



PARENTS FIND FAIRWAYS TO LINK LIFE LESSONS



by Mimi Hudson

It has been said that golf is a metaphor for life. It is a sport that the whole family can enjoy together and provides opportunity for conversation and relationship building. As a golfer, a parent and a parent educator, I contend that everything we need to teach our kids can be learned on the golf course.

Positive life lessons from the links can be summed up in three broad categories: physical and mental acumen; rules and etiquette; spirituality and global issues.

In terms of physical and mental acumen, golf is holistic. It stretches the body and the mind. While some argue that it is a good walk ruined, eighteen holes provide a 10 kilometer walk in the fresh air and often, sunshine. A game of golf is a math lesson. Numbers feature large in golf. Determining slope rating, the handicap system and counting shots in your head teaches kids math without them even realizing it. Short holes are par 3 and longer holes par 4 and longer still par 5. Golf clubs are numbered -- the higher the loft the higher the number.

Golf teaches different meanings for common words like eagles and birdies, and about homophones or homonyms, especially fore, four and for. Fore is the universal term of warning on the golf course. It is more efficient than "heads-up" or "look out my ball is coming at you." The game is played by

foursomes. Par 4s comprise the greatest number of holes -- usually nine or 10 out of 18. And "par for the course" is usually 72.

Golf is physics made simple. Swing down and the ball goes up. Relaxed shots with a slow backswing go farther than shots swung hard. Golf encourages calmness, patience, focus and staying in the moment. To engineer a successful golf shot, the mind must be quiet. Between shots, just about anything goes provided the rules and etiquette are observed.

Speaking of which, golf has many rules and is a fun way to teach children that life has rules. There is a dress code. Players are required to take turns. If you are farthest from the pin when putting, you shoot first. If you win the hole, you tee off first on the next hole. Personal responsibility and integrity are demonstrated to children by accurately keeping their own score and replacing divots. Do you "lay up" when approaching a green with water or sand in front of you or do you go the distance? As in life, when facing hazards on the golf course, there are risks and consequences.

The third category of life lessons taught to children on the golf course is spirituality and global issues. Regardless of your religious beliefs, walking a golf course can be spiritual. Some call it a "cathedral of green". There is a sense of being one with nature or in the presence of a higher power. The beauty of the

trees, the water, the different grasses, and the mountains is awesome. The real birdies, eagles and other animals that roam our local courses offer a chance to observe the natural world up close.

Golfing with children provides an opportunity to discuss with them more global issues, like equality and mutual respect. Men and women bring different strengths to golf. While men usually hit the ball farther, women can make up for that with their finesse in the "short game". In golf parlance, "drive for show, putt for dough." A walk on the golf course opens up conversation about saving and sharing the earth, the use of pesticides and the vagaries of nature.

Golf has a rich history and tradition. It is a forever sport. It teaches young people important life lessons and helps older people stay young, fit and vital. My mother-in-law is in her late eighties and still plays. She is currently sidelined with an injury but it is her desire to get back to her golf game that is speeding up her recovery.

Get hooked on golf, for no matter how you slice it, it is good family fun. Play golf with your children and teach them the game of life.

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