

10 Mind-Body Distortions for Golfers

All or nothing thinking - Sometimes this is called black and white thinking because of our brain's ability to categorize with polarity (i.e., emotionally charged absolutes). This can lead to predictable teebox gitters or simply giving up on golf for periods of time for those of us who experience a shank or poorly played hole as evidence of a golfing failure.

Overgeneralization - Overgeneralization occurs when a single golf shot, or a series of golf shots, are believed to be a rule. Those of us who overgeneralize tend to use the words "ALWAYS" and "NEVER" when playing a particular type of hole (e.g., dogleg right).

Mental Filters - This is the opposite of overgeneralization. Instead of taking one event (e.g., your golf swing) and generalizing it, mental filters mean taking an event and focusing on it exclusively, filtering out any other information. This happens to those of us who become hyper-focused on one component of our swing mechanics at the expense of experiencing the wide-lens golf shot.

Discounting the Positive - Discounting the positive is just like is sounds - ignoring or invalidating good things that happen in our golf lives. Those of us who use this pattern of thinking don't view mistakes as opportunities to learn. In other words, the emotional response to double bogey opportunities discount the birdie opportunities.

Jumping to Conclusions - Jumping to conclusions has two components: *mind reading* and *fortune-telling*. In *mind reading*, we think someone is going to react in a certain way or that they are thinking things they haven't said, like any different expectations you have when playing with a "duffer" vs. a "pro." *Fortune-telling* is predicting events will unfold in a particular way to avoid something that is difficult, like executing a swinging downhill putt on the 18th green alone vs. with money on the line in front of a crowd.

Magnification - Magnification is exaggerating problems or shortcomings and minimizing the desirable qualities in a person or situation. Those of us who are addicted to reviewing the newest golf technology may exaggerate our need to eliminate errant shots, which further solidifies our dependence on new golf tech and our belief having the newest golf tech is the only way we can shoot lower scores.

Emotional Reasoning - Those of us who engage in emotional reasoning judge ourselves or our circumstances based on our emotions. Often, those of us who have this cognitive distortion rationalize taking risky shots when our last shot didn't "go to plan."

Should Statements - Should statements are part of our internal "committee" that tell us what the expectations, rules, and standards are in a situation. For some of us, our expectations related to "par" are unattainable, or pressure-packed in a self-defeating way. We create expectations of ourselves and others on the course that are simply-put delusional.

Acknowledge any "shoulds" and allow them to float away with your next exhale. Give yourself access to play the game.

Labeling - Labeling involves making a judgment about yourself (or someone else) as a person, rather than seeing our behavior as an committed action. At times, we label ourselves (or others) as "good" or "bad" players or engage in some other form of name calling "cheater" / "hustler" / "stick".

Personalization and Blame - This cognitive distortion occurs when we blame ourselves or someone else for a situation that involved multiple variables/factors. Those of us who post a score on a windy day may display this type of cognitive distortion by believing we somehow controlled the weather (or the other way around).

For more examples, listen to post-round descriptions in the clubhouse.

Adapted from Dr. David Burns (1999)

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Context	Pick a current golf habit to change Please fill in the following blanks with your specific golf habit (or) desired change - e.g., <i>All or nothing thinking, Overgeneralization, Mental Filters, Discounting the Positive, Jumping to Conclusions, Magnification, Emotional Reasoning, Should Statements, Labeling, Personalization and Blame</i>
Pre-Contemplation	Version1: I am currently _____ and do not intend to stop _____ within the next six months. Version2: I am not currently _____ and do not intend to start _____ within the next six months.
Contemplation	Version1: I am currently _____ but I am thinking about stopping _____ within the next six months. Version2: I am not currently _____ but I am thinking about starting _____ within the next six months.
Preparation	Version1: I am currently _____ but I intend to stop within the next thirty days and I have made at least one attempt to do so within the past year. Version2: I am not currently _____ but I intend to start within the next thirty days and I have made at least one attempt to do so within the past year.
Action	Version1: I am no longer _____ and stopped within the last six months. Version2: I am now _____ and have continued for the last six months.
Maintenance	Version1: I am no longer _____ and stopped for longer than six months. Version2: I am now _____ and have continued for longer than six months.

Table adapted from: 1. Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1982). Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: theory, research & practice*, 19(3), 276. 2. Walsh, R. (2011). Lifestyle and mental health. *American psychologist*, 66(7), 579.



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