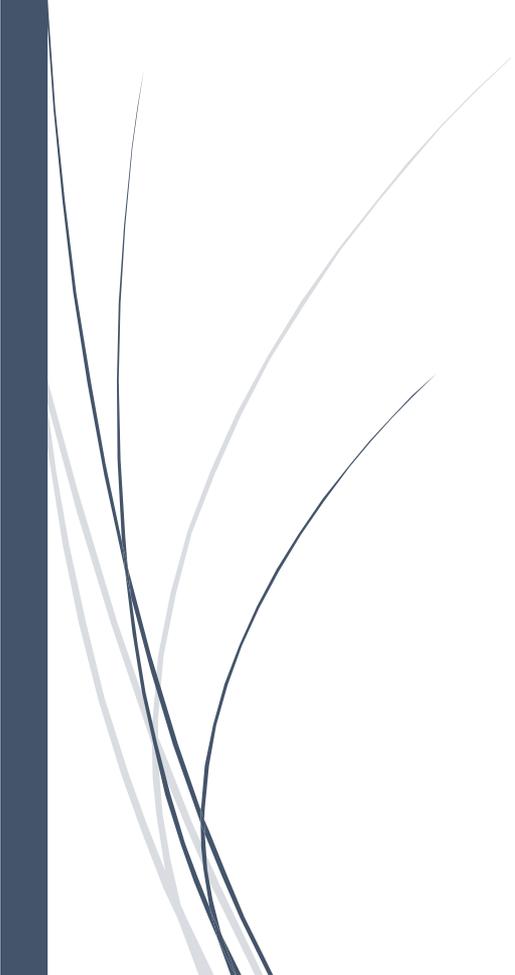




# EEUK Project - May 2022

Self-Awareness and Mental Toughness  
Toolkit to change the system level  
thinking about entrepreneurship enabling  
students to enhance their self-awareness  
and develop a flexible, agile and  
adaptable mindset–

Toolkit transferable to students at  
different university levels and course of  
studies.



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## The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp)

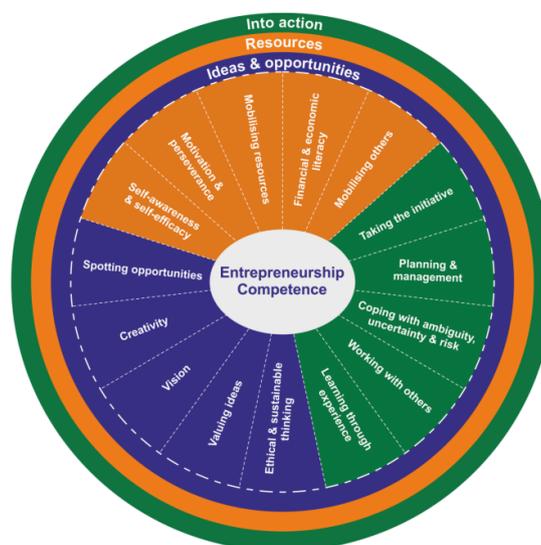
- **What is EntreComp?**

We live in a rapidly changing society where it is essential that everyone has the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas, work with others, manage dynamic careers and shape the future for the common good. To achieve these goals people, teams and organisations with an **entrepreneurial mindset**, in every aspect of life.

The European Commission has developed EntreComp: the **European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework** as a reference framework to explain what is meant by an entrepreneurial mindset.

- **The European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework**

The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, also known as EntreComp, offers a tool to improve the entrepreneurial capacity of European citizens and organisations. The framework aims to build consensus around a common understanding of entrepreneurship competence by defining 3 competence areas, a list of 15 competencies, learning outcomes and proficiency levels, to which current and future initiatives can refer to.



The four key subjects for the EEUK project are communication, conflict resolution, justice and community. Students across all levels will undertake a set of level-appropriate practical tasks that will aim to change the system level thinking about entrepreneurship enabling students to enhance their self-awareness and develop a flexible, agile and adaptable mindset. The tools library will offer a choice of practical tasks to encourage interdisciplinarity, disruptive and critical thinking. This will be particularly useful for social sciences and criminology students as researches show that an understanding of the theory and practice of entrepreneurship can assist in the investigation of serious and organised crime (Smith, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

## **Self-awareness, mental agility and mental toughness tasks toolkit**

- **Introduction to the Concept of Mental Toughness**

*“Mental Toughness is a personality trait which determines, in large part, how people respond to challenge, stress and pressure, irrespective of their circumstances”.*  
(Clough & Strycharczyk, 2012)<sup>2</sup>

Very well researched and established way of thinking about people’s behaviours, personalities and attitudes. It explains why it is possible to **place two individuals into the same working environment and to see that one finds it difficult to cope with pressure and one thrives.**

The terms mental toughness and mental strength are frequently used interchangeably. For various reasons, though, it is crucial to be cautious in how Mental Toughness is defined and referred to. To begin, Mental Sensitivity is the polar opposite of Mental Toughness. Mental Weakness is the polar opposite of Mental Strength. These are not synonymous. Mental toughness is synonymous with mental strength; yet, mental sensitivity is not synonymous with mental weakness (AQR International, 2022).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, R. (2009). Understanding entrepreneurial behaviour in organized criminals. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*.

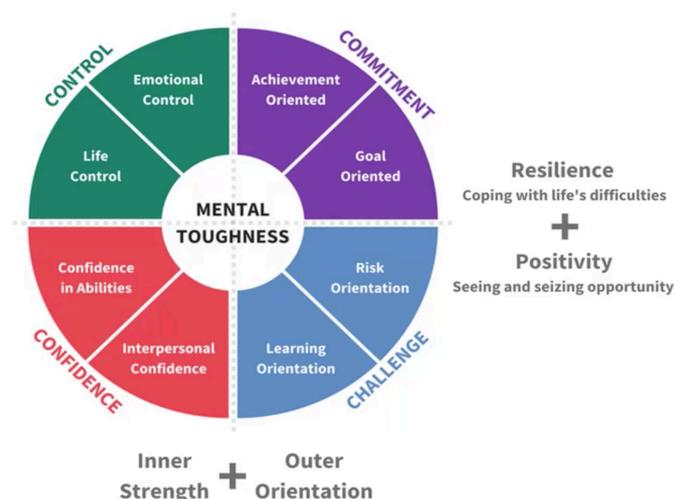
<sup>2</sup> Kobasa, S.C. (1979). Stressful life events, personality, and health: an inquiry into hardiness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 37 (1) pp. 1-11.

<sup>3</sup> AQR International (2022). Innovations in Improving Performance [online] Available at: < <https://aqrinternational.co.uk>>

According to research, the Mentally Tough benefit from an advantage - they achieve more, enjoy better well-being and are more positive. The Mentally Sensitive, on the other hand, finds life and work more difficult since they can feel every bump in the road and the implications it entails. However, there are Mentally Sensitive people who are successful and do amazing things. Similarly, some Mentally Tough people may face difficulties and become frustrated. Self-awareness is the key. Whether you are Mentally Tough or Mentally Sensitive, the key to making the most of your abilities is to understand who you are and why you think the way you do. With this in mind, the following set of activities is being suggested to enhance students' **self-awareness, self-efficacy, motivation and perseverance** (Resources 2.1 and 2.2. of the EnterComp framework) towards **spotting new opportunities** whilst **valuing ideas with creativity, vision and sustainable thinking** (Competencies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 of the EnterComp framework).

### 1. Mental Toughness model – practical activities to aid problem-solving

Research, initially at the University of Hull and then at Manchester Metropolitan University, under the direction of Professor Peter Clough, identified 4 key components of Mental Toughness: **THE 4Cs MODEL**<sup>4</sup>.



<sup>4</sup> Clough, P., Strycharczyk, D. and Perry, J. (2021). *Developing Mental Toughness: Strategies to Improve Performance, Resilience and Wellbeing in Individuals and Organizations*. London: Kogan Page, Limited.

Below there is a brief explanation of what each component stands for followed by a practical scenario where students are asked to reflect on:

- How they would react to each situation proposed
- If students wanted to change/adjust their default mental response to that circumstance and why. Students need to discuss how they, realistically, would react to the situation (eg. “I would cry”) and why (eg. “I would like to cry a bit, to let my emotions out, but then begin to plan how to retake and pass the test so that I have another chance”).

This will help students to enhance their **level of self-awareness and self-efficacy** and be able to **persevere** when facing adverse circumstances and consciously make the best decisions.



Control is the extent to which a person feels they are in control of their life. Some individuals believe that they can exert considerable influence over their working environment, that they can make a difference and change things. In contrast, others feel that the outcome of events is outside their personal control and they are unable to exert any influence over themselves or others (MTQ User Manual, 2019).

### **Exercise 1:**

Think about a situation in which things/events do not go as expected/ as you wanted, what did you do? And what would you do now that you are more self-aware?

- 1) Panicked
- 2) Stayed calm and had a more rational/logical approach to the situation?
- 3) Did not react at all

**E.g., 1:** You failed a test that you expected to pass. What is your emotional response? How do you take control of the situation?

**E.g., 2:** You are criticised for something you feel strongly about. It hurts your feelings. How do you react?

**E.g., 3:** You have signed up for many extracurricular activities and have a lot of work to do for university, it is overwhelming. How do manage the situation?



Measures the extent to which an individual is likely to persist with a goal or work task. Individuals differ in the degree to which they remain focused on their goals. Some may be easily distracted, bored or divert their attention to competing goals, whereas, others may be more likely to persist (MTQ User Manual, 2019).

**Exercise 2:**

Goal and Achievement Orientation.

**E.g., 1:** You want to get an A\* in a difficult class: How likely are you to achieve this? How could you guarantee that you achieve this?

**E.g., 2:** You are going to run a marathon but have no experience. What is your default approach? What is your approach if you could go back and change your initial reaction?



The extent to which individuals see change, setbacks and challenges as opportunities. Individuals who see them as opportunities will actively seek them out and will identify problems as ways for self-development (MTQ User Manual, 2019).

**Exercise 3:**

**E.g., 1:** You have the opportunity to change your job. Your new job will be difficult and you will start from the bottom and have to work your way up. Would you take it? How do you feel about it?

**E.g., 2:** You have the opportunity to work for the company of your dreams and many benefits.

But you'd have to move to a country with a language you don't speak. What would be your default mental response? Would you change it?



The extent to which individuals believe they have the ability to deal with whatever they will face. Referred to as 'Self Belief'. Confident individuals are aware that even best-laid plans can go wrong and setbacks can occur but they will say: 'I know how to do this', and 'I can deal with that' (MTQ User Manual, 2019).

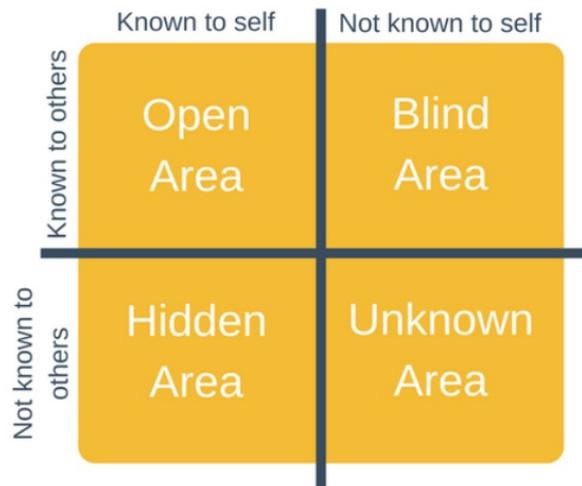
#### **Exercise 4:**

**E.g., 1:** You find out that life is a simulation. There is no doubt about it. What is your reaction to this news? How will you lead your life from this point forwards?

**E.g., 2:** The start-up you have developed as part of your course project, after careful consideration, proves not to meet the industry standards. What would you do considering that you were extremely confident that this would have met specifications and you would have been successful in the project?

**Relevance to the project:** These four exercises will help students to enhance their **self-awareness and self-efficacy** by reflecting on their needs and aspirations as well as identifying strengths and weaknesses in their default mental responses to various circumstances. This can consequently help students to understand better their skills and be more **determined (perseverance and motivation)** to turn ideas into actions whilst being resilient under pressure and adversity (Competencies 2.1 and 2.2. – *Self-awareness and self-efficacy, Motivation and perseverance* of the EnterComp framework).

2. Self-Awareness activity using “*The Johari Window*” (Luft, J. and Ingham, H., 1995)



A powerful tool to expand your awareness: apparently a fairly simple grid but it is very useful in understanding where there is scope to learn with regards to self-awareness. In each sector, there is space for learning and development

**Open Area** – Includes things known to self and known to others too.

**Blind Area** - space for learning provided feedback is given from others

**Hidden Area** - If confronted with a trusted person, there might be freedom to talk, re-arrange thinking and understand what is troubling the individual - space for learning

**Unknown Area** - Is there anything to know? I do not know about myself - new insights about myself (like personality tests/ psychometric assessments) exploring new areas

How can an understanding of Mental Toughness help in this respect?

**Relevance to the project:** Help students reflect on their needs, aspirations and wants in the short, medium and long term to empower them to take the initiative and identify ways to make the most out of situations/ideas according to the skills known to them or still unknown that will be revealed using the Johari Window (Competence 1.4 – *Valuing Ideas*, and Resource 2.1 – *Self-awareness and Self-efficacy* of the EntreComp framework).

**Exercise 5:**

**How does the Johari Window Model work?**

- Select 5 adjectives that describe who you are.
- Ask a diverse set of people to select 5 adjectives that describe who you are.
- Categorise the results into the four Johari Window Quadrants.
- Discuss the results with the group to elicit deeper insights.
- Use this tool to help facilitate the exercise: [MIRO Template](#)

### **3. Mental Toughness and essential elements of Teamworking**

The image shows the primary connections between the mental toughness factors and the essential elements of teamworking. The mental toughness factors will impact in some ways other team working behaviours: unsurprisingly, Goal Orientation may relate positively to working toward Common Goals and Objectives. Interpersonal Confidence will be a factor in Effective Communications as well as Working Together where Emotional Control will also figure. The Challenge construct underpins the avoidance of complacency which is what Continuous Improvement embraces. Life Control, Confidence in Abilities and Achievement orientation come together in a form of Self Efficacy which is largely captured by Engagement with Success.

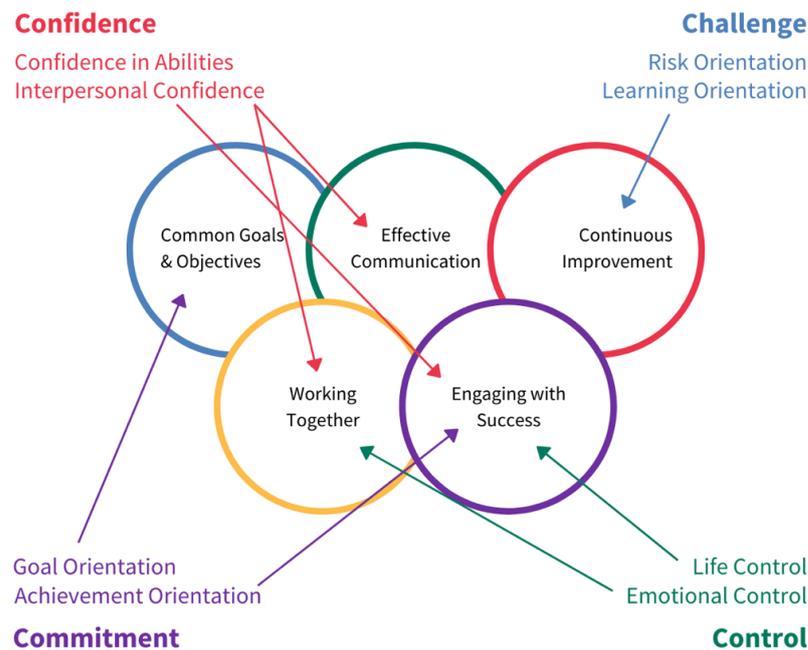
If the mental toughness factors underpin the teamwork behaviours and the team's mental toughness is essentially an aggregation of the mental toughness of individual team members, then the extent to which each team member brings mental toughness factors to the team may impact the team's overall capabilities. A mentally tough individual who lacks self-awareness can be disruptive in a team – sometimes showing intolerance of others rather than using their mental toughness to support others to help them make an optimal contribution. In summary, mental toughness is an enabler that helps individuals and teams to understand how to demonstrate valuable behaviours in pursuit of important outcomes.

#### **Exercise 6:**

Using the diagram below:

- Reflect on which of these dimensions you have developed the most when it comes to team-working.
- Which one/s may constitute a hindrance in working together and cooperating with others to develop ideas and turn them into action?

- How would you sort team conflicts arising from such discrepancies in actions and thinking? (Competence 3.4 of the EntreComp framework)



(Strycharczyk, Clough and Perry, 2021. p154)

**Relevance to the project:** Understanding individual strengths within a Team using the framework provided will help students to appreciate how resources and competencies needed at any stage can be effectively mobilized (Resource 2.3 – *Mobilizing Resources* – of the EntreComp framework) whilst using their strengths in one or more than one dimension to develop ideas and opportunities to create value/solutions to existing challenges (Competence 1.2 – *Creativity* – of the EntreComp framework).

#### 4. Building Emotional Awareness

The purpose of this activity is to improve people's capacity to effectively sense and comprehend others' emotions. Why does this matter is the question? It might be difficult to assess whether one's assumptions about another person's sentiments are right in everyday life. The ability for students to evaluate whether their observations are correct is a valuable aspect of this tool.

#### Exercise 7:

In this exercise, you are going to practice “reading” other people’s emotions. Reading others’ emotions involves analysing their facial expressions, as well as the way in which they are talking and moving.

- **The speaker.** The speaker selects one emotion and talks about a time when he or she experienced this emotion quite strongly. The speaker should not mention the emotion he or she has chosen, as the job of the observers is to guess the selected emotion.
- **The face decoder.** The face decoder carefully observes the speaker’s facial expressions to decipher the emotion being spoken about. For instance, are the speaker’s eyes opened wide in surprise, or drooped down in sadness?
- **The body decoder.** The body decoder carefully observes the speaker’s bodily movements to decipher the emotion being spoken about. For instance, how is the speaker using his hands to gesture while speaking, and what is his posture like?
- **The speech decoder.** The speech decoder carefully observes how the speaker is talking in order to decipher the emotion being spoken. The speech decoder focuses on both verbal and non-verbal characteristics of speech. For instance, what kind of words is the speaker using (i.e., strong, bold, positive, negative), and how is the emotion reflected in the pitch, loudness, and speed of the speaker’s way of talking?

**Points of reflection:**

- How was it to do this exercise?
- Which aspects were challenging?
- What did you learn?
- What is your take-home message?

**Exercise 8:**

Write down your core beliefs about emotions in the thought bubbles in the Core Beliefs About Emotions worksheet below.

Reflect on:

- What would be the consequences of those beliefs?

- Would these beliefs about emotions prevent you from achieving your goals somehow?
- What would be the first step for you to undertake to change those that are considered “wrong” beliefs? Formulate an action plan

**Examples of common beliefs:**

- If I lose control of my emotions in front of others, they will think less of me.
- If I let myself feel this emotion, I will become overwhelmed by it.
- Other people don’t feel this way. There must be something wrong with me.
- Only an immature person would get so emotional.
- To be acceptable to others, I must keep any difficulties or negative feelings to myself.
- Being an adult means not getting carried away by emotion; I’m supposed to be rational!
- Showing my emotions to others makes me look like a “drama queen.”

The diagram illustrates the relationship between beliefs, emotions, and consequences. It features a central silhouette of a person. Above the silhouette are three thought bubbles, each labeled "BELIEF:" and containing three horizontal dotted lines for writing. The silhouette itself has a section labeled "EMOTION:" with one horizontal dotted line, and a larger section below it labeled "CONSEQUENCES:" with three horizontal dotted lines. Below the silhouette, there are three more horizontal dotted lines for additional notes.

## 5. Self-awareness and communication

How being self-aware help us to enhance effective communication through emotional control: the power of choices.

In this Ted Talk, Louise Evans highlights that we make choices about the behaviours that we bring into the world and the choices that we make have a direct impact on the conversations that we have, the relationships that we form and the quality of our life in general. This leads to enquire what can we do at a practical level to get more conscious about this. The parallelism with 5 coloured chairs is what Louise uses to help individuals slow down in how they are behaving and to analyse why.

### **Exercise 9:**

Watch this TEDx Talk and critically examine how you would react by default if in the same situation as the speaker.

- Which “chair” would describe your approach best?
- Are you happy with your behaviour? Does it need changing and why?

[Own Your Behaviours, Master Your Communication, Determine Your Success | Louise Evans | TEDxGenova](#)

**Relevance to the project:** This activity would be useful for students to help them make decisions when the result of that decision is uncertain, the information available is partial or ambiguous or when there is a risk of unintended outcomes (Competence 3.3 – *Cooping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk* - of the EntreComp framework).