



21 Hours to Mental Power Breathing Technique Explanations

Breathing is something you do on a moment by moment basis your whole life. Yet, how often are you aware of it and how well are you doing it? Have you ever been taught how to breathe properly? Breathing in through the nose pathway (as opposed to the mouth) slows the mind down and brings it into a calmer state. Breathing down into your belly (rather than short chest breathes) allows for relaxed full breathes that replenish the blood with oxygen for optimal muscle function. In sport, breathing plays a crucial role in helping you be aware of what's going on inside of you, play in the present moment, and remain calm under perceived pressure. Signs your nerves are out of control: Fast HR, Mind starts to speed up, rush/skip/forget routines, physically moving too fast.

Your ability to manage your arousal levels goes far in controlling your performance. The prime indicator of gauging your arousal level is your heart rate. When your heart rate is under 120 beats per minute (bpm) your decision making remains sharp as your mind is still relatively slowed. As your heart rate exceeds 120bpm's your decision making begins to break down leading to poorer decision making. Beyond 150 bpm's, your mind goes "primal" and this is when you tend to make your worst decisions. Increased HR makes it harder to repeat consistent good performance. The importance of learning to control your breathing is a foundational skill that when improved, will improve every other aspect of your game.

Always take a few minutes to jot down some notes about the breathing exercises including things you did well and things you struggled with so you can improve hourly.

Breathing Exercise Explanations

Hours 2-4 - Belly Breathing: Lie on your back, sit in a chair, or stand up (hardest), and place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. Then breathe all air out. Then take air in through the nose and down to the bottom of your lungs (pushing your diaphragm down which causes your stomach organs to rise). Fill your entire lung capacity and hold for 2 seconds which allows the rib cage to drop. Exhale out through the mouth with pursed lips (exhale should always be longer than the inhale). Repeat.

Hours 5-7: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR): Breathing for Awareness...this technique brings awareness to the different parts of your body with directions to first tense the muscles in focus then full release that tension so that you learn the difference between tension and relaxation. This helps you in games to check in with you to see if your muscles are tense or relaxed. Athletes play best when muscles are relaxed. Muscle endurance lasts longer with relaxed muscles as well. Tense muscles fatigue quickly.

Hours 8-10 - Box Breathing: Inhale (nose) for 4 seconds, Hold for 4 seconds, exhale (mouth) 4 seconds, empty 4 seconds. Good for control breathing during workouts, managing stress by thinking about the numbers rather than a stressful situation, and good for conditioning the lungs as your rep count increases beyond 4 counts to 5, 6...

Hours 11-13 Butterfly Breathing: Do 50 jumping jacks or 20 pushups or basically anything to get your heart rate up. As you are doing this imagine you are in the *biggest athletic situation* (ie: bases loaded World Series). Then practice bringing your heart rate (HR) down as fast as possible by taking nice long deep inhales in through the nose and exhale even slower through the mouth. While doing this, when your HR is up, see wild butterflies rapidly fluttering around in your stomach. Then see your body and mind moving very fast. As you slow down your breathing, see the butterflies start to slow down and arrange themselves so that they are flying in unison together. Also see the butterflies in your mind start

to slow down and thus your body performing nice smooth movements. You control the butterflies. Repeat set #rounds. **Benefit:** In big situations athletes tend to get nervous. Nervousness is not a bad thing unless not controlled. Once you learn to become comfortable knowing you will get nervous, you can begin to control you nerves and have them work for you rather than against you. Diaphragmic breathing helps control the heart rate – in turn slows the mind – able to perform well.

Hours 14-16 - NASA Breathing: Starting at 50 count down inhales (even numbers) and exhales (odd numbers). Visualize each number in your mind and find a creative way to see that number in relation to your sport. IE: A baseball batter might visualize seeing the number “coming out of the pitchers hand.” This is also a concentration exercise in keeping count. If you lose count or are in doubt of your number...start over.

Hours 17-19 – GameTime Breathing (4-1-5) – Usually have between 10-15 seconds between plays in many start/stop sports (baseball, softball, golf -approaching the ball, tennis, and volleyball) and 5-6 seconds on transition sports like basketball. BENEFITS: Centering breathe – allows reset and to get present. Monitor seconds not the breathe. Get the full 10 seconds (4-1-5) or (3-2-4) for kids under 12.

Hour 20 – On the Minute Challenge (OTMC): - Breathe for 4 minutes using the fewest breathes possible. Bring your awareness to your heart rate and internal environment then take your focus elsewhere and notice how quickly the time roles by. Record your results. Benefits: This exercise challenges and conditions your lung capacity.