



Make Your Golf Course More Welcoming to People With Autism

Bob Beach on the importance of making your golf course more welcoming to people with autism:

The first suggestion I have to reaching the goal of becoming more welcoming to people with autism is to create a social story at your golf course. A social story is a preview of what is going to happen through a sequenced set of illustrations or photos. This can help prepare the person with autism on what to expect while at the golf course. I also suggest having well-placed visual aids that let the person with autism know that they can take a break at any time. The student can pick up one of these break cards at our registration table. We have also established two sensory neutral areas at our facility. The first one is located in our clubhouse. It is a private area that is sensory-neutral, quiet with soft lighting and comfortable temperatures. We also have a sensory-neutral area designated on the golf course. It is a place where the students can continue working on their golf skills in a quieter, less crowded setting. We have found that having these two sensory neutral areas pre-established is extremely helpful to both the person with autism along with their caregiver.

The Business Impact of making your golf course more welcoming to people with autism

Exposing a lifelong, wonderful sport to a group of people, who may not otherwise have the chance to learn, is a guaranteed way to grow our sport. My favorite thing to do as a PGA Professional is to help people who never thought they could play the game of golf become golfers. I have found that these golfers often help lapsed golfers get back in the game. The lapsed golfer seems to develop a better attitude about the game and have more fun out on the golf course. Our accessible golf programs at the Braintree Municipal Golf Course continue to grow at a rate of five to 10 percent every year. Our Putting for Autism program, which takes place every Monday evening, has more than 100 participants. I see many of the golfers from our program out on the golf course, and in most cases, accompanied by a caregiver who is also playing. My goal is to get as many golfers from our special clinics out on our golf course.