

POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

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*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly*

MENTAL GUIDE FOR JUNIOR GOLFERS

by Joan King

The U.S. Open Championship is over and Jim Furyk, our new champion has been crowned. This is the tournament that young golfers dream of winning. They see themselves playing in the tournament, visualizing their play, hearing the roar of the crowds, holding the trophy high over their heads in victory, and feeling the ecstasy of winning this most prestigious tournament that signifies your greatness for all time.

Jim Furyk's swing tells us that you can be a winner without a so-called "perfect traditional swing". Golf is about trusting the abilities you have. It is about having fun doing something you really enjoy doing.

Your mental game means learning about yourself and developing the qualities that make you a better player and a better person. How else can you be focused while playing golf if your thoughts are about how you are doing, what other people are thinking of you, about the players who are better than you are, about letting your parents down, or about not being good enough to make the team? Golf is like life, you learn from your experience. It is a process.

Your goal is to play the best you can on any given day..... then you are a winner! Even Tiger Woods can't win all the majors, but he does give every performance his maximum effort. Jack Nicklaus said he never hit a careless shot. He prepared his mind and body 100% for every shot he hit whether it was in practice or on the golf course. He gave it the best possible chance.

This month's article is a continuation of my response to a father requesting help for his 7-year old son's single digit golf game. Following are his questions. While each question could be answered in a complete article, I will attempt to answer them all in this newsletter.

1. How do you avoid burnout and symptoms of burnout?

Burnout occurs when the “game” is no longer fun and has become “work”. When it has become a struggle and the desire to play and practice is gone, it is time to do something else. For young children it is good to have more than one sport to play. When one isn’t working they can play the other one. Having more than one sport develops different muscle groups.

Juniors: When you are practicing and hitting poor shots, don’t quit. Take a few deep breaths, refocus and hit a few more until you find your tempo. Leave the range when you feel good, not when you feel bad.

Parents: Praise your child for his efforts and reward him.

2. How do you train juniors to accept defeat?

There is only one winner. There will always be better players. The true champion is the one who gives 100% effort and plays the best he can with the skills he has that day. If you give it your best you aren’t defeated, the other person just played better on that occasion.

Juniors: Know that your time to win will come if you use your mental skills of thinking positively, staying relaxed & focused on the present shot (mindfulness techniques) and using a consistent preshot routine.

Parents: Share with your child the times in your life when you didn’t succeed and how you were motivated to improve.

3. How do you change the attitude that one bad shot results in a poor round?

This is a limiting belief. One bad shot does NOT cause a poor round, UNLESS you believe that it will! Remember all the times when you recovered from a bad shot or a big number. Golf is not a game of perfection. It is a game of recovery.

Juniors: Change your attitude before you go to the golf course. Know that you can make up for lots of mistakes. Learn from your mistakes. Don’t let them control your mind and your game. Forgive yourself for making an error. Know that failure doesn’t reflect upon you as a person, but your attitude towards that mistake does.

Parents: Teach your child forgiveness. “To err is human. To forgive is Divine.” William Shakespeare

Find a golf pro who enjoys teaching children and gives them lots of hitting time and little time teaching swing mechanics. The hitting is what fun is for children. And they love to have someone watch and praise them.

4. How can you keep from letting one bad hole ruin the round?

Look at the glass as half full instead of half empty. Failure is a learning experience. Every new thing you attempted to do you failed at first. All of us learn from our experiences more than from being told what to do. No one learns anything when they are in the zone...they just enjoy the experience! Learning experiences come from failure and defeat. It is a necessary step to success.

Juniors: Write down what you learned so you won't have to learn it again. Before every tournament, review your learning experiences.

Parents: Teach your child that the best chance for success is to focus on what he **wants** to happen, not on what he **doesn't want**. This is a great lesson that will enhance all areas of their lives.

5. How do you keep from losing focus while playing in front of a gallery?

Figure out what the fear is. Are you afraid of hitting someone? Are you afraid of playing badly in front of so many people? Are you afraid of disappointing the gallery?

Golf is a game that plays with the emotions. If your thoughts are on people or things outside of you, your emotions will be magnified. Detach from the actions of the gallery and focus on your game plan. Use your imagination to see the people in the gallery as a part of nature such as sturdy oak trees.

Juniors: Golf is your game. Play for your own enjoyment. If the gallery applauds your good shots it is a bonus.

Parents: Teach your child that he is the sole judge of his performance and that other people have their own perceptions.

6. How do you keep from letting a bad start ruin the round?

A lot of golfers let the beginning holes dictate the rest of the round. After a poor start the confidence they had prior to the round has gone. The opposite is also true for some golfers. When they are playing better than they expected, they sabotage their play by thinking it is too good to be true.

It is important to stay positive in either case. If you automatically assume that things will get worse, it will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Stop thinking about score and remember to relax and have fun. Put the beginning holes behind you.

Juniors: Never give up. Remember the times when your game turned around. Be patient and stay in the moment. Relax between shots by talking with your playing partners. Stay on an even emotional level. Don't let poor holes get you discouraged or good holes get you too excited.

Parents: Life and golf are full up emotional ups and downs. Teach your child to honor his emotions by feeling them, and then releasing them in order to focus on the task at hand.

7. How do you keep from getting intimidated by a fellow competitor who is playing "lights out"?

Confidence is the best antidote to pressure and intimidation. Always believe that you can win. Don't talk yourself into losing. The more you watch your opponent's

game, the more you think about how you are going to beat him. Focusing on your opponent's play is where the intimidation starts. This only hurts your confidence. Instead of focusing on what your opponent is doing well, focus on what you do well. Stick to your game plan.

Juniors: Don't compare yourself to other golfers who you think are better than you. Act and think as if you are one of the best. Know that anything can happen in golf. Stick with your strategy.

Parents: Build your child's confidence with praise. Let him know that you support his efforts and are proud of him regardless of the results.

8. How do you come from behind?

#1. Be your own best caddy. Use positive self-talk to remind you, pump you up, encourage and support you and help you to focus your mind in the present. What you say to yourself will have a powerful effect on how you feel and perform.

#2. Bring your mind back to the task at hand. Don't focus on what has happened or get ahead of yourself planning what might happen. Focus on what you can control; the execution of the present shot.

#3. Relax your mind and body by taking deep abdominal breaths. This will help you to relax the tension in your body and focus your mind.

Juniors: Play one shot at a time. Don't let your mind wander into the past or future. Stay in the present. Don't think about what will happen if you miss a shot.

Parents: Encourage your child to always strive to do his best.

9. How do you relax under tournament pressure?

Tournament pressure is a self-imposed choice. The outcome of the tournament is in the future. You have no control over the future. The only thing you have control over is yourself and the shot you are creating in each moment.

It is impossible to be anxious and relaxed at the same time. Anxiety is caused by thinking about the "what ifs"; all the possible scenarios that could happen. Believe in yourself. Trust your ability. In your mind playback your best rounds and know that you can repeat. Remember that you love to play this game because it is so challenging.

Juniors: Choose to think about playing in the tournament as a special opportunity to challenge yourself and see how well you can play. When thoughts of failure surface, replace them by rehearsing in your mind how you will play the golf course. The more you practice mentally, the easier it will be on the golf course.

Parents: Let your child know that you are proud of him for wanting to test his abilities in a tournament. Allow him to express his feelings without judging or correcting them. Always remember that they are children, not little adults, and that they are learning. Learning golf is like learning life's lessons. It is about progress and everyone progresses at their own rate.

"Staying in the present is the key to any golfer's game; once you start thinking about a shot you just messed up or what you have to do on the next nine to catch somebody, ...you're lost." --- Paul Azinger

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!

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"Prior to listening to your "Fearless Golf" CD, my fear was totally inhibiting my natural golf swing. Now I am much more relaxed on the golf course. My focus and concentration have improved. I am swinging with confidence once again." ---DN, Amateur Golfer

"Your "Confident Putting for Lower Scores" tape has really helped me. I was having the yips. Since listening to the tape I am putting much better and not tensing up over the short putts." --BL, Amateur 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.

