

# Newsletter August 2001

## Vol. II, Edition 8

Improve Your Golf Game  
Easily & Quickly  
With Mental Coaching

### **Self-Approval** by Joan A. King, C.Ht.

When you are hitting shots on the practice range and miss a shot badly, do you berate yourself or make noises and motions to indicate to others your displeasure? When you miss a shot, or a series of shots on the golf course, do you get angry and call yourself derogatory names? If you do, be aware whom you are trying to impress. Champion golfers do not need the approval of others as they did their parents' approval when they were young. A missed shot is just an indication of your humanness that you didn't do it as well as you would have liked.

At the heart of exaggerating your response to a missed shot, is the problem of *feeling* to the exclusion of *thinking*. This is the time to breathe deeply and *let go*. This is the time to *dissociate* from the feelings.

1. Learn to think instead of feel.
2. The ultimate goal in all problem solving is self-support. Use your own resourcefulness. Know that you have the intelligence to regain your composure and maintain an accurate perspective.

*Ask yourself this question; when you get in trouble, either through your own fault or through a bad break, which mental attitude will serve you best; infuriation and self-pity, or a philosophical and positive approach? I see a lot of bad temper and self-pity on tour, especially on difficult courses. I've been guilty of it myself at times. It's a human enough reaction. But even if anger or self-pity is excusable, I still dislike them intensely, in myself even more than in others. The reason is that they are crutches—copouts. You face a situation that you cannot cope with, so you give yourself an excuse for possible failure by getting mad at the course or the injustice you've suffered. The result invariably is that you fail to recover, not only from the one poor swing or unlucky bounce that first upset you, but from all the others that inevitably follow. —Jack Nicklaus*

I visited my 4-year-old grandson in Atlanta recently and watched one of his Karate training sessions. When the teacher asked if someone would like to recite the seven Tenets (doctrines) of Karate, his little hand shot up in the air and waved at her. When she called on him, he stood tall and proud and shouted out each tenet pausing for the class to echo after him. The tenets which are easily applicable to golf, are:

1. Integrity

2. Concentration
3. Humility
4. Indomitable spirit
5. Sense of humor
6. Perseverance
7. Self-control

Every month the class strives to achieve a different tenet. When they do something that shows they have supported that discipline, it is verified by a parent, teacher, etc. and brought to class for validation by the presentation of a colored stripe on their uniforms. These 4-6 year-olds were easily learning body maneuvers as difficult as the golf swing, and were reinforcing them with personal life-strengthening values.

Golf is a game that tests all of your beliefs, attitudes, personality traits, thoughts, emotions as well as physical skills. It brings out the best and the worst sides of a person's character. Unlike so many other activities in our daily lives, golf rewards success and penalizes failure immediately. You do not need to wait for a teacher to grade your efforts, or a boss to tell you what kind of a job you are doing. In golf you know as soon as the ball leaves the clubface how well you have performed.

Golf is a funny game where poorly struck shots sometimes will run onto the green, and a great shot might end up embedded in a greenside bunker. Luck and a "rub of the green" are part of the game. It is up to you to accept the good breaks and to not let the bad breaks deter you from staying centered in your challenge of the course.

Golf is a game that is never mastered, never perfected. The better you play, the more the game entices you to improve even more and play better.

There are human qualities that enhance your performance. There are also qualities such as anger and anxiety that sabotage your game. It is up to you to develop self-control and an honest self-analysis. You can choose at any given moment how you want to react to a situation. ***Your golf game does not reflect on you as a person. The way you react to your golf shots does reflect on you as a person.***

The golf course is not your opponent-- you are your opponent. The golf course just waits quietly for you to challenge yourself on it. This is why it is such an exciting adventure. The golf course challenges you to get to know yourself and to grow from the experience.

Use this checklist to determine which personality characteristics you use on the golf course. Rate each one on a scale of 0 to 5 with 0 being *Never Happens* to 5 which *Happens Frequently in every round of golf*. As you use more of your

effective qualities, and less ineffective qualities, notice how your golf performances improve and how much more you are enjoying the game. Continue until you do not need outside approval anymore. Lower scores, enjoyment, and self-approval will be your reward.

Ineffective Qualities

- \_\_\_\_\_ Discouraged
- \_\_\_\_\_ Angry, frustrated
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bad attitude
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inconsistent Routine
- \_\_\_\_\_ Doubtful
- \_\_\_\_\_ Forceful
- \_\_\_\_\_ Negative Self-Talk
- \_\_\_\_\_ Indecisive, confused
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cheating
- \_\_\_\_\_ Too serious
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tired
- \_\_\_\_\_ Distracted
- \_\_\_\_\_ Quits (mentally/physically)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inconsistent Practice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Anxious, fearful
- \_\_\_\_\_ Impulsive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Negative
- \_\_\_\_\_ Critical
- \_\_\_\_\_ Judgmental
- \_\_\_\_\_ Guilty
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unlucky

Effective Qualities

- \_\_\_\_\_ Patience
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sportsmanship
- \_\_\_\_\_ Good attitude
- \_\_\_\_\_ Disciplined Routine
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trusting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relaxed, calm
- \_\_\_\_\_ Positive Self-Talk
- \_\_\_\_\_ Decisive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Honest
- \_\_\_\_\_ Playful
- \_\_\_\_\_ Motivated
- \_\_\_\_\_ Focused Mind
- \_\_\_\_\_ Persistence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diligent practice
- \_\_\_\_\_ In the present
- \_\_\_\_\_ Even-tempered
- \_\_\_\_\_ Optimistic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accepting
- \_\_\_\_\_ Forgiving
- \_\_\_\_\_ Self-approval
- \_\_\_\_\_ State of Grace

*“I have never played golf perfectly, and there is a mighty good chance that neither I nor anyone else ever will. The better I have become, the more I have embarrassed myself by failure; and the more I have embarrassed myself, the more I have been goaded into trying to develop greater skills. Of this I am presently certain; when failure ceases to embarrass me, and thus to stimulate me to greater efforts, my day will be done and I shall quit playing golf in public. -*  
 ---Jack Nicklaus

***Let your light shine brightly in this galaxy. Be true to yourself.***

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***“Your “Fearless Golf” tape has taught me to get rid of my fears and recognize that I am playing a game. I have also been able to put my priorities in proper order relative to golf and other matters.”***

-- Ralph Engel, Attorney

***“Because of your “ Progressive Relaxation of the Mind and Body” tape, I am more relaxed and focused on each shot. I no longer have performance anxiety and therefore have a marked improvement in my short game and am scoring better. –Garry A. Goldstein, MD, MPH***

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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](mailto:info@mastermindgolf.com) Also, please share with us how this website information has helped you improve your performance.