

Case Study: Perfectionism in Golf

A friend of mine approached me beginning of this year. She is a professional Golfer, has a sponsor who supports her, makes some good money and travels the world to play in different tournaments. She thinks of quitting. I was a bit shocked, having known her for a long time, always envying her a bit for her career and her extensive travel around the world. She told me that she feels burned out. She has long since lost the fun of the game and feels at a dead end now.

I offered to see, if there is anything we can do and thus we started with a short anamnesis of her status quo and of some basic background information. She got right to the point after and explained what she thought the problem was. What I quickly learned was, that she showed some definitive thought patterns of a perfectionist. I confronted her with my impression and she proudly agreed: “yes, but that is a good thing, right?”. There are different problems with perfectionism. Amongst them is that the self worth of a person is strongly linked to their perceived success. Success, in the eye of a perfectionist though means, that everything less than perfectionism equals failure. The general expectation of such a person is nothing less than the maximum performance: perfectionism! Everything below that often means failure in the eye of a perfectionist. This becomes a problem, not so much during training, when she can repeat a shot, but during a competition, when she has exact one try. If that single try then isn’t good enough, in her world things escalate quite quickly and she gets frustrated and discouraged and starts beating herself up for being “an idiot”.

In the following sessions we had long talks about whether or not she thinks that this expectation is realistic and if her feeling burned out may be linked to never feeling having accomplished a given task.

After some sessions I could see a mind shift in my friends’ beliefs. She is no longer convinced that the way forward is perfectionism but excellence. Together we looked at some statistic to see, what a realistic expectation for someone playing with her handicap would be. We agreed, that even professionals make mistakes and that it is a normal thing to just deal with imperfection.

My friend did not quit her career. She is working hard on herself, trying to change her year-long beliefs into more realistic and forgiving ones. It often is a long to change thought patterns, especially for someone that is convinced it is the right way to do.

Please note: the entire coaching process is represented in a shortened version. The entire coaching process to change thought pattern took several sessions.



Kristin studied Economics in Germany and Italy and majored in Marketing and Global Management. She found her passion for mental coaching after having spent a year in Argentina, playing Polo. Her advice and coaching techniques are highly sought-after by professionals as well as amateurs or executives. Kristin is a Level I IMGCA Certified Mental Game Instructor, certified by the International Mental Game Coaching Association, USA and a Sports Mental Trainer, certified by the ZFU in Germany. She undergoes permanent training to gain new knowledge about the latest state-of-the-art techniques in the field of mental training.