

## 8. MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL TUFFNESS

### Training for Mental Tuffness

Wild Women on Top Trek Training is designed to develop mental tuffness, by including boring, repetitive high intensity challenges for long periods of time in all weather conditions. For example, doing sets of stairs, or carrying a heavy pack in soft sand for hours in the rain will assist you in developing mental tuffness. And once you've done a significant mental tuffness challenge in the wilderness, you will be set for life. All other challenges will become less daunting as a result of these skills. To prepare for the Wild Women On Top Sydney Coastrek you should look for opportunities to develop mental tuffness by suffering through physical pain, sleep deprivation and exhaustion for up to 24 hours with a team of four.

### Weather

The best way to prepare for extreme weather is to exercise in extreme weather. You should be excited and thrilled if you get the opportunity to train in torrential rain, high winds and freezing temperatures because these opportunities DON'T come up that often around home! Get out into the elements and test your body, your mind and your gear by having the mental tuffness to endure these conditions.

The Wild Women on Top Sydney Coastrek will test your ability to handle the heat so any training you can do in the heat will assist you in training for mental tuffness. Practice by training in conditions of up to 36°C in full sun on soft sand but ensure that you're familiar with the issues of heat illnesses before you take on this mental and physical tuffness challenge. (The Australian College of Sports Medicine do not recommend **sport** in temperatures above 36°C but if you're in the wilderness, there's nothing you can do but endure and hydrate). If you must keep going, walk slowly and conserve energy.

### EMOTIONAL TUFFNESS

Emotional tuffness is the ability to remain positive, motivated and clear thinking, no matter what the circumstances. We all have issues in our every day life which require emotional tuffness, but during a tuff endurance event, these issues can be more extreme for a

number of reasons. Firstly, you may not be surrounded by close friends and family to assist you emotionally when things get tough, and secondly, you might be experiencing extreme situations for which you're not emotionally prepared.

Eric Lamkin defines emotional tuffness as: "the ability to consistently perform toward the upper range of your talent and skill regardless of circumstances."

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Wild Women On Top have a rule which is that you are not allowed to get grumpy and you're certainly not allowed to share negative thoughts with your team publicly.

The power of words in times of physical and/or emotional stress is incredible, and having an awareness of this and the ability to manage and censor your comments is essential. We call it "the inner child" which often comes out when we're under physical or emotional stress.

It is well recognised that as much as 80% of First Aid occurs in your ability to reassure and calm the patient, so other team members have a big part to play in this scenario. For example, if a trekker breaks a bone, your job is to reassure and comfort them, NOT cry out "Oh my god, oh my god, she's broken her leg!"

It is essential, in the wilderness, to prepare for emotional challenges by practicing emotional control at home. By training yourself to stay positive, control your thoughts, and not be influenced by the moodiness of the people around you, you will manage the wilderness environment.

We have learned that "attitude is everything" and staying positive at all times in the wilderness is a must!



## Team Tuffness:

Coastrek is about T.E.A.M. Together Everybody Achieves More. By supporting each other, training together, and keeping a positive attitude, your team will thrive with everybody achieving far more than they thought possible.

You will all struggle at different times and often the strongest team member will surprise you with an unexpected battle at some point during the event. You will learn a lot about yourself and you will learn that walking 50 or 100km is more about mental tuffness than physical fitness.

Prior to the event, ensure that all team members publicly state their goal for the event. You should either agree that getting the whole team across the line is paramount, or finishing in a particular time is paramount. Of course we'd prefer a full team across the line, but not everybody sees it that way. If you're mismatched in terms of pace, you really need to be very clear on your goals in this regard BEFORE you start the event. Also put together a plan in terms of timing, stops, pace and nutrition. You all need to agree on whether you're the "hares" or the "tortoises", the 'cappuccino set' or the "Great Race" brigade. Meet with your Support Crew and ensure that they're also on the same page. Are they dealing with "racers" who want to whizz into the checkpoint, have water filled and food provided and race out, or are you going to want a massage, a gourmet meal and a good chat?

Check out the following tips which will assist your team during the event:

1. Stay positive at all times, no matter what you're feeling.
2. Talk to each other and keep talking, particularly throughout the night.
3. If you have an issue, discuss it politely and clear the air. Good communication is essential to getting the team across the line.
4. Keep your slowest or weakest walker in the front and NEVER let them get behind. This is a recipe for disaster. You're only as fast as your slowest trekker and they will be empowered by being in front, and disempowered at the back.
5. Keep an eye on each other and if anybody isn't talking, isn't eating or isn't drinking, find out why and ensure

- that they do.
6. Try not to focus on the whole distance in one slab. Take it little chunks at a time and tell yourself you just have to get to the next checkpoint. Give yourselves a pat on the back at each unmanned check point and take a second to note where you are, because the views are stunning. Every step takes you closer to the final goal.
7. Encourage each other and remind yourselves that you're far tuffer than you imagine and that you're walking to restore sight. When you start to feel tired and grumpy, remind yourself that many people in third world countries can't see and through your efforts, their lives will soon be transformed.
8. Plan some games and activities for the trek to keep your mind occupied. A-Z is a favourite of ours and can keep the whole team engaged for hours on the trail. It can apply to any topic you like and if you want to string it out, ensure that each word is accompanied by a story. A-Z of boyfriends or girlfriends, A-Z of the contents of a woman's handbag, or a man's shed ... anything you can think of ... songs, movies, tv shows etc etc etc. See below.
9. Keep in touch with family and friends by phone or SMS as you trek, but ensure that you're on a safe section of the trail because this can be hazardous if you're on rough terrain.
10. Stay together ... encourage, motivate and support each other and you'll experience a truly remarkable event



### TEAM DISTRACTION GAMES:

The following games are great for teams doing the 100k event, particularly around 2am, when you really start to wane. Print them out and have them handy in your pack.

What music do you want to have played at your funeral?

What is the most disgusting thing you have ever eaten?

If you had to sacrifice one of your senses, which one would it be?

What sport would make the best substitute for war?

If you could have a complete makeover, what would you change about yourself?

If you were told you only had a few weeks to live, what would you do?

When you travel on your own, do you ever take on another persona?

What is your favourite country you've visited so far?

Which country have you never been to but would like to go to?

If you had three wishes granted to you, what would they be? (no more wishes allowed)

What is the most beautiful thing ever made by humans?

Do you have any superstitions?

What constitutes a well-lived life?

What artistic talent would you most like to have been born with?

You get to institute a new public holiday. What would you call it and what date would you choose?

What's your earliest memory?

What goes round the world but stays in a corner?  
A stamp

What goes up and down the stairs without moving?  
Carpet

What goes round the house and in the house but never touches the house?  
The sun

What comes once in a minute, twice in a moment, but never in a thousand years?

The letter M

The more you take, the more you leave behind.

What are they?

Footsteps

I have a little house in which I live all alone. It has no doors or windows, and if I want to go out I must break through the wall.

A chicken in an egg

It's been around for millions of years, but it's no more than a month old. What is it?

The moon

What goes up the chimney down, but can't go down the chimney up?  
An umbrella

What is it that you will break even when you name it?  
Silence

What is it that you keep after giving it to someone else?  
Your word

Which of the following words is the odd-one-out?  
IBIS IBEX ORYX SIKA ZEBU

Who are the two brothers who live on opposite sides of the road yet never see each other?  
Eyes

What holds water but is full of holes?  
A sponge

You throw away the outside and cook the inside. Then you eat the outside and throw away the inside. What did you eat?  
An ear of corn

I can run but not walk. Wherever I go, thought follows close behind. What am I?  
A nose

As I went across the bridge, I met a man with a load of wood which was neither straight nor crooked. What kind of wood was it?  
Sawdust

What belongs to you but others use it more than you do?  
Your name

I'm the part of the bird that's not in the sky. I can swim in the ocean and yet remain dry. What am I?  
A shadow

I'm where yesterday follows today, and tomorrow's in the middle. What am I?  
A dictionary