

Positive Mental Imagery



Newsletter March 2000, Vol. 1, Edition 4

*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly
With Mental Coaching*

Dear Golf Enthusiast,

PMI is pleased to provide this free electronic newsletter, ***Mental Coaching for Golf*** to give you information for balancing your mind-body-spirit so you can play golf effortlessly, free from distractions, trusting your swing, confident, focused, and enjoying the game more!

Thanks for subscribing. With your subscription you will receive new tips and insightful information at the beginning of each month to help you develop a winner's mentality for your golf game by balancing your mental, physical and spiritual bodies. In the last two issues we have written about setting your goals for Y2K, and how to balance your physical body with the necessary nutrition for consistent energy. This month's newsletter is about the emotional and mental arousal level needed for consistent, high performance on the golf course.

The average golfer leads a hectic life during the week and is unaware that he brings this stress with him to the golf course on the weekends. Different sports require different physical and mental combinations to maximize the player's skills. Unlike football, swimming, weightlifting, or running, golf is not a high arousal/excitement sport.

Most people believe that you have to become "psyched up" to win. And the more desire and intense the level of arousal, the better they believe they will perform. There is certainly a time and place to be aggressive in every sport, but golf is a game that demands that your body be relaxed and your mind alert in order to achieve high performance.

This production of intense energy, tension, and power for aggression is caused by the output of adrenaline. The release of adrenaline produces higher blood pressure, constriction of blood vessels, increased blood flow to the muscles,

and increased blood sugar levels. These are the same physiological reactions that occur when we are afraid. Certainly not an ideal state for playing golf.

Poor performance can be caused by either being too aroused or not aroused enough.

High Arousal Level:

If you are too aroused your muscular tension will increase. Also, your mind will be more active which will make it harder to concentrate and visualize.

Indications that you are at too high an arousal level would be:

distractions such as thinking someone is rushing you,

worrying about your score,

feeling tense and anxious over your shot.

When you are over-aroused, you lose the skills you have practiced, your balance, timing and tempo are off, and you revert to power and aggression to force the win. It is impossible to be relaxed and anxious at the same time!

When you get anxious or angry you make mental and physical mistakes. As you get more angry and frustrated, you make more mistakes and then continue in a self-defeating cycle.

Low Arousal Level:

There are times when you are not enthused about playing golf. If you aren't motivated to play for whatever reason, it would be in your best interest to do something else that you would enjoy doing that day. If you are determined to play, motivate yourself by setting some positive goals to accomplish while you are playing.

Another way that you can defeat yourself through a low arousal state is when you become complacent in a match. For example, you are four holes up with five to play. Thinking that you have already won, you relax. Becoming distracted and lowering your arousal level, which got you to this point, you lose your focus and lose the match.

When you are on the tee, or hitting long irons or woods you can be slightly more aroused than when you are playing scoring shots around the green. As you move down the fairway your task becomes more complex as your target becomes smaller. Instead of hitting the ball into a 25-yard wide fairway, the task now is to put the ball into a four and 1/4 inch hole. This requires a lower level of arousal.

Are you the type of person who is in a hurry to hit his shot, in a hurry to finish the round, impatient with the slow pace of play, who is very competitive, and who gets annoyed with he misses a shot? If so, you probably have a lot of company on the golf course. Studies have shown that 75% of large urban populations and 50% of the general population are Type A personalities. Type A personalities try to accomplish *more and more in less and less time*. If you

are this type of person, you might find it more difficult to manage your level of arousal than a calm person who can relax easily.

When your level of arousal increases, it is important for you to have an awareness of the mental, emotional and physiological changes that are keeping you from playing well. Here are the actions you can take to counter these changes.

Physical Changes:

Your heart beats faster. Your blood pressure rises. You perspire more. You feel tension in your neck, shoulders, arms, hands or other places.

Breathe deeply to relax. Fill up your diaphragm and abdomen so that your stomach protrudes on the inhale and deflates on the exhale. Inhale to the count of 4, hold the breath for the count of four and exhale twice as long as you inhale. As you exhale slowly, say to yourself, Relax.....

Stretch tight muscles. Tighten the muscles that feel tense, hold the tension for a few seconds, and then slowly release the tension and say to yourself, Relax.....

Swing a club to release tension. Swing until you have reestablished your swing tempo and rhythm.

Get out of the cart and walk. Take turns walking every other hole with your cart partner. Walking to your ball can slow down your mind, relax your body, and put you back into your rhythm.

Mental Changes:

You begin to worry about your score, about how you are playing, about letting your team down, or losing the match. You begin to think about the future, about the outcome of your game. You are using valuable energy trying to control the situation.

Stay in the Present: Bring your focus back to the process of hitting each shot with your undivided attention. Be decisive. Give your full intention to what you want to create. Staying in the process means focusing on your pre-shot routine, visualizing, and feeling your rhythm and tempo.

Let Go of Expectations: The following expectations can be situations that influence your thinking and raise your arousal level on the golf course:

I hit the ball poorly (or well) on the range.

I'm playing with players better than I am.

The course is very difficult.

I can't get over the water on that hole.

The greens are very hard and fast.

Change Negative Thoughts: Listen to the self-talk inside your head and change critical, judgmental, outcome oriented thoughts to positive, empowering, constructive thoughts about your round.

Stick with your game plan. Prepare your mind fully so you have no indecision.

Summary

Choose to believe that you can score well even if you don't have your "A game". Winners make the best of what they have available on any given day. Decide to give the game your best effort and you are a winner.

When a golfer is playing at a high level of performance, his mind and heart are in sync (entrained). Remember what you love about playing this game. Remember the good feeling inside your heart when you are playing "out of your mind". Your golf swing is powerful, yet easy and effortless, and you are having FUN in the search (the process) for The Holy Grail.....the perfect golf shot.

"You don't get to control any outcome, only every choice you make along the way." --Stephen C. Paul

Joan A . King, C.Ht., PNLP
Positive Mental Imagery
<http://www.mastermindgolf.com/>
info@mastermindgolf.com

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!

PMI © 2000 - All Rights Reserved