

4 Troubleshooting Tips To Get Your Game BACK ON TRACK

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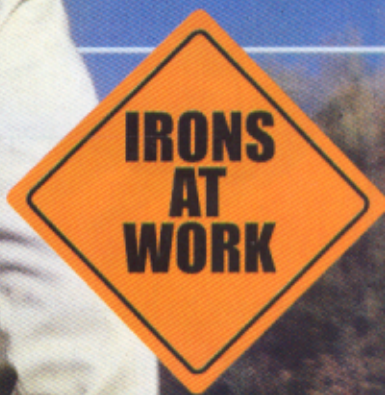
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# Regain Your Focus: Mental Exercises

**W**hen you've bogeyed your last hole and you're about to hit the next drive, do you find it difficult to forget your misses and concentrate on your swing? Or maybe the pressure to sink the next putt has you paralyzed with stress? If you find it difficult to recover your focus in a negative situation, it's because stress has taken over and your mind is stuck.

Every golfer knows the game is just as mental as it is physical. Beyond the techniques and mechanics, golf requires your left brain to think clearly, analyze situations and look at the details of the course. It also requires your right brain for creativity, intuition and considering the big picture.

Learning disability specialist Paul Dennison, Ph.D., originally developed simple body-movement exercises called Brain Gyms® for use by children and adults with learning disabilities. These exercises get both sides of the brain working together to produce better results. Now the Brain Gym techniques are used in school systems around the world, in the sales profession, as well as in golf. Even the PGA and LPGA recognize the validity of these concepts in course work for golf pros being re-certified as instructors.

Dr. Dennison based the exercises on research in the fields of developmental optometry, neuro-linguistics, left and right brain research, acupressure and kinesiology. The movements use specific muscle groups in ways that facilitate the integration of both brain hemispheres. To be a truly successful golfer, you must use both sides of your brain at the same time. When

one side isn't working, stress takes over and your game suffers.

You need an integrated, whole brain approach to keep your stress levels down and be successful at golf. If a bad swing causes you to lose focus, you can get trapped in a downward spiral for the rest of the round. The following exercise reveals the connection between your mindset and your physical performance.

### Noticing

Noticing is a method of biofeedback response that lets you see how situations affect your ability to perform on the golf course. I refer to it as internal self-checking because it relies on you noticing your inner reference points. This means you'll need to pay special attention and notice your feelings, posture, body sensations and breathing.

Noticing is an easy method of biofeedback response because it is simple to stop and notice the feelings and sensations that cause you to be switched on or off about golf.

When noticing, you observe what's going on in your body. To practice the technique, stand up and put your hands comfortably at the sides of your body. Close your eyes



The Brain Gym mental exercises get both sides of the brain working together to produce better results.



# To Eliminate Negative Thoughts



and think of a negative golf situation. Really focus on the negative thoughts and feelings about it. Now, without adjusting your body, observe your physical posture for a few seconds. Next, observe your breathing, then notice any discomfort or pain you feel in your body and where it is. Finally, observe what's going on in your mind as to any thoughts or churning that is taking place.

So what did you observe? While there is no single right answer, many people may observe that their physical posture was slumped, their breathing was shallow, they had pain in a certain location and that their mind was churning. Your observations may be different. Remember,

noticing is not judging. It's just paying attention to what's going on in the body.

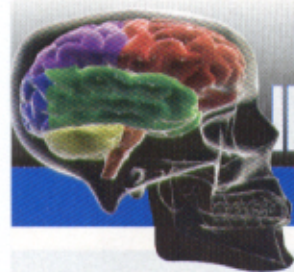
To demonstrate how quickly the body responds to your thoughts, stay seated or standing and again observe your body. Close your eyes one more time and think of a positive golf situation. Really focus on the positive thoughts and feelings about it. Now, without adjusting your body, first observe your physical posture for a few seconds. Next, observe your breathing, then notice the ease and comfort in your body. Finally, observe what's going on in your mind.

Did you observe anything different this time? Again, while there is no one right answer, many people may observe that their physical posture was upright, their breathing was deeper, their body was at ease and that their mind was calmer.

So how does this affect your game? When you have just hit a really bad slice into the lake and are getting ready to hit the next shot, your mind may still be focused on the negative thoughts from the slice. This means when you approach the ball, you have actually changed your body's physiology. So when you take your swing, you hit another bad shot. This continues to happen because your body is no longer in the position you think it is.

When you focus on either the positive or negative side of a golf situation, you will create different physical outcomes congruent with that mindset. Now that you understand this connection, use the





## INSTRUCTION

### Mastering TheMentalGame

following Brain Gym exercises to regain your focus when you hit a bad shot. These exercises only take 90 seconds, so you can easily perform them before your next shot.

#### Hook-Ups

Hook-Ups can help stop those negative thoughts. To do a Hook-Up, stand or be seated (as if you are in your golf cart), clasp your hands together and take note of whether the right or left thumb is on top. We'll call that side of your body with the thumb on top the primary side of the body.

Next, release your clasped hands and extend your arms out in front of you with the backs of the hands facing each other. Now, take the hand on the primary side and raise it up and over the other hand. Then, join both

it negatively. Hold for 30 seconds.

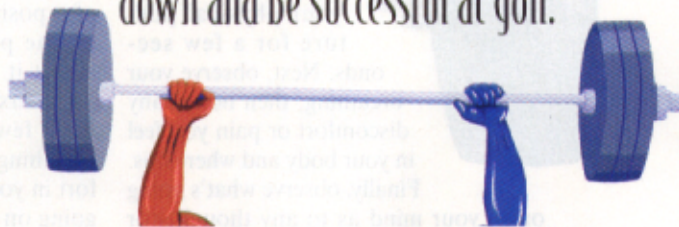
While you are doing Hook-Ups, you may find at some point that your mind wanders off from the situation or it becomes hard to continue to focus on the negative. When that happens, start viewing the situation positively, because you have now discharged the negative and can think about the same situation from a positive viewpoint. You are not attempting to make your mind think positively. It is only after you can no longer focus on the negative that you switch your view.

#### Positive Points

For this exercise, remain standing or seated. On your forehead, halfway up to the hairline from the middle of your eyebrow, locate the small, bony protrusion known as a frontal eminence. It's where the curved part of the forehead is located. Place the middle three fingers of the left hand over the left frontal eminence, and the middle three fin-

hands together by intertwining your fingers, with the palms touching. Bend the elbows and rotate your hands under and

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into your chest. Cross the ankle on the primary side of the body in front of the other ankle. Finally, touch the tip of your tongue

of the right hand over the right frontal eminence. Maintain a very light pressure. Remain in this position for 30 seconds. If you feel the negativity dissipating, begin to focus on a positive side of the event. You will now be totally refocused to the positive elements of your swing and can watch how your game will improve.

#### Future Improvements

After you've completed the Brain Gym exercises, think once again about the same situation and notice your posture, breathing, lack of pain and calmness in your mind. You will find that you have the same responses as when you originally focused on a positive golf situation. You also will discover that you can think of the situation, but the negative charge has been erased from your memory.

Ultimately, you have control over how a situation impacts you. These Brain

to the roof of your mouth  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch behind your front teeth.

While you can do this with your eyes open later on when you are on the golf course, close your eyes just this first time. Now focus on the negative thought. Begin to think about it and put as many details and feeling into the thought as possible, because it is necessary to visualize the event to take it out of the brain. Hold for 30 seconds.

Next, uncross your legs. If you are sitting, put both feet flat on the floor. Place just the fingertips of both of your hands together so they form a tepee. Hold your hands in a comfortable position. Keep your eyes closed if you are sitting. Continue to hold the tongue up and breathe through your nose. If the negative thought is still there, continue to view

Gym positions are just one aspect of an entire system that teaches you the power that movement has over your brain and body. When you use these exercises in golf, you can eliminate the negative patterns that result from losing focus. So the next time you find yourself in the rough, use the Brain Gym exercises to immediately get your mind out of the rough in order to play that next shot. **GI**

— Jerry V. Teplitz is the author of *Managing Your Stress: How To Relax and Enjoy, Switched-On Living, and Brain Gym for Business*. He specializes in showing people how they can become more positive, energized, focused and effective. To further explore these mind-body connections or to order his instructional DVD, visit [www.parandbeyond.com](http://www.parandbeyond.com) or call 1-800-77-RELAX.