

# POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

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*Improve Your Golf Game  
Easily & Quickly*

## **FEARLESS GOLF**

BY Joan King

### HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

The summer golf season is waning and we are moving into the holiday season of giving thanks for our blessings, and bringing light and joy into our lives with the celebration of Christmas. It is a time of remembering what is important and appreciating its value. The holiday season is a good time to stand back and observe your life and be grateful for all the good things you have created so far.

Life is full of choices. On the golf course we have a multitude of choices as every golf shot is different. Most people are afraid of making the wrong choice. Some people become frozen, afraid to choose. Risk takers make a choice knowing that it can be the difference between success and failure, but that it will be a new and exciting learning experience.

Golf is not a sport where there is a fear for your physical safety, even though some golfers have sustained injuries. But almost all golfers experience fear due not to physical factors but to psychological factors. Psychological fear leads to tension which is the ultimate swing destroyer.

Fear is an agitated feeling aroused by an awareness of possible trouble. It is an uneasy feeling that something *may* happen contrary to your desires.

When you begin to feel the fear, your emotional state brings up situations where you have experienced those fearful sensations in the past and you find yourself in a loop that escalates the fear. Fear is a sense that we are not in control.

Fears on the golf course can be caused by:

- Negative thoughts of past shots such as topping, hitting it fat or in the water
- Generalizing about how your day is going (You 3-putt the first three greens and say, "It's going to be that kind of day!")

- Your reputation (Believing that you should score to your handicap every round.)
- Embarrassment
- Worry about the results

To overcome these fear thoughts that you have conjured up in your mind, you need to focus your strength and energy on positive and productive activities until your mind is totally occupied and you are in the moment. This is accomplished by using positive affirming self-talk and a consistent pre-shot routine.

Focus on what you want, not on what you fear.

Whatever you focus on becomes your reality.

Here are some fears that you could encounter on the golf course.

### Fear of Failure

Perfectionism is based on a belief that in order to feel okay you need to hit every shot perfectly. Golfers who have this belief describe their shots by what they did wrong. Because they can't live up to their perfectionist expectations, these golfers are primarily driven by the fear of failure. It is what motivates them. The downside is that they aren't motivated by good shots, only ones they consider inferior.

Playing in a Pro-am, the amateur participants get very nervous and worried about failure. A best ball tournament can cause the fear of not playing well and letting your partner down. Instead of being self-critical and dwelling on what isn't working, build your self-confidence by remembering times you did play well and congratulate yourself every time you do hit a good shot.

Golf is about managing imperfection. The mental game is about how to manage *yourself* around the golf course.

### Fear of success

Fear of success occurs on a more subconscious level than fear of failure. When you win, the fear of success means that people will expect you to win or you will place greater expectations on yourself to win. This creates pressure. Fear of success creates an anticipation of future negative outcomes. When you win the club championship or your flight, the pressure mounts to do it again the next year. To keep from turning it into a pressure cooker situation, turn the fear into a positive challenge to just do your best instead of focusing on winning. Focusing on the game instead of the fear will bring you a great sense of accomplishment.

### Fear of embarrassment

Beginning golfers have a fear of whiffing the ball. Low handicap golfers fear missing a short putt, or missing a short shot into the green after hitting an enormous drive. The fear of embarrassment comes up because the player perceives these shots as so simple they shouldn't ever miss them. Putting pressure on yourself to make these "simple" shots increases the fear.

### First-Tee Fear

All golfers have a degree of nervousness on the first tee. And the fear is compounded if you are playing in a tournament, before a gallery, or with better players. Even pros admit to it, but know how to overcome the fear with mental preparation. They don't swing until they have visualized the shot landing on the designated target, and trust that it will happen as they imagined it. The pro will *let* the swing happen instead of trying to *make* it happen.

### Fear of Hazards

A beginner golfer is afraid of hitting his drive into the water on the right side of the fairway. He tees off thinking "Don't slice it in the water". Unconsciously his mind pictures the ball slicing into the water, and his body responds accordingly. A more experienced golfer will notice the water and then visualize the target where he does want the ball to go, and tell himself, "Hit it down the left side of the fairway".

What do golfers do when their golf ball ends up in the sand? They don't walk into the bunker with a smile on their face looking forward to the excitement of hitting the ball out. Most people are not looking forward to the prospect, and are muttering to themselves about their bad luck, complaining about the situation.

For those brief moments, the golfer has put himself into a state that changes his feelings from good to bad, his physiology from relaxed to anxious.

Golfers are afraid of steep sand bunkers, downhill lies in the back of the bunker and "fried egg" lies. The fear is that they won't be able to get the ball out of the bunker. Instead of seeing the ball hit into the bank of the bunker and roll back down, see a slow-motion movie of the ball floating up and out of the bunker and landing on the green. Use a trigger word to enhance the movie such as "bounce" to feel the flange of the club bouncing off the sand.

### Fear of a Pressure Putt

Golfers tense up over a short putt because they think they "should" make it. Golfers miss short putts because they fear missing it. What is the length putt that you think about missing? When you think too much about the break, you make the margin for error smaller by aiming to the side of the hole instead of the center. Golfers think too much about the speed instead of smoothly accelerating through the ball. And lastly they think that they are taking too much time on this easy putt.

### HOW TO CONTROL YOUR FEAR

1. Fear is the result of remembering a past missed shot and being concerned about doing it again before it even occurs. Since you created this fear thought, you can replace it with a positive thought of what you do want. Changing the thought will change the feeling.
2. When you experience the emotion of fear, take time to take a deep breath, tell yourself to relax, and focus fully on the process of preparing to swing to your target.

It is impossible to be relaxed and anxious at the same time. When you worry or doubt you don't have any room for trust, or for positive thoughts to exist. In golf and in life, these doubts are based on your expectations of the outcome. This doubt moves in when you miss a shot, or remember a missed shot from the past that undermines your feelings of confidence or self-worth.

Everyone longs for control, or a feeling of being in control, in their lives. When you feel that you are not in control of your swing or your game, doubt creeps in which then leads to worry which leads to fear. Detach your identity from your actions and know that there will be positive and negative which will balance out. Into every life some rain must fall...just don't think it is the monsoons every time you feel a little shower. Stand back from it and let it go.

Having a good mental game means changing your thinking to accept that you cannot know everything and cannot control the outcome of your game. All golfers want to win. What they don't realize is that the more energy they put into winning, the less control they have. You can only control what is happening to you in the present moment.

You can't have two thoughts or emotions at the same time. It is your choice which to believe. Since your thoughts create your emotions, the best way to keep doubt, worry and fear from forming is to continuously use positive self-talk and affirmations. I am always re-energized when I read "The Little Engine that Could" story to my grandchildren. It is a tale about a little engine at the end of a long train of cars that had to keep the train from slipping back down the track when it was going up a steep hill. He kept repeating to himself, "I think I can, I think I can".....and he did!

What you think is what you create. Thought and emotion direct energy. Watch what you say. Wake up your mind. Watch what you think. What you think is what you create in your life. Begin to notice the words in your everyday conversation.

### ***Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!***

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To overcome your fears on the golf course, purchase the Positive Mental Imagery CD or tape, "*Fearless Golf*" directly at [www.pmi4.com/cart](http://www.pmi4.com/cart) . As you listen to this tape repeatedly you will transform the voice of past fears and self-doubt on the golf course into positive, empowering self-talk for more confident and relaxed rounds.

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*"I have been using "Fearless Golf" for several weeks and I feel much*

*more confident about my game.” ---SW, amateur senior golfer*

*“Since my session with Joan my putting has improved greatly. Also, I am able to stay focused throughout the round of golf.”---* GC, Golf Professional

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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](mailto:info@mastermindgolf.com) Also, please share with us how this website information has helped you improve your performance.

