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SPEAKERS

Eckhart Tolle, David Sandstrom, Novak Djokovic

D David Sandstrom 00:00

Proverbs, 17:22, a joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. Now our thoughts have the power to heal and the power to harm. Our thoughts matter a great deal, and if we want to maximize our health potential, we've got to acknowledge this powerful tool as a resource. Welcome to the Christian Healthy Lifestyle podcast where I help Christians over 40 maximize their health potential so they can age gracefully and live abundantly. I'm your host. David Sandstrom, naturopathic doctor and biblical health coach, and this is episode number 159

D David Sandstrom 00:42

we're moving through a series called The nine pillars of health, and right now we're in the section on the mental emotional component, and we're on pillar number four, which is mindset, or mental toughness. Now if you listen to episode number 158 you've got a pretty good idea of what mindset is and mental toughness is mental discipline. It's exercising our agency, or our free will, to choose the right thoughts at the right time. Now, when most people think about mental toughness, they think about maybe a Navy Seal or the military demonstration pilots like the Blue Angels. I like watching those air shows as much as anybody else. But mental toughness is not just for elite special forces or military demonstration pilots. Everybody needs this. So if you're a Christian over 40 and you want to maximize your health potential so you can age gracefully and live abundantly, mental toughness is worth exploring. So why is this important? Well, because thoughts have the power to heal or the power to harm. Now I consider the Bible to be the original mindset or mental toughness. Handbook, Proverbs 23:7 says, For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. And then we see in Proverbs, 18:4 the words of a man's mouth are deep waters. When we think thoughts in our minds, we use words, Proverbs. 16:24, gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Now there is a powerful mind body connection that we can't afford to ignore. Proverbs 17:22, a joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. Now, our thoughts have the power to heal in the power to harm. Our thoughts matter a great deal, and if we want to maximize our health potential, we've got to acknowledge this powerful tool as a resource. Now

let's take a lesson from one of the greatest masters of mental toughness of our time, Novak Djokovic. Novak is a champion tennis player, as most of you know, and I ordinarily refer to the Bible for illustrations here. But all truth is God's truth. And what Novak shares in this video that I'm about to show you is some really important mental toughness truths. And this guy's a master, so let's listen to what he has to say.

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Novak Djokovic 03:15

But also there has to be next to the willpower, you know, strength, that comes not just from your physical self, but from your your mental and emotional self. And it's, I think it's well for me, at least it's a constant battle within. You know, more than than, than what happens outside. It's, it's really not the situations that you experience that are affecting you, but how you internally experience those situations, how you accept them, how you live through them. So how do you do it? Well, I practice a lot of mindfulness. So, you know, meditation, you know, journaling, talking with my team with my parents, with my wife, with everybody who is around me trying to address certain with my of course life coaches that I have that help me address certain emotional, You know, issues or traumas, or whatever it is that that tend to appear on the court. So when it appears on a breakpoint, when I'm facing a match point or break point, or, you know, clutch moments, they do tend to surface, but they are they I managed to to gain the control over them much quicker, and I manage to impose my positive affirmation and positive feeling, or if that doesn't happen, then I just try to be conscious that I have to accept that moment, that that's going to happen. But I focus on my breathing and I focus on being in the moment and what needs to. Done next moment, which is playing the right shot, positioning myself well on the court, and just focusing on executing the point right.

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David Sandstrom 05:10

So here's some of the takeaways from what he just said. It takes more than just physical strength to perform at our best. We find strength from our mental, emotional side, but we've got to choose to tap into it. Now what this is, what I've been saying for quite some time, a spirit that's connected to God will be stronger and more robust, and that strong spirit will animate our minds in healthy ways. And a healthy mind will animate our brains in healthy ways, and the brain runs the body. Now, Novak is touching on this spirit, mind, body relationship in his discussion here. Another thing he said is it's a constant battle. This is something that we all go through. You don't have to be a professional athlete performing at very high elite levels in order to need this and use this. It's something that we all should should recognize and embrace. Another important point he made is it's not what happens to us that's most important. It's how we react to what happens to us that matters most. And he uses tools such as journaling, meditation, visualization. He talks with his friends and family, his coaches, and what is he trying to accomplish by having those discussions. He's trying to uncover the truth now. He mentions in there that we all have emotional trauma, and that trauma will surface once in a while, especially in stressful situations and emotional trauma can often convince us to believe lies. So sometimes in those stressful situations, we need to be reminded of the truth. So he turns to his coaches and trusted confidants to help him uncover some of those truths. Another point he made is he remains in control of his emotions. He doesn't let his emotions rule over him. He's the one in charge, and he points out that if he recognizes an emotion, it's not serving him well, and that emotion doesn't want to submit. He chooses to focus on the moment, being present in the moment. He talked about focusing on his breathing and but

especially what he's what he mentioned was he focuses on what needs to be done next, on getting the next shot executed. So he uses his agency, or his dominion over his thoughts to focus on what's important at that moment. That's mental toughness.

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David Sandstrom 07:41

You know, a lot of times when people hear that I was an airline pilot for 35 years, they'll ask me this question. It's one of the first questions I get very often, is, you're an airline pilot? How did you fly the big ones? Yeah, I did. How do you handle all the stress of 200 plus people's lives in your hands every time you get behind the controls? Well, the truth of the matter is, airline pilots don't feel that stress because we don't think about that we focus on the task at hand, because at 500 miles per hour, there's very little room to allow your thoughts to drift in an unproductive pattern. Our lives literally depend on our ability to focus on what's important now, which is fly the plane, and if we do that, well, the outcome we all want to arrive at our destination safely will happen by default. In episode 143 I talked with a gentleman by the name of Dr Eddie O'Connor, and he's a licensed psychologist and a sports psychologist, and he has an acronym there that I really love. He calls it win. He teaches his athletes to win, and it's w i n, and it stands for what's important. Now, if a baseball or a softball player wants to come through for his team in a clutch situation, they can't be thinking about the the three strikeouts they just had in the last three times at bat. They've got to be focusing on that, the at bat that they're at at that moment, and specifically they focus on the next pitch. Now I'm recording this episode in October, and it's playoff season in baseball, and I was watching a Mets game the other night, and it was two outs in the bottom of the ninth, and it was a tie game, and the Mets best hitter was up to bat, and he got a base hit that gave them the walk off win, and he was being interviewed by the commentator at the end of the game, and the commentator said, you know, you're such a great hitter that a lot of times these pitchers don't want to really pitch to you. How do you know whether they're trying to give you something you can hit, or they're trying to pitch around you? And he said, I don't think about that when I get up to the plate. What I'm thinking about is I want to let the balls go by and swing at the strikes. That's all I'm thinking about when I'm. Bat. In other words, he did the same thing airline pilots do. He focused on the task at hand, which is swinging a pitch that's a strike or something he can hit. And if he does that well, the outcome that his team wanted, the walk off win, just happens on its own, kind of by default, he focused on the win. W I N, what's important now that's mental toughness. Now, when I talk about aligning our lives more fully with God's natural design for spirit, mind and body, the same principle applies. We focus on doing things God's way, and we leave the outcome up to him. After all, he's the one in control, so we leave the outcome up to him, not us. Takes the pressure off. Now, remember, God always has our well being in mind, and when he tells us to do something, it's for our benefit. When he tells us to avoid something, it's for our protection. Now, the health benefits of following God just happen by default. They're like side effects or fringe benefits to doing things God's way. We don't have to worry about the outcome. We just have to focus on submitting and surrendering to his love and kindness. Now mental toughness is right there in the middle of all that. It's a very useful tool to help facilitate my approach to personal development and success in every area of life. A Bible passage that teaches on this is Joshua 1:8. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Now we all want to focus on the prosperity and the success part of that passage, but it's not just reading the Word of God that brings success. Don't miss the phrase in there that says, Be careful to do all that is written in it, we have a role to play, and mental toughness helps us fulfill that role. Now, mental toughness can help us overcome fear and anxiety. Here's one of the

main ways we could overcome fear and anxiety. The first key is knowing that God is in control. That's key number one. The second key is focusing on the right thoughts. Courage is not never being afraid. Courage is facing our fears and pressing through them. Close to 7000 people have climbed Mount Everest. 12 men walked on the moon. But there's only been one human being that has free climbed El Capitan. His name is Alex Handall. El Capitan is a 3200 foot vertical rock in Yosemite National Park. Now Alex free climbed that cliff. He did it without being tethered to any climbing equipment. Now, I can assure you, when he was making his ascent, he wasn't looking down. He was looking up. He wasn't thinking about the hideous fall that could happen if he made a slip. He was looking up. He was focused on the next step up. Where's the next ridge that I can grab a hold of and get a few more inches closer to my goal. Now that's mental toughness to the extreme. Most of us will never be in such an extreme situation, but we can learn a thing or two from those types of examples.

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David Sandstrom 13:33

Now we can't talk about mental toughness without mentioning spiritual warfare. Some people might say, Oh, we don't need to do warfare. Dave, Jesus won the battle for us. Yes, Jesus made a way to overcome sin and death, but we've got daily battles to fight. Now, spiritual warfare takes place in our minds. Again. The Bible is the original mental toughness handbook, Ephesians 6:12 tells us for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world, forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness. In the heavenly places, there is a cosmic struggle going on between good and evil, and that struggle against the spiritual forces of wickedness takes place in our minds. Now we shouldn't forget that Satan has come to steal, kill and destroy, and he has us in his crosshairs, and he's not smiling. Now I don't like this fact any more than you do, but this is where we find ourselves. If we fail to acknowledge this battle and engage in it. It amounts to surrendering without a fight. Now if we're going to do this, well, we've got to understand the origin of thoughts. Thoughts don't just float through the universe just waiting to land on somebody. Now I know that sounds silly, but a lot of people are believing just that. I want you to listen to this German philosopher by the name of Eckhart Tolle. He was asked, Where do our thoughts come from? And here's what he had to say,

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Eckhart Tolle 15:12

Where do our thoughts come from? Thoughts are not your thoughts, really. They arise in the collective mind. They are energy fields, or energetic entities that one could almost think of them as little bubbles floating around, little bubbles thought forms floating around. And if the thought form discovers any resonance with anything inside you, any form of negativity. And then there's another thought form, that vibe that resonates with that negativity, and then that little that bubble comes it's not, it's not, it's not yours. It's you pick it up, and then it gets hold of you, and then they're stuck with it.

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David Sandstrom 16:03

So how does that sit with you? Does that make sense, or does it make you feel a little uncomfortable? It doesn't sit well with me at all. Okay? And in fact, I think it's sometimes amusing to watch the lengths some people will go to to justify their atheism. Our consciousness

comes from God. God breathed into Adam, the breath of life, and the man became a living being, Genesis 2:7. Now, before you think this guy is just a fringe thinker, consider this, that video we just watched at the time of this recording has 1.7 million views, and this guy has over 2 million subscribers to his YouTube channel, and he appears on very popular talk shows, and he's spreading this idea around, and some people are actually buying into it. Now, thoughts don't just float through the universe waiting to land on somebody like a tree frog with suction cups on the end of his feet and wanting it attach themselves to our face. Thoughts always have the origin in the mind of an intelligent being. Jesus has a very clear teaching on the origin of thoughts in Matthew chapter 16, we'll pick it up in verse 13, Jesus speaking, Who do people say that the Son of Man is and they said, Some say, John the Baptist, and others Elijah, but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He said to them, But who do you say that I am Simon? Peter answered, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said to him, Blessed are you Simon, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my father, who is in heaven. So there's the first two sources of thoughts, flesh and blood himself, or maybe another person, another human being, and the Father in heaven. First two sources of thoughts. Now a little further along in that same chapter, I will pick it up in verse 21 from that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised up. On the third day, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God forbid it, Lord, this shall never happen to you. But he turned to Peter and said, Get behind Me, Satan, you are a stumbling block to me, for you are not setting your mind on God's interest, but man's so Jesus explained to Peter, in no uncertain terms, that that thought that he just had didn't originate with him, it came from Satan. So there's the third source of thoughts, the enemy or Satan, or maybe not Satan himself, but perhaps one of his demons or false spirits. So somebody might be saying, right now, come on, Dave. I like it when you talk about health and wellness, but you get a little out there. I don't know if I'm comfortable with this discussion. Well, consider this, who would argue that the Spirit of God cannot speak to our spirits. We see phrases like And Moses said to God, and God said to Moses, and God obviously spoke to the prophets on many, on many occasions. So we see it all over scripture where God is speaking to His people. In John chapter 10, Jesus says, My sheep know my voice. So when God speaks to our hearts, some people call that the still small voice of God. So we know that God's Spirit can speak to our spirit or our hearts and minds, and we know that Satan and his demons are fallen spiritual beings. Don't forget that Satan convinced a third of the angelic population in heaven to follow him, so don't underestimate his power and his influence. Now we see a similar teaching by Jesus in Luke chapter nine. Jesus and the disciples were on their way to Jerusalem and. Wanted to pass through Samaria and the Samaritans and the Jews didn't like each other, and the Samaritans held racist views towards the Jews. Well, they knew that they were Jews by the clothing that they were wearing, and they said, You can't pass through here. You're going to have to go around the ground the city. So we'll pick it up in Luke 9 verse 54 when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them and said, You do not know what kind of spirit you are of the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Now Jesus was using a very similar tone as when he was speaking to Peter in Matthew 16, when he said, Get behind Me, Satan. In other words, you guys don't know what spirit you're listening to. Consider 1 John 4:1 Beloved. Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Now there is a spiritual battle taking place, and that battle takes place in our minds. And no discussion on mental toughness or mindset for that matter would be complete without mentioning this topic of spiritual warfare. Now, there's a lot more to say on Spiritual Warfare. And if you want to go deeper, I've got two chapters in my book on Spiritual Warfare. You might want to pick up a copy. It's called the Christian's Guide to Holistic Health. It's available on Amazon, and it's available in paperback, hardcover, Kindle and Audible. Now

here's another important point I want to make on this topic of spiritual warfare, before we leave it, Adam and Eve after the fall, they knew that something had gone horribly wrong, and normally they would hang out with God and he'd walk and talk with them in the garden. And it came time for God to hang out with Adam and Eve, and they were nowhere to be found. And we picked this up in Genesis, chapter three, verses nine through 11. Then the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you? He said, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself. And he said, Who told you you were naked? Now God obviously knew where Adam was, but for his edification, God was pointing out that there was another being doing the speaking. Satan is the who that told them. He's the creature that's not hidden from God's sight. In Hebrews, 4:13, He's the prince of the power of the air. In Ephesians 2:2. He's the spiritual force of wickedness in heavenly places. In Ephesians, 6. Now just because we're living in the 21st century doesn't mean we're immune from this type of activity. Consider Second Corinthians, 11, three, but I'm afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. And that's why we're told in first Peter five, eight, be of Silver Spirit, be on the alert, your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Remember, John 10:10, the enemy has come to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly, that life is not just going to show up gift wrapped, it's going to be opposed. And the enemy does want to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to steal our peace. He wants to kill our joy, and he wants to destroy our effectiveness. For Kingdom work where he gets the most bang for his buck is when he compromises our health. Now here's the good news, Satan is not omniscient. He doesn't know everything. He doesn't know the future. He's not omnipresent, he's not everywhere, he's not under every rock. And we have power and authority over Satan and his demons. First John 4:4 greater is He who is in you than he that is in the world? Now Satan wants us to believe his lies because they're stress producing, and chronic stress will compromise our health. Remember Proverbs, 1:7, a joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. God wants us to enjoy peace. We see this teaching in Philippians chapter four. This chapter is all about peace. Pick it up in verse eight, nine, Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things, and then most people stop there, but there's a huge promise attached to dwelling on those things, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. So this chapter is all about peace. Earlier in that chapter verses five and seven, the Lord is. Near Be anxious for nothing but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ, Jesus, in our pursuit of vibrant health, grateful aging and abundant living, it's peace, whereafter, not stress. Now remember, God's love is beneficent. He always has our well being in mind when he tells us to do something, it's for our benefit. If He tells us to avoid something, it's for our protection. Here in Philippians four, he's telling us to think on godly things, because it'll produce a godly peace that surpasses all understanding. He doesn't say, Do what I tell you, or else I'm going to send lightning bolts your way. He says, do it my way. You won't be sorry.

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David Sandstrom 25:57

So how does this tie in our discussion of mental toughness? Well, we see here in Second Corinthians, 10:5 we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Now that word for speculations is the Greek word *lagismas*, and *lagismas* means a persuasive argument set against the Christian faith, in other words, in opposition to God's will for our lives.

Now, we have the power to choose. So how do we distinguish our thoughts, or God's thoughts, versus satanic thoughts? Well, the first thing to ask ourselves is Is this true? Is something is true? It's always true. And we talked about the nature of truth in episode 154, we should ask ourselves, does it lead to more fruit of the Spirit? Does this produce more love, joy and peace? If it doesn't, perhaps we should reject that thought. Does it lead to more righteous living? Is this what Jesus would do and say if he were in my shoes? Does this thought or action that I'm contemplating, does it lead to more relational connectedness and peace? If it does, then we go with it. If it doesn't, if it produces more strife and relational disconnect and stress, that thought should be rejected. Think of it this way, if I had a thought bubble over my head that everyone could see and read the thoughts that I was having in my mind, would that make me uncomfortable? If it would, it's probably not a good thought. All right, so another useful tool in this process of distinguishing between good thoughts and evil thoughts is to take that thought out, to follow it out to its logical conclusion. Where would that take me? Let's say I'm a married man, and I work in an office environment, and I notice that this woman at work that I often run into at the water cooler is very attractive. Well, there's nothing wrong with that thought, but if I linger too long on her attractiveness, where is that going to take me? You see the difference there? One thought is acceptable and the other isn't. One needs to be rejected and the other doesn't. Now it can often be a slippery slope. Don't forget, Satan knows our weaknesses, and he doesn't feel remorse or pity. He goes after the juggler. So we've got to recognize when some foul spirit is knocking on the door of our hearts. We've got to practice Second Corinthians, 10:5 and take those thoughts captive and in the authority of Jesus Christ, we should tell that foul spirit to hit the bricks, pack his bags, because he's going on a little road trip in the power and authority of Jesus Christ, those demonic forces have to flee from our presence. In the name of Jesus Christ, we have the power and the authority to do that commanding. Let's summarize what we've covered here. Covered a lot already. Mental Toughness is using our agency or our free will to focus on the right thoughts at the right time. And we don't have to be a military demonstration pilot or an extreme rock climber to understand and use the principles of mental toughness. Our thoughts have the power to heal and the power to harm. For As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. One of the most important mental toughness principles is focusing on the win. W I N, what's important now and being present in the moment. We should decide ahead of time to do things God's way, submit to His way of doing things and leave the outcome up to him. In order to truly take control of our thought lives, we've got to realize that there's a spiritual battle going on in our minds. We got to recognize it, acknowledge it, and understand that God has given us the power and authority to be victorious. Is but we've got to implement we can't afford to be passive. To be passive is to give up without a fight. So I think that's enough for now. Now, don't go anywhere. Stick around for the next episode, because I'm going to be talking about the V in our MVP, and that is victory over limiting beliefs. It's going to be powerful. You don't want to miss it. That's it for now. Thank you for listening. I appreciate you. Go out there and live abundantly. I'll talk with you next time. Be blessed. You.