



What Is **YOUR** Intention?

A Ladies Links Fore Golf reader wrote in with a problem I observe in many golfers...

“I am a fairly good golfer, but I really struggle with my mental game. I find it hard to keep concentrating over 18 holes. I seem to need the first four to five holes to warm up. I generally play well in the middle of the round and then I have trouble staying in the present over the last four holes.”

If this story sounds familiar, ask yourself a few simple questions before assuming you have difficulty with your mental game. First, did you physically warm-up prior to play? A lack of warm-up prior to play can cause you to spend the first few holes searching for your rhythm and timing. The good news is that it doesn't require lengthy time on the driving range before you tee off. Simply arrive at the course with time to stretch and hit a few shots around the green. Second, are you physically tired toward the end of a round? Have you properly hydrated and eaten throughout your round? Fatigue influences many things, including focus. In this case, the real problem is physical conditioning. A great resource for golf fitness can be found on Titleist Performance Institute's web site (www.tpi.com).

Assuming a lack of warm-up and physical fatigue are not your issues, how can you improve your focus? First, it is important to clearly establish your intention before you step on the first tee. Many golfers don't actually lose their focus. They never have established it to begin with! Assume for example you are working to improve your balance for more consistent solid contact. Create an intention to observe this: “Today I will observe to what extent I am able to hold my finish position after each swing (easily balanced, somewhat balanced, or

not balanced at all).” Regardless of what your intention is, be sure to establish one before your golf shoes are laced!



Once you have established your intention, simply notice when your focus shifts to something else. For example, you are standing on your nemesis hole overlooking a treacherous water hazard. You have played great up to this point in the round and suddenly all you can think about is hitting the ball in the water. When you notice your focus shift, gently remind yourself to return to your original intention of simply observing how balanced you are at the end of your swing.

Another common distracter includes well meaning advice from our playing partners. Your friend is playing awesome. She sees your struggling and suggests you lead with your hips on the follow through. You think to yourself, “Hmmm, maybe I should try that. After all I would give anything to play like her.” WRONG! Not bad advice, but it's not your intention. Before you know it, you are trying a million different things and we all know how that story ends. There is no magic formula for focus. The key is to clearly establish your intention for practice or play upfront. When



your focus wanders, and it will, gently remind yourself of your original intention. The process of observing your focus will strengthen your ability to focus. All golfers lose their focus at times. The great ones notice sooner when they have strayed from their original intention and have the discipline to return to it.

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