow – Esteem and Self Actualisation**



How does this fit into current thinking?



Can we assess it confidently?

We can – MTQ48

- Very easy to use
- Short Training period
- Range of reports
- Ability to measure distance travelled – change
- Generates a huge amount of useful information



Summary

OVERALL MENTAL TOUGHNESS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CHALLENGE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

COMMITMENT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CONFIDENCE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CONFIDENCE IN ABILITIES

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

INTERPERSONAL CONFIDENCE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CONTROL

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

EMOTIONAL CONTROL

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

LIFE CONTROL

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How
can we
assess
it?

Mental Toughness Development

Can we develop mental toughness and its benefits? We can!!

The Mental Toughness model is a fairly complete process

Understanding – the model provides structure



Diagnosis – the measure enables diagnosis, assessment and measurement at a useful level – the 4Cs

What do we need to develop/improve? Where is it best to start?



Interventions – ability to direct interventions better–works with any intervention strategies.



Evaluation – the ability to measure change and link it to action.

Really important

Mental Toughness Development

Positive thinking – affirmations, think three positives, turning negatives into positives, etc

Visualisation – guided imaging, using your head to practice, etc

Anxiety Control – relaxation techniques, breathing, etc

Attentional Control – focus, dealing with interruptions

Goal setting – SMART, balancing goals, how to deal with big goals, etc

The test itself + feedback – people respond to the feedback

*“Showing people
how to be the best
they can be”*

All experiential, most simple & short & easily built into curriculum.

Mental Toughness Development Toolkits

Number Grid Concentration Exercise



Running the exercise - Paper and pencil version- run in up to 4 cycles, enabling learning from each cycle to be applied to the next attempt.

1. You need a stopwatch (on your smart phone) and copies of the number grid to enable attendees to complete it 4 times. Students need a pen or pencil.
2. Explain that students will do an exercise which will "test" their ability to focus. They must also follow your instructions closely...and must not cheat.
3. Issue a sheet to each person (say, sheet with Grids A and B). Ask to place the sheet in front of them with Grid B facing upwards.
4. Explain that:

When I say "GO" you can turn the sheet over and work on the Number Grid which is now facing up (Grid A). This avoids people "cheating" by looking ahead.

Turning the sheet over, you need to find 00, cross it off, then 1, cross it off and so on. You must do this strictly in sequence - no cheating - no skipping numbers.

You have 90 seconds. The last number crossed off will obviously be your score.

5. Run one round. Shout "Stop" when time is up. You can use different time intervals - up to 3 minutes works.

Teacher Review

Ask how many scored more than 25 (rare), more than 20, more than 15 and less than 15. Most first time scores are around the 12 - 18 mark.

Ask the students with the highest score how they achieved that. Similarly with the students with the lowest score ask what they found difficult or challenging.

Encourage short discussion so that all learn ideas about improving their scores.

6. Re-run the exercise three more times, each time challenge students to improve their scores.

Teacher Review - after each round

Ask how many have improved and how many have worse scores.

Congratulate those who have improved their scores and ask them to share "What did you do this time that you didn't do before". This shows learning.

Over time everyone should improve on their original score and will be concentrating like mad.

Encourage students to:

- Reflect on what they have done and what they have learned
- Identify what they can do to improve concentration
- Think how they can apply this to coursework, study, reading, etc.



Number Grid Concentration Exercise



Background

This is an exercise which is engaging and illustrates the value of repeated practice as well as concentration. It involves everyone in debate. It has the advantage that it has a built in scoring mechanism which enables progression to be assessed.

Improving Attention Control i.e. the ability to focus longer and to focus better can produce some of the biggest boost to productivity, learning and wellbeing. Studies show that it is possible to improve attention span from an (UK) average of 8 minutes to 45+ minutes. Not only enabling students to be more productive but it takes the stress out of such activities.

Discussion Guides:

Why do students think their score has changed (hopefully up)? Do people feel more positive and more focused?

What difference does this make for them? E.g. when reading or writing?

Why do they think concentration helps performance, wellbeing and behaviour?

Reflection will usually produce a crop of answers around three themes:

1. Techniques - often to do with organising themselves
2. Setting goals and targets and steadily working towards them.
3. Concentrating and blocking out distractions...By the 4th cycle students will often be so focused on the exercise that they fail to notice what anyone else is doing.

This illustrates that improving focus can be learned and that most can work it out from themselves or by talking to others. This is experiential learning.

Support Materials & Resources

Pre-printed A4 sheets specially designed for this with double sided grids are available in pads of 50 from www.aqr.co.uk

An on-line version is available on <http://www.salticid.com/concentration.htm>

The grid is automatically refreshed randomly each use.

It is impossible to cheat. You can alter the dimensions of the grid to make it more difficult over time.

It assesses time taken to complete a grid, which makes it useful for developing attention span.

It is useful for students who want to practice learning how to focus better and for longer at home.



Applications In Apprenticeships

Apprentices and Learners:

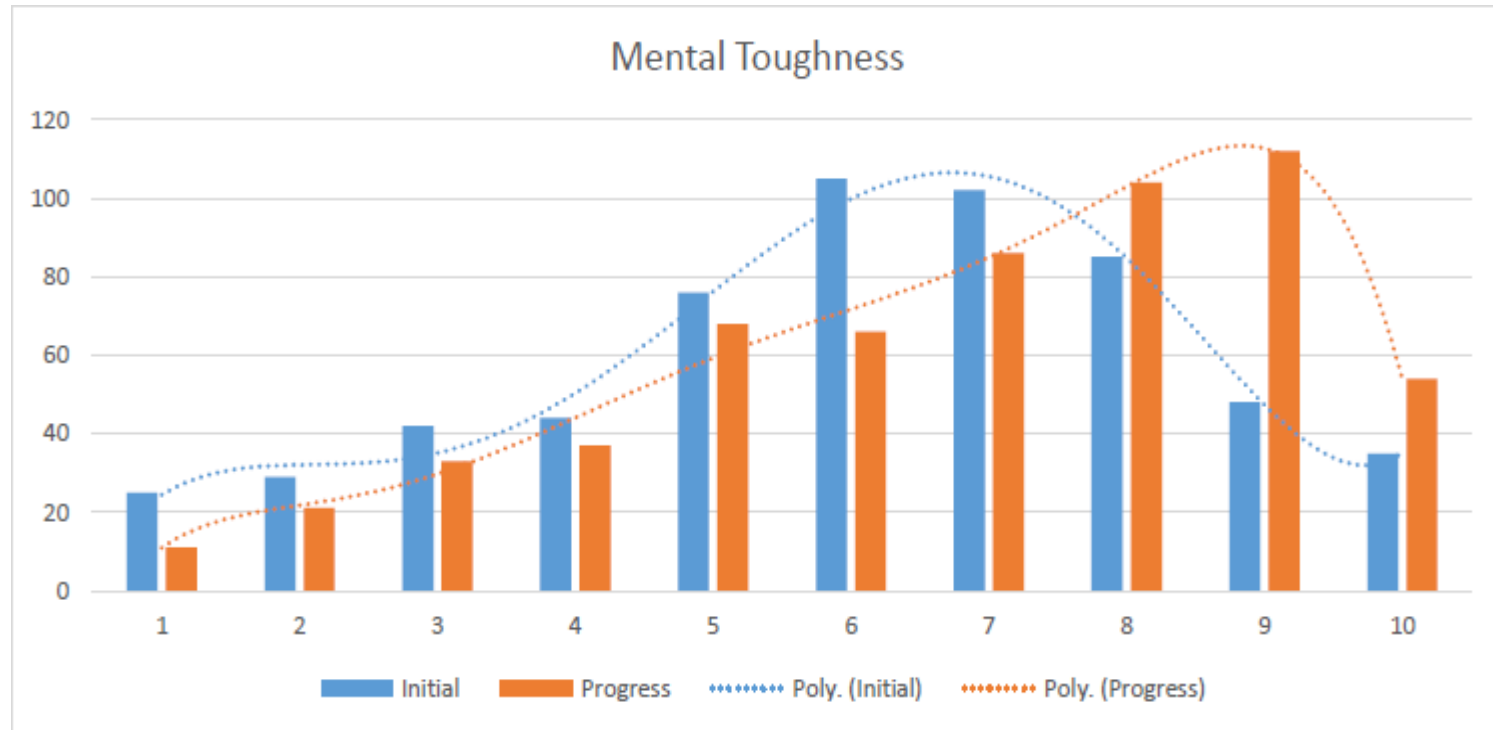
- Retention
- Getting going quickly
- On programme behaviour
- Attainment
- Wellbeing
- Motivation and sense of achievement

Staff:

- Leadership
- Stress Management
- Attainment
- Wellbeing
- Motivation and sense of achievement

Research confirms bottom line benefits too

A Case Study - Kingswood



Assessing progress with 592 apprentices

Retention has been 100%!!

Profiles for each scale shows where most progress is being made

So ... the benefits of looking at this

- Helps to understand something about people which is fundamental to their performance and wellbeing
- Easy to use framework – it applies to all soft skills development
- Ability to evaluate – reliably – what you are doing with your people.
- Its an enabler – which translates into personal success and greater impact

Questions?... and Further Information

Thank you for listening

Any Questions?

For more information or direct
queries please contact

headoffice@agr.co.uk

To trial the MTQ48 foc, attendees
can e-mail the same address

