

# Is Creating Mentally Tough Players a Masquerade for Emotional Abuse?

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# Sport Psychology's 'Mental Toughness' milestones

- 1982, 1986 Loehr defined Mental Toughness in a sport context

- 2002, Jones et al. Defined 12 attributes of Mental Toughness
- 2002, Clough et al. Defined the 4 C's of Mental Toughness, and MTQ 48 developed

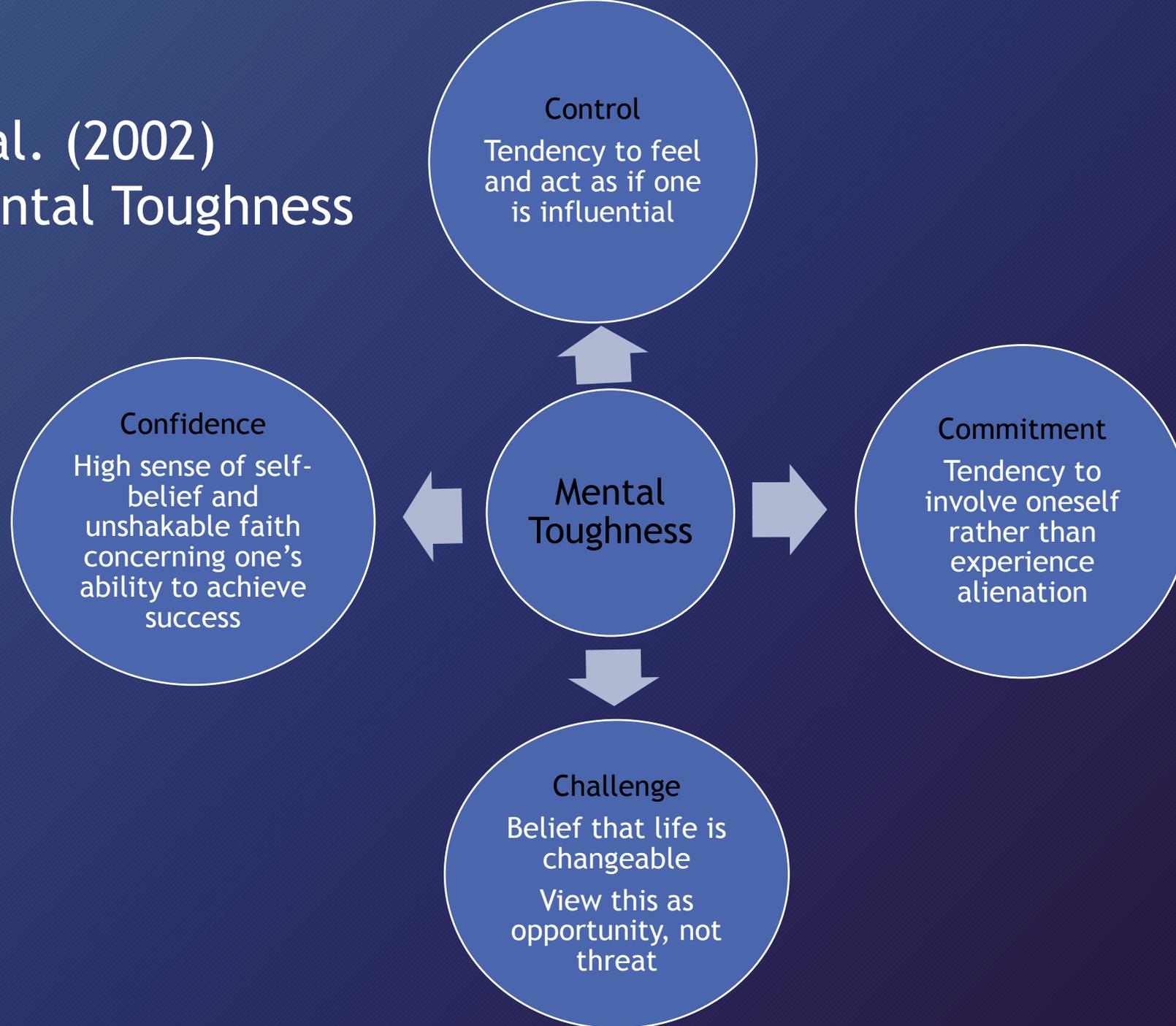
- 2005, Thewell defined Mental Toughness in football
- 2005, Bull et al. defined Mental toughness in cricket

- 2007, Crust review of Mental Toughness
- 2007, Jones et al. Mental Toughness framework developed

- 2009, Sheard et al - Development of SMTQ
- 2010, Focus on Mental Toughness in different sports. (Coulter et al., Butt et al., Thelwell et al.)

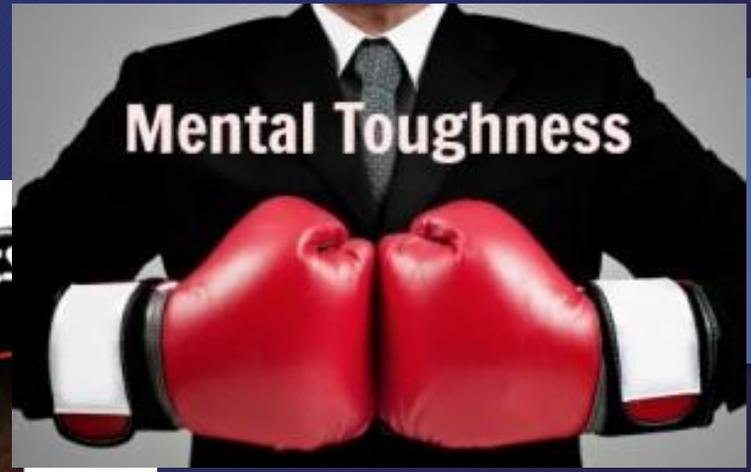
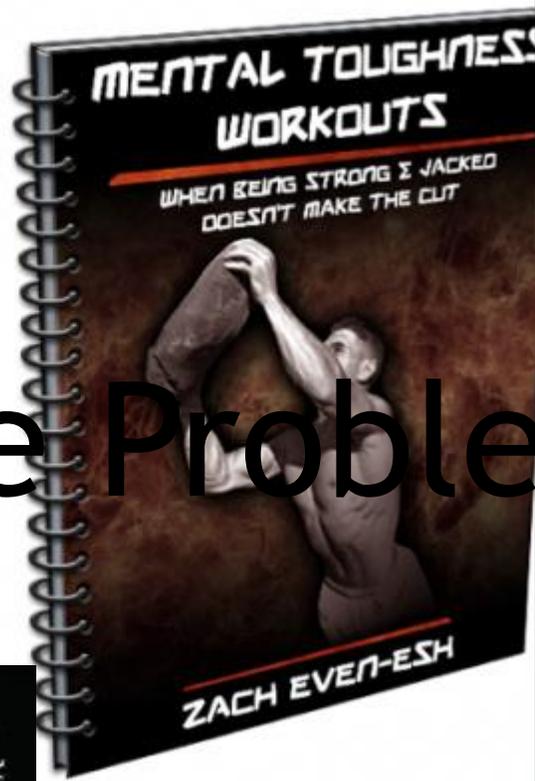
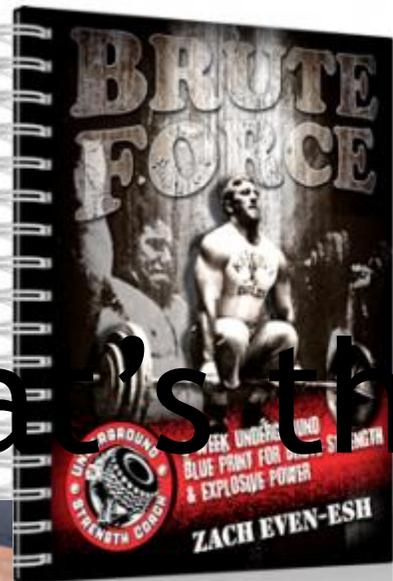
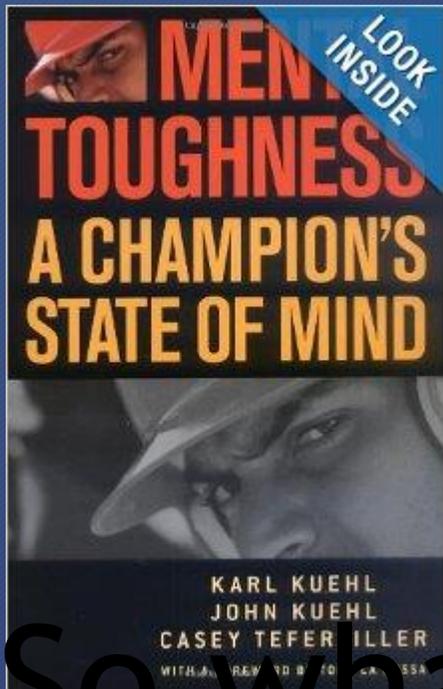
- 2011, Weinberg et al. - Coaches opinion of development
- 2012, Driska et al. - Elite swimming coaches

# Clough et al. (2002) 4 C's of Mental Toughness

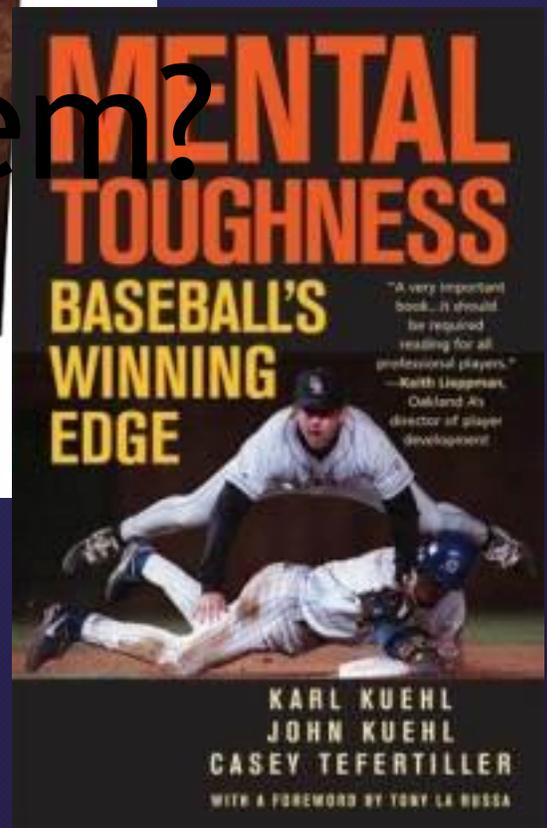
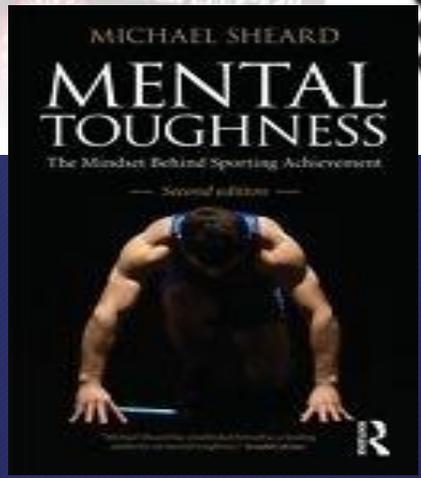
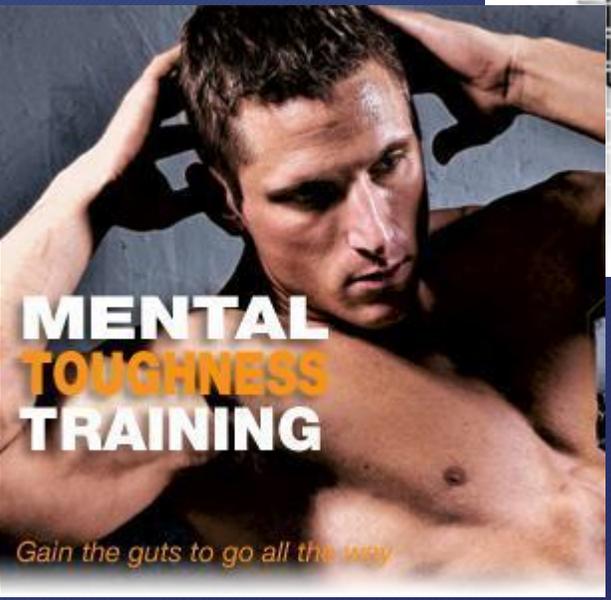


# What is Mental Toughness? Jones et al. (2002)

Rank	Attribute
1	Having an unshakable self-belief in your ability to achieve your competition goals
2	Bouncing back from performance setbacks as a result of increased determination to succeed
3	Having an unshakable self-belief that you possess unique qualities and abilities
=4	Having an insatiable desire and internalised motives to succeed
=4	Remaining fully-focused on the task at hand in the face of competition specific distractions
6	Regaining psychological control following unexpected, uncontrollable events (competition-specific)
7	<b>Pushing back the boundaries of physical and emotional pain, while still maintaining technique and effort under distress (in training and competition)</b>
8	Accepting that competition anxiety is inevitable and knowing that you can cope with it
=9	Thriving on the pressure of competition
=9	Not being adversely affected by others' good and bad performances
11	Remaining fully-focused in the face of personal life distractions
12	Switching a sport focus on and off as required



So what's the Problem?



## Method:

### Aims:

1. Explore coaches perceptions on the significance of mental toughness
2. Explore the methods used by elite youth football coaches to develop mental toughness

# Method

- **Participants:** 12 elite youth football coaches (n=10 male, n=2 female: M age=31, SD= 7.67)
- **Instrumentation:** Semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide. Example questions included - How much influence do you think mental toughness has on a young players performance? What can a coach do to develop a young players mental toughness?
- **Procedure:** Interviews arranged at a mutually convenient time and place
- **Data Analysis:** Transcribed interviews were analysed using content analysis. General dimensions were derived from the interview guide, and emergent themes were aligned with previous research on emotional abuse where appropriate. Meaning Units were calculated to illustrate the strength of the emergent theme (max=12-min=1)

# General Dimension

Significance of mental toughness

# Emergent Themes

Key ingredient to success  
(MU=12)

A catalyst to good performance  
(MU=7)

A significant influencer in selection  
(MU=3)

# Raw Data

'to be successful you have to be mentally tough'

'I struggle to name a successful athlete who isn't'

'it is an output and a catalyst to good performance'

'it effects 80% of an athletes final performance'

'it's a massive part of someone making pro or not'

'you go for the 11 strong that can get results and cope with that'

“

It is the difference between  
making or breaking careers.

”

# General Dimension

Coaching Strategies used to enhance Mental Toughness

## Emergent Theme

Bullying  
(MU=10)

Belittling  
(MU=8)

Humiliating  
(MU=8)

Shouting  
(MU=8)

## Raw data

If she is on her all the time she will get used to it

I have seen coaches belittle players and say that it is 'banter' when it clearly is not.

Stuff like 'what was that' or you're playing rubbish

Horrific examples..they think they are working on MT by screaming and shouting... and wanting to see a reaction.

“

I have seen coaches humiliate players. When they have got them in front of them, in front of mums and dads, on the touchline, fingers in the face- and I am only talking under 11's

”



## General Dimension

Coaching Strategies used  
to enhance Mental  
Toughness

## Emergent Theme

Intimidation  
(MU=5)

Rejecting  
(MU=3)

Scapegoating  
(MU=3)

Forced Physical Exertion  
(MU=1)

## Raw data

Verbal information given in a way that  
is aggressive or disrespectful

I mean I have seen some bad things  
like- if you are not ready to play then  
get off

Coach coming in all guns blazing and  
speak about each person and what they  
have done wrong and why they are not  
at the highest level.

Within the fitness where you continue  
until you drop out

# Discussion:

- All coaches agreed that mental toughness was a critical factor in determining the future success of players
- All key elements of emotional abuse behaviours were identified by coaches as being normal/acceptable strategies for developing mental toughness
- Coaches reported that mental toughness is enhanced through exposing players to emotionally challenging and physically harsh training environments
- Coaches struggled to draw distinctions between coaching behaviours that develop mental toughness and those that are emotionally abusive.

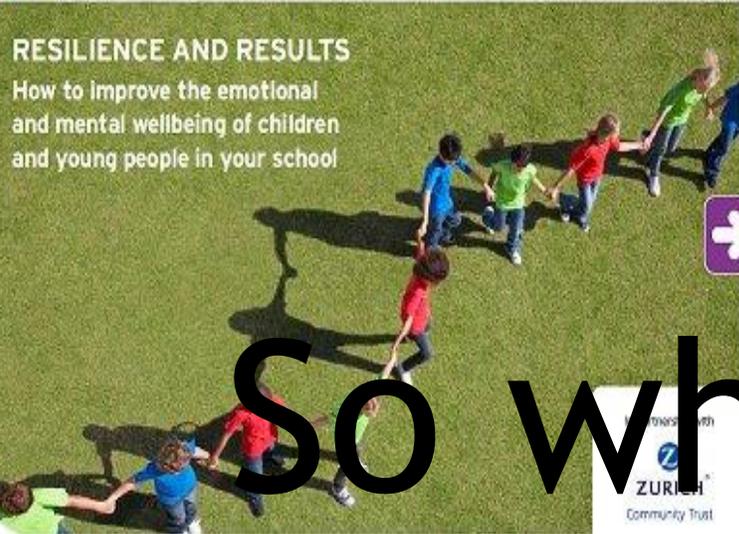
# Final Thoughts.....

- Sport Psychologists should consider the impact of this terminology.
- Sport Psychology has not considered the potential for harm.
- Sport Psychology has not considered how coaches have interpreted and acted upon this term.

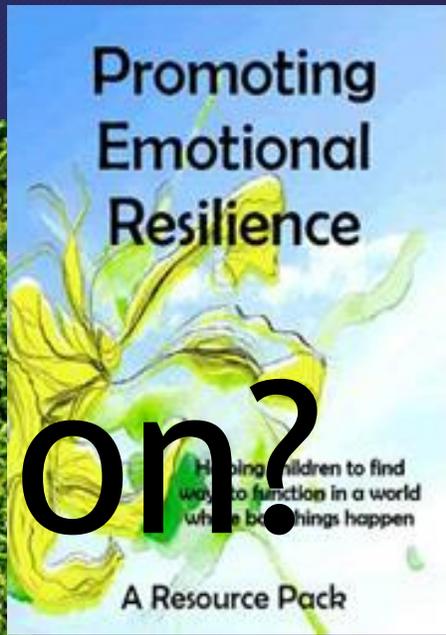


### RESILIENCE AND RESULTS

How to improve the emotional  
and mental wellbeing of children  
and young people in your school



Partners with  
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Community Trust

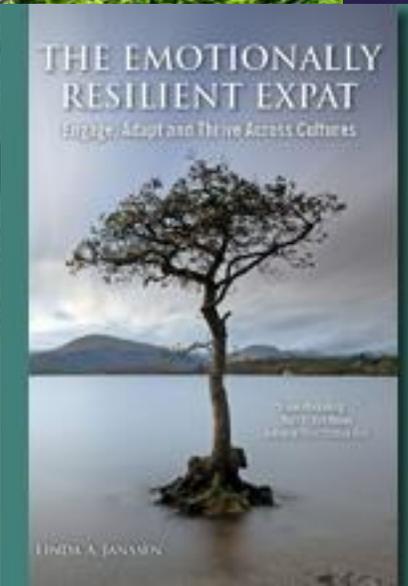
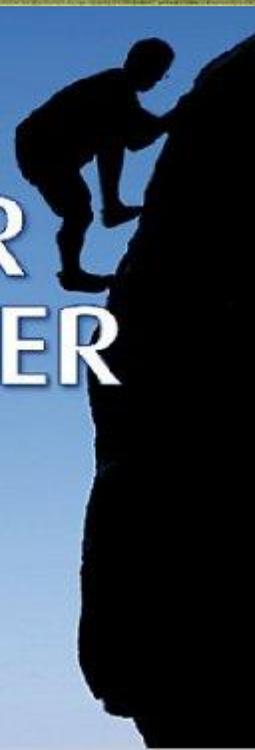


# So what's the solution?

## FIND YOUR POWER

a toolkit for  
resilience and  
positive change

Chris Johnstone



"Janssen's work is sure to be a stand out in any expatriate or cross-cultural arena."  
  
Tina L Quick, Author,  
The Global Nomad's Guide to University Transition,  
internationalfamilytransitions.com