

POSITIVE MENTAL IMAGERY

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*Improve Your Golf Game
Easily & Quickly*

CONTROL

by Joan King

This month's newsletter will continue with the series about the mental parts of the game where golfers most want to improve. The four C's are: confidence, consistency, control, and concentration. The July newsletter gave suggestions for improving your confidence, August's issue gave suggestions for becoming more consistent, and this month's topic is about maintaining control of yourself and your golf game on the golf course.

With all of its challenges, golf is like taking a roller coaster ride. As you get into your seat you are full of anticipation. You trust yourself that it will be a fun ride. You start off not knowing what is going to come. Going down the first hill it feels a little scary. You hang on to the railing of the seat tightly. Your breathing increases and you begin to feel uncomfortable. There is no going back. You are thrust back into your seat as the ride starts to go up. At the top of the hill it feels motionless before the cars are hurled downward. Your perception decides how you will experience the ride. You let out a scream and release the tension. You begin to relax and enjoy the ride. Each turn takes you in a different direction. Breathing deeply you let go of the tension and tightness in your body. You begin to enjoy the ride wherever it takes you.

Playing at your peak performance levels means managing your thoughts and emotions to your best advantage. While most people think these are two separate entities, they are entwined. In order to have control over your swing and your game you need to have control of your thoughts and feelings.

It's not your feelings that cause you problems. It's the undisciplined decisions that you make as a result of focusing on the feelings.

How do you control your feelings? Someone once said that to try and control your emotions is like trying to tell your heart to stop and your body to still function.

How do you control your thoughts? You are the only thinker in your mind. It is up to you to choose what you want to think.

What causes you emotional problems on the golf course?

- People are too slow
- People are rushing me
- People are talking too much
- Physical problems
- My husband keeps telling me what to do
- Out of bounds shots
- Shots hit into water hazards
- Buried lies
- Missed shots
- Someone in your group is cheating

A lot of golfers express the feelings of frustration, embarrassment, and humiliation experienced on the golf course by getting angry. Most of the time we get angry because things don't go our way. We feel afraid that we have lost control of the situation and feel unworthy. Holding on to anger will sabotage your performance. Know that there is always another way to look at a situation. Change your thoughts and you will change your emotions.

It is my belief that it is easier to gain control by thinking through your beliefs, attitudes and possible situations before you encounter them (again) on the golf course, so you can then train your brain and body to react positively.

Let's look at some situations where you can change your limiting beliefs for greater control to maintain calm and focus on the golf course.

Do you choose to be disciplined enough to control your game by:

- Letting go of missed shots?
- Not judging your performance?
- Giving every shot your full attention and intention?
- Developing and using a consistent preparation routine?
- Playing each shot as if it is the only shot you will hit?
- Believing that you can get the ball up and down around the green?
- Constantly imagining the perfect tempo of each shot?
- Affirming your confidence in yourself and your abilities?
- Using positive body language to reinforce your success?
- Being aware of negative emotions and changing your thoughts?
- Giving every size putt the same amount of time and attention?
- Sticking with your confident attitude no matter what the results are?

Now let's look at some specific areas where golfers often lose control of their emotions and then transfer that anxiety and tension to the swing.

1. How can I deal with a bad shot or mental error?

Most players react with anger. Anger is only a temporary motivator. It is best to release the anger quickly and then refocus on the next shot. Most champions stay calm in the face of adversity, forget about the mistake and move on. Use your energy to prepare for the next shot instead of analyzing the error, which is now in the past.

2. How can I regain control after getting a big number on a hole?

Some players seem to fall apart after making a large score on a hole due to poor course management, not playing a percentage shot, tension due to lack of confidence, or a swing flaw. Frustration causes players to try and make up for the big number by swinging harder, not preparing thoroughly, and not calming down enough to make good decisions. This is the time to get centered and focused within for good emotional control. Take deep, calming abdominal breaths to slow down your mind and body.

3. How can I control my emotions?

Your emotions are a natural expression as a human being. Through your life's experience you have learned to react with certain emotions to certain situations. Most everyone reacts to a hole-in-one with exuberant excitement and joyous body movements. While this is a good feeling emotion, it isn't necessarily good to be this excited because it makes the next swing more difficult. In the same way you release anger after a missed shot, you need to release the thoughts of excitement surrounding this perfect shot. Know that your thoughts control your emotions and you can control your emotions at any time by changing your perception. So instead of expecting your hole-in-one to produce a low score, calm down and stay focused on resuming your strategy.

4. How can I control my thoughts on the golf course?

If you listen to what golfers say to themselves, it becomes apparent that the self-talk usually is not helpful or affirming. Criticizing and judging yourself causes a mental or emotional downslide as your reactions can become easily magnified and erode your self-confidence.. When you continue to replay mistakes and create doubt in yourself, you work yourself into greater emotional turmoil. Talk to yourself as if you were your best friend, nurturing, affirming yourself as a winner. Make your internal voice pleasing, deep, slow, and loving.

The only thing you can control is yourself. Do not give any mental or emotional energy to what you cannot control. This includes the condition of the golf course, the weather conditions, your playing partners' behavior or their scores. Spend your energy on preparing for your shot, sticking to your game plan, your own awareness and changing negative perceptions to positive thoughts.

Tips for having control of your game:

1. Never give up.
2. Make a plan and stick to it.
3. Let go of expectations.
4. Give yourself permission to make mistakes.
5. After a mistake, slow down and breathe deeply.
6. Know your skill level and play percentage shots.
7. Be flexible. Golf is full of surprises.
8. Use positive self-talk throughout the round.
9. Use the same preshot routine on every shot.
10. Maintain your arousal level.
11. Give up judgment and analysis on the course.
12. Play from your heart.
13. Play for your own enjoyment.

One of the keys to playing in the zone is having control of your thoughts and emotions. To play well in a tournament or in a match where you are betting against your friends, you need to have control of your emotions. The pressure of the situation has to do with your perception. You can decide to thrive on the pressure (being in the hunt) or become nervous and anxious (fearful of the results). It all depends on your internal dialogue. Choose to shift your thoughts to creating a good shot or putt. Focus your attention on the target and visualize the shot you want to hit.

"I have done my best."
~Albert Einstein

That is about all the philosophy of living one needs.

Entrain Your Heart & Brain for Peak Performance!

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"I can't tell you how much I have enjoyed your articles. My son has just come in second in the 6-8 year-old category at the World Junior Golf Championships in San Diego. He was the favorite golfer and person of all the parents who were there. That is a victory worth more than coming in

first in any tournament..... to be loved and admired even by your opponents. All this has been possible with your assistance and the excellent advice. Thanks very much for your assistance. I look forward to your upcoming newsletters.” ---VB

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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.