



*Newsletter November 2006
Volume VII, Edition 11*

*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly*



Play “In the Zone” with Joan

I have been writing this monthly newsletter since 1999 to give you the most current and relevant information for understanding the mind-body connection so you can easily attain your golf goals. In the past month the computer storing my email list crashed into oblivion. As a result, I have put together a new list of the golfers who have participated in PMI mental training and your name is on that list. If you no longer wish to subscribe to this newsletter, you can unsubscribe at info@mastermindgolf.com by putting Remove in the subject line.

THE SPIRIT OF GOLF

I believe that when we play golf at its highest levels of perfection, it becomes a spiritual game transcending our humanness. When we are in sync with the laws of nature, the experience is successful, harmonious, and beautifully in line with all the other forces of energy. It is spontaneous and flowing. There is no fear, no anger, and no guilt in nature. As humans, we try to control our golf games with physical force. We need to study nature; the flexibility in the wavering trees, the solidity of the giant oaks,

the persistence of growth through storms. To tap into this power is to connect with your heart. When you feel joy, it comes from your heart, the center of your being. The heart then directs the energy through the mind to the body.

Here in Western North Carolina, Mother Nature has put on her absolute best show this autumn by covering the landscape with every imaginable color. The dried leaves crackle under our feet as we walk the golf course. The cool, crisp air enriches and stimulates our senses. We are surrounded by mountain views that look like colorful handmade quilts. These are the warm memories that will carry us through the winter until the warmth and new growth of Spring returns.

“Autumn is a second spring, when every leaf is a flower.”
–Albert Camus

As we venture into the uplifting holiday season, it is time to be introspective and change any lingering negative beliefs and emotions that could be carried over to the golf course next spring. Emotions are the most important mental ingredient in your golf game. Learning how to change your limiting beliefs and expectations that cause upsetting emotions is an important part of preparing your mental game.

What is your belief system? A common mistake made by golfers is that they make shot selections based on their best shots rather than on their usual shots. By playing within your ability, you can exceed your expectations. This is the time of year to swing at 80% for control so your balls won't be lost in the leaves off the fairways.

“Don't try shots beyond (your) ability, and don't get upset on the course.”
--Joyce Wethered, 5-time English Women's Amateur Champion

Emotions

As humans we tend to let our emotions get in the way of making good decisions under pressure. Good results come from good decisions. Good decisions come from when you are in a good state. Thoughts are powerful things and produce an emotional charge. When you allow your thoughts and therefore your emotions, to run out of control, you sabotage your performance. An example we are all familiar with is; when you miss a 6-foot putt for a birdie and then miss the “gimme” putt coming back because you were emotionally engaged.

The way you perceive what happens to you is a major factor in your success. The key to hitting good shots is developing consistent patterns of

positive thought in the off-season so they will be entrenched in your mind for automatic use when you are under pressure on the golf course.

We get angry most of the time because things don't go the way we want. We feel afraid that we have lost control of the situation and feel unworthy. However, to regain control, there is always another way to look at a situation and react to it.

You hit a shot over a greenside bunker to a hole cut in the front of a green. It falls short and imbeds under the lip of the bunker. As your emotions bubble up, remember why you love the game of golf. It is a game where there is one-half inch between perfection and disaster. Do you only love it when the half inch works in your favor? If so, you will be frustrated and angry often on the golf course. By changing your attitude you will stay in an even emotional state.

An Attitude of Gratitude

The first American Thanksgiving was held in Virginia on December 4, 1619. It had long been a traditional holiday in much of Europe giving thanks for successful harvests. The tradition was brought to North America by early settlers to give thanks at the end of the harvest season.

In the middle of the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that Thanksgiving was to be a national day of celebration on the last Thursday in November 1863.

As the golf season takes a back seat to the holiday season, it is time to be especially thankful for any additional blessings that come into your life.

Thanksgiving is an annual one-day celebration of being thankful for what one has. Change your attitude from blame, frustration and the things you can't control to acceptance and gratitude for what you already have. Staying in the NOW and being grateful will move you closer to the flow state or zone state where you will perform at your maximum ability.

Gratitude is an emotion. Research has shown that feelings of gratitude can be beneficial to emotional well-being. Life events have little influence on people who are grateful in general. Without the knowledge of what has benefited us, we will not feel gratitude. The more grateful you are, the more you will attract things to be grateful for.

The best way to change your attitude is by writing down every day all the things in your life you are grateful for. Add new things each day. Using this "glass half full" axiom will keep you in a positive, uplifting "good"

state where you are relaxed and accepting, and not trying to “fix” what you perceive to be wrong.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is also an essential part of creating self-esteem to keep you in a “good” state. It is necessary to close the door on past “bad” feelings that you could carry into the present to sabotage your performance. When you don’t forgive, you have the unfinished business of your past hanging around in your mind, body and energy field. And this negative energy attracts similar mistakes until you muster the courage to forgive and change your life. So the sooner you learn and apply the skills of forgiveness, the easier it will be to focus in the NOW.

*“Golf, like life, must be played in the present
—you cannot change the past or control the future.”*
--Dean Reinmuth

While we mostly think of forgiveness in regard to what we perceive other people have done to us, the ultimate forgiveness is to yourself. You build confidence by speaking kindly to yourself. When you let go of self-criticism, judgment and expectation, your attention will be focused in the present moment. In Zen, “right action” is the capacity to observe what is happening and to act appropriately without being distracted by self-centered thoughts.

Our thoughts form the basis of the world we experience. We see the world not as it is, but as we are. When the main focus of our thinking is on what's wrong and trying to fix it, we're telling our eyes and ears to only take in what is wrong, what doesn't work, or problems. Forgiveness is unconditional love in action.

*“Men are disturbed not by things,
but by the view which they take of them”.*
--Epictetus

Forgiveness is about accepting your humanity. As humans we learn from our own experience more than from what others tell us to do. Every time you are aware of being judgmental or critical, let that be a signal to get to know yourself better. Self-criticism is a learned habit pattern. Some believe that we have to criticize ourselves to improve. Just the opposite is true. Judging ourselves only strengthens the habit pattern and keeps the focus off playing the game.

The truth is that golf, like life has its ups and downs, victories and adverse circumstances. The person that deals with these best will win out.

You must believe that every missed shot, every victory lost is an opportunity for you to have a beneficial experience to learn how to improve. When you are playing in the zone state, you will be so enamored by the wonderful feeling that there is nothing to be learned, just enjoyed. All other times are opportunities to learn a lesson, and to forget the loss.

*“If you strike the ball well, but manage your game poorly,
you will rarely win.
If you manage yourself well and hit the ball poorly,
you can win many times.”*
– Jack Nicklaus

Expectations

When we don't fulfill our expectations, our internal dialogue tells us we “should have” or “could have” played better, which sets us up for the emotions of frustration and guilt. When your golf game doesn't meet your expectations, be aware of your emotions and the way your physical body feels.

Expectations are limiting, controlling and rigid. Letting go of expectations is creative, fun and limitless.

Letting go of expectations of scoring to your handicap, or expecting a low scoring back nine after shooting your career round on the front nine are examples of mental mistakes. If you didn't have any expectations about what you are going to do, you wouldn't have any reason to get disappointed or upset, and could easily maintain your emotional equilibrium and focus.

To maintain an inner sense of well-being, strive to do your best on each shot because you *enjoy* doing it, as opposed to a belief system of expectations telling you that you must play in a certain way to be good enough.

*“Each of us at any time and space is doing the very best
we can with what we have.”*
-- Louise L. Hay

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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.