

## Use self-talk to your advantage on the course

By **PATRICK J. COHN**

We regularly carry on an inner dialogue with ourselves during a round of golf — this is called self-talk. Your self-talk can be negative and self-destructive (“I stink, how can I hit a shot like that!”) or it can be positive and helpful (“Nice shot, keep up the good play.”).

If you want to be negative with yourself, you have plenty of time to do so. But I don’t think you will have much fun on the course or play your best. You have a choice to make about what you say to yourself. You have to believe in your ability and have a positive attitude to play your best.

It’s easy to forget someone else’s criticism of you, but it’s not easy to forget your own criticism of yourself. You must monitor what you say to yourself and not cut yourself down with negative self-talk. When you say things to yourself like ‘I can’t play this game’ or ‘you are the worst

player’ or ‘don’t hit it fat again’, you are hurting your own confidence. Negative thoughts lead to low self-confidence and negative outcomes.



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Most golfers don’t pay attention to what they say to themselves and often berate themselves when they play poorly. After you hit a ball into the water hazard, you jump all over yourself (“You can’t hit one good shot; you’re the worst golfer”). If a professional hits a ball in the water he simply sees it as a fluke and expects that it won’t happen again. You can be sure Lee Trevino doesn’t tell himself what a bad player he is when he hits a poor shot or hits it poorly one day.

Can you change your self-talk to help you play better? Yes. No one can be positive for you but yourself.

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