



Educational Council Consortium

Tips for Educators and Parents

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Educational Council

Our Vision:

"To assist school districts and their communities to implement innovative educational solutions and to promote healthy life choices for students."

The Consortium supports the efforts of the member school districts to grow healthy school communities.

Our monthly wellness tips are offered with the hope that they can be added to your educational and parenting toolkits.

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Monthly Tip: Mental Toughness

At this point in the school year, you may have noticed that some students manage to stay focused and make progress in spite of seemingly insurmountable personal obstacles. These students grow and thrive despite tough circumstances, exemplifying a characteristic that many of us desire - mental toughness.

Psychologist Laurence Miller has studied mental toughness and has identified skills that the mentally resilient utilize during tough times. Confidence, motivation and courage are key strategies described by Miller.

The mentally tough are confident, in that they expect to succeed and persevere, and even draw strength from the difficult situations they face. The mentally tough are motivated, take appropriate risks, embrace new challenges and practice the skills they need to get through tough times. They are also courageous, seeing stress as a normal part of living and a chance to grow and prosper. They know that life can be hard and yet they embrace the challenge. When life is stressful, they stay focused and manage to make progress despite the adversity all around them.

Researcher Salvatore Maddi believes that approaching stressful life circumstances with an attitude of mental toughness results in hardiness. Hardiness develops when we face tough life circumstances and grow. Hardiness assists our growth and development both in life circumstances that are extraordinarily stressful as well as everyday stresses that we all face.

How can we help more of our students, or ourselves, become mentally tough?

First, help students check their expectations. Life is tough, each year is supposed to be tougher than the previous year because they are older, stronger and smarter than they were the previous year.

Next, help students embrace stressful circumstances and challenges as opportunities to grow and succeed. Prompting them to recall times they have overcome other challenges will nurture their confidence.

Assist them as they set challenging "stretch" goals. Purposefully setting goals in areas in which they have to "stretch" (challenge themselves) will result in higher levels of motivation. Help them identify and practice the skills they need to use in order to reach their stretch goals.

Help them identify strategies to use once they are stuck. Set appropriate recovery times for your students, building in periods of recovery to balance out periods of stress. Nothing saps a student's mental toughness more than burning out.

Help students notice when they are making progress. Noticing progress builds confidence, energizing students to work harder.

Practice positive, realistic self-talk. Challenge them not to allow their own negative self-talk to derail their efforts.

Good luck growing mental toughness in yourselves and your students!

[Next Month: The Mindset of Success](#)