

Frustration Free Golf

FOR THOSE JUST ABOUT TO BEGIN GOLF,
OR THOSE JUST ABOUT TO QUIT!

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INTRODUCTION

I'm ashamed of the following. But it's true, and the thing about confession is that when others hear it, they learn that they're not "the only ones!"

There I was, thankfully alone, on the 7th tee. I was duck hook/topping drives – make that "would-be" drives – into the small pond that lies just to the left and forward of the tee box. No sane person would expect tee shots to end up in that pond, but after my 3rd had done just that, the frustration that been building up inside me exploded into a blinding fury.

Up with the knee, down with the driver! You never know how hard it is to bust a graphite shaft over your leg until you try to do it!

That driver's refusal to submit only further enraged me. I bashed my knee with it until at last the shaft snapped. Finishing with a flourish, I heaved both halves of the offending club into that damned pond, my heart racing wildly and my blood pressure about 300 over 200. Frustrated golfers of the world... I *feel* your pain!

Well, after the round, and after my heart rate had abated somewhat, and after I realized that I now had no driver, I felt a deep remorse. Now, deep remorse can cause healing, and even discovery. The good news is that my remorse caused me to think long and hard about frustration and golf.

My remorse caused me to develop the techniques that I will detail in Frustration Free Golf. Using the techniques has caused my golf frustrationometer readings to plummet, and my golf pleasurometer readings to soar. And lowered my scores about a stroke a hole!

I don't want what happened to my driver to happen to yours. Or to any of your other clubs. So, if you're just about to start learning the game of golf, I invite you to read what I have to say. I think it could help prevent frustration in your golf game from happening in the first place.

If you are what I call a "recovering" frustrated golfer; if something like what happened to my driver has already happened to some of your equipment, I would also invite you to see what I have to say. I don't promise a cure, but I believe that remission is possible and even probable!

In most sports, at the higher levels of competition, the mental/emotional/spiritual factor is the biggest factor in deciding who wins, and who loses.

In golf, these factors are the most important factors at *all* levels of play, including recreational golf. That's because if you're up tight, your body will be tight; and if your body is tight you just can't make a decent swing... and, well, golf clubs might suffer!

I became tired of beating up on myself and my clubs. (You don't want to know the terrible names I called myself when I would make a crummy shot. You don't want to know how close I came to looking for a cliff to hurl myself over. And luckily, the truck that I threw myself in front of was parked!)

My golf game was becoming violent, and I was the victim! So, from sheer necessity, to enable myself to continue golfing at all, I developed a program for myself that has put my golf frustration into remission.

THE FRUSTRATION FREE GOLF PROGRAM

Here is my program, and I'm happy to share it with you:

Choose to:

- 1) choose
- 2) enjoy the challenges
- 3) proactively expect disasters
- 4) accept failure
- 5) celebrate partial successes
- 6) learn/practice golf backwards
- 7) learn golf gradually

The rest of this short book will be taken up detailing my program so that you can use it, too. Here and there I may throw in some words on certain "how to s" of golf, although that will be a very, very small part of the book.

I'm mainly writing to share with you things that have helped me lower those golf frustrationometer readings. I believe that lowering those readings will help your game as much or more as just about anything else. Because when you're abusing yourself mentally, the golf gods will smite you. Only for your own good, you understand.

CHOOSE TO CHOOSE

You have choices to make. That's the good news.

Just think. There are millions of North Koreans who don't have the choice of whether or not to golf. Millions of people from the People's Democratic Republic of Bukino Faso- ditto. Millions of people in your country- ditto. So if you have options with respect to golf, consider yourself lucky!

You can choose to think about choice, or not to think about choice. But please do.

Think about this: suppose that you went out to the course and discovered that you had been put into a group including the most attractive member of the opposite sex that you had ever seen. A person totally uninterested in either world peace or feeding the hungry, but with a body not to die for, but to kill for!

Imagine, also, that in your group was the person that would be conducting, tomorrow, your interview for the dream job you had been working towards for over 20 years.

Now, do you think that you could *choose* to play cheerfully, to play without any monumental displays of club throwing misbehavior accompanied by embarrassing and disgusting displays of profane and obscene oratorical splendor? Without any fits of rage that any tin pot dictator would envy?

Of course you could. Because you would *choose* to. For ulterior reasons, of course. Nevertheless, that ability to choose and fulfill a choice made, shows that you can make other choices, and follow up on them.

So, before EACH round of golf, *choose to choose*. Then choose to enjoy the challenges, proactively expect disasters, accept failure, and celebrate partial successes.

Before beginning golf, or before working on your game, choose to learn/practice golf backwards.

Before beginning golf, choose to learn gradually.

And for God's sake! Choose to remember that you are what you are. You are not what you golf! You can't break 100? You can't break 90? You can't break...whatever? That doesn't say anything about what you are as a person.

Don't be embarrassed by bad shots. Golf is only the world's hardest game. Be proud that you're courageous enough to try it. And, anyway, (joke!) it might be true that the purpose of golf is to humiliate one's self in front of one's friends.

Actually, what you can take away from that joke is that it is funny precisely because making bad shots in front of friends (and strangers) is a universal experience in golf. So don't be embarrassed. You're no different than millions of others.

And let me say right here, right now, that if you are going through a difficult time in your life- a major career change; a move; a divorce- you must expect your golf scores to suffer. Knowing that in advance can, along with the Frustration Free Golf program, help to minimize your frustration.

Golf is a game. Play it. Your golf score, doesn't define you. Let your ability to play Frustration Free Golf define you on the course!

ENJOY THE CHALLENGES

The nature of all games is that they involve challenges. The challenges may be physical, and/or mental. They may involve competing against the clock, the odds, an opponent, or the adversities of nature.

The nature of golf is that it involves an infinite variety of environmental, physical, mental and spiritual challenges. *The nature of golf is that... all of these challenges are present for every shot!*

The first step in enjoying the challenges of golf is to understand just how hard the game is. This will allow you to get rid of unrealistic expectations that might drive you crazy.

How hard is golf? It's only the world's hardest game. NO ONE has ever mastered it. Some have been maddened by the attempt. But as they say, what's a game, if you never lose?

Golf is hard because, in addition to the environmental challenges of the course itself, with its tree hazards, water hazards, long grass hazards and sand hazards (and the hazard of having no excuse should your ball ever end up in a perfect position from which to play it!) there are many components, making up the game, that have to be learned.

There is the full swing tee shot, the full swing fairway shot, the full swing recovery from trouble shot, the less than full swing variations of all of the above, short range shots from near the "green," sand shots, and putting shots.

There is the mental component, consisting of making risk/reward decisions on the course.

There is an emotional management component. (I.E. how to play Frustration Free Golf)

There is even a spiritual component that has to do with commitment to the decided upon plan of attack that one has made to deal with any combination of the above.

All in all, golf is hard because it's a little slice of life, itself.

To understand how hard golf is, let's look at what "par" is, and how it is determined. Most standard golf courses will have 18 segments, or "holes." A "hole" consists of a "teeing ground," or "tee box," a "fairway," and a "green."

The tee box is the area from which, for each hole, play is started. Here, you are permitted to put your ball on a little peg, or "tee," to make it easier to strike the ball.

The "fairway" is a narrow strip of land with its grass mown rather short, that connects the tee box to the "green."

The green is a small area of grass mown very short, that permits the ball to, theoretically, roll easily along until it falls into the "cup," which is situated somewhere within the confines of the green.

Now, of course, surrounding the entire hole, from tee to green, are hazards (oops! I mean... "challenges!") consisting of longer grass, (called "the rough") trees, bushes, nettles, brambles, thistles, and cacti, water, sand, thixotropic clay, alligators, lizards and poltergeists. (And, if you're VERY lucky, television cameras to capture your game, make you a star, and make big product endorsement deals possible for you!)

Now, a standard course will have 3 kinds of holes: short, medium length, and long. There are usually 4 short holes, 10 medium length holes, and 4 long holes. The short holes are called par 3's; the medium length holes are called par 4's; and the long holes are called par 5's.

The holes are so named because it is expected that a *PROFESSIONAL* golfer, playing normally (not having either a super good or a super bad day), will be able to get his ball onto the green of a par 3 with his first shot; onto the green of a par 4 with his second shot; and onto the green of a par 5 with his third shot.

It is further expected that this *PROFESSIONAL* golfer will then need to make an additional 2 attempts at rolling his ball (putting) on the each green in order to get his ball into the cup, or hole.

Therefore, a par 3, for a *PROFESSIONAL*, is 1 tee shot plus 2 putts for a total of 3 strokes; a par 4 is 1 tee shot plus 1 fairway shot plus 2 putts for a total of 4 strokes; and a par 5 is 1 tee shot plus 2 fairway shots plus 2 putts for a total of 5 strokes.

If a *PROFESSIONAL* gets a "green in regulation" it means he was on the green in 1 shot for a par 3, on in 2 for a par 4, and on in 3 for a par 5.

If *ANYBODY* gets his or her ball into the cup taking 1 less shot than is par for any hole, that's a great result and is called a "birdie."

Taking 2 shots less than par, for any hole, to get the ball into the cup is terrific. It happens to the pros you see on T.V. about once in every 100 holes of golf, and is called an "eagle."

Taking 3 shots less than par, for any hole, to get the ball into the cup is fantastic, hardly ever happens to anybody, can only happen on par 4s and par 5s, and is called a "double eagle," or, more quaintly, an "albatross." (When your golfing buddy tells you he made an albatross, you know that he was either luckier than hell or is full of guano!)

What if a golfer is not playing up to par? If he or she should score one more than par for any hole, it's called a "bogey." 2 over par is a double bogey, 3 over is a "triple", etc.

Even among the pros, such things as septuple bogeys and even worse happen. What about the famous pro who carded an 18 on a par 5? Or another famous pro who scored a nifty 10 on a par 3? Hey, I told you, golf is hard! So don't tie yourself up with unrealistic expectations.

When you arrive at a tee box and see that a hole is labeled as a "par 4," realize that unless you are a *PROFESSIONAL* golfer, it really is unrealistic to think that you will get the ball into the cup with only 4 strokes. Now, you might! Go ahead and aspire! Just don't go off your nut if you don't make par.

For most of golf's history, until the advent of professional golfers who could make a living golfing because others would pay to see them play, "bogey" was THE standard for *competent* - - not beginner - - amateur golfers.

"Bogey" minus 1 stroke, or "par," was only invented as an afterthought, to provide a standard for *PROFESSIONAL* golfers. Unfortunately, golf courses now only label their holes as "par" 3's, 4's, or 5's. This gives a false impression to amateurs, and especially to beginners.

Now, a PERFECT round of golf on a standard golf course with a par of 72 would yield a score of only 36 strokes. (As you probably know, in golf, the lower the score, the better.)

If you think about it, a *perfect* shot that got the ball on the green, in regulation, would not only get the ball on the green, but in the cup as well, as the cup is situated within the confines of the green. So the *perfect* round of golf would involve NO putting!

18 *perfect* greens in regulation would equal 36 strokes total for the round.

Now, the lowest score ever recorded by professionals in tournament play is 59. Almost 66% worse than perfect. And of all of the millions of rounds of golf that have been played by professionals, the score of 59 has been achieved only a handful of times in all of golf history.

If we take the theoretically perfect score of 36, and make it 2 times worse, or 72, we have what is known as "par for the course," which is actually the expected standard for *PROFESSIONAL* golfers.

Think about that! 2 times worse than perfect is the *PROFESSIONAL* standard! This is like an airline pilot crashing twice on every flight. A surgeon operating on both elbows of each knee patient he sees. A lawyer losing every case and incurring a counter suit to boot!

Every once in a while, you may read of a bowler rolling a perfect game. You may occasionally read of a pitcher, in baseball, throwing a perfect game. But NOBODY (except, perhaps, for "Dear Leader" of North Korea!) has ever played a perfect round of golf.

When you compare the *PROFESSIONAL* standards for golf with the theoretically perfect game, you can see how hard golf is. Because it is so hard, NO amateur has any business *expecting* his or her next shot to be successful. *Hope, yes, expect, no.*

Because golf is so hard, isn't it ludicrous for an amateur to become insanely angry at sending a tee shot into a water hazard, the ball consigned to a watery grave shared, probably, by only a *few million* other little white orbs?

(And let me make this point about golf balls, now, as an absolutely truthful aside: Never feel sorry for the golf balls left forever holding their breath, or waiting for rescue in tall grass, thickets, pastures, or wherever. Golf balls, though seemingly inanimate, are actually the adolescent spawn of otherworldly demons and imps; and have minds of their own, mostly uncooperative and often downright rebellious!)

Please also be aware of another source of false impressions for beginners and amateurs. Television. Every week we can turn on the telly and see wondrous golf shots being made by touring pros.

There is a rule of psychology that says that what we see a lot of we come to view as "normal." Therefore, after we watch a couple of hours of professional golf, we think that we should be able to make the same kind of shots, because they are "normal."

We compare our performance against the “normal” performance of the pros we’ve been viewing. We see ourselves as ABNORMAL, spastic idiots when we try to pull off shots that we’ve never been taught, have not practiced, and... *fail*.

We should consider the following, however. Of all the millions of golfers in the world, only 125 or so, the cream of the cream of the cream, qualify to enter any Professional Golf Association (PGA) they choose to. Those guys are “fully qualified” on the PGA tour, and they *are* good.

For any given tournament, a percentage of the 125 guys who are fully qualified, plus other pros, making up a total of about 150 golfers, begin play on Thursday. T.V. coverage will only show about 20 of the most successful golfers in that particular tourney. So we see only the cream of the cream of the cream of the cream for that week.

After Thursday and Friday’s play, about ½ of the original 150 or so golfers who started that tournament, get “cut.” They do not qualify to play on Saturday and Sunday.

Only the top 75 or so (the number varies because of ties, etc.) pros advance to play on the weekend. They have “made the cut.” Only those who make the cut and play on the weekend share in the prize money.

Now, of the top 75 guys in the tournament, who does television show us on Saturday and Sunday? Probably only the top 10, and especially the top 4. Guys that have a realistic chance of winning the tourney.

So on the weekend, we are watching the top 10, for that week, of all the millions of golfers in the world. These guys are so good, that week, that *they* are the freaks! They are so good that *they* are just plain ABNORMAL.

The millions of amateurs out there watching these pros on television have no hope of sniffing these guy’s butts, but the amateurs go out and try to golf as well as these guys, and get upset when they don’t. Doesn’t make sense!

It would be better for amateurs if television showed the bottom 10 in each tournament, each week. Along with the other 65 guys who didn’t make the cut. Then amateurs would see pros struggling, and making some really bad shots.

If pros can and do struggle, then *amateurs will surely suffer every time they go out on the course*. That’s just the way it is. Knowing this in advance can prevent the frustration that comes from having unreasonable expectations.

To try to copy the kinds of shots pros make, when they are on a hot streak, and then to fail miserably in the attempt, is perfectly NORMAL!

Be honest with yourself. If you've watched much golf on TV, in addition to much wonderful golf, haven't you even seen the *leaders* of tournaments hit drives into the trees, into lakes, into sand; haven't you seen them top fairway shots, pop up 90 yard drives, shank chip shots to lose tournaments, blast from one greenside sand trap into another, miss 2 foot putts and take 3 putts from 3 feet?

Golf is hard, even for the best of the cream of the cream. Even for those who have had swing coaches since they were 3 years old, and mental coaches since they were 8. Even for those who play every day and hit 10 practice balls for every stroke they take on the course. Even for those whose game has finally peaked at the particular tournament you happen to be watching.

And YOU'RE going to use these pro's best results as a yardstick to measure your own results by? Are you freakin' nuts?!

By now, I hope that you agree that golf is hard. That is, it is challenging! There are an infinite number of challenges within the game.

Knowing beforehand, before we golf, how hard it is, helps us to rein in our expectations. We should not *expect* our next shot to be successful. We should not *expect* to play the next hole, or the next round of golf, successfully.

We *should* expect to give it our best, and then be astonished and *delighted* if the damn ball goes anywhere in the vicinity of where we wanted it to.

Reining in our expectations lets us focus on the "play" aspects of the "hazards" themselves. It allows us to see the amusement possibilities of the "hazards." (Dammit... "Challenges!")

Choose to look at the golf course not as a land mine strewn obstacle course, but rather as a playground for adults, which it, literally, is. Be politically correct- the "hazards" are now the "challenges" that frame the fairway and the green.

Choose to look at the physical golf course as a child would look upon a playground. The monkey bars and other equipment may be hazardous, but the child sees adventure. He sees only the possibility of fun.

See the golf course as a collection of boring fairways and greens made exciting by the playground equipment- the trees, the sand traps, the ponds and lakes and streams.

Choose to see the fun in picking the right strategy, the right club and the right swing to deal with any situation you might find yourself in, whether you're on the tee box, in the penalty box, in the middle of a thicket of trees, in a sand trap, or whatever.

Choose to remember that if all fairways were 200 yards wide, with no water, no tree, no bushes, etc. in sight; and if all greens were gigantic grassy funnels with the cup at the bottom, golf would be **B-O-R-I-N-G!**

Choose to remember that *the so-called hazards are what make the game fun!* The so-called hazards are actually just the various pieces of playground equipment on the playground for adults known as the golf course.

Remember that you are out for fun. Instead of asking yourself the question, "What are the dangers on this hole?" ask yourself, "What makes this hole fun?"

Instead of telling yourself, "Don't go left into the water!" tell yourself, "It will be fun to try to make this shot go right and onto the landing area."

How about, "I know the golf course architect has tried to trick people into going long and into disaster. But I'll take a safer route and outsmart him!"

If the hole you're about to play has an island green, surrounded by water except for the walking path onto the green, instead of saying to yourself, "If I go anywhere but on the green I'm dead!" try, "It'll be fun to try to get this ball on the green! Not all courses have an island green and I'm lucky to get to try this shot!" Let the kid in you say the second thing, and let him say it with conviction!

While you're playing for fun, if you're not *totally* convinced that your mental approach to playing a particular shot would let that shot be fun, *intentionally* take 2 shots to get where 1 shot **might** have gotten to.

When you're starting out, if a particular hole just flat out has too many "opportunities for fun" for your mental game, don't be afraid to skip the hole entirely. Or perhaps just go and drop the ball on the green and putt. Hey, we're playing Frustration Free Golf, here!

If "par" is for professionals, and "bogey" is for experienced amateurs, what should be the goal for a beginner, or a "recovering" golfer when he or she steps up to the tee? (A recovering golfer is one who wants more than anything to just throw in the towel and be rid of the agony, but who has made just enough good shots to be hooked, and therefore is not able to actually quit!) The beginner, or recovering golfer should have as his or her goal to *exercise his or her free will!* The more free will that is exercised, the better will be the golf that happens.

Let me explain. Golf is, like life, the art of *making choices*. You *chose* to golf. Maybe you feel that someone or some social situation is forcing you to golf. But ultimately, if you golf, you have *chosen* to, for you could always simply not golf.

Having *chosen* to golf, you must further *choose* to never confuse the object of the game of golf - - to propel, with fancy clubs, a small white ball into a small, distant hole in the ground, with the fewest strokes possible - - with your reason for doing it in the first place.

Why would you participate in a *g-a-m-e*, no matter its object, unless you had *chosen* to have fun? Now, if you have *chosen* to have fun by participating in a game, why not *choose* to *p-l-a-y* the game?

CHOOSE to use a variety of shafted implements to strike a small white ball so as to propel it as few times as possible to get it into a distant hole in the ground, SO AS TO HAVE FUN.

This *c-h-o-i-c-e* allows you to *p-l-a-y* rather than struggle for fortune or fame. It allows you simply pick your ball up from a sand hazard or move it from a tree or grass hazard and continue *p-l-a-y-i-n-g* from a better spot. Until you are experienced enough to CHOOSE to try to stroke the ball out of the sand, from under the tree, from out of the grass, or whatever, for the *f-u-n* of trying to do so.

If you're not playing in a tournament, or for betting purposes, which you should never do as a beginner, you're playing for *f-u-n*. That makes it your game.

Go ahead and make your own rules. Change the object of your game if you like. A former president of the United States plays what I would call "race golf." It seems he doesn't care much about how many strokes he takes but only about trying to finish 18 holes as fast as possible.

Accept only as many of the official rules of golf as you personally find fun-producing. As you gain experience and become more proficient, you'll probably want to play "by the rules" more and more. But that will be your choice. And in the beginning, cut yourself some freakin' slack!

Golf is probably the most useless, albeit fascinating and bewitching activity ever invented. After walking or riding 3 or 4 miles and getting a ball into 18 different holes in the ground, what has anyone ever really accomplished?

There are only 3 possibilities: 1) competition, 2) recreation, and/or 3) self-development (especially in the field of dealing with challenges!).

To accomplish anything in any of the 3 categories above, one must CHOOSE to take frustration out of the game. ASSERT and EXERCISE your free will and CHOOSE to CHOOSE a Frustration Free Golf experience.

PRO-ACTIVELY EXPECT DISASTERS

Forewarned is forearmed. And even though 2 arms are all you need, being forearmed can lead to Frustration Free Golf.

Knowing, ahead of time, that disasters **will** happen, helps you to accept them when they do. Knowing, ahead of time, that disasters **will** happen, helps you to put them behind you more quickly when they do happen.

It's what I call being an optimistic pessimist. Now, I'm not talking about, when, after you've topped your drive 50 yards and sliced your second shot into a pond, you tell yourself, "Things can't get any worse!" and then answer yourself optimistically, "Of course they can!"

I'm talking about acknowledging the fact that disasters will strike, and choosing, BEFORE THEY DO, to optimistically deal with them. I'm talking about choosing, BEFORE disasters happen, to focus on taking the most positive steps you know how to, to deal with the situations that disasters will put you in.

Before the round is the time to choose how to deal with, for instance, a poor tee shot.

A Pollyanna might say, "All my drives will be wonderful!" But when her first drive to go wrong puts a ball out of bounds, she is crushed. She is shocked. Disgust, shame, fear, frustration and tightness all jump into her next shot. It may take several holes for her to recover, and to begin to play good (for her) golf again.

A true pessimist might say, "All my shots will be crummy. It's to be expected." Probably this guy's brain will find a way to sabotage his shot making in order for him to be right. All his shots WILL be crummy.

But Y-O-U will tell yourself, before teeing off on the first hole, that bad tee shots happen to every golfer. Yes, even to *that* guy!

Now, the shot coming up is just another shot. It might be average; it might be the best you'll ever make; it might be good, bad, or the pits. The odds are, and you should acknowledge this to yourself BEFORE every shot you hit, that your next shot will be somewhat disappointing, and less than what you were hoping for, because, after all, you are an amateur.

Statistically, amateurs make only about 4 good tee shots per round of golf. So you will tell yourself, BEFORE every shot that you will ever take from now

on, that while you do not *EXPECT* the shot to be perfect, neither do you *EXPECT* that it will disastrous.

You will tell yourself that you will, calmly and cheerfully, do your best to advance the ball to a better place, from wherever it may come to rest after you make *this* shot. You will tell yourself: "I will calmly and cheerfully give my best effort to whatever result comes of this, my present shot."

Every shot in golf is about getting the ball to a better place than where it is now. The best way to do that is calmly and cheerfully, EVEN IF WHERE THE BALL IS NOW IS WORSE THAN WHERE IT WAS BEFORE YOU MADE YOUR LAST SHOT!

The best way to be calm and cheerful over any and every shot is to have chosen, BEFORE YOU MADE YOUR LAST SHOT, to be calm and cheerful over *it's* results!

Having made that choice, you can, when disaster strikes, disassociate the result of your last shot from your golf game in general, and your next shot in particular.

Just because you hit a disaster shot it doesn't mean that you are a terrible golfer. You will have pre-acknowledged that disaster shots happen to everybody, even the pros. And you will know that just because your last shot was a pooch, it doesn't mean your next one will be.

Disassociating a bad shot from your golf game in general and your next shot in particular is a must for Frustration Free Golf. It is a way of giving yourself "selective short term memory loss." That's where you immediately rub out all memory of the swing, the ball flight, etc. of the disaster shot. You put the disaster behind you. It's gone.

What you have is a fresh situation. Believe it or not, **a new opportunity for fun!** Your approach should be to tell yourself, "It will be fun to figure out how to get this ball, partially under this tree, into a better spot than where it is now."

You have to disassociate your present situation from the shot you made that got your ball where it is. Pretend that you have made a game out of hitting balls that some malevolent imp has dropped around the course, in the cruelest of places.

That's your best approach to a bad situation. Say, "Okay, Beelzebub, so you dropped a ball in this thick rough. Well I'll show you! I'll advance it to a

better place just to spite you!" That way, you don't take fear, shame, disgust and frustration with you into your next swing.

Try this: play a game of "rescue." Go to the course with a buddy and purposely drop each other's balls into disastrous locations. Under trees. Into sand. Onto steep side hills, etc. Try to "rescue" your ball from each of its hellish locations.

Think about this: when you come up to a ball in thick rough, dropped there on purpose by your friend, you will feel no shame, no disgust, no embarrassment or any other negative feeling. Y-O-U didn't put it there due to any un-coordinated folly on your part. Your buddy put it there, on purpose.

The game is for you to now deal with the situation, just like he is now dealing with the ball you purposely put in the fairway bunker. You can dispassionately, objectively, coolly, calmly, cheerfully have a go at trying to get this ball to a better place. Hey, it's fun!

After playing a few holes of "rescue," you should be able to remember how it feels to just accept where a ball is, and deal with the situation cheerfully. CHOOSE to deal with all of your shots like that, forgetting how the balls got to where you find them, no matter where you find them.

If you find one of your shots going into water, or out of bounds, or being lost, you will be able to, because of your previous choice to have fun from wherever your ball ends up, just go on and have fun trying to advance the (new) ball to a better place, from either the drop area or the tee box. Cheerfully, just as you would if that killer member of the opposite sex or the interviewer for your dream job were playing with you!

ACCEPT FAILURE

There have been perfect putts made. Godzillions of them. After all, every putt that goes in the hole is perfect. Even the worst golfer in the world, if he or she in fact finishes all the holes in a round of golf, will have made 18 perfect putts- the ones that finally went in.

There have been perfect approach shots made. Full shots from the fairway or rough, pitches or chips that not only made it to green, but went in the hole as well. Perhaps you have made some of these yourself, albeit probably not that often. Even your humble author once put one in from about 80 yards. (The thing about flukes is that they're so much fun because they're completely unexpected!)

Of course, perfect approach shots are much rarer than perfect putts. You certainly aren't guaranteed to make 18 perfect approach shots per round. More like one perfect approach shot per 18 rounds!

There have been perfect tee shots made. After all, there have been holes in one made. Obviously, they don't happen very often!

Any shot that goes in the hole is, inarguably, perfect. But as we've seen, the farther away from the hole a shot is made from, the less chance there is of the shot being perfect, and going in the hole.

If you've just broken 100 by shooting a 99, and have made no holes in one and no approach shots that went in, you've just made 81 less than perfect shots (99 minus the 18 perfect putts that went in).

(You might argue that some of your tee shots and second shots on par 4's and par 5's were perfect because they found the center of the fairway, but how can you *prove* that they perfect? No, the only inarguably perfect shot is one that goes in the hole. Sorry.)

Now, if you shoot 81 less than perfect shots out of a total of 99 shots taken, you've just made about 80% of your shots less than perfectly. You incompetent slug!

No! No! The point is: you have failed 80% of the time but still have managed to break 100, which isn't bad! And you probably still enjoyed hitting a great many of those less than perfect shots.

You should embrace failure, because it's probably going to happen, on the golf course, about 80% per cent of the time. And, if you're using the Frustration Free Golf program, you're having fun!

Look at it this way. By failing 80% of the time, you have still managed to get the ball to a better spot than where it was before, often enough to break 100. By failing 80% of the time, you were able to set up 18 shots that *were* perfect!

By failing 80% of the time, you were able to have fun. With the Frustration Free Golf program working for you, you'll have a lot fun failing 80% of the time!

Now, there are a lot of sports at which, if you failed 80% of the time, you *would* really suck! If you missed 80% of the clay pigeons when you went skeet shooting, you would need to take some lessons! How would you like to go parachuting if 80% of the time, chutes *didn't* open?!

Be glad that in your sport- golf- an 80% failure rate really isn't that bad. *Because* golf is insanely difficult, you can have fun by failing 80% of the time! In this respect, like in many others, golf is a game of opposites. Make the ball go up by hitting down. Succeed by failing.

If you think about it a little bit, the paradoxes in golf make it resemble life itself. In life you can't be perfect all the time, but just a bit of success can bring much happiness.

Say you played in the NFL for 20 years and failed to win the Super Bowl 80%. You still would have won it 4 times. Would you be happy to have 4 Super Bowl rings?

Hell, even lions catch something to eat only about once in every 10 tries. But you--you get to make a guaranteed 18 perfect shots per round. Are you feeling less frustrated, now that you know that failure is inevitable, unavoidable, and necessary to set up success, and fun?

You are? Good on ya, mate!

CELEBRATE PARTIAL SUCCESS

We've just seen that failure in golf isn't such a bad thing. You can play a fairly respectable round, and have a lot of fun doing it, by failing about 80% of the time. What would happen if you failed only about 75% of the time?

Let's say that you're playing a course that has a par of 72, and you actually par the course. You would be happy wouldn't you? (Unless, of course, you were *ecstatic!*)

Let's assume that you didn't make any holes in one, and that you didn't sink any approach shots. That means that you made 18 perfect shots- the putts that went in. If you take 18 from 72 you are left with 54 less than perfect shots. You've failed 54 times out of 72. That is almost exactly 75%! Hey, buddy! You can fail, at golf, 75% of the time and beat over 95% of all golfers!

Now, if you fail at something 75% of the time, what you have is **PARTIAL SUCCESS**. Wouldn't you celebrate the kind of partial success that lets you beat over 95% of other golfers?!

Do the math: if you played at a 70% failure rate, you'd score a 60 on a par 72 course. You'd be a touring pro, and millions would be watching you on TV. You'd be a hero to millions, and still fail at what you were doing about 70% of the time!

Now, the point of all these calculations is to show that with only **PARTIAL SUCCESS**, you can have a ton of fun playing golf. So why not celebrate the partial success of *every* shot?

Golf, except for the final shot of each hole- the one that goes in- is a game of only partial success. Why not celebrate your partial successes? They can give you so much fun, so much camaraderie, so much captivation.

Instead of bemoaning the fact that you missed the green with your tee shot on a par 3, celebrate the fact that you're 130 yards closer to the hole!

Or celebrate the fact that you got the ball in the air!

Or celebrate the fact that you hit the ball.

Or celebrate the fact that you can afford to golf.

Or celebrate the fact that you have the time to golf.

Or celebrate the fact that you are physically able to golf.

Or celebrate the fact that there is even a golf course there for you to golf on.

Choose, *before* you golf, to celebrate *something* in every shot you make. Choose, *before* making every individual shot, to celebrate whatever partial success that shot may bring.

Hell, even if it goes in the water, or you lose it out of bounds, that damn ball probably wasn't ever going to listen anyway, and you're better off without it!

One thing that will help in the celebration of partial success, is remembering that in golf, there are no points for style. You get the same score on your scorecard if you skull a shot that hits a sprinkler and then ricochets off a tree and into the hole as you do if you make a very pretty shot that curves gently around a tree some 30 yards away, and onto the green some 60 yards away, and into the hole some 64.456893 yards away.

In celebrating partial success, we are in fact practicing very powerful, positive, but weird psychology. We want to forget bad shots as fast as possible, accept the present position and lie of our ball as if *we* weren't responsible for them, and choose to, ahead of time, take credit for any amount of success we may have in getting the ball into a more favorable spot than where it is now.

When it comes to playing Frustration Free Golf, it's okay, in fact it's mandatory, to be 2 faced and egotistical to your own sub-conscious. You take credit for the good results you get but you do not blame yourself for bad results.

If you hit a ball into the rough, you "forget" who hit it there, on the way to finding your ball. When you get to it, you say, "Whoa! There's a ball here! What a crummy lie! I wonder how it got here. Probably dropped out of someone's pocket."

(You have already selectively forgotten the shot that put the ball where it is. What possible purpose would it serve your golf game to remind yourself that *your* idiotic, useless, stupid, incompetent, and crappy golf swing put it there? So...don't go there!)

Then say to yourself, "It'll be fun to try to get this ball, from this horrible place, into a better place. It'll be fun to figure out which club to use, which stance to use; to try to figure out which compensations to use to overcome

the crazy footing I'll have to use, etc." And then go ahead and get the fun out of getting the ball out of its predicament.

Remember, *YOU* don't get into predicaments on the golf course, but sometimes *your golf ball* does. The fun of golf is helping that poor little white sphere get to a happier place than where it is now.

This kind of weird psychology is your only choice, if you want to play Frustration Free Golf. If it's bad, it's not your fault. If it's good, *you* did it!

Now, you could always say, when you hit a good shot, "Anybody could've hit that shot." Or, "Even I get lucky twice a round!" And you could always say, when you hit a bad shot, "Of course! I'm such a complete idiot it's no wonder!" And you could always beat yourself up, the whole time that you're trying to find a ball in the rough. That is, *if* you want to seize up your body with tension and more or less guarantee that your next shot will be a disaster, too.

Listen, here's how to have a lifetime of great golf memories, and I'm not being facetious: choose, **BEFOREHAND**, to forget your bad shots as soon as they happen! And then just go hit the ball from wherever it lies, as it lies, as if some one else hit it there. And congratulate yourself when you get the ball to a better spot. Any better spot. Celebrate!

Celebrate your partial successes. They are, apart from the 18 perfect putts that go in, your golf game!

LEARN/PRACTICE GOLF BACKWARDS

Please heed this section, especially if you are just about to begin golfing for the first time. PUH-LUH-EEEEEEEE-ZUH learn or practice golf backwards, just for me. And see if it doesn't lead to Frustration Free Golf.

Learning/practicing golf backwards means learning the shots required in golf in the order opposite to that in which they will be used on the course. Learn putting first, then chips, then pitches, then iron shots, then driving.

Now, a beginning student who has never touched a golf club before probably isn't going to be able to hit a drive 300 yards. He or she may not be able to hit a drive 300 *feet*. But he or she can putt the ball 6 inches. Why not start there?

We've seen that the course is designed for the golfer who makes par to make a full 50% of his or her strokes with the putter. Why not start learning golf with the putter?

Go to the course, and ask at the pro shop who their best putting instructor is. Sign up for a lesson.

At the lesson, ask the instructor to explain to you the difference between the curving putting stroke, where the putter moves on an arc, and the pendulum putting stroke, where the putter moves straight back and straight forward through the putt.

Have the pro help you determine which kind of stroke is best for you. One will feel more natural to you, and will work best for you.

Remember that it doesn't matter which type of putting stroke you use, so long as you use the one that is the best for you. For *your* body. And *your* brain. Your brain will naturally favor one or the other. **Don't fight your brain!**

Have the pro show you some different kinds of putters during this lesson. And have him help you select the right length putter for you. Then buy one that is of the proper length. One that feels good and looks good to you.

Don't buy a putter until you find one that you have fallen in love with. There are more kinds of putters than there are kinds of any other type of club. Putting is a personal thing. Only buy a putter that you can have a personal relationship with!

Finally, have the pro show you the basics of green reading. That is, how to predict how the ball will, because of undulations on the green, tend to curve to one side or the other of the line it was rolling along originally.

Now, when I said that you're going to learn golf backwards, I wasn't kidding! After learning the basics, and kidnapping a putter that you've fallen in love with, you are going to go to the practice green and practice perfect putts. The ones that go in.

Start with putts of just a few inches. Make a bunch. Then make a bunch of putts from a foot. Make a bunch from 18 inches. Make a bunch from 2 feet.

Maybe it sounds ridiculous to you to start with such short putts. But pros have missed putts from inches to lose tournaments. If you can become so good from 2 feet that such a putt is automatic for you, you'll be in great shape when, later in your golfing career, you need a 2 footer for your best round ever.

By starting from very close to the hole, your brain is getting accustomed to the very distinctive sound of the ball falling into the cup, and rolling around in the bottom of the cup. This is good!

You are learning to be a confident putter. You can't expect to make them all, but you know that you can give the ball a good stroke on the greens, and that your putts have a good chance of having a good result.

Okay, after you've made a bunch from 2 feet, go to 2 ½ feet, then 3 feet, sinking a bunch from each distance. When you become a killer putter from 3 feet in, you will slaughter your friends on the greens, and probably on the course.

I know! I know! Not all putts are from within 3 feet. But we are learning putting, as well as golf, backwards. So we started with the shortest of putts, and are working our way out. After we are whizzes at putts out to 3 feet, we are going to make a jump. Out to 20 feet.

I've found that learning to get the ball close to the hole, and sometimes in, from 20 feet, is excellent practice. Why? Because if you find yourself at 10 feet, half of your 20 foot stroke will be about right. 30 feet will take about 1.5 of your 20 foot stroke. 40 will take 2 times your 20 foot stroke. You get me.

Take a couple of quarters and put them 7 paces apart on the practice green. Call that distance 20 feet. It's close enough. Why paces? Because later,

when you're golfing for real, you will step off the distance from your ball to the cup, while looking at the line to see if there are any bumps or impediments to be fixed before you putt.

No one will ever know that you're pacing off your putt! You can also pace off your putt while courteously offering to be the one to remove the flagstick from the hole, after everyone in your party is on the green.

As you golf more and more, you will find that your ball often ends up about 7 paces from the hole. Call that 20 feet. Learn how hard you have to hit the ball with your putter to make the ball go at least 20 feet, but not much more than that.

Practice hitting putts back and forth between the two quarters that you have placed on the green. You're trying to learn to control the distance of your putts. So you aim at quarters, and not at the practice holes on the practice green. You're not trying to get the putts to go into a hole. You're trying to make them go at least 20 feet, but not much more.

Distance control in putting is everything. Watch the pros on TV. They might miss a putt, but usually it ends close enough to the hole for them to get the ball in the hole with their next putt.

Undulations on the green, spike marks on the green, small depressions on the green, even the stalk of a mown weed that is slightly thicker than the grass blades around it, may deflect a putt and make it miss. Misses happen, even to good putts. That's golf! But what you don't want is to leave your putt 5 feet short, or blow it by 6 feet.

You want your putt, if it doesn't go in the hole, to end up close enough to the cup that even Vladimir Putin's grandmother could make the *next* putt.

If you have good distance control in putting, even if your present putt doesn't go in, your next one probably will. That's what you want!

Oh, and how do you control the distance of your putts? By 1) making a rhythmic stroke taking the same length of time to make the back-stroke, as you do to make the forward stroke, and 2) making a certain length of backstroke for a certain length of putt.

For example, if I, personally, make a nice rhythmic stroke, and take the putter back about 15 inches before doing the forward stroke, and then make a smooth forward stroke using the same tempo that I used to make the back stroke, the ball will roll about 20 feet on most greens. That's me. Maybe,

with your particular pace of making putting strokes, an 18 inch, or a 12 inch backstroke will produce a ball roll of 20 feet. Whatever!

Whatever length of backstroke it takes you to make the ball go 20 feet, groove that stroke! Once you have learned to make the ball go at least 20 feet, and not much farther, you can adjust, as I've said earlier, for other distances.

After becoming comfortable with putting, you can go on to tackle the very short shots made from close around the green. These are "chips." Chipping is a skill in itself. So off you go for another lesson.

Go to the pro shop and ask who their best chipping instructor is. Get a chipping lesson and then practice chipping, along with putting for a few days.

Next you will move on to shots out to about 100 yards. These shots are "pitches." They are a skill in themselves. So off you go for another lesson.

You know the drill! Then, practice pitching along with chipping and putting shots for a few days.

Now, you are ready to golf on a course! But you're not going to use the whole course, yet. Just the area within 100 yards of the hole.

Most courses have a marker 100 yards away from the green. You'll drop your ball there and play in from there. Play 9 holes, on at least 10 different days, before advancing to learning iron shots.

The best way to play these 100 yard games would be to go to a Par 3 golf course. Par 3 courses are small courses that have nothing but short, par three holes. Don't pay to play on a full length golf course if you're just going to play each hole from 100 yards away from the hole.

After you've practiced playing from 100 yards, go and get another lesson in playing iron shots with a full swing. Use a nine iron.

Then play a couple of games from 150 yards out from the green, (most courses have a marker at the 150 yard point away from the green) with your 9 iron, your wedges, and your putter.

(Your pro will explain what the different clubs are, and what they are for. Just know, for now, that the larger the number on the club, the higher the shot will fly, and the shorter the shot will go.)

After you have played a couple of games from 150 yards with nothing more than a 9 iron, get another iron lesson, this time with an 8 iron. Then play another couple of rounds of golf from 150 yards to the green, with nothing but your 8 and 9 irons, and your wedges and putter.

Next, take another iron lesson, this time with a 7 iron. And play the rest of this first year in golf from 150 yards out from the green, with nothing but your 7,8, and 9 irons, your wedges, and your putter.

In your second year of golf, start out in the spring with a putting lesson. And spend a day or so practicing putting.

Then take a lesson in chipping and practice chipping and putting for a day or two.

Then take a lesson making pitch shots with wedges. And practice making pitch shots, chipping, and putting for a day or two. Then play a round of golf from the 100 yard markers.

Then take an iron lesson with your 9 iron. And practice hitting your 9 iron, making pitch shots, chipping and putting for a day or two. Then play a round from the 150 yard markers.

Then a lesson with your 8 iron, and play from the 150's with your 8, 9, wedges and putter.

Then a lesson with your 7 iron, and play a round from the 150's with your 7, 8, 9, wedges and putter.

What you have done is taken a nice review of all the 4 basics you require, before starting your second season in earnest. This would be a great way to start each new season! You are easing into the new year of golf gradually, and backwards. Just like you oughtta!

NOW FOR THE BIG TIME! Take a lesson with a pro trying out, and receiving instruction for, hybrid clubs. Your instructor will explain to you what hybrid clubs are, and why they're good for you. Pick your favorite hybrid, buy it, and start playing from the forward tees at full length golf courses!

When you can play a round of golf at a full length golf course, from the forward tees, using only your hybrid, and your 7,8, and 9 irons plus your wedges and putter, and score 110, go to your pro, have him give you a lesson with a 3 wood, select a 3 wood that you like, and add it to your arsenal.

Now, you're set for a while. You don't need a driver until you can score 100 from the forward tees, using nothing more than a 3 wood.

Here's why you don't need a driver until you can score 100 or less. A driver has more power, can propel the ball farther, and *that* may be a disadvantage!

There is a rule in navigation that is called the 1 in 60 rule. If you are off course by 1 degree, you will be off course 1 mile for every 60 miles you travel. So if you travel 120 miles, you will be twice as far off course than if you had only traveled 60 miles.

Now, let's say you hit both your driver and your 3 wood 5 degrees "off course." Because your driver propels the ball farther, the ball will be farther to the right or left of where you wanted it to be, than if you had used your 3 wood and not propelled the ball so far.

It is better to propel the ball 180 yards and only 10 yards right or left, than to drive the ball 220 yards and be 15 yards right or left, and end up in the trees!

So until you are accurate enough to score 100 or less, you probably won't help yourself, score wise, to hit the ball farther, with a driver, but farther off line as well.

Hell, you could spend your whole golf career without ever owning a driver, and have a ton of Frustration Free Golf fun!

You only need a driver if you can break 100 from the forward tees, using a 3 wood or a hybrid for your tee shots. When you can do that, get a pro to give you a driving lesson, demo-ing several drivers. Pick the one that you like, and away you go!

As I am writing this, I am recovering from a badly broken left wrist, that required surgery, a plate and 8 screws. This happened at the beginning of the golf season, and this year's golf is over for me. But you can bet your boots that I will be starting out again, next year, using exactly the same gradual and backwards method I am presently advocating.

And I will be using the Frustration Free Golf method! After losing an entire season, I will certainly be able to celebrate the partial success in every shot. I will certainly be able to celebrate being physically able to golf, because at first my surgeon told me that it was unlikely that I would ever golf again.

Me not golfing again. Now... *that's* unlikely!

LEARNING/PRACTICING GOLF GRADUALLY

As you might have noticed in the section on learning/practicing golf backwards, the process was also conducted gradually.

The idea is for the beginner to NOT take one lesson, with a driver, and then go out with a full bag of clubs, and no knowledge of which one to use in any given situation, or how to use it, and then get frustrated by trying to play a round of golf on a full length golf course.

The idea is for the beginner to learn the game gradually. With success and fun built into every stage of learning.

If the first putt the beginner ever makes is from just a few inches away from the hole, he or she will be beginning his or her golf career with a perfect shot! How good is that?

Then, our neophyte moves on to chipping. After he or she has made her chip, he or she is on the green, and *knows how to go about putting*. Now our beginner has 2 levels of success.

Then our beginner moves out a few yards and pitches. Maybe he or she doesn't quite get on the green. But he or she can make the chip shot that is left for him or her to get the ball on the green. And when the ball is on the green...

You see, learning backwards, and gradually, builds on blocks of success, on blocks of already acquired skills.

By adding to previously learned skills, the student is never left in a situation where he or she doesn't have the knowledge to be able to figure out what kind of shot is required next.

By adding to previously learned skills, the student is never left in a situation where he or she doesn't have the knowledge of how to go about making the shot that is required next.

The gradual approach goes for practice, and working on your game, as well.

Start practice with putting practice. The average amateur probably uses about 1 more putt per hole than a pro would. Hey, that's 18 shots per round!

Now, unless you have lots of time to practice, and can afford to have a coach watch every putt you make, you're probably not going to putt like the pros that you see on TV. But what if you improved your putting 25 % and knocked 4 strokes off your round? That just might let you break 100... 90...

A missed 30 inch putt that makes you take another putt to get the ball into the hole counts 1 stroke, just like that 300 yard drive that you dream of. But which of the following do you think would be easier? To practice enough to make more of those 2 ½ footers, or to practice/learn/work-out enough to ever hit the ball 300 yards?

Remember, the course is *designed* for you to use your putter for half of the strokes you take on the course. Why not practice putting more than you probably do?

Then, after you've worked on putting, build on that success as you practice and work on your game gradually, building success, and confidence.

And kicking frustration in the butt.

IN CONCLUSION!

So there you have it! My program for Frustration Free Golf.

The program really comes in 4 forms. The long one, the short one, the quick and dirty one, and the emergency one.

The long form is a complete plan of attack for your golf career, or for your golf season. The long form is for the long term. It's seven components are:

Choose to:

- 1) choose
- 2) enjoy the challenges
- 3) proactively expect disasters
- 4) accept failure
- 5) celebrate partial successes
- 6) learn/practice golf backwards
- 7) learn golf gradually

The short form of the program includes the components that you will need every time you play, or practice golf, or work on your golf game. Those components are the first five of the seven listed above. Use them every time you have a club in your hands, even when practicing, or working on your game.

The quick and dirty form of my program is for when you can't remember all 5 components of the short form of my program. It includes just the following components:

Choose to:

- 1) enjoy the challenges
- 2) accept failure
- 3) celebrate partial successes

The emergency form of my program is for when your mind has gone blank for some reason, you are about to tee off, and don't wish to give in to a torrent of anger and profanities.

The emergency form of my program is: simply pretend that that special member of the opposite sex, the one you'd kill for, is standing behind you watching your every move, as well as your sweet buns, and would not be impressed by any over the top displays of emotional collapse on your part.

The Frustration Free Golf program has worked for me. I hope it will work for you, and that you will give it an honest try.

In closing, I could say, "Keep it in the short grass!" as a kind of inside joke, one golfer to another. But as a practitioner of Frustration Free Golf, I won't offer you that kind of *adieu*. I don't have to. For I know that should some demented wind god maliciously throw your beautifully struck ball into the rough, you'll cheerfully enjoy the challenge of advancing it to a better place.

And Frustration Free is a better place to be!

Thank you,
Jim

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