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Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly
With Mental Coaching

STRESS by Joan A. King, C.Ht.

It is now almost two months since we were shocked on September 11, 2001 by the attack on our homeland, our security, our freedom, and our world. We now know that the world we thought we knew will not be the same again. Similarly, when we grow out of our childhood patterns and begin to make our own choices on our own behalf, we gain wisdom. This tragedy has made all of us look at our lives and ask ourselves if we are living a life that really matters.

A crab hiding in a bag of shells was accidentally carried from the Gulf Coast of Florida to the high desert of Phoenix. After several days it ventured out, carrying its shell on its back. Although it now lived in Phoenix, it began to crawl out in a cyclic manner as though it was in sync with high tide in the gulf. At times like these, life can pluck us from the familiar Gulf and drop us in Phoenix. And, like the crab, it will take time for us to adjust. The best thing to do is take care of your mental, physical and spiritual bodies and allow the transition to take its own natural pace without expectations about the outcome.

Happiness is like a butterfly. The more you chase it, the more it will elude you. But if you turn your attention to other things, it comes softly and sits on your shoulder.

Millions of Americans will need treatment for the psychological effects of the 9-11 trauma. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) begins as an acute stress reaction from living through or witnessing a life-threatening event. For most people this trauma occurred around television images. The images were so traumatic and compelling they were ensconced into our memory banks as if we were the actual victims. Vulnerability to PTSD is increased if you had a past trauma that is unhealed.

Just as viewing the tragic scenes over and over on TV can cause an emotional reaction in the body, "seeing", "feeling" and "hearing" poor golf shots over and over will be stressful and then cause anxiety in the body. On the other hand, if you imagine something that is relaxing, your body will automatically relax because it is impossible to have a relaxing thought and feel tense at the same

time. It is also impossible to think of something happy and feel depressed, or to think energetic and feel tired.

Your body doesn't question, analyze, reason or judge. It follows what the mind tells it to do. ***"What the mind perceives, the body believes"***. Your body doesn't know the difference between what is imagination and what is real. It only knows what you direct it to do. The first rule of the mind is that ***"Every thought causes a reaction in the body."*** Persistent thoughts establish specific patterns in your unconscious mind.

Your subconscious mind loves to hear, see and feel the same experience over and over because it picks up something new each time. Little children love to watch the same video over and over again where an adult would become bored after a couple of times. Children live in the moment by seeing and experiencing something new in each moment of their lives. Adults use their conscious minds to analyze and judge and become bored after they have "figured it out". Since the golf swing and game are constantly changing, perhaps that is why we find it so intriguing and compelling.

Stress is good. Without stress there is no growth. But recovery is essential. It is necessary to renew energy. If you are constantly beating yourself up for bad shots, there is no recovery time to produce change for good shots.

Parable of the frog: *If you put a frog in boiling water, it jumps out. If you put a frog in cold water that is gradually heated to boiling, the frog stays in until it is boiled.*

Take control of your mind. When you were a child, you didn't know anything and your mind had a blank computer screen. As you grew, you began to learn the programs that were put into your head. Now you had a voice in your head. The more you learned, the more different solutions you had for the same problem. And that breeds confusion and indecision. Then you no longer trust yourself. It is like riding a wild horse that takes you wherever it wants. You need to choose, be decisive and ride the horse where *you* want to go. Knowledge is a powerful tool to be used by us, not to have power over us. Most of the time we believe we are what we know or what we do. When we believe what others tell us, we become that.

We have been asked by our government to be more vigilant in noticing our surroundings. It is the same in golf. Be more vigilant in choosing how you perceive your world and your golf game so the potentially stressful situations don't turn into anxiety and nervousness in your body.

Nutrition, sleep and exercise are the things that help us manage stress and give us peace. According to all the great religions and philosophies, the root of happiness is sharing your life with others in a meaningful way. What better way

to do that than by playing a round of golf with your friends! Golf is the most social of sports.

Coping Skills for Stress:

1. Eat foods that enhance your energy level:

Food affects the brain; how we feel, think and our emotional responses. We all know about “comfort” foods that make us feel better temporarily, but subsequently drain our energy. These are foods that can trigger a “stress” response in the body, causing feelings of anxiety and mood swings. These foods are counterproductive to keeping an even keel for a four hour round of golf.

One of the substances that increase the release of stress hormones in the body is caffeine. It causes alertness but also causes the muscles to contract. It can also cause dehydration, irritability and anxiety.

Refined carbohydrates including sugar (those tempting donuts and pastry) also drain you of energy.

To maintain a high stable energy level, increased mental clarity and calmness, eat three small balanced meals and three small balanced snacks a day. They should contain some low glycemic carbohydrate, some lean protein and some healthy fat. (Nutrition; February 2000)

Complex carbohydrates act as tranquilizers by increasing the amount of serotonin (the neurotransmitter that calms) in your brain. Omega 3-fatty acids, like those found in fish, will also raise your serotonin levels.

2. Drink 48 to 64 ounces of water a day.

3. Physical Exercise:

Exercise two to three hours a week. Walking is a good stress reducer. Weight training keeps muscles firm and from losing muscle mass.

4. Rest and Recovery Time:

Go to bed at the same time, and wake up early. Studies show that seven to seven and a half hours of sleep per night is optimal in order to build, repair, and maintain the immune system and to repair tissue.

Manage your energy levels. Take a break from whatever you’re doing every 90 minutes. Even a five minute walk will change your rhythm and re-energize yourself. On the practice range, stop and take a break every 15 minutes and hit a different club.

5. Organize Your Life:

Give yourself mental relief from becoming overwhelmed by setting goals, making lists, and choosing priorities. Use your senses to visualize and imagine yourself completing your tasks and goals. Break your goals down into small manageable chunks so you can feel the success of completion. (Goal Setting: January 2000)

6. Spiritual:

To restore balance between your mind and body, take time during the day to be in solitude, to slow down your mind and body, to stop thinking and just enjoy the peace of "being". To renew your spirit; meditate, write in your journal, pray and give service to others. (Spiritual Golf: December 2000)

7. Life Perspective:

Golf is a game that we play for fun. Keep the game in balance with the importance of your health, happiness, family and work. When we connect to the things that matter, we have passion for life.

To follow your dream, keep life in balance.

Golf can be many things to us. It can be a classroom where we learn to improve ourselves. On the golf course we can develop the necessary self-knowledge, awareness and understanding that promotes inner strength when we need it. Golf requires the development of strong character. It asks us to be patient, to trust, and to take risks all in one round of golf. Each time you play a round of golf, you are on a personal path of self-discovery and learning.

Help save the world one soul at a time; yours.....

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!

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"I had a great summer because of your workshop. I read and reread the mental principles before the Club Championship and won against an 8 handicap. My attitude was good and I did have fun!" ---Linda deSpirlet

"As a result of listening to your "Fearless Golf" CD I am in a better frame of mind on the golf course. I am sleeping better, more relaxed, hitting the ball further, and scoring better." ---David Daniels

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If you have a question or need help with your mental game, email Joan at Positive Mental Imagery, info@mastermindgolf.com Also, please share with us how this website information has helped you improve your performance.