
The Focused Golf Training Manual

Bob Phillips, Ph.D.
Clinical and Golf Psychologist

A complete training program for amateur and professional golfers.

The Golf Psychology Training Center
Norcross, Georgia
USA

(c) Copyright Focused Sports, 1997

Copyright 1997, by Robert D. Phillips, Ph.D.

All rights reserved. No part of this book (except those forms specifically copied for the individual use of the purchaser) may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission in writing from the author.

Published by Focused Golf
748 Holcomb Bridge Rd. Norcross, Georgia 30071

Please Do Not Copy

The Goal of Golf Psychology

The goal of golf psychology is to give you the information, techniques and practical experiences needed to gain control of the mind-body connection. The golfer, through these methods, will be able to stop interfering with his or her desired level of performance. You can control so many of the elements that knock you out of a positive mental state. With practice, you increase your ability to call your own emotional shots. Through planning and practice, you become increasingly more in control of your emotional and physical response in any situation.

As in learning anything, you will need to practice each of the elements and techniques of the mental game of golf. Some elements will be easy for you, some will be very difficult. Remember that you are really developing a complete program for mental mastery and control. This training focuses on individual elements, but it's the total program that will eventually allow you to feel the freedom of emotional control. Of course we are not talking of emotional control like a robot might have, we are very emotional creatures. What we are shooting for is having the ability to limit our negative responses (both emotional and physical) enough to allow our best physical performance. We want to manage our responses so we can enjoy positive consistency in our game.

The mind can travel in time. We can go back and feel the best we have experienced in the past, or we can recall the emotional and physical details of past failures. We can go into the future to experience the pain of a miss, or we can practice success in a way that greatly increases our chances of draining the putt. Practice controlling when and where your mind goes. Use time as a tool.

Everything in this program must be practiced both mentally and physically before you can expect to use it successfully in competition. If something is important give it the time it deserves to become part of you. Eventually, they become a natural part of your game. A simple check before each round, a solid plan and consistent practice will allow you to combine mental and physical training.

Bob Phillips, Ph.D.
Clinical and Sport Psychologist
Director
Focused Golf
Norcross, Georgia

www.dr sport.com

How To Use This Training Manual

First, begin by reading through the manual. You want to get started so go ahead and read the whole thing. After you complete the evaluation (on the internet at drsport.com), you are ready to plan out your training program. Now look up the Topic pages that directly address the areas of your lower scores, or use the Problem Checklist. Go over each page with the idea of beginning a plan (set of goals) that includes all of your problem areas. Write out a description of what you plan to do over the next few months about these areas. Use Topic Plan forms to specifically plan out your training on each topic. Remember “things take time”, so be smart and plan for steady gradual improvement. Some things will come more quickly and easily, others will take several weeks to master. Do not overwhelm yourself, take a few topics to work on at a time. Remember to practice in your mind as much or more than you practice on the course. This increases the expectation and likelihood of success.

Golf psychology is about being prepared for both expected and unexpected events. The goal of this training is to give you the knowledge and skills needed to consistently be in control of your physical and mental game of golf.

Turn to the section that contains the Charting the Course flow charts. Go over the charts and see how the elements flow from beginning to end. Mentally go over the chart step by step. Now close your eyes and mentally practice the steps. If you forget the next step, look at the chart, close your eyes, and continue mentally experiencing the steps. Understand the flow of the process.

Now look over the Homework Form. Use this form to decide what mental elements you will work on during the first week of training. During each week keep track of the time spent, as well as the outcome of the work, on the selected areas of training. Save these so you have a history of what you have practiced.

Practice using the Pre-Event Checklist by pretending you are playing in a competition the next day. Go over the checklist item by item and make sure you are ready. Use this even for a friendly game. Most golfers notice a difference the first time they begin to really apply more “intention” to their game.

Remember to practice everything before you use it in competition. Master each topic and skill. Expect change. Expect success. Enjoy the game.

Index of Training Program Sections

- Section One The Problem Checklist
- Section Two Major Topic Areas of The Mental Game of Golf
- Section Three Personality Characteristics of Highly Successful Golfers
- Section Four “Charting the Course” Flow Charts
- Section Five Golf Psychology Process Forms
- Section Six The Seven Habits of Highly Successful Golfers

Section One:

The Problem Checklist

Use this checklist to determine which training topics you can use to solve the problems you have identified as being present in your game. Each problem has three or more training areas assigned to it. The assigned topics will address the problem. Using this guide you can determine which training areas you will focus on to solve the most pressing problems. Use the training forms to plan your training program. Do not work on more than three areas at any one time.

Golf Psychology Training Center

Click on the topics assigned to each problem to jump to that information.

List of Problems that can be resolved by using the Focused Golf Training Program.

- 1. My hands become numb, cold or “like stone”.** Focus, Outcome vs Process Thinking, Setting Cues, Relaxed, Body Awareness, Self-Sufficient
- 2. A bad shot or round really upsets me.** Program in/Program out, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Routines, The Negative Image, Detached
- 3. I do well in practice or when playing for fun, but when I am in competition I can’t score well.** Focus, Setting Cues, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Routines, Imagery, Detached, Chart 3
- 4. When I am shooting well below my usual score I get uptight and I lose focus. The result is that my score shoots up.** Outcome vs Process Thinking, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Imagery, Chart 3
- 5. I had a really bad or embarrassing incident during a round and now I can’t seem to get into the game.** Setting Cues, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Pre-Event Preparation, The Negative Image
- 6. When under pressure I begin to rush my tempo and my game really suffers.** Setting Cues, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Relaxed, Routines, Imagery, Body Awareness, Emotional Stability
- 7. I let myself think of too many negative things and I lose focus.** Focus, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, The Negative Image, Internal and External Distracters, Chart 3
- 8. I freeze up over the ball and it makes me nervous.** Focus, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Relaxed, Body Awareness, Dominance, Chart 3
- 9. I sometimes get so excited, or worried, about the outcome of a hole or round that I lose concentration.** Outcome vs Process Thinking, Step Breathing, Chart 7, The Negative Image, Emotional Stability, Dominance

Golf Psychology Training Center

10. I tend to worry about my club selection or my ability to judge distance. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Dominance, Self-Sufficient

11. I can't get a hazard out of my mind. Focus, The Negative Image, Chart 3

12. I have no confidence in my ability to put the ball where I want it. Setting Cues, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Imagery, Dominance

13. I think to much about what I am doing when I swing or putt. Focus, Routines, Internal and External Distracters

14. I try to focus only on golf during a round and I get mentally fatigued after about ten holes. Pre-Event Preparation, Relaxed, Chart 8

15. I play to conservatively, but when I push myself I can not score well. Pre-Event Preparation, Imagery, Dominance

16. My game is very inconsistent. Focus, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Routines, Pre-Event Evaluation, Slumps, Emotional Stability, Chart 3

17. I practice, but I am not really getting any better. Pre-Event Preparation, Routines, Pre-Event Evaluation, Emotional Stability, Chart 3

18. It takes a few holes or even an entire round before I can play my best golf. Optimal Arousal, Pre-Event Preparation, Emotional Stability

19. I get to involved with how well I am scoring and it makes me tense up. Outcome vs Process Thinking, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Optimal Arousal

20. I have too many negative images before or during a shot or putt. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Routines, The Negative Image, Internal and External Distracters, Chart 3

21. When I don't play well I really get down on myself. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Slumps, Chart 10

Golf Psychology Training Center

22. When I play badly I get upset and ruin the round for the people playing with me. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Emotional Stability

23. When I start a round I tend to feel unprepared and uncertain. Setting Cues, Imagery, Pre-Event Evaluation, Dominance

24. Sometimes I feel flat and not really into playing golf. Setting Cues, Optimal Arousal, Pre-Event Preparation, Pre-Event Evaluation

25. I often feel out of control when I am playing golf. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Relaxed) Routines, Internal and External Distracters, Pre-Event Evaluation, Emotional Stability

26. I lack confidence in my ability to play my best golf. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, The Negative Image, Emotional Stability, Dominance

27. I frequently feel rushed and unprepared when I start a tournament. Setting Cues, Optimal Arousal, Pre-Event Preparation, Imagery, Pre-Event Evaluation

28. I can play well for one or two rounds, but then I have trouble scoring well. Focus, Relaxed, Routines, Emotional Stability, Chart 3

29. I tend to carry a bad shot over into the next shot or hole. Program in/Program out, Routines, Self-Talk

30. I tend to let my thinking control me. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, The Negative Image, Internal and External Distracters, Chart 3

31. It is hard for me to regain my confidence after a bad hole. Setting Cues, Program in/Program out, Step Breathing, Chart 7

32. My shots are very inconsistent. Focus, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Internal and External Distracters, Emotional Stability, Chart 3

33. I notice that I think of physical techniques (keep your elbow in, pivot or turn correctly, etc.) when I swing or putt. Step Breathing, Chart 7, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Routines, Chart 3

34. I frequently find myself thinking unnecessary thoughts as I hit or putt. Focus, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Routines, The Negative Image, Chart 3

35. I tend to have a lot of “what if” thoughts and they cause me to have problems in executing my shots. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Routines, The Negative Image, Internal and External Distracters

36. I tend to physically tense up during play, especially after a bad shot. Program in/Program out, Relaxed, Routines, Body Awareness, Self-Talk

37. Sometime I seem to forget how to swing the club. Focus, Routines, Imagery, Dominance

38. I tend to see bad things happening when I am planning a shot or putt. Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Internal and External Distracters

39. A negative image will get stuck in my head. Internal and External Distracters, The Negative Image, Dominance

40. I tend to get distracted by things and people around me. Focus, The Negative Image, Internal and External Distracters, Emotional Stability

41. When I am playing over my head (out of my comfort zone) I get nervous and I stop scoring well. Outcome vs Process Thinking, Setting Cues, Imagery, Self-Talk

42. Under pressure I tend to overshoot my target. Focus, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Relaxed

43. I have a hard time getting out of a slump. Setting Cues, Step Breathing, Chart 7, Self-Talk, Chart 10, Chart 11, Pre-Event Preparation, Routines, Slumps

44. I have a hard time getting into the “zone”. Focus, Optimal Arousal, Pre-Event Preparation, Routines, Emotional Stability, Chart 3

45. I usually play under (poorer than) my physical level of ability. Focus, Setting Cues, Pre-Event Preparation, Routines, Emotional Stability, Detached

46. My hands will sometimes jump or hesitate on a putt. Focus, Optimal Arousal, Pre-Event Preparation, Routines, Emotional Stability, Chart 3, Step Breathing

Section Two:

Major Topic Areas of The Mental Game of Golf

Read these topic sheets to learn about these important subjects in golf psychology. Each topic gives you the information you need, the critical points to remember and how to use the topic in competition. Use these topic sheets to guide you in preparing for a mentally strong golf game.

Each area covered is important, so be sure that you eventually cover all of the topics. Use the process forms to create your training program and track your progress. The personality characteristics of highly successful golfers are covered in their own section.

Topic

Outcome vs Process Thinking

Information

When in competition spend very little time thinking about the outcome of your play. Instead, focus almost entirely on the process or how you are making it happen. This does not mean to focus on the mechanics of your game. It means to focus on the mental aspects and the necessary physical aspects required to be successful in playing your best. Outcome thinking is “counting your money while you’re sitting at the table”. When you think of the good or bad outcome of a round, hole or shot, you are losing focus. How can you be effective when your mind is in the future. The future is for motivation, but it is your enemy if you let it invade your thoughts while you are needing focus to execute the immediate physical part of the game. Play each shot for the shot, not for what it means.

If you find yourself distracted by outcome thinking, simply set these thoughts aside (this takes practice) and go on. If you know you have a habit of outcome thinking prepare yourself by mentally practicing having and then letting go of these thoughts. Also, before a round begins, ask yourself questions such as what is the worst thing that can happen? Will it last long? Will your loved ones stop loving you? Will you fall down dead? Have you gone through it before, are you still alive? Get a perspective of the outcome, mentally prepare yourself, and enjoy your day.

Point(s) to Remember

Outcome thinking is for motivation, process thinking (staying in focus and doing what is necessary) will get you there.

Practice regaining control of outcome thinking and replace it with confident process thinking.

Competition

Watch for inappropriate outcome thinking (i.e. If I make this then---, I’ve got to hold on for two more holes, I’m out of it now, This will be my best finish ever.) If you find any, set it aside. Focus on what you need to do to be successful in the present. Thoughts about pace, target, enjoyment, confidence and feelings of positive expectation are much more helpful.

Notes

Topic

Program In / Program Out

Information

We want to increase the odds of creating a good shot and decrease the odds that a bad shot will effect the next shot in a negative way. One way to help this happen is to have two consistent routines that you perform. After a bad shot, perform the “program out” routine. Some will tap their shoe with the club, tap the ground (not too hard) or simply wave the club slightly. This waving or tapping is as if you were getting rid of the “badness” still on the club. After a very good shot (it should be better than average) you may want to touch the center of your chest just under your throat, or squeeze the club grip gently to seal in the feel of the excellent shot.

This routine can give you enough relief to avoid taking the negative emotions and their disabling physical side effects to the next shot. The “program in” routine can build a strong positive cue that you can use later to assist in maintaining a positive mental attitude from the inside.

Point(s) to Remember

It is better to control your thinking than to let it control you.

Use routines to improve your game, program in the good feelings of success and program out the negative effects of frustration and poor performance.

Competition

Use these routines each time you have a very good or a poor shot.

Combine the “program out” routine with an image of the shot being very successful. Do the routine and then imagine the shot being successful. This increases the probability of leaving the negative emotions and body reactions behind. Never let a negative image or feeling be the last part of a shot. Always end on a positive emotion.

Notes

Topic

Slumps

Information

When things go bad, either in the mental or the physical part of the game, for an extended time, you are in a slump. There is always a reason or group of reasons for a slump. Uncertainty and negative expectation are frequently the causes of a slump. Frequently, changes in some basic element can start a slump. This change could include your swing, your clubs, your reason for playing or the perceived “importance” of your score. Playing with pain, over practice or underpractice can also trigger a slump. If you are playing too much you can burn out, or if you have increased the self inflicted pressure to do well you can cause your mind and body to react with negative results. Personal issues outside of golf can also have strong impact on your performance.

Fight slumps by accepting both the positive and the negative fluctuation of the game. Just like you feel different on different days, you will play differently. Even if you give sufficient time to the mental aspects of the game, you will still have a fluctuating level of play. But remember what the smart golfer said, “Sure I have bad rounds, but I don’t mind, I used to have bad years”. Also, commit to your game, your trainer and your style of play. Give them time to become natural for you.

Point(s) to Remember

Slumps are a natural part of golf, or life for that matter.

The stronger your learned habits of good mental golf are, the easier and sooner you will come out of a slump.

You are in control of most of the things that cause or continue a slump.

Competition

Accept what happens, work to improve.

Focus on mental work, not on physical change. Evaluate your game with someone you trust and respect. Build a plan for improvement, stick to the plan.

Go back to why you play the game. Be who you are. Enjoy.

Notes

Section Three:

Personality Characteristics

This section discusses the seven personality characteristics that research has shown to differentiate between touring professional golfer and highly successful touring professionals. While the goal is not to make every golfer think and act the same, it is most likely that these personality characteristics serve these men and women well in competitive situations. We will look at the behaviors that these characteristics exhibit and explore how these can be used by you regardless of your level of play.

As in the Topic Sheets, each topic (personality characteristic) will be discussed. The most important points will be delineated and the use of the characteristic in competition will be explored in detail. It is very important for you to understand your own personality structure, especially on these seven characteristics.

Topic

Self-Sufficient (Personality Characteristic)

Information

This is your ability and preference to make your own decisions. Followers do not generally make the best golfers. Golfers who are lower than most on this characteristic tend to ask too much of others. They are often indecisive on the course, over reliant on instructors and take forever to make decisions.

Some ways of raising your level of self-sufficiency are: keep track of your problem areas and plan how to improve these areas, make a commitment to your game, your instructor and increasing your abilities. You should also use practice rounds to work on a definite game plan. Make a point of choosing your clubs, shots and course management decisions with confidence. Find other areas of your life in which you are already confident, and learn how to bring that confidence into your golf game.

Point(s) to Remember

Use imagery to practice being more decisive. Learn to be comfortable with confidence.

Learn how to reduce your overall tension.

Make most of your own decisions.

Competition

Do not make changes or accept assistance during competition.

Make your own decisions

Commit to each club and shot, no exceptions. It's better to hit with the wrong club with confidence than to hit with the right club but be unsure.

Notes

Section Four:

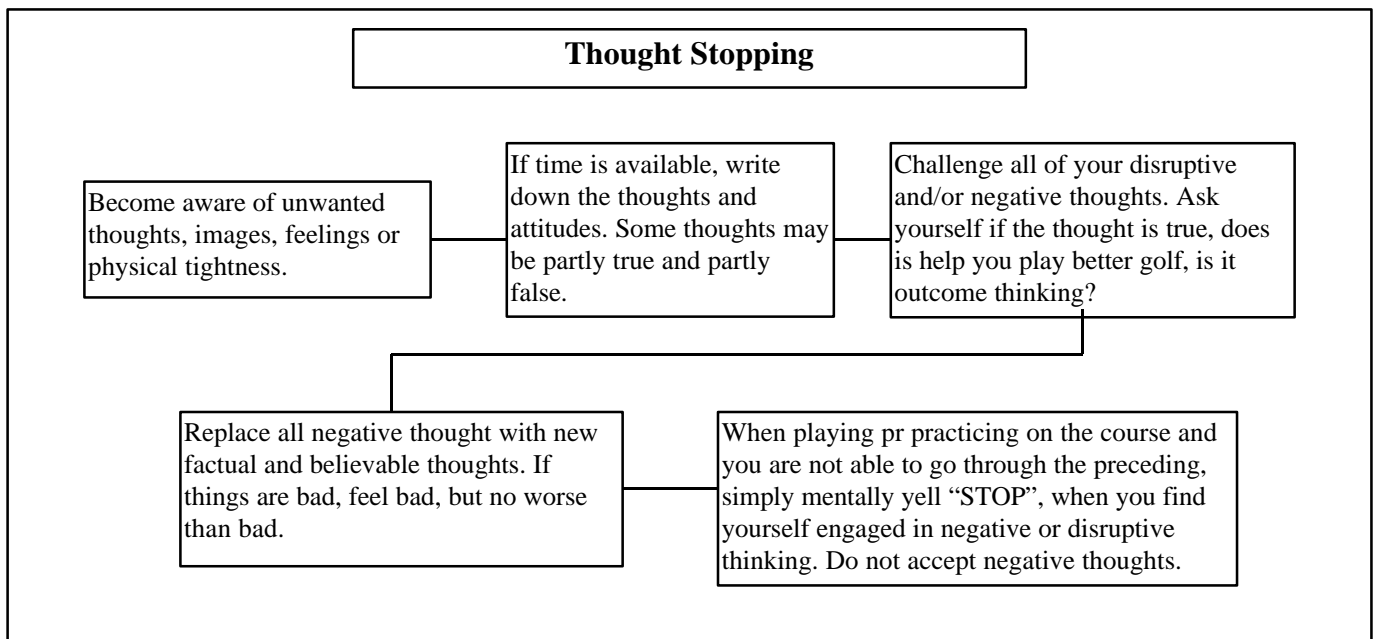
“Charting The Course” Flow Charts

This section gives you a complete set of mental game of golf flow charts. It is important to not only know what to do to control your emotional and physical reactions on the golf course, it is also very important to understand the best sequence for each topic or technique. When you do something is often as important as what you do.

Follow each flow chart step by step and notice how the sequence moves through the process. Image or think yourself through each chart. Pay special attention to the emotional aspects of the charts. The emotions give the process its strength. Learning these processes will give you the ability to determine your own reactions on the course.

Charting the Course # 11 Thought Stopping

There are times when you can not take the time to work through the change your thinking pattern. Use the “thought stopping” technique to help you stop your negative thinking or images.



Changing your thinking patterns by stopping a thought is a strong way to control your unwanted emotional and physical responses. Another variation on this idea is to imagine taking hold of the thought and hanging it up in a tree. Others like to imagine opening up a filing cabinet and putting the thought or negative image in the drawer and then locking the file.

Section Four:

Process Forms:

This section gives you a complete set of mental game of golf process forms. Each form is designed to help you master the mental game of golf. Use these forms to plan your training program. Keep your forms so you have a history of your training program. These will come in handy for reviewing your learning and development in golf psychology.

The Topic Plan. This form guides you through the three phases of learning each topic or technique. Fill out one of these as you study each topic. Use the short form evaluation to help you decide where to begin your training.

Golf Practice Report. This form helps you track both your topic area and your progress for the week. This form also helps you to not omit any topic area from your training. This form is especially helpful if you are planning to fully explore all the areas of golf psychology.

Golf Cognitive Checklist. This form trains you in the process of changing your “stinken thicken”. Because your self-talk is so important in creating your emotional and psychophysiological reactions, special attention should be placed on this training area. When you have a negative reaction use this form to find the self-talk or attitude behind it. Challenge the self-talk or attitude and then change the thinking to new more rational thinking. All that you feel arises from your thoughts.

Golf Pre-Event Checklist. This form helps you get ready for competitive play. Use this form to structure your pre-event preparation.

Golf Post-Event Checklist. This form guides you through the process of learning from your performance. Review your mental game performance with an eye towards making it even better.

These forms may be copied for your own personal use. Make as many copies as you need of each form. **Please copy these forms only for yourself and not for others.**

Topic Plan

Use this three phase approach when developing your golf psychology skills. The phases are understanding, acquisition and utilization. Work on each skill systematically and monitor your progress.

Name of topic: _____

Rate your current ability on this topic 0 to 10, (10 is highest) _____

Phase one: Understanding. Describe, in your own words, what this topic is all about and how it can lead to lower scores in your golf game.

Check your answer in the Golf Psychology Training Manual.

Phase two: Acquisition. This phase includes practice, self-monitoring and self-reinforcement. Spend time specifically using the new skill. Single it out and force yourself to focus on it. Use the "Practice Report" form to keep track of your practice. Track your progress. Remember, "Only the mediocre are always at their best". List the things you will do to practice this specific new skill.

I will:

Phase three: Utilization. Now use this new skill in your practice and then in your competitive golf. In this phase you do not single it out for practice, you bring it into your normal game. Continue to monitor your progress. Describe below how you will be successfully utilizing this skill in your competitive game.

I will:

Section Six:

The Seven Habits of Highly Successful Golfers

This section puts the mental game into seven habits that can allow your game to reach a higher level. These seven habits incorporate many of the topics covered in the training program. The important thing about these habits is the philosophy that includes acceptance of where you are so you can start with the honest truth of the matter. They talk about why you play golf and how, no matter what, it is not a life and death situation. Too many golfers ruin the game for themselves. Too many make it harder than it is and far too many play far below their ability. It still comes down to learning what you can control, more than you thought, and letting go of the rest.