

Dr Zsuzsanna Fajcsak
PhD, MA, MA, MSc, CNS

What is Performance Optimization?

Performance optimization in simple terms means that you start to do things a bit differently in your life, which can ensure to have a better game, a stronger training, strength and good focus, endurance and high energy. Practicing these tools will bring major benefit to recover faster after training and game; avoid getting hurt, and when got hurt the injury may not be so serious hence recover faster. Getting back to the game with little or no loss in physical and mental readiness is the key to keep winning the game.

Who is Performance Optimization is for?

Regardless of your level you are competing or just enjoying for fitness, there are ways which can help you greatly to have more fun and reach and maintain results and top level performance. Performance optimization is for everyone who chooses to live this life “alive”.

What are the aspects of Performance Optimization?

In the followings in this section of the magazine you will find many useful and practical tips which not only going to help you to be healthier but also provides an increase in your performance hence the level of fun.

There are four major areas we will discuss here as pillars or foundations of performance optimization– these are:

1. Mind – How you think and reach superior mental focus. How manage negative emotions and transfer into empowerment. The mental and self communication aspects of performance
2. Nutrition – How you fuel and hydrate your body
3. Training – How to chose your exercises for your workout to avoid injury and able to transfer the most power, strength, agility into your technical skill
4. Recovery & rest - How restore the body actively and passively using movement, breathing and meditation. Meditational techniques are to train and sharpen the mind hence major aspects in superior undisturbed focus

All these areas can be implemented alone and the more you add together and take on board the better your performance gets and the better you will feel.

Fear and Anger --the Mental Crippler, physical disabler and performance destroyer

Lets start with a Mind related aspects: FEAR and ANGER and how to transform them to reach your goals. In order to make this happen we need o see the anatomy of

these negative emotions, recognize them, look at their parts and understand their processes on our performance and health.

How does fear debilitates performance?

Fear creeps in and debilitates performance and it mostly hits its power over you in the worst possible second. It makes you crippled and throws your technical skill off, and in golf it is the golf swing.

Have you ever examined your mind what is going on that second when fear hits in? What is it what you are afraid of? What is your chatterbox in your head talking to you? What is the language your mind is using to talk to you?

How does your mind talking to you while under the power of fear?

Most athletes miss the goal or the finishing act as they think: “ Oh just don’t hit bad”, “ Don’t kick it into the goalie”, “don’t hit it into the lake or trees”, “ I don’t want to fall down”. When your mind speaks to you in this language, know that these are expressions of fears. These sentences, which include the word “don’t” – are sentences which tell your brain what you don’t want. And since the brain does not hear the or recognize the word “no, don’t” it hears everything else after. So if you are surprised to hit the ball in the trees hence tis is what you exactly didn’t want, now you are no longer at surprise. You already told you brain “Hit the ball in the trees”. And not to mention you are seeing all that happening in your minds eyes—that is the ball going into the trees. And of course it gets you fuming out of anger and saying “ How could it be so stupid?” And by this time you lost focus.

How to adjust mental self communication to take the power out of fear?

The first in getting where you want, is to tell your brain exactly where you want the ball to go and you need to make a mental vision of that path or series of actions what will get you there.

Must accept the fact that yes it is possibility that the ball can go into the trees, but applying the correct technique and having the mental vision of successful accomplishment will get you there or at least very close.

Where does fear comes from?

In order to make this shift in your head you will need to have an understanding of where is your fear is coming from. And I m asking for your patience to read this section through as it will all make sense and will be visible how fear can inhibit performance.

All negative emotions are coming from the childhood, as at one point you have experienced a situation, which repeatedly conditioned you to have fear.

Fear is--on the bottom line—being afraid of not being good enough

Fear is mostly rooted in being afraid of not being “good enough” or perceived by others that we are not good enough. So out of fear of not being perceived as “good

enough” we do all sorts of things in life so we don’t reveal that we are not good enough. Lying is the first implication of fear of not being good enough. You are afraid to tell the truth, as if you did it will be found out that you did something wrong, hence you are not good enough.

It has to do with the parenting you are coming from or the lack of it and having a certain negative environment around you where it was reinforced in you that you are not good enough and therefore --why would you deserve anything better.

Through these experiences Once you form the belief that you are not good enough, then you start also believe that you deserve also to have certain things and reach only certain levels of success, so as to you start speaking low about your own self.

If you are serious about reaching your goals you must look into yourself and examine these aspects honestly.

Most people who messes up in the very last minute and wont reach their goals because they simply feel not good enough to have that.

How to transform fear to empowerment?

This first thing to do is find your very first event in the past likely 0-7 years of age and recall that fearful event. And you will be surprised how this one very fist event is the root cause of your adulthood fear. And by resolving this event by looking into what can be learnt there, you can transform your fear. The fear of anything in childhood – unresolved – will be inhibiting you reaching any of your goals.

Fear and its powerful messages to make you win

It must sounds strange for you, however every fear holds very powerful messages or instructions on how to things n life and in this performance aspects how to execute.

And when fear takes over the subconscious mind, your conditioned mind will perceive situations and makes you feel the already known fear feeling hence react in certain way and will tell you not to look into the root cause of fear as it will kill you .

So only if you are brave and know that yes, all those childhood event are unpleasant and it is only temporary while you look into it and find these pearls of wisdom can you have the direction, instruction to succeed.

Looking at the fearful situation and what was wrong --all you need to do is switch the what was wrong to how to make it better, which is the solution.

Once these what’s wrongs were transformed, the instructions in fear will tell you how to do things to avoid hurt or doing wrong. And these instructions are all positive in language saying like

- Stay calm,
- Keep clear head,
- Focus on what you want,

- Tell others what you want
- Stand up for what you want
- Execute step by step
- Be patient
- Be persistent
- Practice, practice, practice
- Feel that you deserve to have anything in life what you put your mind to it
- Make the mental vision of your action reaching your goal—see your perfectly executed golf swing, hitting the ball and see the ball reaching its target. – Breathe-- Now you are ready to actually hit the ball. Let your body follow the mental image.

Now if you applied all these would you have anything else as end result then success?

What is anger?

Here is the unsuccessful golf swing and the ball went into the trees. The anger reaction will make one shout out and call himself all sorts of names and start even hitting the golf club to the ground. One can even hit his own body, or kick the ground. Now others may just start yelling at the caddy that he did something wrong and he is at fault. The ball manufacturers can be also cursed out, as it must have been a ball from a faulty manufactured batch. Then someone unknown could have been messing with the golf club to make sure one hit into the tree. And lastly one can bite on his own hands or on the golf club, and in more subtle cases constantly chewing on chewing gum or crunchy foods like nuts.

It is pretty funny when you read this about someone else, however what about you? Lets stop and think. When this happens just how do you feel, and is this how you want to feel instead? Further how fast can you refocus and get back to the game feeling this unwanted way? Which behavior makes more sense?

How is anger being released?

There are very specific ways how anger is released form the body. The above examples described all four forms of anger expressions or releases and as it embedded to sports and golf.

If you read closely the above anger-behaviors you can find the four ways with one common consequence, which is creating an impact.

Anger releases through:

1. yelling—creating impact between air molecules
2. hitting with the hands – creating physical impact of a sound when hitting self or others. Actually hitting the golf ball is one way of anger release and if the swing is made out of anger, likely it will be uncontrolled motion.
3. kicking with the foot – creating physical impact whatever the foot kicks.

4. biting with the teeth – creating physical impact between the teeth and the object which was bitten.
Some people grind their teeth at night and eat when no one sees as compensation for suppressing anger. And this is the form of anger, which will start slow by slow “eating your body up alive” and causes all sort of heart aches and serious degenerative illnesses even cancer.

How do we learn to be angry?

Anger is a learnt process or reaction to an event or situation when someone feels:

1. threatened
2. rejected
3. abandoned
4. taken advantage of - cheated
5. belittled, humiliated- hence not good enough
6. being injustice done

Anger begins to build up from series of smaller or bigger frustrations experiencing one or more from the above list until all reaches a point and spills over as an uncontrolled behavior. Anger is most likely expressed toward those who has nothing to do with the initial frustrations and toward those who cant fight back.

We all experienced anger reactions of others who were close to us while growing up and we learnt to copy them. With time and practice anger become automatic then become part of the character.

Now you can see how much parenting and the environment of the children counted, and looking back to your own family – its all visible the cause of our anger reactions.

Before you get yourself bugged down of all this, I can suggest to cheer up, as **all learnt behaviors can be relearnt**. Just like anyone who choses to live mindful and conscious have the chance to retrain the brain and manage anger reactions and turn them into performance.

How to manage anger?

The **first step** in managing anger is to admit that you have it. If you think that you don't have it and deny it, or you get angry when someone tells you that you are behaving angry , these are signs that you are not ready to change.

Once you admit, that yes you have anger and react quickly out of heat, then you are ready to change and apply the following management skills.

The **second step** is to look into yourself and list down the situations in your life, in your family, in your work, and in your sport what makes you angry. List them down all. Look for the common cause what that situation makes you feel that the automatic anger reaction just comes out of you and you reject everyone and yourself in the process.

Then see your day in advance when is it possible to encounter such situations and make mental note. These are the times you will need super extra focus to apply awareness. This process will make you prepared of situations which used to trigger anger.

The **third step** is the actual new behavior when situation arises. The new behavior is that you start to take deep breaths and think about what is really happening objectively and what shall you start focusing on?

1. Say to yourself: "I see this is an anger situation where I used to blow my horns, so lets breathe and see – observe what is really happening"
2. Realize what is happening objectively, it is nothing else but a golf swing, which need to be adjusted.
3. It is in the cards that things can go wrong and by applying patience and practice you can make it better. Look at the technique – the movement what needs to be corrected, -- your foot movement, your trunk, your arms, and perhaps your head and your mental focus.
4. Realize that any given time you are doing the best you can of the resources you have. So if you don't get the result which you wanted during the entire game then it means you may have to practice more. And there is nothing wrong with that.

How to we practice anger management on the daily bases?

Observing frustration level on the daily bases is a great tool in general. If you rate your frustration between 0-10 and you are at level 5-6—it calls for dealing with the root cause. You still have your clear head and it is much easier to handle situations while its still cool.

You see how easy it is and how much sense it makes to break down such unwanted behavior as anger and turn it into empowerment.

How is the long-term process of transforming anger looks like in reality?

Any behavior we learnt took years to develop and it takes also time to re-learn. As you will progress re-training your mind, allow yourself that you may still get angry, as change will takes place step by step. So if you can manage and apply your new skills of observation and empowered thinking one out of 10 times, then you are on the right track. If you continue practicing you will be able to catch yourself and do it better and better.

Apply these skills in your daily life, with your family members and work situations so the new empowering behavior becomes automatic faster.

In the process of behavior change, the first 3 weeks will be the most important. Once you made the commitment with the firm decision that you practice the new skills you stepped on your new journey. Even if you still get angry catch yourself and self correct immediately. Forgive yourself and continue practice. It takes 9 months of practice until this new behavior can start setting into automatic behavior, and takes 2 years until it becomes a part of character.



Its never late to start to change. The right time is perhaps right now to begin transforming fear and anger-- the most destructive emotions keeping us in our own prisoners of our lives.

So why not making the decision that you want to enjoy your golf game and live happily now.