

## Bad Shots...Moments of Gratefulness

I love to play golf...didn't hit my first shot until I was sixty... wondered if I would ever learn the game...have taken dozens of lessons...and have decided that it is the most enjoyable sport I have ever experienced. As a golfer, I get to play different venues, all different, be outdoors enjoying nature and get to meet many great folks, young and old, who share my love for this great sport. I get to hear stories that are unbelievable...a hole-in-one that was really a three as the first ball didn't clear the water hazard! ...A hole-in-one on a one hundred and ten yard hole that caromed off a pile of railroad ties forty-five degrees to the left of the tee box and landed in the hole...that shot hit using a driver no less! I even saw a friend get an eagle, which after arriving at the hole we saw the ball had started to move from the fringe and made a looping trip almost forty yards to drop neatly in the hole. There are many more golf stories like this...In fact I think nearly every golfer has at least three or four better than the ones I mentioned above. Oh, and my golf partner, Jim's least favorite story is the day his son-in-law got an eagle on a par five and Jim couldn't escape from an embedded lie in a sand trap and took a thirteen on the same hole! Such is golf!

Some folks enjoy golf and others seem to relish wallowing in anger and misery as a result of some of their bad shots. They hit a good shot and start telling others how to improve their game and then hit a bad shot and sulk, or worse, throw clubs or stop talking, or blame someone else for sneezing on their back swing. Some of these behaviors spoil the wonderful game for the one exhibiting them...and certainly for those playing along with the offender. Wouldn't it be nice if we could all realize that life can be more fun if anger wasn't a part of the golf equation? You see, one doesn't have to blow off steam for fear that they will ruin "their

boiler (stomach),” they just have to learn not to build a fire under “their boilers.”

Which brings me to the solution I have for anyone having trouble controlling their emotions while on the golf course...or at any other venue or life event.

**Thought One.** First, it helps to stay focused on “what” one is doing rather than “how” they are doing. Most frustration occurs when one is not doing as well as they thought they should be doing...“I should be doing better than Bob.”...“I need two pars to shoot my age.”...“When did she start hitting better shots than me?”...all thoughts that focus on how we are doing/playing rather than “What” we are doing. “What” thinkers do not focus on the past but rather think about what they need to do on the next shot (or next step in life). Maybe, “I need to adjust my grip to hit a straighter shot” or “I need to work harder rather than lamenting how Bob keeps getting better raises than me.” “How” thinking is comparative, past-orientated and judgmental and puts the wrong emphasis on golf and life. “What” thinking is forward looking and insures future success.

**Thought Two.** I have not had trouble with anger on the golf course, but a lesser form of anger...disappointment. I sometimes would be disappointed with myself for not hitting shots as I had practiced them. In fact, this is merely another type of “how” thinking. To overcome this type of thinking, I have come upon the idea (actually an old idea revisited) of inserting new thoughts in place of the disappointment I used to feel. Let me digress. At seventy-eight years of age, I have a number of friends who are unable to play golf any longer because of lingering illnesses or illnesses so severe that they can’t swing a club because of limited flexibility or loss of strength. My very best high school and college

friend past away several years ago. These events have tempered my view of golf (life) and I have used these revelations to help me enjoy golf more. After I attempt to hit my seven iron over sand trap and it drops just short of clearing the trap, leaving me with a difficult sand shot...or...when my drive finds its way behind a tree requiring a chip back to the fairway, I employ the following strategy: I think of a friend who would like to be playing this particular day but can't because of a health issue, and say to myself, "Thank God I am able to be on this beautiful course on this beautiful day...I have so much to be grateful for and I am thankful." A bad shot is better than being unable to play. Turning a bad shot into a moment of gratefulness is a victory in and of itself. Try it sometime on the golf course...or better yet, in your daily life.

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