

Five sure ways to improve your game . . .

no matter what game you are playing.

Let's say it's Bridge. You know, that card game your mother taught you. You've got a few bucks on the outcome and a crush on your partner. . . Your partner bids four hearts. You hold a two of hearts and a total of eight points. You don't know how to respond, your throat tightens . . .

Let's say it's golf. Your drive goes straight down the fairway--into the sand trap. You're two down on seventh hole, \$100 bet on first nine, you hate sand traps . . .

Let's say it's tennis. Not Wimbledon, but pretty close in your life. You've made it to a championship match. You reach back to serve and feel a tight cramp in your left calf . . .

Let's say it's croquet. Your husband's thin, sexy publicist has just blasted through two wickets. Your ball lies two feet away. She takes aim. She misses. It's your turn . . .

Want to win?

Here's what you should do:

1. Immediately ask yourself, "Will I die if I lose?"
2. If the answer is "Not bloody likely," ask, "Will I be mortified if I lose?"
3. If the answer to that is "Yes," ask "Why? And then consider the fact that your ability to win this game is no big deal. IT DOES NOT DEFINE YOU.
4. Breathe deeply and notice your breathing.
5. This is the most important step: IMAGINE

If it's bridge, imagine the play all the way through with you making amazing finesses—before you respond to your partner's bid.

If it's golf, picture the lift of the ball out of the sand trap. See the sand slowly falling down like rain. See the ball soar straight up onto the green and roll into the hole BEFORE you choose your club—BEFORE you descend into the trap.

If it's tennis, picture your serve as a cannon shot just clearing the net and your body as molded mobile gelatin.

If it's croquet, forget the skinny bitch. Picture your husband beaming as you knock her ball across the court.

If it's life, imagine the scene you want, breathe into it, be willing to lose, and put your heart into winning.

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