



## ***The Impact of Golf in the Kingdom***

***A Conversation with Michael Murphy, Sara Yarmer,  
PGA, and Ben Kline, Shivas Irons Society***

*Responses to questions posed during the Zoom call  
(some previously discussed)*

**What's the difference between trying very hard and trying too hard?**

**Ben Kline:**

Just from the wording of the question, trying "too" hard implies that something is lost in the effort. It's kind of like the statement "f\_ck our ever getting better". If you get caught up in the emotion of trying to get a result, then you are creating mental interference and you lose the opportunity to be present to what is actually happening when you work to improve and eventually master a skill or a shot or a feel. So, don't "care" whether you get better, just do the work, get the coaching, make a plan and stick with it, and getting better (and developing awareness) will be the result.

**Sara Yarmer-Conte:**

I define trying two ways. One type of trying, like the examples in the question, is to force. It happens when we feel like we have lost control and are making decisions that ultimately destroy our intentions. When the results we are forcing ourselves to produce don't happen, we react emotionally and throw ourselves off balance.

Have you ever seen someone play an entire hole from the rough? Their tee shot lands them in the rough. They want to be on the green next so that they can still make par, but play their shot as though they are in the fairway. They choose the wrong club and swing as hard as they can only to end up in the same rough they started in. They continue that way all the way to the green, then give up because there is no way to save par. That person tried very hard to shoot a certain score and made their situation worse because they refused to accept that they were in the rough and not the fairway.

When we are trying to force certain results, we are ignoring the present situation, often stuck thinking about what should have happened or what we wish would have happened. These ideas do not help us and prevent us from making smart decisions that benefit our current situation.

The second type of trying comes from a peaceful mindset of curiosity. When we are curious we are focused and intentional with our decisions, yet we are open to the idea that we don't know what will happen. We are ok with not knowing.

This second kind of trying is necessary to learning and through this process we can transition from trying to doing. Once you have tried all the options through practice you can trust that they will work again when you need them. Trust is necessary to doing. When you trust yourself and the decisions you make, everything you have learned will be there at your fingertips ready to be used.

The golf course is going to present us with an infinite number of obstacles that we must overcome at any given moment. We must be willing to try anything because every situation is unique, but in order to create a certain shot, to do the thing you intend, you must accept your current situation for what it is. You cannot change it. You can only influence the next shot.

**Question for Sara - Did you experience grief/loss when the flow or 3-month zone dissipated? If so, how did you handle it?**

**Sara Yarmer-Conti:**

Absolutely. It was awful. I went from playing my best golf to my worst. I was shooting par, or a couple strokes over, for 3 months. I was having fun. I didn't care how well I shot, I was more focused on each individual shot and hardly thought about the final score.

When I started playing in college, my focus flipped. I was only focused on shooting a good score and I stopped appreciating each individual shot. I was miserable and scared. I doubted myself. Was I really as good as I thought I was? Do I deserve to be here? I felt like I was letting down my teammates, but especially my family. They had supported my golf for so long. I thought I was failing them.

After college, I stepped away from golf for about a year. It took that long for me to start missing the game. I had been working as a swim instructor in that year. I realized that I loved working with people and supporting them as they learned a new skill. I wanted to do that with golf. I joined the PGA of America with the intention of becoming an instructor. My goal was not just to teach swing fundamentals, but to also help people through the most difficult part of the game, which is the mental game.

Golf is like a mirror. It will show us our true selves. I think many of us don't like what we see. One of the lessons we learn while playing this game is to accept ourselves for who we are in this moment. We can still set goals to improve ourselves and be better than we were yesterday, but that growth isn't linear and doesn't happen overnight.

I think that's why golfers are so eager to share what they have learned with one another. We all know how difficult the journey is and we want to help others by sharing the things that have helped us.

**What tips do you have to help experience the joy of golf without it being about your results?**

**Ben Kline:**

Play a round of golf and don't keep score.

Play a round of golf with only five or seven or nine clubs in your bag.

After your round, make a point to remember your favorite moments, your best three shots. How did they feel?

Set an intention to be present to nature and to your playing partners between shots. Care more about how they are playing than how you are doing.

Have compassion for yourself when a shot doesn't come off the way you want it too. If you were walking with a small child, how would you support that child when things weren't working out the way you intended.

Imagine that this was the last round of golf you would ever play. How would you want to experience that time?

**Sara Yarmer-Conti:**

There are so many ways to measure progress while playing golf, but as golfers we tend to focus on the one we have the least amount of control over: the final score. Don't keep score. Feel free to focus on anything else. How many birds you see. How many bunkers you landed in and made out in one shot. Maybe it's how many fairways your hit. Just don't worry about the final score. Walk tall. Try using new clubs for different situations. There are so many other ways to measure progress. There are other ways to use your time on the course. Learn from every experience, the good and the bad. When you focus on the score, you stop learning.