



## **What is Really Relevant on the Golf Course?**

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As a golfer, it is extremely important to be able to concentrate on the golf course. How many times, however, have you made mistakes due to a loss of concentration? For example, how many times have you been more concerned with how well one of the people in your group is playing than you are with your own game? How many times have you been getting ready to hit a shot, but find yourself dwelling on a previous bad shot or missed putt? If you are like most golfers, probably all too often. This inability to maintain focus on relevant factors is a mental error that costs many needless strokes.

Focus is simply being able to give your complete focus and energy to the task at hand. In the case of golf, the main task at hand is to execute smooth, relaxed swings and hit your target. This is the only thing under your control at the time of your swing. You do not have any control over how the ball will land: It could very well hit a rock and bounce in a completely different direction. In fact, you do not have any control over the ball once it leaves the clubface. A strong gust of wind could come along and carry your ball ten yards off your mark. Here's the point: You have to learn to give your complete focus to the task at hand: executing a smooth, relaxed golf swing and hitting your target. If you are able to accomplish this task, your consistency will increase and, as a result, your scores will drop.

There are several different skills to help you improve your ability to concentrate on the golf course; one is learning to pay attention to relevant factors – things that have the most importance to executing good golf swings and making good golf shots. Professional golfers can easily start thinking about their final score, prize money at stake, previous day's score, a bad shot or hole from earlier in the round, or a whole host of other things. None of these things are relevant. Furthermore, professional golfers do not change their grips or backswings based on the number of people in the gallery or the amount of money at stake. They do not change their stance based on the day's playing partner. These things are not relevant to executing a smooth golf swing and hitting the target. The same principle is true for everyday golfers. It does not matter whether you are playing against a scratch golfer or a 15-handicap, your job does not change. You still need to execute smooth, relaxed golf swings if you want to play your best golf. How well your partner is performing is not relevant to the task at hand.

So what is relevant? The factors pertinent and in your control are your grip, backswing, stance, club selection and the type of shot you want to hit. Other relevant factors are knowledge about how the greens are rolling, how they are holding, distance to the hole, wind speed and direction, and your position on the leader board (you may want

to play conservatively if you have a comfortable lead or aggressively if you do not). These are relevant factors and the ones that you want to make certain to give your complete and undivided attention. If you are able to bring your focus and concentration to these factors, you will dramatically improve your chances of playing better golf.

It is important to learn to stay within yourself on the golf course. You and your golf swing are the most relevant factors of all. By staying within yourself, you have a much greater likelihood of paying attention to significant factors. Ernie Els, going into the last day of a recent U.S. Open, illustrated the importance of paying attention to relevant factors when he emphasized that he could not worry about how Tiger Woods was playing. That would distract him from the most relevant factors, executing good golf swings and making good golf shots. Thus, if you find yourself becoming jealous of how well someone in your group is playing or thinking about a previous missed putt, you are not paying attention to what is most relevant: executing a smooth, relaxed golf swing in the here and now right at your target. Stay within yourself. Pay attention to what is really relevant.

**Play Hard, Play Smart and Play Well!**