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Great putting a matter of choice

By [Patrick Cohn](#)
GolfWeb Columnist

One of the most important mental abilities that all golfers have is the power of choice. Much of my work with athletes involves teaching players that they have the ability to make choices. In fact, everything I do in sport psychology revolves around showing players how to make good choices in their thinking.

Each and every one of you has the power to make choices. You have the ability to choose your attitude. You have the ability to choose to be confident. You have the ability to choose to stay focused on the task. Making the right choices is important in all of golf and especially putting.

After several interviews with great putters such as [Larry Mize](#), I am convinced that making the right choice is critical to success.

I have a story that illustrates the choices that confront you in putting. When I was working with the University of South Florida Men's golf team, one player asked, "I'm standing on the 10th tee at even par and I've lipped out 6 putts in a row! I'm starting to get



To make putts, you must choose to overcome any negative thoughts during a round. Greg Norman is one who can do this.

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frustrated. What should I think
when this happens?"

My first response to this player is that he has two choices or two ways to think about this situation. The reality is that the putts did not drop for him. So what is the best way to think that will give this player the best chance to make putts on the back nine?

I said the first choice and the wrong choice is to think that you're not putting well, that "the gods are not on your side". Every putt looks like it's going in and it misses! This choice only causes you to become frustrated with your putting and then you blame yourself for not putting well.

This attitude makes you think that you will continue to miss. Obviously, this choice of thinking will not help him make putts on the back nine. I suggested to this player that the better choice is to know that you are hitting the hole on every putt and that you are in fact putting well. The putts just have not dropped yet. You're hitting solid putts, but nothing is happening YET.

Being confident means that you must be patient and believe that the putts will fall if you keep hitting good ones. To me, this player must make this simple choice. Do you want to give yourself a chance of making putts on the back nine? Of course you do. Then you'd better make the right choice to give yourself a chance of making putts right now!

On the other hand, not making the right choice is what I call the "pessimistic putter." This type of player will fold his or her tent early if he or she misses at the start of the round. Pessimistic putters don't treat each putt as a separate putt. Pessimistic putters or streaky putters need to believe that each putt has an equal chance of going in regardless of previous results. They need to choose to believe they will make putts rather than look for excuses to putt poorly the rest of the round.

In contrast to how a pessimistic putter thinks, great putters choose to think that they will make the next putt no matter what happened previously. If [Greg Norman](#) misses early in the round, he might tell himself that the odds of success increase with each missed putt. You may feel that this is unrealistic thinking. But making the right choice and believing is what you have to do to give yourself the best

chance of making putts.

Note: This piece was adapted from the new audio cassette, *Great Putting -- Right Now*. To place an order call 888-742-7225.

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