

Golf is Not a Game of Perfect

People by and large become what they think about themselves.

Winners and losers are self-determined, but only the winners are willing to admit it.

Bobby Jones excerpt from *Down the Fairway* "One bit of earnest admonition. Stewart Maiden maintains that he cannot think of any of these details, or of any other details, during the execution of a shot---that is, if the shot is to come off. He adds that he does not believe anybody else can think of these or any other details and perform a successful shot. I find this to be the case with my own play."

The brain tries to be an accommodating mechanism. It will try to send the ball in the direction of the last thing you look at or think about.

Bobby Locke quote "Why would I want to see it if I miss it."

A golfer chokes when he lets anger, doubt, fear, or some other extraneous factor distract him before a shot. Quite often under pressure, a distracting doubt or fear turns on the conscious mind. The golfer stops trusting his swing. He starts going through a checklist of errors to avoid. He gets tight and careful. When he's tight and careful, his body must work against gravity, rhythm and flow. His muscles get spastic, his feet get stiff, and he loses his natural grace and tempo. He hits a bad shot relative to his ability. That's what choking is.

I don't advise people to commit their lives completely and exclusively to golf. That would be like deciding to eat only cookies. It would be bad nutrition. And it would soon spoil your taste for cookies.

The happiest people have a sense of commitment in everything they do, whether it's playing golf, running a restaurant or selling hardware. They approach their undertakings with passion.

Free will is a golfer's greatest source of strength and power. Choosing how to think is a crucial decision.

There is no such thing as a golfer playing over his head. A hot streak is simply a glimpse of a golfer's true potential.

Confidence is crucial to good golf. Confidence is simply the aggregate of the thoughts you have about yourself.

Golfer's need selective memories, retaining the memory of great shots and forgetting bad ones. Selective memory helps a golfer grow in confidence as he gains experience and skill.

On the first tee, a golfer must expect only two things of himself: to have fun, and to focus his mind properly on every shot.

Courage is a necessary quality in all champions. But an athlete cannot be courageous without first being afraid.

Golf is a Game of Confidence

As long as the rules reward getting a ball in a hole in the fewest strokes, golf will be about playing well with the wedges and the putter.

The disease called the yips doesn't exist, except in the mind.

It was clear the Byron had, through experience and some helpful teachers, picked up virtually all of the fundamentals of golf psychology that I teach today. He had learned to trust his swing and not to think about mechanics as he played. He had learned to visualize his shots. He had learned the importance of his short game; he had learned to rely on feel around the greens. He had learned to accept the results of any shot and let go of anger and frustration. He had learned to stay in the present and not to worry about outcomes.

All great athletes, I think, have had to go through a period of fire, a period of despondency and near despair. The fire is like the smelting process that burns ore and turns into precious metal. Without the fire, the process cannot happen.

A conservative strategy joined to a cocky swing produces low scores. Reckless boldness joined to a doubtful swing is a formula for disaster.

Every individual goes through periods when he does a lot of the right things—practicing efficiently, thinking well—and gets no immediate tangible results. This is the point at which successful people bring to bear the powers of faith, patience, persistence, and will. Faith is the ability to believe without any tangible evidence.

It's not very important where you've been. Life is about where you're going.

The difference between a dream and a fantasy is commitment.

Which comes first, confidence or winning? The implication in some minds is that you can't win without confidence, and you can't get confidence until you've won. But if that were the case, no one would ever win for the first time. The fact is that the confidence required to win can be learned.

Harvey Penick's Little Red Book

Lessons are not to take the place of practice, but to make practice worthwhile.

Take Dead Aim. Take dead aim at a spot on the fairway or on the green, refuse to allow any negative thought to enter your head, and swing away.

Chuck Cook suggests the swing the bucket theory. If you tell your muscles to spill water to the left at the finish, you will hit a draw. If you spill to the right, you will hit a fade.

The motion you make lopping off dandelions with your weed cutter is the perfect action of swinging a golf club through the hitting area. Furthermore it is heavy and builds golf muscles.

Before I take a student onto the range, I like to go to the clubhouse for a cup of coffee and a chat. Usually students are nervous. I want to put them at ease. I want to gain their confidence. I ask about their game, how often they play or practice, what their goals are. I tell them, "Any mistakes that are made out there today are mine, not yours." When I hear one of my students griping about how his clubs are no good, I like to say, "Hey, your swings are my fault first of all, your fault second and the club maybe third." I'll ask the new student if he or she would rather hit woods or irons, are there any aches or pains, how is life going. I want to understand my students and put them at ease with me. This takes about twenty minutes, and it gets us off on the right foot.

I learn teaching from teachers. I learn golf from golfers. I learn winning from coaches

With an uphill lie, you are going to pull the ball. Go ahead and make allowance for it. Shorten your uphill leg and straighten the other, so that your hips are level. You will naturally play the ball back in your stance, but don't let your weight shift back with it. On a downhill lie, straighten your downhill leg and flex the uphill leg, again to level the hips. Play the ball toward your right foot. Sole your club on the ground and the manufacturer will tell you about where it belongs when the face is square.

The Golfer's Mind

There is no such thing as muscle memory. Your muscles have no capacity to remember anything. Memory resides in your head. Therefore, no matter how long you practice a golf swing, no matter how skilled you become at it, your muscles alone can't remember it and execute it when the need arises on the golf course. Your muscles and the rest of your body are controlled by your mind. Unless your mind is functioning well when you play golf, your muscles are going to flounder.

I want players to understand that while it's important to have dreams and goals in golf, the pleasure comes from chasing those dreams more than it does from catching them. A life spent chasing dreams is a life well spent. The dreamer doesn't get critical or judgmental about himself. He knows that in the end, things will turn out well.

The inability to forget is infinitely more devastating than the inability to remember-Mark Twain

Imagine a man lost in a desert. He's been without water for days. He's hot, he's thirsty, he's staggering. Suddenly, on the horizon, he sees palm trees and vegetation—an oasis. He understands that the oasis contains the water that can save his life. He turns toward it. His eyes lock onto those palm trees on the horizon. Getting there consumes his entire consciousness. He walks steadily toward it. He pays no attention to rocks or dunes or other obstacles. He thinks only of the oasis. That's the way a golfer should feel about his target. When a player is properly into his target, it's as if there were a laser beam linking his mind and the spot where he wants the ball to go. Nothing else exists for him. He's very single minded.

There's a wide individual variation in the way players perceive targets. Some people tell me they envision a dotted line running from their ball to the hole. Some people see a railroad track, a chute, or a path burned into the green. I've had players tell me they see a trajectory rather than a target. Others see the ball popping out of the hole and running backward to their clubs. The only necessity is that what you see is relevant to where you want the ball to go.

Every shot you make on the golf course creates a new hole. The object of the game is to get the ball from the point where it rests into the hole you're playing in the fewest strokes possible. It doesn't matter how the ball got to the spot where it's resting.

Anger is a choice. It's not caused by anyone else. Anger is the way you choose to respond to an irritating event.

Thorough preparation breeds confidence.

A complete game plan anticipates all the contingencies that can arise in a round of golf.

Balance Beam Analogy- Lay it on the floor and people can walk from one to the other with no problems. They trust their ability to walk a straight line. But put the beam fifteen feet in the air and ask people to walk it. They start

being very careful about where they place their feet. They forget to trust the fact that they know how to walk a straight line. They start thinking about how they're going to place one foot in front of the other.

I'm not saying that there's no place and no time in golf for conscious thought, self-criticism, and analysis. I am saying that the place is the practice range and the time is well before competition.

You must realize that fear on the golf course is caused by an excessive concern about the opinions of others.

The worst thing that can happen to you on a golf course is a blow to your ego. That's nothing to be afraid of. Throw away fear and play fearless golf, and your scores will drop.

Some players are too concerned with demonstrating to others that they're committed. They are certain to be among the first on the range and the last to leave. They may spend a lot of that time schmoozing with other players. They may spend a lot of it mindlessly beating balls. But the media and the galleries think they're committed to improvement. They're not. They're committed to projecting an image.

It's more important to be decisive than to be correct.

Commit yourself to a program of improvement and honor your commitment.

To succeed, you must have an unshakeable belief that if you do the right things, wonderful stuff is going to happen to you. You can't control when.

You can't dictate when success occurs.

Expect good things to happen. Just don't expect them right now.

Success comes to the person who does the right things repeatedly and patiently.

Don't try harder. Try your best.

Take pride in the way you bounce back from setbacks.

How would you respond to a setback if God had already told you that you were going to play the round of your life, or win the tournament, or win three tournaments this season? If you hit a drive out of bounds on the first hole, you'd think, "Well, that's interesting. I guess I'm going to make a lot of birdies the rest of the way in." If you played the first nine holes of the tournament four over par, or four over your handicap, you wouldn't get upset. You'd just assume that you were going to get very hot very soon. And if you missed a couple of cuts in a row, you'd think that the experience was going to make your three victories that much sweeter.

The Golf of Your Dreams

Somehow, the teaching of the golf swing has supplanted the teaching of golf. It's as if a football coach taught his quarterbacks to throw perfect spirals, but not to pick out receivers, analyze defenses, and pass for touchdowns.

If you have desire, commitment, and persistence, you have the prerequisites for improved golf. You can be a scratch player or close enough to it that you will have a marvelous time seeing how good you can get.

Millions of people want to play a round of golf once or twice a month. They want to enjoy the fresh air, the sunshine, and the company. They don't want to practice or take lessons, and they may have valid reasons. Perhaps young children demand most of their time and energy. Perhaps their careers demand seventy hours a week. They may just not care very much how well they play golf. That's fine, as long as they understand the limitations they place on themselves, and admit they don't want to play as well as they can, at least not now. If this makes them happy, they're welcome to play their way.

I have a friend who does business in Russia. He decided that his work would be more successful if he spoke Russian, so he took Russian language courses and worked with tutors. For several years, he carried index cards in his jacket pocket with Russian words written on one side and the English equivalents on the other. Whenever he had a few minutes, he'd pull out the cards and study them. After a long while and a lot of practice, he learned to speak pretty good Russian. But when he meets people who discover that he speaks Russian, the most frequent response he hears is, "You must have an ear for languages. I don't. I have a tin ear." People would rather believe in tin ears than acknowledge that the reason they don't speak Russian is that they don't put in the hours of study and practice.

"Don't let the things you can't do stand in the way of the things you can do."---John Wooden

A golfer who wants to perfect his swing before addressing his short game is trying to turn golf into a game of perfection, which it can never be. He doesn't really like golf as it is—a game of imperfect swings redeemed by good chips, pitches, and putts. He will lie on his deathbed someday, wondering when his swing is finally going to come around.

First, you have to admit to yourself that you want to be good at golf and that you have the talent to play well. Second, you must commit yourself to a process that will, over time, improve your game. You will need patience. You will need perseverance. But you can improve. I can guarantee that if you fall in love with the process of improvement, you'll find out how good you can get.

Suppose you're a lawyer, and a good one. You didn't start out that way. You started out, in fact, when you were a child and learned to read and write. Slowly, you assembled the skills a lawyer needs. In high school, perhaps, you were on the debate team and learned to present an oral argument. In college, you picked up research skills and people skills. In law school, you took all those fundamental skills and added specialized legal training. Finally, having passed the bar, you entered a firm and worked under a partner as an associate, observing how he or she conducted business. You developed a firm belief that you could be a successful lawyer, which helped see you through all the tedious nights of study. And though you did all the work yourself, all along the way you had mentors who helped you learn more quickly and more thoroughly than you could have on your own. Golf is the same way. It helps to have a mentor.

In fact, honest communication is the first essential in a successful mentor—student relationship.

A smart pro realizes that a student will make much better progress if he feels that he's following a plan he helped devise. An old coach's saying applies here: "Plan your work and work your plan."

In my experience, no one is too old to learn. Age may make learning harder. But this is usually because people who are older tend to be less receptive to new ideas and new ways of doing things. It's their minds that get inflexible even more than their bodies.

Sticking to an improvement plan is not easy. If it were, we'd all be slender and shooting in the seventies. It requires a commitment and it requires honoring that commitment.

In golf, there are so many conflicting opinions tossed around on how to swing, chip, putt, or even hold the club that you have no prayer unless you can focus on one source of advice and trust that source.

This is the way of golf buddies everywhere. They'll take covert (and sometimes not covert) satisfaction from seeing their friend fail to improve, since this suggests that their own haphazard approach is not responsible for the state of their own games.

Charting practice drill can show a substantial increase in skill. If, after several months of effort, you don't see any improvement in your golf scores, you might check the log of practice drills. If you've been diligent, you will no doubt see some improvement in the number of consecutive putts you can hole in the compass drill or in the percentage of balls you get up and down from around the green, or the percentage of drives you hit onto an imaginary fairway on your practice range. This evidence of improvement can help sustain your morale during difficult times.

The best way to fix mechanical problems during a round is to have a drill that restores the correct feel and helps you recapture that feel. You will only know the proper drill to restore feel if you work one out with a pro who knows your swing and its tendencies.

Making a major swing change requires a substantial amount of commitment. Before making this change two points need to be discussed. One is how long the pro thinks the player will need to make the proposed change. Two is whether the player is prepared for the possibility of getting worse before getting better. This is very likely, because any fundamentally new movement will feel awkward for a while.

The fact is dominant habits exist. Each time you swing, your dominant habit is trying to assert itself. This is especially true under pressure. You need good, sound, dominant habits.

In general, people learning new sports skills or breaking old habits go through three stages. In the beginning they are unconsciously incompetent. That is, they're doing it wrong, but they're not aware of it. After instruction, they pass through a long intermediate stage, where they are consciously competent. This means that they know the right movement and can execute it, but only if they think about it and direct their body with their conscious mind. Finally they reach the advanced stage of unconscious competence. In golf, this means that a player swings correctly without thinking about it. In other words, his dominant habit has become a correct habit. It will show up under stress. He can focus on his target with trust that his body will perform properly.

Mind Mastery for Winning Golf

I have watched many people ruin their enjoyment of the game by taking themselves and their game so seriously that their playing creates rather than eliminates stress in their lives.

Golf professionals often speak of students who are unteachable because they won't accept the pro's assessment of their weaknesses.

How often do you blame your lack of success or the success of others to their being born with it? What good does such a perception do to your golf game, or your self-concept? Little if any, other than give you an excuse for your

own poor performance. If you wish to start moving in a positive direction, you will need to change your perception. Emphasize the importance of effort in the success of others, and use the knowledge to help your game. Likewise, question how great their own innate ability is, relative to yours. Are you sure that all super golfers are more talented than you? Were they born with that talent? Or have they simply practiced longer and more diligently?

The first step to gaining self-confidence is to seek out your weaknesses and practice hard to eliminate them.

Clearly, then, if you wish to “master your mind,” you must have a systematic goal-setting program designed to maximize your potential. Step one in the program requires that you develop a list of realistic goals for yourself in golf. Both a list of long-range goals and a list of sequential short range goals need to be carefully identified. Be sure that each goal is objective and measurable so that your confidence will be able to naturally grow as you achieve each sequential goal on the way to achieving your long-range goal. Your goals should set you up for success rather than failure. They should be based on the notion of progressive steps and successive approximations. Step two requires you to draw up a master list of all the golfing skills needed for reaching your desired level of proficiency (knowledge of physical skills, strategy, rules, proper equipment, physical conditioning, mental training.) The list should be very specific. Each golfer must detail, in sequential order, a list of their golf skills starting with their weakest and working on up to their strongest. A specific amount of time should be allocated during every practice session for working on one weakness only. As each weakness is alleviated and you reach your short-range goal, less practice time should be spent on it. Time is then increasingly spent on your next weakest skill. The process continues until you have accomplished all of the short-range goals which will lead up to your long-range goals.

Golf Digest Magazine has shown that golf is 43% putting, 25 % wood play, 13 % chipping, 7% short irons, 4% medium irons, 3% long irons, and 5% trouble shots.

Your golf self-concept is your personal concept of the kind of golfer you are. This concept was primarily developed as a result of your previous golfing experiences. Included are all of your successes and failures, moments of pride as well as shame, feedback or comments made by friends, parents, coaches, instructors, opponents, or yourself. Recognize and accept the fact that your self-concept will not change overnight. But you can change it if you will make a commitment.

Studies related to the effects of drugs and nutrition on sport performance, utilizing placebos, have documented the fact that the expectancy of performance being improved as a result of an artificial aid is far more influential on performance than the actual value of that aid. In other words, athletes given placebos or meaningless drugs, who expected to improve performance, did in fact improve. Similarly, if they expected performance to decline, it did—even when no outside influence was imposed.

MENTAL REHEARSAL: WINNERS SEE WHAT THEY WANT TO HAPPEN; LOSERS SEE WHAT THEY FEAR MIGHT HAPPEN

Recall your expectations immediately prior to recent rounds of golf or competitive matches. Did you doubt that you would play well? Did you question your ability? Did you worry that your opponent was out of your league? Did you worry about embarrassing yourself? Do you sometimes question your ability to ever attain your goals? Do you tend to dream of losing or making mistakes on the day or days preceding your rounds?

The moment that an experience or a belief about yourself enters your mind and forms a picture, it becomes subjectively true. It does not matter whether or not it is. Your performance on the golf course will be influenced by the way you picture yourself. Picture yourself standing up on the first tee and hitting OB. Chances are you will

lose confidence. Imagine missing a three foot putt on 18 and you'll likely miss it. Picture a successful shot before hitting it and you will have made a major step in the right direction.

Imagine playing each shot perfectly—just the way you planned it. As it relates to the mastery of specific golf skills it is best to imagine shots that you are currently practicing physically. Picture any bad situation you might get into and imagine successfully overcoming it. Fill yourself with confident thoughts.

Scientists have emphasized that the human brain and nervous system cannot differentiate between a real and an imagined experience. Research in sport psychology and motor learning has consistently demonstrated the superiority of combining mental practice with physical practice in both the learning and mastery of athletic skills. The best way to successfully help acquire the desired neural pathways is through the use of mental rehearsal and positive visual imagery.

Whenever you find yourself making anxiety-provoking statements or thoughts, tell yourself: (1) Take a deep, slow breath, (2) STOP, (3) help yourself, (4) make a positive self-statement, (5) consider what is the most rational and realistic way to deal with this situation, (6) make your decision and stick with it—no doubts allowed.

Clearly, you cannot be concentrating on what you need to do, if you are distracted by worries about what you might do wrong. Worrying is a waste of energy if it is not used to mobilize your energy into positive action!

You cannot fool yourself into being confident. This is why reading your anxieties and learning to cope with stress is so crucial to your future golfing success. You must effectively use your mind and body to develop confidence.

Let's begin when you are ready to retire for the evening prior to a big match. Get in bed, close your eyes, and go through the relaxation training exercises. Picture the course that you will be playing tomorrow, and imagine yourself playing each hole perfectly. Hit every shot as you would ideally like to hit them. Hit every tee shot, sink every putt. Feel good about your swing. Feel confident. You have read your anxieties and prepared. You have reason to believe in yourself. Relax and drift off to sleep.

Remember, concentration is thinking in the present, not in the past or future. If you find yourself thinking about blowing it and being considered a "choker," or fearing that if you win you'll have more pressure to win again, recognize these thoughts as anxieties and distractions and induce relaxation. Continue to work with positive imagery to calm your mind and to get the proper frame of mind back again.

Life is Not a Game of Perfect

Real talent is the traits and attitudes that help people achieve greatness. Every person is born with the most fundamental of real talents—free will. I believe that anyone, if he or she chooses to apply free will to the development of the traits and attitudes I'll describe, can succeed. Real talent is something anyone can develop.

There is no shame in failure if you fail after giving all you have.

To succeed in business, you have to have the courage to put yourself in a position where you can fail.

Do whatever you do with a passion for excellence.

We are all underachievers. It's just a question of whether we get 40% out of the abilities we have or 90%.

My dad measured our successes not so much by what we achieved, but by how much we got out of the abilities and opportunities we had. The outcome of the games I played mattered less to him than the effort I put into preparing and performing.

Someone who is persistent, loves to compete, and is willing to work harder than the competition, has every reason to believe he will succeed.

If you prefer to believe that you are the helpless victim of circumstances beyond your control, and that these circumstances dictate your behavior, there's not much I can do to help you. If you believe, as I do, that your past does not have to be your future or determine your future, there are few limits to what you can achieve.

I believe that every human being has the ability to choose how he thinks about himself and how he acts.

If you do what you love, it's never hard to get out of bed in the morning with a smile on your face. If you do what you love, it will be easy to work as hard as you have to work to succeed.

Success is something every individual must define for himself or herself.

"You can either do what you love, or love what you do. I don't see where there's any other choice."-George Burns

If you seek and find the ways in which your work enhances the lives of others, you're going to enjoy it more. Contribute to the quality of other people's lives.

It seems to me that more people used to work as if they were on television. They worked as if they were constantly being watched by people whose opinions mattered to them. In fact, they didn't need to be watched. They had pride in what they did. People with real talent find ways to get excited about their work...and they do it every day.

No matter what happens in your life, you will come to the end of your days contented if you can truthfully say to yourself that you did the best you could possibly do to attain your dreams.

A dream without a commitment is just a fantasy.

People with real talent wake up each morning and find a way to motivate themselves to do what it takes to achieve their dreams.

People with real talent pay no attention to people who question their dreams. They understand that they will be happy chasing their dreams even if they don't achieve them, because a person who is chasing a dream is a person who is excited, vital, and alive

Perceived Exertion- People are not always reliable judges about how hard they're working. There are many people who think they're working hard, but really aren't if objective measurements are used.

When people with real talent approach any endeavor, they look for a method, a process, that will lead to success. Then they follow that process every day. They set themselves up to succeed.

Pre shot routines are intended to produce the same feeling of calm purposefulness whether the golfer is hitting his first putt on Thursday morning or the last putt Sunday afternoon with all the money on the line.

Define the process that leads to success. Learn to love the process. Be committed to it. Be patient while you wait for it to work. Define success in terms of how well you honor your commitment to the process.

The fact is that it would be very difficult to fail, no matter what your endeavor, if you went to work every day with a great attitude and dedicated yourself to a sound process.

You want the people around you to come to value you for the reliability of your optimism, confidence, and enthusiasm.

Confidence is the product not of experienced success, but of will and preparation.

Your thoughts are like people that knock on the front door of your house. You can't control who walks up and knocks. You can control which ones you let in and entertain as guests.

"The inability to forget is infinitely more devastating than the inability to remember."—Mark Twain

Have a long term memory for success, and a short term memory for failure.

Confident people separate worries into two categories---those they can do something about and those they can't.

If you're confident you can take care of your own performance, make it the best it can be, and let the results take care of themselves.

Make sure no one is outworking you. Once you're sure you're working harder than anyone else, look at other things if you're not yet as successful as you want to be.

Successful people perceive stressful situations not as threats or burdens but as challenges they can overcome.

People with real talent usually manage to surround themselves with people who support their quest to make the most of their talent, whether it be in golf or any other endeavor. They show appreciation for that support. They cherish it.

People with real talent compete primarily against themselves. Their quest is to see how good they can get.

You can only coast in one direction.

It's possible to work with and improve a player who acknowledges his flaws. It's almost impossible to improve one who doesn't.

You have to demonstrate the attitudes you want in the way you conduct yourself—your honesty, your commitment, your discipline.

I look for coachability. That means they want to improve themselves and they're willing to listen and learn how to do it. I look for people who are hungry to be better than they are, to be something special in life. I look for people who aren't satisfied with being average. I look for people with energy and enthusiasm, people who are looking for excitement in their lives. I've never hired anyone for what they are. I hire them for what they can be.

The inconsistency and mistakes of past management can destroy trust and loyalty.

People tend to be much more confident and optimistic when they feel they can control, at least partially, their own situations, their own destiny.

Are you going to do what you love, or learn to love what you do? Are you going to chase your dreams? Do you want to be the best you can possibly be at what you do or do you, in your heart, want to settle for a safe mediocrity? Are you going to listen to your highest aspirations, or are you going to listen to some “expert” who tells you you’re not talented enough? Are you going to try to have a Hall of Fame career, or are you going to give into the peer pressure that wants you to be average? Are you going to succumb to fear or failure, to doubt, and risk nothing, or are you going to free yourself of fear, laugh at it, and strive for excellence? Are you going to believe in the power of your will and your mind and take responsibility for what you do with them? Or are you going to pretend that your destiny is out of your control? Are you going to indulge in self-pity when you encounter the inevitable rejections and failures? Or are you going to learn what you can from your mistakes and move on? Are you going to train yourself to think confidently, or are you going to succumb to the fiction that you can only be confident after you’ve succeeded? Are you going to make and keep a commitment to put out your best effort every working day, or are you going to get complacent whenever you can? In a sense you are writing your own autobiography every day of your life. Real talent will allow it to be great—if you choose so.

In most of life’s endeavors, characteristics like persistence and self-discipline are much more important than the kind of talent measured by standardized tests.

Every human being has the ability to choose how he thinks about himself and how he acts.

A vision of what they can become is what enables some people to maintain and honor the commitments they make while others falter and give up. The ones who maintain their commitments are sustained by a vision of themselves as they would like to be. The ones who falter are those who rely on progress to sustain their motivation. When progress stops, so does their commitment.

People with real talent fail, just as do people without real talent. What sets them apart is the way they respond to failure.

COACHING YOUR KIDS TO BE LEADERS

The seven qualities of effective leaders are: Vision, Communication, People Skills, Character, Competence, Boldness, and Servanthood.

Books to read: *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, *Power of Positive Thinking*, *How to win Friends and Influence People*

Success takes place not as we feed our egos, but as we put the good of the team about ourselves and willingly serve one another on the team.

No great deeds were ever achieved inside a comfort zone.

Leaders get things done. Not through their own effort, but through the combined efforts of people.

Bosses push their people. They demand, order, threaten, and bully people to get results. Authentic leaders pull their people. They inspire, motivate and draw people along in order to achieve results.

The benefit of being a leader is not that you will be able to tell people what to do. The benefit of being a leader lies in being able to work with others, encouraging them and equipping them, and together seeing some great things.

Once you prove that you are competent and successful as a leader, you find that more and more people are willing to trust you and follow you.

If you respect people, if you demonstrate confidence and competence, if you offer a sound plan and wise direction for the future, people will follow you regardless of your age.

When we talk to young people, we should encourage them to seek solutions. Make a contribution. You don't have to change the whole world, just reach out to one person at a time and in the process you'll make a big difference in the world.

Leaders are people who can evaluate a situation and see if there is an issue that needs attention. They spot problems on their own, then mobilize the people and resources to solve those problems.

A person's emotional quotient (EQ) is a more reliable predictor of success than that person's IQ. People with a high EQ are better equipped to empathize with, understand, relate to, and connect with other people.

Watch the kid whose face lights up when he talks about his passion. Nurture that young leader and feed that interest. Affirm him and confirm him. Put him in situations where he can talk about that passion and communicate it to others.

It is one thing to capture the attention of people and it's another thing to maintain their respect after you have captured their attention.

Junie B. Jones books for kids.

In order for a team to be enthused, inspired, fired up, and energized to achieve great things, that team must have a leader with a vision—and the leader must communicate that vision to everyone on the team.

Knowing where you want to go requires three things: having a clear vision, articulating it well, and getting your team to be enthusiastic about sharing it. Above all, any leader must be consistent.

Leaders are the people who have a vision. They not only see the parts, but they have the ability to piece the parts together in order to form the whole picture. That whole picture should ignite, excite, unite, inspire, and motivate the team to perform at a higher level.

A fourth grade teacher once set a bowl of flowers in front of the classroom and told her students to sketch the flowers. Most students produced drawings that slavishly imitated the contours and colors of that bowl of flowers. One student, however, put his visionary imagination in high gear. He interpreted those flowers in a new way, changing the proportions and dimensions, then added an extra dollop of imagination by drawing faces on the flowers! When the teacher saw the boy's interpretation of the flowers, she scolded him and said, "Flowers do not have faces!" Fortunately, that boy paid no attention to the admonition. He went on to produce animated cartoons featuring flowers with faces, a talking mouse, a flying elephant, and more. That boy's name of course was Walt Disney.

Leaders know that the price they pay today will be well worth it when the future goal is met and the vision becomes a reality.

Teams perform better when the players are having fun. If you lead by being a visionary, you don't have to rule them with fear.

People skills demonstrated by good leaders:

Affirmation, Authority, Coaching, Conflict resolution, Counseling, Delegating, Facilitating, Fairness, Hospitality, Motivation, Negotiating, Organization, Persuasion, Recruitment, Sociability, Teaching. Every one of these skills is a learnable skill.

Being a great leader is when you find out how people want to be treated and treat them that way.

So if a leader spends 98 percent of the time affirming, encouraging, reinforcing, and building people up, then that leader will earn the right to confront, honestly and bluntly, during the 2 percent of the time when toughness is needed. Positive affirmation lends credibility to confrontation.

"Don't be misled: Bad company corrupts good character"

"Character is manifested in the great moments, but is made in the small ones."

"Character is simply habit long continued"

"When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost"

I believe that if you aren't feeling overwhelmed, you aren't taking on a big enough leadership challenge. I don't think I have ever felt totally prepared or adequate for any leadership position I've held.

Competence is a combination of five components:

1. Knowledge
2. Experience
3. Confidence
4. Commitment to excellence
5. Competitiveness

Every time a leader makes a decision, there is a risk involved. A team needs to have one bold individual at the helm, one person who is willing to step up, be decisive, and accept the accolades for the brilliant decisions—and accept responsibility when things go wrong.

Leadership is not just wearing a title like 'Captain.' It's not just getting to receive the attention and the glory. Leadership is also doing the hard work that others won't or can't do. It's doing all sorts of things that nobody sees, nobody notices, and nobody thanks you for.

Bosses wield power, give orders, and expect to be served. Leaders empower people, delegate authority, and serve others. Bosses elevate themselves, leaders elevate others.

In the old boss at the top pyramidal model, the boss says, "My people exist to lift me up and make me successful." The new leadership model says, "I exist to lift my people up and make them successful."

The New Golf Mind

Giving up voluntary control at the perfect moment is of the greatest importance.

If you get very excited during an argument, you may notice you have trouble speaking clearly or thinking of the correct words to use. The right brain emotions are blocking the left brain verbal skills. Professional typists run into the opposite problem if they start trying to comprehend the material they are copying. The word per minute rate goes down while their errors increase, because the left brain analytical process is blocking the right brain performing ability. This type of communication block happens all the time in golf.

There are two reasons why the psychological scorecard is a valuable tool for golfers. First, it creates an awareness about an individual shot execution that allows the golfer to process bad shots without getting upset about them or tinkering with swing mechanics unnecessarily. The second reason is that it builds awareness of general traits in our psychology which alone may be sufficient to help us improve.

“Flip a penny in the air and watch it rise, then fall. Did you see any sudden change in direction? No. No that’s the way a golf swing progresses from backswing to downswing. It just happens.”—Bill Mehlhorn

A lot of people know how to swing a golf club, but they’ve gotten so involved in swing mechanics that they’ve lost track of the main goal, which is to come in with a low number.

The more you collect these impressions of good shots in play or on the practice tee, the easier it will be to conjure them up in your mind’s eye when you face situations that require similar shots.

The swing is a wheel and the golfer is the hub. Coil and uncoil. Turn in a barrel. Pivot around a fixed center. Feel the clubhead as though it were a stone on the end of a rope.

Moving into familiar positions and doing things in familiar patterns breeds the feeling of physical well-being that in turn promotes a sense of security in the mind. When the body is put through the same motions prior to every shot and comes to recognize those motions and feel comfortable with them, it’s much easier to stay relaxed yet be sharp mentally. It also reduces tension by putting your mind on the routine and keeping it off the results of the upcoming shot.

The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one.

The more we experience the type of pressure relative to our own level of play, the less it will bother us when it comes up during actual matches.

Suppose, like many golfers, you have a particular nemesis hole. You’re psyched out by the hole. You’re flooded by negative thoughts and feelings. There is no way to get better unless you develop a pattern of success on the hole. The way to do that is to experience success when it doesn’t count, then transfer it when it does. Go out some time when the course isn’t crowded and play the problem hole with three or four balls. Play it over and over again until you make par or birdie. Then do it again. Develop a pattern of success in practice and take that with you in your next playing situation.

If the quality of your concentration, involvement, mental imagery and swing feel is high, then you can achieve good results hitting fewer balls.

Keep a journal of play and practice.

Motivation always becomes more deeply rooted when goals are stated in concrete terms or when deadlines are assigned for attaining them. Writing down positive goals in itself may actually bring them closer to realization.

The game journal doesn't have to be limited to material related to the mental, emotional, or psychological side of the game. It's also a logical place to record your scores, tactical information about different holes and courses, and notes on mechanics and techniques.

The single most important aspect of personality within our means to change is the ongoing portrait we sketch of ourselves as golfers—how we see ourselves and how highly we value what we see.

Savoring a golf shot is a practical method for engraving the good swing in your nerve and muscle system, so that it's easier to do again, and filing it in the feeling register.

Labron Harris Sr. used to make the players on his teams putt thousands of balls in a wooden track laid out on the practice green. This repetitious action not only grooved the collegians' putting strokes, but it showed them so many putts dropping into the cup that it helped their confidence, too.

"Keep yourself centered over the ball!" "Swing around your center" These phrases allow for rotation, even of the head, around a center and free up the swing.

A good round of golf is like a string of pearls. Each good shot is a precious pearl that takes your full attention to create. You can only create one at a time, so don't concern yourself with those you've already made or those you have yet to make. Focusing on adding one pearl, individually, leads to the creation of a fine finished product.

Cary Middlecoff used to negate the effects of a poor shot on himself during a tournament by musing, "Well, my wife still loves me and I have some money in the bank, and when I go home my dog won't bite me." That's keeping things in perspective.

The challenge in golf is to be physically aroused without becoming tense, to be mentally relaxed without becoming indifferent.

If you feel anger after playing a particularly horrendous shot, try British teaching pro Ken Adwick's trick. Keep your fingers fully outstretched for a while. It's hard to stay mad when you can't make a fist.

Harry Vardon quote "Trying to do in three what should normally require four often ends up taking five."

Golfers who don't fully appreciate the game's inherent difficulties are the ones most readily perturbed and most often victimized by fear or anger, or both.

During a round of golf, the ANALYZER side of your brain helps you primarily in preparing for each shot. It helps you evaluate the lie of the ball, the course and weather conditions, and the type of shot you are planning. It helps you to select the proper club and to devise intelligent shotmaking tactics for each hole. The INTEGRATOR side of your brain plays the same role in the pre-shot routine—it helps you visualize the shot you're planning to make, for example—but its main job is to "get it all together" for you at the time of execution. Its special intuitive, body-in-space powers help you make the transition from the pre-swing preparation to the in-swing mechanics each time a shot is played.

Effectively coping with pressure on the course is another area where individual choice must be exercised. Does talking to your playing partners help you stay relaxed? Does recalling a past successful shot do the trick? How about focusing on some pleasant attribute of the natural setting? Or does it take something physical—a few deep-

knee bends, say—to prevent the choke? These and many other methods are all perfectly valid and functional—if they suit you.

“Folks who never do any more than they are paid for, never get paid more than they do”

“The best preparation for good work tomorrow is good work today”

“Only when we are no longer afraid do we begin to live”

Extraordinary Golf

There is tremendous freedom in playing a game that you choose to play, rather than one you think you should play. Once you begin to uncover your own personal reasons for being out here, you can use them to form powerful, inspiring commitments that will free you from the constant pressure of “looking good.” There are any number of possibilities: playing for enjoyment, to make new friends, to overcome fear, to learn to trust yourself—and you can certainly have different commitments at different times. The important thing is that they are freely chosen and that they have value to you. These new commitments are crucial in learning how to play golf in a new way.

Golf should be a new, unique experience every time you tee it up.

I believe that the real reason people get upset after a bad shot is that they think that they will do it again. Let’s say you knew for a fact that you would top your first tee shot, but after that you were going to play the best round of your life. What would your reaction be after that first shot? The key to this change in attitude is that you know you have a bright future, a future that is not determined by your past.

It’s a beautiful day and we’re taking a walk in a beautiful garden. That’s what golf really is, and there’s no reason that this wonderful feeling should change just because we happen to have a bag of clubs with us.

I had an ideal setup for learning golf: a convenient course, time to learn and experiment, and the support of my friends and family without any pressure or competition. I wish all kids could learn the game under similar conditions. I grew to love golf and everything about it: the playing, the practicing, the atmosphere, the camaraderie—it was a wonderful time.

Reasons to play golf: The challenge, to be with friends, like to walk in nature, good vacation activity, like to learn new things, joy of accomplishment, game my spouse and I can play together, develop confidence, like competition, can play all my life, develop concentration.

There are three main parts to everyone’s golfing experience: Performance, Enjoyment, Learning. Things work best when all three parts are kept in balance. The paradox is that too much emphasis on performance throws things out of balance and lessens your ability to perform well.

When we start to fear on the golf course start to ask yourself, “What am I REALLY worried about.”

There is something wrong with my game and I need to fix it. This is the point of view from which virtually all golfers see their games. As you develop awareness and free yourself from the tyranny of right/wrong, try to loosen up and play around a little. Take a look at what’s possible. Do things differently. Try different swings,

different shots. Don't worry about the "right way". Try swinging in exaggerated ways—very far inside-out or outside-in, very slow. Try hitting all kinds of shots—high, low, hook, slice. Physical learning is becoming aware of the differences between two actions and recognizing the consequences of each. This is the way we learn all basic activities—walking, running, even riding a bicycle—and the reason we don't have to think about them once we learn them. Having mastered the feel, we don't have to keep second guessing ourselves. The best way in golf to develop feel is to swing in exaggerated fashion. Once these large differences are distinguished clearly, you can begin to move toward the more subtle ones.

There is no satisfaction in feeling that something is wrong all the time. There is no joy in a continuous struggle against yourself. The only reason golfers put up with these things is because of the belief that they will lead to eventual success in golf, but it seems clear to me that for most people, that success is not happening.

The average person has 5 fully different foci during the two seconds it takes to complete the golf swing—1.Key swing thought 2.Reconnect with ball 3.Anticipation of impact 4.Evaluation of impact 5.Evaluation of ball in flight

I have a video of two young men, both baseball players, on the driving range. One is also a golfer and he wants to teach the game to his friend, who has never swung a golf club before in his life. The novice takes his first swing and completely misses the ball, but he has a wonderfully full and powerful swing, with great hand and body positioning through the impact area. He then takes a second swing, also with a good position, and hits a short slice. His buddy starts talking to him. I don't know exactly what is said, but I have a pretty good idea: head down, left arm straight, shift the weight, etc.—we all know the tune. On the third swing the beginner's body stops at impact, he casts the club at the ball, he has an awkward position in terms of what his instincts tell him, and he hits the ball straight about 150 yards. His buddy turns to him and says, "Now you've got it!" It has taken only three swings for this person to go completely against what he instinctively knows to be true, this in order to survive in the golf environment—at least in the environment that was presented to him.

If you want your child to view the game a certain way and be a certain kind of person on the course, work on being that kind of person yourself. Be the kind of person that you want your child to be, and that person will show up in your child. It's who you are that makes the difference.

"You are walking down a hill. You catch your foot on a rock, stumble, and fall. You are left lying on the ground with a sore leg. The question is, Are you now afraid of walking? The answer is, No, you're not. Because you felt how your foot hit the rock, how you lost your balance, and how you fell, you would not now fear walking. You would be annoyed, certainly, but not afraid, since you were able to sense everything that happened. Let's take another scenario. Suppose you're walking down the same hill and the next thing you know you're on the ground with your leg hurting. The result is the same as the first scene, but this time you have no idea how you got there. Do you think you'd be afraid of walking now? Yes, you would. You would probably start to walk like the way most people play golf: tentatively, always looking for "something wrong." Why? Because you could not sense what was going on, and therefore you cannot be sure it won't happen again.

The secret to competing successfully is being aware that the games of learning and enjoyment are under your control and winning them will give you the best chance of winning the scoring game, since it will ensure your best performance.

Extraordinary people are not bound by their circumstances; they are able to create their lives anew each day. Yet we all have this ability all the time.

No one wants to be stuck at the same level of play, no matter what that level is.

Extraordinary golf comes from commitment. What you are committed to makes the difference. Your commitment is your anchor. It gets you out of bed in the morning and keeps you going in the right direction. It helps you withstand the pulls and distractions of the ordinary golfing world. Commitments are the foundation of consistent play.

Jim Flick on Golf

Whenever I go to him for a lesson I always leave feeling uplifted, both professionally and personally. People leave his lessons feeling good about the game of golf and about life in general.

I can't begin to fix a guy's golf swing until I've fixed his mind.

What works best in life also works best in golf. You need honesty, creativity, and a positive but realistic attitude to play golf. You need to be able to learn from failure. You need to have an inquisitive nature, sensitivity, and the ability to look at yourself clearly. You need good judgment. You also need a sense of humor. Especially a sense of humor.

But trust me on this one because this is the key to improving your game: the more you try to impose conscious, mental control over a physical, athletic endeavor, the more tension you introduce into the equation, and the more tension you impose, the worse you will perform.

"The psychological foundation for the most ideal state of athletic performance is that of unquestioned faith at the moment of execution."---Dr. Maynard Howe

If you break the golf swing down into its components, you tend to destroy the rhythm, tempo, and fluidity required to execute it.

Why is golf so damn hard? Maybe it's because of the complexity of the circuitry in the human nervous system needed to make a seven-ounce clubhead, multiplied by centrifugal force to a pull of 150 pounds down the shaft at impact, at upward of one hundred miles an hour along a line of tolerance of three degrees either way, make contact on a ball within a tolerance of a tenth of an inch. Or maybe it's because we haven't gone about it the right way.

If as much were written about sex as there has been about golf, life would be extinct by now.

The goal is not to get better at practicing golf, but to get better at playing golf, isn't it? Most people approach the game in a manner that would lead you to believe they were more interested in working golf than playing golf.

I don't care what your swing looks like: if you can make it repeat, you can play the game. If you can make the ball go in the same direction with the same curvature most of the time, you can play the game.

"Tension is an insurmountable barrier to effective motor performance." ----Dr. Maynard Howe

Eight keys to consistency:

- 1- Mind-set and Pre-Shot routine that protect against cognitive interference with swinging a club
- 2- Grip pressure that is sensitive to position of club face and speed of club head
- 3- Posture and setup that permit your body to respond freely, smoothly, and in balance.

- 4- Correct aim and body alignment
- 5- Club swinging in balance with target line
- 6- Constant spine angle throughout your swing
- 7- Good rhythm, smooth tempo
- 8- A sequence of moves based on a philosophy of trying to make the clubhead put a ball in the target area

Length of shot determines length of swing. Length of swing determines amount of pivot. Length of swing rather than effort determines distance. Fingers secure...arms relaxed.

Jack Nicklaus grew up on a Donald Ross course in Ohio, where he developed a swing that created a high, soft ball flight. Growing up in Texas, Ben Hogan needed a ball that would bore underneath the wing, so he had a swing that created a low ball flight with a lot of hook, at least at first. Bobby Jones didn't play with a dynamic, aggressive swing because the equipment of the day didn't allow it. He had a soft sweeping swing and even occasionally would let go of the club with his left hand at the top of his swing to keep from stressing the hickory shaft. Sam Snead had a much stronger body than Jones and could afford a more aggressive approach after steel shafts were introduced. His swing was similar to Jones's but more upright because it fit his long arms and body type. Byron Nelson fought a shank early in his career: he developed a swing that dropped the club inside the backswing arc when coming down, and he used his feet and legs to support the club from the inside to eliminate the over-the-top attack that could produce an occasional shank.

Stand up, hold a club straight out parallel to the floor, and close your eyes. Better still, have someone hand you the club after your eyes are closed. Now twist the club around and try to identify precisely which way the club face is pointing. A good player can sense exactly where the face of that club is pointing at all times. It's a matter of awareness for the club. It's a matter of feel.

"Golf is a game of motion and rhythm, not of position and mechanics." ---Martin Hall

Golf is exactly like learning a language: there's a huge gap between intellectual understanding and physical feel. You bridge that gap with repeated execution. In other words, practice.

"The goal is effortless power, not a powerful effort."---Bob Toski

As a test, try playing nine holes without once looking at a sprinkler head or 150 marker. Make your club selections based on what your eyes tell you. "Seeing is believing."

"Feel the Clubhead"- this is the number one requirement for eliminating tension and developing a consistent golf swing. You can't do it unless your muscles are relaxed, as relaxed muscles contribute to steady tempo.

"The club weighs less than a pound. The ball weighs less than two ounces. We don't need to prepare for violence."---Bob Toski

"First you teach a golfer to hook the ball by using his hands and arms properly. Then you teach him how to take the hook away by using his body and legs properly."---Harvey Penick

Simply put, the swing turns the body both ways, backward and forward. The body does not turn the swing.

If your club is laid off, on your forward swing you have to come out and over, your hands get out too far ahead of the club head, and your shoulders or hands have to mount a rescue mission to catch up. Either the shoulders rush forward too fast or the hands flip the club head. The result? An ugly pull-hook or slice.

There are three distinct but complementary movements in the golf swing:

- 1- The hands and wrists move the club vertically
- 2- The arms and legs move the club laterally
- 3- The shoulders and hips impart a rotary movement

The swinging elements of a golf swing are:

- 1- The Club
- 2- The Mind (picturing a pendulum swing)
- 3- The fingers and hands
- 4- The wrists (your first hinge)
- 5- Your forearms (they transport the club and keep it on course)
- 6- The elbows (Your folding units for the backswing and forward swing)
- 7- The upper arms and shoulder sockets- Your second hinge. They are not used to turn the swing, they are carriers of the swing. The upper arms must be able to move freely under your shoulder sockets.

The turning elements of a golf swing are:

- 1- The shoulders, the torso, the hips, the legs, the knees, and the feet.
- 2- They play a subordinate role to the swinging elements.
- 3- The turning elements should respond to-and be in harmony with-the swinging elements.
- 4- The turning elements should not control the swinging elements.

In studying the game's best players, I've concluded they have three common traits:

- 1- The hands and the club shaft return to the starting position at impact.
- 2- The head returns to its starting position or moves slightly to the golfer's right at impact.
- 3- The left knee and foot- not the hips or shoulders-control the change of direction.

The developmental swing:

- 1- Shoulders and hips square to slightly closed at address
- 2- Early wrist cock
- 3- Swing arc in to out through impact
- 4- Clubface rotates and turns down through impact
- 5- Legs and hips respond to swing motion
- 6- Ball flight right to left
- 7- Finish with arms high

Professional Swing:

- 1- Shoulders and hips fractionally open at address
- 2- Passive wrists
- 3- Swing arc inside-along-the-target-line inside through impact

- 4- Clubface square through impact
- 5- Forward swing initiated by left foot and left knee
- 6- Ball flight: straight or left to right
- 7- Finish with arms around the body

“If I put my club in the right position at the top of my backswing, I’ll be turned properly. And if I apply the club head to the ball correctly, my weight will shift.” –Jack Nicklaus

Pre-shot routine helps condition your conscious mind to give way, to give in, and to stop trying to control or manipulate the smooth functioning of your swinging and turning elements.

Don’t swing harder or easier—swing longer or shorter

For more distance, you don’t swing harder, you swing your arms and club longer.

Have I sold you on the idea that sixty yards from the flagstick is a great place to build your golf game and a great place to fix it? If not, grab a seven iron—okay, take your wedges too—and head out to a practice range. Start at sixty yards, but move down to thirty and up to seventy, then back to sixty. Hit teed-up seven irons to get your rhythm, then go to your wedges. Pretend you’re Seve: use the “wrong” club on purpose.

Low shot=low risk High shot=high risk

Set your mind at ease so your body can perform.

If you’re having difficulty making crisp contact with your green-side chips, try hitting some shots with your left arm only. This encourages a pendulum-like stroke, discourages excessive involvement of the hands and wrists, creates a descending arc with minimal follow through, inhibits the lifting motion that leads to skulled shots, and helps you develop feel for the swinging force of the club head as opposed to a snapping wrist action.

The ball goes where the sand goes, not where the clubface is looking.

Walk halfway to the hole along your target line. Look first at the grass between you and the hole, then back toward your ball. Where the shade of green is lighter, the grain is growing away from you. Where it’s darker, you’re looking into the tiny shadows cast by the grass and the grain is running toward you.

The golf club doesn’t swing by knowledge. The golf club swings by feel and awareness ingrained as habit.

If you find a drill that’s really difficult for you, it probably means that’s the drill you need the most.

Right foot left toe keeps your body at home until your arms and hands swing the club head through the ball, turning your body in the process. This drill is also great for instilling an inside-along the target line-to inside path. Great for slicers.

My goals as a teacher is to give you the tools to diagnose your game, prescribe treatment as needed, and monitor your progress. In other words, be self-reliant.

Comfort is where you are coming from. To get better in golf, you need to be more interested in where you are going—and willing to accept being uncomfortable for a while in order to get there.

Prepare for success, accept what happens, then get ready for your next shot.

Fearless Golf by Gio Valiente

Fear begins and gets its fuel from the uncertainty of self-questioning. Most fear inducing questions boil down to the same theme: What if I am faced with something terrible that I am not prepared for? But go deeper and it is just as easy to realize that this fear can fall away once we are willing to hear an answer to one of these moderately absurd questions. The answer is a positive question of its own...**What am I going to do about it?** Look objectively at our particular uncertainty and deal with it thoroughly.

No matter how many times you win, the nervousness is there—and it is great. That's the best thing about it, to put yourself in that position and to get nervous, to really get scared. It is what it is all about. People don't understand how wonderful that feeling is. To absolutely be scared to death that you are not going to be able to perform, and then you do. You pull the shots off—sometimes to your own amazement. It is an incredible feeling. That being scared, that's fun. That's good. If you are not scared, if you don't get the adrenaline pumping, all you can do is average things. I love that. And that is the thing that people don't understand. If you are not scared, it means you don't care.—Tom Kite

We do not run from obstacles because they will always find us, especially since we cannot run from those things within our own minds. So we challenge the obstacles, the fears, by identifying them, learning about them, and understanding how they work against our chances for success. The first step in playing fearless golf is to consciously make a decision not to be afraid, or maybe at least not to be afraid of being afraid.

Fear can cause physiologically...an inability to concentrate, body tension, loss of sensation in the hands, increased heart rate, dizziness, shortness of breath, sweating, and in extreme cases nausea, constipation, diarrhea, muscular pain, skin afflictions etc. No wonder making a decent swing could be the least of your body's concerns the moment it senses fear—even when that fear is entirely self-created. In an instant, by asking a bad question, a golfer can create his own anxiety and undo the confidence required to play this delicate game.

The fear response....The cortex, which is responsible for rational and conscious thought is a relatively recent evolutionary development. Before the development of the cortex, humans developed the amygdale, also known as the fear system's command center. The fear system, governed by the amygdale, is like a throw switch or a fire alarm or a default mechanism that is able to override the conscious mind in large part because the cortex (conscious mind) has few dedicated resources or pathways to influence the fear system, while the fear system has a number of resources to dominate the cortex.

American poet Robert Frost once wrote how poetry "begins with a feeling and finds a thought." His observations are remarkably insightful because the part of the brain (amygdale) that produces feelings such as fear operates far more quickly than the parts of our brains that process "conscious thought" (cortex). We often feel fear before we can think in a rational way about the thing that produced that fear.

For instance, when a person sees something threatening such as an aggressive, attacking dog, it takes just a fraction of a second for the amygdale to react. In that fraction of a second, a mixture of chemicals and stress hormones begin bathing the muscles, causing them to tighten. Blood pressure rises, pupils dilate, digestion shuts down, and capillaries constrict, discharging the "fight or flight" response necessary to survival. Almost a full second later, the cortex receives the message, and the person is able to process the word "dog" and to think in rational terms about the situation. Even at low levels, anxiety causes muscle tension, which in turn can lead to tightness in the golf swing, and even worse for a golfer, flinching muscles and twitching eyes.

The brain has evolved to remember fearful situations so as to be able to avoid them in the future. Many chemicals, such as adrenaline, act like yellow highlighters to ensure the brain remembers fearful situations. If you were to get into an automobile accident at an intersection, chances are you would flinch every time you went through an intersection for weeks following the accident.

Anticipating the possibility of missing another fairway, a golfer may flinch during his swing.

The mind does not just respond to “actual” threats such as lions, tigers, and snakes. It also responds to “perceived” threats such as embarrassment, disappointment, and frustration. Golfers who learn to fear situations in golf actually condition their minds to perceive situations as more threatening than they really are. They often beat themselves up for making the slightest mistakes. The psychological consequences of which are similar to a car crash. They result in subsequent hesitation, tentativeness, and fear.

Golfers with lower self-efficacy who interpret physiological arousal as fear produce more of a stress hormone called norepinephrine whose job is to tense the muscles. The difference between being psyched up and psyched out is a matter of interpretation. When an event is perceived as exciting, the body relaxes, when it is interpreted as frightening, the body tightens.

Low self-efficacy results in interpreting physiological change as fear rather than excitement. Fear feeds on itself and triggers the sympathetic nervous system to do two key things detrimental to golf. First, norepinephrine is produced and muscles tense up. Second, capillaries in the hands constrict, making golfers lose feeling in their hands such that they grip the club really tightly.

Bad shots decrease self-efficacy and increase fear, and the cycle simply repeats and insidiously feeds on itself over and over. And there you have it, a psychological breakdown that produces the dreaded downward spiral.

Have you noticed that when people get nervous they fidget with their hands? Anxiety usually makes its first appearance in our hands. When blood flows away from our extremities, the result is that we often lose feeling in our hands. To regain the ability to feel the club in their hands, golfers do what comes naturally...they grip the club tighter.

In golf, your mind is overly occupied with results (not the process), even in the midst of executing a shot. The focus (thanks to the power of fear) is on the result when it should be on the process.

Shake hands with the target.

In business these days there is a fascination with the Japanese word “kaizen.” It is the idea of an intense effort to improve a process or system by eliminating all nonessential elements as waste. It is the idea of continual, measured improvement, regardless of performance. The mastery golfer is not discouraged by an initial lack of success, rather he is excited at the prospect of the challenge. Mastery golfers who demonstrate kaizen get lost in the details, puzzles, and mysteries of the game, and they see their task as mastering those details and understanding the game’s mysteries. In kaizen you embrace the process on your own terms and you are totally in control of your own improvement.

The reasons why individuals choose to engage in a particular task or activity are called achievement goal orientations. It means we choose to do something for a certain end...we are motivated by the activity because in some way it enhances our sense of self, our personal well-being. Those objectives govern our approach from the very outset. These orientations are critical factors that influence a person’s level of motivation and achievement, as well as the degree of anxiety and fear they experience as they engage in those activities.

The primary motivation for some golfers is to earn recognition from others. For these golfers, what others say about them is powerfully important, sometimes more important than improving and developing their game.

The golfer who thinks this way exhibits what psychologists call an ego orientation. In contrast to those who play because they want the attention and admiration of others, some golfers have as their primary incentive a desire to learn, improve, and excel. A focus on learning and personal development is inconsistent with worries about how our results will be viewed by others.

A recreational golfer whose reason for playing is to learn and grow, and even relax, cares very little about how others in his foursome will view his game. These golfers are better able to stay focused and remain composed during their round.

Attempt to plan out the round shot by shot, deciding which par 4's absolutely require a driver, where the safe misses are on par 3's and whether there's a par 5 you can attack. The key with such a distraction is that it forces you to focus on the golf course.

The first step toward developing focus is to immerse yourself in knowledge about the course and its individual holes and in developing a strategy to play it.

Public speaking often fills people with the same type of fear as golf. Even in this most dreaded of activities, people whose reason for speaking is to present information and enjoy themselves typically fare better than people whose reason for speaking is to have the audience perceive them as smart or to avoid looking like a babbling idiot.

The key distinction I am drawing can be thought of as the difference between striving to perfect one's task versus striving to look good in front of others or fearing their disapproval. This is a distinction that many golfers know very well.

Achievement goal orientations—the underlying reasons why golfers play golf—can be separated into two main categories: mastery orientation and ego orientation. Only one of these approaches will work regardless of the circumstances, only one will work for any golfer regardless of ability, only one will make it possible to play fearless golf.

“Golf to me is a livelihood in doing the thing that I love to do. I don't like the glamour. I just like the game.”—Ben Hogan

Mastery golfers who demonstrate kaizen get lost in the details, puzzles, and mysteries of the game, and they see their task as mastering those details and understanding the game's mysteries. Because they view mastering golf as a constant challenge, they find it easy to become fully involved in what they are doing, whether practicing chip shots or putting in competition.

Mastery golfers do not care who their competitors are, because they don't view golf as a competition between players. Rather, they see golf as the process of playing a golf course as well as they can with the skills that they possess. Mastery golfers are neither swayed by praise nor bothered by criticism. Mastery golfers are not influenced by how often others tell them they are good or they are bad because, quite frankly, they do not play for others.

“What's my target?” The mastery golfer should be able to answer any dilemma, any difficult situation, with that 3 word question.

A mastery approach does not necessarily require a focus on shooting a particular score at the start of the day; instead it requires an exacting focus on hitting a particular shot with a particular routine at a particular target as often as it takes to hole out eighteen times.

Nicklaus's teacher, Jack Grout, was the assistant pro where young Ben Hogan caddied. Hogan and Grout played the Tour together and, when he inherited the young Nicklaus as a student, Grout often used "Bennie" Hogan as the model toward which Nicklaus should strive. Similarly, Tiger Woods was in awe of Nicklaus (he grew up with a poster of Jack on his wall) and patterned his own career after Jack's.

The driving force of many ego golfers is not simply to demonstrate their ability and receive the approval of others, but to avoid at all costs being embarrassed by a poor performance. Such golfers live in very real fear of the embarrassment they may suffer at almost any moment. For them, a round of golf is closely aligned with the mindset people adopt for "image management." It is their chance to shine. It's not about golf (the task), it's about them and their ego.

Mike had taken a mastery approach to the game of golf (as most children do.) He practiced and played whenever he could. He had unbridled enthusiasm for learning and improvement. He would try out new shots, invent games for himself, and get lost in hours of experimentation and mastery. Growing up, the reward for playing golf was playing golf. His motivation was learning and improvement, and he was never satisfied. In town and at the club people would ask his parents about Mike and his golf game. Without even being aware of what was happening, Mike was beginning to relish the attention that golf brought him. It wasn't long before the first thing that he would do after executing a great golf shot was look around to see who was watching. If no one saw it, he was disappointed. He would talk endlessly after good rounds of golf, and be silent after poor rounds. Mike got caught in a cycle of detrimental ego-oriented thinking that was triggered by everything around him. Because Mike had spent so much time deepening the creases of bad mental habits, the process of reorienting his perspective to a mastery approach took time and patience, the way that replacing bad habits always does. Developing a mastery approach became a day-to-day process of monitoring those cues to which he reacted so powerfully.

The difference between seeking approval and avoiding embarrassment can be well understood as the difference between "playing to impress" or "playing to avoid looking foolish."

For recreational golfers, if their boss is part of their foursome, rest assured that the confidence of the ego golfer rests securely in the boss's hands rather than in the golfer's skills, where it should be.

"There are two opponents in the game: yourself and the golf course. If you can somehow combat those two, you'll do all right."

Instead, ego golfers in a tournament setting see other players as their primary opponents. For recreational golfers, they see the scorecard as their opponent or the esteem of their buddies or the admiration of those looking down from the clubhouse above the eighteenth green. Ego golfers have difficulty immersing themselves in the moment because their minds are preoccupied with the reaction to the shot rather than with the shot itself.

Research in psychology has revealed that a mastery orientation fosters deeper processing of information, generates better concentration, leads to more enjoyment, and ultimately to higher levels of motivation and achievement.

You can't hit the shot again...so forget about it. When adversity serves as a trigger for immediate recovery, that is psychological bounce back at its best.

You are not playing against a score.....You are not playing against a tournament....You are not playing against other players.....You ARE playing a golf course, one shot at a time, the best way you know how.

Prior shots or future outcomes have little bearing on the task before them. Immerse yourself in the process of playing golf, and often you will concentrated to the point of ignoring everything around you.

In fact, I think that focusing one's concentration on challenging the golf course while blocking out the play of other golfers is one of the keys to not only beating Tiger, but to consistently winning on the PGA Tour, the mini Tour, or in a local match with friends.

“Compete” is rooted in the Latin *competere*, which means “to strive together” or “to seek together.”

Same with basing your approach on whether you bogeyed or birdied the preceding hole. When this is your approach, your confidence rises and falls and you are subject to either dwelling on the past or worrying about future developments instead of immersing yourself in present realities.

Attention to what someone else is doing takes away from the most fundamental component of golf: hitting the ball at a specific target. If I am paying even a little attention to another golfer, or anything other than the target, then I am not paying full attention to the shot at hand.

Awards and accolades are secondary to learning, improvement, passion, and fun. Kaizen is the goal of continuing improvement regardless of performance. Standards for excellence are self-imposed and self-judged. Motivation to improve is an internal drive, not external rewards. Obstacles are viewed as challenges to overcome (not threats to avoid). Focus is on playing the course itself, not things superficially related to golf. Competition is an opportunity to test and perfect one's skills. The fun of championship caliber golf is to collectively challenge a golf course (not necessarily to win money or beat other golfers). Poor shots lead to curiosity and greater motivation for improvement.

The mental baggage that comes along with ego orientation sometimes makes those golfers tense, apprehensive, uncertain, anxious, and afraid of making mistakes.

The time to pay attention to achievement orientations is after a poor performance, when golfers are coping with failure. Ego-oriented golfers tend to inflict a great deal of pain on themselves after playing poorly. The drive pain deep into their minds, and usually leave the golf course as quickly as possible because they are embarrassed. Consequently, they approach future challenges with fear or panic triggered by questions like, “What if I play badly again?”

Mastery golfers deal with poor performances by looking to correct the skills and mechanics of the golf swing or thought processes, not the emotions that accompany social shortcomings. As a result, they usually leave the golf course and head for the practice tee to improve their mechanics and refine their skills. They approach future challenges, not with fear or panic, but instead with focus and concentration.

Don't ever hit a shot and ask “What happened there?” Instead you let it go and go on to the next shot.

In a landmark book entitled *How We Think*, philosopher, psychologist, and master educator John Dewey put forth the simple but important idea that individuals evaluate their own experiences and thinking by reflecting on the outcome of their actions. In simpler terms, human beings have a tendency to get into their own heads.

Key to the process of self-reflection are the beliefs we create and develop about our own capability, about what we can and cannot do. These are our self-efficacy beliefs, which psychologists formally define as the beliefs that people hold about their capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage specific situations. Put more simply, self-efficacy is belief in our ability to succeed. That's the very essence of confidence.

Psychologists contend that self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment. This is because unless people believe that their actions can produce the outcomes they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Our self-efficacy beliefs are instrumental to the goals that we pursue and to the control we exercise over our world, however large or modest that world may be. Self-efficacy beliefs touch virtually every aspect of our lives

People with strong self-efficacy anticipate successful outcomes. Golfers confident in their putting ability anticipate, even visualize, making successful putts. Those confident in their driving skills expect their drives to be straight and true off the tee. The opposite is true of those who lack self-efficacy. Golfers who doubt their putting ability regularly envision two or three putting difficult greens. Those who lack confidence in their driving skills envision uncontrollable hooks and slices even before their driver comes in contact with the ball.

Individuals with high self-efficacy view obstacles as challenges to overcome rather than as barriers to avoid.

Self-esteem is an emotional judgment that speaks to how people "feel" about themselves, perhaps even whether or not they like themselves. Self-efficacy is different in that it is a cognitive judgment of what a person believes he can or cannot accomplish, independent of how he feels about the task.

Helping golfers improve their performance means helping them develop confidence in their ability to manage themselves and their thoughts so that they can produce the type of golf required to be successful when it counts, the type of golf they clearly have the capability to produce.

Helping golfers is a function of first getting their minds focused on the task at hand (playing shots to specific targets, one at a time). The next step is often teaching them skills and nurturing their confidence to overcome whatever obstacles stand in the way of mastering their task.

There are countless golfers across America with driving-range skills comparable to those of many Tour players but who are missing the key elements required to execute those skills when it counts in competition. Indeed, once sound mechanics are in place, it is the mind that divides golfers into different groups.

Of all the beliefs that golfers can develop, none is more important than their belief in their ability to hit the shots required to shoot the scores they want to shoot when it matters most. Those beliefs are referred to as golf self-efficacy beliefs.

Performance in the clutch (in fact, performance in general) always depends on the confidence one has in one's capability, which is to say, performance boils down to one's self-efficacy beliefs.

Given two competitors of equal ability and equal amounts of good fortune on a particular day, the one with the most assured sense of self-efficacy will outperform the less confident one every time. Those who succeed are able to think in ways that help them make the most out of the skills they possess.

Alexander Dumas wrote, "A person who doubts himself is like a man who would enlist in the ranks of his enemies and bear arms against himself. He makes his failure certain by himself being the first person to be convinced of it."

Decorative knowledge (knowing that it is important to believe in your abilities)

Procedural knowledge (knowing how to cultivate and nurture that self-belief and, more important, exercise it when you need to)

Confident individuals approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided. They have greater interest and deep engrossment in activities, set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them, and heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure. They quickly recover their confidence after failures or setbacks, and they attribute such failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills, skills and knowledge that they immediately acknowledge are acquirable.

As poet Shel Silverstein wrote "If the track is tough and the hill is rough, thinking you can just ain't enough."

Belief and reality must always be in concert, and so the confidence we have in our abilities must always be a reasonable reflection of the abilities we actually possess, regarding the task at hand.

Great coaches never tell athletes that they cannot achieve this or that. Rather, a great coach simply provides her athletes with instruction, effective practice, corrective feedback, and appropriate encouragement, and she helps them to maximize their potential, always raising the bar as high as is reasonable given the athlete's capability at the time, temperament, and level of commitment.

I suspect that confidence is the spouse of spirit. When both are high, the marriage is happy. Deflate one, and the other will surely follow. Lower confidence can result in decreased optimism, discouragement, and a negative outlook.

"It is our duty as human beings to proceed as though the limits of our capabilities do not exist." Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Playing fearlessly does not mean you feel like you can do anything, but it does mean that you feel like everything you do you can do. There is an important subtlety here: I do not jump off the roof of my house expecting to fly, but I do climb down the ladder without fear because I have learned the skill of climbing up and down the ladder. I do not all of a sudden doubt my ability to climb a ladder; rather my past experience and my attention to the task provide the confidence required for action.

Gary Player "People who want to resist and avoid adversity are cheating themselves. It is how you handle adversity that defines you as a person, as a golfer, and as a champion. I see guys out here all the time who let the littlest things undo them, undo their confidence, undo their motivation. I say, "Get in there and play the game with some courage, man! It is part of the game to have bad times. It is built into it, I think, to weed the weak people out. Nobody has good times all the time, so get up and fight! Show me some courage! Show me some patience. Show me some determination, for goodness sake!"

Frank Pajares "Self-efficacy is as much about learning how to succeed as it is about learning how to persist and persevere when you do not succeed. Self-efficacy does not provide the skills required to succeed; it provides the effort, perseverance, and adaptive thought patterns required to obtain those skills. Thus we make a very great mistake when we endeavor to prevent people from failing. Failure, after all, is the price we pay for success. Our efforts are better aimed at helping individuals learn how to fail when failure is unavoidable.

Only those willing to fail greatly can achieve greatly.

Rather than ignore obstacles or try to somehow remove them from the mind, self-efficacy gives golfers the means to effectively acknowledge and overcome the obstacles that accompany every round of golf.

Philosopher William James- "Do something every day or two for no other reason than its difficulty."

The presence of challenges and overcoming those difficult obstacles builds confidence.

Knowing is the first step toward doing.

Ultimate success is a function of how you deal with failure.

Success is the result of learning how to cope with setbacks in ways that golfers emerge from adversity stronger rather than weaker. As a result, true competitors welcome adversity knowing that it will weather them in adaptive ways. No human endeavor is better than golf at exposing a person's shortcomings.

Adversity is the very ingredient necessary to cultivate mental toughness.

Not to be afraid of golf's challenges and inherent difficulties, but rather to acknowledge them and learn to deal with them effectively.

The way you handle yourself at the bottom of the mountain will determine how high you climb.

Maximize what Jack Nicklaus called "playing badly well."

Caution can be implemented into your strategy rather than your golf swing. Pick more conservative targets.

For the psychologically weak golfer, even slight mistakes often trigger a downward spiral. Focusing on a mistake leads to thinking about hitting a bad shot. A mind occupied with thinking about hitting a bad shot invariably leads the body to actually hit a bad shot. Bad shots often lead to anger and frustration, which lead to obsession with the bad shot, which prevents focus on the subsequent shot. The cycle is endless as one calamity simply leads to another.

Automatic, thoughtless, efficient reaction to the target should be your goal.

Those who expect good things from themselves usually perform better than those who expect bad things. This is what psychologists refer to as the self-fulfilling prophecy.

People tend to be successful in areas where they expect success and tend to fail in areas where they expect to fail.

Performance is enhanced when a person sets goals that are high but achievable, specific rather than vague, and measurable rather than subjective.

If you are not hitting the ball perfect you have to figure out how to take 10 or 15 or 20 % of your game away and play with the other 80% to maximize what you can do.

Take a moment to write down something in which you are highly confident. Next, write down a few reasons explaining why you are confident in your ability to do this thing.

Most people are confident because they have experienced former success in that endeavor. Second, it's possible that other people have often pointed out to you how good you are at these things. They may have praised you

openly and frequently. Third, you've seen how others do certain things, and you know you do them as well or better than most of those you observe. Fourth, you are aware of how good you feel when you do these things.

Your confidence is rooted partly in how good you feel when you do this thing.

Self-efficacy is rooted in one or more of the following: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasions, and physiological states.

The confidence we have in our ability to succeed at a particular activity is strongly influenced by how successfully we've accomplished that activity in the past.

The challenge for the average golfer is to narrow the range of focus. They must learn to remember the good shots so that those are the ones the mind flashes to in a crucial moment.

A resilient confidence requires battle-tested experience in overcoming obstacles through hard work and sustained effort. Past difficulties, setbacks, and hard falls in pursuing the things we desire can be powerfully energizing, for they teach us the value (and cost) of the successes we finally attain.

As the wise Confucius once observed "Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall."

Low self-efficacy leads to bad questions, which lead to heightened fear, tension, and indecision, which lead to bad golf swings, which produce poor shots, which further undermine self-efficacy and fuel self-doubt. There are cycles of success and cycles of failure.

Because experience in any endeavor is a mixed bag of success and failure, individuals have the power to choose which memories they will attend to, the meaning they will give to those memories, and how strongly they will let those memories register in their minds.

Every day of our lives we each have the choice to frame situations in a manner that will either empower us and give us a competitive edge or disempower us and put us at a disadvantage.

Improvement at anything requires that we strive to do things we are not yet capable of doing, and so framing those experiences positively is critically important.

Get lost in playing a golf course.....Hogan used his practice sessions to "cultivate the habit of concentration."

Two questions to ask when you are playing....What is the best strategy for playing this hole? & "What is my target?"

Professor William Purkey once observed that "we tend to become what we think other people think we are."

Faith naturally breeds more faith, so take advantage of others' confidence in you to restock your own confidence in yourself.

Praising for ability tells a person that success is a matter of natural talent (which people tend to believe one either has or doesn't have). Praising for effort tells the person that the harder you work the more you accomplish, the more skillful you become, and the more you develop your talent.

Physiological changes by themselves are not the key factor in how a golfer performs. Recall that fear is inversely related to self-efficacy. The higher the self-efficacy, the less fearful a golfer will be. While the golfer with low self-

efficacy has a tendency to interpret these changes as indications of fear, the highly self-efficacious golfer interprets them as signs of being excited and ready to go, often even as a sign of euphoria and mental sharpness.

“How am I going to win this golf tournament?” is how Jack Nicklaus approached every event he ever entered. His two favorite questions that he forced himself to focus on throughout the round were? How am I going to win this golf tournament? And How do I want to play this shot?

Mastery golfers tend to ask themselves the same few questions over and over again: What is my target? What is the best way to play this hole? What sort of shot does this hole require? How do I want to hit this shot?

Because the mind often returns answers in visual form to the questions we ask ourselves, it is no wonder that mastery golfers are able to stay more focused and composed.

We do not run from obstacles. Rather, we identify them, learn about them, and then figure out how to effectively overcome them. Questions that focus the mind on details relevant to hitting great shots at precise targets are the key component of mastery golf.

Just as the mind instinctively responds to poor questions, it also responds instinctively to great questions like “How do I want to play this shot?” or “What is my target?” These are questions with immediate, knowable answers. Those are the questions of a golfer in control of his game and of his emotions.

Here is a list of productive, directed, specific questions that are the hallmark of the successful fearless golfer. What is my goal for this round? What is my strategy? What is my target?

The ideas of confidence, optimism, hard work, perseverance, and discipline are timeless and universal across all pursuits. Prepare your mind to win.

Sun Tzu’s immortal words that “all battles are won before they are ever fought,” or John Wooden’s “Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.”

Golf’s difficulty doesn’t lie in simply hitting a golf ball; any beginner can do that. The difficulty lies in the fact that golf is so very, very sensitive to psychological and mechanical fluctuation. Even subtle changes in an individual’s mood, tension levels, confidence, muscular stiffness, or swing path can result in dramatic differences in shots and in subsequent scores.

Jack Nicklaus would warm up on the driving range being guided by the simple question “What are my parameters today?” In other words, Jack wanted to know how well he was hitting the ball that day so he knew how risky or conservative he had to play.

One of the biggest challenges all golfers face is staying in the present. On the tee box ask yourself. “What is the best strategy for this hole?”

The golfer’s quiet mind goes something like this: What’s my target...a specific target in the distance is picked out....the target is locked on to with 100% concentration....a fearless golf swing is made at the target.

New equipment is as unlikely to improve your game as much as a new pen is to improve a writer’s prose.

The Attribution Tripod- The attributions for success and failure that golfers make typically fall into three key categories. The key to consistent improvement is to accurately identify which of the following factors are responsible for your golfing performance.

1. Personal/Physical Factors include health and fitness issues as well as swing mechanics and things such as grip, alignment, ball position, grip pressure, hip and shoulder turns.
2. Psychological Factors include attributions, achievement orientations, self-efficacy, anxiety, trusting your swing, and the other ideas covered in this book
3. Equipment includes drivers, fairway woods, putters, irons, wedges, and the golf ball, maybe even shoes, socks, hat, glove, depending on how much uncertainty has invaded a golfer's mind.

Believing we can control the things that influence our golf is essential to playing with confidence.

When listening to the attributions that golfers make, psychologists first look for the accuracy of the attribution. When a golfer says he played badly because he had no confidence, it is essential to discover whether that is the actual reason why he played badly.

In general, attributions for success and failure have three characteristics:

1. Stability. The causes of outcomes are stable (Fixed over time) or unstable (variable over time)
2. Locus. The causes of outcomes are internal (due to the individual) or external (due to factors outside the individual)
3. Controllability- The causes of outcomes are controllable or uncontrollable.

Research suggests that athletes who have a tendency to attribute their performance to controllable factors (effort, preparation, mental and physical skills, etc.) rather than to uncontrollable factors (luck, weather, etc.) typically perform better in the long run.

People who tend to attribute their success to natural, inborn talent are similarly likely to attribute the success of other golfers to talent. When failure and success are viewed in terms of inborn talent or natural ability, factors such as preparation and hard work are not considered essential to improving one's game.

Jack Nicklaus "I don't think anyone is born a great golfer. All great golfers, all people who are truly great at anything, are not born great. They become great through desire and hard work."

It bears repeating that praising young golfers with statements such as "You are such a natural!" or "You have tremendous talent!" can often have the opposite effect intended. Praising for ability or talent tells the novice that success is a matter of natural ability (Which the youngster believes one either has or does not have).

Rather than praising for ability, great golf instructors always make it a habit to praise the effort, preparation, and persistence that it takes for a golfer to succeed.

That's why getting in the exercise of honestly evaluating a round quickly after the fact may get our attention directed to the real areas of our game that need emphasis. Moreover, it is just as helpful and perhaps even more important to our development of confidence to talk about and review the holes we played well, as it is to critically dissect the holes where we didn't score. The challenge of playing fearless golf begins with a commitment to learn from the past by thinking and talking about it productively.

The more we believe we have control over events, the more confidence we have in our ability to achieve our goals.

Human beings have a tendency to provide highly inaccurate explanations for their failures in order to avoid anxiety and for their successes in order to take more credit than they rightly deserve.

First, only by making the right attribution for our lack of success can we hope to correctly identify the problem responsible for our failure, correct such problems, and set ourselves on the road to improved performance. Similarly, only by making the right attribution for our successful endeavors can we continue to execute the behaviors that led to our success.

Thomas Jefferson "I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have."

It does us not service as human beings to believe that the fruits of our endeavors are fixed, at the mercy of forces outside ourselves, and beyond our control. Such beliefs are a recipe for continual surrender and resignation in the face of adversity.

Habitual devotion to improvement....kaizen....is the zest to get better even if there is no immediate reward for the effort.

Hogan once said that there were not enough hours in a day to practice all the shots you'd need to play your best golf.

As Hogan once said in Golf Magazine, "You hear stories about my beating my brains in practicing, but the truth is, I was enjoying myself. I couldn't wait to get up in the morning so I could hit balls."

Aristotle wrote that "we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence thus, is not an act but a habit." William James.."Habits are the stuff of which behavior consists."

There is a time during which our behavior is elastic, simply because we are in the process of learning. Once the learning has taken place, however, our behavior hardens and we begin to operate, as it were, on automatic pilot. Through repetition and time, habits eventually bury themselves so deeply into the coding of human thought and behavior that they ultimately often override conscious choice. As the saying goes, we begin controlling our habits. In time, our habits control us.

As people age, they become more strongly influenced by the behaviors and inclinations they mastered earlier on.

The more frequently we give in to fear, the more sensitive the trigger becomes, and consequently, the more situations produce fear.

First, it seems clear that it is far better, and much easier, to cultivate good habits than to try to break bad habits. For James, the critical challenge that humans faced was making their positive and adaptive behaviors, thoughts, and emotions automatic and habitual as early as possible.

For all athletes these include—the habit of keeping on top of one's game, developing one's skills, concentrating on important features of the game, working to overcome weaknesses, organizing time well, learning to block out distracting thoughts and events, and adopting a no-fear-attitude toward the game of golf.

Top instructors agree that helping golfers develop new swings is initially about teaching them what to do. Beyond that, the challenge becomes the process of habituation. Making the swing become an automatic process that they can easily trust is not an altogether easy enterprise. The muscle memory part of the equation requires repetition and time. The mental portion requires patience and fortitude.

Veteran fighter pilot interview: He didn't hesitate to tell me that it was training that made him successful. "Up there, you just do what you are trained to do. You don't really think about it too much. You just do it." When you know that you can trust your good habit, you really don't have to think very hard about what you're doing.

William James offered several practical maxims about habit:

1. In acquiring a new habit, or breaking an old one, we must launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible. No half measures are useful in the game of habit making and breaking.
2. It is critical to never suffer an exception to occur until the new habit is securely rooted.
3. Every opportunity must be seized to act on the new habit we wish to create. For James, this is a matter of “will,” and will requires the personal conviction to act in firm and prompt and definite ways.
4. Talk is cheap. It is action that is called for.
5. It serves us well in developing good habits or breaking bad ones to engage in challenging activities “for no other reason than their difficulty.”

A combination of quick attention, self-reflection, and accurate self-perception are nearly always the best ingredients for the beginnings of a cure.

Play Your Best Golf Now by Pia Nilsson & Lynn Marriott

Lynn and Pia move beyond overintellectualized instruction and make golf a sport again—a game you play.

“We can’t control what happens to us, but we can control how we react to what happens to us.”

Be your own coach; you are the expert on you.

The key to great performances has as much to do with passion, belief, and trust as it does with arm angles, body positions and swing planes.

THE 8 ESSENTIAL PLAYING SKILLS:

- 1- **LEAVE YOUR MIND BEHIND-** This is about entering the Play Box, the sacred ground of golf. Learn to engage with the shot. Just make it happen.
- 2- **DECIDE & COMMIT:** Become a more confident player by learning to make clear decisions that you trust and stick with. Believe in great golf.
- 3- **FIND YOUR BALANCE:** Walk the tightrope to great play. Be centered physically and mentally
- 4- **FEEL YOUR TEMPO AND DANCE TO ITS RHYTHM:** Learn how your natural tempo feels and discover what tempo works best for you.
- 5- **TAME TENSION:** There is no greater saboteur of the golf swing than tension. Recognize it and manage it. Balance, tempo and tension awareness (BTT) will make any swing better.
- 6- **BUILD EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE:** Learn how to turn disappointing results into stepping stones rather than stumbling blocks.
- 7- **STORE MEMORIES:** File away the good and neutralize the bad. The past doesn’t have to be your future. You can learn from the past to make a better present.
- 8- **DROWN SELF-TALK IN USEFUL THOUGHTS:** Hear that voice in your head that raises doubts and fears? We all have it. Have a dialogue with it. That voice isn’t always right. You can set it straight.

THE 2 ESSENTIAL PRACTICE SKILLS:

1. **SIMULATE GOLF:** The time and effort you invest in practice yields the best return when it is most like real golf. Make practice like golf by inviting the pressure of performing onto the practice range with you. This is crucial to getting better.
2. **INTEGRATE SKILLS:** Why are you practicing? Don't just hit balls, practice with a purpose. Have a plan. Hit each shot with an objective in mind. There are many people who hit golf balls for an hour and think they have practiced golf, when all they have done is hit golf balls for an hour.

This game is far too beautiful to be reduced to just swing theory.

In a world cluttered with a myriad of specialized instructors, we view ourselves as coaches for the complete game of golf. We are not offering a gimmicky quick fix—although some of our students have seen astonishingly fast results—but rather a permanent foundation for greatness, a functional baseline for long-term excellence that will last as long as you play the game.

We are performance coaches. The point of the game is to get the ball in the hole in as few strokes as possible. We facilitate that process.

Most golfers are trained to think while they are performing. But all the research on peak performance shows that to maximize the outcome, you need to surrender to the moment and be right here, right now, with all of your senses.

“To be good at flying an F-16 requires extensive preparation and hundreds of hours of training. But once you are in the pilot’s seat, being good at it—being great at it—requires that you be one hundred percent present in the cockpit. This incredibly complex activity becomes entirely sensory based. I have a half dozen tasks to carry out with my right hand and just as many to do with my left. If I were thinking about the process instead of being totally engaged in the process, the outcome would be disastrous.

In the PLAY BOX, you must be totally present and through your senses completely engaged with your swing and the shot.

First, you need to know the difference between thinking and sensing. The second stage for a successful PLAY BOX is for you to learn how to stay present with your senses for those precious few seconds you are actually in the PLAY BOX. Third, you need to learn what works best for you to be sensory present in the PLAY BOX. You need to show up for every shot.

When you swim, you don't think about how to swim; when you ride a bike, you don't think about how to ride a bike; and when you walk, your mind is not focused on the mechanics of walking. You swim, you ride, you walk. Make it the same for golf. Don't think—play!

It is virtually impossible to try to hit a golf ball with a “to-do” list in your mind. It would be like trying to go through such a checklist when you are strapped into the cockpit of an F-16 flying at more than the speed of sound.

The process is the THINK BOX and the target is the PLAY BOX

In the PLAY BOX, you establish your aim and alignment—you commit to your target—and then you perform a committed swing.

You are not concerned about what happens if you miss the putt; you are not calculating what you need to do to shoot your best score; you are not ruminating on that last drive that went left. You are right here, right now. There is only one of you.

Some play their best when they see the target in the PLAY BOX, or the trajectory of the ball; others perform better when they hear the swing or hum a tune in the PLAY BOX; yet others feel a sense of rhythm or tempo while they swing or are more tactile and focus on grip pressure throughout the swing.

We find that for most good players, the PLAY BOX routine lasts between four and nine seconds from the time you step into the shot until you begin the swing.

When you cross that DECISION LINE into the PLAY BOX, you should feel a sense of liberation, not hesitation. The hard work has been done; the decisions have been made; the practice hours have been recorded. You have committed to the shot. Now comes the fun! It's time to play golf!

The PLAY BOX is where you are a performer.

If you allow a void to exist in your mind, it will be filled by self-talk, and self-talk is always unproductive, telling you what you can't do or reminding you of how you messed up the last time you were in a similar situation or worrying about the future or trying to remember the last swing tip.

Your golf experience is an ongoing process. It's not a destination at which you arrive but a road upon which you travel. Learn how to take vacations between shots so you save energy for each time you hit a shot.

When Yani Tseng won the 2010 Women's British Open at the age of twenty-one, we had her singing songs to herself to keep the self-talk away between shots, and we had her keep her PLAY BOX routine to five seconds so the self-talk wouldn't have time to start up when she was over the ball.

EXERCISES

1. Put a club or string down between the THINK BOX and the PLAY BOX. Hit 10 shots and make sure you have stopped thinking when you step across the club on string.
2. Hit three balls seeing the trajectory, three balls humming, three balls feeling a low center of gravity, three balls feeling a relaxed jaw, three putts seeing the line of the putt, three putts listening to the sound of impact, three pitch shots seeing a bright orange landing spot in your mind.
3. Hit three shots seeing the ball flight, hit three shots feeling the grip pressure, hit three shots feeling your feet, hit three shots seeing a green neon line moving to the target and back to your ball

How many shots can you hit being 100% engaged in the PLAY BOX?

Hit 3 shots with a 3 second PLAY BOX routine...6 second....9 second.

Play nine holes with only a PLAY BOX routine and no THINK BOX routine. What is that like?

You are a PLAY BOX Master when: You are 100% present for every PLAY BOX on the golf course....You have identified several choices for your best PLAY BOX AWARENESS, You have the skill and discipline to be engaged for the entire PLAY BOX, You are consistent with the time you spend in the PLAY BOX on the course and the time you spend in the PLAY BOX is with full engagement.

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