

Chapter Three

Developing a firm Belief in yourself and Others

Even though most people really don't believe this, you do have the power to control your

thoughts. In golf, as in life and in business, your belief system is a critical part of your performance. Do you truly believe in the possibility of change? Or are you stuck thinking that your past performance is a predictor for future performance? By becoming aware of your beliefs, you can also recognize that you have the power to change them.

If all of our frustrations in business, in personal goals, or on the course were magically removed from us today, we would soon find ourselves attracting a similar set of problems about something else. Unless we learn how to redirect our focus from unhappy, restless thoughts and emotions and deal with our mind's focus on dysfunctional chatter about our past and future, the problems will continue to reoccur. The stories, people, and experiences may change, but at the end of the day, week, year, and decade the results will be similar.

60 61

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

I am very grateful to have stumbled onto a different way of looking at the game of golf that can be used to help others. Using golf as a venue for looking and changing our methods of thinking has helped many people recognize the need to change in other areas of their lives. In some cases even non-golfers have used these techniques.

The first step to making changes in any situation is awareness that something needs to change. This awareness may show up as frustration, embarrassment, or even boredom. Feeling these emotions in business or in golf can be used to prompt the changes you wish to make.

Use the Power of Your Mind

In sports, as well as at work, subconscious thoughts control our success. As we perform tasks, our brains subtly control minute muscle movements that can mean the difference between success and failure. In our training sessions, we do an exercise that demonstrates how with the power of our minds we can even influence the movement of objects. It's simply a way to get people to see the power of intent. It's also about the ability to

visualize our target and how easily interference can distract us from it. Once people learn to focus and experience success in this situation, it's easy to extrapolate the process to real-world situations. This notion was introduced to me in 1997 when I was first starting my business. A coach named Jim Earley gave me new insights to really understand who I am and how to focus on my own targets.

There is nothing magical about this exercise; it simply shows that focused thoughts on a target help our brain coordinate our body's movements to get the desired results. Like a guided missile, as long as we keep our thoughts coordinated to hit the target, our mind and body work together to make the adjustments necessary to stay on course.

Coin moving helps us recognize the power of the mind.

Coin Moving Exercise

In this exercise, you will learn to utilize the power of your mind to move a coin while staying focused on a target. You'll need a washer about the size of a quarter and a piece of string, thread, or fishing line about nine inches long. Tie one end of the string to the washer so that you have a pendulum (you can also improvise by taping a quarter to the end of the string).

Sitting down at a table with the picture of the following golf hole in front of you, hold the loose end of the string with your thumb and index finger. Rest your elbow on the table and move your hand so that the coin, when hanging straight down and perfectly still, is resting over the middle of the image pictured below (at the intersection of the north-south and east-west lines). Keep your arm, hand, and fingers relaxed but stationary throughout the exercise. Take the coin with your free hand, pulling it back a few inches along the north-south line, and let it swing forward. As the

62 63

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

coin moves back and forth, you are going to change the direction of the coin to move east-west using only your thoughts. Keep your arm, hand, and fingers relaxed but stationary, and visualize the coin changing directions so that it starts moving back and forth along the east-west axis. With concentration and a little time, the coin should start moving from north-south to a small circular motion to finally an east-west direction.

This simple exercise demonstrates the power of intent by showing that your mind alone can make things go in the direction you desire.

Once you have the coin moving straight east-west, see if you can change your intent, along with the direction of the coin, by visualizing the coin moving once again along the north-south line. If someone is available nearby, hold the coin back a few inches as before and let it swing from north-south. Have the other person tap the coin with their finger to go east-west. This visually represents interference and distractions that

move us in a direction different from our intent. Focus your thoughts again to move the coin north-south. The quicker you can refocus on moving the coin back to north-south, the quicker it will change directions. Focusing on your intent reduces distractions and helps you achieve the results you want.

Now that you have demonstrated to yourself just how much your mind can control, you also get to look at the things that cause you to lose focus. In golf, we call these things interference, which can be anything from someone watching you putt, strong winds, or the deliberate interference built into courses, such as bunkers and water. In business, interference can be other people's comments, your memories of past mistakes, or a telephone that keeps ringing. In these and many more instances, you have the opportunity to acknowledge, recognize, and then quickly deal with whatever is causing interference.

Dealing with Interference

Interference is anything that distracts us from keeping focused on the target. The interference can come from the inside and be self-imposed, as when our own thoughts or actions stray from our goals, or the interference can come from the outside, from someone else's actions or external things, such as weather or road construction. Let's explore some of the ways we encounter interference and how we can deal with it so we can get back on track to staying focused on the target. Interference can be caused by the following (just to name a few):

Focusing on what we don't want to do rather than what we want to do

Allowing the past to control the future

The need for perfection

Negative perceptions clouding our judgment

64 65

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

Chuck, who had recently completed my workshop and had mastered the coin moving exercise, related how he dealt with a frustrating situation while taking a break from the winter cold of Minnesota. Chuck went on a trip to Florida with his family.

They decided to spend one of their days golfing. Because he had learned how to focus and how powerful the mind was, he was able to deal with interference without letting it ruin his game or his day.

I decided to go golfing with my son and wife as a way to relax. Instead of keeping score the regular way, I decided to mark the scorecard with a check if I had a good score on a hole, a dash for an OK hole, and an X for a bad hole. A check mark was not related to the number of strokes I took on any given hole but in my own mind how I played

the hole.

The first hole was a disaster, starting with a thirty-yard drive and a ten-yard second shot. I picked up the ball and walked to the green, deciding to practice my putting while waiting for my wife and son to finish the hole. My head was not clearly in the game or focused on a target.

Things got worse at the second tee. This hole—a ninety-degree dogleg that turned sharply at the 150-yard mark—already had two groups ahead of us playing the hole. We waited on the tee box about thirty yards from the first green. A foursome playing behind us approached the green. One of them yelled at us to hit. I responded that we couldn't hit. They kept yelling, and soon we were exchanging some pretty heated words.

It was really up to me to choose how to deal with this distraction. I didn't have to let someone else ruin my day.

Taking the time to walk back to the first green where they were putting, I simply pointed out that if they looked ahead more carefully, they would see that we were waiting for two groups ahead of us to move forward before we could hit.

They apologized. Instead of fuming for the rest of the round, I enjoyed the game and did well on the next two holes, rewarding myself with check marks. The next two holes earned dashes, and I finished the round with four more check marks.

By taking control of the situation and not letting myself be victimized, my wife, son, and I could go on and enjoy our game. The exercise simply reminds me of the power I have to choose what to do in the face of interference.

Like some of the best golfers in the world, those in business will face many types of interference on a daily basis. Whether the interference comes from our personal thoughts or from outside influences, as it did in Chuck's story, it takes continued practice and perseverance to stay focused on the outcome you want.

One of my clients noted that his biggest source of interference came from the clients providing the least amount of revenue for his company. After analyzing his customers and his company's use of time, he said, "I've found we've been spending way too much time on the bottom 25 percent of our clients. The clients we work with who bring in the smallest amount of revenue seem to be taking up most of our time. I need to be spending more time with the top 25 percent of our clients to find ways we can help them and in return double our business."

For this business owner it was a particular group of customers that

did not fit with the company's profitability goal. By making one decision, by changing one piece of the equation (the bottom 25 percent of the customer base), he removed a major interference to success. The owner discovered how he could keep the company on track, meet his goals, and have more fun doing it. Sure, there are risks involved, and it isn't always easy to let go of what's getting in the way, but the rewards are worth it.

66 67

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

Sometimes the interference can be more difficult to see, especially when it is accompanied by the best of intentions. One of my clients, for example, volunteered her expertise to help on a strategic planning commission for a religious institution. She was totally committed to helping the organization move in the right direction. As she attended the meetings, however, she realized no one had a vision; there was no clear direction for how the group wanted to proceed. Because of this, the well-meaning ideas contributed by others were nothing more than interference. The target wasn't clear, so it was hard for the group to focus. Looking back, she realized she could have saved a lot of time and frustration before she joined by simply asking the group what their vision was. In golf terms, the group needed to decide what the target could be and move forward to play the hole.

What is distracting you at the moment? What is getting in your way of better performance? Is it a disgruntled employee? Is it a product that's taking too much time? Is it lagging sales? Is it pressure from stockholders? Is it an upcoming move or working with vendors who are dragging their feet? Is it something you like to do, or feel like you have to do, that's keeping you from more important matters at hand?

Interference is a daily challenge, and opportunity, whether we create it or something else creates it, is going to confront us even on the way to meeting our smallest goals. The good news is that you have the power to change the direction in which you are moving by changing what you are thinking. While you cannot control the thoughts and actions of others, you can control your own thoughts and actions and how you respond to interference. Changing the direction of something can often be as easy as changing the way you think. Changing your thoughts can change your reality. I often think of the serenity prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." This allows us to think and create for ourselves and our teams.

It also helps us be open to the mindset to love ourselves in challenging times. You get to be on the planet to grow yourself and others and to make a difference.

One of the ways we experience interference is by remembering events from the past when making decisions in the present. For instance, have

you ever thought about why you get mad at yourself after making a mistake or an error in judgment, whether it's on the golf course or in the boardroom? Often we get mad because we're afraid to repeat the same mistake.

When I was playing competitive golf and shooting even par, I went out for a leisurely round of golf with my parents. I played badly on the first two holes, scoring a double-bogey on each hole. I had barely started the game, and already I was four over par. I was fuming mad and decided to stop playing. My thinking was "If I keep shooting like this, there is no way I'm going to score in the thirties for nine holes, or in the seventies for eighteen holes, even if I par every hole from here on out. In fact, I'll be lucky to shoot in the eighties!" So I quit.

As I looked back on this event, I could see how wrong I had been in my thinking. I was angry because I assumed that I would continue to make the same mistakes on the rest of the holes. Why play more holes if they're going to be as bad as the ones I just played? Why repeat the past? What never crossed my mind at that time was that I had also birdied every hole on that golf course at one time or another and so I had the potential to birdie the next sixteen holes. It was a possibility, at least, within the range of my experiences. My record at that point was five birdies in a row. If I had kept playing and birdied the next five holes, simply repeating a positive portion of my past, I would have been one under par after seven holes. Even if I just birdied four of the next sixteen holes and shot par on the rest, I would finish the round even par. Instead, I got mad at myself because I thought I'd make the same mistakes as I had in the past thirty minutes and repeat my poor performance.

68 69

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

Do we really have our eyes open to the possibilities? Or have we let the pasted control the future?

I tell this story because it is a vivid reminder to me of how powerful our thoughts can be. I could have changed my game, and my performance, by focusing on times when I performed well. Instead, I let the first two holes control my day, and at that moment I made a decision about my future—or the next sixteen holes, at least. I had a choice to let them be an opportunity for success or a chance to fail. I decided I was going to fail and walked away from what could have been my biggest comeback ever.

Letting go of the past is one of the most effective tools in our game and

in our life. It allows us to move forward and live in the moment to create our dreams. How quickly are you able to change your thoughts? How fast can you let go of the past and realize you can perform better in the next business meeting, the next phone call, or the next customer interaction? Even if your day started out poorly, that is already in the past. You have the power to create the future. You do not need to become the victim of your own game, thinking that you're trapped in a downward spiral because things started out on a low note. Even though it may be difficult to see at the time, the next moment could be the start of your biggest comeback ever. You have the power to change your future by changing your thoughts.

The Need for Perfection

Perfectionism is always about fear and a lack of confidence. But what is perfection exactly? Does it ever fully exist or last forever? This certainly doesn't mean we can't work toward it every day, but we shouldn't be disappointed if we are not perfect. When we feel that we must do something perfectly, we tend to lack confidence. Where does confidence come from? How do we get it? It certainly does not come from never making a mistake. It comes from learning from our mistakes.

After years of studying many top performers in business, golf, and other fields, they have proven that confidence comes only from within. Friends and family mean well when they say, "It's only in your imagination. There's nothing to be afraid of." You and I know, though, that that type of reassurance never works. Such remarks may give us relief for a few minutes, but the truth of the matter is that hearing "It's only in your imagination" doesn't really build confidence or cure fear. Fear is very real and can cripple us. The first step is to recognize it exists, determine where it is coming from, and learn how to deal with it.

We can call this emotion fear, worry, tension, embarrassment, perfectionism, or self-consciousness, but whatever we call it, it can immobilize us. Simply knowing about fear and how we generate it doesn't cure it. Fear is the number one factor in ruining opportunities for success. It wears us down physically and can actually make us sick. It prevents people from achieving what they want. It certainly messes up a wonderful round of golf. Many people know how quickly we can "lose it" when we are playing one of our best rounds ever. We get nervous because we lose our belief and have a need for perfection to finish strong that takes us out of our flow state, or zone.

In golf the first tee often sets up the player for a round of fear. As many people discover in my workshops, when they first do an exercise like putting, there is added pressure and tension when other people are watching. It is the fear of performing well or looking good with someone else watching. Ask golfers where they feel the most pressure to hit a good

shot, and most will say on the first tee, because that is where other people are waiting and watching. Focusing on these other people can also cause us to lose the focus on the target itself.

Speaking to groups or giving presentations is one of the greatest fears people have for the same reason—they are afraid of looking bad or making a mistake in front of others. Performing before an audience, whether it's

70 71

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

hitting the golf ball or giving a speech to several hundred people, can cause a great deal of anxiety and interference that takes your mind off the target.

The awareness that you are fearful and calling fear by its true name is the first step to making change. The next steps are preparation and understanding that all confidence is acquired and developed through action. No one is born with confidence. Those people you know who radiate confidence, who are on the journey to mastery, are those who acquired their confidence through action.

Positive action helps relieve fear. The motion exercises and activities in this book are one way to build confidence. That is why, in my training, I have people write positive things that happen to them in their workbooks. I then ask them to relate those things to what they are learning.

Action is the cure for fear. I have seen this many times.

I had a business owner and her team, who were struggling with sales, into my studio. The fear of the economy and their calls versus sale completion was getting to them. They listed all of their worries to me in great detail. Finally I cut in and asked them, "What are you doing about it? What are you doing to correct this situation? Where would you like to be in a week? A month? Three months? Six months? A year?"

They seemed to think that talking about and worrying about the issue was doing something about it. I decided to demonstrate something to them through the medium of golf.

Most of the people on the team enjoyed golf, so I played a putting competition with them in the studio. However, several weeks before this session, they had participated in the five ways of putting exercise, and many had done better putting with their eyes closed than with them opened.

When we competed that day, though, they went back to their regular way of putting. I knew this would demonstrate to them that they had gone back to old thought processes.

After the game I simply asked questions of the group that allowed them to process and make changes in their way of thinking. I was pleased to see confidence return to their eyes. They were soon taking action steps. They realized that they had been over controlling other members and were micromanaging. They laid out a plan for leadership and sales teams. Soon thereafter, the business owner and her staff began

to achieve their goals as they were able to become creative leaders as a team.

Much lack of self-confidence can be traced back to a mismanaged memory. Memories are just things we deposit in our brains. Often we don't deposit what is really true. We, of course, don't always have control over our experiences, but we do have control over how we remember them and the stories we tell ourselves about our experiences. Are your stories about golf and other areas of your life confident or self-demeaning? Your brain will remember what you tell it to remember. Confident, successful people specialize in putting positive thoughts into their memory banks. You are always telling yourself the story of your life. Make sure to tell it in positive terms.

There are many ways in which you can put positive thoughts in your mind. Driving a car, eating alone, or taking a shower are all good opportunities to feed your mind positive thoughts. Before you go to bed at night might be the best time to plant your positive thoughts and images in your mind. Review your accomplishments and victories during the day and ask yourself what you are grateful for and how you would like to get more out of them. Take a week to replay the memories you create for yourself. Then, take another week and replace the negative memories with positive ones. See how much better you feel and perform in just a few weeks of changing your self-talk.

Perceptions Restricting the Reality

Is your perception true to reality? How do past experiences influence how you think today? Do you perceive a golf hole with a water hazard as harder to play than one without water? Or do you play the same shot to the same hole over and over again? Pretend that you are going to play the hole below in your mind. What do you see?

72 73

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

What do you see as you approach your shot?

It's not unusual to get into a situation where perception is different from reality. You expect one thing, and something entirely different occurs. You procrastinate on a big project, for example, because the perception is that it's going to be overwhelming, unmanageable, and a grind to get through. When you finally start, however, you discover it was easier than you thought. Whether it's lack of awareness, a shortage of information, or a misconception on one's part, the perception we have of a situation does not always give us an accurate picture of reality.

Without looking at the picture again, answer the following questions:

1. What is the color of the flag?
2. What is the color of the flagstick?
3. Where is the flagstick (pin) located in relation to the rest of the

green? Front? Center? Back? Left? Right?

4. How many sand traps are there?

5. Where exactly did you want to hit your shot?

6. The picture below is the same golf hole you saw earlier, this time looking back at the house from behind the green.

Our perceptions may be different than the reality

Now take a minute to look back at the picture of the golf hole from the tee box. Pretend you've just hit your shot.

The picture on the right is the same hole. Many people are not aware of the sand trap on the right of this flag stick from the tee box (picture on the right); looking down (picture on the left) you don't see the sand trap.

Looking at the hole from this perspective, how do you see the hole now?

These pictures raise many important lessons about perception and awareness. First, what we see initially is not always true to reality. People think of a golf course when they see the hole from the tee box. They only see what they see, which is not always the reality. We also usually do not see the target we want to hit, even when we think we do.

Where else do you recognize that perception is different than reality in business, your personal goals, and golf?

This exercise helps people become more aware of their surroundings.

It's the awareness that is the first step to improving performance.

Let's say a marketing director of a company is working with a longterm mindset, setting out goals that can be achieved within two years. At

74 75

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

the same time, the sales director may be operating with a shorter-term mindset that covers a three-month span. Two separate mindsets from two company leaders will complicate the situation and confuse other employees, which will hurt the company in the future.

The snow gives an opportunity to use the environment to one's advantage.

When looking at it from a different angle, reality becomes clear.

Here's another example of perception versus reality. The two pictures above were taken in Minnesota in April. I challenged a number of people to get the ball onto the green. Being a fairly small green with snow surrounding it, the perception of each person was that they needed to be precise with the tee shot. However, the reality was that they could hit a putt and bank the ball off of the snow, all the way down to the green, and do it fairly easily. Taking in the whole environment before stepping up to the ball would have made a big difference. Have we really explored all the possibilities before we seek to perform?

Overcoming a Self-Defeating Perception

Our perception in one area of our life can affect our

performance in other areas. Julie, for example, was a nongolfer and manager with a large insurance company. She was a quick learner and very smart. During a putting exercise in the studio, she suddenly stopped putting and said out loud, “I can’t putt. I am not an athlete.” She was frustrated, and I sensed some anger riding underneath her comments as she set her putter to the side. An invisible wall went up in front of her, and the relaxed environment of the group suddenly changed, as though a black cloud had hit the inside of the studio.

I wasn’t exactly sure what Julie was thinking, but I knew she was not open to the possibilities. A perception was getting in her way. Getting her to change her thought process would be an opportunity for a breakthrough. I handed Julie a few golf balls, backed up three feet, put my hand up as a target, and said, “Julie, toss me a golf ball.” She threw it to me with her left hand, even though she was right-handed. She hit the target. I backed up three more feet. “Toss me another one.” She threw another one underhand, this one with her right hand and directly on target. I took a long stride backward and raised my hand, nine feet away. Again, without hesitation, she hit the target.

76 77

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

“When you threw me the golf ball just now, what did you do physically,” I asked, “with your arm?”

“I moved my arm forward toward the target,” she replied.

“Right. Now grab a putter and make the same forward motion with your hands, without hitting a ball. In other words, simply pretend you’re tossing me the ball while swinging the putter, remaining focused on the target.”

Julie took a few practice swings with the putter.

I set the head of the golf club I was holding down on the ground, three feet in front of her, and said, Now move the putter the same way you just did, aiming for my club with a golf ball.”

Julie putted the ball and it hit my club.

“Interesting,” I said, backing up another five feet and setting my club in front of a hole. “Hit the club again.” Julie took aim and hit the club squarely with her putt. “Now put the ball in the hole,” I said as I took away my club. She aimed, hit the ball, and drained the putt. She was now smiling and engaged, having discovered she could putt after all.

What had happened? For me, two things were going on in Julie’s head that stopped her from participating. First, she was most likely getting negative signals from past experiences in sports. “I can’t compete as an athlete. I am not coordinated. I’m not going to do something if I can’t succeed, whether it’s golfing or badminton.” Second, interfering thoughts were getting in the way. “If I can’t put the ball in the hole, I must be doing

something wrong. If I can't do something right it means I'm a failure." As in many cases, this was a great correlation to the issues she faced in the office. I thought, "What are the questions she can ask herself when she is in a similar situation in order to overcome it?"

As a coach, I helped Julie see that putting was as easy as tossing a ball, which she already knew how to do. This changed her perception from "This is something I can't do" to "This is something I can do." I also guessed that the hole was creating interference (putting and success equals getting the ball in the hole), so I took the hole out of the equation by having her aim for my golf club instead. The purpose was to show her that she could succeed in hitting a target without having the ball go in the hole. After a few successes, knowing she could hit a target, the hole no longer became an obstacle for Julie. It wasn't about good or bad, right or wrong; it was simply about putting the ball to a hole. The breakthrough for her was realizing that she could be very focused and achieve things she did not think were possible, while remaining unattached to the things she could not control.

Fear of Failure at Work

This well-choreographed dance occurs daily in the workplace. Employees or managers start out with a perception and suddenly equate that perception with "I can't do my job." Because they don't want to be the one making all the mistakes, or they are fearful they may look stupid or lose their job, they stop taking chances, or blame others, or shut down. Soon an invisible wall pops up, all because of the wrong perception. This is not just with employees or middle managers; this can happen with leadership teams, executive teams, CFOs, and CEOs. The role of a good coach is to help them see this is happening without telling them what to do.

Creating awareness or a new perception is often the first step in overcoming such obstacles. Going back to the example of Julie, when

78 79

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

we discussed what happened with putting and related it to her work, she agreed that when she encounters a new situation that seems overwhelming, her first thought is often "I can't do this." Putting gave her a new perspective that allowed her to look at other possibilities without closing down so quickly. Now, when faced with a new situation, thinking back to other projects or situations where she has succeeded and done well in the past, like knowing she can toss a golf ball, may be all it takes to change her perception into "I know I can do this because I've done something like it before." Julie might think of this by herself, or she may need a reminder from her manager about similar situations where she has succeeded.

In any business situation, you may have as many different perceptions as you have people involved. Even though a foursome of golfers or a team

of employees is looking at the same hole or project, what we each see is influenced from experiences we've had in the past. So our viewpoints may be very different. We can't assume everybody sees the same thing or is on the same page. It is helpful, therefore, to see if your perceptions match those of others and be aware of what's happening "around the hole" that could affect the outcome.

Changing Our Perceptions

Many years ago I had a high school student come to me to improve his golf game. Although he was good enough to be on the junior varsity golf team, he admitted he was "probably the worst golfer on the team" and was ready to quit. His best score for eighteen holes was a ninety-seven, and he rarely broke fifty for nine holes.

It didn't take long for me to see that Jason's golf scores were directly connected to the perceptions he had about competitive golf and his fear of failure. While his coaches wanted to help him with the fundamentals, Jason got nervous when his coaches were watching, tensing up on the swing and hitting the ball poorly. His coaches tried to fix his swing—what they saw from the outside—instead of taking time to realize Jason's swing was simply the result of his negative thinking. The doubt was created by lack of focus and loss of his target through impact.

It was important for Jason to deal with failure as an opportunity to learn from what happened, to change the things he could change, to refocus, and to let go of the past. "Dan didn't even teach me the fundamentals," Jason recalls, "but my swing improved through awareness and focus on the target. He taught me how to feel the club in my hands and how to create different kinds of shots." Two weeks later, after just two sessions, Jason shot his career round for nine holes of thirty-seven, just one over par. Instead of dreading the upcoming golf season as a sophomore, Jason was excited. "I have a whole new outlook on golf," he said. "I am no longer afraid of failure, and my swing feels confident. I lowered my score, on average, by nineteen strokes." Jason's golf continued to improve as a junior and senior, scoring low rounds of seventy-two for eighteen holes and thirty-three for nine holes. This became an opportunity for him to be mindful of what he was experiencing on the course, which later changed the course of his life.

However, the most noticeable benefits of Jason changing his perception happened off the golf course. When we first met, Jason couldn't look me straight in the eyes because of his low self-esteem. Now at school he began taking on leadership roles in extracurricular activities and gained more confidence as a speaker. His report card also improved. His average grades of Bs when we first started working together changed to As in

high school, where they remained throughout college, even with a double major.

“I sat down with Dan to look at my goals for my first semester in college,” Jason remembered as a smile settled on his face. “He asked me what grades I wanted to get. I knew I became a pretty good student in high school but didn’t know what to expect in college, so I marked down three As and an A- for my goals. The A- was to give myself permission to not have to be perfect. Not only did I get three As and an A-, my A- was just one point away from getting another A. I don’t consider myself superstitious, but Dan keeps saying that if you write down what you want, you

80 81

Performance in Motion Developing a Firm Belief in Yourself and Others

often get it. The following semesters I didn’t make the same mistake—I wrote down all As and achieved it. More important than the grades, however, is the confidence I’ve gained through what I’ve learned with Dan. I look forward to applying the same concepts to my career and future life.” By changing his perception, Jason not only changed how he looked at things but broadened his opportunities and changed his life into something better than he had ever imagined. At the time of this writing, Jason is attending Harvard to work on his doctorate degree.

Asking questions of others to understand their perceptions can be helpful in terms of customers, clients, or competition. Do your customers perceive the benefits of your product or service the same way you do? What are the perceptions of your core audience to your company and product? Do you assume all your customers have the exact same needs? Do you proactively ask your customers what their needs are?

3 pictures from different angles show multiple perceptions of the same golf hole.

There is perhaps no other sport in which your mental game is more important than golf. Mastering your thoughts will aid in your golf game, and learning how to do so will improve your work and your life.

Managing Your Mindset

If our mindsets have such a powerful effect on us, then wouldn’t it just be better to get rid of them in order to eliminate the ups and downs of performance? It might seem like it, but the answer is no. Mindsets bring order to our lives and help us decide what to do in certain situations. The mindset helps us interpret the picture or movie of the world. Without it, we would see nothing.

It is important to understand that mindsets are not good or bad, right or wrong. The real issue is whether we are clear with them. If we understand them, then we can make the necessary changes. When our perceptions are different from our realities, that is when we find ourselves in trouble. Sometimes, mindsets can limit our boundaries and only allow us

to see part of the bigger picture.

To what extent does your mindset help you become the master? To what extent does it put you as the victim? To be in control of our own mindsets helps us see, think, influence, behave, and perform.