

The ball knows what you're thinking

# MENTAL FITNESS TRAINING FOR GOLF

By Michael White



**YELLOW CAR COACH**

what you focus on you attract

Improve your mental strength  
and improve your game in  
sport and in life!



# INTRODUCTION

**The mental game of golf, although spoken about regularly these days, is something many golfers still don't really give much consideration to.**

And that's surprising when you look at the fact that the average handicap hasn't come down in over 25 years, even with all of the club, ball and swing improvements that have been made.

I'd like to point out the obvious - the piece that's really preventing your game from improving - is the 6 inches between your ears.

We know that once you reach a certain level of physical ability in Golf, that the mental part of the game is truly the differentiator in the level of success you achieve, yet golfers still invest more in their equipment than they will in their minds.

With this in consideration, I've decided to provide an overview package of some of the key tools, tips and strategies that I use with my one-on-one golfing clients, including some of my PGA Touring players.

By implementing even a few of these concepts, you're likely to shift your game to a better place, improve your experience and likely see your scores actually come down.

Remember, golf is 90% mental and the other half is in your head.

What you focus on you attract!

Hope you enjoy it.

# POSITIVE FOCUS

When you find yourself thinking “don’t put it in the water”, “don’t be short” or “just be sure to clear the bunker”, you are thinking the wrong way. By putting attention to the obstacles or the results you don’t want, you’re actually increasing the likelihood of attracting exactly that. The more you think of the water the better the chances you’ll bring the water into play.

That’s right, what you focus on you attract! And that goes for what you don’t want as much as for what you do. I call it pushing against instead of pulling towards. That which we think about expands.

**TIP:** Moving forward, focus on what it is you want. Shut out the obstacles by filling your mind with only positive outcomes. If, when on the tee, you’re looking for a fairway, block every single thought other than that fairway from your mind. Ask yourself what do I want? If there’s water left and OB right, the only thought you should be having is the fairway; anything else decreases the chances of your success. By practicing your awareness of what you are thinking, you will catch and correct yourself to the positive. With constant training you’ll start to create a new habit of positive focus and begin to create automation of only thinking of what you desire. When automation occurs the frequency of fairways increases. Focus **ONLY** on what you want. Practice and repetition, just like the swing, is the key. Do the work. *What you focus on you attract!*

# ATTRACTING THE DESIRED RESULT

The smaller the target, the smaller the miss. In the last lesson, we discussed the importance of focusing only on what you want, and specifically, we referenced the importance of seeing only the fairway.

Expanding upon that concept, when you see a 40-yard wide fairway and think “Fairway” you open yourself up to a massive target. In doing so, you increase the margin of a miss as the brain focuses on a bigger space. If you miss the fairway by 30 yards, which is even less than your target, you likely end up OB, in the water, or even in the parking lot.

**TIP:** If you focus instead on a much smaller target, for example a tiny dark patch of grass in the fairway that’s a foot wide, a 150 marker or a branch on a tree in the distance (not the tree trunk, but a branch, or even a leaf on it – thanks Jack Nicklaus) you not only shrink your target, but you shrink the miss as well. “The smaller the target, the smaller the miss”. By thinking very specific, you dial in the focus and increase your concentration level. In doing so, you increase the odds of attracting that desired result. *What you focus on you attract!*

# VISUALIZE YOUR SUCCESS

Visualization is certainly one of the key components to the mental game of golf, and life for that matter. If you can see the outcome before it even happens you make a shift mentally that heightens your chances for success. The old saying “I’ll believe it when I see it” is the typical perspective we, as humans, take in the game and is one that tells us we can believe in our success when we have that success. In golf, that means; once I shoot a low score or make a birdie I’ll have the confidence to do it again.

The problem with this thinking is two-fold: One, if you are waiting for success to show up and aren’t making the mental steps to assist it, you will be waiting an awfully long time. And two, birdies and low scores don’t create long-term confidence. Confidence creates low scores and birdies. We seem to have been taught the opposite of what holds true for real success; that the results need to come first for us to build upon them. Those who truly excel in the game are able to see the success before it happens.

**TIP:** start telling yourself “I’ll see it when I believe it” and put yourself in the mental state of expecting the results. When you “feel” the success before it even happens, you change the energy inside you and increase the odds of those desired results showing up. *What you focus on you attract!*

# PUTT TO MAKE

Watch the PGA and listen to the commentary and you will hear things like, “he’s got about 50 feet, and he’s looking to lag this to a foot or two”. I have news for you, not many tour pros are looking to miss a putt (although some actually do). They generally putt to make it. But for some reason the game has been presented to us based on even the pros trying to miss a putt on purpose to make sure the next one goes in.

I don’t know about you, but that’s absolutely ridiculous to me! They putt to make it, and you should too. So instead of putting to miss, putt to make! See every putt falling in the hole. Whether or not that’s ramming it in the back of the cup, or dropping it in on the last turn, make sure you see it falling in.

**TIP:** And going back to “Pick the tiniest of targets”, identify a blade of grass, or perhaps a tiny mark on the back of the cup where you see the ball hitting, falling or rolling over. When you practice identifying the tiny target you will create a new habit of putting the ball there. And in the case of a miss, it’ll be much closer than if you miss that two-foot circle by two feet. I’ll take a tap in over a four-footer any day. When you visualize the ball going in and feel it happen before you make the swing, you increase your likelihood of having that success. *What you focus on you attract!*

# DON'T SWING UNTIL IT FEELS RIGHT

If you haven't figured it out by now, I'm a big fan of FEEL. Not just on the golf course, but in all areas of life. When you attach positive emotion to that which you want to have happen, you change the energy inside of you and improve the chances of your desires becoming reality. That's the attraction part. When you feel good, good stuff happens. That's why "the better it gets, the better it gets"!

When you're standing over the ball and you feel off for some reason, maybe you're standing on uneven ground, or there's a divot under your right heel, or maybe there's more of a breeze in your face than you first thought and are thinking you may not quite have enough club. No matter the reason, if you're thinking of anything other than where you want the ball to go, you're thinking about the wrong thing. This is when you know it's time to step away.

**TIP:** Make a decision and get behind it. If you're not 100% focused on how you want this shot to go, step away, reset, go through your routine again and then step back in. You need to be committed with laser focus to give yourself the best possible chance at success. It needs to FEEL right. If you ask yourself the question "how's this feel?" and the answer is "Ya baby, I've got this" then make the swing. If it's not, reset. *What you focus on you attract!*

# STAY IN THE MOMENT

You're last shot is a past now and your next shot is a future now. What can you control in either of those cases? That's right, absolutely nothing! You can't control anything that's already happened and you certainly can't control what's going to happen in the future. Funny knowing this and yet we still let past shots and results dictate so much of what we do and how we feel moving forward.

The concept of doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is met with the definition of insanity. I'd like to introduce the same philosophy of worrying about past shots; "Letting something you have no control over control you" is my new definition of insanity. So it's time to let the past go and focus only on what it is you can control. And that's the shot you're about to make and the attitude that you take towards it.

**TIP:** Practice thinking only of the moment you're in, and do this by asking the simple question, "what can I control right now"? When you create a habit of asking this question, you'll keep yourself focused in the moment and eventually it'll become a new, automated habit, which again, is the key for a better mental game and better results. Habits are "actions repeated"—what you practice becomes who you are. *What you focus on you attract!*

# WALK LIKE A PRO

Body posture changes your energy. When you walk with purpose, no matter what that looks like for you, you release “feel good” hormones in your body (dopamine and serotonin), which give you a boost of confidence. A confident walk is different for everyone. Most are shoulders back and head high, others might include a swagger (aka Rory McIlroy on a great day) or a Dustin Johnson like saunter.

When you hit a poor shot and walk away frustrated and hunched over, your body releases adrenalin and cortisol; the stress hormones, which put you into a negative state (these are the fight or flight hormones that keep us stuck in fear and disappointment). Awareness of these feelings is the first step to making a change and like so much of what we talk about, fostering this change is all about the practice.

**TIP:** after every shot you make, instantly shift your thoughts to your body posture; how are you reacting, how are you moving? Pay attention to your movements and correct them if you get down. By focusing on your posture, you will heighten your awareness, improve your attitude (that’s the science) and, oh, by the way, if you did hit a bad shot, you’ll have shifted your thoughts quickly away from it, which will help let it go, bonus! *What you focus on you attract!*

# PLAY YOUR GAME

It's always surprising to me to watch a golfer in a tournament who typically hits 3 Wood step up to the tee when all his playing partners pull Drivers and decides to do the same as well. It happens, and likely has happened to you at some point in your career. What others do influences some of the best golfer's, and it's not always club choices. Everything from shot shape to when you choose to have a drink or a bite to eat can be influenced. You have certain strengths in your game and when you play to your strengths you give yourself the best chance at your best round. When you allow your surroundings and outside influences affect you, that's when you falter. The ability to know your game and play to your strengths is a sign of solid Mental Strength.

The development of “your game” is integral to the success of your game. “Make a decision and get behind it” is a saying I love to use and applies to so much in our lives and in golf. It's picking the line on the green, it's choosing a club and trusting in your swing. It's creating a routine and using it every shot, no matter what. It can even mean doing the same thing before every round to keep you focused in the proper headspace. Habits, which create positive thinking, are key to success.

**TIP:** create 2 or 3 daily success habits, which keep you in positive alignment everyday. Perform these religiously and you will understand the value in doing it your way to achieve positive results. Take that same approach to the golf course and play your game to your strengths. Don't care what anyone else is doing, do your thing. *What you focus on you attract!*

# STAY IN THE PROCESS

Routine to a golfer is gold. It's the process of pre shot habits that keep a player calm and focused during the shot at hand. We speak often of habits and previously we discussed the importance of "daily success habits". The pre shot routine is the "on course" habit (or collection of habits) that maintains the necessary energy (Emotion) required to play at your highest level possible.

When you consistently perform your pre shot routine, you subconsciously prepare yourself in the best possible way to execute. In doing so, the actions allow you to concentrate in a manner that keeps you calm, centred and focused on your target. When stress levels elevate, say on the first tee of a big tournament or on the last hole of a championship where you are carrying a one shot lead, the routine is one of the key tools that keeps you from allowing the "stressors" to set in.

**TIP:** Practice your routine on every shot you make, whether on the course or on the range. If you make this a part of the swing, you will create it as a subconscious, positive habit, which will help keep you calm and focused when it really matters. The successes come when you automate your mental focus. Just like automating your swing. The more you do it the better you get. It's Neuro-Science 101. *What you focus on you attract!*

# FIND THE GOOD

Everyone makes a poor shot at some point. It's a common part of the game. Even the pro's hizzle-rocket it once in a while. Regardless of how many poor shots you make in a round, how you react to them is essential to your mental fitness, and also to your experience on the course. In fact, your attitude towards the bad shots is the most influential factor in how you recover and ultimately it's the only real part of the game you have full control over.

You can't control the bounces, the breaks, the conditions, the weather or your playing partners, but you can control your attitude towards it all. So by finding the good in every shot, no matter the circumstances, you will position yourself far more effectively to enjoy your round of golf.

**TIP:** Look for the positives in every shot. If you scull one into the water, for example, and the drop zone happens to present a good angle to the green, see it as "a great angle coming in", focus on getting the next one close (or in!) and move forward. If your ball get's hit by a gust of wind and comes up 20 yards short, even though you hit it just like you wanted to, focus only on the fact that you hit it perfectly. In doing so, you will stay in a positive state and give yourself a much better opportunity of hitting the next one perfect again. I like to suggest using the saying, "Flush! - Next!" *What you focus on you attract!*

# HAVE MORE FUN

You started playing this game because it's fun (at least I hope so). For many reasons though, it can be a game that beats us up pretty bad. Every failure in golf leads us to question our own physical ability, our mental stability, and challenges us to the core. It's a game that can frustrate us more than most, yet rewards us just the same and somehow keeps us coming back for more. How many times have you played, what you consider to be a horrible round of golf, then you drop a putt, par, birdie or eagle your last hole and walk off the course excited about the next time you get to play?

Whether you are a weekend worrier, a 20 or 40 round a year player, or you play on tour, when you have fun playing the game, you create a better experience, which pretty much always results in better scores.

**TIP:** Watch when guys like Justin Thomas and Jordan Spieth are having fun (emphasis on "when" haha) eagles, birdies and low scores appear everywhere. They don't create their fun from the birdies and low scores, they create the birdies and low scores from their confidence and love of the game. There's a misconception out there that results are what dictate our attitudes. Not true. Our attitude dictates our results. And once you figure this out, and begin to apply it, it's amazing the things you can start to do... and the success you'll start to have. This is the basis of "*What you focus on you attract!*" and applies to every aspect of your life.

# CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLES

Possibly one of the most straightforward, yet powerful strategies to implement in the game of golf. Understanding that your attitude and your approach dictates the results you have is key to your success, not only on the golf course but on the course of life as well. By taking charge of that which you can actually control, you position yourself to not only reap better results, but also, and just as importantly, ensure you have a better experience.

We often lose focus and allow outside influences to negatively affect our performance. And those influences are often the one's we have no control over. Consider weather for example. How many times do you let wind, rain or extreme heat be the reason for a less than stellar performance on the course? I hear it all the time; "I had everything going until the wind kicked up, or, until it started raining..." News flash; the only reason you are letting those uncontrollables control you is that you're not playing with confidence and not playing in the moment.

**TIP:** If you feel excuses coming on, or influences starting to negatively affect you, ask yourself the question; "what can I control here"? The right answer will be; assessing the shot I'm about to make, preparing the best way I can and executing to the best of my ability. The rest is out of your control. When you focus on what you can't control, you give it power, and it usually wins. Put attention to what you can control. *What you focus on you attract!*

# NO EXCUSES

In golf, I often find players blaming things like wind and other weather conditions, the actions of a playing partner, bad bounces or even something like a sore thumb or blister to intercept their concentration and disrupt their game. Years ago I had a hockey teammate of mine make the following comment to me on the bench during a game, (while I was complaining about an injury, and of course, allowing my focus on this injury to negatively impact my game), he said, “Wytey, no f#@&ing excuses”.

Two things, 1. FYI, my nickname since grade 2 has been “Wytey”, and 2. He was spot on, and impacted me with this statement in a massive way. I had allowed things (excuses), to affect my performance and my mental approach. We spoke last time about what we can and can't control, and just as importantly, being aware of making excuses and stopping this behaviour will improve your game. When you complain and use excuses, you divert your attention away from what it is you're trying to achieve and put it on negative factors instead. As you know by now, what you focus on you attract. So by bringing excuses into play you just sabotaged your chances of success. I get that you're going to have “off” days, but your attitude towards it will be the differentiator and the key factor to how well you bounce back and/or salvage the rest of a round. *What you focus on you attract!*

# DEALING WITH ADVERSITY

Adversity, or negativity in the game of golf is quite common. As it is in the game of life. We are faced with bad bounces, tough breaks and unfortunate situations everywhere we turn. We kind of live in a world of negativity these days, just watch the news. In fact, a recent study has shown us we have approximately 70,000 thoughts a day, and what's staggering is that 80% of those thoughts are actually negative :o. How you respond to them however, dictates the experiences you have moving forward. What we know from prior lessons is that you are not able to control what has already happened, whether or not that's last year, last month, last week or 5 minutes ago, in fact, the moment the ball leaves your club you have zero say. The past is out of our control and once we get that through our pre-programmed, negative based skulls, we'll find ourselves in a much better position to enjoy golf, and life fuller. There are two really good approaches to take regarding adversity that can help alleviate and even embrace the situations.

**TIP:** The first is to see adversity as something other than negative. I like to refer to adversity, as "Contrast", for contrast, by definition, is simply something different than what you expected or hoped for. It's indifference, and within indifference comes opportunity. So start to see negativity and adversity as opportunity instead and you can begin to actually embrace it when it occurs. Which is the second approach; embracing Contrast. If we see every instance of adversity as opportunity and we "embrace it" as beneficial to our growth, development and wellbeing, we learn quicker from the experience and take away the learning's and grow within ourselves much faster. So start seeing adversity as opportunity, embrace it, learn from it and grow from it. That double cross just fixed itself! *What you focus on you attract!*

# GOLF HAPPENS FOR US

There are a ton of lessons that come from the game of golf, the most powerful in my eyes being the ability to assess our “self-control”. The game acts as a mirror for us and reflects back to us what we are feeling about ourselves.

How we react to situations is a direct reflection of our internal guidance system. Which is why when you’re in a good mood, and are relaxed and truly enjoying the many positive variables of the game, like the weather, the surroundings, the company and taking in every swing (in the moment) you have a great experience.

Conversely, if you are off that day, didn’t sleep well, or had an “off” practice session earlier, you will tend to attract poor shots and more contrast (adversity) than normal. If you haven’t figured it out by now, there is one common de-nominator in both scenarios. That of course, is you. How you are feeling leading up to and during your practice session, round or tournament is the major factor that influences your experience on the course, and consequentially, your results.

**TIP:** Look at the game of golf (and life for that matter) as happening “for us and not to us”. In doing so, you will understand that everything good and everything not so good that happens, is there to help us, not hurt us. When you look at it this way, you enjoy the good and learn from the not so good. That’s all good, thank you golf. Oh, and FYI, when you’re feeling good, you know you’re in perfect alignment with who you are. When you’re “off” its time to shift. “Flush – Next”. What you focus on you attract!

# I'LL SEE IT WHEN I BELIEVE IT

This saying has little meaning to most; with the exception that it sounds similar to the one we are very familiar with: “I’ll believe it when I see it”. A slogan or saying that has been around for years and if you’re anything like me, one that you likely grew up with and understood to be true of most things in life; that being, when something good in your life shows up, then and only then can you believe it to be true. We are taught to “plan for the worst but hope for the best”. What we don’t realize, is that by thinking this way we don’t actually help ourselves feel better if things don’t work out as we planned, but instead, we set ourselves up for failure before we even begin. If we put our attention to that which we see as the worst-case scenario, we give it strength. I get that you don’t want to be disappointed, but the thought that you would pre-meditate that disappointment to ensure you’re not let down seems ludicrous to me.

**TIP:** instead of pre planning for disappointment, try pre planning for the feeling of success instead. “Plan for the best and expect the best”. In doing so, you will increase your chances of succeeding 10 fold.

**TIP:** As an example, you can use the process “segment intending” which means looking at each segment of your day in a manner that you would like to see it unfold. It’s standing on a tee and processing the thought of “I love this hole and always play well here” as opposed to “oh crap, this hole eats me up every time”. It starts by believing it first. “I’ll see it when I believe it.” *What you focus on you attract!*

# FRED COUPLES...

## BEST SHOT...

In 1992, the night before Fred Couples won the Masters, he had a conversation with Bob Rotella (golf mental game coach) surrounding this unique approach to his game. Fred was not a client of Bob's but wanted to know his take on the mental routine Fred had incorporated to his game. As Fred outlined, before he would take a shot, he would think back to the best shot he had ever made with whatever club he had in his hand at that time. Bob acknowledged how such a process exuded confidence and it was no surprise to him that Fred went on to win the Masters the next day. What Fred was doing was referencing past successes in order to put him in a positive mental position to experience a similar feeling, and consequentially the perspective that he had achieved previously.

**TIP:** The key to this process is the emphasis on the “feeling” that Fred experienced when he pulled off these best shots ever, and not the success or result itself. When we focus on results, we get too far ahead of ourselves (future thinking), and lose focus on the task at hand. Yet when we put emphasis on the “feeling” of the success we generate positive energy in that moment, which is the controllable factor.

*What you focus on you attract!*

# HANK HANEY, THE WORST IN A PLAYER...

A number of years ago, I was fortunate enough to be a part of a Junior Golf workshop where Hank Haney provided us with a series of tips and tools surrounding the game. Something that stuck out to me, that I still reference today in my practice is the value of seeing a player at his or her worst. As Hank noted, regarding scouting potential College players, I like to see how a player reacts when they're playing poorly, as this tells so much as to their mental strength and character. Your reaction to circumstances on the golf course impacts your next move. When you are able to control those reactions and quickly calm your mind and reset for the next shot, you increase the likelihood for success. This goes for both negative experiences as well as positive ones. Not only can you get too low when you hit a poor shot or get a bad break, but you can also get too high after a great shot or result. The key is keeping your mind in a level state – not too low and not too high. When you manage your mind you manage your game, and the by-products are lower scores and a better experience.

**TIP:** Be conscious of your behaviour on the course. How are you acting and reacting to your shots? How is that behaviour affecting your attitude overall and your next shot? Are you getting “over-excited” when things are going well and thinking too far in the future (ie, “I’ve got a great round going, if I keep this up I’ll beat my personal best score”) or are you getting too low (“it’s like I’ve never played this game before, who am I, I suck”). Evaluate your mental performance after each round and keep a journal as to your progress. Your game will thank you for it. *What you focus on you attract!*

# MOE NORMAN, SWINGING WITH FEAR

Moe Norman, for those of you who don't know, was a brilliant, Canadian Golfer and instructor, who had a unique perspective and outlook not only towards the swing but also towards the mental approach.

A friend of mine, and PGA playing, and teaching professional, Ian Doig makes reference to Moe and specifically remembers an event he was playing in: During the second last round Moe was following Ian and at the end, when Ian came off the 18th green Moe said to him "swinging with fear, swinging with fear, can't swing with fear". Moe was quick to point out that Ian was swinging the club with apprehension and uncertainty, which eventually will result in failure. Ian got the message and the next day on the final hole of the tournament with water on the right and out of bounds left Ian pulled out his driver hit it perfectly down the middle, hit wedge to 4 feet and made the putt to win the tournament by one.

More importantly, Ian took away with him the importance of swinging with confidence, and in his next tournament won by 6. Fear is a unique and powerful thing. It affects us in so many ways and in so many aspects of our lives.

Stress is a form of fear, anxiety is fear, first tee jitters; all fear. What's interesting however, is that fear itself isn't even real. It's a conjured up mental response to a pre-determined decision we make about the outcome of an event or situation that hasn't even occurred yet. WHAT?!

ARE YOU KIDDING ME? Yup, fear is simply a response we create in our minds ahead of our doing or experiencing something. Now, it's developed through everything we know to be; the things we learned when we were kids, from our parents, grand parents, coaches, teachers, society and even social media. Fear is simply a limiting belief that we've learned. And it's not an easy one to change, but the good news is, it is changeable. It's a matter of "thinking different".

**TIP:** Instead of seeing anxiety, stress or FEAR as a negative, start seeing these as "Excitement". On the first tee of a tourney or the last putt of a championship, understand that those butterflies aren't bad energy, but instead see them as excitement. The more predominate they are the more excited you are for being there. Embrace the "excitement", embrace Fear and you will walk out the other side better because of it. "Opportunity doesn't present itself unless you are ready for it" - that's a good one to remember! *What you focus on you attract!*

# PLAY WITH NO WORRIES

Ok, this might sound a little cliché and even ridiculously obvious, and for good reason, as playing golf “loose” or “with nothing to lose” often creates a better experience and results in better scores. The art of approaching any stressful situation from a place of ease and calm comes from a place of preparation, both physically and mentally. And since we’re talking about the mental side of things here, I will focus on a key strategy to staying calm, and that, is Trust, or as some call it, Belief.

When you are able to trust yourself, both physically and mentally, that’s when you perform at your best. By believing in your ability with absolutely certainty, with no second-guessing, no apprehension and no pressure, you focus more in the moment and funnel that focus far more effectively. And when you do, the score doesn’t become a factor, a poor shot previously hit doesn’t have value and nothing else matters except for the task at hand.

Trust and Belief, like physical strength takes practice. Just like you can’t go to the gym once and expect to be buff, you can’t think about trusting your swing a few times and expect to see consistent results. It’s a process, a mental strategy, which incorporates new systems and ideas - new thinking patterns, that when practiced, become habits, and once practiced more, become automated habits. That’s when the changes are made. That’s when you start to see the results.

**TIP:** Create new, daily success habits of telling yourself how good your swing is, how accurate you are with short irons, how consistently you roll it with the putter, and any and every other aspect of the game you wish to include. Create only positive affirmations about your game and preface them with “I am...” When you do, you will create new beliefs in your mind, which with practice, will lock them into memory and develop them into habits. Continue to repeat them and eventually they will show up in your game. Write them down in that journal! “I am an awesome golfer”. *What you focus on you attract!*

# EASY GAME

You can put 9 golf balls into a golf hole, 3 stacks of 3, that's a pretty big hole. Perception is everything regarding how hard or how easy it is to get the ball in the hole, key word being "perception".

How you regard the situation dictates very much the success or failure you will have. Two separate perceptions of the game to consider: One; The game of golf is a highly sophisticated, mechanically complicated and mentally challenging game of precision that requires virtual perfection gained through thousands of hours of repetitive practice, study and implementation. Vs Two: The ball just sits there, never moves and all you have to do is hit it with a club towards a target ahead of you.

With no one checking you, interfering with you or trying to stop you from doing it. Then, when you get on the green, you get an even easier club to hit it with and a beautifully smooth, groomed surface to play on, then all you need to do is roll this tiny ball into a hole that's about 3 times the size of it. Your perception of the game is dictated more by your pre-programming, past experience and outside influence than anything else. Everyone focuses on hitting their putts in the centre of the hole, yet last time I checked, as long as it drops to the bottom it counts. So if you start seeing the hole as much bigger than it actually is, doesn't it seem to make sense that more putts are likely to go in? Especially when you're picking the tiniest of spots to hit it at.

This analogy of the game is often met with resistance, as many (and maybe you are one) are saying, easy to say it's as simple as this, but I

know better, I've been playing for years. Newsflash, you've been playing for years and consequentially taught yourself how difficult it is. You've been programmed to believe and expect it to be hard, and why not, pretty much everything on TV surrounding golf tells us so. This is my point; our perception of the game is one of difficulty, not because it is, but because of what we've been taught.

**TIP:** When you roll a putt in, think “Easy Game” and start to feel that emotion. Every time you hit a good shot; “Easy Game”. It will change your perspective, keep you positive, simplify your thought process and after practice, reduce your scores. *What you focus on you attract!*

# PERSONAL TRASH TALK

Arguably one of the worst possible game crushers out there is your own personal trash talk. And it happens to almost everyone, on a regular basis! The negative impact that your self-belittling has on your psyche and consequentially, your game, is massive. Our own self-value is key in the success we have, both on and off the course. In fact, as a mental coach, I would say self-value is, without a doubt the #1 factor in personal growth and success.

If you believe in yourself and bring a confident attitude to the course, or anything you do, you increase your chances for positive results by an immense margin. You cannot achieve positive results from a negative place, and conversely, you cannot achieve negative results from a positive place. Keep this in mind as you approach each segment of your round, how you approach it and the attitude you bring dictates the results you will see.

**TIP:** When trash talking yourself on the golf course, or anywhere else for that matter, ask yourself the following question: Would I ever speak to someone else this way? Likely, the answer will be a flat out NO. So if you wouldn't speak to others that way, start training yourself to be nicer to you. Your experience will improve as will your game. *What you focus on you attract!*

# MANTRA'S AND AFFIRMATIONS; I AM

The words you use are incredibly powerful, and can make the difference between a confident performance and an apprehensive one. How you speak to yourself has a huge effect on the results you reap. By being aware of the language you use, and choosing those words effectively, you add another layer of positive mental support to your game. As you talk to yourself prior to a shot (and I know you do ensure you are telling yourself the right story. What you say and how you say it dictates your outcome. Instead of “this hole bites me every time”, try something different, like: “I love this hole”.

When you attach emotion and “feeling” to a statement like this, a positive result will follow (it always does. Caveat: If you say it, but don't feel it, your default will dictate the result. This is the key to affirmation. In a previous lesson, we talked about the statement “I'll see it when I believe it”. This is the basis of affirmation and how to ensure your statements become reality. “I am a great putter” only becomes real if you believe it. It starts by thinking it, expands by saying it, and gets locked in when believing it. You've likely known a putt was going to go in well before you even made the swing, you look at the putt and have a feeling it's going in.

Sometimes you “see the line” or the “trough” and just “know”. That's the feeling you want and the feeling you will get more often when you believe it first. It takes practice and training, just like your swing. “I am awesome”. *What you focus on you attract!*

# LOVE YOUR CLUBS

A drill I love to use and one that I find has great results, is “falling in love with your clubs again.” If you’re playing a lot of golf and love the game, you’ve likely researched, tested and purchased a great set of clubs that you “Love”. They might be off the shelf, purchased through a buddy, or maybe they’re custom fit by a professional fitting service, sponsor or manufacturer partner. Whatever the case, not only were you able to hit them well throughout the fitting process but you loved the way they looked when you held them and peered down at them.

Over time though, you might have started to take your clubs for granted, perhaps you don’t clean them as often as you did when you first got them, or maybe you toss them in the bag after a shot instead of placing them gently so they don’t get scratched. Your level of care has likely decreased with time. You still like them, but the infatuation period has passed. By re-sparking your love with your clubs, you can actually improve your results. When you increase your attitude of gratitude for your wedge, driver or 8 iron, not only will your energy change to a more positive state, but your shot results will improve as well. Next time you pull a club, really pay attention to how awesome it really is, how good the grip feels in your hands, how knowing the fit is spot on and the set up is perfect. See and FEEL the club as an extension of you. Be one with it and trust that it will perform for you just as you wish. “Your club knows what you’re thinking”, so ensure you’re processing the right thoughts. When you put attention to appreciation (gratitude of what you have, you increase the likelihood of success. The same holds true for your golf bag, tees, balls and every other piece of equipment you use. Love your clubs and they’ll love you back. *What you focus on you attract!*

# BALL FOCUS

Last time, we talked about the importance of loving your equipment and using gratitude to change your perspective and enhance your results. It's about re-focusing your thoughts and putting your attention towards a more positive perspective.

A Focus process I use often with my one-to-one clients is called "Ball Focus": Grab a golf ball from your bag. Ideally an older ball that has some marks on it, perhaps a little road rash, maybe a few logos and some worn off lettering or markings... Take 1 minute (set up a timer on your phone) and analyze this ball's every little detail, the shape of the dimples, the pattern, the colours, the brand, the number on it, the exact location of the scuffs, bruises and markings. See, and put to memory everything you can about this ball. When the timer goes off, put the ball away. Now, write down every detail that you remember about that ball, no cheating. Draft a list and when you're done, pull the ball back out and see how you did. What did you get right, what did you miss or forget, how accurate were you, etc.? This drill is good for practicing focus; laser focus, which translates back to the course and every detail of the game.

By being able to quickly assess each shot with laser beam accuracy, you'll have far more success processing, committing to, and executing shots. It's training your brain to see details, and to enhance the visualization process. Back to the saying, "I'll see it when I believe it", when you visualize the shot before the shot and feel like you've already pulled it off, the likelihood of success has just improved. *What you focus on you attract!*

# CONCLUSION

**Hey, thanks for being part of the program!**

I hope there were a few nuggets that stood out for you and that you will implement moving forward in your game.

We merely scratched the surfaced here and for a true game shift and mind shift, please reach out to me and let's discuss a one-on-one coaching package.

Hope to connect soon.

And thanks again for your interest in the Yellow Car Coach programs.

*Mike White*

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Michael White is a Mental Performance Coach, Certified Law of Attraction Life Coach, and Grief and Loss Educator. He is the founder of Yellow Car Coach, a personal coaching practice with a key focus on sports-specific mental training.

Mike works primarily in golf and hockey, with players from the Junior ranks through to the professional level. He also works with former professional athletes, helping them focus on new life chapters after sport and with parents to help them keep their head in the game.

His philosophy of “What you focus on you attract” is a simple, yet effective view on how your perspective dictates your experience. Control, focus and the ability to accept and overcome adversity are at the forefront of his teachings.

Mike is an avid golfer and hockey player and spends his time between Vancouver BC and Southern and Central Ontario. His son, Braydon White is a PGA of Canada Professional and the Head Teaching Pro at Tangle Creek Golf and Country Club in Barrie, ON.



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