

## Golf – it's all in your head

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There's too much time to think during a round of golf. This is one of the pitfalls of many golfers as they psych themselves out before they even hit the ball! However, that doesn't have to happen to you if train your mind to focus on the right stuff at the right time.

Your mind functions somewhat like a GPS. In order to get to your destination, you need to "tell" your mind what you want to do and give yourself specific data to work with. If you are not specific in your directives, your mind will take on a



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life of its own. Unless you have trained yourself to think positively, the likelihood is that your mind will wander towards negative thoughts. Develop a habit of telling yourself what to think in order to do what you want to do.

A few simple rules to using your GPS:

1. Before you begin, reset your GPS by clearing your mind of all thoughts. Focus on breathing in slowly, gently. Release your breath very slowly, and allow your shoulders and neck to relax and release. Repeat this process several times.
2. Give yourself three specific focus points, no more. When you enter data into your car GPS, you make three specific entries: city, number, and street name — clear, concise steps to your destination. Focus on the three key performance factors that you do well and that lead to a successful shot. Focus on these, nothing else. Example: alignment – feet and club-face aligned to target; smooth and fluid

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backswing; lead with your hips.

3. Word your focus points in a what-to-do format, rather than what-not-to-do.

For example, if you have a bunker to your left and the pin straight ahead, avoid thinking, "don't hit the ball into the bunker" because your mind will listen to the directives except it doesn't hear the word "don't".

Always keep your mind on the process – the three key focus points – and the outcome (destination) will take care of itself.

Developing good mental habits is critical to success. All habits, good and bad, are created through repetition. Use, and repeat, the three rules above and you will create positive mental habits and bring consistency to your game.

The majority of the world's top golfers use sport psychology tools and techniques but so should everyone who wants to bring enjoyment and consistency to his/her golf game.

Dr. Natascha Wesch is a mental performance consultant who works with athletes, coaches, and teams of all sport backgrounds. To learn more and to contact her, visit her website

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