

SILENT MIND GOLF

Lesson 1

Intro to Silent Mind Golf

Silent Mind Golf is a process of developing a 'quiet' and controlled mind through both mental conditioning and on course practice exercises. It seeks to equip the pupil with a clear understanding of the impact of thinking on performance outcome, as well as to give tools and techniques to enable them to be in the best mental state to perform to their best ability. Silent Mind Golf is all about learning to do your thinking immediately before and after, but never during the shot

Mindfulness Overview

Mindfulness is being aware in the moment in which we are. It finds its modern roots or origins in Buddhism and has entered modern society as the basis for psychologists who specialize in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. I am not an expert on either of these subjects but it would be fair to say they both seek to understand the link between thoughts and emotions, and teach you to understand that if you manage your thoughts, you will be able to affect or control the associated emotion. They share a tradition of being in the "here and now," and that state of mind is often referred to as "mindfulness."

However, mindfulness is not something we achieve by sitting crossed-legged on a mountain top deep in meditation. On the contrary, it is an activity that can be done at any time, any place, without any special technique. **It is achieved by simply bringing the mind to focus on what is happening in the present moment** while still being aware of the mind's usual "background thoughts," but without associating any emotional value to them.

In the Silent Mind approach to golf, we need to be in a state of mindfulness in which there is no thought at all. I call this **Presence**. We become totally in the moment, a state where we have no thoughts of the past or future, and importantly no thought in the present moment (which is simply for the duration of the swing). I've heard of professional golfers who are asked about the greatest round they ever played. Many tell of a round of perfect golf during which they were, "in the zone." When asked years later what they felt about that round, they remember it as being their best ever, but when asked how they felt at the time, they reply, "nothing." Rather than find this odd, I find this wholly consistent with the state of perfect mindfulness - when we no longer associate any emotion to the act of doing, or the outcome of the action. We exist in the moment, which explains why people in this state (psychologists explain it as "optimal flow") feel "timeless" with "a strong sense of ease" towards achieving desired results.

It is a rare state when it reaches such extremes of exactness, but the more we are aware of the conditions required to bring it about, the more likely we are to make it occur. I believe that as we stand over the shot, the ability to think of nothing at all is the single greatest mental key to peak performance.

Learning Points

Intro to SMG

The Importance of Goals

Mindfulness Overview

Exercise

Thought for the Week

"Thinking instead of acting is the number-one golf disease"

Sam Snead

Suggested Reading

I will suggest books which I have read and have found insightful and helpful, some on the practical game and others on the lives of past players. There is no obligation to read these titles, as they are not part of the 13-week programme. However should you do so I believe you will find some excellent takeaway from each title.

How to Play Your Best Golf All the Time

By Tommy Armour

I first read this book 40 years ago and though the text and illustrations seem very dated now, it contains a wonderful simplicity of wisdom. Tommy Armour won The Open, US Open and the PGA Championship, who after he retired from competition, taught golf for 25 years at Boca Raton GC.

It is like taking an exam. If you prepare over weeks doing diligent revision and structured learning, you will have the knowledge required when you sit to take the test. All you have to do at that point is put it down on the paper.

The same is true of learning to be this Silent Mind Programme. If you read these weekly lessons and say to yourself, "Oh, I get it," – that will help a little, but structured learning and dedicated daily practice is the key.

Getting the Most Out of Yourself Over the Next 13 Weeks.

You may have heard the expression, "Never forget, today is the first day of the rest of your life" , it is clichéd and can I admit sound a little simplistic and cheesy, nevertheless the truth contained in this phrase has never left me. The truth is exactly that - today *is* the first day of the rest of your life.

I want you to recognise the importance of leaving behind your past memories of failure. No matter how often you have failed, and to what degree you feel you have failed, is of no consequence. Whatever golfing goals you have set in the past and achieved or not achieved are not important. Hanging on to memories of failure raises your expectation of future failure. The next 13 weeks are all about going forward, starting anew and making changes that work.

Many people identify with their past failures and use those thoughts and memories as their template for who they think they are. This influences their level of expectation. It is natural to have self-doubt, but to repeatedly focus on your past failures is to set the scene for future failure.

Most of us have acquired the failure habit. It is ingrained at such a deep subconscious level you just aren't aware it's there. Understand that your level of expectation will colour and influence the outcome of the next 13 weeks. The challenge you face is to change your expectation from some vague notion of failure to a powerful absolute conviction that you are going to succeed.

It is important that you enter this transformational period with a positive and strong expectation of success. Your mindset from this point forward is critically important to the ease with which you will overcome challenges, maintain your discipline and stay committed.

You change your life when you change your negative emotions and expectations to positive emotions and expectations. The reality is, we and we alone are responsible for our playing ability You will discover that you do have all the abilities, all the resources and all the tools within you, to change the way you approach the game from the inside out. .

So, are you ready to begin? throughout the next 13 weeks your commitment and mental approach will be the source of your success or your failure. When you get that right, everything else will follow. You must believe you can. You must believe in your ability to succeed, and make that your number one priority. I want you to remind yourself today that you are going to succeed. Because when you truly believe it, you will invest the time, you will not skip practice or make excuses or give up on yourself. When you believe you can you will.

Daily Exercise For Week 1

Many of the SMG exercises can take place in a chair. At first it is very common to be self-conscious about doing them (you may not feel they are having any impact or working –but that is the chatterbox mind ‘throwing a barrage of thoughts in to your head, as it is not used to consciously ‘not thinking’). Many of the exercises are about stilling the mind as well as developing the visualization skills that take you from having a vague sense of outcome to a technicolour ‘clear picture’.You will require a countdown timer

Sit upright (do not slouch – back straight) in a comfortable position for 10 minutes with your eyes closed. All I want you to do is think of nothing at all. Absolutely nothing at all. I imagine right now you think this will be the easiest thing in the world to do and some of you may think it is an opportunity to have a quick snooze, but this is not about going to sleep, this is about emptying your mind of thought. 10 minutes, eyes closed without sleeping or thinking of anything. Whenever a thought (and don’t worry there will be lots of them to begin with) pops into your mind, simply do **not** hold onto it as soon as you are aware of the thought, simply focus on your breathing, for a moment and return to not thinking at all.

Key Thoughts on Week One.

- ✓ DO NOT THINK OF ANY EXERCISE AS A CHORE, ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO IT.
- ✓ MAKE THE TIME TO DO YOUR DAILY EXERCISES SCHEDULE THEM INTO YOUR DAY.
- ✓ REMEMBER THOUGHTS ARE ONLY THOUGHTS