



Well here we are, the end of another great season of racing, I hope that everyone has finished the season strong and healthy!! Over the years I have written about nutrition, conditioning, and how to layout out programs including riding as well as incorporating chiro and massage, now I would like to touch on the mental aspect of training and competing.

Some of us seem to have no outward signs of any problems, we come across confident and strong, but in our heads we are worrying, we are second guessing, and to become a true warrior, we need not only to be in shape physically but mentally as well.

I have always believed that hard physical labor will help with our mental strength, look at the military for example, they combine hard physical training with teamwork, honor and discipline to make sure that they are mentally tough. Now, just to be clear I do like how the military does something's, but not all of there approaches do I condone. For one I don't think we need to yell and demean people, instead of pushing people off the cliff so-to-speak, we need to lead and have the person want to jump on there own. Now before you go jumping off cliffs, let me explain, the cliff I'm talking about is the cliff of trust and absolute belief in your program and training. In the Military they tear people down, breaking them both physically and mentally, then they "re-program" them to follow orders almost without question. Now I'm not saying they become mindless zombies, because some of the special forces operators are incredible at adapting and thinking on there feet during missions. This comes from the re-building process, after they are torn down, they train them for endless hours on different techniques that they can then apply in different situations. So how the hell does this apply to you the racer, well think about this, if you have total confidence in your readiness both physically and mentally you would be a formidable force on the track. So now lets get to the 'good' stuff, how are we going to tear you down and re-program you to be able to confront any and all things that get in your way!!

One of the first things we are going can do is train more outside, training in the gym or with gym equipment lacks that 'real' world touch. Go get a big tire, a sled hammer, fill two large sand bags, get some Olympic rings and a mountain bike or road bike. Remember this , there is a difference between working out and training, training is about using our bodies in the same manner that we race. Your program should always be evolving in order to provide as many different stimuli as it can in order to constantly challenge the body in new ways. Test yourself, see how far you can push yourself, my opinion is that people are twenty times more capable than they think they are. I always tell my athletes, fail, never quit... I have seen so many athletes quit before they are actually tired, push yourself to new limits and change your comfort zone!!!

Breaking Mental training down into categories:

ATTENTION CONTROL

YOU NEED to learn and become aware of your thoughts, and then determine if those thoughts are negative or positive, because negative thoughts will sap our strength our energy and they need to be stopped!! Positive thoughts on the other hand need to be focused. Now this sounds easy, it's my mind I know what I'm thinking, this is easy, however there are thoughts that pass just below our conscious, but they can affect our mood, drive and overall energy. Think of those hard training sessions when you get to the point you feel like you cant continue, if you let those tiny thoughts of I CAN'T creep in, or what about my knee, or is my bike fast enough, you will psyche yourself out and you will quit. WHERE YOUR MIND GOES, YOUR BODY WILL FOLLOW. IF you don't think you can beat someone, YOUR not going too!!

BODY CONTROL

This is where we learn to control the body through breathing and concentration. I'll give you an example, your watching a scary movie, the music is getting louder, you know the crazy machete wielding psycho is under the bed, and the pretty girl is coming into the room... watching this your heart might start to race, your extremities might get cold as the blood in the body rushed to your core in a flight or fight response. This is an example of your mind controlling your body, though not through your conscious direction. We want to be able to direct the mind and thus direct the body. One thing I have seen work is breathing exercises coupled with visualization, through breath control and thinking about certain things we were able to feel warmer. Think about it this way if before a race, before you head out of the trailer, you stop, close your eyes and breathe, thinking about different areas of the track, breath, think about the corners, breath and so on...this will calm you down, and when on the track breath, relax, calm your mind!!!

BREATH CONTROL

This is about taking time and actually putting though into something we do all the time without any thought. Try this exercise: inhale for 5 seconds, hold your breath for 5 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds, hold the exhale for 5 seconds, repeat for as long as you can. This will help with lung capacity and will calm the mind!! I have read a lot on this, and one guy was talking about getting through HELL WEEK with the SEALS, and talked about during the 14 mile runs he would just think about breathing, and he would hold for a 2 count on the inhale and he was amazed at how time just flew by, he also talked about the times he didn't use this technique and how he struggled with the runs. When he concentrated on his breathing the mind was calm and thoughts of failure or the pain he was enduring were unable to enter.

CONCENTRATION

Concentration and breath control can go hand-in-hand, however we want to emphasize the focus on the MOMENT - right here right now. If you worry about the future, the outcome of a race you can easily *get overwhelmed, Take the race, or the HARD workouts and break them down into smaller pieces, this way* they are more manageable. Breath control will help with concentration which will help with breath control, which will help with concentration.... Working on one aspect of awareness will have an effect on another.

MEDITATION

Developing the discipline of listening deeply while not actively thinking of anything. This sounds different, think of it this way, breath deep and let your mind be still, you want to remain in this state until *your not thinking about breathing but listening to your breathing, listening to everything around you without* thinking about anything!! It's tougher than it sounds, but this will help clear your mind, and one thing I have found it does is bring things to the surface things that were lingering in the back of my mind...maybe your worrying about something and your not even aware of it. Try and meditate each and every day, I like to do it both in the morning and then again at night.

We train the body, now train your mind, complete the picture!!!

As always if you have any questions please email me at drew@evolvednutrition.com