



Links Players

The “Yips”

I can do all the things which He has called me to do through Him who strengthens and empowers me to fulfill His purpose.... (Philippians 4:13, AMP)

I was asked recently how to beat the “yips.” Having no idea, I did some research. The dictionary defines it as “a nervousness or tension that causes an athlete to fail to perform effectively, especially in missing short putts in golf.” I now know what’s wrong with my game!

I would not have thought about consulting the Mayo Clinic until I Googled ‘yips’ and discovered their website: The most common symptom associated with the yips is an involuntary muscle jerk, although some people experience tremors, twitches, spasms, or freezing. Anxiety worsens the effect.

Mayo’s findings indicate that the “yips” impact is between 25% and 50% for all avid golfers. In layman’s terms, the yips are a movement disorder that most commonly impacts a player’s ability to putt but which has been known to affect their chipping and, in some cases, their full swing.

I’ll spare you all the medical details; however, it now appears that some people have the “yips” due to a neurological condition affecting specific muscles known as focal dystonia.

Here is the intuitively obvious conclusion of the condition from their website: it is an extreme form of performance anxiety that some golfers become so nervous and self-focused — overthinking to the point of distraction —that it has a harmful effect on a golfer's game.

Other than golf, have you ever found it challenging to do something that once seemed instinctive or effortless? We know there are mental health conditions that cause people to panic and wrestle with anxiety. But what about the spiritual “yips.” Has anxiety, even fear, ever gripped you and become a roadblock in your spiritual life?

Ever get the “yips” when you want to invite someone to attend your Links Fellowship gathering? Have you ever tried to talk about your faith with a friend, but you got the “yips” thinking you might get rejected? What about the “yips” of embarrassment when gently confronting someone overtaken by sin? What about being asked to lead a prayer?

When it comes to living out the Gospel, many aspects of the Christian life can cause us to “freeze up” or “shy away.” Like a few bad putts or chips, an unpleasant experience can get into our heads and talk us out of trying again to publicly identify with Christ.

Consider a few tips from Neal Pollard to overcome the Jesus-follower “yips”:

Forget the past and focus on the future (Phil. 3:10)

Pray for boldness and confidence (Acts 4:29,31)

Ask others to pray for your ability and boldness (Eph. 6:19)

Get others to join you or help, where possible (Ecc. 4:9-12)

Elevate your motivation and remember why you do what you do (Col. 3:23)

God's counsel to being more confident is to look to Him as the source of that confidence. We can impact eternity when we overcome relational "yips." Utilize the tools God has given you to overcome your anxiety.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, may any mental block or loss of confidence lead me to rely on Your presence in my life so that it would positively affect my public stance for You.

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The Links Daily Devotional appears Monday-Friday at linksplayers.com.