

# Golf is a Mind Game

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I admire any athlete who without cheating can manage the stress of competition. Think of the stress level a player must manage when all eyes are on him or her during a championship.

Every golfer has the potential to be much better than he or she is, and using the mind is one essential way to improve performance. The psychology of golf is no different than the care and attention one must dedicate to their state of mind on the day of any sports competition. The key word here is 'competition'.

Merriam-Webster's definition of competition is the act or process of trying to get or win something (such as a prize or a higher level of success) that someone else is also trying to get or win.

When professional athletes prepare for a competition, their entire focus is accentuated towards their peak performance. Everyone around them know this, whether they are family, coaches or fellow competitors.

Sports psychology is a relatively young discipline within psychology since it was founded in 1920 by Carl Diem in Berlin, Germany. The major topics within sports psychology are imagery, motivation, and attentional focus. But how does this apply to everyday recreational golfers?

If you are not playing in a competitive golf event then why stress yourself during your Sunday afternoon golf game? The answer easily comes to us once we come to terms with the fact that everyday life affects our time and play on the links.

In regards to motivation, I have found that most people are intrinsic or motivated from within. While the extrinsic motivators such as trophies and money are enough for some, the intrinsic motivators such as the desire to better the next stroke or the sense of personal pride after two putting a green, are preferred by most.

The ability to tune out distractions and focus your attention on the task at hand is by far the most difficult to master.

For instance, the stress caused by traffic while driving to the golf course can add a few strokes to your first three holes.

The best way to manage your stress is to learn healthy coping strategies. I invite you to do everything you can to leave the stresses behind when you get to the golf course and find ways to relax your mind and body.

Stress is a part of life, and you can't always avoid it. But you can try to avoid situations that can cause it, and you can control how you respond to it. In terms of your golf game, adopt healthy habits. Use the benefits of the game to your advantage take in the fresh air, exercise and the sense of freedom.

Success in golf comes from patiently and persistently doing the right things over and over. These repeated processes will give you the opportunity to find out how good you can be.

Try any of the processes below during your next round of golf. You may find yourself surprised by how well you may begin to play with the right focus:

- I will trust myself and my swing on every shot.
- I will execute my pre-shot routine on every shot.
- I will stay in the present.
- I'll stop worrying about breaking 90, 80 or 70.
- I will not critique or analyze the shots I've taken. I will focus on each shot as it comes, and that will be the only shot I'll care about.
- I will refuse to allow anything that happens on the golf course today to bother or upset me.
- I will accept bad breaks and mistakes. I am going to be in a good mood and a great state of mind for the entire round today. I'll enjoy playing.
- I will get looser freer and more confident as the round goes on.
- I will love my wedge and putter today.
- I will play to play well.

Then, take an honest account of your game. Perhaps you need to improve on your follow through or possibly chipping and pitching or bunker play. You might need to have a better approach toward putting, or simply focusing on staying in the present.

Obviously, no one is perfect in any of these areas. Most players are better in some than in others. Try and give yourself a type of report card or priority list. Today I need to work on putting, for instance, my priority #1. By knowing what you want to work on you can allocate your time and energy in a systematic manner. This process will guide you in setting goals that are suitable for you and will help to improve your game.

Golf is a game of mistakes and unpredictability. Love the challenge of the day whatever it may be.

A SMILE MOMENT: The golfer who takes up golf to get his mind off work soon takes up work to get his mind off golf.

**To book your next golf lesson**, contact Lisa today via e-mail at [lisalgolpro@gmail.com](mailto:lisalgolpro@gmail.com) or by telephone at 506-232-0728 or visit her website at [www.PrivateGolfPro.ca](http://www.PrivateGolfPro.ca).

Lisa Elle is the PrivateGolfPro who teaches in the greater Moncton area and southeast NB. Her unique golf service assists all levels of players with their golf swing. Her golf articles have been published in print and on websites across Canada. She is also the face of the charitable trust 'Lisa's Fund - a breath for Cystic Fibrosis'.