A man with a beard, wearing a dark shirt, is shown from the chest up, looking upwards towards a bright, cloudy sky. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds against a blue background. The entire image is framed by a thin orange border.

The Secret to Better Performance

*The 2 exercises that can help you perform
better on the field and in the bedroom*

By Ricky Harris

The Secret to Better Performance

The 2 exercises that can help you perform better on the field and in the bedroom

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Introduction

My name is Ricky Harris. I'm a certified holistic life coach, personal trainer, free diver, rock climber, EMT, father and husband. I've always been active, from playing with my friends as a child to organized high-school sports. I've started martial arts at age 7, and even dipped my toe in the pro-circuit. (*Very briefly it was a bit too cold for my liking*).

There are two things all of my, seemingly different, activities have in common. The first is movement and the second is breathing.

In this E-book I'm going to share what I discovered about breathing and give you a few techniques you can use to start your journey to a better performing you!

These exercises/techniques can be done anytime and anywhere you are able to breath.

Let's Gets Started!

My Quick Story

It's always been my goal to get the best performance possible out of my body, but I was always fixated on only the movement side. Getting a specific technique down or building my cardio, building strength or mobility. Basically, building my muscles and nervous system through repetition.

Things worked out well. My performance was what I expected it to be, the problem was I couldn't maintain that performance for very long periods of time. Maybe 30min to an hour, depending on the activity. Keep in mind I was running and doing cardio 6 times a week.

Then I came across the wonderful sports of freediving and spearfishing. If you've never heard of them, it's pretty simple.

Freediving is a form of underwater diving that relies on a divers' ability to hold their breath until resurfacing without the use of a breathing apparatus such as scuba gear. And Spearfishing is freediving, but I have a spear-gun and hunt fish. Now remember I said simple, not easy they are very different.

I know. It sounds a little crazy, but freediving changed my life in so many ways.

As with anything else in my life I thought I could just practice the physical movements and progress to the point where I could finally meet Ariel (The Little Mermaid).

But it didn't work. After months of holding my breath in the bathtub, pool, or at a red light and only adding a few seconds to my hold, I started to get discouraged.

No, let me be completely honest.

I got Angry.

Why couldn't I power throw this like everything else. I mean practice makes perfect, right?

Well Yes and No.

You have to practice the right stuff.

Think about it. If you practice pottery every day for 10 years will you suddenly become a legendary guitarist? No.

So after picking my ego up off the floor I started to do my research and found that I was focusing on the wrong thing.

Once I discovered the secret not only did I take my freediving to the next level, I found performance gains in all aspects of my life. Not just physically, but mentally as-well. I was able to think clearer, I found I didn't get as angry at the small stuff. I could run further and performed better in the gym. It's been such an amazing journey. I wanted to share it with as many people as possible.

What is Breathing?

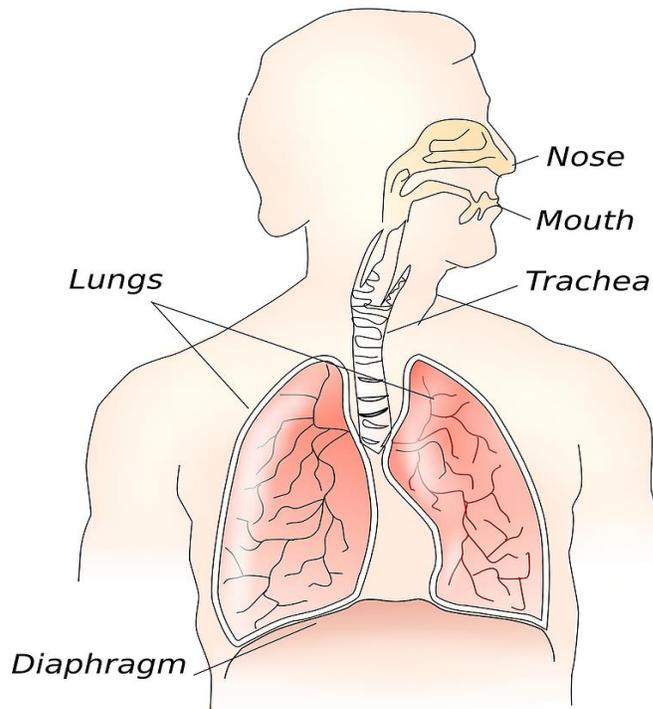
According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, breathing is "to inhale and exhale freely".

Seems simple enough the statement is true, but it's like saying the Earth is just a rock that revolves around the Sun.

I mean both are true statements, but both are also lacking tons of depth.

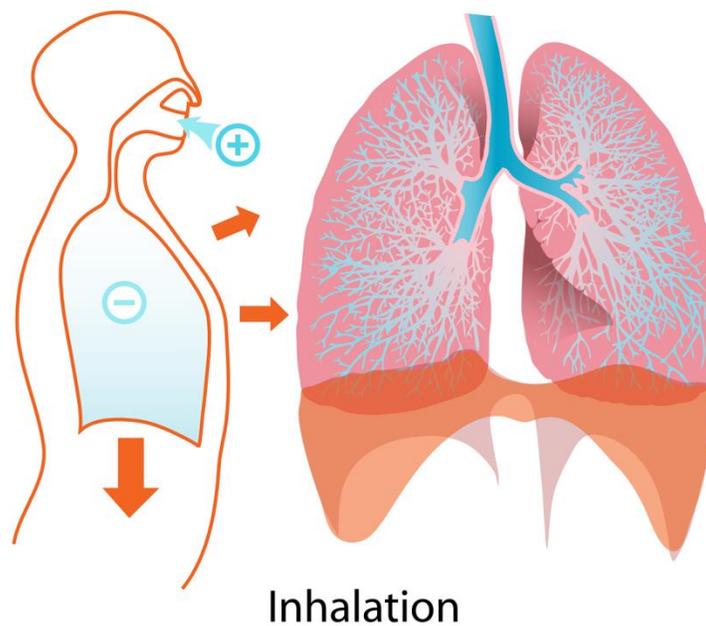
So let's look a little deeper.

The most important muscle in breathing is the diaphragm. It contracts to create a vacuum in our lungs that pulls air in. It is also the muscle that separates the upper organs (lungs and heart) from the lower organs (liver, kidneys, spleen, digestive and reproductive organs, etc.)

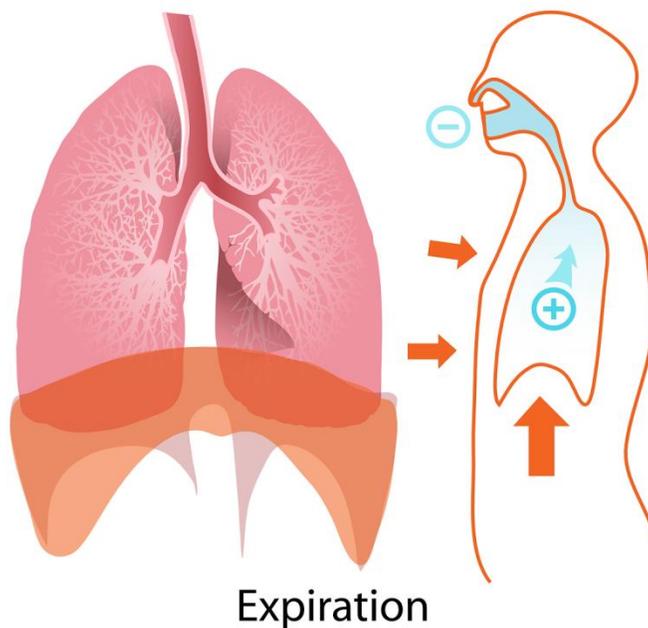


You can see in the image above how the diaphragm separates the chest cavity.

When we inhale the diaphragm moves down and allows the lungs to expand the chest and create room for the incoming air.



When you exhale the diaphragm contracts and moves up, pushing the air out of your lungs.



We do have other muscles that work to help us breathe. The muscles in our neck, chest and back all work together to perform this vital movement. But the diaphragm is the work horse if you are breathing properly.

Exercise 1:

The 1:2

*I want you to sit up straight. Picture you have a string attached to crown of your head and it is being pulled toward the ceiling. Poke your chest up and let your shoulders down, Don't force it. Just until it feels comfortable.

*Now relax your jaw and tongue. If you're having a hard time with that, try and swallow- your tongue will naturally relax.

*Now inhale counting to 3 through your nose using your diaphragm. (Your belly should expand before your chest does). To make sure this happens place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. When you inhale make sure your stomach moves before you chest.

*Pause at the top of the inhale

*Now exhale counting to 6

*Don't force the air out at the bottom, just let it flow out.

Repeat this for 1 to 2 mins.

Could you feel all of the muscles working when you did your exercise? Do it again and see if you can feel them this time.

TIP: If having your hands on your stomach and chest isn't really working for you, you can try this:

- *Place your thumbs over your kidneys, just below your back ribs.
- *Wrap your fingers around your sides, towards your belly button.
- *Apply gentle pressure with your fingers while you breathe through your nose
- *You want to force your fingers apart while you breathe in

So that is breathing,

A little bit more than just inhaling and exhaling freely.

Why is Breathing Correctly Important?

I'm not going to talk about why breathing in general is important I think we can all figure that part out...

I'm going to talk about why breathing the right way is important and will help you perform.

Breathing is Pumping

We just learned that breathing is movement. You can't breathe if you can't move.

And movement is pumping.

When we breathe right all of the muscles I spoke about are engaged and lengthen your spine.

That's why you get taller when you inhale.

All of this movement happening in your spine and around all of your internal organs they are actually getting a nice massage and light squeezing. This massage/ pumping, moves out the old blood and lymphatic fluid and allows the new nutrient rich fluids to move in.

So why is this important? If the fluids don't move they become stagnant. Parasites, harsh bacteria and fungus love stagnant environments and will overwhelm your system if given a chance. We are a part of nature and when we are stagnant those decomposers thrive inside us.

This can also help the body recover faster after a strenuous workout. And can help the body flush out excess toxins.

FYI, One of the most common forms of stagnation in most people is constipation but that is subject for another book.

Breathe Through Your Nose

The vagus nerve. Vagus meaning wandering, which describes these nerves perfectly.

You have one on each side of your neck. These nerves run from the base of your brain all the way down and connects your internal organs everything from your stomach to your reproductive organs.

The cool part about these nerves is that when you breathe properly through your nose (another organ the nerve connects) you activate them and trigger a parasympathetic or rest response in your body.

You can put yourself in a relaxed state and gain all the benefits from it. Better and faster recovery, better digestion, higher sex drive, clearer mind and just an overall healthier outlook on life.

Stimulation of this nerve has been used to treat all sorts of psychological ailments. There have been hundreds of studies done on this nerve and there is tons of information, if you want to do a google search when you're done reading.

So basically, belly breathing through your nose stimulates your vagus nerves, which trigger the "rest and digest" portion of your autonomic nervous system which helps you relax.

Everyone from top athletes, billionaire hedge fund managers, teachers and soldiers coming home, suffering with PTSD have used these breathing techniques and exercises to help focus the mind and calm the body.

Exercise 2:

The 1:4:2

Get into the same position as the first exercise.

*Again sit up straight. Poke your chest up and let your shoulders down, remember don't force it. Just what feels comfortable.

*Now relax your jaw and tongue.

*Now inhale counting to 3 through your nose using your diaphragm. (Your belly should expand before your chest does)

*Now hold your breath for 12

*Now exhale counting to 6

*Don't force the air out at the bottom, just let it flow out.

Repeat for 1 to 2 mins

But wait!?! After I spent all this time telling you to breathe, now I'm saying to hold your breath?

Yes!

And here is why.

Hold Your Breath

While doing my research I came across the real life aqua man, Stig Severinsen. He is an amazing free-diver and all around great human being. Look up Stig [here](#). You can also see his world record breath hold [here](#).

Because I find no point in reinventing the wheel I'm going to quote Stig Severinsen's Breatheology website here:

"At a first glance holding your breath seems very simple: You inhale, hold your breath as long as you can and then start breathing again. It is also quite a simple measure. How many minutes/seconds? But it is at the same time a multifaceted and complex parameter. It reveals the degree to which you are psychologically in balance – your mental stability – and how finely you are tuned in on your body. The simplicity of breath holds makes it an excellent barometer of your stress level, and makes progress easy to measure... On the long run meditation and breath holds seem to develop your nervous system and brain. Scientific studies have revealed that people who practice meditation and/or freediving show marked changes in their brain and nervous system. One area in the nervous system that undergoes changes lies in the brain stem and is connected to the vagus nerve. This is part of the calming parasympathetic pathway which counteracts stress."

I don't think I can make it any clearer than that. Again there is a reason some of the top athletes and CEOs in the world are exploring breathe control.

To control your breathe is to control yourself.

Conclusion

So a quick rundown of how these exercises can help you perform better in all aspects of your life:

- *Promotes slower, deeper breathing.
- *Helps focus the mind and calm the body before activity or just when feeling anxious.
- * Helps to hold increases in breathing.
- * Helps massage and oxygenate organs and other soft tissues.
- * Helps to promote good posture.

I try to these exercises at least once a day, either during my morning shower, right before bed, at a red light or even in the bathroom. When I started out I was only doing the exercises for 1 to 2 mins, but as I began to see the difference I started to do 5 or 10 min stretches.

Now it's like meditation and I lose track of time.

It is truly amazing how the body reacts to proper breathing.

Give it a try and let me know how it went.

Getting in Touch

If you want to get serious about real change in your life please shoot me an email about my online coaching. Or if you live in the San Diego area go to 108Athletics.com and schedule your free consultation.

We will work together to achieve your fitness goals. I am a straight shooter but it's only because I truly care about my client's wellbeing. If you need help in any aspect of your life, contact me and we will see what we can do.

I would also ask you to help me with two small things. Because I want to help as many people as possible breathe the way they were meant to, I need YOUR help.

Could you:

*Send me an email to info@108Athletics.com letting me know how this information has impacted your life and how it's different than anything else you've tried before.

*Please share this book with anyone you know trying to regain control of their life. You can send the book however you see fit. An email, private message, in conversation, or just share it in any groups or forums you think might benefit from the information I've shared.