

Mindset Secrets for a Better Golf Game

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When you've bogeyed your last hole and you're about to hit the next drive, do you find it difficult to forget your misses and concentrate on your swing? Or maybe the pressure to sink the next putt has you paralyzed with stress? If you find it difficult to recover your focus in a negative golf situation, it's because stress has taken over, and your mind is stuck.

Every golfer knows the game is just as mental as it is physical. Beyond the techniques and mechanics, golf requires your left brain to think clearly, analyze situations, and look at the details of the course. It also requires your right brain for creativity, intuition, and considering the big picture.

Paul Dennison, Ph. D. and learning disability specialist, originally developed simple body movement exercises called Brain Gyms[®] for use with children and adults with learning disabilities. These exercises get both sides of the brain working together to produce better results. Now the Brain Gym techniques are used in school systems around the world, in the sales profession, as well as in golf. Even the PGA and LPGA recognize the validity of these concepts in course work for golf pros being re-certified as instructors.

Dr. Dennison based the exercises on research in the fields of developmental optometry, neurolinguistics, left and right brain research, acupuncture, and kinesiology. The movements use specific muscle groups in ways that facilitate the integration of both brain hemispheres. To be a truly successful golfer, you must use both sides of your brain at the same time. When one side isn't working, stress takes over, and your game suffers.

You need an integrated, whole brain approach to keep your stress levels down and be successful at golf. If a bad swing causes you to lose focus, you can get trapped in a downward spiral for the rest of the round. The following exercise reveals the connection between your mindset and your physical performance:

Noticing: A Self-Coaching Method for Understanding the Body's Response

Noticing is a method of biofeedback response that lets you see how situations affect your ability to perform on the golf course. I refer to it as internal self-checking because it relies on your noticing your *inner* reference points. This means you'll need to pay special attention and notice your feelings, posture, body sensations, and breathing.

Noticing is an easy method of biofeedback response because as you'll discover in the instructions below it is easy to stop and *notice* the feelings and sensations that cause you to be switched-on or switched-off about golf.

In this noticing technique you will observe what's going on in your body. So stand up and put your hands comfortably at the sides of your body. Read the instructions below and then do them without adjusting your body. Just observe your body's response.

1. Close your eyes and think of a negative golf situation. Really focus on the negative thoughts and feelings about it.
2. Now without adjusting your body, first observe your physical posture for a few seconds.
3. Next, observe your breathing for a few seconds.
4. Next, notice any discomfort or pain you feel in your body and where it is.
5. Finally, observe what's going on in your mind as to any thoughts or churning that is taking place.

So what did you observe? While there is no one right answer, many people may observe that their physical posture was slumped, their breathing was shallow, they had pain in a certain location and that their mind was churning. If your observations are different that's okay. Remember, noticing is not judging; it's just paying attention to what's going on in the body.

Now to show you how quickly the body responds to your thoughts, stay seated or standing and again just observe your body using the instructions below.

1. Again, close your eyes and think of a positive golf situation. Really focus on the positive thoughts and feelings about it.
2. Now without adjusting your body, first observe your physical posture for a few seconds.
3. Next, observe your breathing for a few seconds.
4. Then, notice the ease and comfort in your body.
5. Finally, observe what's going on in your mind.

So what did you observe this time that's different from the first time? Again, while there is no one right answer, many people may observe that their physical posture was now upright, their breathing was deeper, their body was at ease and that their mind was calmer. If your observations are different that's still ok. Once again, noticing is not judging, it's just paying attention to what's going on in the body.

How does this affect your game? When you have just hit a really bad slice into the lake and you are getting ready to hit the next shot, your mind may still be focused on the negative thoughts from the slice. This means when you approach the ball, you have actually changed your body's physiology, so that when you take your swing you hit another bad shot. This continues to happen because your body is no longer in the position you think it is.

When you focus on either the positive or negative side of a golf situation, you will create different physical outcomes congruent with that mindset. Now that you understand this connection, use these next two Brain Gym exercises to regain your focus when you hit a bad shot. These exercises will only take 90 seconds so you can do them before your next shot:

Hook-Ups

While holding the Hook-Ups position, use the same negative thought you had earlier. Begin to think about it and put as many details and feeling into the thought as possible, because in this situation it is necessary to visualize the event to take it out of the brain. While you are doing first Hook-Ups and then Positive Points, you may find at some point that your mind wanders off from the situation or it becomes hard to continue to focus on the negative. When that happens, start viewing the situation positively because you have now discharged the negative and can think about the same situation from a positive viewpoint. You are not attempting to make your mind think positively, it is only after you can no longer focus on the negative that you switch your view. Hold each position for 30 seconds.

Part I

- Step 1: Stand or be seated (as if you are in your golf cart), clasp your hands together and take note of whether the right or left thumb is on top. We'll call that side of your body with the thumb on top the primary side of the body.
- Step 2: Release your clasped hands and extend your arms out in front of you with the backs of the hands facing each other.
- Step 3: Take the hand on the primary side and raise it up and over the other hand; then join both hands together by intertwining your fingers, palms touching.
- Step 4: Bend the elbows and rotate your hands under and into your chest.
- Step 5: Cross the ankle on the primary side of the body in front of the other ankle.
- Step 6: Touch the tip of the tongue to the roof of the mouth one-half inch behind your front teeth.
- Step 7: While you can do this with your eyes open when you are on the golf course, close your eyes just this first time if you are seated. Focus on the negative thought first. Hold for 30.

Part II

- Step 1: Uncross your legs. If you are sitting, place both feet flat on the floor.
- Step 2: Place just the fingertips of both of your hands together so they form a tepee. Hold your hands in a comfortable position.
- Step 3: Keep your eyes closed if you are sitting. Keep the tongue up and continue to breathe through your nose. If the negative is still there, continue to view it negatively. Hold for 30.

Positive Points

For the last exercise, remain standing or seated. On your forehead, half way up to the hairline from the middle of your eyebrow, locate the small bony protrusion known as a frontal eminence. It's where the curved part of the forehead is located.

1. Place the middle three fingers of the left hand over the left frontal eminence and the middle three fingers of the right hand over the right frontal eminence. Maintain a very light pressure.
2. Remain in this position for thirty seconds. If you feel the negativity dissipating, begin to focus on a positive side of the event.

You will now be totally refocused to the positive elements of your swing, and just watch how your golf game will improve.

Improvements in the Future

After you've completed the Brain Gym exercises, think once again about the same situation and notice your posture, breathing, lack of pain and calmness in the mind. You will find that you will have the same responses as when you originally focused on a positive golf situation. You will find that you can think of the situation, but the negative charge has been erased from your memory.

Ultimately, you have control over how a golf situation impacts you. These Brain Gym positions are just one aspect of an entire system that teaches you the power of movement has over your brain and your body. When you use the Brain Gym exercises in golf, you can eliminate the negative patterns that result from losing focus. So, the next time you find yourself in the rough, use these Brain Gym exercises to immediately get your mind out of the rough in order to play that next shot.

About the Author: Dr. Teplitz is an author, attorney and has a Ph.D. in Wholistic Health Sciences. He is author of *Managing Your Stress*, *Switched-On Living* and *Brain Gym For Business*. He speaks and consults on management, leadership, sales and personal development issues. Contact him at 800 77-RELAX (777-3529), Email Info@Teplitz.com or go to www.Teplitz.com.