

SAILING FIT

By: Meka Taulbee

ACE Certified Personal Trainer

SAILFIT Inc

MENTALLY FIT

Are you mentally fit? You may be thinking “What is she talking about?” or “What do I need to be Mentally Fit for?” When it comes to any athletic event or even just day-to-day living mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness. While I know this may not be for everyone, I at least want to give you an introduction and point out some of the benefits so you can decide for yourself. Put your sailing skill, physical fitness, and mental fitness together with a nice breeze and just see the results you get!

Lets consider the sailor who wins the majority of races he competes in or the person who seems to find success in everything they attempt. These people go to the next event with an established sense of self- confidence. Why Shouldn't they? They have shown to others and themselves what they are capable of. They have come to expect the same results at each event and others have come to expect the same as well. Whether they are consciously aware of it or not they have created a mental edge over the rest of the competitors. On the other hand many of the competitors have let themselves be taken over by this mental edge. Whether they are consciously aware of it or not they automatically expect that they will finish behind this person. Look at Lance Armstrong and the Tour de France. He definitely has a mental edge over his competitors. He knows he can win and that is the mental state I am sure he goes into each stage with.

Now lets consider how we view ourselves. Do you go to an event thinking “I am a winner” or do you not even think about it and assume that there are those that will always finish in front of you? Take a minute and consider how the other competitors view you in relationship to themselves. Do they assume you will always finish in front of them or do they assume that you are not a threat? It seems as though the longer we let ourselves and others believe something the truer it becomes. Why not go into each event with some confidence and give yourself an even greater chance of achieving the results you want! This isn't to say that we should all go around thinking and acting like we are the best things since sliced bread. Unlike physical fitness, mental fitness can't be seen on the out side, but rather comes from within.

As with anything mental fitness doesn't happen overnight, but rather takes time to develop. The good news is you don't have to go to the gym, do a million crunches or be a marathon runner to be good at it. To start, think about what type of competitor you would like to be. Do you want to become better at what you do? What will make you feel good about your performance at the end

of the day? Then think about how you would want others to perceive you. Do you want them to know that you are going to make them work to beat you instead of letting them assume they can? Do you want to be known as being a fair player or would you be satisfied if people thought you played dirty? Having a good picture of the type of competitor you would like to be will help you take actions to become that person. Just by being aware your subconscious will help you become what you envision for yourself. Not too tough right?

Next, you can start to set some goals for yourself. This is important because it gives you something personal to work toward that when achieved will help establish more confidence in yourself as a competitor. This doesn't mean that you have to want to become the next Olympic gold medalist or win the world championships. Start with the next event, maybe you want to finish in the top half of the fleet, maybe just two places better than you did the previous year, perhaps you and Joe Sailor are always neck & neck and now it's time to show him your stuff or maybe you just want to make it across the finish line. Whatever your desire is start by breaking it down into small chunks and doing each one at a time. Before you know it you will be making great advances and in turn you will feel so good about yourself and so much more confident. Others will start to notice this new confidence and now is when you are gaining your mental edge.

There are many things that can affect your state of mind and in turn hinder your performance. If you or any outside influence put too much pressure on yourself to win or too much emphasis is placed on your desire to win it can have the reverse effect. If you don't do as well as you hoped it could be easy to dwell on it and let it knock you back a few steps. The next time you will be so concerned with not wanting to feel that way again and winning that you can not focus on the task at hand. You may have an injury that you may think will hold you back. If you just worry about the "what if" or the negatives that "could" hold you back then here again you can not put your full focus on the event. You are so worried about the outcome that you are not living in the moment. Every event will have its ups and downs and you need to recognize those and learn what you can from them. Then put it behind you and go on to the next one. For example, if you hit a mark and are forced to do a 360 you may spend the rest of the race mad at yourself and thinking about how much it will cost you. Instead, do your 360 and be confident that you can make the best out of the rest of the race. Dwelling on it pulls your focus away from the task at hand and may make you miss other opportunities that will arise to help you gain back some ground.

When you start to become aware of the type of competitor you want to be and setting some goals for yourself you will start to feel more relaxed, become more confident and enjoy things more. With this clear picture it will become easier to stay focused and concentrate on what you are doing and what is going on around you. The next time you go out to compete in an event picture what you want to happen that day and think about what your goals are. Take a minute to put everything in perspective then go out there and let it rip!

Remember to have fun and enjoy yourself. You would have never started doing this sport if it wasn't fun to begin with and we all excel at those things that we find the most enjoyable.

If you can start with these small steps you will be well on your way to becoming mentally fit and that mental edge will grow with each event you compete in. Let's not forget that what goes around comes around. If you start to treat others like they are less than you someone is going to make you feel the same to help increase their mental edge. The bigger edge is gained by achieving your personal goals while treating others the way you would want to be treated in return. You never know what someone may teach you along the road.

I am always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have. If you have a topic you would like me to cover don't hesitate to contact me. www.sailfit.com or meke@sailfit.com.