
STRENGTH

“Adversity causes some men to break; others to break records.”

~ **William Arthur Ward**

“When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.”

~ **Henry Ford**

“Stop letting people who do so little for you control so much of your mind, feelings, and emotions.”

~ **Will Smith**

“Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”

~ **John Wooden**

“My deepest fear is not using what God blessed me with to its’ full potential.”

~ **Kobe Bryant**

One of the most talked about phrases or character traits in sports is mental toughness. Having this means that you have the strength that is rooted deep within an individual. Our mental toughness becomes who we are. It is not necessarily something that we can turn on and off. It is a habit that is developed like any other skill we might have. These are healthy habits. Mentally tough people learn how to control and manage their thoughts, actions, and emotions. They are strong people.

Amy Morin lost her mother to cancer and then

on the three-year anniversary her mother's death, her 26-year old husband died suddenly. She wrote a book and gave a TEDx Talk called "The Secret to Becoming Strong", which has been viewed more than 6 million times. Her best-selling book *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do* has been translated into 30 languages. Here are the 13 things that she learned through her experiences on what a strong person doesn't do: 1

1. They Don't Waste Time Feeling Sorry for Themselves
2. They Don't Give Away Their Power
3. They Don't Shy Away from Change
4. They Don't Waste Energy on Things They Can't Control
5. They Don't Worry About Pleasing Everyone
6. They Don't Fear Taking Calculated Risks
7. They Don't Dwell on the Past
8. They Don't Make the Same Mistakes Over and Over
9. They Don't Resent Other People's Success
10. They Don't Give Up After the First Failure
11. They Don't Fear Alone Time
12. They Don't Feel the World Owes Them Anything
13. They Don't Expect Immediate Results

Those are some great thoughts. Amy has been through a lot and shown a great deal of mental toughness and strength. She has been an inspiration to many people.

Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt Jr. was born on October 27, 1858. He was the second of four children. He had repeated nighttime asthma attacks that felt like he was being smothered to death. The doctors could not cure him. He also had extreme near sightedness. By all health standards Roosevelt was a weak boy. He was a determined young man and would not let his bodily weakness define him.

His father once said “Theodore you have the mind but you have not the body, and without the help of the body the mind cannot go as far as it should. I am giving you the tools, but it is up to you to make your body.” To which Teddy replied “I will make my body!”²

Teddy and his father called his new way of living the “strenuous life.” Each day he worked to improve what he could in himself and strive after fearlessness. They built a gym and Teddy began to box and lift weights. He hiked in every type of weather. Once considered frail and weak, Teddy mocked his circumstances and became an elite athlete. He rowed competitively and boxed at Harvard. Despite his athletic achievements doctors encouraged Teddy to avoid strenuous activity and find a desk job. Instead he climbed the Matterhorn.³

Roosevelt had acquired the strength to overcome, the strength to work, and the strength to have courage in dark times through his initial debilitating circumstances as a child. Strength is not an ability one is born with but a heartiness that is developed through trials. His mental toughness led him to become physically strong. “A soft, easy life is not worth living, if it impairs the fiber of brain and

heart and muscle”, said Roosevelt. “We must dare to be great; and we must realize that greatness is the fruit of toil and sacrifice and high courage ... For us is the life of action, of strenuous performance of duty; let us live in the harness, striving mightily; let us rather run the risk of wearing out than rusting out.”⁴

Roosevelt went on to serve in the army, was elected Vice President of the United States, Governor of New York, Assistant Secretary of the Navy. He even won the Medal of Honor and the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1901, he was elected as the 26th President of the United States. Among all of these honors and positions, he also fought to preserve national parks, forests, and the nation’s natural resources.

After his presidency he led a two-year expedition to the Amazon basin where he almost died of tropical disease. Remember this is the same frail boy once afflicted with asthma. There is no doubt that Roosevelt led a full life; his strength was admired by all and demonstrated again and again. He chose the “strenuous life.” The beautiful truth is that anyone can choose the strenuous life; there is no weakness so big that can prevent one from displaying strength.

On October 14, 1912 in a car on the way to give a speech Roosevelt was shot in the chest by John Schrank. The bullet passed through the manuscript for the speech and did not reach his lungs or heart, but Roosevelt still had a bullet in his chest. He refused to go to a hospital and demanded that he give his speech. Standing up behind the podium he

said “Friends, I shall ask you to be as quiet as possible. I don't know whether you fully understand that I have just been shot; but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose.” He stood in a bloody shirt and spoke over an hour that day. ⁵

Roosevelt time and time again chose strength over circumstance. He focused on what he could do instead of what was going on around him. He had asthma, so he took up boxing; he was shot, but he still gave his speech. To most people even the notion of these responses seems ridiculous, but most people will never be President of the United States or win a Nobel Peace Prize. Roosevelt's strength started with weakness. He chose to look it dead in the eyes and defeat it.

Strength and toughness are not elusive. Anyone can attain this. One of the best ways to be tough is to accept responsibility for our actions. Roosevelt used to say, “If I kicked the person in the pants most responsible for my problems, then I wouldn't be able to sit down for a week.”

Often, we need to discipline ourselves and others won't have to. We have to recognize that we can control our attitudes and responses. Many times, tough people aren't necessarily tougher or stronger than someone else, but they choose to be tough just a little longer than the other person.

Whether we cause our own problems or are caught up in a situation that we can't control, we can always choose to be strong.