

Resolve to Reduce Stress Forever!

You might be asking yourself what a golf professional knows about stress and how on earth playing golf can actually help to reduce it. After all, isn't golf a game that has unwittingly frustrated its players for centuries?

So what is stress? There are many definitions but one that I like most is, *"any condition or situation that causes strain or tension"*. In today's busy world there are many - lack of time, demands of work, family commitments, money, and for some the list may even include golf. What if a round of golf could actually help to reduce stress? What if it was played in a way that helped us become more aware of what stress feels like and introduced tools that can help us unlock our personal potential?

So how can this work? To answer this question and more, I asked Susan Maravetz, a corporate teambuilding and executive coach, to share her perspective on golf and how it can be used to positively impact our ability to perform in all areas of life.

DH: Why do you think stress is so prevalent today?

SM: As a society, we are experiencing change at an unprecedented rate. Just keeping up with technology requires that employees learn quickly and adapt to quicker information cycles and a barrage of constant demands. Add to that the trend of most organizations asking their employees to do more with fewer resources, whether time, money or support. Most employees today work longer hours and are more productive than any previous generation, but these are also conditions that create great pressure and stress.

DH: Do you think it is limited to the workplace?

SM: Definitely not. Many people are connected to their workplace 24x7, thanks to the internet. This means they never have a chance to detach and relax from these pressures. They experience similar pressures at home, with more demands on their time to ensure their home is maintained and their family is taken care of. Children today are just as stressed, feeling the pressure to attain excellent grades, take more advanced coursework and excel in sporting programs.

DH: How can learning to play golf differently help lower stress and anxiety?

SM: If you take a look at the times you play your best golf or hit your best shots, they are usually times that you are relaxed, confident and not trying too hard. Unfortunately this is not how most golfers play the game. What would happen if we intentionally made an effort to feel this way over every shot? Would this be less stressful and would the results be better?

We have found that by reducing anxiety or tension, expecting good outcomes, and playing in a relaxed, mentally "quiet" state is crucial to not only playing your best golf but performing your best in all areas of life.

DH: Can you explain how we use bio-feedback tools in our programs?

SM: The emWave Personal Stress Reliever®, manufactured by HeartMath out of Boulder Creek, California, is one such device. We use it in our programs to help individuals create awareness of what a stressed state feels like. When stress is prevalent in your day to day, it can begin to feel like a normal state. This bio-feedback tool clearly demonstrates the current level of stress the wearer is experiencing.

On the golf course, we use the tools as a way of recognizing stress and finding a stress-free zone within which to execute the swing. It is very useful for our clients to become aware of their anxiety on the course and then find specific methods to shift their state of mind.

Through individual coaching, I work with clients to deepen this understanding and access specific tools to manage their stress. We do this by setting specific goals for the coaching, and working through programs to access peak performance, reduce stress or improve health.

DH: Where else is the emWave® Personal Stress Reliever used to lower stress and improve performance?

SM: The tools are being widely used in Hospitals as a method to reduce stress among practitioners and to facilitate better patient outcomes. On the PGA Tour, many golf professionals have adopted the emWave Personal Stress Reliever as a training tool for better course management and focus.

DH: Tell us more about how it is used to help children attain better grades in school.

SM: As I mentioned before, the current generation of children is probably the most stressed yet, leading to anxiety, obesity and many health disorders, such as diabetes and hypertension. The pressure to perform well in school is definitely a contributor. Tools such as HeartSmarts™ are designed to help with testing anxiety and to give children life skills to proactively manage stress and societal demands.

DH: If any readers have resolved that in 2008 they will reduce stress, can you offer any closing thoughts?

SM: First off, don't get too stressed out about that long list of resolutions. By eliminating stress from your life, you will find the rest of the resolutions fall into place. Second, follow your heart and third, don't forget to breathe.

Susan Maravetz is a business coach, group facilitator and entrepreneur. She is CTI-trained, CTA-certified and a licensed HeartMath 1:1 Provider. Susan has over 15 years of practical experience in corporations and has worked for IBM, Software Spectrum, HAHT Commerce and Intervolve.

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