

POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

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*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly*

MENTAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF JUNIOR GOLFERS

by Joan King

This article is in response to a father requesting help for his 7-year old son's single digit golf game. I will state my philosophy about learning and playing golf and then answer his specific questions in next month's newsletter.

When my children were young I had this chart hanging on the wall in their rooms.

CHILDREN LEARN

If a child lives with criticism,
A child learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility,
A child learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule,
A child learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame,
A child learns to feel guilty.

WHAT

If a child lives with tolerance,
A child learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement,
A child learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise,
A child learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness,
A child learns justice.
If a child lives with security,
A child learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval,
A child learns self-esteem.

THEY LIVE.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
A child learns to find love in the world.

Children model and copy the behavior that they see around them. As I look back, I was not able to model all of the wonderful spiritual qualities in the second paragraph of the poem, because I had been exposed to criticism, shame, guilt, and the perfectionist way of child rearing. Now, as a grandmother, having developed these positive qualities on my own, I know how important it is to provide a safe environment for children to grow and succeed, to be loved for who they are, to be encouraged to explore and experiment in order to develop their own self-esteem. And after four decades of listening to adult golfers who are trying to find that confidence and self-esteem, I know how difficult it is to regain what was not given at the appropriate time. There are many players on the professional tours who have had to overcome their early programming to become successful. Here are a couple of examples.

Colin Montgomerie shot a 67 during the 1997 British Open at Royal Troon. James Montgomerie, the club secretary, told his son Colin, *"You've let your family down, you've let your town down ... in fact, you've let your country down."*

"People are uptight because they are afraid of failing. They're afraid of what folks are going to say, of being criticized. My dad was a perfectionist. He was very critical. If I could do anything over again I would have him be more supportive so I'd feel like it was okay to go out and make a mistake. I didn't want to come home from a basketball game and hear how I didn't do this or didn't do that. It'd be more fun to be able to play and not worry about being criticized when you got home. I always liked other kids who would go out and just play freely with no fear of making a mistake and I'd say man, I wish I could play like that. It wasn't until the last three or four years that I really started to overcome what it took all those years to build up. It's a tough barrier to overcome." Tom Lehman, PGA

What we know now is that the optimum state for learning and accessing our peak performances is the play state. Toddlers are a perfect example of learning through play in the zone state. In the first 18 months of life, they learn the challenging tasks of walking and talking naturally with little or no coaching. They model what they see. They are completely absorbed in the task at hand. They are not judging, criticizing, and analyzing their experience. There is no interference, no conflict. There is only the experience of learning by playing.

Children have self-esteem as part of their make-up. Small children know they are valued because people smile, talk to them, give them compliments and make gestures and sounds to make them smile. As they grow up, they begin to realize that people do judge them and have opinions about them other than total acceptance. And then the child begins to believe those judgments rather than

what he had originally thought of himself. The process of diminishing self-esteem begins. This lack of self-esteem keeps them from taking chances and risks. They then begin to worry about failure.

Confidence comes from within. No one has confidence all of the time in all areas of their life. Confidence is a process of building toward success. Focusing on the solution allows us to create change rather than dwelling on what didn't work. Spend time talking with your child about his goals, expectations. Listen to how he describes golf as a fun, exciting game. Listen to what he loves about playing the game. Praise him in those terms. Encourage him to have fun!

Learning golf is about playing the game in a safe, courteous environment that fosters self-esteem. Learn about how your child reacts to problems. The emphasis must be taken off of the ultimate goals or outcome and put on the process to achieve those goals.

Allow your child to learn by having fun. Allow him to enhance his self-esteem by using his imagination by figuring it out for himself.

Know that your child may have a different learning system and perception of the world than you do. Neither way is totally accurate. Don't overload your child. Learning has to be broken down into small tasks.

Reward your child by affirming his efforts. Do not criticize and constantly point out what you think he is doing incorrectly. This will jeopardize the most important quality he needs on the golf course, his self-esteem.

7 to 11 year-old children listen to the ideas and suggestions held by their peers, parents and other authority figures about who they are and what their potential is. They automatically mirror back the social behavior they see whether they have been told to or not.

If we love an activity, we do it because we love doing it, not because of the reward. Love of the game provides self-pride and self-discipline. Great champions play from their hearts. Here is what some world-class professionals said about how their relationship with their fathers encouraged them to believe in themselves and their ability.

"My dad played golf and I learned to find a peace on the golf course at a young age and I think that's what has helped me to do as well as I have because I don't let things bother me out there. My dad always said it's only a game and you want to enjoy it." Nancy Lopez, LPGA Hall of Fame

"I had tremendous self-esteem because of my father. It was always "Champ, nice going, champ." If I hit it bad, "let's see what you can do on the next one." He was never dwelling on the negative. It was always, always dwelling on the positive. Always positive. I had a very secure childhood. I knew he loved me

and accepted me. He instilled in me that there's no affirmation stronger than a father's affirmation that you're going to succeed." Johnny Miller, PGA Hall of Fame

"My dad had a refreshingly simple way of looking at the game. The object is to get the ball in the hole. If the ball isn't going in the hole, you're either aiming at the wrong spot, or you are mis-hitting the ball. So as I started to play the game, I became immensely curious about how to play it better and take strokes off my game. How can I do it better? Nothing related to score, competition, who I was beating, whether I could win a junior trophy or a college scholarship, the PGA tour event, none of that had anything to do with my love for the game. It was all driven by curiosity." Mike Reid, PGA Masters Champion

"My dad was great at teaching me to learn from my mistakes and pick the good out of any round, no matter what it was. If I was ten years old and shot 95, he'd say, "but on #4 you hit two beautiful shots and on #16 you hit two beautiful shots, and if we can just get you to do that a couple more times a round..." All the way up to when I was winning tournaments he would say, "All right, you were two or three swings away that day from playing about as good as anybody can play the game." He was always positive. He would ferret out the positive, show it to me, and then show me how to fix what didn't work." Davis Love III, PGA Champion

Teach your child to achieve his dreams, and to "shoot for the moon". Most people are afraid of failing and will be motivated by a fear of failure, putting their energy into moving away from the fear instead of toward their goal/success.

PMI Coaching Guidelines for Parents

- Remember that your child is *playing* golf for fun. Golf should not be work.
- Children are in the process of finding out who they are. Every human being is unique and especially gifted.
- Development of character through playing golf is more important than your child's performance.
- Remind your child that his potential is *unlimited* and that you believe in him.
- Praise your child for his efforts (not results). Even one word of criticism can damage their belief in themselves. You are their idol and role model and you can crush their self-esteem very easily.
- Ask your child what he wants. *Listen and hear* his answer. Don't assume that you know what is best. Discuss and compromise.

- Teach your child how to appreciate and give compliments to himself and others.
- Help your child set goals by establishing daily practice routines (mental and physical).
- Hug and/or touch your child every day.
- Affirm your child's strengths. Wonder at his accomplishments. Accept his mistakes as part of the learning experience.
- Motivate your child with love and not *your* fears.
- Have fun with your child. Share his life. Teach him to have a healthy sense of humor about himself and his life.
- Keep questions about performance to a minimum. Instead, ask what he learned on the golf course today. Ask what he did well in his round. Ask him how he thinks he can improve.
- Help him become a winner by teaching him self-discipline and responsibility for his actions.
- Stimulate your child's imagination. Show him the sounds, colors, and sights of nature.

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!

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"I am having the best time ever on the golf course. Golf is truly fun. And an exciting game! For the first time I am playing full-out on the golf course, and having fun! I listen to your Putting and Concentration CDs and am the envy of my partners when it comes to putting. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! --- SW, Amateur Golfer

"I want to personally take the time to tell you that your tapes are fantastic! I am an ex-basketball player and you have been able to take me to another level of golf. My secret for winning is now my strong mental game. Thanks. You are part of my daily life." --FP, Amateur Golfer

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