



As Featured in *Healthy Times*

Nip Golf Yips

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An Alexander Technique student and golf instructor recently brought to my attention the golfers worst nightmare. Yips. That is right - yips. These are involuntary movements occurring just before or at impact of the golf ball. According to Hank Haney, golf Analyst for ABC and ESPN, approximately 26 percent of golfers have yips at some point in their game. This can ruin a perfect golf career as evidenced with Jonny Miller, Ben Hogan and Bernhard Langer. It can also keep the casual golfer from playing or pursuing further golf.

Yips can happen to anyone who does anything repeatedly be it basketball, baseball, needle work, gardening, computer use or playing a musical instrument. The following are body observations to explore to allow the most amount of range and the least amount of resistance in activity. The more neutral and free the body is the less likely yips will occur.

1. Bodies can compress and decompress... When compressed the body is contracted and this is like having an emergency brake on movement patterns. Put your hand on top of your head and push down slightly. Notice that your head probably went back and down and your neck muscles tightened. This is compression. Release your hand and notice what direction your body goes in now. This is a decompression, which is essential to golf. Ask yourself if you are compressing and notice where muscles release. Now put your club or putter in hand and begin your golf stance. Did you start to tighten just by thought of this? If so, ask what it would be like to allow your neck muscles to be free so that your head can delicately balance on top of your spine.
2. Golf requires the whole body. Some people get fixated with their grip, hips or other. Notice yourself from head to toe and again observe if you are holding any extra breaks on the muscles.
3. Are you now asking where am I holding what? Notice your shoulder blades as part of the whole. First think decompression (Exercise 1) now, ask yourself if your shoulders are creeping up to your ears. If you notice a release, congratulations you just let go of unnecessary holding and took another break off. Shoulder blades actually float in a sea of muscles. Think of your back as fluid like a pond or a lake. Think of each shoulder blade as a free floating lily pad in water. When shoulders are released, arms can swing more freely and so can your club.
4. The legs are part of playing too. Place your hands on your hips while standing. Allow the heel of the palm of the hand to rest on the hip bone (iliac crest). The finger tips should be resting further along the sides of the leg. Now place one hand on a wall or table for support and swing the opposite leg. Do you feel a bone moving under your finger tips? This is part of your largest bone in the body the femur bone. Now place both hands on your hips again (as above). Notice the space between your hands. This is your width. (Yes, I know some of us do not like to be reminded of this.) The more you can allow the full space that is there to be open and free the more fluid your game will be.

5. The back is not a hinge. Learning to bend from the hips is essential. To explore this stand and outline your hips (iliac crests) with your finger tips. As you notice the crests end at the front of your body let your finger tips drop about two inches lower. From there raise a knee up. Your finger tips should feel caught in the crease. This is where bending takes place to save the back. Try gently directing yourself into a seat by lightly pushing on these spots. More so, you want to send your rear (the infamous gluteus muscles) back and allow your knees to bend until you happen to find yourself in the seat. As you do this, note that you will be in the perfect golf stance between standing and sitting.

Tense muscles create tense golf. Easy muscles create easy golf. The absence of tension is lightness and ease and freedom from yips. Free muscles allow free joint movement. The more free flowing the whole body is the better your performance will be. Pick your summer sport pleasure and explore more freedom in motion.

Christie Johnson helps people discover their unique patterns of thinking and moving in relation to all that they do. She helps executives and performers mitigate stage fright, seniors and surfers improve balance, gardeners and golfers improve range of motion, pregnant women and their partners expand their comfort, and riders and runners to release muscle tension. Free your Form, Function and Flow.

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