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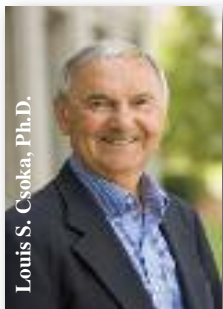
# The Lure of Rumbling Bald Resort

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**PULL-OUT GOLF COURSE GUIDE**

# Calm Mind, Relaxed Body

by Louis S. Csoka, Ph.D., Apex Performance



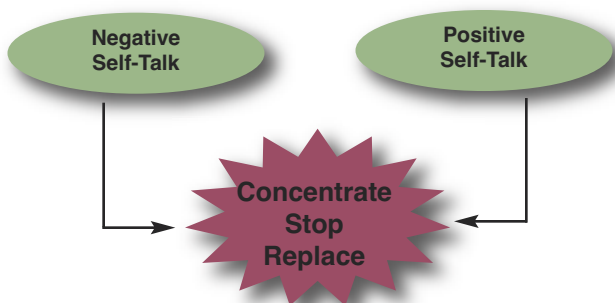
Louis S. Csoka, Ph.D.

**M**aintain a calm mind and a relaxed body! That is probably the single most valuable advice you can receive when it comes to the mental side of golf. Sounds easy, but actually, it is not. Both our minds and our bodies have automatic mechanisms wired to respond just the opposite when you are under the gun, when you feel the pressure of making that shot.

Witness the final round of the Masters tournament, Rory McElroy going into the final round was at the top of the leader board and by the end of the day, a total meltdown. In the Wells Fargo tournament, he didn't even make the cut to advance to the weekend rounds. Now I am not picking on Mr. McElroy, he's a very talented player. I am just pointing out that the mental side of the game can kill you, perhaps more than in any other sport.

In several of last year's issues of the Carolina Golf Journal, I wrote about controlling your thoughts and self-talk, of learning to relax the body so that it can do what you have practiced so hard and so long to do. In this issue, I want to elaborate the mechanism you can use to take control over your thinking and self-talk so that you have confidence in your mental game.

Remember, confidence primarily comes from within. If you have a steady stream of positive, effective thoughts as you approach the tee or address the fairway shot or walk on to the green, you will do fine. However, if you don't, then here is what you must do.



As you find errant thoughts entering your head, Negative Self-Talk, (I hope I don't slice this drive; my short iron game is the weakest; I always have trouble seeing



Rory McElroy loses concentration and the 2011 Masters, missed cut at Wells Fargo

the line to the hole), try these three things; (1) Concentrate on the thought for a moment, (2) say STOP to yourself, and then (3) Replace with a positive counter-thought. The key is to have a positive, effective thought ready at hand or else your mind will go back to your original thought(s).

You develop these ready-made thoughts by becoming quite aware of what you are thinking in these situations, create real counter thought(s) and then practice the switch on a regular basis. You must make this automatic if you expect to use it in the moment during play. Remember, the brain learns through repetition. Repeat the right thoughts for the right performance occasions and they become automatic, just like your negative thoughts have.

To test yourself, let's see what your self-talk tends to be. Take this short quiz\*, and be brutally honest with yourself as you respond to each sentence. Your score can give you a rough idea about your self-talk tendency.

Once you know, you are better prepared to do something about it. (\*Source: Sport Psychology Mental Training Manual, US Olympic Committee, 2004)

**Answer the following with**  
**0=Never 1=Sometimes 2=Almost Always**

1. *Before a big golf game, I purposely tell myself what to do and how to focus \_\_\_\_\_*
2. *I am able to focus on what I'm doing instead of the outcome \_\_\_\_\_*
3. *In a performance situation, I'm my biggest supporter \_\_\_\_\_*
4. *I know what to say to myself to get over a mistake \_\_\_\_\_*
5. *I have specific things I say to myself to stay focused \_\_\_\_\_*
6. *I have specific things I say to myself to stay motivated \_\_\_\_\_*
7. *I know how to talk to myself to be at my best \_\_\_\_\_*
8. *I focus on my strengths, not weaknesses before/ during a match \_\_\_\_\_*

**For scoring, just add up all the numbers and then use the guide below to give you a rough idea on your ability to manage your self-talk and thus ultimately your thinking.**

**Score 11-16:** You're doing a great job managing your self-talk but keep at it. Use these new concepts and techniques to take it to the next level.

**Score 6-10:** You're headed in the right direction but practice these skills on a consistent basis. It's just like anything you learn, the more you practice, the more likely you are to stick to it.

**Score 0-5:** You're not taking control over your self-talk. It may be ok when things are going well but it probably hurts you when you need it most. Work at it and take back control!

Take these results as they are intended, as a mere glimpse into your self-talk tendencies. Now that you have a better understanding of how to change what you think and say to yourself, I encourage you to use the simple steps described in this article. Remember, practice, practice, practice! It won't happen in a match just because you know about this. Make it automatic through repetition.



**PERFORM AT YOUR BEST**  
*when it matters the most.*  
MENTAL SKILLS FOR GOLF AND LIFE

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