

M. Scott Peck, personal enrichment guru and author of The Road Less Traveled, recently sponsored a \$ 10,000-a-foursome golf tournament to promote "spirituality, golf and the fine art of business management." He said, "I read there was a Buddhist sect in Japan that owned four golf courses, and their temple was the 19th hole. I believe the skills necessary for playing golf are the same as for enlightenment."

And I believe they are the same for reducing speech anxiety. As the great South African golfer, Gary Player, says, "I get more nervous the older I am, because the nerves get frayed. Heck, they get worn out, like a worn-out muscle."

Besides sharing getting a case of the jitters, public speakers and golfers also share some physical techniques.

In both, the stance requires the feet to be parallel to the shoulders, with our weight equally distributed over both feet. In my Public Speaking seminars, I call this the 50/50 stance—a stance that is perceived by an audience to be focused, forthright, confident, and in control.

The rhythm of body movement is much the same, as well. The golf swing, at its best, is smooth, fluid, and deliberate, as hand and arm gestures should be in speaking. One of my earliest golf instructors, kept telling me, "Make your swing more deliberate. Right now it's loose and vague."

I find myself telling my public speaking clients during a coaching session, "Your gestures lack strength and energy. They are involuntary jerks of the body, driven by nerves. To be perceived as composed and confident, you must make your gestures from the shoulders not the hands and wrists. Make your gestures direct, deliberate, extended, flowing, yet forceful."

Do these adjectives sound familiar to you golfers?

Also, both speaking and golf require an alert, athletic posture. As one client who was a former college basketball player told me during a coaching session, "Ah! Like waiting to receive a pass: alert, ready, and composed." Exactly.

In fact, in all sports, balance (stance) and posture are the bases of any great outcome, whether it's a homerun, 3 point shot, or hole-in-one. In order for a speaker to score points with an audience, the feet must be grounded and rooted (no aimless pacing), and the

posture must be unapologetic--no more "schlepping around" in front of an audience (or on the tee-box!).

I often tell my clients that public speaking is a life - long "sport," one that requires self discipline, body awareness and consistent practice. (Toastmasters is a great "driving range"!)

Am I saying, take up golf to be an effective public speaker? No, but I am suggesting business people remain actively involved in some sport at some level, no matter their athletic ability, to be the best public speaker--and business person--they can be.

PHYSICAL POISE, BALANCE, CONCENTRATION, RISK TAKING, and RECOVERY are the foundations of any sport, of golf, of public speaking, of business....of life. And, if occasionally we flawlessly transfer the physical and mental attributes of the game of golf to public speaking, we may just manage to score that "HOLE-IN-ONE."

Mary E. Rauch is a San Antonio communication strategist and public speaking coach. She can be reached at her web site www.maryrauch.com
She also serves on the Golf San Antonio Board, which runs the Texas Open, and founded the local Executive Women's Golf Assn. She would not release her golf handicap.