



BRAD BREWER

ADVISORY TEAM MEMBER

LEARN TO MAKE LASTING CHANGES

Have you ever taken a lesson and then started hitting it worse? Was a machete, ball retriever with extended reach and a significant number of provisional balls necessary tools to complete your very next round? If this has happened to you, rest assured you are not alone. Often during a first lesson with a new client, I will be told how the last pro he or she worked with really messed them up causing great confusion. During group instructional seminars I will ask, "How many of you feel golf lesson do not work and are a waste of your good money?" After the audience gets over the initial surprise by the nature of my query, inevitably, hands raise up with fervor.

I must admit, I was that person. As a junior golfer if what the pro was trying to get me to do didn't show positive results in a flash, I fought it all the way. I was the worst lesson taker known to the PGA of America.



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At the time, I didn't know why I would chose to act this way. After all, I was the one who signed up for this improvement, and paying for this great information. But my stubborn feelings to hang onto the old way even though it wasn't serving me well, caused negative vibrations and tension which resulted in poor ball striking. I look back now and am so grateful for the patience of my Instructor and for my not giving up on what I was being taught. I can recall the many frustrating hours before the break through of better results occurred motivating me to go on a quest to learn why I, along with many of my clients, struggle with change. I am pleased to share what I have since discovered in the hopes that change becomes a joyful adventure towards continued growth and greater personal expansion for you too.

Change...it is often said that nobody likes change, so much so that hundreds of books have been written on this very subject. But we also consciously understand that change is necessary for all growth. During adolescence we called it "growing pains." Perhaps it is here that a negative connotation begins to resonate in our minds. Though it will be different, know that change doesn't have to be painful. It is our subconscious resistance to change that creates an internal struggle; producing inconsistent results. If you are not overwhelmingly convinced you should make a change, you will go in with one foot out the door. On the flip side, when you are well aware without question, the change is going to benefit you, your paradigm shifts because now you feel in control of the change, rather than the change being in control of you.

I always ask golfers to tell me what they really want from their game. The vast majority can tell me what they don't want, and struggle with declaring what they do want. I have come to realize that it is often due to our mind being so emotionally wrapped up in past results that it binds and limits us from thinking about what we truly desire. All we see are images of negative past results, a slice into the water or a missed three-footer for par. Our perspective of what we can do is based on our past results and not on our true potential. This is the perception problem that impedes forward progression. It is our excuse to stay in the comfort of what we know, even though it is not what we want. We lie to ourselves by saying things like, "I am just a bad driver, or a bad putter and nothing I do will change that." My mental guru, Bob Proctor paraphrases a biblical quote to best illustrate this self persecuted attitude: "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they know not."

Awareness precedes the journey of change. When a golfer moves into the realm of awareness of a need for change, that golfer shifts from being an Unconscious Incompetent (does not know what is being done incorrectly,) to what Bob calls a Conscious Incompetent. They now know what it is about their technique that is causing the result that they do not want. This is a necessary step, but certainly not a desired place to be for long. We think in pictures—Seeing is Believing, images impress upon our minds, therefore I prefer to show my clients with visual tools, the cause and effect of faulty fundamentals. Once



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a golfer receives a proper understanding of the faults that have caused them to fall short of their true potential, they are on their way to a successful change.

Now the fun begins. With change come different feelings. Often these new feels are referred to as strange, weird, or even horrible. I remind golfers that if it feels different, it is a good thing because it means it is not the same as what was being done before that didn't serve a good purpose. The different feeling is progress. The new paradigm must then be conditioned with the encouragement that the change will begin to feel comfortable. This cannot happen instantly. It is human nature to gravitate back toward old conditioned habits, thus the change made must be acknowledged and rehearsed before every shot. Think about 80% of our daily activities, how we get dressed in the morning, what we eat, how we walk and talk, all pretty much accomplished on auto pilot. Why do you put your right shoe on before your left one? Because that is what you were taught and you rehearsed it daily for years. Now if I asked you to put your left shoe on before your right, you would need to make a conscious decision to do so until it became your new habit. This

is a challenging time with change, what was done on auto pilot now requires effort and that often causes a golfer to believe the lie that they just don't have what it takes to improve their game.

Often the golfer at this juncture is trying their best to want and like the change, but begins to have self doubt because current results are inconsistent. Tension mounts, a flood of negative self talk rages and mental ping pong ensues—should I do this or not? Psychologists claim it takes four positives to cancel a negative. That is why reminding the player of what they want and how to rehearse this feeling before attempting to strike the next ball is crucial. This helps to take the sting out of their last poor shot and encourages them to replace it with a finely executed shot.


Whack! "Wow, that was easy!" is a common remark made when the change produces a flawless result. The golfer has just crossed into a new frontier of change. They are now the Conscious Competent. They know what it is they are doing differently and how to successfully execute it.

But wait! This is where the danger lies. With one good execution the golfer

thinks "I got it." These are famous last words of many frustrated golfers in the stage of conditioning a new change. Think of losing weight and finding it all over again, plus another five. That one perfect strike is great awareness that consciously rehearsing the new feels and trusting in the change, makes one capable of executing really good golf shots. But realize this: We don't like to think about things. We desire to do things unconsciously, on auto pilot, and soon we skip rehearsing the new, expecting it to be a conditioned habit after just a few attempts. The truth is it takes thousands of conscious rehearsals to reprogram a new paradigm.

This doesn't mean you can't play good golf during this period of retraining, because you can. We see examples of this on the professional level all the time. It just means that you must build into your routine the rehearsal of this new feel prior to walking into the ball and executing on the desired shot at hand. Changing our paradigm is done by maintaining a conscious awareness of what you want for many repetitions until it conditions the newly formed habit. The old habit will wilt away from lack of energy as you strengthen the new with positive reinforcement and celebration of better results. The Unconscious Competent emerges as a result of this successful process of change: A perfection of skill to a mastery level where Mind, Body and Spirit function in harmony, able to create desired results consistently.

Top performers in golf, business and life have learned this process of growth and joyfully transition into being the master of what they do. And so can you!

Until next time...happy golfing, 

Brad Brewer is a PGA Class A Professional member of the PGA Presidents Council and Founder of the Brad Brewer Golf Academy. He is also on the GFM Advisory team. For further information about Brad, log onto www.golffitness-magazine.com/advisoryteam.