



# Breathe & Lower Your Score

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*Do you want to be the best you can be? Then you need to be mentally prepared to compete at the highest level in your sport. If you want to enhance your performance, then you need to start mental training. Implementing regular "breathwork" is the best way to start.*

## WHAT IS BREATHWORK?

Breathwork is a meditative activity that helps regulate the mind-body connection involving the nervous system. It includes many forms of deliberate modification of one's natural breathing patterns. This also includes "mindful breathing" where one simply pays attention to one's ordinary pattern. Breathwork requires focus and promotes optimal health conditions. It has long been involved in mind-body practices such as yoga, Ti Chi, QiGong and various martial arts. The technique is also utilized in a variety of highly competitive sports that require supreme focus such as shooting, archery, darts and rowing.

## BREATHWORK HELPS FOCUS AND AROUSAL REGULATION

By regulating the nervous system, breathwork increases self-control, endurance, attentiveness and concentration. This enhances your ability to focus and think clearly under stress. All of these benefits are critical for an athlete, especially for golfers.

Your breathwork also optimizes arousal regulation, which impacts endurance and operates when athletes become aware of the degree to which they experience anxiety and physiological responses. Examples are breathing rate, muscle tension and heart rate. Research indicates that successful athletes tend to constructively use their elevated arousal, whereas less successful athletes become more anxious because of their poorly controlled arousal level. Golfers are prime examples because they must sustain attention and concentration for long periods of time — all while executing body movements that require precision. One simple mental error may lead to an undesirable swing and add one or multiple strokes that negatively impact the entire round. Proper arousal regulation leads to more effective self-regulation.

What is self-regulation? It is the ability to respond to the constant demands of pressure with the appropriate emotional reactions. In addition, it is the ability to delay impulsive reactions as needed. For athletes this is the key component desired when dealing with pressure situations, adversity and critical decision-making.

## HOW TO START TRAINING

Try these two breathwork drills to begin your training program.

### 1) Breathing Assessment:

- Relax and stand or sit comfortably.
- Do one inhale and exhale, which equals one "breath cycle."
- Set a timer for 30 seconds.
- Start the timer and begin counting the number of breath cycles you take in those 30 seconds.
- Multiply this number by 2 to create your standard breath count.
- Record the number.
- The average number of "breath cycles" is usually around 8.
- If your number is higher than 8, practice at a slower breathing pace. If your number is 8 or less, keep practicing at that rate and master the breathwork.

### 2) "4-7-8" Breathwork Exercise:

Sit with your back straight and place the tip of your tongue on the top of your mouth, behind your upper front teeth, for the duration of this exercise. During this exercise you will be exhaling through your mouth around your tongue.

- Exhale your entire breath through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose, counting to 4 in your mind.
- Hold your breath, counting to 7.
- Exhale entirely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of 8.

This is *one breath*. Now inhale again and **repeat the series three more times** for a total of **four breaths**. Note that you continually inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth. The tip of your tongue should stay in position the entire time to make this effective.

Use these techniques the next time you are out on the course, and the change in your golf game may be a breath of fresh air! In the meantime, check out the free online training center at [www.MentalGolfGame.com](http://www.MentalGolfGame.com).



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