



Links Players

The Greatest

The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted (Matthew 23:11-12)

Dr. Lawrence Conell has 46 years of experience in the field of psychiatry related to addictive behavior. He notes that the typical criteria for something to be classified as an addiction are that the behavior is repetitive and that the person will persistently pursue it even in the face of adverse consequences.

People who are addicted feel a compulsion to satisfy the need, and they get an initial sense of well-being. Listing other characteristics of addiction, he says the person will feel a craving for the behavior and develop a tolerance to it over time.

This leads to conduct that results in emotional or physical withdrawal. Continuing the behavior can disrupt the addictive person's relationships and life responsibilities. It's his opinion that many of us are physiologically and psychologically addicted to golf.

Wow! According to that list, taking golf to an extreme can create effects that reinforce and perpetuate addictive behavior. As with any addiction, there is a burst of dopamine, and with each pure stroke, there is nothing like that feeling.

Something Dr. Conell calls "intermittent reinforcement" is the most powerful force to compel certain behaviors, making the most addictive things addicting.

"This kind of psychological reinforcement is when a reward isn't given every time the behavior occurs. Rather, the reward comes every now and then." Even if you hit 17 terrible tee shots, if the 18th is hit down the middle, it will keep you coming back.

I recently met with a guy for whom golf is his life. He lives for the next fix and recognizes it. If there is something more important to human life than pleasure, I propose it is meaning or purpose. Not the "what" but the "why." That sounds so deep, so philosophically fashionable, doesn't it?

I came across some thoughts from Rick Nielsen's book *Doing Time* about his experiences in prison ministry. "Those who live meaningful lives live small lives." He does not mean petty, narrow-minded, or ungenerous lives.

Put another way, meaning is what someone experiences when they understand that they are small but important... part of something far bigger than themselves.

People who talk about meaningful experiences often say things like, “I was caught up in something bigger than me” or “I understood that there was something larger going on.” My favorite is, “I am but one character in a larger narrative.” In other words, I am small.

Maybe that's what draws us to major sporting events. We realize we are a small part of something bigger than ourselves... and we love it enough to pay big bucks to be “part of it.”

I found that when I realized my life isn't about me, it became, ironically, more meaningful. Who'd have thought that?

I wonder if that's what Jesus had in mind in Matthew 23:11, from the Message, “Do you want to stand out? Then step down. Be a servant. If you puff yourself up, you'll get the wind knocked out of you. But if you're content to simply be yourself, your life will count for plenty.”

Meaning comes to the small... and you can be small anywhere and at any time... even on the golf course. Put simply, our purpose is to know and declare the greatness of God. It means giving up our own glory, so everyone knows our “addiction” is to the God we worship. Live small!

Prayer: Father, help me to maintain a healthy balance between my passion for golf and my commitment to You and other important aspects of life, recognizing that true fulfillment comes from You.

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Bill Crawford

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