



# Links Players

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## Improving Relationships & Your Grip

*Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:32, NASV)*

After golfing for fifty years, I attended a 3-day golf school last summer and learned how little I knew and why the basics are important. In his book *Golf My Way*, Jack Nicklaus wrote that he is not a believer in methods but a believer in fundamentals.

On the first day, the instructor changed my grip. There was no way I could hit the ball gripping the club that way. It felt awkward...but I loved the results. He responded, "Just keep doing what feels unnatural until it starts to feel natural."

It isn't easy changing a stance, a grip, or a swing... especially if you've gotten into bad habits or never learned correctly. It takes time to unlearn old patterns and replace them with new ones. Nevertheless, if you want to improve, you've got to be willing to change.

In relationships with others, changing poor habits and learning new, more effective practices are difficult and bring discomfort. However, it will yield greater results and consistent improvement in communication and conflict resolution.

Next, I was told to "Loosen your grip." Johnny Miller says that only one golfer in a thousand grips the club lightly enough. Although it seems like a tight grip would produce more power and control, holding a club too tightly causes several bad results: loss of distance, slower club head speed, and a ball that's "prone to wander."

Many people tighten their relational grip and try controlling a spouse, child, grandchild, business associate, or golf partner. It has the same effect as tightening the grip on your club. By criticizing, micro-managing, or failing to make allowances for different personalities, we put undue tension and pressure on our relationships, AND then we don't get the results we want.

Usually, we don't realize that our behavior feels controlling to another person. We think we're "just being helpful." A loose grip in relationships can mean eliminating critical comments or refraining from asserting our preferred style into another person's method of doing things. When you loosen your grip, it encourages and motivates others to develop strengths, pursue dreams, and overcome obstacles.

Loosening your grip is a matter of paying close attention to a person's temperaments and strengths rather than tightening the grip of control that can squelch a healthy relationship.

I also learned the importance of fixing my divots quickly. An immediately repaired divot takes one to two days to heal. Wait an hour to repair, it takes up to 2 weeks to heal. Unrepaired divots take up to 3 weeks to properly heal.

This principle easily translates into repairing relationships. It's inevitable that you will hurt or be hurt. How quickly you attempt to address hurts will determine the condition of your relationships. The longer you wait to reconcile, the more difficult it becomes. To paraphrase Ephesians 4:26, "Do not let the sun go down...without repairing your divots."

If you experience recurring problems in your golf game, consult a golf professional. Encouragement, advice, and direction from a knowledgeable instructor also brings valuable perspective to the inevitable difficulties of relationships.

The truth is you can't rely on minor league advice nor coach yourself and expect great relationships. That happens when you turn the job over to someone else. God has a book as well, Relationships My Way... I mean the Bible. AND, He's willing to be your relational instructor.

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, change my grip regarding my relationships. May I seek forgiveness from those I've hurt and offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me. Amen**

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Bill Crawford

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