

# Mentally Tough!

4 steps to creating a 'Winning Edge'  
by learning to be more *resilient* in sports



*"We're looking for great competitors. And that's the guy's that have grit. The mindset that they're always going to succeed, that they've got something to prove. They're resilient, they're not going to let setbacks hold them back. They're not going to be deterred by challenges and hurdles and things... It's that attitude – we refer to it as grit"*

**-Pete Carroll**

**R**esiliency is defined as "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulty; toughness".

Because sports are filled with constant challenge, adversity and failure, being 'resilient' is a pre-requisite to success.

The origin of the word finds it's root in the Latin word *resilire*' which means to "spring back". Springing back means to resume form and function 'quickly' not slowly. Not to wince and cry. Not to make excuses. Not to give up for awhile but to 'spring back' immediately.

Being resilient means to be mentally tough. To experience adversity. To make mistakes. To fail and then to 'spring back' in to action. To your original form of optimism and confidence.

Resilient athletes have the courage to put forth maximum effort with no guarantee of an outcome. They are willing to fail, and they are not afraid of what others think or say about them if they fail. When they fail they resume their original form unaffected by their failure. They learn quickly from their mistakes and try even harder not to make the same mistake again.

An athlete with a resilient mindset understands that growth is a process. They understand that failure and adversity are requirements for growth. As a result, they don't view failure in the same way as most people do. They don't see it as a disappointment. Rather they see it as feedback. They believe that there is NO such thing as failure. When they do fail, they interpret it solely as an opportunity to learn and improve.

Resilient athletes compete against their own 'inner scoreboard not the external one that spectators see.

NFL Coach – Pete Carroll in his book [Win Forever](#) suggests, *“My opponents are not my enemies. My opponents are the people who offer me the opportunity to succeed. The tougher my opponents, the more they present me with an opportunity to live up to my full potential and play my best. From an extreme perspective, that’s a reason to love them, not hate them”*

The key to mastering a ‘resilient mind set’ is to not have a victim mentality. To be 100% accountable for everything that happens and avoid blaming anyone or making excuses for anything.

Failure fuels them to work harder. To seek coaching and to learn more and to get better! Resilient athletes look forward to the next opportunity to practice and compete. The next opportunity to get better!

NFL football player, Jerome Bettis spoke of ‘4 Keys to Greatness’ in his [Hall of Fame induction speech](#) in 2015. 2 of the 4 keys to greatness deal with adversity and the need for resiliency. The need for ‘grit’

### **4 Keys to Greatness**

1. You must be willing to **sacrifice**
2. You must be willing to **endure pain**
3. You must have the ability to **recover from failure**
4. You must **LOVE** what you do. If you don’t, you won’t be willing to do 1,2 and 3 above.

Consider the above 4 items... Three of the four Keys above relate to the need for resiliency!

How Resilient are you?

Take the Resiliency Test to see how you score. Use your results as feedback.

Study the techniques and concepts outlined for you in this manual to improve!

Re-take the assessment it in the future to determine how you’re growing in this important area!

*The Winning Edge*

## Resiliency Assessment <sup>®</sup>2018



A key trademark of an elite athlete or team is resiliency. It's having the ability to endure pain, failure and adversity. Some may call it grit, intestinal fortitude or toughness. Like anything else, resiliency can be improved and developed with intentionality.

Complete this 'confidential' self-examination. Be honest with yourself. Keep in mind that it's only for you!

Read the words very carefully. Evaluate your score and read the recommendations associated with your score. When you're done, read: '4 Ways to Become More Resilient'.

Take the test before during and after the season and look for improvement. Take it annually thereafter.

Lastly, READ **The Winning Way Way** to learn skill specific strategies for becoming more resilient while also learning how to become a 3-dimensional competitor who elevates self, teammates and sport!

*Eric Smith, Author - The Winning Edge Way*  
**How To Become a 3-Dimensional Competitor**  
Elevate Self, Team & Sport

Winning Edge Development, Durham, NC  
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## Winning Edge Resiliency Test

*Strongly Disagree*  
*Disagree*  
*Somewhat Agree*  
*Mostly Agree*  
*Strongly Agree*

Failure doesn't discourage me. I rarely give up!	1	2	3	4	5
I can get laser focused on something then easily give up after a short period after starting	5	4	3	2	1
I normally fail when trying new things and then, after trying and trying again, eventually I overcome and succeed	1	2	3	4	5
My interest in activities seems to change from year to year	5	4	3	2	1
I rarely give up on a sport once I take it up	1	2	3	4	5
It's easy for me to get distracted from whatever I'm focusing on	5	4	3	2	1
I always finish what I start regardless of the adversity I experience	1	2	3	4	5
I tend to lose focus or interest in the sports I play which take more than a few months to complete	5	4	3	2	1
My coach would say I am a 'grinder' with a very strong work ethic	1	2	3	4	5
When I set goals, I tend to change them and pursue different ones	5	4	3	2	1
When I lose or play poorly I can't wait for practice and the next chance to compete	1	2	3	4	5
When it's clear that I'm beat I tend to reduce my effort	5	4	3	2	1
An opportunity to face a dominant competitor excites me!	1	2	3	4	5
I find myself working harder when a coach is present	5	4	3	2	1
I <i>always</i> leave everything that I have on the field, court or arena	1	2	3	4	5
I 'like' the sports that I play, but I don't 'love' them	5	4	3	2	1
I welcome and embrace mental and physical pain from sports because it gives me feedback that I need to get better	1	2	3	4	5
When I'm injured and can't play I feel like crawling out of my skin	1	2	3	4	5
When my coach is tough on me and demanding of me, it brings out my best	1	2	3	4	5
I see team failure more as other people's fault rather than my own	5	4	3	2	1

### Score

Add your score and divide by 10

- 8-10 You are highly resilient & growth minded and mentally tough
- 6-7 You are somewhat resilient but need to work to improve
- 4-5 You are not very resilient. You need to toughen up and improve your mind-set
- 2-4 You need to change your mind-set and be intentional about change or consider other activities

If your resiliency score is less than 8 then you have some work to do!

Below are 4 ways to improve your level of resiliency.

## 1. Develop a stronger 'why'

*"If your why is strong enough, you can endure almost any how"*

- Friedrich Nietzsche

Nothing worthwhile is easy. Everything that has redeeming value is up-hill. In his book *The Last Lecture*, Randy Posh said, "the brick walls are there for a reason. Not to keep us out but to prove to us how badly we want something. And they are also there for the people who don't want it badly enough"

Understand that if you want something that you've never had before then you need to become someone that you've never been before! If you want to *have*, you must first *become*!

Accomplishing something worthwhile requires growth. Growth requires change. And change requires doing things differently. It requires getting outside of your comfort zone. When you're outside of your comfort zone you are going to experience pain! You're going to experience adversity and failure. If you're 'why' isn't big enough then the pain just won't be worth it to you. You'll retreat into your *safe/comfort zone*.

Abraham Maslow famous for developing 'Maslow's hierarchy of needs' stated that *"humans will either move forward into growth or retreat back into safety"*.

Another famous person, heavy weight boxer Mike Tyson when asked about 'a plan' that his upcoming opponent had for him replied... *"everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face!"*

Mike was right. When you set a goal or strive for growth you're going to get 'punched in the face'. What he means is that you will experience pain and adversity in your pursuits.

Success is not easy! When you decide to do something challenging you only have to make a decision to *start* one time, but because of the adversity that you will

experience, you will need to decide to *continue* with your decision over and over and over again.

Being resilient *begins* by having a strong enough reason “*why*”. If your reason *why* is strong enough it will outlast almost any how. In other words, if your “*why*” (reason) is strong enough then you’ll work at it long enough to figure out *how* to do it. Your “*why*” will propel you forward through adversity.

Here are some questions that you can ask yourself to help determine the strength of your ‘why’.

- ✓ Do you *procrastinate* doing things that are required or *attack* them?
- ✓ Do you practice because you *want to* or because you *have to*?
- ✓ Do you talk about your *sport* when you’re away from it or would you rather talk about *other things*?
- ✓ Do you spend time watching your sport on TV or do you watch other things non-related?
- ✓ Do you get irritated when teammates, coaches or parents encourage you or do you love to be engaged in conversations with others about how you can get better?
- ✓ Can you clearly articulate why you are playing the sport and is it for the right reasons or do you struggle to provide good reasons about why you play?
- ✓ Do you put ‘driveway time’ into your sport? (*time playing your sport at home during leisure time*) or do you spend your free time pursuing other activities?

Take time to really think about these questions. Revisit and re-connect with your reasons for beginning to play your sport in the first place. Hold on to your ‘*why*’!!

## **2. Invest**

*“The greater your investment is in something, the greater your fight will be to protect it” – Eric Smith*

Imagine if after every work out that you did you put a shiny penny into a special jar.

Over time, you will have developed a lot of pride in that special jar of pennies.

Understand that the economic value of those pennies may not be much. In other

words, that jar of pennies wouldn't buy you much, but it would have special 'worth' to you because they would represent a significant body of work.

Now imagine if someone came by and stole that jar of pennies. To them, the jar of pennies would have little *economic value* and absolutely no *personal value*. The question is, would you fight for that jar of pennies? The jar that required so much dedication from you to create? I believe you would!

Think of the work that you 'invest' in the same way you think of that jar of pennies. Appreciate the value of the body of work that you have invested and know that your investment will provide a return to you one day.

### **3. Trust and Love the process**

'Trusting the process' means that you believe that your investment of 'hard work' will pay off someday. Trust that all the work that you put in will pay dividends someday. Knowing that it will pay off someday, can help you fall in love and stay in love with the process that's required to succeed.

Love is a word that is difficult for many athletes and coaches to embrace because it has connotations of 'softness'. Don't let yourself feel that way. Love is a requirement of success. You must LOVE what you're doing, or you simply won't be willing to put in all of the hard work required of success and you certainly won't be able to endure the adversity that you will inevitably face along the way.

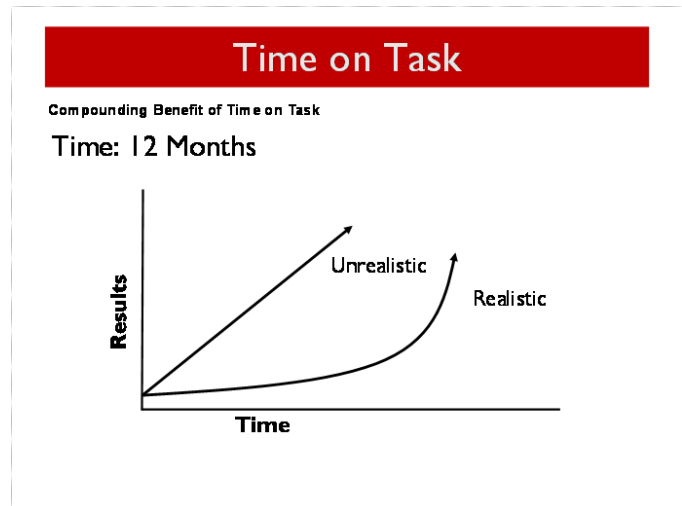
*Trust* and *embrace* the process required to be the best you can be. 'Embrace it' means to put your arms around it as if were a long-lost friend. Love it! And *trust* that someday, the process will love you back. Don't put a time limit on your success. Just know that eventually, with consistent effort and the proper attitude, you will have success.

One thing people don't appreciate enough is that even *IF* you don't reach your goal, you still grow! You get better even when you fall short. Be sure to value and appreciate the fact that your growth will benefit you in other aspects of your life.



Item 4 below (Learning from failure) teaches you how you can maximize your growth when goals aren't reached.

Also, it's important to understand that your path will not be *linear*. Your growth path is not a straight line! Most people's path to success looks more like this..



When people fall short of their goals, it's sometimes not because they have 'unrealistic goals', rather, it's because they have 'unrealistic time-frames' in which to achieve those goals.

Understanding what the path to success looks like will help you be more resilient to the adversity you will encounter along the way.

### ***Preparation + Opportunity = Success***

Success can only occur when these two things come together... preparation and opportunity.

Think about it... You can be prepared but not have an opportunity. You can also have an opportunity but not be prepared. Unless those two things intersect, there will be no success. Preparation is the *process* that success requires. In life, when an opportunity comes, it's too late to get prepared. You've got to be ready to capitalize. If you've trusted the process in knowing that you will have opportunities, then you'll be ready when they come.

In addition to being ready for opportunities, there is one other huge benefit that comes from preparation, and that is **confidence**! The dictionary defines confidence as "*the feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something. To have firm trust.*" The Latin root of confidence is *firm trust*.

If you're prepared through hard-work and commitment to the process, then you will be willing to trust yourself when *opportunity* presents! When you trust yourself, you play with more confidence and you'll capitalize on your opportunity.

In 1984, I was able to earn a full athletic scholarship to play Division I football as a quarterback. I can tell you that it wasn't my statistics that did it for me. After all, I only threw for 550 yards my senior year. There are quarterbacks that do that in a single game in today's era of football.

My success was because I was *prepared* for an *opportunity*.

It was July of 1984. Just prior to my senior year of football. For the previous three summers I had been going to quarterback camps throughout the Midwest refining my skill as a quarterback. I normally would invest my own hard-earned money to go to at least two QB camps each summer.

Before my senior year I decided to go to the Michigan Football Camp. It was a 4-day camp. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, our quarterback group was walking off the field to take a break and I heard someone yell from behind me - "Hey Smith!". I turned around and saw a group of coaches all standing together. These were not all Michigan coaches but coaches who were working the camp from various colleges and universities nearby.

The coach who called me asked as he pointed to the middle of the field .."Eric, would you go over there and pick up that ball and just give us a 5-step drop and throw the ball down the field as far as you can toward the sideline?"

Admittedly, it was a bit of an awkward moment for me, but I said - "sure coach!"

I proceeded to pick up the football and execute a mechanically perfect 5-step drop and threw the ball about 60 yards down the field exactly where he told me to. I turned around and looked at the coaches. He said - "thanks Eric" and I walked off the field!

About 2 weeks later my mailbox started filling up with recruiting letters from schools. That's when it all began. In one singular moment where I had an opportunity to display my abilities in front of a bunch of college coaches. I was prepared!

I attribute that one moment to changing my life in many ways.

The question I have for you is - Will *you* be ready when your opportunity comes?

## 4. Learn from failure

There is an old saying that goes... “sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.” I would suggest another way to look at losing. Leadership author John Maxwell authored a book entitled: “Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn”. I would suggest re-phrasing that old saying the way John Maxwell did.

When it comes to competition, your mindset should be that there is no *winning* or *losing*, there is only *feedback*! Feedback of what you did right and what is paying off as well feedback on what you did wrong, and what you need to get better at.

For most of us, life experience is our best teacher. In formal education, we’re taught a lesson, then we study the information and then have a test. In LIFE, however, the test normally comes *before* the lesson. When the test comes first we don’t normally score as well as when we have a chance to study the material first. But, the sting that comes with failing the test can be more impactful in the long run. That is, as long as we have the maturity to analyze what went wrong, then take the time to learn the lesson afterward.

In society, we tend to over value that character trait of *tenacity*. For example, when a person fails and gets back up to try again only to fail and get back up over and over, society says – “he’s resilient”. “He’s a winner!” I would suggest that this person is not only displaying resiliency, but their displaying stupidity as well! Why? Because, when an intelligent person get’s knocked down, they ask questions. They want to know *why* they got knocked down before they get back up.

In order to learn, you have to ask good questions!

- *What* just happened?
- *Why* did this happen?
- *What* did I learn?
- *What* do I need to do differently next time?

When you ask good questions, you get good answers and because of the painful experience of the previous failure, you’ll learn at a higher level. When we *evaluate* past experiences and failures we tend to learn the best.

Knowing this, you need to develop a mindset that that failure is ok! In fact, since you know it’s going to happen at times, and you have the skills to learn from it, treat it as your friend. Embrace it! Value for the great learning opportunity that it

provides. Understand the benefits of it. Appreciate the blessings of learning that failure brings to you!

The key to growing through failure is to owning it. Don't blame others or external circumstances. If you do, then you'll be missing the *silver lining* that it offers which is the gift of learning.

Understand that you will only be as strong as the adversity that you have overcome in your past.

One of the saddest things to experience is watching people sit on the sidelines because they're afraid of the very thing that's required of success... and that is to *fail!*

Too often, people are worried about what others will think. They don't want to be embarrassed. They're too concerned about 'how they will look'. Who cares! If people are critical of you for stepping outside of your comfort zone in an effort to get better, then do you really care enough about them to care what they think? They clearly don't care about you so why would you care for them or what they think? A second of your time thinking about their opinion, is a second lost that could have been used in a positive way. In a way to help you get better.

People worth your attention will encourage you to be the best version of yourself and they will be proud of you for your *efforts* regardless of your *results*. If you're concerned about pleasing anyone, please them by applying effort!

One of the greatest short writings on this subject comes from Theodore Roosevelt's - Man In The Arena

*"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat"*

I heard this once, and I honestly believe it to be true... If success were a stew, then failure would be the main ingredient. To make a big beautiful pot of sweet tasting success start by dumping in a big bag of failure and stir it up. Let it stew!! Yum!

Have you ever heard "in critical moments, champions *rise to the occasion*"?

In actuality, athletes don't do that. Rather, what they do is 'fall to the level of their preparation and training' and the only way to become *prepared* is by participating. By putting yourself "in the arena" as Roosevelt said, where you have an opportunity to fail and thus evaluate and learn. Putting yourself in the arena will allow you to prepare for the critical moments in *YOUR* future!

So far we have discussed how to become a grittier more resilient *athlete*. If you want to create a grittier, more resilient *team*, however, then understand that it starts with each member of the team. Understand that any given team is merely a lengthened shadow of it's people.

If you can exhibit the characteristics described above, then you're modeling the behavior that you want to see from everyone. By understanding these 'mechanics' of being resilient yourself, you'll be in a position to help others do the same. When you do that, you're showing leadership, and leadership is ultimately the key to the success of an organization.

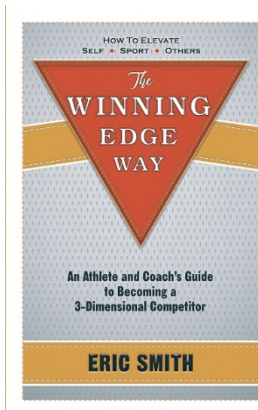
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He is currently the director of **The Winning Edge Quarterback Academy** and **Winning Edge Leadership Academy**. He is a certified speaker and trainer with The John Maxwell TEAM, the world's leading leadership organization.

Visit [www.3Dcompetitor.com](http://www.3Dcompetitor.com) to purchase Eric's NEW book:

**The Winning Edge Way, An Athlete and Coach's Guide to Becoming 3-Dimensional**

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