



# 7 MENTAL MISTAKES ALL GOLFERS MAKE

## How To Overcome Them

By Randy Friedman

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**Y**ou keep thinking the same thoughts, you keep getting the same results, and somehow you're still wondering why things don't change. Hmm... better keep reading. The fact is the thoughts you think, produce the shots you hit, which give you the feelings you feel... good and bad.

Basically if you keep thinking what you're thinking, you'll keep getting what you're getting! So, if you are truly ready to change your outcome you've got to change your income. In order to play better golf you must think better thoughts. Professionals in any sport know how to perform under a range of pressures. Here are seven common mental mistakes (that golf professionals rarely make), and what you can learn to think more effectively to get out of your own way and improve your game.

**1** "Just think target... and finish the swing... and pause at the top... and hold the angle, and keep my eye on the ball... oh, and don't sway..."

How many times have you hit balls at

the range before your round, found your groove, and decide on a swing thought for the day only to change it on the first tee? Or better yet, use that swing thought on the first tee, hit one poor shot and then change your swing thought? Commitment is the key.

This is one of the most common mistakes I see with my students of all levels. Thoughts of what you want to do and are going to do should stay consistent. Once you have a routine and game plan, be brave and stick with it no matter what. The more you change your thoughts, the more your thoughts change your swing, the more variance the shots that come off the clubface. When you commit to a positive thought, you detach yourself from fear and move into a place of fun, love and joy.

**2** "I don't like this club, but I'll hit it anyway!"

Have you ever held a club thinking, "I don't like this club, but I'll hit it anyway?" Do you think the Pro's think that way? Probably not. Most of them have a

light bulb service that goes off as soon as the club they are holding doesn't feel right. If you've ever watched golf on television and seen a Pro going back and forth with their caddy figuring out what club to hit, it's because they want a clear decision that says, "yes, this is the one". Then and only then will they hit the shot without trepidation. Doubt creates fear, and fear does not make for a good golf shot!

You must be in agreement with your mental and physical game to hit your best shot. If your external "you" (the physical) doesn't agree with the internal "you" (the mental)... YOU will cancel each other out and have no shot. We all have an internal light bulb within us, and that is your awareness. Once you become aware, you are half way there.

**Next time you play become aware:** Notice what you are feeling as you take your club out of the bag. Your goal is to feel good before you hit the shot. This "yes" will put you in agreement with your inner mental swing and your outer physical swing.

3

"I can't play well when I'm nervous"

Tiger Woods has said if he wasn't nervous on the first tee, he'd be nervous! The difference is "his nervous" is a positive energy feeling he uses to get his round started. Most amateurs think that being nervous is a bad thing, connect negative energy to it and hope the worst won't happen.

You can play great golf and give a brilliant business presentation when you're nervous. The real enemy is negative thinking combined with nervousness. You can regain your power by breathing deeply and attaching the feeling of love before you play. Think about the beauty of the golf course, the nature surrounding you, and the appreciation of where you are in that moment. When you attach the word love to your game, your negative nerves will disappear and be replaced with positive ones.

**Say these words before your next round of golf:** *"I love playing golf, I appreciate everything about the golf course, I look forward to every shot I hit."* Your nerves will thank you!

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"I hope I don't hit it in the water again!"

Pro's rarely make the same mistake twice. Granted they may (and should) take more calculated risks than you, but if something is not working that day they usually won't repeat it. How about you? Do you learn from your mistakes and make better choices the next time? One of the biggest mental mistakes I see with amateurs is coming up short of the green.

**Use this thought on your next round:** *Take more than enough club when going over hazards. It's better to be on the back of the green (having taken more than enough club), than to be short in the water or bunker. When you've gone over the green a few times, then dial it down a club.*

5

"I can't figure out these greens. These greens are too slow...these greens are too fast... these greens are just right!"

Can you guess what the Pro's think during their round of golf? What about you? What have you been thinking lately that has affected your putting results? When you think about it what choice do you really have? You can accept them as they are.

Accept and love the greens on the course you are playing on that day, or... beat yourself up and never figure out the speed of the greens. The sooner you accept the speed of the greens are perfectly the way you like them, the sooner you'll putt well on them.

Next time you are on the practice putting green say to yourself, *"I love these greens, they are perfect for me."* Take that thought to the golf course!

6

"I just can't see the shot!"

Most low handicap golfers imagine their shot in their mind before they actually hit it. And although all of us can imagine, we don't all tap into it. The fact is that we are all born with the gift of imagination, but not many people use it past their toddler years. If you haven't reaped the benefits from imagery in golf, you're not tapping into your unlimited potential!

Seeing yourself perform in your mind can help prepare you for actual play. To use imagery properly, first realize it will work with a little practice. The more you practice visualizing the better you'll get at it. Similar to hitting balls at the driving range is your physical practice, visualizing your shot before you hit it, is your mental practice.

**Do this tonight:** *As you fall asleep tonight, play 9 holes in your mind. See every shot you hit with detail. Watch patiently as the ball climbs into the sky, from each tee box to each green to pulling the ball out of the last hole. Practice helps performance.*

7

"I hate playing with this person, they're so ..."


Can you imagine if Tiger, Ernie, or Phil complained about being paired with someone they didn't like and moaned about it during the entire round? As comical as that sounds, so many golfers complain (out loud and quietly to themselves) about who they've been paired up with. This creates a negative feeling from the first tee and can easily ruin your entire round. Has this ever happened to you?

Acceptance is a powerful tool and neutralizes negative emotions. It's up to you to accept whoever you are paired up with whether it's just for fun or in a competition. How can you easily stay focused and play your game? Decide on a goal you want to accomplish for that day.

**For example you can:**

- 1) **Keep stats of how many fairways & greens you've hit.**
- 2) **Track how many putts you've had on each hole.**
- 3) **Strive to shoot below a certain score for 9 or 18 hole.**

When you do this your distractions are limited and your focus becomes on your game. Appreciating the beautiful nature surrounding you, and your complete love of the best game in the world is another great goal to keep you happily playing your game.

Incorporate these seven mental tips into your game and watch the magic unfold. Allow them to mentally awaken and empower you to gain control of your golf and your life. 

*Randy Friedman is a corporate golf professional, speaker and founder of Golf Mind Power. For questions: [randy@golfmindpower.com](mailto:randy@golfmindpower.com)*