

POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

*Newsletter May 2002
Vol. III, Edition 5*

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

SELF-TALK by Joan King

We all know that we can, and do respond to suggestions from other people. Sometimes suggestions are positive and at other times, they can be negative. Suggestions by others are known as external stimulants.

There is another way in which we all tend to respond to suggestions, known as internal stimulants. Internal stimulants take place through self-talk. Everyone uses self-talk. We have positive as well as negative self-talk. During a round of golf course you will give yourself hundreds if not thousands of suggestions.

The human mind is only capable of holding one thought at a time. This is called the Dominant Response. This means that the most current thought on your mind before you swing the club will dictate your performance on that shot. If you are thinking "failure" you will get "failure" feedback in the form of a missed shot.

Scott Hamilton, the famous ice skater says that when an athlete is under pressure, they perform 30% better or worse depending upon their self-talk. Self-talk is anything that you say to yourself in words or pictures outloud or on the inner conscious levels. This means you can raise your performance level 60% higher than when you talking negatively.

The Expectancy Theory states that you don't always get what you want, or what you work for, but you will get what you expect. If you expect to miss a shot, you will.

On the golf course I have heard (expectation) sayings such as:

"It looks like it is going to be that kind of a (bad) day".

"When I play, I never know who is going to show up".

"I wish I was starting on a par 5 instead of a par 3".

"I hate the sand".

"This is my day for bad lies".

"I never play well in the wind".

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

What if?

Do you let your mind wander to what might happen and play the mental game of “What if” in your mind? Many golfers do not realize how often they sabotage their golf games with negative self-talk suggestions.

What if I don't get off to a good start on the first hole? **What if** I hit my drive out of bounds on the first hole? **What if** I hit the second ball out of bounds? **What if** I get angry/frustrated/embarrassed and miss the next shot? **What if** I get scared about having “lost my swing”? **What if** I swing hard to try and make up, and dub my approach shot into the water? **What if** I finally get on the green and three-putt?

Change your negative self-talk from the **“What if”** scenarios to **“Act as if”** suggestions. Act as if it is impossible to fail. Act as if you have confidence. Act as if you know how to play like a champion. Act as if you are playing like a pro. Act as if you like challenges. Act as if there is nothing that can keep you from obtaining your goals. Act as if you love everything about the game of golf.

“To become a champion, you must first look and act like a champion.”

~ Muhammad Ali

To think positively you must eliminate:

- Thoughts that limit you or other people. Don't place limits on your ability. Stretch your mind to see yourself performing at your peak performance levels. Set your goals higher.
- Thoughts that label you or anyone else. Don't compare yourself with others. You will always meet someone who plays better, or hits it straighter or longer, or is a better chipper, putter, etc. on a given day. Compete only with yourself against the golf course.
- Thoughts that judge or condemn you or someone else. Don't program your mind with judgements or negative ideas. Praise is the best way to program your unconscious mind.

We often spend so much time coping with the problems we have created in a round of golf that we forget why we are even playing golf in the first place. The result is that we have a distorted and perhaps inaccurate view of what's really important to us.

1. Start listening to the voices inside your head. Make a decision to replace negative self-talk with positive self-talk. World class golfers rarely put themselves down. Their mental training includes changing negative thoughts into saying “I can”, “I will”, “I can recover”, “thank you”. They avoid the failure statements of “I can't”, “if only”, “I could have”, “I hope”, “It's a hard shot”, “It's a tough hole”. They repeat the positive messages until they are wired into their brains, body and spirit and have become a conditioned response.
2. Don't agree mentally when someone makes a negative statement. Breathe to relax your mind. Ignore the comment or turn it around and tell yourself the opposite positive message inside your head.

3. Program your self-talk towards what you want instead of *away from* what you don't want. If you tell yourself not to miss another shot, your subconscious mind will reinforce the missed shot. *What you resist, persists.* This is called negative hypnotic programming. Focus your dominant thought on what you do want.

Once you have the awareness that you create your internal world, you will realize that you can change it into productive thoughts. Your body learns what it is told to do. Learn to tell it what you want, not what you don't want. Control of the body is not accomplished by force. Control is accomplished by becoming relaxed, and imaging and visualizing what you intend to change.

If you do not begin to control and use your own brain, then someone else will either control your mind for you, or worst yet, you just have to leave your mental training to chance. You need to control your own self-talk and also filter out what you hear from others around you including your friends, family and coach. The process to control your brain is:

1. Affirmation Card: Write down all your strengths in your golf game on a 3X5 card. Before you go to the first tee, read the card outloud to yourself.
2. Thought Stoppage: Recognize as soon as possible when you are saying failure suggestions either outloud or inside your mind. When you do, visualize a red STOP sign coming closer and closer to you and yell "STOP" in your inner mind. This will cause your mind to become blank and change your state.
3. Relax your mind by breathing deeply. This will get you back into control.
4. Replace the failure thought with a positive affirming statement. It is very important to replace the failure thought or it will come up again. See, feel and experience the shot and the swing that you know you have successfully practiced and performed.

Mind Filters:

An example of a filter would be whether you view the glass half empty or half full. On his home course, a golfer might see the fairway as wide open with no obstacles, while a person playing it for the first time might see deep rough, bunkers, trees, etc. as obstacles to overcome.

"We perceive the world not as it is, but as we are."

Another example would be how two different people might decide on their strategy to play the golf course. Lets suppose that Jack and Don are playing a match. Jack's strategy is to par every hole and let the birdies come. His plan is to play his own game as well as he can. This is what is called a "toward" strategy. Don on the other hand, is motivated by failure and will do everything in his power to avoid losing. He is motivated by bad shots and big scores and has an "away from" strategy, to get away from the failure.

The difference in the two strategies is that Jack has a plan to move toward his specific goal of playing well and winning. Don, on the other hand sometimes digs himself into a

losing game he can't recover from. When you are moving away from something you don't know what you may create.

When you change these filters, it can dramatically change how you approach situations, how you perceive the world and the success you will achieve. Your self-talk is what determines your confidence level and your performance. The conversation you have with yourself is the most important conversation you will ever have.

“People are disturbed not by things but by the view they take of them.”

~ Epictetus, c 200 AD

Here is an exercise to determine your self-talk conversations. Go back to the beginning of this article and notice the thoughts that you have in response to reading these ideas. Write your thoughts down as they surface. Then, for the next hour write down the self-talk that comes up as a result of your other activities. It is very important to write them down as our thoughts are so fleeting we do not remember them. After you have written down all of your thoughts and conversations you had with yourself, go back over the list and determine how many were demeaning and how many were self-empowering. Determine how many times you tell yourself you can't do something and how many times that you can.

It is time to let go of the negative thoughts that arise from your past experiences. It is time to let go of your fears of the future. Your negative thoughts can create negative pictures resulting in negative emotions. When you tell yourself you can't do something, or expect something awful to happen, the doubt is created. Train your brain to use positive words and thoughts. When you hear yourself or others using these “failure” words and thoughts, think of it as an error to be corrected. Choose not to feel guilty. Set mental boundaries. It is not possible to build on a negative. Begin to build your ladder of success with positive, empowering thoughts of yourself and your world. On the golf course, hire yourself as the world's best caddy. In your life, be your own best friend.

“The trouble with all of us, who grumble over the game and thus spoil an otherwise pleasant afternoon with congenial friends, is that we do not understand the game, nor ourselves. In this we can take a number of lessons from the poorer player who without fail has fun. For no matter how good we may be, if we should fancy that we have mastered golf to the extent that we can go out day after day and play as we please, then we are greater fools than ought to be left at large”.

~ Bobby Jones

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"I was so pleased when I found your CDs on the internet. They were just what I was looking for. I have used all of them and have not been disappointed. My confidence has improved tremendously and my scores have gone down". --Joe Sargeant

"Thank you for your monthly newsletter. I look forward to receiving it. It has really helped me to understand my mental game and become more confident on the golf course. When I don't listen to your tapes my game suffers." --Betty Motley

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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.

