MENTAL GAME FUNDAMENTALS

by

David MacKenzie
Peter Taylor

“Competitive golf is played mainly on a five-and-a-half inch course, the space between your ears.”
- Bobby Jones
Introduction

Hello and welcome to the Golf State of Mind. Thanks for signing up for this eBook and course of lessons.

My name is David MacKenzie and I am happy that you have decided to learn the most effective way to improve your golf scores. Over the next couple of weeks, you’re going to learn the basics of how I was able to go from a very average player to a scratch handicap in less than a year, and what I teach my students who range from beginners to Tour professionals. And the beauty of it is that it has nothing to do with your swing mechanics.

The purpose of the Golf State of Mind teaching is for you

To - increase your self-belief and confidence to enjoy more consistent golf.

By - developing the mental toughness to rise to all the challenges you will face.

So that - you stay positive, focused, and decisive.

To be able to - use your skills naturally without the negative interferences that would normally hold you back

Learning to become the best golfer you can be requires cultivating the right mental attitude for success. This requires developing mental toughness, characteristics of confidence, courage, patience and commitment.

The key question is what do you really want to achieve in golf? Desire will only survive with so many other things clambering for your attention if you nurture it, and stay focused. This is achieved through clear goals and commitment - an essential part of every great golfer mindset.
Success will come only when you do the right things, repeatedly and patiently.

MAKE THE DECISION NOW!

Commit to a continuous program of improvement and honor those commitments. You are taking the first step to optimizing your mind to reach your true potential as a golfer.

Remember:

- Your mind and body are one system and affect each other directly
- You can choose ‘how’ to think. You can ‘always’ choose your response to what happens, definitely.
- Your body responds as if your ‘thinking’ is real, positive or negative;
- Therefore, focus on the positive outcome you want.

The strength of your mental energy depends upon…
I. Desire

First, list your dreams and wants (even those you may not fully believe are possible for you at this stage). For an amateur golfer, this might be to achieve a scratch handicap or winning the club championship. For a professional it might be to become a PGA Tour player.

Create short term goals (those you want to achieve in the next 3 months) and long-term (those you want to achieve in the next 5 years).
Outcome goals

Only put things here you are 100% committed to achieving i.e. you are willing to take action on now.

Think about…

What do you want expressed in the positive? E.g. “I will become a better putter.”

How will you know you’ve achieved it? I.e. keep a record of your stats

Now write your goals to meet the following criteria (SMART):

- Specific - “I will lower my putts per round to 29”
- Measurable - How did I do at this? Let’s keep a record of putts per round
- Achievable and challenging - set yourself a target that is not too easy nor too hard to achieve
- Relevant – Is this goal relevant to get make you a better player? E.g. if your putting is currently the best part of your game but you hit just a few fairways, then putting is not the most relevant
- Time bound - I want to be at this target within 8 weeks

Performance goals (process goals)

- Goals required to achieve the outcome goal, e.g. Practice regimen, fitness, or commitment to specific improvements
- Have a structured practice plan to make sure you’re using your time productively
II. Outcomes Thinking

“My life has been full of terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened.” ~ Michel De Montaigne

“What is my target?”

A very simple and profoundly powerful concept. Your brain doesn’t process negatives or ‘don’t’ e.g. don’t think of a blue apple.

It’s vital to think (often visually), sending messages to your muscles of what you do want. The brain responds far greater to images than words.

Any problem or ‘don’t want’ can be expressed in terms of what you do want. Positive language creates positive imagery and therefore a more useful performance state.

Reframing

You can shift your perspective at any time…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Frame</th>
<th>Becomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to go</td>
<td>I want to be on the fairway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.O.B.</td>
<td>I can play better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I played badly</td>
<td>I want to relax and play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to be</td>
<td>I will stick to my pre-shot routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I messed up</td>
<td>I will practice my putting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My putting is off
III. Focus and Concentration

The ability to focus or concentrate on what you choose will provide you with a supreme personal development tool that transcends golf. Daily practice even a minute or two will train your brain to focus automatically.

Concentration at one level is only “your ability to stay focused on what you choose while you choose to.” If your mind strays, the key is to ‘notice’ and bring it back without judgment. Focused attention always involves choice.

Play with breathing and relaxation techniques until you find the perfect ones for you.

Levels of concentration

1. Discipline (notice and comeback)

2. Interest (become fascinated with fine detail)

3. Absorption (at this level you are not aware of any distractions)
Some breathing techniques

Generally, teach yourself to belly breathe, rhythmic and silent, inhale and exhale with your chest still.

Visualize breathing into the bottom of the lungs.

Other techniques include:

Take a deep breath through the nose and slowly exhale through the mouth 3 times.

A deep breath and letting out the air smoothly is used universally in all sports before or during action.
Staying in the NOW (process thinking)

One important and useful way of being able to ‘focus’ is, staying in the NOW, in the present. Your attention (thinking) isn’t on what’s happened or what will happen (consequences), only on what’s happening now, the process, e.g. your pre-shot routine.

Inner voice: listen impartially, do not judge it, just gently bring your attention back to what’s happening.

Direct your focus of attention to your breathing and what you see (the ball e.g.)

– be alert and aware but not thinking (you can practice this any time, on any activity).

One day you’ll catch yourself smiling at this inner voice.

Being in NOW is so useful in golf because you only need to perfect it for a few seconds as you go through your pre-shot routine, and it’s a perfect way at any time to come out of negative emotions, regret, anger, anxiety – fear is always ‘future’.

If you’re truly present you don’t evaluate how you’re playing or keep a running total, or think ‘if only’. Excitement suggests thinking about results, regret suggests past mistakes, just keep playing the shot in hand until they run out, and narrow your focus on where you want the ball to go (the target).

The best way to access ‘now’ is through the body and its senses (see, hear, and feel). E.g. pay attention to your breathing.

Exercise

Ask, - “I wonder what my next thought will be”, and ‘notice’ how long it is before a thought comes in. Keep practicing until you can extend that time to several seconds or more.
This is easier, now focus on something, a glass, a golf ball etc (be very specific e.g. the light sparkling off one dimple of the golf ball). Now hold your attention and see how long it is before a thought comes in, then notice if your mind drifts and gently bring it back.

Practice, daily at first, then often to maintain the skill.

**Imagery**

- Match as near as possible the real world in your imagery
- Stand while you practice visualizing
- Consider holding a club
- Imagine in detail the course and hole you are playing
- Include other senses and emotions that would be present ideally
- Use real time generally i.e. not slow motion

If imagery isn’t easy at first, practice with a mirror or video of yourself, then close your eyes and replay what you saw.

Notice the difference in the feelings seeing yourself in the picture (disassociated) and seeing the picture as if through your own eyes (associated).

**IV. Managing Emotions**

How to access the ideal **performance state** for Golf (The Golf State of Mind) is learning how to manage your emotions.

There are only 4 things to monitor (notice)

1. Thinking

What are you focused on?

2. Inner voice
What are you saying to yourself?

3. Posture

How are you standing/walking, gripping?

4. Breathing

In belly or high in chest/rhythmic?

Fully consider these beliefs about confidence held by confident people:

- A key belief of confident people is ‘whatever happens I’ll handle it’
- Confidence means – Staying focused on what you want to happen
- Confidence is a decision to do what’s necessary to overcome obstacles.
- Confident people typically don’t need the approval of others in order to feel good about themselves

Notice the difference in your thinking and imagining when you say to yourself

What if....?

What would I do if...? (This one is more useful and creates a proactive attitude)

Stay focused on ‘wants’ rather than imagining things going wrong and possible consequences, embarrassment etc.

Always look for the positive intention of fear and doubt,

Tips on confidence
The absolute key of confidence in golf is to develop an unshakable, instinctive pre shot routine.

The brain is a mass of neural pathways; every action (including practice) creates new connections. Each time you repeat an action that particular pathway is strengthened. One of the best ways to accelerate our new behaviors (confidence) is through the imagination.

Your Body and Mind are intimately linked. It makes more sense to start using the term “mind-body.”

Whatever you think will affect the way your body feels, and the way you use your body (posture) will affect your thoughts.

Practice saying ‘Delete’ after poor shots especially at the range and ‘save’ after good shots i.e. Shots that matched your intention.

**Nurturing your Confidence**

**Checklist**

- Remember past successes
- Realistically assess skill level
- Examine Self talk
- Notice physiology – posture and breathing
- Preparation (sufficient rest, nutrition, warm up, rehearsal)
- Focus on things under your control
- Note your beliefs about yourself, in this arena, are they helpful or one’s you want to change
- How engaged are you, what is your ability to create a state of peak performance
- Pre Shot Routine – Develop your own and write it down
Here is a model that works well although it is essential you work on a personal strategy with your coach (see also recommended reading – Think box, Play box)

First stage: Decision and thinking stage

Consider your lie, wind etc things that will affect the shot, precise target, choice of shot, exact distance, and club selection etc

‘DECISION MADE’ 100% committed to this club and choice of shot.

Second stage: Visualize

Always give your full attention to every shot.

Stand behind the ball, ‘feel the shot’ with the club (include any practice swings in this section), ‘visualize’ the ball flight, landing area. Choose a distant target and a short target.

Step in, settle – anchor for alignment. Waggle etc

‘Trust’ and focus – Instinctive and unconscious

Have a Success Trigger

Remember…Keep your sense of humor and perspective and strive to enjoy your golf!!!

Thanks for reading the Golf State of Mind Mental Game Fundamentals eBook.

If you have any questions at any point, please email me at david@golfstateofmind.com