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BIOHACKING

WITH BREATH TECHNIQUES FOR
STRESS REDUCTION AND
PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT



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SECTION 1

**Mastering Breathwork and
Biohacking:
Controlling Your Nervous
System in Times of Stress**





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Introduction

Hey there, biohackers!

Dr. Seth Hickerson from My Steady Mind here, ready to share some powerful breath techniques to help you conquer stress and unlock your peak performance. This cheat sheet is your ticket to optimizing your mind and body through simple yet effective breathwork. Let's dive in!

In the face of adversity and high-stress situations, maintaining control over your nervous system is crucial. By harnessing the power of breathwork and biohacking techniques, you can develop resilience, enhance focus, and optimize performance. This manual provides you with a military-inspired approach to incorporating breath training into your daily life. Get ready to take charge of your physiology and unlock a multitude of benefits.



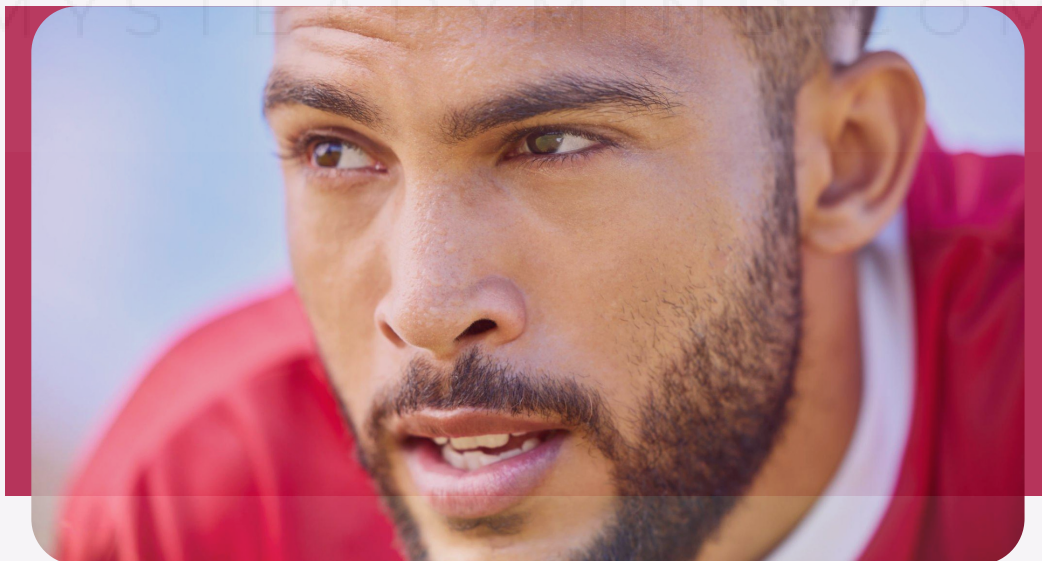
Understanding the Power of Breathwork

The Warrior's Breath: Why Breathing Matters

At My Steady Mind, we have been training elite athletes, Navy SEALs, NASA Executives and other high-performing people and teams for many years. And the one thing that these folks understand is that your breath is the secret weapon.

Understanding how to control your breath, especially during stressful situations is what allows you to be calm in chaos. Now your chaos might not be a battlefield, a boardroom or a sports arena, it could just be your kids going crazy on a Saturday morning or an unrelenting boss always breathing down your neck.

Regardless of the situation, understanding how to control your breath and your nervous system will give you an unfair advantage and allow you to thrive in any situation.





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During stressful situations, it all comes down to being able to manage our nervous system. This consists of the sympathetic (fight, flight or freeze) and the parasympathetic (rest and digest).

Sympathetic State

In the sympathetic state, also known as the fight-or-flight response, the brain functions in a highly alert and vigilant manner. This state is characterized by increased arousal, elevated stress response, and heightened physiological activity.

The breath tends to become shallow and rapid, matching the heightened state of the body. However, this state can impair cognitive function and hinder digestion and immune system functioning.





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Parasympathetic State



Parasympathetic state, (think of a parachute “coming down”) also known as the rest-and-digest mode, promotes relaxation and calmness. In this state, the brain operates in a relaxed and engaged manner, fostering enhanced focus, clarity, and cognitive function.

The breath becomes slower and deeper, facilitating a relaxation response throughout the body. Digestion and immune system functioning are improved, allowing the body to restore and heal.

Breathwork techniques can help regulate the CNS response by consciously influencing the breath. By engaging in deep, diaphragmatic breathing, one can activate the parasympathetic nervous system and shift from a sympathetic state to a parasympathetic state.

This results in a cascade of benefits, including reduced stress, lowered heart rate and blood pressure, improved digestion, enhanced immune function, and increased mental clarity.



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Mastering breathwork empowers individuals to modulate their CNS response, promoting a more balanced and optimal state of being.

The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is like the boss of your body's automatic functions. It controls things you don't have to think about, such as your heart beating, breathing, and digestion. It has two main parts: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS).



When you feel stressed or scared, your body goes into "fight-or-flight" mode, thanks to the sympathetic nervous system. It's like a superhero that gets your body ready for action. It makes your heart beat faster, increases your breathing rate, and pumps blood to your muscles, getting you ready to run or fight.



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On the other hand, when you're calm and relaxed, the parasympathetic nervous system takes over. It's like a peacekeeper that helps your body rest and recover. It slows down your heart rate, lowers your breathing rate, and helps with digestion, so you can feel relaxed and peaceful.

Now, here's where things get interesting. Your breath, heart rate, and emotions are all connected. Have you ever noticed that when you're scared or excited, your heart starts racing? That's because your emotions can influence your heart rate. And guess what? Your breath can also influence your heart rate and your emotions!

When you're stressed, taking deep, slow breaths can actually help calm you down. It's like magic! When you take deep breaths, it sends a message to your brain that everything is okay and there's no need to be on high alert. This message activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which slows down your heart rate and helps you relax.

So, by practicing conscious breathing, like taking slow, deep breaths, you can have control over your body's stress response. You can tell your body to relax and calm down, which is pretty cool! It's a way to trick your brain into thinking you're safe and not in danger.

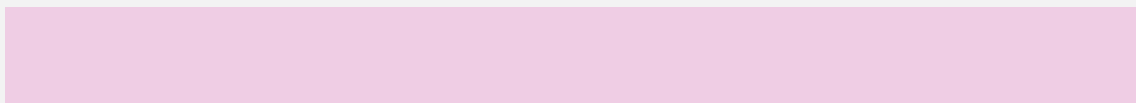


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Activities like meditation, yoga, and mindfulness can teach you how to use conscious breathing to manage stress. These practices help you focus on your breath and slow it down, which in turn activates the peaceful parasympathetic nervous system. It can make you feel less anxious, more balanced, and improve your overall well-being.

So, to sum it up, the autonomic nervous system controls automatic functions in your body, and it has two parts: the sympathetic system for stress and action, and the parasympathetic system for relaxation.

Breath, heart rate, and emotions are all connected, and conscious breathing can help you calm down and activate the relaxation response. It's a way to take charge of your body's stress response and feel more peaceful and in control.



The many benefits of breathwork training

Breathwork, especially in high-stress environments, can offer numerous benefits for managing stress and promoting well-being. Here are the top 10 benefits of incorporating breathwork practices in such situations:

1

Stress Reduction: Breathwork techniques help activate the body's relaxation response, reducing stress levels and promoting a sense of calm and peace.

2

Improved Focus and Clarity: By practicing breathwork, you can enhance your ability to concentrate, think clearly, and make better decisions, even in demanding situations.

3

Emotional Regulation: Breathwork helps regulate emotions by calming the nervous system, allowing you to respond more effectively to stressors and maintain emotional balance.

4

Increased Energy and Vitality: Certain breathwork techniques can boost energy levels and invigorate the body, providing a natural and sustainable source of vitality during demanding periods.



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Enhanced Resilience: Regular breathwork practice strengthens the body-mind connection, increasing resilience and helping individuals bounce back more quickly from stress or adversity.

Improved Sleep Quality: Breathwork can help relax the body and quiet the mind, leading to improved sleep quality and better overall rest, essential for managing high-stress environments.

Boosted Immune System: Chronic stress weakens the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to illness. Breathwork helps reduce stress, supporting a healthier immune response.

Lowered Blood Pressure: Deep breathing exercises activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which can lower blood pressure and promote cardiovascular health, even in stressful situations.

Enhanced Coping Skills: Breathwork provides individuals with practical tools and techniques to manage stress, regulate emotions, and cope effectively with the challenges of high-stress environments.

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Improved Mental Well-being:

Breathwork practices release endorphins and increase oxygen flow, leading to a sense of well-being, reduced anxiety, and improved mental clarity, all crucial in high-stress environments.



It's important to note that breathwork techniques should be learned from qualified practitioners or instructors to ensure safe and effective practice, especially in high-stress environments.

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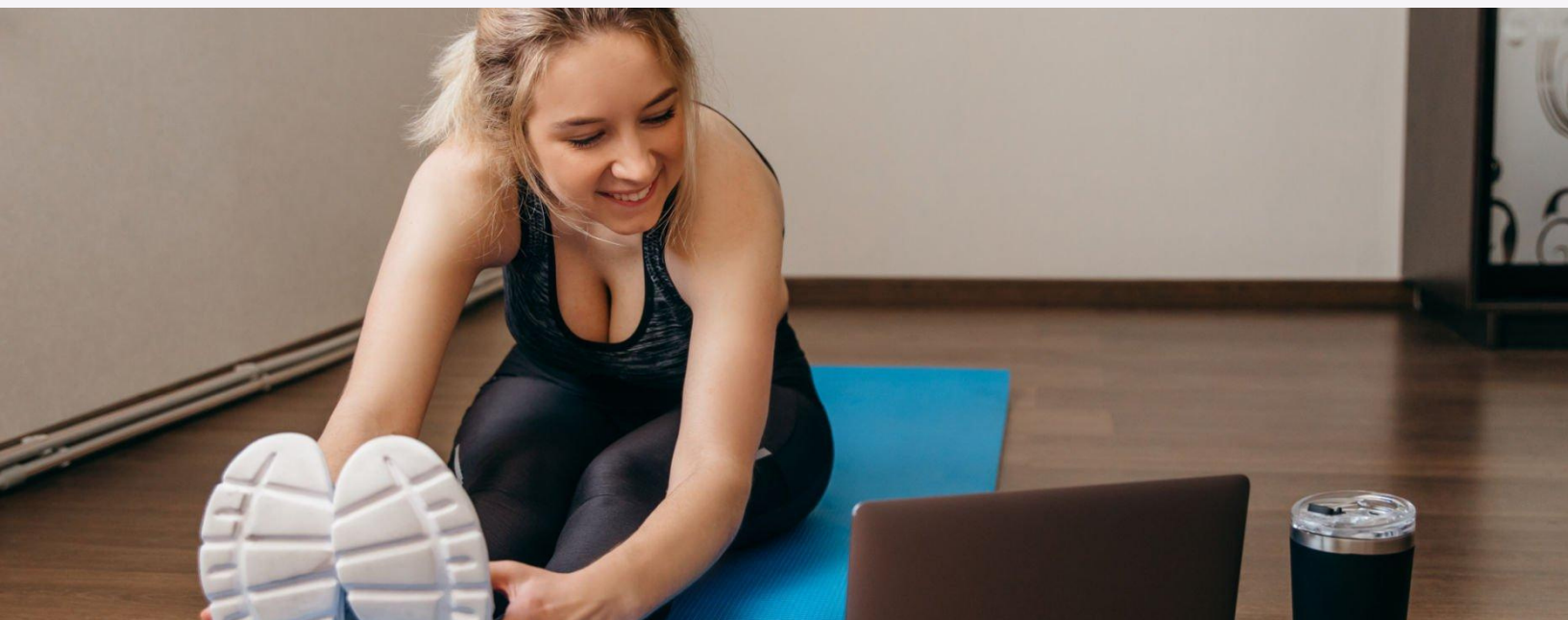
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SECTION 2

Implementing Breath Training in Daily Life





So how do we go about implementing breathwork training into our life? The key word is TRAINING! It has to be something you set time out to intentionally practice daily. The good news is that it doesn't take long.

Ideally, you practice the techniques for 2 minutes a day. It could be 2 straight minutes, or it could be 30 seconds a few times throughout the day. By practicing you are reconditioning your body to breath deeper in a normal fashion so that every breath activates the parasympathetic state (flow state).



The following breathing techniques can be implemented into your daily routine. The techniques are listed from easiest to most difficult. I would recommend starting with the first technique and practicing that for a couple of weeks and then moving on to the next one. Really commit to practicing and stick with it.



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BAMO breath (Breathe And Move On)

This is our “War Cry” at My Steady Mind! This simple breathing technique can transform your life. It’s amazing how effective and simple it is. The beauty of this breath is that it isn’t just a “breathing technique” but it is also a “call to action”....Breathe and MOVE ON!

Get back into the project, the activity, the task...we don’t just want you to sit there and breathe...get back in the game and MOVE ON! The BAMO breathing technique is a simple and effective method for promoting relaxation and calm. Here are the step-by-step instructions: Note: When you are inhaling and exhaling make sure you are COUNTING to 4 in your head. The counting will shut off any negative thoughts you are having.

- 1** Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lie down. Ensure that your body is in a relaxed position.
- 2** Close your eyes or maintain a soft gaze, whichever feels more comfortable for you.
- 3** Take a moment to bring awareness to your breath and allow it to naturally settle into a comfortable rhythm.
- 4** Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose for a count of four seconds. As you inhale, imagine the breath filling your abdomen and chest.
- 5** Hold your breath for a count of four seconds without straining or creating tension in your body. Maintain a calm and comfortable breath hold.



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6

Exhale slowly and completely through your nose or mouth for a count of four seconds. Allow the breath to release smoothly and effortlessly.

7

After the exhale, pause for a count of four seconds before beginning the next breath cycle.

8

Repeat the cycle of inhaling for four seconds, holding for four seconds, exhaling for four seconds, and pausing for four seconds.

9

Continue this rhythmic pattern for about a minute if you can, if not, just do one in the moment and re-engage.

Benefits of the BAMO breathing technique:

- **Stress Reduction:** This breathing technique activates the body's relaxation response, helping to reduce stress levels and induce a sense of calm.
- **Improved Focus and Clarity:** By bringing your attention to the breath and maintaining a steady rhythm, you can enhance concentration and mental clarity.
- **Emotional Regulation:** The balanced and controlled breath pattern can assist in regulating emotions and promoting a more balanced state of mind.
- **Enhanced Mind-Body Connection:** Focusing on the breath cultivates awareness of the present moment and helps deepen the connection between mind and body.
- **Reduced Anxiety and Tension:** Practicing this technique can help alleviate symptoms of anxiety and tension, promoting relaxation and a sense of ease.
- **Improved Respiratory Function:** Deep, controlled breathing can enhance lung capacity and oxygenation, supporting overall respiratory health.



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- **Motivation:** The MOVE ON aspect of this breath is your call to action!

Remember to adjust the duration of the breath count according to your comfort level. If four seconds feels too short or too long, you can modify it to three seconds or five seconds. The goal is to find a rhythm that feels soothing and sustainable for you.

Box Breathing: The Tactical Breathing Technique

Tactical Breath (also known as 4x4x4x4 Breathing):

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| STEP 1 | Find a comfortable position, either sitting or standing, with your back straight. |
| STEP 2 | Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to a count of four, filling your lungs completely. |
| STEP 3 | Hold your breath for a count of four, maintaining a comfortable level of breath retention. |
| STEP 4 | Exhale slowly and fully through your mouth to a count of four, emptying your lungs. |
| STEP 5 | Hold your breath again for a count of four before starting the next cycle. |
| STEP 6 | Repeat the cycle for several rounds, maintaining a steady and controlled pace. |



Benefits of Tactical Breath:

- Calms the nervous system and reduces stress in high-pressure situations.
- Increases focus, mental clarity, and situational awareness.
- Regulates heart rate and helps maintain composure during challenging tasks.
- Enhances self-control and decision-making abilities under stress.
- Supports emotional regulation and resilience in demanding situations.

Both box breathing and tactical breath are effective techniques for managing stress, promoting relaxation, and enhancing mental and emotional well-being.

Choose the technique that resonates with you the most and practice regularly to experience their benefits.

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4-7-8 Breathing technique

The 4-7-8 breathing technique, also known as "Relaxing Breath," is a simple and effective method for calming the mind and body. Here are step-by-step instructions:

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| 1 | Find a comfortable sitting position or lie down in a relaxed position. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to settle into a state of relaxation. |
| 2 | Part your lips slightly and exhale completely through your mouth, making a gentle whooshing sound. |
| 3 | Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four seconds. Allow the breath to fill your abdomen, feeling it expand as you breathe in. |
| 4 | Hold your breath for a count of seven seconds. |
| 5 | Exhale completely through your mouth to a count of eight seconds, again making a gentle whooshing sound. |
| 6 | This completes one breath. Now, inhale again and repeat the cycle for a total of four breaths. |
| 7 | After completing the fourth breath, resume normal breathing and allow yourself to return to a natural rhythm. |

Note: The counts of four, seven, and eight can be adjusted slightly to suit your comfort level. The key is to maintain the relative ratio of the breath, with the exhale being twice as long as the inhale.



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Benefits of the 4-7-8 Breathing Technique:

- **Promotes Relaxation:** The extended exhale and focus on breath control help trigger the body's relaxation response, promoting a sense of calm and relaxation.
- **Reduces Anxiety and Stress:** The deliberate slowing down of the breath helps regulate the autonomic nervous system, reducing anxiety and stress levels.
- **Enhances Sleep:** Practicing this technique before bed can help calm the mind, relax the body, and promote better sleep quality.
- **Improves Focus and Concentration:** The conscious focus on the breath helps quiet the mind and enhance focus, improving concentration and productivity.
- **Supports Emotional Regulation:** By slowing down the breath, this technique can help regulate emotions, providing a tool for managing intense emotions and cultivating emotional balance.
- **Releases Tension:** The intentional exhalation with a whooshing sound helps release physical and mental tension, allowing for a greater sense of relaxation.
- **Balances Energy:** The 4-7-8 breath technique helps balance the flow of energy in the body, promoting a sense of harmony and equilibrium.

Remember to practice the 4-7-8 breathing technique consistently to experience its benefits fully. It can be used whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or simply want to promote relaxation and calmness.



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Diaphragmatic Breathing

Here are step-by-step instructions for diaphragmatic breathing, also known as belly breathing:

- 1** Find a comfortable and quiet place to sit or lie down. You can also choose to stand if that is more comfortable for you.
- 2** Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your abdomen, just below your rib cage.
- 3** Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose. As you inhale, imagine that you're filling your belly with air, allowing it to expand like a balloon. Focus on feeling your abdomen rise while keeping your chest relatively still.
- 4** Exhale slowly through your mouth, letting the air out gently. As you exhale, feel your abdomen naturally deflate and sink back down.
- 5** Continue this pattern of breathing: inhaling deeply through your nose, feeling your belly rise, and exhaling slowly through your mouth, feeling your belly fall.
- 6** Try to make your inhalations and exhalations equal in duration, taking slow and controlled breaths. Aim for a count of 4 or 5 for each inhale and exhale, but adjust the pace to what feels comfortable for you.
- 7** As you practice, try to relax your body and let go of any tension. Focus your attention on the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body.



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Benefits of diaphragmatic breathing:

- **Stress Reduction:** Diaphragmatic breathing activates the relaxation response, calming the nervous system and reducing stress levels.
- **Improved Oxygenation:** By taking deep breaths, you increase the amount of oxygen delivered to your body, promoting overall well-being and mental clarity.
- **Lowered Heart Rate and Blood Pressure:** Diaphragmatic breathing helps slow down your heart rate and can lower blood pressure, supporting cardiovascular health.
- **Relaxation and Sleep:** Practicing belly breathing before bed can help relax your body and mind, promoting better sleep and improving overall sleep quality.
- **Enhanced Focus and Concentration:** Deep, slow breaths help bring your attention to the present moment, enhancing focus and concentration, which can be beneficial in high-stress situations.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Diaphragmatic breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, helping regulate emotions and promoting a sense of calm and balance.
- **Physical Relaxation:** This breathing technique can relieve muscle tension and promote physical relaxation, reducing physical discomfort caused by stress.
- **Digestive Support:** Deep breathing stimulates the vagus nerve, which can enhance digestion, reduce gastrointestinal issues, and support overall gut health.



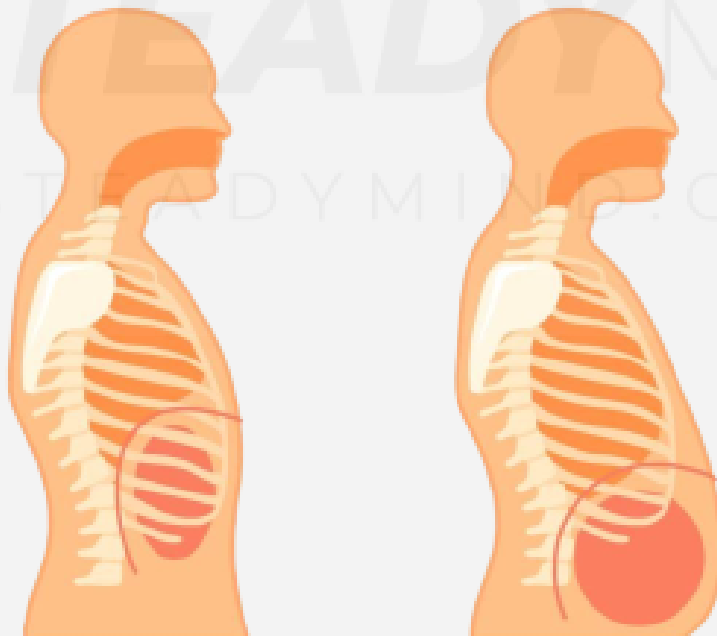
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- **Mood Enhancement:** Diaphragmatic breathing can boost mood by releasing endorphins and reducing feelings of anxiety and tension.
- **Overall Well-being:** Consistent practice of diaphragmatic breathing can lead to improved overall well-being, promoting a sense of calm, balance, and resilience in high-stress environments.

Remember, regular practice is key to fully experience the benefits of diaphragmatic breathing.

Aim for a few minutes of practice each day, gradually increasing the duration as you become more comfortable with the technique.

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING





Progressive Relaxation and Extended Exhalation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique that involves systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups in the body to promote relaxation and release tension.

By combining this practice with breathing techniques, you can enhance the overall effectiveness.

Here are step-by-step instructions:

| | |
|----------|--|
| 1 | Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lie down. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to help relax your body and mind. |
| 2 | Start by focusing on your breathing. Take slow, deep breaths in through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. Allow your breath to become calm and steady. |
| 3 | Begin with your toes and feet. Inhale deeply and as you exhale, tense the muscles in your toes and feet. Hold the tension for a few seconds, then release and let the tension melt away as you exhale further. |
| 4 | Move up to your calves and thighs. Inhale deeply, tensing the muscles in your lower legs and thighs. Hold the tension, then exhale and release, allowing the muscles to relax completely. |
| 5 | Progress to your abdomen and buttocks. Inhale deeply, tightening the muscles in your abdominal area and buttocks. Hold the tension, then exhale, releasing the tension and feeling the muscles soften. |
| 6 | Continue to your hands and arms. Inhale deeply, clenching your fists and flexing your forearm muscles. Hold the tension, then exhale, letting go of the tension and feeling the muscles loosen. |



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| | |
|---|---|
| 7 | Move up to your shoulders and neck. Inhale deeply, raising your shoulders toward your ears and tensing the muscles in your neck and shoulders. Hold the tension, then exhale, allowing the tension to melt away as you drop your shoulders and relax your neck. |
| 8 | Lastly, focus on your face and head. Inhale deeply, scrunching your facial muscles and tensing your scalp. Hold the tension, then exhale, releasing the tension and allowing your face and head to relax completely. |
| 9 | Take a few moments to enjoy the feeling of deep relaxation in your entire body. Continue to breathe deeply and slowly, letting go of any remaining tension with each exhale. |

Benefits of Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) with breathing techniques:

- **Deep Relaxation:** PMR helps release physical and mental tension, promoting a deep sense of relaxation and calm.
- **Stress Reduction:** By systematically relaxing the muscles, PMR helps activate the body's relaxation response, reducing stress levels.
- **Improved Sleep Quality:** Practicing PMR before bed can help relax the body and mind, promoting better sleep and improved sleep quality.
- **Heightened Body Awareness:** PMR cultivates an enhanced sense of body awareness, allowing you to recognize and release tension more effectively.
- **Enhanced Mind-Body Connection:** Combining PMR with breathing techniques strengthens the connection between the mind and body, fostering a greater sense of overall well-being.



- **Reduced Muscle Tension:** Regular practice of PMR can help alleviate symptoms of muscle tension and chronic pain.
- **Improved Mood and Mental Well-being:** PMR promotes relaxation and releases endorphins, helping to improve mood and overall mental well-being.
- **Improved Mood and Mental Well-being:** PMR promotes relaxation and releases endorphins, helping to improve mood and overall mental well-being.

Remember to practice PMR regularly to fully experience its benefits. With consistent practice, you can develop the ability to recognize and release tension in your body, promoting a greater sense of relaxation and well-being.

Practice makes progress! This isn't about perfection. Consistency is key when it comes to mastering these breath techniques. Aim to incorporate them into your daily routine, dedicating even just a few minutes to your breathwork practice. Over time, you'll notice reduced stress, improved focus, enhanced performance, and an overall sense of well-being.

So, fellow biohackers, take charge of your breath, unlock your potential, and embrace the incredible power of breathwork. Let's breathe our way to a better, steadier mind together. Stay mindful, stay steady, and keep hacking!

By mastering the art of breathwork and incorporating biohacking techniques into your daily routine, you can take control of your nervous system, combat stress, and optimize your performance.



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Remember, just as a disciplined warrior hones their skills, consistent practice and dedication are key to reaping the benefits of breath training. Embrace this powerful tool and unlock your full potential in the face of any challenge. Breathe. Conquer. Excel.

Enjoy the multitude of benefits of becoming an expert of breath control! Stay Steady my friends!

