

The Five Mountains

Unbeatable Mind

By Mark Divine

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The First Mountain: Physical Preparation

Physical training should not only be geared toward competing in a particular event, a weight loss goal or strength objective. No matter your age, weight or conditioning, you should plan to train your entire life. The quality of your life will dramatically improve by conquering this mountain alone.

We want you to have within your grasp the most effective training available regardless of your short or long-term goals. In order to develop this type of training, we focus on five key competencies:

- Strength
- Stamina
- Endurance
- Work Capacity
- Durability

Strength & Stamina

Did you know there is more than one kind of strength? There is *relative strength* and *maximum strength*. Relative strength is a measure of how much can you move or carry relative to your size, and maximum strength measure the maximum weight you can manipulate (lift, push, carry).

In the gym environment, we develop strength using the Deadlift, Front Squat, Back Squat, the Presses (strict, push and jerk), Overhead Squat and the Olympic lifts (which develop strength speed and explosive power). Outside of the gym, we can use any number of things: your training partner can be a weight (Buddy carry), sand bags, tires, logs, etc. The benefit of doing this type of training, particularly for the military operator or industrial athlete, is the realism and core strength-durability that develops alongside your raw relative strength. Very valuable stuff!

Closely associated with relative strength is *stamina*. People often confuse stamina with endurance, though they are not the same thing. Stamina has to do with the ability to repeat a movement efficiently and effectively over time. For example, if you're doing pull-ups with 15

seconds rest in between every set of five, the max number of sets you can do prior to muscular exhaustion would determine your stamina for body weight pulling.

Endurance

Endurance involves training the body's capacity to work long and under low intensity in a mono-structural mode. Examples of this include running, swimming or a rucksack hike. Having high endurance also means having an efficient *oxidative energy pathway* (aerobic), meaning your lungs are the primary source of oxygen to your muscles. An example of this would be the SEALFIT athlete who goes on a 14 mile run, maintaining a steady pace, and continues onto the next phase of training (or the mission). This is a measure of endurance.

Work Capacity

Work Capacity is what I like to think of as basically your horsepower. It measures your ability to do more work in less time. We time our work capacity training sessions in order to maintain maximum intensity.

We employ a system of constantly varied, functional movements performed at high intensity. Functional movements are those that remain true to how our bodies move in nature, in contrast to doing arm curls or leg extensions at the gym. Although there may be a time and place to isolate a particular muscle, as in the case of muscle rehabilitation, we are firm practitioners and proponents of applying functional movement in all of our physical training.

Another way to look at functional movement in your training is by understanding how it works and thereby why it is superior to isolated muscle training exercises. Functional movements *begin at the core* and *end at the extremities*.

This includes activities such as pulling, pushing, squatting, lifting weight from the floor, throwing, running, swimming and more.

Durability

You can consider *durability* to be the training of your joints, ligaments, core and everything else that helps to keep you off the bench. Durability includes those activities critical for longevity that most people know they should do, but often let slip. Examples of durability are active stretching, core

development utilizing sand bags and strongman exercises, foam rollers, joint mobility, range of motion drills, fueling and re-fueling, hydration and rest. Forgetting to take care of this component can torpedo even the most hardened of athletes.

Final Note: We learn more by working in a group than alone. At SEALFIT we employ team workouts and team mental challenges that accelerated the growth experience. In other words, we're not just developing the unbeatable body, but also fostering teamwork, leadership, emotional control, awareness and the unbeatable spirit. Each training session, whether it's a 2-hour workout or the 50-hour Kokoro Camp, is a comprehensive hybrid event that can encompass all Five Mountains!

The 2nd Mountain: Mental Preparation

Our experience has shown us that mental toughness can be trained, and that mentally tough athletes achieve extra-ordinary success on the playing field as well as in the arena of life.

Mental Toughness is the second mountain of SEALFIT training and something the ancient Greeks understood and embraced entirely. They used the concept of hard physical training to develop the mind along with qualities of good citizenry.

Those that have spent time in physically strenuous work, such as first responders or military warriors, understand the value that hard physical training brings to developing mental toughness. The Greeks didn't just rely on a good workout to develop their warriors, nor do we. At SEALFIT we like to carve out Mental Toughness and work on it as a core competency and essential requirement to be fit and live a good life.

A key tool we use to develop a strong mind is team training. Training with a team that shares your thirst for self-mastery is a powerful force for developing your fullest human potential. How? Have you ever played competitive team sports or been part of dedicated and focused team at work?

Training with a team forces you to operate in the complex world of "others," rather than the relatively simple world of "me." You are no longer held accountable to only yourself but also to the needs and expectations of those around you. This *team effect* will force you to step it up a few notches.

Another very valuable tool for forging mental toughness is to get out of the gym. Though an excellent tool, it is an artificial environment that can lead to complacency and a false sense of security. If you like to lift heavy, then get out and lift something heavy in the woods. If you like to run, get off the treadmill and do an obstacle course or trail run. *Real world* activities will increase your ability and thereby your confidence when having to deal with moving, lifting and handling objects in the real world.

The 3rd Mountain: Emotional Control

*“There are two types of pain in the world. The temporary pain of self-discipline and the permanent pain of regret” —
Anonymous*

So what does it mean to be emotionally in control? Do I mean here you won't cry or yell when the workout involves more than you think you can do? Hmm... maybe. No, just kidding! What I'm talking about here is that as we train our minds to be still and more perceptive and aware, we will begin notice that our bodies *speak* to us as well. *What?*

Are you familiar with the term, *emotional baggage*? Our bodies are giant energy producers and storehouses, and the energy we store often turns into emotional baggage. Emotional baggage can often come back to haunt you by way of feelings of fear, anger, timidity, jealousy, rage and other negative beliefs and responses.

Clearly these emotions are not supportive of our journey toward self-mastery. By ridding yourself of emotional baggage, you will find that your reward is depth of character. A good analogy to this is the flow of water in a stream. In places where it is shallow, the water is choppy and turbulent, like our *monkey minds*. But in places where the water is deep, there is stillness and calm.

Here are a couple of tools you can use right away to deal with emotional baggage and work on emotional control.

Therapy is a terrific way to help shed light on any emotional baggage we may have trailing behind us, trashing things in its wake. Unfortunately, most people have a jaded view of therapy and believe it's only for those that can't gut through difficult situations. Not true. Therapy is preventative maintenance. Similar to preventing a flood in your house by clearing a clog in your bathroom plumbing, rooting out emotional blockages will improve the flow of your emotional intelligence and overall development.

Yoga is another fabulous tool for dealing with emotional blockages. I have personally witnessed grown men cry as they strike an emotional storage repository through a specific pose — amazing! The release is often immediate, and that scary monster of stored emotion is revealed by the light of Yoga to be nothing more than stored negative energy.

Final Note: a key attribute of emotional control is the ability to make sound decisions. This is something that is almost impossible to do if our minds are cluttered with random thoughts and bodies are cluttered with unhelpful stored emotions

The 4th Mountain: Awareness and Intuition

Okay, we're almost there, but not quite. The Fourth Mountain covers the key elements of awareness, intuition and sensory development. These can be further broken down into five essential components.

Attention Control is about being aware of your thoughts. Hold on, I know what you're thinking. *Coach, if I'm thinking about a thought, aren't I already aware of it?* Well, yes and no. While you may be aware of what you're thinking, are you aware of why you're thinking it? How this plays into developing awareness is simple. Not every thought we have is the right one, so we must learn to hold onto the positive ones and put aside the negative ones.

Negative thoughts will sap your physical energy and need to be stopped. Positive thoughts, on the other hand, can have fantastic results in your training and overall development.

This might sound simple in theory, but it is not easy to do. There are also a large amount of thoughts that pass just below your conscious radar that can still have a considerable effect on your mood, drive and overall energy.

During a particularly tough workout, how often have you found yourself in agony repeating these very words: *I'm not going to make it another second!* See what's happening – and possibly without you realizing it consciously – you're psyching yourself out. So, what happens next? Your body weakens with every similar thought, and where your mind goes, the body will follow.

Body Control is learning to control your body response through breathing and concentration. Think of what happens when you're watching a scary movie, the combination of visual and sound cues physically alter your body's response. You may begin to shake or feel cold at the extremities as your blood rushes to your core in a fight or flight response. This is your mind controlling your body, though not through your conscious direction.

Our goal here is to apply body controls methods in order to determine your body's response. Yogis and martial artists are great examples of people who practice body control. Did you know you can warm yourself through simple breathing and visualization techniques? Breathing coupled with visualization can have outstanding results.

Breath Control, closely linked to body control, is about placing all of your conscious thought on the breath. Why? Think about it, you're erasing every other thought from your mind but one. Nothing else matters. Just thinking about that has a calming effect, and that's precisely what happens. Your body begins to relax. Another side benefit is increased lung capacity. Not too bad, either.

One tool for developing breath control is the box breathing exercise, where you inhale a breath for five seconds, hold the breath for five seconds, exhale for five seconds and hold the exhale for five seconds. I personally used breath control during BUDs during the 14-mile runs. The beginning and the end of the runs were often the hardest, while during the middle, when I slowed my breath down by holding it for 2 counts on the inhale, time simply flew by. I was calmer and able to let my body do what it had to without battling the weakness of my mind.

Concentration is also closely related to breath control but unique in its emphasis, as it is solely about focusing on *this moment, right now*. If you allow yourself to worry about the future – what's next – you can easily become overwhelmed. By taking a race, training event or any personal challenge one piece at a time, you'll find it is much more manageable. Breath control is also helpful with developing concentration, which helps with attention control – you can see how one aspect of the Awareness and Intuition element will have an effect on another.

Meditation, our last area of focus, covers the discipline of listening deeply while absent of active thought. Notice I did not write sitting on a cushion and focusing on the breath. Meditation can also mean focusing on our environment, bodies and those around us. In other words, meditation is about learning to keep our mouths shut, minds open, and listening with our whole being. Sounds simple, but like much of what we practice, it is not easy.

You can't help your teammates if you can't listen, and as you become more adept with attention control, you'll find that what comes out of your mouth will also begin to make more sense!

Kokoro: The Unconquerable Spirit

*“Out of the night that covers me, black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be for my Unconquerable soul.”*

— *Invictus*, by W. E. Henley

Last but not least is the Fifth Mountain of SEALFIT and the holy grail of our training, developing an unbeatable spirit. I often tell our Academy classes that the Fifth Mountain is a culmination of the previous four Mountains: Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Intuitive.

We cannot easily separate the training of the mind, body and spirit into nice little chunks and say, “I am now working the body and tomorrow I’ll work the spirit.” An unbeatable spirit can be developed through the sum total of your daily work in the other four mountains, as well as through crucible experiences, like surviving cancer, Hell Week and Kokoro Camp.

Although it is very difficult to carve out unbeatable spirit and train it separately, there are some ways to cultivate it. The first is by practicing *Total Presence*. In the now, the future and past do not exist. The past is a memory and the future is a notion. Simply by collapsing our time to the present, we eliminate uncertainty and analysis paralysis. Sound simple, huh? But once again, like anything else worth attaining in life, it’s not easy to master.

Here are three tools we utilize to keep our minds focused on the present:

1. Breath control
2. Reciting a positive and powerful *mantra* (mine when I run is “feeling good, looking good, ought-a be in Hollywood!”)
3. Practicing *wide-angle vision* – a gaze with “soft eyes” not focused on any one thing, but using *peripheral vision*.

The second way to cultivate *Kokoro*, or unbeatable spirit, is through fear management. Fear is what exists in the gap between what we know to be true, and what we know we don’t know to be true. The wider the gap, the larger our fear. Your goal here is to narrow and ultimately eliminate the gap between the known and unknown, and we do this by narrowing our focus to the present (thereby eliminating the possibility for the gap in the first place). Something else you want to do

here is *close your openings*. What I mean by this is overcoming weaknesses that can open you up to critical failures.

We don't need to master everything in life, just the important things. This is why we teach *Combat Defense* and an *Offensive Mind* as part of our Fifth Mountain training. We want to be certain that if our life or the lives of our loved ones are in danger, we can deal with the threat. We therefore do not walk in fear of loss of life or limb.

Thirdly, in order to develop unbeatable spirit we practice *hyper-focus*. Hyper-focus is focus to the exclusion of everything else. This is when you focus on a particular action or goal with all of your emotional, cognitive, subconscious and action energy. There are no compromises. There is no quit. Think of using your eyes like laser beams, singularly focused on you target. Certain martial arts refer to this type of focus as *spirit eyes*.

Finally and closely related to hyper-focus is *total commitment*. This practice, also known as a warrior virtue, draws upon our values of discipline and courage and extends to both task and team. It's what makes elite teams elite and can skyrocket your development towards an unbeatable you!

I have seen many SEAL candidates fail on *maybe*. No, we will carefully lay the groundwork for success, and embark on the final journey toward our worthy goals only after careful consideration and study. Once the decision is made and the line crossed, you will have entered into the realm of total commitment to task and team – one that allows no room to even think about the quit or hesitate about the right action.

“Courage is resistance to fear; mastery of fear - not absence of fear.”

- Mark Twain