



# MENTAL FITNESS GUIDE FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Effective Fitness Training  
Resource Guide

# INTRODUCTION

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Mental fitness includes, but is not limited to, **the following**:

**Resiliency** – The capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties.

**Fortitude** – Courage in pain or adversity.

**Toughness** – The ability to deal with hardship or to cope in difficult situations.

**Perseverance** – The steady persistence in a course of action or purpose, especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement.

Some believe that mental fitness is inherent, or you're simply born with it, but the truth is it can be learned, it can be honed, and it can be improved. Like any skill, you may have some natural ability, or you may really struggle at first. It's important for you to know and believe that you can get better with practice, just like with anything else.

In this training guide, you will find an explanation of five different mental fitness tools you can start training today. Included with these explanations will be examples of how you can start working to improve these skills in your workouts and daily life.

## SEGMENTING

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Segmenting is the act of breaking up larger, more daunting tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks.

During a long and/or complicated and/or complex situation, your mind is likely to feel overwhelmed. You don't know where to even begin. Maybe there is too much to do and too little time. Maybe you don't think you can possibly hang in long enough to finish the task. Think about a multi-car crash and you're the first on scene. Think about a physical assault complaint with multiple involved parties who aren't particularly compliant. Think about taking the initial information on a complaint that is sure to be a long and complex investigation. The examples are endless.

The first thing you must do is prioritize.

Mentally create a prioritization list as follows:

1. **Important and urgent**
2. **Not important but urgent**
3. **Important but not urgent**
4. **Not important and not urgent**

## SEGMENTING (CONT.)

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Now, segment your overwhelming task using your prioritization list. Simply focus on the more important and urgent task first. Don't focus on or worry about anything after. Multi-car crash? Ensure your safety then identify and treat any life-threatening injuries. Don't concern yourself with anything that comes after that. Once that has been dealt with, now move on to your next most important and urgent task. Continue in this manner until the once overwhelming task has been completed.

Of course, your list can and will change based on new information you receive. Simply adjust your focus to whatever is currently the most important and urgent task.

Segmenting can be practiced in several ways in lower-stress situations:

**Example 1)** As a police recruit, simply focus on getting to your next meal. Don't think about the weeks of training ahead. Don't even think about what's after lunch. Just get to lunch. Then just get to dinner. You string enough meals together and the next thing you know you're wearing the badge.

## SEGMENTING (CONT.)

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**Example 2A)** You're in the midst of a particularly long workout. Don't worry about anything other than the next minute. You know you can get through that minute. Once that minute has been completed, draw your attention to finishing the next minute. Continue this until the whole workout has been completed.

**Example 2B)** You could also segment the repetitions. Just get these next five reps. Focus only on those five reps. So on and so forth until the workout is complete.

**Example 3A)** You're on a run and you're gassed. Draw your attention to an object in the distance and focus only on getting to that object. Once you get there, find another object to chase after. You're breaking a run up into smaller more mentally manageable distances.

**Example 3B)** You're taking all your groceries into the house in one trip, as any self-respecting human does, but today was a particularly heavy haul. As you farmer carry your bags from the car, focus on getting to the door and nothing else, then focus on opening the door and nothing else, then focus on getting to the kitchen and nothing else, then finish by lifting your groceries up to the countertop.

You will find, with effective segmenting, you can go further and longer than you previously could.

## COMPARTMENTALIZATION

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This is the act of mentally setting aside thoughts or emotions that are not useful to your immediate task. Compartmentalization can certainly be negative. You absolutely should not compartmentalize your credit card bill that is two months past due. Take care of that shit! You absolutely should compartmentalize anger when a motorist starts screaming at you for no apparent reason. While fear can have value, too much can limit performance so consider compartmentalizing fear while en route to a particularly dicey call. You absolutely should set aside feeling fatigued when you're carrying your buddy off the 'X'.

Again, this isn't a tool to ignore your problems, but it is a recognition of what is most important right now. Anytime your focus is on something that is not productive or useful for your immediate task, it needs to be set aside.

One way to do this is with self-talk. Instead of saying "I am angry" say to yourself "I feel anger". Instead of "I am afraid" say to yourself "I sense the feeling of fear". With this, you create some separation between yourself and your emotions.

This doesn't mean you ignore these thoughts and emotions, but it does mean you place your focus in more productive places. You can come back to those original emotions after the job is done.

## COMPARTMENTALIZATION (CONT.)

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**Examples of lower-stress situations you can develop this skill with:**

During a burner of a workout, you feel the deep burn in your lungs and muscles. Instead of focusing on and succumbing to the pain, focus on your movement technique instead. Additionally, recognize that pain is simply a message transmitted by nerves, while suffering is you telling yourself something is wrong. The pain isn't useful, and suffering is an opinion.

Focus on your next five reps or running to that object up ahead in lieu of focusing on the pain. You could also say to yourself "I feel pain, but I am not suffering. I just need to get these next five reps." This is combining compartmentalization and segmenting together.

Someone cuts you off in traffic. You feel that immediate tinge of rage and the need for revenge. You compartmentalize it by recognizing you're feeling the emotion of anger, which is nothing more than chemical signals.

You also recognize the most important thing is everyone gets where they're going safely. The anger gets set aside to obtain the best possible outcome.

## SELF TALK

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Positive self-talk has been shown to improve performance when compared to neutral or negative self-talk.

The first step to this is paying attention to the way you talk to yourself in your own mind.

Once recognition has occurred, shift the words and phrases to a positive message that will keep you focused and push you further, longer.

Instead of “I don’t think I can do this” say something like “I can do this if I focus on one task at a time” or “I have resources at my disposal that will help me get through this” or simple “I will because I must”.

Find a mantra, song lyric, or phrase that you can turn to when things get bad.

Navy SEALs have “the only easy day was yesterday”. The British SAS have “who dares wins”. Creed has “can you take me higher”. You get the point. Find what works for you as a fallback when the situation and your thoughts get dark.



## SELF TALK (CONT.)

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### Training examples:

**EXAMPLE 1)** Before the start of a brutal workout, consciously decide to begin the workout with positive self-talk. Start the workout and pay close attention to your thoughts. If and when you recognize negative self-talk creep in, like “this hurts too bad” or “I can’t keep this pace”, record how long you made it before those thoughts entered your mind. Now on your next workout, do the same thing and try to beat your time.

**EXAMPLE 2)** During a boring department training you were volun-told to attend, consciously choose to go into the training with positive self-talk. Examples being “I’m going to find one thing I can take away from this course” or “I know this class is boring but I’m going to lead by example by staying attentive”. Continue to monitor your self-talk throughout the training and if it turns negative, like “this is the biggest waste of time”, redirect it back to something positive and useful.

These examples are just ways to practice this skill, so you become better at the skill. Getting better at the skill will increase the likelihood it will be automated when shit hits the fan on the streets.

## PRE-EVENT VISUALIZATION

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If you have a complex or challenging task ahead, or maybe you're en route to a call, visualize in your mind exactly what you are going to think, say, and do when you're there. If there is time, visualize the whole event from beginning to end and everything goes perfectly.

Now, it can be particularly useful for law enforcement officers to visualize everything around them going horribly wrong, but they do everything right. Visualize yourself responding swiftly to a rapidly changing environment. Visualize yourself saying and doing all the right things despite the shit show of a call you're on.

Ideally, for this to work best, you visualize everything, including sights, sounds, smells, and emotions, in real-time. For law enforcement officers, there is likely not enough time for this but do the best you can with the time available.

One way this works is it increases your feeling of predictability and control over the situation you're en route to. With increased predictability and control comes increased confidence. With increased confidence comes increased performance, even if the situation doesn't play out exactly how you envisioned it.

## PRE-EVENT VISUALIZATION (CONT.)

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Here are a few ways you can practice this in less time-restricted and less stressful situations:

**EXAMPLE 1)** Well before a pistol qualification take the time to mentally rehearse. In your mind, envision the sights, sounds, smells, and emotions you'll sense at the range. Go through the entire qualification in your mind. Your grip is perfect. Your trigger pull is smooth. You're not anticipating your shot. Go through it all, in real-time, as you earn a perfect score. While this isn't live fire, it counts as reps. Maybe not as good as live fire but they still count.

**EXAMPLE 2)** You probably do this already. Visualize yourself in a public place when an active attacker strikes. Envision all the possible details you can. Visualize exactly how you react from start to finish. You direct those around you with a commanding presence. You swiftly move to the threat working your angles and your available cover. You act exactly the way you would want to act if it were real-life.

**EXAMPLE 3)** Before an EFT Tactical Saturday workout, you visualize yourself performing the workout in your mind. You envision yourself grinding it out; maintaining positive self-talk throughout and segmenting when things get rough. You rehearse your thoughts and actions in your mind before ever touching a weight.

## POST-EVENT VISUALIZATION

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This skill is used as a corrective tool. The event is over. With a post-event analysis of your performance, you identify things you could have done differently that would have improved the outcome. Go through the same visualization procedure as above (maximum detail in real-time).

Only this time you visualize the events that have already happened, except when it comes to the point where you screwed up, do it right in your mind. Go through that past event and you do everything correctly.

This certainly does not erase the memory of the errors, and wouldn't necessarily want it to, but the post-event visualization gives you a positive rep to finish on. This visualization will help ensure you don't make the same mistakes again.

It can improve the likelihood you have a better outcome the next time you find yourself in a similar situation.

## POST-EVENT VISUALIZATION (CONT.)

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### Low-stress training examples:

**EXAMPLE 1)** You have a bad encounter with a coworker or family member. With hindsight, you recognize the actions you took that contributed to the poor encounter. After the fact, visualize all the details of the situation. In your mind, go through the same encounter but with the things you would do now that you have hindsight.

**EXAMPLE 2)** You get through a workout then realize you succumbed to fatigue. You let off the throttle far more than you needed to. Visualize yourself performing the exact same workout in the exact same place. In your visualization, you push through the fatigue using positive self-talk, compartmentalization, and segmenting. Practice post-event visualization to get good reps in after a less than ideal situation. These good reps will help prevent the same thing from happening again.

## CONCLUSION

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Remember, like your physical fitness, your mental fitness is trainable. The more you run the better at running you get. The more you practice these mental skills the more mentally fit you will become. We all know cops need as much mental fitness as possible so don't ignore this essential skill.

## QUICK LIST

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Print out the EFT Mental Fitness Quick List and keep it on your person, in your patrol car, and/or in your gym as a reminder of these tools. Practice daily.

# THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING!

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We hope you will utilize this mental fitness resource guide into your daily regime as a law enforcement officer.

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14-DAY FREE TRIAL TODAY AND  
BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE**

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If you have any questions about this mental fitness resource guide or anything that Effective Fitness Training has to offer, email us at:  
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