

MODULE 8

Pre-Shot Process

*Part of the Master Your Golf Brain System
Powered by My Mental Caddy™*

Introduction

Alright, let's talk about what gets in your way over the golf ball.

You're standing over a shot, and all of a sudden you start feeling emotions. Your brain starts chattering at you.

This is where most golfers lose it.

They stand over the ball with no process for managing those emotions, and their brain takes over.

So in this module, we're going to talk about the Big 3 emotions that show up before a shot, the thoughts that create them, and the process for choosing Power Thoughts that put you back in your preferred state.

The Big 3 Pre-Shot Emotions

There are three main emotions that show up before a shot and keep you from swinging freely:

- Anxiety or Nerves
- Pressure
- Doubt

Any of those sound familiar?

These are the emotions that leash your swing. They keep you from being able to play your best golf.

And here's what you need to remember from Module 6: **situations don't create emotions. Thoughts do.**

So let's break down what thoughts are creating these emotions — and what you can do about it.

Emotion #1: Anxiety or Nerves

Anxiety and nerves show up in first-tee jitters. They show up over shots you don't like — downhill sliding putts, shots over water, narrow fairways, clubs you don't trust.

What thoughts create anxiety and nerves?

Two main types:

1. "What if..." thoughts

- "What if I hit it in the water?"
- "What if I miss this putt?"
- "What if I make a big number here?"
- "What if I don't make the fairway?"

Anytime you ask your brain a "what if" question followed by a problem, your brain is going to scan the universe for all the different ways you're going to get in trouble.

Remember from Module 2: your brain is designed to look for danger. So when you ask it, "What if I hit it in the water?" it starts churning up a lot of answers that are not going to feel very good. They're likely going to be negative.

We don't want to ask our brain bad questions because we'll get bad answers.

2. "I hope I don't..." thoughts

- "I hope I don't hit it in the water."
- "I hope I don't skull it out of the bunker."
- "I hope I don't blow it coming in."
- "I hope I don't embarrass myself."

Here's the problem with these thoughts: your brain doesn't know the difference between negative and positive. It just knows what you're putting your attention to.

So when you say, "I hope I don't hit it in the water," your brain just hears "hit it in the water." It puts its attention on the water.

Be very cautious of how we direct our brain to the things we don't want to do. We end up turning it and pointing it in the direction of exactly that place.

How many times have you said, "I hope I don't hit it in the water," and then you hit it in the water? You're like, "What the heck?"

It's because your brain doesn't understand the negative.

Emotion #2: Pressure

Pressure shows up when you're standing over a shot that feels important. Playing with teammates or a partner. A putt to win. A shot in front of people.

When you feel pressure, you get tight in your shoulders and arms. You squeeze the club tighter. That affects your tempo, your swing length, your ability to focus.

What thoughts create pressure?

"I have to..." and "I need to..." thoughts

- "I have to make this putt."
- "I need to make a birdie here."
- "I have to hit the fairway."
- "I need to get up and down."
- "I have to save par."
- "I need to play well today."

We say these so often in golf. We think it's just true. But it ends up producing a lot of pressure.

So here's what I want you to understand:

You don't have to do anything. You don't need to do anything.

You're out there playing golf. You don't have to hit the fairway. You don't have to make the putt. You don't need to make a birdie.

You don't have to do any of those things.

You **want to**, or you're **choosing to**. Totally different language. That feels completely different than "I have to" and "I need to."

You could pick up your ball and walk in if you wanted to. You have that decision. You have that agency.

So when you remind your brain that it's something you want to do or that you're choosing to do, it takes the pressure down.

There Is No Such Thing as a Pressure Shot

Now, I'm going to hurt your brain a little bit here with this comment, and I just want you to think about it:

There is no such thing as a pressure shot.

Now, if you're like, "What? Of course there's a pressure shot. It's pressure when I have a partner relying on me or I have a putt to win" — hear me out.

Pressure is an emotion. And an emotion comes from a thought.

"Pressure shot" would not go in the S line on STEAR. We can't prove it in a court of law. Seven billion people on the planet might not agree with you.

It only becomes a pressure shot by the thoughts you create — the words you say.

So if this hurts your head a little bit, I just want you to marinate on it.

There is no pressure shot until you make it a pressure shot with your thoughts.

We just kind of go along with it. "Oh yeah, that's a pressure shot. Oh yeah, it's pressure to have a partner who's relying on you. Oh yeah, it's pressure to hit shots in front of people."

It's not. You feel that pressure from what you're saying about it in your head.

So listen to what you're saying.

Emotion #3: Doubt

Doubt shows up when you're standing over the golf ball and all of a sudden you're uncertain.

When you have doubt, you mess up your tempo. You don't think very clearly. You steer the shot. You might decelerate, especially around the green. You're squeezing the club very tight because you're uncertain.

Your brain does not like uncertainty. That's a danger to your brain.

What thoughts create doubt?

"I don't know..." and "I'm not sure..." thoughts

- "I don't know if I can hit this shot."
- "I'm not sure about this club."
- "I don't know if I should aim there."
- "I'm not sure if I can pull this off."

Those thoughts create uncertainty. They create doubt.

And when you're in doubt, you're not swinging freely. You're not committing.

So listen for those words when you're on the golf course. If you hear yourself saying "I don't know" or "I'm not sure," here's a useful thing to do:

Ask yourself: What DO I know?

- "What do I know about how to hit this shot?"
- "What do I think is my next best move here?"

Then you get your brain looking for information that'll help create a little bit more certainty and less doubt.

Your Words Matter

Every word that comes out of your head matters — whether you think it or say it.

The simplest way to know if a thought is useful is to ask yourself: How do I feel when I say it?

If you say, "I hope I don't hit it in the water," how do you feel? Anxious. Nervous.

If you say, "I have to make this putt," how do you feel? Pressure. Tight.

If you say, "I don't know if I can hit this shot," how do you feel? Doubtful. Uncertain.

Those thoughts are not putting you in your preferred state.

They're not putting you in calm, certain, or confident.

So here's what we're going to do: we're going to choose different thoughts.

The Process for Choosing Power Thoughts

Step 1: Notice the emotion.

You're standing over the ball and you feel anxiety, pressure, or doubt.

Step 2: Identify the thought creating it.

This is STEAR.

What am I thinking? Is it a "what if" thought? Is it an "I have to" thought? Is it an "I don't know" thought?

Step 3: Choose a Power Thought instead.

A Power Thought is a thought that puts you back in your preferred state. It's a thought that creates calm, certain, or confident instead of anxiety, pressure, or doubt.

And here's the good news: you don't have to make these up on the spot.

We've created a list of 120 Power Thoughts for you in the app. You're going to pick 2-3 that feel natural to you, and you're going to use them over and over again.

Examples of Power Thoughts (Before a Shot)

Here are some Power Thoughts you can use before a shot:

- "Pick it. Commit. Swing."
- "Target, not technique."
- "Trust the motion."
- "Swing free, not careful."
- "See it. Feel it. Do it."
- "Smooth and easy."
- "Tempo over tension."
- "One clear thought."
- "My best chance is full commitment."
- "I know this shot."
- "Let the swing happen."
- "Solid contact, not perfect contact."
- "Trust beats control."

Notice how different these feel from "What if I hit it in the water" or "I have to make this putt."

These thoughts put you in your preferred state.

They create calm. They create certainty. They create confidence.

How to Pick Your Power Thoughts

Here's what I want you to do:

Go to the app and find the 120 Power Thoughts list. Look at the section called "Before a Shot."

Pick 2-3 Power Thoughts that feel most natural to you.

Not the ones that sound good. The ones that feel right when you say them.

For example:

- If you tend to get tight and careful, you might pick: "Swing free, not careful."
- If you tend to overthink, you might pick: "Target, not technique."
- If you tend to second-guess, you might pick: "Pick it. Commit. Swing."

Star them. Circle them. Write them down.

These become your go-to thoughts before a shot.

And here's the key: **you use the same 2-3 Power Thoughts over and over again.**

You're not picking new ones every shot. You're not making it up as you go.

You have your Power Thoughts, and you use them consistently.

That's your process.

Putting It All Together

So here's what this looks like on the course:

You're standing over a shot. You start to feel anxiety.

Step 1: Notice the emotion. "I'm feeling anxious."

Step 2: Identify the thought. "I'm thinking, 'What if I hit it in the water?'"

Step 3: Choose a Power Thought. "Pick it. Commit. Swing."

You say your Power Thought. You feel your body relax. You're back in your preferred state.

And then you hit the shot.

That's the process.

Notice the emotion. Identify the thought. Choose a Power Thought.

This is STEAR in action.

This is how you guide your brain instead of letting it guide you.

Key Takeaway

The Big 3 emotions that show up before a shot are anxiety, pressure, and doubt.

They come from specific thoughts: "What if," "I hope I don't," "I have to," "I need to," "I don't know," "I'm not sure."

And you can choose different thoughts.

Go to the app. Find your Power Thoughts. Pick 2-3 that feel natural to you.

And start using them.

Action Step

Go to the app right now and find the 120 Power Thoughts list.

Look at the section called "Before a Shot."

Pick 2-3 Power Thoughts that feel most natural to you.

Write them down. Star them. Put them in your phone.

These become your go-to thoughts before a shot.

Next time you play, use them. Every shot. Same 2-3 Power Thoughts.

Notice the emotion. Identify the thought. Choose your Power Thought.

That's your process.

And here's what you'll notice: you're going to feel more in control. You're going to swing more freely.

Because you're guiding your brain instead of letting it guide you.

Continue to Module 9: Post-Shot Process