

HI Level Volleyball “Performance Breathing”

By Brad Yates

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this column is to present coaching points that will allow you to learn how to give your best effort under pressure. These coaching points will include the inner-skills of breathing, self-soothing and visualization, the process for preparing, executing and completing each play and the leadership ability needed to achieve your performance goals and build team.

COACHING POINT #1 MAKE PERFORMANCE BREATHING CENTRAL

The idea of performance breathing that can help you create more energy is a change in state and an increase in focus. The ancient Hawaiians had language to describe the need to use the “ha” (breath) that originates from the na au (gut) to create mana (energy). Unfortunately, this awareness has been isolated to the martial arts, healing modalities like Qi Gong, and the yoga and palates movements. But, thanks to the efforts of a select group of athletes, the difference performance breathing can make in your performance is well documented by runners, weight lifters, archers, tennis players, golfers, paddlers, big wave surfers and most extreme sports athletes. Please consider making performance breathing central to your training, competition and everyday life.

PERFORMANCE BREATHING: Learn to breathe PROPERLY at rest, during performance and during performance UNDER PRESSURE.

REST: Lie down, sit or stand in a comfortable position and breathe in the following manner: take a slow, deep breath, inhaling through your nose, push the tip of your tongue against the front teeth and the roof of your mouth; shove your abdomen out as you breathe, allowing your rib cage to expand while you fill your lungs to their maximum capacity; pause at the top of your breath, and then exhale through your mouth, make the “t” sound and drop your jaw and let any tension go. Pause at the bottom of your breath and then roll your head forward and tuck your chin on your chest. As you inhale, lift your head as you extend your chin forward and look up as high as you can. Pause as you hold your breath and focus on the tip of your tongue. As you exhale, drop your jaw and roll your chin forward.

FORMAT: Repeat the process THROUGHOUT your day and gradually you will learn how much emphasis is needed on the inhale and exhale to create the calm and stop any unwanted chatter.

APPLICATIONS: *Performance breathing at rest can help you to stop the chatter (anxiety), to be calm and clear regarding your intentions, to help you make good decisions, to help you sleep, and to visualize your performance goals for a practice or game.*

PERFORMANCE: To relax on the INHALE and use your ABDOMINALS to complete the EXHALE, and in the process to create power, to feel centered and maintain or reset your focus.

FORMAT: When the need for oxygen or the nature of your activity demands that you breathe through your mouth; make sure you keep your abdominals engaged and link the exhale with your need for power. It's like running up a steep hill that forces you to inhale on each stride. Experiment with timing your breath so that you inhale on the beginning of the stride and you exhale as you plant each foot. If you can take more than one stride for each breath, alternate which foot you plant on the exhale. This will balance the work load between each side of your body and give you more strength and power. The same style of breathing will translate to your play on the court.

APPLICATIONS: *Performance breathing can be used during your activity to help you to RELAX at the start, to reset your focus and to be efficient, to increase intensity, to avoid being distracted and to focus on the feelings related to giving your best effort.*

PERFORMANCE PLUS PRESSURE: Include performance breathing under the most extreme pressure: just one complete breath can help to create the calm, to reset your focus, to visualize, to recover and to create positive energy.

APPLICATIONS: *Performance breathing under pressure (even though it's labored) can help you to stay relaxed, deal with the pain and discomfort, center your mind, and push through to the end of the point and/or match. Performance breathing combined with psychological cues, affirmations, intense listening, and smiling can stop the chatter and help you to reset your focus and get dialed into the moment.*

SUMMARY: Performance breathing can provide you with the energy, emotional state and focus you want and need, period! However, the discipline and awareness required to make it happen comes at a cost and you must be disciplined to "pay the price." Which involves practicing performance breathing at rest until you can apply it during your performance, and then practice it at increasing levels of intensity until performance breathing becomes automatic under extreme pressure. Please know that the rewards are well worth the time and effort. PERFORMANCE BREATHING will enable you to give your best effort, physically and emotionally. In other words, BREATHE PROPERLY, STAY COMPETITIVE and you'll have way more FUN. That way you'll continue to train, compete and live at your own Hi-Level!

Brad Yates HiLevel Coaching Service www.bradyates.com 737.1272