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Developing Your Confidence Bank

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Confidence is important for golfers and it can be created when you don't have it. Use this confidence bank idea to build your confidence.



Confidence is important for golfers. When you have it, you know your shots will be strong, you don't dwell when the shots don't go as planned, and you believe you can handle the challenges that golf presents.

But when you don't have confidence, you're likely to shank balls, hit straight into the bunkers, and lose faith in your swings. Ever had the yips? You're probably lacking confidence when that happens.

The great thing about confidence is that it can be built. It's a myth that you either have it or you don't. Think of your confidence like a bank; we all make deposits and withdrawals. The deposits are the positives experiences, thoughts, and feedback: good shots, a lowered handicap, a successful round, a compliment from a fellow golfer—you get the idea.

The withdrawals are things like poor shots, losses (in a friendly match or an important competition), or negative feedback that take away from your confidence. It can seem like withdrawals happen all over the place, sometimes draining your bank account. Every deposit builds confidence; every withdrawal brings confidence down. However, as humans, we tend to overemphasize the withdrawals and ignore the deposits. Think back—have you ever had a round that was by everyone else's standards okay? Maybe even decent? But you had a couple bad shots or bad holes that you focused on? Maybe you can still remember them vividly!

These types of withdrawals are common: we focus too much on negative events or experiences, causing our confidence to decrease. Meanwhile, we've ignored all the parts of our game that went well and should help to increase confidence. But, because we don't pay attention, those deposits don't hit the bank. It's like we're leaving money on the table!

A confidence bank is a concept you can use by imagining a bank in your mind and noticing the deposits and withdrawals. Or, you can physically create one to see an actual representation of your confidence. Here's how to start creating your confidence bank.

Step 1: Focus on the deposits

After each round or outing, take a few moments to pay attention to what went well. Think about what confidence boosters happened: maybe you were consistent off the tee or your short game has improved. Take notice of any positive feedback or other experiences that help you feel good about yourself as a golfer. Write these down if you'd like, or simply imagine your bank getting fuller.

Step 2: Evaluate the withdrawals

Once you've reflected on the positives, you can then review any potential withdrawals. Notice the word potential. A bad shot (or even a series of shots) doesn't have to be a withdrawal unless you let it.

Consider those "negatives" and rather than letting them be a hit to your bank account, see if you can learn from them, find a positive in them, or review them objectively, not letting them get built into larger withdrawals than they need to be. If one of your golf friends told you about that same instance, you'd likely pump her up and remind her it's not that big of a deal. Do that for yourself and help those withdrawals be as minimal as possible.

Step 3: Create more opportunities for deposits

Confidence can be built by having positive experiences, so if you feel like you're in a bit of a slump, take a step back and look at where to help yourself create more positive experiences. Take putting—if you've been having trouble with putts more than 8 feet, practice more putting, but starting at 5 feet. Build your confidence bank back up. Then go to 6 feet, and then 7. You get the idea. You can manufacture some opportunities to add to your bank. You can also add to your confidence bank by imagining positive situations and successful golf scenarios.

Bonus: Create an actual confidence bank

This is fun for younger golfers but is great for adults too. Find something like a mason jar, fishbowl, or glass vase. Then, find something to represent your confidence, like pennies, macaroni, or small pom poms from the craft store. Then, when you're reviewing your outings, add actual items to your confidence bank. Yes, you can make the withdrawals too, but really make sure to focus on as many deposits as you can, and only taking the necessary deposits.

Remember, your bank account can fluctuate, and that's normal, but when you step out on the course or head to a lesson, take the time to remember the deposits you've made. If you're heading into a challenging situation like a hard course or a competition, consider the specific deposits you've made for those types of events or situations. If you have a physical bank you've made, look at it (or keep a photo or list on your phone) before you head out to golf.

Confidence can feel illusive but with consistent intention to focus on the positive moments and successes, making sure the withdrawals aren't bigger than they need to be, and you're likely to find that your confidence bank continues to grow.