

SECTION ONE

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SUPERSTITIONS





CHAPTER 1

For the purpose of this book, a superstition is any belief that we have that we think is “true.” Of course, I am talking as it relates to golf. You will have to figure out the rest of your life for yourself.

Let us begin with three simple words in the English language—is, *should*, and *because*. Since you think in words and your thoughts influence your actions, you should probably pay attention to what you think on the golf course (and everywhere else).

IS

First of all, if you really check it out, there is no “is” anything. For example:

- This is a tough shot
- This is an easy shot
- This is a bad lie
- This is a good lie, etc., etc.

Those are all just your interpretations, and they are not true. Not everyone has the same interpretations. Given your interpretations, you think and act in particular ways. In truth, we mostly react. These reactions definitely can influence the outcome.

“Is” also applies to you, personally, on the golf course. You think of yourself as a particular mix of skill, talent and ability based on your past experience. Moreover, you keep producing results that match your assessment of yourself. Oh, you may improve a little, but you are just a prisoner of your own interpretation. There is no way you “is.” Sorry about the grammar, but you see what I am saying? Begin to take notice wherever you know *how it is* or *how I am*.

.....
*There’s
no way
you “is”*
.....

 As a leader in your organization how does the distinction “is” show up? Where I would look first is at your key relationships.

Relationships are always growing, breathing things or they are starting to die. You do not want to stifle that growth in any way.

Knowing how someone “is” will do just that. Could you consider that you really don’t know that person? Being familiar isn’t really knowing him or her.

Where are you limiting them? What have you decided about them that’s “true”? Are you continuing to look for what else you could learn about the people you say are an integral part of any success you might have?

Let me give you a true example of what I am talking about. In my last year of coaching college basketball I was working at Taft College (CA). I had a young but talented squad.

I only had 11 players, nine of which were freshmen. My 11th man, which I decided he was early on, was a young man from Portland, Oregon, Tim Pruitt. He came to Taft College for track and field as he was a fine triple jumper.

When he asked if he could try out for the team I happily said yes, given I only had ten players and his being on the squad gave insurance for having enough players for practice. Before he ever got started he was a “practice” player in my eyes.

In our early games he, of course, played very little if at all. He was 5'9", a very average ball handler and not a great shooter.

Every day he pestered me for more playing time and even during games he would come down the bench and urge me to put him in. Of course, I knew better.

Nine or ten games into our season we were playing a team with a terrific point guard and he was killing us. Down the bench Tim came. “Put me in coach.”

So, I put him in. Not because I thought he could get the job done but to shut him up for the rest of the year His instructions were to

not let No. 11 touch the ball and if he did, to pressure him to pick up his dribble.

This is what happened. No. 11 didn't touch the ball for four minutes. It totally destroyed their offense. He caused four turnovers and where we had been struggling we were now dominating the game.

After that Tim became my "hit man." If any player from 5'5" to 6'5" got hot I sent Tim in to cool him off. He was so quick and athletic (the triple jumper in him) they could not shake him.

So much for what I knew. He wasn't a great basketball player. He was better than I thought and he wasn't afraid to take a risk. I will take that anytime.

You also might want to look at what you have decided about yourself that is a limitation. Especially look at what you have said you aren't good at. If it is a skill it can be acquired by practicing or supplied by someone else who is really good at it already. You are not accountable for doing everything; just that it gets done.

If you give something away to more skilled people, let them know that you're aware they are more skilled. It is a great acknowledgement for them, not a put-down for you.

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*What
you know
might
be your
biggest
limitation*

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SHOULD

"Should" is perhaps the one word in the English language most damaging to one's self-esteem. It is a total superstition. Should is an opinion, assessment, or judgment after the fact based on an ideal. An ideal by its' very nature is unattainable. Looks like a set-up for frustration, disappointment or dissatisfaction.

The facts are that each swing produces a unique result, i.e., the ball traveled one hundred fifty yards and landed in the sand trap. End of story. Anything else you say about it, you made up and made it mean something that you are in the trap. End of story.

Next case, what do I want to do with this 35 foot pitch out of the trap that will get me as close to the pin as I am able? No *should*. You have the circumstance that you have to deal with. No other thoughts are of any value. This will allow you to focus on the precise actions you will take.

That is as good as it gets. You have put yourself in a powerful place called “*I know what is so.*” When you are addicted to *should*, there is no opportunity for satisfaction in anything you do. *Should* and its brother, *should not*, will rob you of any appreciation for who you are and for the process of life itself.

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Should is the language of the second-guesser. In the stands, not on the court.
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 Now that you know about *should* on the golf course, where do you see it at play at work? One thing to constantly pay attention to is the action we take which is driven by opinion or commitment. Opinion is formulated from some experience we have had to which we have formed some attachment. In many cases, we don’t stop to see where it comes from. And, we think it is the “right” opinion.

No one knows what anyone should do. That includes people at work. Your job is to support them in finding the path to take. It is also critical that they have an environment in which it is safe for them to say “I don’t know.”

The mere fact of being able to say that gives you an opening to say “try this.” You can only create the shot, not guarantee the outcome. Then, you manage whatever you have to work with.

BECAUSE

These are the reasons and justifications you have for not producing the intended results or being the person you think *others* expect you to be. *Because* creates an absence of responsibility.

As difficult as it may be to explain away our performance on the course (since your play is entirely up to you) we will try anyway. Our use of *because* prevents us from identifying what is so. Therefore, you are