

Inner Golf Coach

So how do you know when you need or could benefit from employing sports psychology techniques and methodologies - that you need to develop your Inner Golf Coach?

Here are a few areas that may sound familiar:

Practice vs Competition: During your practice sessions at the range your swing and tempo is fine - your shots go where you want them to go and you feel at ease. However, during a competitive round, your performance drops, anxiety may build up and what was easy for you to do on the range becomes difficult on the course. This anxiety may happen because your desire to win is so great you leave no room for error, you can't accept mistakes and so, when they happen, your game deteriorates. If your game is not of a high enough level to worry about winning, you can become anxious because you don't want to look stupid in front of fellow players though your miss-hits and mistakes. This fear of failure and associated anxiety - causes golfers to try too hard and worry too much about outcomes and results - which in turn impairs performance rather than improve it. Sound familiar?

As Dr. Bob Rotella states "Golf is not a game of Perfect": Many club golfers think that playing perfect golf is the reason why they are successful, on the occasions they are successful. And yes they may have hit a few "perfect" shots on the way round to a good score. Also, while there are some advantages to having a nature that strives towards perfectionism, many perfectionist characteristics can hold individuals back from success. Having expectations that are set too high can easily lead to frustration and anger, which in turn, ruins your game. Does this sound like you?

What about Peer pressure and self doubt: Do you get uptight when eyes are upon you? Perhaps you are fine playing with regular colleagues or friends but suddenly get over anxious when playing with strangers? All too often players put pressure on themselves when playing golf. They tie in their self-esteem to their game, telling themselves that they are no use because, for whatever reason, they can't get off the tee that day! When you criticise yourself too harshly, you compound the link between self worth and performance in the game of golf. Many players talk to themselves in a way they wouldn't accept from a caddy, for example. They are overly critical when the slightest thing goes wrong. If this is you - you need mental coaching. You are not your golf game. You are not your performance on any given day.

And what if you are prone to losing focus during a round: When you try to close out a match, or suddenly realise you're on course for a personal best round it all falls apart. Sound familiar?

When you begin to look ahead or count up shots or whatever takes you away from the immediate task in hand - you have lost focus and you will probably agree that's when the game changes. Suddenly the pars, that were happening so easily, dry up. The drives that were splitting the middle of the fairway suddenly begin to tail off and go into the rough and the more you try to correct the situation - the more mechanical your swing thoughts become - the worse it gets. Suddenly your best ever round tapers off into an everyday, mundane score. All because you lost focus - or perhaps more precisely - began to focus on the wrong things. If this describes you, once again this is a sign that your mental game needs improving.

So how Can the Club Golfer Benefit From Sports Psychology?

Sports Psychology is about improving your attitude and mental game skills to help you perform your best – which in turn – will allow you to get more enjoyment from your game. Here are some of the areas Sports Psychology can help you with:

Getting to grips with how our mind works: Many golfers have no idea about how their own minds record and playback information and until they learn – cannot effectively communicate with themselves. Round after round golfers unintentionally reinforce negative aspects of their game, while letting positive – performance enhancing facets pass them by. Sports Psychology helps you change all of that.

Grow confidence in your game: How many times have you doubted your ability to win a match or even play a given shot? If you maintain many doubts prior to or during your round, this may indicate low self-confidence. When you understand what Sports Psychology is all about, you'll recognise that everything is geared to improve your self-confidence, because confidence is a key "mental game" skill that many other "mental skills" use as a foundation for their success. If you don't have confidence in what you do – you have doubt – and doubt kills free flowing golf.

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Improving focus: Many golfers have the ability to concentrate and focus, but often on the wrong things – such as; what they need to do over the last 4 holes to post a personal best score – and to their dismay, often fall short of achieving what they set out to do. A key mistake many golfers make is to focus on “outcome” related issues that puts undue pressure on them and their game. Sports Psychology encourages focus and concentration on “process” goals and targets that allow the scores to happen. By developing processes for shot making, golfers keep their concentration away from outcome goals and so reduce pressure and mental errors when playing.

Develop coping skills to deal with poor play: As golfers we all play badly at some point and it’s amazing how we let a bad shot or bad hole destroy our game. Learning how to deal with setbacks on the course is essential if you don’t want to erode your confidence and destroy your round. Sports Psychology helps the golfer put setbacks into perspective and together with working on your focus and concentration techniques, will help keep destructive thoughts and actions at bay.

Playing in the “zone” more often. The accumulative effect of employing Sports Psychology principles and practices is that the Club Golfer will experience playing in the “zone” more often. Now the “zone” may vary from player to player and depends largely on our skill levels: To a new player, playing off a 28 h/c - hitting two good shots in a row, feels good. To a mid handicapper - playing two holes well, in a row - feels good. To a single figure player - having two birdies in a row - feels good. To another player putting together a solid back nine or front nine - feels good. Whatever your current level of ability, Sports Psychology will give you the mental skills to reach your “Personal Zone” more often and as your technical ability and mental skill levels increase – so will the level of your personal zone.

I have only highlighted a few examples here; there are many, many more golfing situations where the correct mental approach can benefit you and your game.

However, you must remember that different situations affect players in many different ways; the key is to find the right mental approach for you. In the Inner Golf Coach, we cover most of the common situations that the club golfer or amateur will face. You can then select the techniques and methodologies that suit you and your personality and put them into play.

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The Inner Golf Coach *CD Content*

CD 1: Understanding the Key Mental Skills

1. Welcome to the Inner Golf Coach
2. How Sports Psychology can improve your Golf
3. Understanding how our Mind works
4. How we Record Information
5. Understanding Mental Imagery and Visualisation
6. What are Perceptual Positions and why are they important?
7. Understanding Anchors

CD 2: Using the Key Mental Skills Pre Round

1. Understanding Reframing
2. Understanding the use of Peripheral vision and Breathing techniques
3. Preparing to play – Pre Round thoughts
4. Dealing with Performance Anxiety
5. First Tee Nerves
6. Why Expectation is the mother of all golfing evils
7. How to Focus on the Process of playing golf

CD 3: Using the Key Mental Skills during Play

1. Handling the Opening Holes
2. Using Confidence Strategies during a round
3. Using Mental Imagery and Visualisation
4. Pre-shot Routines
5. Playing in the “Zone”
6. Dealing with Poor Performance