

Mental Preparation

By Jayson Patino

Being mentally strong is one the most important traits a competitor can possess. Having confidence and the ability to push through adversity and perform despite distractions and difficult situations can often times be the difference between winning and losing. You need to have the ability to be “clutch” and perform to your *full potential* and not “choke” under pressure. Having your subconscious mind congruent with your conscious intentions is a sure fire way to make sure your body reacts physically the way you want it to. ***Mental preparation is the most neglected area of training amongst competitors, despite being the most important.***

It is important to understand why mental strength and preparation is so important to be able to fully commit to the requirements necessary to achieve it. Many people don't realize that their ***subconscious beliefs override their conscious thoughts***. What I mean is, you may have doubts of your abilities, or fear of your opponent's abilities, deep in the back of your mind that will supersede your conscious thoughts. This means that the behaviors and motivations you want for yourself will not be possible as long as your subconscious hijacks your mind with these “fears.” Even if you think and say, “I am the best, I will destroy my opponent.” but your subconscious mind is not congruent with those thoughts; your doubts will manifest themselves in a negative way and sabotage your performance. Fear, even in the smallest doses, can undermine mechanical skill.

The goal of mental preparation is to reprogram your subconscious and your conscious thoughts to be congruent, or consistent, with each other. Just like you practice physical techniques thousands of times to be able to execute them on instinct, you must also practice mental preparation techniques thousands of times to be able to perform to your full potential.

Another reason mental preparation is so important is because of our body's natural response to stressful situations. Humans are wired with self-protective mechanisms that have helped us survive for centuries. Our Fight, Flight, or Freeze (FFF) survival response is designed to mobilize our brain and body to fight an enemy, run from potential danger, or freeze to hide from a predator. In present day we don't necessarily need these survival responses as they were originally designed. None-the-less, during competition our brain can trigger the FFF response and we enter into survival



mode quicker than our rational minds can react. When this FFF response is triggered our body releases a surge of adrenaline, we start to breathe faster and shallower breaths, our heartrate increases, and our pupils dilate causing tunnel vision. All of which cause more stress and anxiety making it harder to think clearly and perform technically and physically. Game plans are thrown out the window and technical combinations can become reckless attacks.

These FFF symptoms can be seen when a fighter that is in normally in great shape, technical, and aggressive in training, all of the sudden freezes and hesitates during a fight. They start throwing wild strikes and then gas out in the first round. Knowing the symptoms of the activation of our FFF response can make it easier to recognize and reduce the effects. Practicing the techniques laid out in this program can help us minimize and stop the negative effects from the FFF response.

UFC veteran, Din Thomas, one of the head coaches of American Top Team, the best MMA team in the world, who trains some of the best fighters in the world, had this to say about mental preparation:

“What most fighters don’t understand is that for as much time as they put in physically they need that much time mentally training. The problem with a lot of fighters is they are somewhat embarrassed by the fact that they may not be as mentally sound as they think they are. So they’re not willing to commit to the “buy-in.” Those fighters will always struggle. 90% of fighters think that their mental work is done simultaneously with the physical work. Only a few fighters can get away with this being the only mental work they need. The rest of them need isolated mental training and a full commitment to it with daily practice, the same as they would practice any other skill.”

The key to following through with this type of mental training regimen (or any new routine for that matter), is to be *self-disciplined* and make the changes a daily habit. Just like training and sparring is part of your daily routine, mental training should also be done daily. By following this program, research has shown that you can reprogram your brain, control your heartrate, stay calm under pressure, and perform to your full potential.



It can take twenty-one days to over sixty-six days to build a new habit. The length of time will vary depending on the person and the habit. You should ***commit to a specific goal or daily habit for a minimum of thirty days*** to start. Talk to people you trust about your goals and habits to create accountability for yourself. You're 30% more likely to follow through simply by telling someone else. It's even better if you are working towards a goal alongside someone else so you can motivate each other, discuss your successes and failures, and hold each other accountable.

This program has the option to use a mind body technique that uses a methodology of removing neurological or meridian aberrations related to the physiology of unresolved stress. What this means is they are able to identify and clear you of subconscious disruptions that could be hindering you from performing to your full potential. This powerful technique, called ***Neuro Emotional Techniques (N.E.T.)***, has shown in studies to change brain activity upwards of 30%. With this protocol you can actually locate neuro emotional complexes within your subconscious and then “shut off” the parts of the brain that send signals to the rest of your body to react negatively. These changes have never before been shown scientifically so quickly. You can visit www.MyNewDimension.com, www.netmindbody.com or www.stresseddoc.com for more information on this technique or to schedule an appointment.

At first, the strategies outlined in this program may seem like a daunting task for a fighter. The questions you have to ask yourself are; do you want to be the best and have an edge over your competition? Do you want to be the best version of yourself? There was a time when football players didn't study tape. When the best baseball player in the world, Babe Ruth, was fat, out of shape, drank, did drugs, and smoked cigars on a regular basis. Just like those sports have evolved, combat sports are evolving very rapidly as more studies and research is done. The best athletes in the world in every sport have realized the importance of having a mental edge over their competition. You want to be ahead of the game. Eventually these practices will be common play amongst competitors in combat sports. Set yourself up for the best possible chance for success.

There are many drills and techniques to train the mind. We have identified seven of the most powerful strategies that we will teach in this program. We will go through each lesson in depth and give the necessary information about each topic. Each lesson will be followed by a practical application that you will need to do to begin your transformation. By committing to



these steps and being disciplined in the practices you will be closer to realizing your full potential and be a better competitor. Seek out a NET consultation if you want these techniques to become even more powerful and ensure your conscious and subconscious minds are congruent.



Seven Steps to being Mentally Prepared for Competition

- 1. Breathing and Meditation**
- 2. Setting S.M.A.R.T. goals**
- 3. Visualization drills**
- 4. Positive Affirmations**
- 5. Preparing to cope with adversity**
- 6. Fully committing to your game plan**
- 7. Simulating your competition**



Breathing and Meditation

Meditation can be defined as, “The action or practice of thought contemplation.” Just as we practice the physical tasks of our sports and jobs to improve, we also need to practice mentally to become stronger and more focused. It is my belief that mentally strong people are winners and champions more often than the physically gifted. If you can combine the mental and physical it can be an unstoppable combination. Meditation is a way to clear our mind of non-important and erroneous thinking and focus on the things we truly want for ourselves. Napoleon Hill said, “Remember that your dominating thoughts attract, through a definite law of nature, by the shortest and most convenient route, their physical counterpart. Be careful what your thoughts dwell upon.” By focusing our thoughts in a meditative state, we are more likely to attract and manifest the things we wish for. Conversely if we think about the negative, we will attract those things to us as well.

Meditation has many other scientifically validated health benefits such as:

- Regulating mood, increasing attention and ability to focus and perform under stress
- Improves information processing and decision making
- Pain relief
- Improves learning, memory and self-awareness
- Improves rapid memory recall
- Can decrease blood pressure and risk of stroke
- Can control stress and increase immunity
- People who meditate need less sleep
- Many other positive benefits

Meditation is a very simple practice that many people overcomplicate. We will focus on breathing meditation, where you focus on your breath. The basic idea of meditation is simple; Every time your mind begins to shift its spotlight away from your breath and you get lost in thought, you simply bring your attention back to your breath. Then you repeat this again and



again until your meditation timer sounds. Over time your focus, concentration, and attention span improve, in addition to the plethora of other benefits mentioned above.

Start small. If you try to meditate for 30 minutes right from the start, you will probably get frustrated and discouraged. Start with five minutes, and only increase that time when you're comfortable. Even if you sit for five minutes, and your mind wanders the whole time, you will still receive incredible benefits from meditation. Meditating for 10 minutes a day is infinitely better than meditating for 70 minutes once a week. Try to meditate daily, even if that just means sitting for a few minutes.

To begin, you will need something to sit on and a timer. You can sit in a chair or on a cushion, but keeping your back erect with proper posture is key. If you are in a chair, don't let your back rest on the back of the chair to keep you alert and focused on your breath. Make sure you are in a quiet place and comfortable. Once you are comfortably seated and start your timer, close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath. If you begin dozing off, it is okay to slightly open your eyes and focus on a spot on the floor in front of you. Close your mouth and focus entirely on your breath as it enters and leaves your nose. You can focus on any element of your breath that you want; from how the air feels as it enters and exists your nose, to how the air feels as you inflate and deflate your lungs, to the sensation under your nose as you breathe in and out, to the sound you make as you breathe. Don't force your breathing, just breathe naturally and observe your breath without thinking too much about it. If you are having trouble concentrating, count your breaths. Count up to five, then start again.

Don't think. This is the hard part. Don't analyze your breath; just bring your attention and focus to your breath, without thinking about it or analyzing it. ***Bring your attention back to your breathing when it wanders.*** When your mind wanders, and it will, gently bring your attention back to your breath once you realize that your mind has wandered. You may not realize at first that your mind has started thinking again, but when you do, gently bring your attention back. Don't be hard on yourself during this stage. Just gently bring your attention back. When your mind begins to think about how boring meditation is, gently bring your attention back to your breath. When your mind becomes restless, bring in your attention again. Keep doing this until your meditation timer sounds.



Setting SMART goals

What if you could achieve anything in the world you wanted to? THAT is the power of goal setting. Making a plan to achieve what is most important to you. Setting goals is critical for developing perseverance and making a plan to achieve what we want from life. People really struggle with following through with their goals, though. Studies show that *only about 8%* of people achieve their New Year's resolutions! This can most likely be attributed to people making more of a wish, than writing down a detailed plan to achieve their goals.

A Harvard study on goals found:

1. We must change *inside* before we can change our outside world.
2. Goals give us reasons/motivation to change and move toward wholeness.
3. Specific, effective goal writers have the winning edge because they sense specifically what is missing in their lives to make them more whole. In addition, they have made what is missing abundantly clear and crystallized it objectively to themselves by writing these goals down.

Harvard goal study results:

25% of the people who had no goals, had sprinkled results

72% of the people who had sporadic goals were successful 40% of the time.

3% of the people had concrete, written and dated goals and ***were successful 89% of the time.***

Here is the step by step system to help you properly set, plan, work towards, and achieve your goals.

Step 1: Choose your “Big Goal”

If you have a real *desire* to reach your goal, you're far more likely to be motivated, driven, and ultimately successful. What do you *truly* want to accomplish or achieve this year?

Ask questions like:

- What's something you wish you could achieve?
- What's a challenge you would feel very proud to overcome?
- What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?



BRAINSTORM! Make sure the goal is **specific, measurable, and trackable**. It's usually good to set an easier goal first. Then once you've reached that goal, you can set a harder goal to achieve. Goals need to be flexible. The more specific and clear your goals are, the better your performance will be. There's a scientific approach to goal setting that can help you increase your chances of reaching your goal. The key to success is developing a S.M.A.R.T. goal.

S.M.A.R.T. stands for Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Relevant; and Time-bound.

A goal is an outcome, something that will make a difference as a result of achieving it. It can't be too hard to be out of reach, but also not so simple that it does not challenge. A goal has to be realistic with a stretch, requiring effort and focus to achieve it. That's why goals need timeframes and measurable steps along the way so that you can keep track of progress and make adjustments as necessary. Avoid vague goals like, "I want to get better." There's no clear way to know when or if this goal has been achieved.

Step 2: Discuss the Purpose of Your Goal

In order for you to be truly motivated to reach your goal, you must understand your "WHY." *Why* do you want to achieve this goal? *Why* does it matter? What is your *purpose*? When you set goals for yourself, it is important that they motivate you; this means making sure that they are important to you, and that there is value in achieving them. If you have little interest in the outcome, or they are irrelevant given the larger picture, then the chances of you putting in the work to make them happen are slim. Motivation is key to achieving goals.

Step 3: Break the Big Goal into Smaller Steps

"The journey of 1,000 miles begins with one step." –Lao Tzu

An effective goal must be reasonably *within reach*. It should be neither too challenging nor too easy. You must be able to sustain your motivation for an extended period of time. One way to achieve this is to break your big, long-term goal into more *manageable short-term steps*.



People often fail to reach their goals because the goals they have set are too massive and unrealistic. These people focus too much on the *outcome* and not enough on the *process*. It's important for you to understand that you may not reach your long-term goal right away. As long as you're making *progress* and completing *short-term* goals, you're still climbing the ladder to success and shouldn't get discouraged.

Step 4: Brainstorm Potential Obstacles

If you don't plan in advance for potential obstacles, an unforeseen challenge or difficulty could derail your motivation.

The KEY to successfully reaching goals lies in two strategies:

- (1) Visualizing yourself achieving a goal
- (2) Planning a method for overcoming obstacles beforehand.

As you plan for potential obstacles, talk about bad habits or negative thoughts, including a *desire to give up*. Ask yourself "If I feel like giving up, what will I do instead?" It is very likely that you will encounter some form of failure or loss along your journey to achieve your long term goals. The key is view these situations as learning experiences to grow and improve. Do not view a loss as a defeat that defines you. If you focus on the fact that you can learn from your mistakes, then a short term failure can actually be viewed as an improvement for the future. This positive perspective is critical to developing the perseverance to push through the difficult situations that will arise. Achieving long term goals is hard and bumps along the way are to be anticipated. Do not put pressure on yourself to win. The people closest to you in your inner circle will be there supporting you every step of the way, win or lose. When you try your best to prepare and execute you can rest easy with no regrets regardless of the result.

Use our goal-setting worksheets to write down all the information we've discussed. By simply writing down your goals, you're 42% more likely to achieve them. Telling a friend or family member increases this rate to 72%. Finally, don't forget to celebrate success. When a goal is achieved, celebrate!



Visualization Drills

Visualization Drills are the practice of visualizing yourself competing and succeeding. These type of drills are used by world class athletes in every sport. The goal is to see yourself succeeding in the competition as many times as possible before the actual competition. This serves as a form of muscle memory (or mental memory I suppose) to help overcome the anxiety and nerves that come with competing. It's natural to feel nervous when you compete. Don't fight these feelings, embrace them. We can activate the same parts of the brain that react to actual experience through visualization and memory. So our brain and body react as if we are doing or reliving the same moment. By practicing visualizations with positive outcomes we can "rehearse" the feelings and outcomes we want.

Actual competition experience is so valuable because once you've competed enough times, you're better equipped to deal with the potential emotions that are present during competition. This is what we are trying to accomplish with the visualization drills. Put your mind in that competition enough times to where you feel as if you've been there so many times and succeeded. This helps subside the nerves and build confidence. We want to *minimize the gap between your potential and your actual performance*. Have you ever heard of how fighters who make their UFC debut underperform under the bright lights? This is caused by the shock and nerves of competing on the big stage, and the fear of failing with so many people watching. Those fighters that underperform didn't get technically worse. They often let their emotions take control and their nervousness doesn't let them perform to their full potential as they have so many times before. This is what we want to avoid.

These visualization drills are a version of meditation. The difference is, instead of focusing on your breathing, you will focus on the competition. To begin your visualization drill, sit down in a quiet, comfortable place where no one will disturb you for at least ten to twenty minutes. Close your eyes and take several deep breaths. Begin thinking in detail about the day of competition starting with when you first wake up. Visualize yourself eating breakfast, showering, packing your bag, driving to the venue, checking in, etc. Be detailed in your thoughts so it feels like you are really there. Visualize waiting in the locker room, stretching, warming up, getting your gear on and your hands getting wrapped. See yourself walking into the cage or on the mat and standing across from



your opponent. Hear the announcer calling your name, the referee acknowledging you, and the sound of the bell at the start of the fight.

Now, *see yourself executing your game plan* and performing as planned. Are you attacking immediately? Are you feeling them out first? Be specific with different set-ups and attacks that you've drilled. See yourself anticipating your opponent's attacks, defending and countering them effectively. At some point though, you must see yourself caught in some form of adversity where you have to work through and prevail. Maybe you were taken down, hit hard or put in a tight submission. See yourself staying calm, breathing, and escaping or working out of the bad situation. Visualize yourself unaffected from the adversity and continuing to execute your game plan. See yourself staying focused and executing your "go-to" moves that are leading to victory. See the moment you finish your opponent and the referee steps in to stop the fight. At the end of the visualization, you have overcome the adversity and finish victorious. Hear the crowd yelling, the celebratory music playing, the announcer calling your name, and of course, your hand getting raised as you look to your coaches, teammates, and fans with pride. What does that feel like to you? Make it feel real.

Play out several different scenarios, each with a positive ending. This will help condition your mind and make you more comfortable when the day of competition actually comes. If you're training for a tournament with multiple matches in a day, visualize all of the potential matches, (first match, quarterfinals, semi-finals, & finals) and not just one match. After each match see your hand getting raised. See yourself at the top of the first place podium with the second and third place competitors beneath you. Don't make the mistake of only visualizing yourself doing a few moves and call it a day. When visualizing, the more detailed, the better.



Positive Affirmations

Positive Affirmations, also known as declarations, are a phrase or mantra that you repeat to yourself describing an outcome you desire, or who you want to be. At first these affirmations may not be true, but with constant repetition your subconscious mind will start to believe them and these will become your governing belief systems. Just as you have practiced your name millions of times, practicing these affirmations will make you as confident in your beliefs as you knowing that your name is your name. Eventually, they become your reality. Your subconscious mind learns through repetition and affirmations are a great way to practice repetitive thought patterns. They also rewire your brain for different thoughts. Positive affirmations change thoughts of doubt and fear to thoughts of confidence and action. How do you beat a man who doesn't believe he can be beat? Of course, it is possible but it is much more difficult.

The statements should be personalized to you and your strengths. An example of one I use is:

I am stronger than my opponent.

I am faster than my opponent.

I am more technical than my opponent.

I am in better shape than my opponent.

I have worked harder than my opponent.

I will not lose but instead will work through and beat my opponent.

Add or remove whatever statements pertain to you and repeat them daily leading into your competition. As you get closer to your competition increase the number of times a day you say them. On fight day, I say them every time I go to the bathroom. Look in the mirror while repeating them and say them with conviction and confidence. You must believe them to be true for them to work. This may seem silly at first but there is no substitute for positivity and confidence and this drill can improve yours drastically.



Preparing to cope with adversity

It is inevitable that at some point during preparing for competition or during competition, there will be some form of adversity. These are usually situations out of your control that cause you to lose focus, confidence, or composure. They can also invoke stress, anger, anxiety, fear, etc. You will have to *anticipate these challenges and have a plan to cope with each of them* so you're not thrown off your game. During a training camp you may experience an injury, sickness, or changes in your work or personal life that affect your training. During your competition you may get taken down, caught in a submission, hurt, "rocked," experience an eye poke, a low blow, a bad referee call, etc.

Understanding that these are real possibilities and developing strategies to deal with them can give you peace of mind in the moment that they do occur. There is significant power in having anticipated an issue before it happens. If something occurs that has already been identified, then the energy and impact of the issue is lessened. You won't feel anxiety or stress because "something didn't go as planned." You can refocus your mindset and keep your confidence high knowing that you can still follow through with your game plan and succeed despite any distractions or adversity. You must always control your emotions and have them work for you, not against you.

You can develop a list to help identify and plan for coping with the unexpected. This will help you analyze and prepare for difficult conditions ahead of time. Brainstorm and ask your coaches to come up with a list considering the following:

1. The most common possibilities of adversity.
2. The best way to prepare and deal with them.
3. How the condition might serve as an advantage.



Fully committing to your game plan

Ancient Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu famously said, “*Every battle is won before it’s ever fought.*” He was referencing the importance of developing a game plan to win ahead of time. To develop a solid game plan you must first understand the rules of your sport, identify your strengths and weaknesses, both physically and technically, and study and learn the strengths and weaknesses of your opponent. Once you’ve identified your opponent’s weaknesses you’ll want to develop different ways to attack and expose those weaknesses. You will also want to have a plan for how to defend and counter their strengths. These strategies will coincide with your strengths and weaknesses to create an overall blueprint for how to beat this specific opponent. Part of the game plan will also include the potential adversities, as well as plans to overcome them, mentioned before.

During the actual competition, avoid positions or situations surrounding your weaknesses and ***create “funnels,” or specific set-ups, to guide your opponent into your strengths.*** Be honest with yourself. If you were someone else watching video of one of your previous competitions, what weaknesses would you see? One of the goals is to create a plan to make your current weaknesses your future strengths. You’ll also want to identify the most common defenses and counter attacks to your strengths. Then practice countering those defenses and counter attacks. This allows you to be several steps ahead of your opponent when they attempt to defend your attacks. You may also have a plan to initially attack more at the beginning of the rounds, take a minute off and be defensive, and then finishing strong at the end of the rounds. Your timing of certain attacks is important to help them be effectively executed.

If you do not know who your opponent will be, as is common in many grappling competitions or early amateur fights where previous fight videos are unavailable, then your game plan will revolve around your strengths and preparing for the most common attacks you can expect from a competitor. Identify the most common attacks people will go for and have a general understanding of how to identify and counter those attacks. You will really want to focus on different set-ups to funnel your opponent into your strengths. Make sure to write all this information down so you can easily reference it and make it easier to practice and remember.



Simulating your competition

In order to trick your brain into thinking you have much more experience than you actually do, and hence not allow your emotions to affect you negatively, you can create simulations of your competition environment. By pretending it's "fight day" and physically going through the step by step of what you will do on the actual fight day, you can get a sense for what works and doesn't work for you to be best prepared. Just like the visualization drills where you mentally walked through every detail involved in competition day, you can now physically go through those motions.

Focus on the details like what you eat for breakfast, and lunch, how you stretch and warm-up. Do you like to listen to upbeat music with headphones on or listen to the crowd? Before the simulation, talk to your coaches and a good training partner that can mimic your opponent so everyone is on the same page. Go into the cage, ring, or on the mats and do a full live sparring session to mirror a real competition with coaches and breaks in between rounds. The round times and break times should be the same as your competition. The more realistic you can make this simulation the better. Again, the goal is to *recreate the competition experience* to get any jitters or nerves out ahead of time. Consider this a real life version of the visualization drills. Although it is a physical drill it will help you mentally by again putting you in that competition mindset and allowing you to work out any kinks ahead of time.



These mental preparation drills are designed to reprogram your brain and build your confidence so you enter a competition with no doubt that you will succeed. ***You have to believe that you will be champion.*** Believe that you can beat any opponent. Once you believe this, you don't need to worry about the brackets; who you will face first or last; how strong your opponent is, or what they might do. With the proper conditioning done, you don't need to worry about pacing yourself to conserve energy. You must match and exceed your opponent's intensity to constantly keep the pressure on them. Do not let them rest. Every competition is a battle of attrition. A battle of will. Who will break first? That is decided before the fight even starts. Of course you have to put the work in technically and physically to have true self-confidence.

Several years ago at the IBJJF No-Gi World Championships in Long Beach, California I had the honor of sitting down and speaking with 9x World Champion Rubens "Cobrinha" Charles. I was interested in finding out what his regime was for mental preparation before competitions. This was two weeks after he upset Rafael Mendes to win the ADCC Submission Fighting Championships in China. Upon asking him how he mentally prepares for competition, his response was immediate, "I do A LOT of visualization drills... I get in front of the mirror and I talk to myself... I see myself winning..."

I also was lucky enough to meet and speak to Marcelo Garcia, 9x World Champion and arguably the best pound for pound grappler in the world. When discussing mental preparation, the main point he made is that he always tries to ***eliminate any pressure to win.*** He doesn't put any pressure on himself. I believe many competitors make the mistake of putting pressure on themselves to win in front of their friends, family, and fans. Eliminate those feelings of "I have to win." and instead do your homework on preparing mentally and physically ahead of time. If you lose, you will learn from your mistakes and come back stronger. 99.99% of the best competitors in the world have lost at some point and picked themselves back up and learned from it. Stay focused on doing your best to prepare and compete, without worrying about "What if?" and you will give yourself the best chance at competing to your full potential.

Growing up I wasn't athletically gifted, I was chubby and bad at every sport I played. I was the worst kid on my basketball team. I was cut during the soccer team tryouts in high school and only found wrestling by chance. Even then I was the first person in all my extended family to ever wrestle so I didn't have anyone to help me outside of practices. My team wasn't good and my coach had minimal experience wrestling. I didn't get private lessons or get to attend technical seminars. I didn't have many strong physical attributes, but the one thing I've always had was self-discipline. I've always been an analytical thinker and had the desire and ability to plan and prepare more than most people. ***Combat sports are unique in that they are individual sports so your success or failure relies solely on your work ethic.*** I learned that if you work smarter and harder than everyone else, you have a much better chance at winning.



A person with my physical attributes probably should never have been able to medal multiple times at the IBJJF World Championships much less win a grappling World Title without giving up a point. My path to the ADCC World Championships, the Olympics of grappling, came after winning the ADCC trials. My finals match there was a *32 minute* grueling battle against World Champion, Justin Rader. I had practiced these mental preparation drills for years until ***I felt like I couldn't lose***. This is the *Power of Preparation*. What do you want from life? What do you want to accomplish competitively? You only have one life to live and you better develop the self-discipline and courage to go out there and do it. Follow the steps laid out in this program and make a plan to succeed in everything you do.



Checklist and Planning for Mental Preparation drills.

This is a general guide to planning out your mental preparation. The schedule and number of times you practice will vary from person to person. Generally speaking, the more you practice your mental drills the better.

- Breathing and Meditation-** Start with five minutes a day and increase time as you become more comfortable and your focus on your breathing improves. Try to work up to 20 to 30 minutes a day.
- Set SMART Goals-** Write out your short term and long term Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound goals. Use the worksheet provided to plan out your action steps to incrementally achieve your goals. Also write out any potential obstacles that could keep you from achieving your goals as well as plans to overcome the obstacles. Be sure to write out a clear deadline and a way to know when you've achieved your goal.
- Visualization drills-** Practice once a week leading up to the last two weeks before competition. Then increase to daily for final two weeks.
- Positive Affirmations-** Write these down on the worksheet and practice daily leading up to the last two weeks before competition. Then increase to twice a day two weeks out. Increase to multiple times a day the final week.
- Preparing to cope with adversity-** Use the worksheet to make a list of the most common forms of adversity you could face, the different ways to prepare for and cope with them, as well as how the adversity could serve as an advantage. Physically practice what it would be like to overcome the adversities once a week. Once your training camp starts, revisit the list every couple weeks to make sure you know what to do and that you understand everything clearly.
- Fully committing to your game plan-** Use the worksheet to make a list of your strengths and weaknesses. Drill ways to improve your weaknesses and refine and improve the set-ups, and execution of your strengths. Write down and practice the most common counters to your strengths and practice counters to those counters. When your training camp begins study tape on your opponent and list their strengths and weaknesses. Come up with a complete blueprint on how to expose their weaknesses, defend and counter their strengths, and funnel them into your strengths. Write everything down on the worksheet and drill this game plan a couple times a week through your entire training



camp starting with slower, more technical repetitions, then real speed, then practice executing the plan during live training.

- **Simulating your competition-** Once you have been implementing the four previous steps of mental preparation, you will want to start simulating the complete competition experience. Practice putting all the tools in place and see what is working, what needs to be changed, added, or removed. Three to four weeks before competition start your simulations at least once a week at the beginning of a live sparring session. After the full simulation of a fight, finish your regular training session so you don't miss out on precious training time.

