

POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

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*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly*

CONCENTRATION

by Joan King

This month's newsletter will continue with help in the areas where golfers most want to improve. The four C's are: confidence, consistency, control, and concentration. This month's newsletter will complete the series with suggestions for improving your concentration and focus on the golf course.

On Sunday at the Las Vegas International, Steve Flesch demonstrated a lack of concentration. On the 16th hole he missed his "gimme" putt. Instead of taking his time and stroking it into the hole, he backhanded it, missed the hole, and then almost missed the next tap-in.

All golfers have experienced this same situation. You are focused on making the first putt. When you miss it, the disappointment turns quickly to frustration. Succumbing to the emotion, you carelessly jab at the ball without any preparation and wind up adding an unnecessary stroke.

Concentration is a mental skill where you can excel no matter what your handicap is. Golfers who play at their peak potential talk about being in "the zone" or "being on automatic pilot" or "being focused" or "seeing good pictures."

This "zone state" is when you are concentrating in the moment and experience a distortion in your sense of time. It appears that everything has slowed down so you can focus on the present moment easily and naturally. At the same time you have that perception, your mind has speeded up and you react intuitively to the situation with total confidence.

The human mind processes hundreds of bits of sensory information every second so it is no wonder that we have trouble focusing on one shot at a time. This is obvious when we blame our wandering thoughts on Alzheimer's or Senior Moments.

Many golfers believe they have to concentrate on the game for four hours when in fact it is a good thing to relax and joke with your partners between shots and concentrate only when it is your turn to hit. It is important to spend the time between shots in the manner that is most comfortable for you.

Ben Hogan was the best example of unbroken concentration. A typical story about Hogan tells about Claude Harmon, one of his playing partners at Augusta, having a hole in one on the 12th hole. Walking to the next tee, Hogan asked Harmon what he had just made on the hole.

If you give your partners the silent treatment like Hogan did, you will probably be very unpopular. Golf is meant to be enjoyed and the sociability of the game in-between shots makes it special and enjoyable. To concentrate when it is your turn, it is important to keep your conversation casual by not discussing emotional topics that will make it harder to refocus.

Here are seven ways to practice to improve your concentration:

1. Focus on the positive not the negative.

Pick your target & visualize the shape of the shot and see it going toward and landing on the target. As Harvey Pennick said, "Take dead aim."

2. Have a game plan

To put yourself into this focused state, you need a game plan. Playing a "game within a game" that will lead to the low score is a good way to be focused. Many golfers say they play better when they are "playing for the team" in a best ball or scramble tournament.

If you are playing your own ball, your game plan might be to see how many times you can get the ball "up and down" from off the green. Or, how many fairways or pars you can get on the par 3's. Always keep the games positive and congratulate yourself when you are successful. Stay with the challenge of your game plan throughout the round, regardless of the score on individual holes.

3. Be aware of distractions

When Jack Nicklaus was walking up the 18th fairway at Augusta on the way to winning his 6th Masters, the thunderous ovation from the crowd brought tears to his eyes he was so touched by the crowd and this historic scene.

He was overcome with emotion. He was distracted. He caught himself in time and remembered that he still had to play out the last hole. He refocused his mind on the task of putting the uphill 50-foot putt.

Distractions such as noises on the golf course are commonplace. They startle a golfer because of the silence. It is not the same as football, basketball or baseball where the noise is constant. There is also the distraction of your inner voice that brings up thoughts that are irrelevant to your golf game.

If inner voices or outer noises distract you, you have not totally prepared your mind so your body will know what to do. Using a preshot routine is a good way to focus your attention.

4. Establish a precise preshot routine

Most golfers consider the preshot routine boring, unnecessary, and too much work. Using the same routine every time requires discipline until it becomes a

habit. Without a good routine your results are going to be inconsistent and erratic. It can wreck your score.

Using the same preshot routine and swing keys every time will help you stay focused. If you watched the Las Vegas Invitational over the weekend you saw Stuart Appleby's disciplined preshot routine. He never deviated from his routine of taking practice swings when he set up to the ball twice. He was 31 under par and won the tournament in a play-off.

Preparing for the shot is like creating a map or a blueprint of what you want to create. The preshot routine is composed of a series of movements and sensory feelings that give you a way to automatically execute your shots.

When you use the same routine each time you then have control of your thinking and send good messages to your body.

5. Be decisive

An excellent step to add to your preshot routine is the D-Line. Looking down the fairway at your target, draw an imaginary line between you and the ball. This is your Decision (D-Line).

All thoughts and decisions are to be made before you cross this line. You must be absolutely certain of where and how you are going to hit the ball. If anything distracts you from your plan at any time after crossing this line,, go back and begin your preshot routine again to refocus your mind.

Keep a mental scorecard with a pass/fail system or a 1-10 system (with 10 being the best and 1 being the worst) and record your level of preparedness for every shot. You might be surprised how many shots you hit without being mentally ready.

6. Narrow your focus to the present shot

If your mind is crowded with many thoughts and is busy seeking solutions, you will be indecisive and not clear on what you want to create. So the first step in concentration is to quiet your mind and narrow your focus on the present shot.

This is the same process you automatically use when your attention is focused on an engrossing movie. Become engrossed in the process of paying attention to each detail of your mental preparation.

To quiet your mind of any anxious thoughts, do what Scot Mc Caron did in the closing holes to get into the playoff. He took deep cleansing breaths to quiet his mind and calm his body. This should be an integral part of your preparation routine.

7. Give 100% attention to your preparation

To enjoy something more, give it more attention. The more you focus your attention on what you are doing, the less important the other outside details and events become. Concentration is the art of allowing yourself to become enraptured in what you are doing. It is an art. It is a freedom of choice.

Focusing in the present means letting go of worrying about the “what if’s” that might happen. Thinking about your score instead of concentrating on preparing for the shot interferes with your execution.

The more you are absorbed in your preparation for the shots, the less you are distracted. When you focus on executing your preshot routine precisely the same way every time, concentration just happens. And then there is no worry, no anxiety and you are in total control with your mind and body entrained.

AFFIRMATIONS

- **I AM calm and focused throughout my round.**
- **I concentrate and focus fully on each shot.**
- **I think positively and swing to my target.**
- **I concentrate on executing my preshot routine the same way for every shot.**
- **I AM concentrating easier every time I play.**

To improve your powers of concentration, purchase the Positive Mental Imagery CD or tape, “*Concentration for Consistent Golf*” directly at www.pmi4.com/cart . As you listen to this tape repeatedly you will program your mind to become more consistent every time you play because you will be in control, concentrating easier, and having more fun play the great game of golf!

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!

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“The customized tape Joan designed for me made a major difference in my game. I am much more relaxed, have a new approach to the game, and am hitting the ball better. I am getting more consistent and the valleys are not as deep.” ---GO, amateur golfer

“I listen to the PMI tapes 4-5 times a week. I alternate between ‘Concentration for Consistent Golf’ and ‘Confident Putting for Lower Scores’. I am now more relaxed and my poor shots frustrate me less. My sand trap play is more consistent due to being relaxed.” --FG, amateur senior golfer

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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.

