



# OPERATOR EDGE



## 12 Mental Toughness Strategies

To start employing today to build your Resilience,  
Confidence, Adaptability and Attitude

Rhys Dowden

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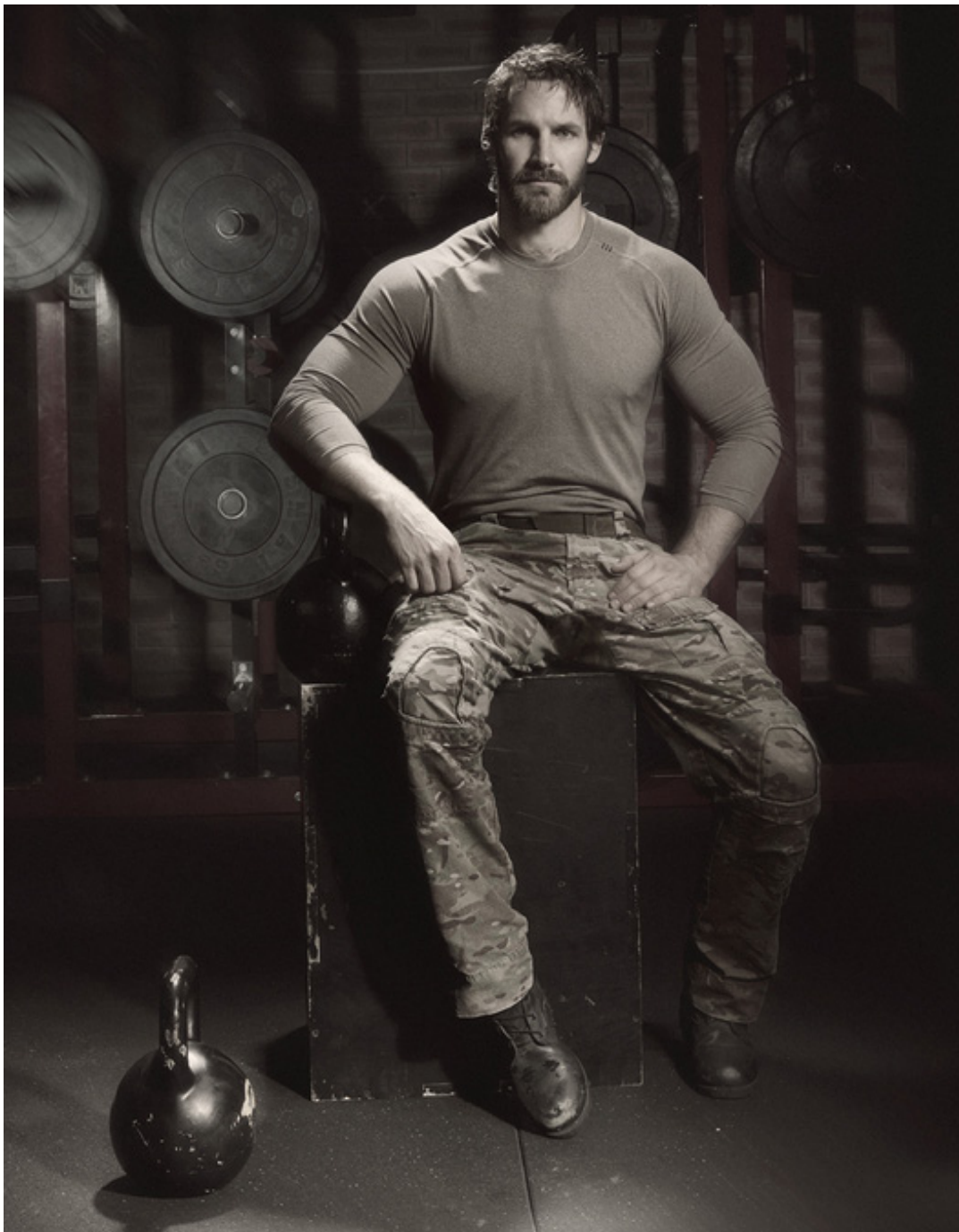


## Rhys Dowden

Rhys grew up in various places in Queensland, with the majority of his childhood spent on the Sunshine Coast. He enlisted in the Army at the age of 18 and served in the Royal Australian Armoured Corps for 4 and ½ years before discharging.

Rhys worked at Australia Zoo on Steve Irwin's security detail for 6 months before taking work in Iraq as a contractor for 2 years. He then re-enlisted in the Army and passed the Commando Selection and Training Course in 2008. Rhys completed 2 tours to Afghanistan with the 2nd Commando Regiment, one as an Operator and one as a Sniper, before discharging in 2013 with a total of 10 years service.

As Owner of Operator Edge, Rhys' extensive military and fitness experience along with many years of martial arts enables him to provide a thorough level of mental conditioning, military, self-defence and strength and conditioning training.





# 1. Build Your Personal Foundation Plan

This is a personal plan to get you real clear about who you are and what you want to achieve. Think of this plan exactly like you would a business plan with a Vision, Mission and Core Values to live by and uphold.

The idea behind this plan is to build a solid foundation for which all your activities, tasks and energy are directed towards your end game or mission.

Take the time to write down and construct your Personal Foundation Plan and review it on a regular basis to ensure:

1. You are on track to mission success
2. You are operating in line with your Vision, Mission and Core Values
3. You still ACTUALLY want to act out your original plan

## Personal Foundation Plan

**Vision** – How do I see my life turning out? How do I want it to turn out?

**My Personal Vision is:**

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**Mission** – What do I want to achieve in my life overall?

**My Personal Mission is:**

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**Core values** – What do I stand for?

**My Core Values are:**

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7. 

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# 2. Create Your Mission

Everybody needs a plan, a goal or a mission. This is vital in developing mental toughness. By setting goals and achievable tasks you are instilling discipline. Discipline which will be tested time and time again, which will by default, build your mental resilience.

The number one thing successful people have in common is goal setting. Successful people ALWAYS set goals. Goal setting is a powerful tool that confirms in your mind exactly what it is you are trying to achieve. If you don't set goals, how do you know where you are going and when you finally get there?

In the Military, goal setting is mandatory. We used a different term: mission planning. Every single soldier on any mission should know every aspect of the mission, in minute detail, and how the objective was going to be achieved . Because of this, every member of the team's thoughts and actions revolved around the common goal of getting the mission completed. As a collective, cohesive group this was a powerful mindset in achieving mission success.

If you haven't previously set goals, start now.

### 3. Set Achievable Targets

In the Military we could call these 'report lines'. Report lines are locations on a map a body of troops would pass along the way to an objective. This lets higher up know exactly where the troops are and how far they have to go.

Set achievable targets throughout your mission to aid you in gaining confidence and building momentum. As you hit each report lines (complete each task) you will feel more confident in your abilities and motivated to keep on track.

### 4. Bulletproof Your Mission

Bulletproofing your mission by creating your 'actions on' is another Military term used to determine your actions if and when something in your plan goes wrong.

Creating your 'actions on' is a great way to feel confident in your plan and your ability to overcome any setbacks. Determining what might go wrong in your plan and how to overcome the roadblock will ensure that when the time comes, you won't panic. You will have a detailed action to combat the roadblock and get you back on your mission path as quickly as possible.

Bulletproof your mission by conducting the following:

#### Step 1.

What are your roadblocks? How will your plan fail? Identify all the possible scenarios in which your plan can go wrong for each step of your overall plan.

Taking into account Murphy's law: 'Anything that can go wrong, WILL go wrong'.

#### Step 2.

Actions on.

Now for each event you've identified that could go wrong, for each step of your plan, create an action to combat that unplanned occurrence. You can even go so far as to write multiple 'actions on' for each problem.

Here's an example.

#### Scenario 1.

**The Mission:** A team of 18 Special Forces Troops are to be deployed into a hostile area at short notice to capture a high value individual.

**Possible problem:** The helicopter fails to start with 6 Special Forces Troops on board.

**Actions on:** All on board troops are to split up and board the other two helicopters and co-ordinate marry up once on the ground.

Bulletproofing your mission is a simple process to combat any possible scenario in your plan which might derail your efforts. This will quickly have you back on track if and when you encounter a roadblock.

### 5. Realise You're Already A Winner

I guarantee you, you've been successful in something in your life already, anything!

How did you do it? What were the steps you took? Maybe you didn't even realise the process you went through at the time to reach your goal.

Think about it now, what have you already achieved?

- Finished school?
- Made a sporting team?
- Got that job you wanted?
- Moved out of home?
- Learned something new?
- Finished a trade?

What you need to do is gain confidence from your past successes and realise that if you've been successful before, you can be successful again.

If you don't believe in yourself, it doesn't matter how many people tell you that "you can do it", "you're ready", "I believe in you", you won't accomplish anything.

Let me say that again and be very clear...

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, YOU WON'T ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING!

Self-belief, I believe, is possibly the greatest driver in accomplishment and the difference in success or failure.

Believe in yourself by the achievements you've already completed. Believe that you can take those past wins and achieve even more and be better, happier, more fulfilled and more successful.

## 6. Take Action

Now this may seem like a generic and obvious saying, but too many people simply don't do this.

You create your plan, you have a detailed process, you've got your 'actions on', now what...?

What's the very first step you need to take?

"A journey of a thousand mile begins with a single step."

Begin your journey, take that first step.

## 7. Utilise The 'Small Wins' Phenomenon

As I've said before, momentum and confidence builds mental toughness. So how do you do it?

Small wins.

Small wins builds momentum and confidence each and every time you complete a task and gain that micro win. It has a snow ball effect. Small win after small win breeds success.

What's a small win? Anything. Making your bed, folding your clothes, answering all your emails, doing the dishes, brushing your teeth, mowing the lawn.

Anything and everything that will get you that micro win, will build momentum, which in turn will give you confidence and keep you motivated. This in turn will ensure you are persistent.

Get enough small wins and the bigger wins will seem easier to attain.

Check out my video here on small wins: <https://youtu.be/SizkOclYWY0>

## 8. Improve Your Emotional Intelligence

How? By incorporating my 6 Elements of Emotional Intelligence:

- 1. Self-awareness** – start to identify your feelings and emotions. This will help you begin to realise who you really are and is a great step towards making emotionally intelligent decisions based on reason and understanding.
- 2. Emotional acknowledgement** – why are you feeling a certain way? Happy, sad, angry, frustrated. Acknowledging your emotions will enable you to move forward quickly from negative emotions and replicate positive ones.
- 3. Self-assessment and self-control** – What are your emotional strengths and weaknesses and how can you control them better? Both negative and positive emotions.
- 4. Empathy** – start to be aware and endeavour to understand others emotions. This will help you gain better insight and perspective into your own emotions.
- 5. Motivation** – See the benefit of long term thinking and or planning and try to forgo any immediate satisfaction in lieu of future success and overall satisfaction.
- 6. Humility** – With confidence comes humility. Put in the work you know you have to, in doing so you won't feel the need to gloat. Stay humble.

## 9. Conduct Regular Exercise

Regular exercise is a key ingredient in developing your mental toughness.

Why?

Because it instils discipline, drive and motivation each and every time you complete a training session. You get to apply mental toughness techniques throughout your training session and are forcing yourself to be resilient.

Each physical session you commit to, allows you to set a bigger goal, break that goal down into manageable steps, work through your quitting point, push yourself, breath and gain those small wins until the session is complete.

Exercise will also help you de-stress by allowing you to focus on the task at hand. Your body will be producing a lot of endorphins and suppressing the stress hormones, after which you will be more focused, have greater clarity, be hyper motivated and feel great.

Exercise!

## 10. Keep Motivated

Motivation is a fickle bitch.

Sometimes you have no trouble jumping out of bed at 5am, sprinting to the gym and smashing yourself in a killer session.

Other times you simply couldn't be bothered. We all feel like this sometimes.

How to combat these days when you lack motivation is to make it hard for yourself to say no.

I do this by getting all of my training equipment ready and putting it in the car early. I grab my gi and mouthguard and belt and water bottle and tape and anything else I need.

It's a commitment process. I'm building momentum and making it hard for myself to say no when the time comes to get in the car and drive to training.

Build a process for those days you lack motivation. You know you'll feel awesome after you've completed the very thing you don't want to do.

Check out my video here on what to do on those days you are lacking motivation: <https://youtu.be/73sNLETKSTI>

## 11. Hold Yourself Accountable

Tell those you have a high opinion of and trust, about the mission you've undertaken. A mentor, coach, teacher, parent, family member.

This will not only help keep you accountable which will drive your motivation, but those very people you've told will also help keep you driven.

After all, you've confided in them and they want you to succeed. They will also, more then likely be motivated by you.

## 12. Start A Daily Reflection

I've added this to my daily routine quite recently and it's been a real game changer.

Every evening I sit quietly for 5-10 minutes and reflect on my day. I think about everything I was able to achieve, how I progressed forward and if I could have done anything more or better.

I also write down the 3 things I must complete the following day.

The daily reflection is also a time to unwind and calm yourself down from the day's activities and ready yourself for bed. Turn off the TV, get off Facebook and Instagram and allow yourself just this 5-10 minutes to relax in thought.

Today's world is so extremely busy and we are constantly flooded with information, news and entertainment, much of it negative. Give yourself this time to reconnect with your thoughts and emotions, you will find it extremely soothing.

## Complete the Mission Planning Blueprint by:

1. Writing your Vision, Mission & Core Values
2. Identifying your Target
3. Knowing your 'Why'
4. Defining your Mission Statement
5. Breaking your mission down into manageable steps
6. Identifying any roadblocks during each step of your plan
7. Combating those roadblocks with your 'Actions on'
8. Learning from each set back
9. Building momentum each step of the way
10. Being persistent
11. Completing your Mission
12. Celebrating your Success!

Developing mental toughness is like developing a muscle. Start small and condition the muscle first before putting too much stress on it. The same applies for mental toughness. Start small by setting achievable goals and creating a pattern of success with each small win.

Start to implement these 12 strategies and you'll be on the path to developing your mental toughness and before you know it those small wins will turn into great feats!

**Good Luck!**

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