

# PERFORMANCE POINT

## BREATHING FOR PERFORMANCE

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Being an elite athlete is physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally demanding. It is often accompanied by heightened levels of **somatic anxiety** (body stress) and **cognitive anxiety** (mind stress) resulting from the demands placed on athletes, both due to self-imposed and external pressures in challenging situations.

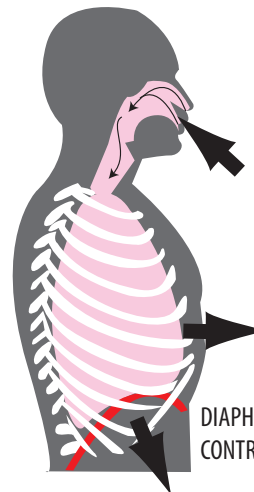
Heightened anxiety (body & mind) can interfere with the quality of your sleep & downtime, social interactions, relationships, training motivation, game preparation, and ultimately performance-on-demand. Performance-on-demand is something that begins long before the actual event and with proper stress management and relaxation skills athletes will be able to create an internal environment (mind and body) that is ready to 'deliver' when they need it.

**Diaphragm Breathing** is the foundation for maximizing performance, as it allows athletes to control their internal environment (body & mind) under a variety of challenging or stressful situations (competition, training, media, public speaking, social settings, daily living situations, rest/recovery, and sleep) and make better performance-based decisions.

### REST / RECOVERY / SLEEP

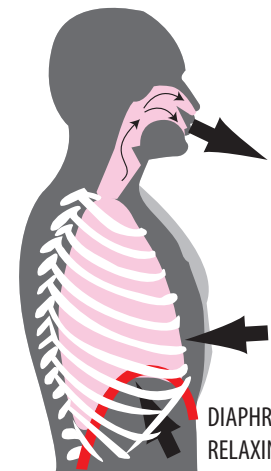
- Place one hand on stomach and one hand on chest. As you inhale your stomach should rise first, followed by a gentle lifting of the chest (bottom-up approach to filling the lungs). Keep the movements very passive and gentle (i.e., don't force the breath in). Feel them both fall on the exhale.
- Use passive thought control to focus on the cycle of "breathe in, breathe out/relax". If distracting or unwanted thoughts enter your mind, simply refocus passively on the breathing cycle and don't try to 'actively' remove the thought.
- On the exhale allow a 'wave' of calm sweep across your body or to a specific area that is holding tension.

### INHALING



DIAPHRAGM  
CONTRACTING

### EXHALING



DIAPHRAGM  
RELAXING

### STRESS MANAGEMENT *(in more active states, daily living, etc.)*

- You will likely catch yourself doing a 'huffy puffy' breath and this serves as a trigger for you to let that go and replace it with a diaphragm breath. Begin by finishing the 'huffy puffy' exhale with a tightening of your abdominal muscles to force the air out, then simply relax those muscle and let your stomach 'spring out' and your diaphragm to slide down in behind to start the inhale. Then repeat this process.
- This will allow to you take control of your internal environment (body & mind) and now you can take perspective on your situation and properly assess your options / solutions.

### PERFORMANCE

- Very effective in the flow of the competition, natural stoppages / breaks, or while on the bench recovering from a shift or preparing to enter the competition.
- Again, use the 'huffy puffy' as a trigger to shift to your diaphragm breathing so to control your internal environment (body & mind).

Remember that under situations of stress and adversity, those who respond best will have the performance edge, rise to the challenge, and thrive in the moment.