

Mental Toughness and the Mental Toughness Questionnaire– MTQ48

Background:

A good deal of the debate on stress has focussed on the working environment and its impact on employees. This is an important area for attention, but it is also true that it is possible to place two individuals into the same working environment and to observe that one succumbs to the pressures of stress and one thrives!

The difference between the two can be explained through the concept of **Mental Toughness**. This explains how individuals develop resilience and an inner drive to succeed. Mental Toughness emerges as a key component for individual and organisational performance.

Applications and research now show that Mental Toughness is directly and closely related with:

- **Performance** – explains up to 25% of the variation in performance
- **Behaviour** – more engaged, more positive, more “can do”
- **Wellbeing** – more contentment, better stress management , less bullying
- **Aspirations** - more ambitious, prepared to manage more risk

Research in the Psychology Department at the **University of Hull** – under the direction of **Dr. Peter Clough Ch. Psych.** has identified the four key components of Mental Toughness . This research has now been independently validated through studies in Canada, Italy as well as the UK.

Peter Clough’s work means that we now have:

- We are able to define and describe Mental Toughness and use it to understand why people perform.
- The first psychometric measure which measures an individual’s Mental Toughness – it is valid & reliable.
- The creation of a Mental Toughness Development programme - parts of which are validated and parts of which are unique.

The result is a complete package which has valuable applications in the social, health, educational and occupational worlds.

MTQ48

The four subscales are called the **4C's - CONTROL; CHALLENGE; COMMITMENT and CONFIDENCE.**

CONTROL

Individuals who score high on this scale feel that they are in control of their work and of the environment in which they work. They are capable of exerting more influence on their working environment and are more confident about working in complex or multi-tasked situations.

This means for example that, at one end of the scale individuals are able handle lots of things at the same time. At the other end they may only be comfortable handling one thing at a time.

Ongoing development of MTQ48 has enabled the identification of 2 subscales to this scale:

CONTROL (EMOTION) - Individuals scoring highly on this scale are better able to control their emotions. They are able to keep anxieties in check and are less likely to reveal their emotional state to other people

CONTROL (LIFE) - Individuals scoring higher on this scale are more likely to believe that they control their lives. They feel that their plans will not be thwarted and that they can make a difference.

COMMITMENT

Sometimes described as "stickability", this describes the ability for an individual to carry out tasks successfully despite any problems or obstacles that arise whilst achieving the goal.

An individual who scores at the high end of the scale will handle and achieve things to tough unyielding deadlines. Whereas an individual at the other end will need to be free from those kind of demands to achieve their goals.

CHALLENGE

Describes the extent to which individuals see problems as threats or opportunities. Some will actively seek out challenge and change and will identify these as ways for self-development. Others will perceive problems as threats.

So, for example, at one end of the scale we find those who thrive in continually changing environments. At the other end we find those who prefer to minimise their exposure to change and the problems that come with that - and will strongly prefer to work in stable environments.

CONFIDENCE

Individuals who are high in confidence have the self-belief to successfully complete tasks, which may be considered too difficult by individuals with similar abilities but with lower confidence. Less confident individuals are also likely to be less persistent and to make more errors.

Individuals at one end of the scale will be able to take setbacks (externally and self generated) in their stride. They keep their heads when things go wrong and it may even strengthen their resolve to do something. At the other end individuals will be unsettled by setbacks and will feel undermined by these.

CONFIDENCE (ABILITIES) - Individuals scoring highly on this scale are more likely to believe that they are a truly worthwhile person. They are less dependent on external validation and are generally more optimistic about life..

CONFIDENCE (INTERPERSONAL) - Individuals scoring highly on this scale tend to be more assertive. They are less likely to be intimidated in social settings and are more likely to push themselves forward in groups. They are also better able to cope with difficult or awkward people.

APPLICATIONS:

The Mental Toughness model and its associated measures and programmes have clear applications for any person(s) who work in areas subject to stressors, pressures and challenges. That means many working environments. There are several areas where the model adds considerable value.

Firstly, it is invaluable in **MANAGEMENT/EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT** and **COACHING** – either to help people identify to be more effective in key areas and cope with stressors or to show people how they can.

Secondly in **ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT**, helping to identify a key aspect of an organisation's culture

Finally, as an **assessment** tool in **RECRUITMENT & SELECTION** – enabling better fit in a critical area for good job performance.

The challenge lies in identifying what might be the causes of stress and pressure for each individual and to help the individual to become aware of these. Awareness leads to understanding, which, in turn, can lead to positive action – and improved performance.

Similarly, where the organisation and one's peers/managers become aware of the potential causes of stress and pressure they are more able to plan and to act to minimise their impact.

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