

An achievement mindset

Mental toughness has become a colloquialism of the modern sporting world, employed ubiquitously in discussions of psychological aspects of athletic performance by athletes, coaches, sports fans, journalists and sporting pundits alike. Yet, paradoxically, in scholarly spheres there is a lack of both conceptual consensus and understanding. Here it shares similarities with athlete burnout, a concept that is also seemingly recognisable, and that people have a sense of but that has historically been plagued by conceptual confusion, and the absence of an agreed definition and approach to measurement. In *Mental Toughness: The Mindset Behind Sporting Achievement*, Sheard states the

objective is to provide clarity by drawing together research efforts in a definitive overview of what mental toughness is and what it is not. To Sheard's credit, he is successful in achieving this objective through a highly readable and engaging account of the concept.

Sheard's book begins with a discussion of anecdotal accounts of mental toughness. This sets the scene well, bringing the concept to life through the lived experiences of athletes, as well as establishing a link between mental toughness and performance. Furthermore, Sheard asserts in this introductory chapter that the concept is not only a personality attribute (a traditional standpoint of the field) but also an achievement mindset, which is a running theme built upon throughout the book. The second chapter is an exposition of the characteristics constitutive of mental toughness. Here the historically 'all encompassing' nature of the term is addressed, alongside the quest for a universally accepted definition. Chapter 3 tackles the confusion around conceptualisation and discusses mental toughness in relation to the associated terms of resilience and hardiness. Sheard also proposes that as consensus has begun to emerge for an association between mental toughness and positive attributes, such as athlete resilience, resourceful and renewal, a positive psychology paradigm is an appropriate theoretical frame of reference for the concept. Chapter 4 is devoted to exploring the validation of measurement tools and approaches, and gives a detailed account of recent advances in the production of psychometrically acceptable inventories. The question of how mental toughness is developed and maintained is examined in the fifth chapter as well as

cultural and national differences, and mental toughness in the injured athlete. The final chapter brings the book together through an insightful concluding commentary, whilst also setting the challenge to the field through future research directions.

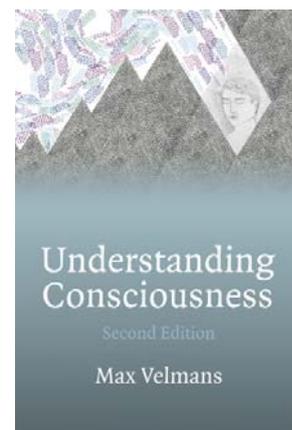
As with any book of this nature, there are some minor quibbles that could be acknowledged, including potentially extending the attention devoted to the related concepts of resilience and hardiness to provide greater delineation. Also, Sheard could expand his argument for the consideration of mental toughness within the positive psychology paradigm. This is a popular and influential approach within sport psychology, and as so much is covered in the text, the valuable comments made in relation to positive psychology could be subsumed by other topics. That said, there are three major strengths of the book.

- | *Integration of anecdotal accounts, theories and research* – Sheard demonstrates solid knowledge and understanding of the theoretical perspectives and research within the field, which he is able to adeptly transfer into action, and make tangible through carefully crafted real-world examples.
- | *A balance of depth and breadth* – The text provides a comprehensive overview of the literature highlighting both what it is and what it is not, and also what is presently known and not known about the concept. Sheard strikes a balance between breadth, giving the reader a sense of the scope of the field, and depth, which stimulates thought and reflection but which still meets the intended objective of clarity.
- | *Engaging narrative* – The text reflects genuine enthusiasm and passion for the field by the author, resulting in an engaging easy-to-read narrative. The potentially more challenging areas to bring to life of theory and empirical research are energised by use of applied examples and anecdotes.

To summarise, this book makes a valuable contribution to sport psychology by providing a one-stop shop for mental toughness, but its audience is likely to be more far-reaching to include related fields such as coaching and occupational psychology.

| Routledge; 2009; Pb £14.95

Reviewed by Kate Goodger who is a sport psychologist with the English Institute of Sport



Original and clear

Understanding
Consciousness (2nd edn)
Max Velmans

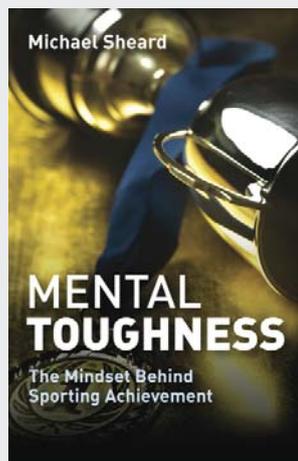
Those interested in the consciousness literature may already be aware of the author's preference for 'reflexive monism', an approach that is prevalent within this publication. However, in challenging the orthodox views of consciousness, such as functionalism, Velmans prompts the reader to question such previous reductionist assumptions, urging them to consider new and interesting ideas for interpreting the philosophical issues presented.

This second edition differs from the first in that Velmans has developed his ideas somewhat, offering a new clarity and depth to the writing. There are also new chapters concerning, for example, the development of knowledge of the neural causes and correlates of consciousness, and the unsettled nature of the relevance of quantum mechanics.

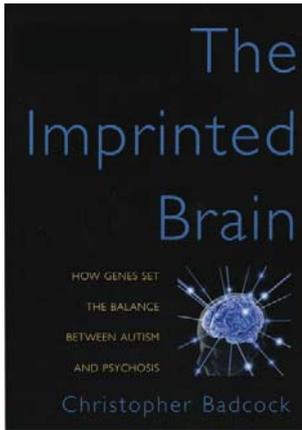
The chapters are arranged in logical and concise portions, resulting in an engaging and effortless read. Velmans gently guides the reader through a comprehensive, but entirely accessible, review of the current state of knowledge concerning consciousness with originality and clarity. This book is inspirational in its ability to stimulate a new level of thinking about consciousness.

| Routledge; 2009; Pb £22.50

Reviewed by Helen Henshaw
who is a PhD student at the
University of Leicester



Mental Toughness: The
Mindset Behind Sporting
Achievement
Michael Sheard



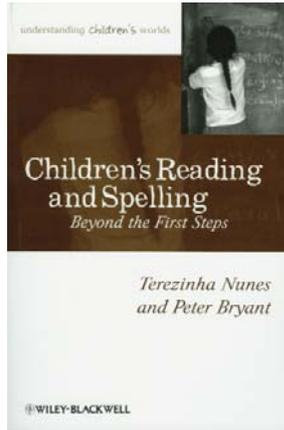
Keeping an open mind

The Imprinted Brain
Christopher Badcock

Badcock imaginatively reconstructs established concepts such as theory of mind and central coherence to articulate a new theory of mental development involving symmetrical cognitive systems associated with 'sister' disorders autism and psychosis. Evidence for the theory is scarce; however, it is worth reflecting on as it contributes to the debate about giving up the search for a single explanation for autism and offers humane insights into subjective experiences and sobering messages about existing practice.

Concepts are clearly explained and evidence is collected ambitiously from a range of sources. Increasingly rhetorical questions act as vehicles for more extreme claims for the theory's power, which, Badcock concedes, may appear far-fetched. The ending is disquieting both in its attack on psychoanalysis and allusions to genetic testing and designer babies. Yet, if progressed, the theory might inform cognitive therapeutic interventions for both autism and psychosis and force psychiatric diagnosis to acknowledge lifelong developmental contexts. Overall the theory is fascinating in its implausibly parsimonious nature and the wide-ranging discussion is coherent, energetic and often entertaining.

| Jessica Kingsley; 2009; Pb £16.99
Reviewed by Sheila McConnelogue who is a trainee educational psychologist, Queen's University Belfast



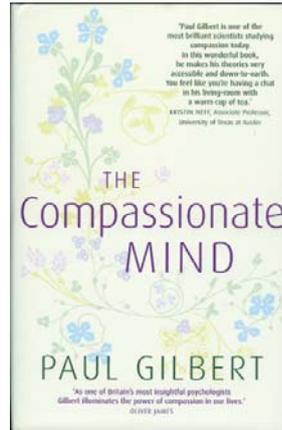
Morphology rules!

Children's Reading and Spelling: Beyond the First Steps
Terezinha Nunes & Peter Bryant

This insightful book, focusing on formal literacy development beyond the initial acquisition of the alphabetic principle, pulls together findings from often apparently conflicting trajectories, such as those behind phonics and 'real book' approaches to the teaching of reading, and explains the value inherent in each before offering an alternative perspective that provides a synthesis of them.

With extensive references to their own and others' research in a number of orthographic languages, the authors provide convincing evidence of how children develop their reading and spelling abilities; with children over-generalising as they practise and refine rules that they are taught explicitly and observe informally in their everyday worlds. Whilst the heavily researched role of phonological awareness is acknowledged it is the importance of morphological awareness, and the feasibility of this being explicitly taught that takes centre-stage here. All of the research is situated within children's overarching cognitive development, considering how what is being learnt is influenced by both the child themselves and the context within which the learning takes place.

| Wiley-Blackwell; 2009; Pb £19.99
Reviewed by Emma Bent who is a PhD student at the University of Bristol



What's love got to do with it?

The Compassionate Mind
Paul Gilbert

The (over?) excitement about neuroscience and CBT brings with it some excellent books for the general public and practitioner alike. Current fMRI studies of meditation and the healing power of love – of ourselves and others – can only enrich and humanise our discipline. Dr John Kabat-Zinn has been toiling in this vineyard for years, bringing Buddhist insights into developing mindfulness-based stress reduction. More recently, Professor Mark Williams has taken his wisdom into his own work in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for depression.

Professor Gilbert gives us, in the first half of this big book, an engaging overview of the nature and science of compassion, focusing particularly on the struggle between what he calls the old brain/mind and new

brain/mind. The second half introduces skills and exercises for building a compassionate self. He emphasises that this is not about polishing one's personal halo but that mind training *matters*. 'We know that most of our problems – of the environment, tribal violence and terrorism, social injustice and human exploitation – are only going to be resolved through our relationships with each other. Evolution has designed for us a really difficult brain, one that can create heaven and hell, and it's up to each of us to choose which to opt for.'

Just hours before going to press, Gilbert heard President Obama's inaugural address and found in its language of compassion a truly optimistic note on which to end this important and enjoyable book.

| Constable & Robinson; 2009; Hb £20.00
Reviewed by Maggie Winkworth who is a Chartered Psychologist in London

just in

- Sample titles just in:**
The Psychophysiology of Self-awareness Alan Fogel
Adverse Impact: Implications for Organizational Staffing and High Stakes Selection James L. Outtz (Ed.)
Safer Surgery: Analysing Behaviour in the Operating Theatre Rhona Flin & Lucy Mitchell (Eds.)
Quantitative Psychological Research: The Complete Student's Companion (3rd edn) David Clark-Carter
The Joy of Work? Peter Warr & Guy Clapperton
From Axons to Identity Todd Feinberg

For a full list of books available for review and information on reviewing for **The Psychologist**, see www.bps.org.uk/books

Send books for potential review to The Psychologist, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR