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Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly



Play “In the Zone” with Joan

MENTAL PRACTICE

By Joan King

Amateurs think if they just perfect their swing, they will play well. Pro golfers know that without a good mental game, there are no good results. This month we are going to look at the thoughts that bubble up from your unconscious mind that are causing you to be distracted on the golf course.

Being “in the zone” state is the absence of mental interference. The things you say to yourself inside your head move you from the need to not make a mistake to free expression of your ability.

Golfers are paralyzed by thinking about swing mechanics on the golf course. When you take out the judgment and evaluation of what you are doing, what you have left is the awareness, which is the language of your subconscious.

You must make the effort..... but then forget *yourself* in the effort. To play at your best, you need to experience effortless power, not powerless effort. Powerless effort is when you try too hard and your muscles become tight and tense.

“Don’t play golf to relax, rather, relax to play golf.” – George Knudson, PGA Tour

WHY DO I DO THAT?

Do you get emotionally involved in your shots? Do you worry about the outcome? Train yourself to focus totally on executing your preshot routine without any fear or concern about the results.

Focus or concentration is nothing more than putting your full attention on what you want to happen. Concentration is allowing yourself to become interested, to become enraptured with what you are doing. This is the function of your preshot routine. It also helps you with focus, rhythm, consistency, and relieving tension. Moving “into the zone” is done by focusing on the process, not on the results.

“The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win.” ---Bobby Knight

Have you ever had the experience of walking from the living room to the bedroom and forgetting why you went there? Or going to the mall and forgetting where you parked your car? This is not “a senior moment” or Alzheimer’s.

When you forget what you are doing, your very active mind has unconsciously processed as many as a hundred bits of sensory information; sights, sounds, and feelings in a span of 2 to 3 seconds.

As you walk to the bedroom your mind is processing additional thoughts and feelings, and overriding the thought of why you went there. To retrieve the information you can retrace your steps, or STOP, breathe deeply to focus, ask why you are there, and wait for the answer.

If you tell yourself you are dumb or stupid, you are forming a pattern in your unconscious which then forms or reinforces that belief system. Listening to the way people talk to themselves on the golf course gives a good idea of how they think of themselves.

Did you ever approach the tee ready to tee off, but when you put the ball on the tee, you weren't able to remember how to swing the driver? Or a fearful thought surfaces about slicing the ball in the woods? Or have you ever stood over a putt and a thought bubbles up about something you are going to do later on in the day?

To avoid this type of unwanted conversation in your head, you need to train your brain to pay attention to what you *do* want. Do you pay attention to the aisle at the mall where you parked your car and the store entrance? Do you mark your shot with a tree or bunker so you will know where it went? Do you have a consistent pre-shot routine to focus your attention? (www.mastermindgolf.com, Archived Newsletter May 2005)

WHY DID I THINK THAT?

Do you have mental and physical tension caused by your thoughts? To take your game from the range to the course requires that you change any limiting beliefs you have stored in your unconscious mind. Unless you change the self-defeating thoughts you have heard or repeated, you will "shoot yourself in the foot," making mistakes due to your faulty thinking. Here are some examples:

1. You are concerned by what other people think of your performance. Most of us don't have to be concerned about playing with a LPGA or PGA tour player, but what if you are scheduled to play with your club pro, or a scratch player, or you are in the lead foursome the last day in a tournament?

Practice visualizing yourself in this situation, executing your shots perfectly. Stay loose by thinking of this situation as an opportunity to "show yourself" what a good player you are under pressure. Take deep breaths through your abdomen, change your thinking and focus on your preparation.

2. What is the conversation in your head on the first tee? When your playing partners have hit really good drives, are you judging your upcoming shot against their performance, bringing up fear thoughts of your weaknesses?

Train yourself to concentrate (www.mastermindgolf.com, Archived Newsletter October 2003) on your routine and target. Use an anchor or swing key to put yourself on automatic pilot. Breathe deeply to slow down your conscious mind for easier focus. To move into the subconscious mind to access an automatic swing, say to yourself, "alert mind, calm body."

3. Every good shot you hit is an opportunity to build your self confidence. (www.mastermindgolf.com, Archived Newsletter July 2003) Golfers tend to

gloss over good shots with statements like, "It's about time," and give the bad shots more attention with excuses, judgment, and quick fixes. Your subconscious mind doesn't differentiate between emotional praise and criticism. If you put more emotion into a missed shot, your subconscious will direct your body to deliver that result over and over.

When you hit a shot, find something good in the result instead of making excuses for not hitting it perfectly. By focusing on successful shots, you will build confidence that will help you to let go of unsuccessful shots. Train your subconscious by saying things to yourself such as, "What a great swing," or, "You are a good golfer," or "That really felt good," to reinforce a positive mindset.

"Your chances of success in any undertaking can always be measured by your belief in yourself." --Robert Collier

When you notice any limiting or negative thoughts on the golf course, write them down before you forget them. Then write the positive spin of the situation and cross off the negative belief. Repeat the new affirmation until it becomes your new belief. Remember, your mind determines what your body is going to do. Make sure all your thoughts are positive and affirming. What you can conceive, and believe.....you can achieve!

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance

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