

How to Deal with a Slump in Form

We've all had periods when our game just goes to pot, nothing seems to go right: You can't putt for love nor money, well hit irons seem to catch the bunker and plug, and you can't hit a fairway with a 7 iron let alone your driver. You probably couldn't hit a barn door with a tractor!

These rounds can appear from nowhere. You're going along playing well then something just derails you and rattles your confidence. When this happens during a round it's bad enough – when it continues and continues – you just know you are in a slump. Sometimes it's just one area of your game that's gone to pot – other times the whole thing just seems to go. You feel completely helpless, completely exposed. You have no clue as to what is happening.

Sound Familiar?

Well next time you are in one of these “slumps” take close notice of your own internal dialogue – your “self talk”. I bet it's not positive! In fact I'm willing to bet it's anything but. And what about your physiology? Are you walking tall with a purpose to your stride, confidently patrolling the fairways and greens? **NOT!**

“Yeh! but wait a minute Brian, I'm down because I'm in a slump. My self talk is negative BECAUSE of how I'm playing – not the CAUSE of how I'm playing!”

I know that's what you honestly believe but let me put another slant on it for you . . .

Somewhere along the line a few bad shots or poor scores put pressure on you and your self confidence. You focussed on these and let your mental game become “lazy”. Your mind returned to Outcome* focussed golf and you constantly registered what every bad shot that you played meant – you lost focus on the Process* of playing golf. YOU must take full responsibility for your slump. You caused it. It is not happening TO you. You are doing things in your mind, in your emotions and in your physiology that virtually guarantees you'll play poorly. This also applies to all of the bad breaks you get too; do you notice how they seem to happen more when you're in a “slump”?

Take a look at your good rounds versus your bad ones.

In both types of round you'll find bad breaks. The bad breaks are drawn to you when you are playing poorly. You weren't playing poorly *because* you were getting bad breaks. You were getting bad breaks because you were playing poorly in your mind! You still got bad breaks when you were playing well but they didn't fluster you or take you out of your game. Because you were in tune and your mental game was solid at the time.

I've often heard football commentators mention about how the teams in relegation trouble just don't get the breaks – it's the same thing. The bad breaks are attracted to the negative, outcome orientated focus the players in these teams are displaying.

You must accept responsibility for your slump. You are causing it. It's not *happening* to you.

Accepting this principle is key. Until you are willing to accept that everything that occurs on the course stems from you, you will never truly allow your Inner Golf Coach to function properly.

When you fully embrace your inner game and the true power of your mind to create the world around you, then you will reach the level of golf that you so desire. Yes, you may have the occasional mental lapse now and then but you'll understand how it occurred and *what you did* to attract it. You'll catch the signals sooner and stop them from taking hold.

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Here's a Reframe* that you might find useful: **Every slump is self induced for the purpose of teaching you something about yourself.** There's always something positive to learn - if you'll only pay attention. Ask yourself what you can to learn from it and move on.

You also have the power of Anchors* to help you.

The following exercises will crush any sense of "poor me" that you might have during a slump and help you take control by using visualisation* and mental imagery*. If you have access to the audio tracks on this topic, you may find it easier to follow the process by listening to the instructions rather than reading them, memorising them and then repeating them yourself.

But the choice is yours:

Destroying the Negative emotions associated with a slump:

Part I

- Get relaxed by using your peripheral vision* and breathing techniques.
- Remember a time when you felt you were experiencing a slump. Maybe it was a particular part of your game that was consistently poor for a stretch of time or perhaps it was an all round period of bad performances.
- Now pick a particular moment that typified your slump. Not a generalised feeling of the slump or an overall memory of poor play. You must isolate a particular memory that typifies the slump for you. If it was a Driving slump recall a specific time when you were topping the ball off the tee or something similar. Recall a memory that you clearly connect with your sense of being in a slump.
- Got it? Now close your eyes and see a picture of that time out on a screen in front of you in **black and white**. Just like you are watching a movie of someone else (you're in a Dissociated* point of view). Let the movie play.
- Ok, now play the movie backwards beginning right at the point you are at now. Right from the point where you are experiencing your slump. Take the memory and run it backwards really quick. Run it backwards to a point before you had any feelings of being in the slump.
- The goal is speed here. You will rewind the movie of you on the screen really quickly. Hear the sound of tape rewinding as you do it! Mix it up. Do it now!
- Rewind it *really* fast! Faster! Do it again. And again!
- Faster! Now add some sounds to it. Play the Benny Hill Theme tune and watch yourself on the screen in front of you as you move comically fast and in reverse and you hear the ridiculous theme music.
- OK Open your eyes. Recall the memory now. Notice how it's changed. What is the first thing you sense about it that's different now?
- Can you hear the sounds? As you recall the memory the picture is probably moving pretty fast too. You have mixed up the memory and added aspects to it that have changed your internal representation* of it for good!
- Do this several times on various images and memories you may have of your slump. In this exercise speed is the key. Taking your time is not what you're after.
- Perhaps the slump was in putting, or shanking your long irons – whatever. Pick a specific memory – see it on the screen in black and white and rewind it FAST to Benny Hill's tune.....

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Part II

- Close your eyes once again – the timing on this exercise now returns to normal speed.
- Recall a time when you performed exceptionally well at that same part of your game. So, using the example above, remember a time when you were driving with confidence and hammering it straight and long.
- Become fully Associated” into *this* memory. Reliving every sensation you can. See what you saw, hear what you heard and Feel what you felt when those drives went straight and long. Got it? Good
- Now, while in this state of confidence look at the black and white movie of yourself in that old behaviour you called a slump. Watch it from several moments *before* the actual memory of the slump began. So if it was of driving poorly back up to before you actually hit the drive.
- Now this time I want you to *Step into the movie* and re-experience it with all of these feelings of confidence, effectiveness, control, certainty, ability and whatever else you have available in this state. Now, with these feelings and the power of this state, run the movie from this point forward. Allow the movie to run in normal speed this state being present.
- Play the Movie in full glorious Technicolor. Play it over and Over at normal speed. Feel your confidence soar. Pay attention to how it has changed. Run the movie with you in an associated position, reliving it with all of these new and confident feelings.
- OK, Open your eyes and relax for a moment.
- Now think about the old slump again. It's difficult to get it back isn't it!
- You have overwritten the bad memory. You have now created a new memory. It is literally impossible to experience that old memory in the same way again. Like any new skill it will require a few run throughs to get the hang of it. But once you understand and become comfortable with the process you can do it in moments. This is how you want it. Fast.
- Then to re-experience the memory with your desired state, anchor* those confident feelings.
- You will want to call upon those confident feelings should you find yourself “waning” on the course.

You'll want to practice and apply this often. Keeping in mind that speed is of the essence in Part I of the exercise and then moving in “normal time” in Part II is what you're after.

* These phrases and concepts are fully explained in the Inner Golf Coach Audio Program