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**MENTAL GAME COACHING
FOR PLAYERS AND COACHES**



MENTAL GAME FUNDAMENTALS

by

David MacKenzie

**A better mental game starts
with these 7 key concepts**

*"Competitive golf is played mainly on
a five-and-a-half inch course,
the space between your ears."*

- Bobby Jones



Introduction

Hello and welcome to Golf State of Mind! You've made a wise choice in signing up for this eBook to improve your game.



My name is David MacKenzie and I've been a mental coach to golfers for over 10 years. Throughout that time of working with all levels and personalities of players, I've worked diligently to refine the way I teach (my system) so it's as effective as possible. I never stop learning, so I'm not saying

it's the finished article, but in this starter guide to the Golf State of Mind, you're going to learn the fundamentals of my [mental game training system](#).

These are the actions, habits and traits that all the best performers that I've worked with have in common, along with some of the techniques they've used to become a top performer. This system is designed to train you to develop the mental game of a champion.

The first thing to highlight is that your Body and Mind are intimately linked. 99% of golf instruction is aimed at improving technical skills, but unless you are in control of the mental side, you won't be able to access those skills no matter how good they are. Just like you train yourself to improve your technical skills, your mind is ready to improve also (your mindset and mental performance is not fixed). My teaching is designed to give you the confidence and focus to access your best game more frequently, especially when under pressure in tournaments. A good mental game can make up for many technical imperfections you might have in your swing or stroke.

Although I refer to this as a system, nothing that you can read in a book or watch on YouTube is going to be as effective as one on one coaching. In my

phone and Skype/Facetime sessions, the approach is adapted to the learning style and personality of the individual player. But in this eBook, we will get you started on the path to success...

The purpose of the Golf State of Mind teaching is for you:

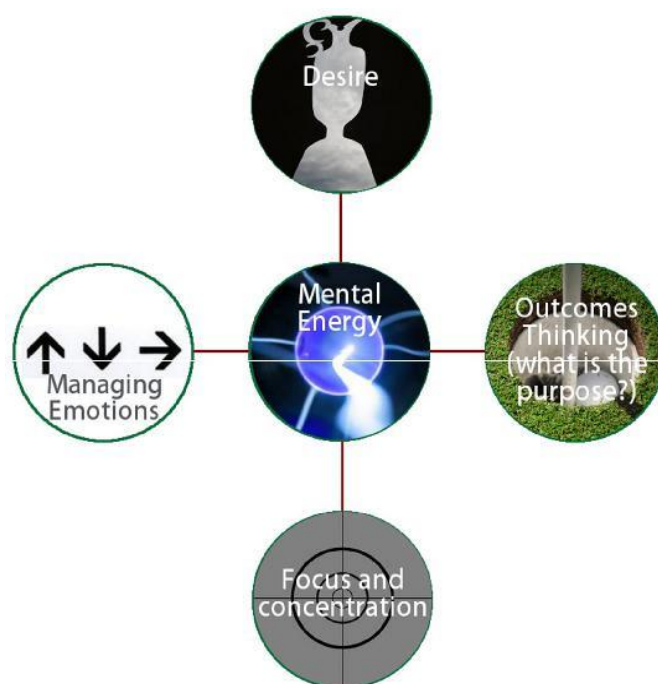
To - deepen your learning, increase your self-belief and confidence so you improve and enjoy.

By - opening your mind, building effective routines, deep practice and developing the mental toughness to stay focused in the face of adversity.

So that - you stay positive, confident, and decisive.

To be able to - use your skills naturally without the negative interferences that would normally hold you back.

The Basic Mental Game Framework



Fundamental 1: Focus on your “Process” and Mental Game Scorecard



If you are going to be able to play your best under pressure and break through to new scoring levels, you'll need to learn how to become immersed in your “process”, not living and dying by the outcome of every shot.

When you're too focused outcome of a shot or hole etc., you're focused on the future, which is uncertain. Uncertainty causes the human brain to think there is something to fear, which starts the “stress response” (increased heart rate, tense muscles and poor judgement).

However, when you are process focused, you're more focused on the things you can do (now), which are within your control and more certain. This keeps the brain from triggering the stress response, and allows you to play from a calmer, more focused state of mind.

The trick is finding out what these process goals need to be to get you in your optimal playing mode. This forms an integral part of my [Ultimate Mental Game Training System](#) and [one on one sessions](#).

Process goals should be actionable things that you do when you are playing well. We can put these into “routines” that are easy to follow. My shot routine fundamentals (they can be tweaked from player to player), follow my A-R-C-T-E-A system (Analyze, Rehearse, Commit, Trust, Evaluate, Accept).

Once we’ve determined the right process goals, we need to make them the primary measure of success of your rounds: how well you did at achieving them? My students take a “Mental Game Scorecard” with them to the course and each round the goal is to do a little better with their process goals and their mental approach.

Fundamental 2: Learn how to quieten the mind, improve focus and relax the body



The ability to focus or concentrate on what you choose will provide you with a supreme personal development tool that transcends golf. Daily practice even a minute or two will train your brain to focus automatically. Concentration is “your ability to stay focused on what you choose while you choose to.”

Golfers heads tend to be filled with mental chatter: “what if’s”, “don’t hit it there” and technical thoughts. To access your best skills consistently requires a quiet, non-judgmental mind, and this takes practice.

The ancient practice of meditation is all about improving a person's ability to quieten the mind. I advise my students to start a daily practice as it has so many benefits (beyond golf). With a meditation practice, you become more able to clearly focus on the things that are most important and reduce the noise from those things that are not.

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Samurai Warriors adopted Zen Buddhism because it allowed them to clear the mind and perform better on the battlefield (when death is on the line you need to be able to think clearly and not let your mind get in the way).

Be in the present: “fear is always in the future”.

Synonymous with a “quiet mind” is being “in the present”.

Your attention (thinking) isn't on what's happened or what will happen (consequences), only on what's happening now, the process, e.g. your pre-shot routine or your walk in between shots.

In between shots is a key time to stay present.

Now, your inner voice needs to be listened to impartially, not with judgement, you just gently bring your attention back to what's happening.

Direct your focus of attention to your breathing and what you see and feel (the trees, sky, surrounding landscape, the wind, the ground beneath your feet etc.). When in the present, you are alert and aware but not thinking (you can practice this any time, on any activity).

One day you'll catch yourself smiling at this inner voice!

Being in the NOW is so useful in golf. It's also a perfect way at any time to come out of negative emotions, regret, anger, anxiety – fear is always 'future'.

Excitement suggests thinking about results, regret suggests past mistakes, instead, just keep playing the shot in hand until they run out, and narrow your focus on where you want the ball to go (the target).

If you're truly present you won't be evaluating how you're playing or keep a running total, or be thinking 'if only'. You'll be quietening your mind and accessing the “Golf State of Mind”.

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Here's an exercise for you...

Ask yourself "*I wonder what my next thought will be?*" and 'notice' how long it is before a thought comes in. Keep practicing until you can extend that time to several seconds or more.

If this is easier, focus on something, a glass, a golf ball, your breath etc. (be very specific e.g. the light sparkling off one dimple of the golf ball). Now hold your attention and see how long it is before a thought comes in, then notice if your mind drifts and gently bring it back. Practice, daily at first, then often to maintain the skill.

Fundamental 3: Using Mental Imagery

“My life has been full of terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened.” ~ Michel De Montaigne

“What is my target?”

This is a simple yet profoundly powerful concept. Your brain doesn't process negatives or 'don't' e.g. what happens when you say to yourself “don't think of a pink elephant”. The same thing will happen when you tell yourself “don't hit it in the water”.



It's vital to think visually, sending messages to your muscles of what you *do* want. The brain responds far greater to images than words (it speaks to
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your unconscious mind which is controlling 90% of your actions and habits).

The brain is a mass of neural pathways; every action (including practice) creates new connections. Each time you repeat an action that pathway is strengthened. One of the best ways to accelerate our new behaviors (confidence) is through the imagination.

Any problem or ‘don’t want’ can be expressed in terms of what you do want. Positive language creates positive imagery and therefore a more useful performance state.

Mental imagery can be used before, during and in between rounds and is an important part of my [Ultimate Mental Game Training System](#).

Before a round, play the course in your mind. See the success you want to achieve as vividly as possible. Imagine the course in detail and include other senses and emotions that would ideally be present. Jack Nicklaus was a great believer in visualizing a round before he played.

Also before a round, recreate past success in your mind in the same way. See times you’ve felt confidence and successful on the course before.

Before a shot, stand behind the ball, “visualize” the ball flight and landing area. Having a clear intention of what you are about to do increases commitment and lowers distractions. The images also tell your body what it needs to do. “Feel” the shot with the club and choose a distant target and a short target.

During a round: Stay focused on ‘wants’ rather than imagining things going wrong and possible consequences, embarrassment etc.

At any time during your round, you can lower stress and increase confidence by looking at your virtual “Highlight reel”. Cameron McCormick (Jordan Speith’s coach) has Jordan do this exercise.

Remember:

- Your mind and body are one system and affect each other directly
- Your body responds as if your 'thinking' is real, positive or negative;
- Therefore, focus on the positive outcome you want.

Fundamental 4: Dealing With Mistakes



When emotions are brought into a round of golf, things tend to go sour. It's hard to access your best skills when you are playing with anger, frustration, regret, anticipation, and even excitement.

Learning how to manage your emotions is key to accessing your ideal performance state for golf (The Golf State of Mind).

Emotions are usually present when a golfer is playing “ego golf”. I.e. their own identity is too wrapped up in how they play the game. The opposite is true of a “mastery golfer”, one who looks at the game and their performance objectively, without ego. Their game does not define them.

A key part of managing emotions is having self-awareness, which we'll cover in the next fundamental. When you can recognize exactly what you are experiencing and (through mental training and improved self-awareness), you'll know how to deal with that emotion and reach a whole new (unlimited) level of play.

Fully consider these beliefs about confidence held by confident people:

- A key belief of confident people is ‘whatever happens I’ll handle it’
- Confidence means: staying focused on what you want to happen
- Confidence is a decision to do what’s necessary to overcome obstacles.
- Confident people typically don’t need the approval of others to feel good about themselves

Reframing negative thoughts

Remember, you can shift your perspective at any time...

Problem Frame	Becomes
I don’t want to go O.O.B.	I want to be on the fairway
I played badly	I can play better
I don’t want to be nervous	I want to relax and play
I messed up	I will stick to my pre-shot routine
My putting is off	I can do better at putting

Remember:

You can choose ‘how’ to think. You can ‘always’ choose your response to what happens.

Fundamental 5: Know Your Best Player-self

“Know Thyself” - Socrates

Who are you when you are playing your best? We call this the “Your Optimal Player Profile” and it’s part of mental training to get closer to it each time you play.



Here are some sample questions I ask my students (during their initial assessment and post-round reviews):

When you’re playing your best, do you:

Have high or low intensity, or are you somewhere in between? (Are you pumped up or calm, having fun?)

Are you aware of your swing or it is subconscious?

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How do you feel when you are walking in between shots?
How is your body language?
What are the things you remember most about the great shots you hit (pre-shot steps etc.)?
How would you describe your attitude and your inner voice (self-talk)?
Was your breathing more in your chest or deep belly?
What do you do before playing?
How did you sleep the night before?
How was your nutrition and hydration?
How engaged were you?

The more we know about your optimal player-self, the more we can measure your performance against in your “Mental Game Scorecard”.

Improved self-awareness of where your focus is and how you are feeling during a round is very important in maintaining your optimal player profile. By noticing your behaviors, thoughts and emotions, you will know whether you are in your “Optimal Performance State” or not as if needed, use your mental skills to help get you there.

Fundamental 6: Goal Setting and Tracking Progress

Taking an honest look at your game is key to knowing what you need to do to improve. The key question is what do you really want to achieve in golf? Desire will only survive with so many other things clamoring for your attention if you nurture it, and stay focused. This is achieved through clear goals and commitment - an essential part of every great golfer mindset.



Where are you now and how good can you become? How are you going to get there? These are important questions.

The strength of your mental energy depends upon...

Desire

First, list your dreams and wants (even those you may not fully believe are possible for you at this stage). For an amateur golfer, this might be to

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achieve a scratch handicap or winning the club championship. For a professional it might be to become a PGA or LPGA Tour player. Now break this into a long-term goal (1 year). In other words, what would represent a step towards this goal in one year's time? Write these goals down in the present E.g. "I am a scratch golfer", "I am a PGA Tour Player", "I am The Club Champion".

The next question is *why* you want to achieve this goal. Your purpose is your underlying motivation.

Next we need to determine the strengths and weaknesses in your game using stats, to get a picture of where you are now in relation to that goal. At Golf State of Mind, we use stat tracking to set long and short-term goals. Goal setting is important for confidence boosting and feeling like you are moving forward.

All my players know what they need to do physically and mentally to reach the next level in their game.

If getting down to scratch is your goal, it's easy to figure out where in relation to it you are. Now you know how many strokes on average you are away from your long-term goal, we need to break that into pieces, into smaller short-term goals. Short-term goals (those you want to achieve in the next 3 months) keep you focused and motivated. Use your time as a factor in how aggressive this goal is.

Only put things here you are 100% committed to achieving i.e. you are willing to act on now. Examples could be 70% of Fairways hit, Average putts to 32, Scrambling to 60% etc. These are called **performance goals**.

How will you know you've achieved it? I.e. keep a record of your stats

Now write your goals to meet the following criteria (SMART):

- Specific - "I will lower my putts per round to 29"
- Measurable - How did I do at this? Let's keep a record of putts per round

- Achievable and challenging - set yourself a target that is not too easy nor too hard to achieve
- Relevant – Is this goal relevant to get make you a better player? E.g. if your putting is currently the best part of your game but you hit just a few fairways, then putting is not the most relevant
- Time bound - I want to be at this target within 8 weeks

Mental coaching is one way to stay accountable in how you are using your time and whether you are progressing.

Fundamental 7: Effective Practice

Following on from knowing your game and goal setting, adopting an effective and focused practice regimen is key to reaching your goals. This is another area where I help golfers.



What are the process goals required to achieve the performance goal? e.g. practice regimen, fitness, or commitment to specific improvements
You need to have a structured practice plan to make sure you're using your time productively. Success will come only when you do the right things, repeatedly and patiently.

In the Golf State of Mind, we divide practice into 3 parts of Block, Variable and Competitive skills practice. **Block practice** is about consciously grooving a new movement pattern, **Variable practice** is about trusting your skills - teaching your body and mind to adapt to different situations (random types of shot and distance) and **Competitive Skills Practice** - putting your game under pressure by introducing consequences to missing.

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Commit to a continuous program of improvement and honor those commitments. During each practice session it should be a cycle of Learn (Block), Trust (Variable) and Test (Competitive).

Summary

I hope you've enjoyed reading through the GSOM Mental Game Fundamentals. By following these, your game is heading in the direction of improvement.

Remember...Keep your sense of humor and perspective and strive to enjoy your golf!!!

If you'd like to learn more about my teaching, I'd be more than happy to share more with you! There are a couple of options: you can check out my [Ultimate Mental Game Training System](#), [Practice System](#), [Putting System](#) or [Pre-round Confidence Booster Audio Sessions](#).

Alternatively if you would like to discuss one on one options, [please use this link to book a free 15 minute consultation](#).

If you are a teaching professional and want to find out more about how Golf State of Mind can enhance your teaching sessions, then please email me at david@golfstateofmind.com