

TRAINING TIPS

MENTAL STRATEGIES FOR WINNING

By Khaled Assem

MANY STRATEGIES FALL UNDER THE CONCEPT OF “RECIPES FOR SUCCESS”; SOME ARE TANGIBLE AND SOME ARE NOT, SOME ARE PHYSICAL WHILE OTHERS ARE TECHNICAL, YET THE MOST ELUSIVE AND CONSTRAINING ARE THE SPIRITUAL AND MENTAL ONES. MENTAL STRENGTH IS NOT GENETIC, IT IS ACQUIRED AND ONE HAS TO UNDERSTAND IT, BELIEVE IN IT AND WORK ON IT.

Proficient athletes in every sport emphasise the importance of mental preparation, strategies and eventually toughness in their success stories.

Mental skills provide more consistent proficiency than the technical ones. In fact, if you take a look at some of the top riders, they remain in the winning posts as long as they are mentally strong and in tune with their game. So what exactly happens when they are not winning? There could be several reasons but one of the most vital elements is the mental consciousness and faith in their ability to win.

Mental training can be divided into six different rules or tasks that a rider can focus on and take up individually. Every rider experiences mental challenges in

the arena although with experience accompanied with knowledge, he can develop his skills, not just technically but also mentally.

YOU HAVE TO WORK ON BEING:

STEADY:

Being conscious and consistent is required to maintain a successful relationship with your horse. Alternatively, your mental toughness in committing to the regularity of your riding schedule, fitness schedule and everything revolving around your goal is an element in that recipe for success. It is the aim to persist in working hard and being calm yet firm. This is an everyday exercise that a rider has to be dedicated to.

SIMPLE:

A proficient rider will always be defined by his logic and efficiency. That could be done through analysing and working his problems out by dividing them up into smaller ones that are more manageable, and certainly by testing his solutions when put next to those problems in order to create a learning curve that will be locked in his memory. This becomes a data map to define and refine his skills continuously.

POSITIVE:

All self-help books in the world unanimously agree that the first rule that leads to success is a “Positive Mental Attitude”. You need to be optimistic and constructive, to realise the importance of working with others and how that may strengthen you. Yet mostly, believe in yourself and your ability, not your shortcomings. Always think of your mainstream goals and stay in tune with them.

FLEXIBLE:

While searching for innovations, new methods or simple answers need an open mind as well as creativity. Always think out of the box, be accepting to unorthodox options and solutions. This is about adapting to new situations and making the most out of them. Sometimes simple ideas lead to magical solutions. Believe that “there is always a solution”, and if it wasn’t the one you tried then there must be another one, one that you will search for and find.

PREPARED:

It is crucial to make a realistic plan and follow it. Practice setting deadlines and following them as well as making decisions and taking control. As they say, a successful surfer has to be on his board, in the sea, fit and ready for the wave.

HUMAN:

Be ready to cope with the ups and downs of life. Realise that it is not necessarily mathematical, sometimes you have to lose in order to win and sometimes you win unexpectedly. Accept the diversities and adversities of life and most importantly, wish others well because that will simply keep you happy, inspired and will cleanse your soul. There is a spiritual dimension that you have to believe in and account for in your plans to remain human.

Surely the pursuit of success in your sport and in life generally is not inborn, it is not a given. It is an educated choice. Finally, remember to enjoy the journey and not just the ending. 🏇

About the author:
Eng. Khaled Assem is a certified Level 2 FEI trainer. He has been training for over 15 years, competing internationally for 10 years and locally for 25 years.