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Disclaimer:

You must get your physician’s approval before beginning this exercise program. These recommendations are not medical guidelines but are for educational purposes only.

You must consult your physician prior to starting this program or if you have any medical condition or injury that contraindicates physical activity. This program is designed for healthy individuals 18 years and older only.

The information in this e manual is meant to supplement, not replace, proper exercise training. All forms of exercise pose some inherent risks. The author advises readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the exercises in this e manual, be sure that your equipment is well maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training and fitness. The exercises in this book are not intended as a substitute for any exercise routine or treatment that may have been prescribed by your physician.

See your physician before starting any exercise or nutrition program. If you are taking any medications, you must talk to your physician before starting any exercise program.

If you experience any light headedness, dizziness, or shortness of breath while exercising, stop the movement and consult a physician.
Important!

Please be aware of your body’s physiological response to breathing exercises. In general, inhalation causes a slight increase in tension and blood pressure, while exhalation causes a relaxation response and an accompanying lowering of blood pressure. These effects can be magnified by holding the breath after inhalation and holding the breath after exhalation. Therefore, please proceed with caution. Additionally, if you start getting lightheaded during any of the exercises, you are doing it wrong. Sit down and breathe normally. Watch the exercise and listen carefully to the explanation again. Feeling lightheaded means you are over breathing. This is completely opposite of what we are trying to achieve. Make sure to clear these specific breathing techniques with your medical professional before attempting!
"Breathing exercises alone, if done RIGHT, will make many a weak man strong and many a sick man well."
– Farmer Burns, 1914

Introduction

I have been fascinated by the science and practice of breath control exercises for almost as long as I can remember. In the beginning, it was simply the mystique that they represented which intrigued me. To see pictures of master martial artists sitting on a rock meditating, or standing under the torrent of a waterfall controlling his breath and withstanding the cold and the pressure of the water was amazing. Then to read about how they used these
mysterious breathing exercises to power their incredible martial arts practice really hooked me.

As I continued to train in martial arts, read and study about yoga, Chinese Medicine, and Qigong, my fascination with breathing exercises only increased, but unfortunately so did the complexity of the exercises. It got to the point where following the procedure of the technique became more important than the experience of the exercise itself. That and I also began to notice that as the procedural details and complexity increased, the real felt effect of the exercises decreased. This was not what I expected at all!

It wasn’t until the year 2000 when I met a couple friends, Oleg and Dave (whom I owe a great debt for both their friendship and unselfish sharing of their knowledge and skills), who were teachers of Russian Martial Art that it all coalesced and started to make sense for me again. They introduced me to a host of breathing exercises, based on Russian and former Soviet research that actually worked. Not only did they work extremely well, but they were geared for performance of both sport and martial arts. They taught how to increase performance and how to breathe under stress rather than just for relaxation! These exercises along with many other specialized conditioning techniques were the providence of former Soviet Department of Maximology.

“To develop fitness programs for both the public and serious athletes, hundreds of scientists in the USSR are involved in full-

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time research into all aspects of physical well-being. At the National Research Institute of Physical Culture in Moscow, for instance, the ‘Department of Maximology’ conducts studies primarily on the nation’s elite athletes, with the help of an array of sophisticated equipment in its laboratories, and develops new methods of strength and power training and techniques for psychological preparation for competition.”

– Dr. Michael Yessis

The exercises taught here in the video are the most potent and powerful techniques I know. These are ones I have practiced myself for over a decade and have taught to my clients and students. They represent a distillation of the most effective and safe breathing techniques I have learned over the years.

Also rather interesting to note is that my research into breath training led me to study the physical culturists of the past. Many of the great old time strongmen like Farmer Burns, Bernarr MacFadden, Paul Bragg, The Mighty Atom, Eugen Sandow and

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others all taught that deep breathing was the first essential component to super health and strength. Even though they had no knowledge of Chinese medicine, qigong, or even yoga, they understood the importance of lung capacity and that the ability to supply highly oxygenated blood to the working muscles was the key to super strength and fitness.

“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.” —Thich Nhat Hanh

Breathing for Improved Performance

Aside from the obvious value of continued existence on this planet, why is breathing important? What benefit do we derive from correct breathing and the application of the various breathing techniques and practices taught in the video workshop? How does improper breathing hinder our performance and sap our energy?

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Improper breathing can cause unconscious tension, tightness, lack of flexibility, and interfere with smooth, efficient movement. Unconscious holding of the breath during stressful situations can cause us to panic by increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and hinder us from being able to access our “natural” response. Poor conditioning can result in us being chronically “out of breath” during training or even something as simple as climbing stairs. The reverse is also true. Correct breathing can be used to calm you down in a stressful situation by lowering your heart rate and blood pressure. It can be used to boost energy when feeling tired or to relax and help you sleep. Fluid, deep breathing also serves to invigorate and energize every cell in our body, flushing them with healing energy and removing waste products.

The most important thing to understand about breathing as it relates to performance enhancement is that it acts as a bridge between our voluntary and autonomic nervous systems. Meaning breath is plugged into both sides. The autonomic system will keep you breathing continuously without your conscious control, or sometimes, without even your awareness of it going on. But with the voluntary system, you also have the power to override that control and decide at any moment to take a deep breath or hold your breath. What does this mean to you though, right? Well, here's what it means, you have the power, at any time, to consciously choose to influence things like your heart rate and blood pressure which are not under your conscious control. Now that's fascinating to me! Because breath is tied into both systems it

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can be used like a bridge to gain access to aspects of your body that you cannot directly control.

How do we do this?

**Try This Experiment**

Take your pulse. Count beats for 10 seconds then multiply by 6. If you’re sitting and relaxed, that number should be your resting heart rate. Now, inhale as deeply as possible and hold your breath and tense your whole body for a few seconds. Is your face red? Take your pulse again. What happened? Your heart rate jumped up and your blood pressure spiked right along with it, right? Now try exhaling for a count of 6, but don’t inhale yet. Extend the pause before the inhale a little bit. Feel more relaxed? Check your pulse. It should have dropped. Pretty cool, eh? And this is just the beginning.
Compressed Breathing Exercises

In these breathing exercises we will utilize an age old protocol founded by yoga and improved upon by Russian sport science and martial art. We will divide the breath into 3 levels: clavicular (upper level), intercostal (mid-level), and diaphragmatic (lower level). The focus of these exercises is to work on each level of breathing first in isolation in order to maximize capacity of the lungs and increase efficiency of oxygen usage. Then the 3 levels are united by

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“panting” with compressed breathing from lower to middle to upper then back down from upper to middle to lower. Finally we then integrate all 3 levels back into a smooth, fluid breathing in one long inhale and exhale. Additionally, working the 3 levels individually seems to have some distinct benefits as you will see.

**Energizing Breath – Upper Respiratory**

The first exercise will focus only on the clavicular, or upper level. This exercise will increase the heart rate and flush the body with energy. Give it a shot – just don’t do it before bed time!

1. Stand naturally with the feet shoulder width apart. Hold the hands in front of the chest at pectoral level.
2. Exhale through the mouth in a short, quick burst by compressing the upper chest.
3. Do not actively inhale. Allow the inhale to happen by relaxing the muscles in the chest.
4. Repeat rapidly 20 to 40 times.
5. Build up to where you can perform continuously for 60 seconds.
6. If you become dizzy, stop and sit down!
Endurance Breath – Intercostal

The second exercise will focus only on the intercostal, or mid-level. Like the previous exercises, this one will also increase the level of energy in the body.

1. Stand naturally with the feet shoulder width apart. Hold the hands in front of the chest at sternum level.
2. Exhale through the mouth in a short, quick burst by compressing the mid chest.
3. Do not actively inhale. Allow the inhale to happen by relaxing the muscles in the chest.
4. Repeat rapidly 20 to 40 times.
5. Build up to where you can perform continuously for 60 seconds.
6. If you become dizzy, stop and sit down!

Restoring Breath – Diaphragmatic

This exercise is literally a life saver when doing high intensity anaerobic workouts! It can be used in between exercises as well as in between sets, during the rest period, and at the end of the workout to normalize breathing and dramatically lower heart rate.
1. Forcefully exhale as deeply as possible by rolling your shoulders forward, tilting the pelvis up, and contracting the core strongly.

2. Pause before the inhale for a few seconds.

3. As stated above, do not actively inhale. Allow the breath to be sucked back in through the nose as your body returns to a natural standing posture.

4. Repeat for about 60 seconds, or as long as needed.

**Breathing Push-ups**

Usually, breathing exercises are done in a very relaxed, non-stressful manner in a seated, or even lying down position. Not here. Breathing push-ups will help us explore our breath while moving and while under load. Why is this important, you ask? Consider that it’s pretty easy to control your breath while comfortably seated on the mat, and easy to relax while lying down. But how much carryover do those types of breathing exercises have to helping you withstand pressures in real life or stress in fighting? Some, certainly, but their emphasis is different. Please don’t misunderstand here though. We need a myriad of exercises to be able to influence and control physiological processes. The stationary relaxed breathing exercises absolutely do have a place in your tool kit and are
important for health, stress relief, and relaxation, but are just not the focus of our discussion right now.

Let’s begin in the up portion of the push-up position. Hands should be about shoulder-width apart, elbow pits facing forward. Back is straight, aligned from crown to coccyx. Very important with all the exercises here, do not use any more muscle tension than absolutely necessary to accomplish the exercise. As you progress, you’ll find less and less muscle power is needed for the same result. We’re working toward efficiency here. So, relax as much as possible and remember that the push-up is just the form; the real goal is the breath work.

Begin to inhale slightly before starting the push-up this way your breath leads the way. As you lower down, continue to inhale by expanding your belly. No chest breathers here! Pause at the bottom portion then start to exhale again slightly before initiating the upward push. The breath should guide the movement. Play with this for several repetitions trying to really get the feel of the breath leading and supporting the movement.

Now reverse the breathing pattern. Exhale on the way down and inhale on the way up. Same rules apply.

If you feel excessive muscle tension being used, stop. Stand up and lean against a wall or a staircase in the push-up position. This will greatly reduce the demand of the exercise allowing you to concentrate on the breathing aspect while still performing the
movement of a push-up. When you feel comfortable with the movement, drop back down to the floor and try again. Keep the same light feeling you had while doing the push-ups against the wall or stairs.

“Inhale, and God approaches you. Hold the inhalation, and God remains with you. Exhale, and you approach God. Hold the exhalation, and surrender to God.” ~Krishnamacharya

### Building Breath Capacity

**Once you get the hang of the breath leading the movement of the push-up, we will begin to work on expanding your breathing capacity.** Here we will stretch out the inhale and exhale to fit more movements into each breath cycle. For example, begin again in the upward portion of the push-up position. Exhale completely without moving. Begin the inhale slightly before the lowering movement and continue to inhale all the way down and all the way back up. Exhale. Now try to do 2 push-ups on one inhale. If you can do 2, try 3. See how many movements you can fit into one inhale, it’s not easy! Make sure you don’t rush that will only add tension and gas you out even quicker. Maintain relaxation and an even pace throughout. Once you’ve done a few reps by expanding your inhale, try to do the same thing on an exhale. Start in the top portion of the

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push-up, inhale completely without moving. Begin your exhale slightly before the downward movement and continue through the whole push-up. Try 2, 3, 4, see how many reps you can do on one exhale.

One way to do this in a set is to do a breathing ladder. Do one push-up on one inhale. Exhale at the top. Then do 2 push-ups on one inhale. Exhale at the top. Then do 3 push-ups on one inhale. Exhale at the top. Try to do 4 on one inhale. Now, reverse it, inhale at the top and do 4 push-ups on one exhale. Then 3 on one exhale. Then 2. Then one push-up on one exhale. Get the idea?

We’ve discussed how to use the basic push-up form as a vehicle for training the breath. Let’s continue with the push-up as the outward expression, but take a look at different types of breathing patterns to increase the depth and complexity of the exercise.

**4 Phases of Breathing**

The breath cycle can be broken down into 4 distinct phases of breathing:

1. Inhale
2. Pause after inhale (full hold)
3. Exhale
4. Pause after exhale (empty hold)
Each of these phases can be manipulated within the framework of our exercises to create variation and change the focus of the exercise. Previously we had discussed how to use the inhale and exhale phases of breathing to increase capacity by fitting more movement into each breath. Here we will focus on the other 2 phases, pause after inhale and pause after exhale. These breath holds will allow us to teach the body how to utilize the oxygen it already has more efficiently by working longer in a state of oxygen deprivation.

Inhale and Hold

In this exercise we will be working with the pause after inhalation. Assume the push-up position. Inhale deeply by expanding the belly. Don’t force it. Just inhale as much as comfortable for you. Pause. Do not exhale. Perform 1 push-up. Exhale at the top and inhale again. Perform 2 push-ups on the full hold. Exhale at the top portion and then inhale and hold. Perform 3 push-ups on the full hold. How does it feel? Can you do 4? 5? Make sure you are not trying to move faster just because you’re holding the breath. Perform the push-ups smoothly and in a relaxed manner. A side benefit of this type of work is that it helps you to work under stress. When you can’t breathe, the body begins to panic. Even though your mind knows it’s just an exercise and you can breathe at any time, your body is responding to the lack of air and begins to sound
the alarm. Understand this and work with it to teach yourself to remain calm in difficult situations.

**Exhale and Hold**

Now let’s look at the pause after exhale, or empty hold. You know the drill by now – assume the position! Inhale and exhale in the top portion of the push-up. Hold on the exhale and do 1 push-up. Inhale and exhale. Do 2 push-ups. Inhale at the top, exhale. Do 3 push-ups. What do you notice about holding on the exhale versus holding on the inhale? Much more difficult, right? Again, note the reaction your body is having to the exercise. Are you speeding up to get through it? Are you using more muscle tension than necessary? How does the increased muscle tension affect your body’s oxygen usage? Relax and slow down. You’ll be able to handle more.

**Rapid Fire Breathing Technique**

*This is used when things get difficult and painful.*  For example: when you hit a sticking point in a rep that you just can’t overcome, when you hit a wall with your endurance and feel like you can’t go on, when holding an isometric exercise and the pain becomes too intense, this is the technique to use. Rapid Fire breathing is done
by taking short, quick breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. It’s almost exactly like the type of breathing women use in labor to push through the pain. The other cool thing about the Rapid Fire breathing technique is that, similar to our Diaphragmatic Breathing above, it can also be used to restore you after an intense effort. Give both a try and see which works best for you!

“The Japanese eat fresh air with even more gusto than they do food. The samurai of old, rose in the morning to pass out into the open air, there to take a number of deep breaths. The time of the morning chosen was just as the sun was coming up.” —H. Irving Hancock, in “Japanese Physical Training.”

Relaxing Breath (Square Breathing)

The basic premise of our ability to influence the autonomic nervous system is that inhalation increases heart rate, which subsequently increase blood pressure, to a slight degree, while exhalation lowers heart rate and blood pressure to a slight degree. During our normal cycle of breathing, these changes are too minute to register, or even notice. But, by gradually lengthening our breath and extending the pause before inhaling and exhaling, we compound the effect.

1. Begin by exhaling through the mouth for 5 seconds.

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2. Do not inhale. Try to extend the breath pause for 5 seconds.
3. Before tension begins to creep in, inhale for 5 seconds.
4. Hold the breath on the inhale for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat the cycle 10 times.
6. As this becomes easier, and your capacity expands, try increasing the duration to 6, 7, 8 seconds.

How to Practice

Okay, I’ve thrown a ton of information and exercises at you. **By now you have to be wondering how to put it all together.** In my experience, the best way to do this is work on some of the exercises every day. Even though you experience immediate results with the exercises it still takes a few months to completely retrain your body to utilize them automatically. As you start to re-pattern your breathing you will find that each different technique starts to fit naturally into your daily exercises and practice.

Programming the Exercises

Start with the Compressed Breathing exercises. These will be challenging initially since they are unfamiliar to most people. If you preserve and do them on a consistent basis though, they will expand your breathing capacity and improve your body’s efficiency.
in using oxygen. The bonus side effect of improved efficiency is an increase in daily energy!

**Here is a basic program to get you started!**

1) **Upper Respiratory** – 10 seconds x 4  
2) **Intercostal** – 10 seconds x 4  
3) **Diaphragmatic** – 10 seconds x 4  
4) Pant through all 3 levels – x 5  
5) **Fluid breathing** all 3 levels x 10

Once this is comfortable, increase each exercise by 10 seconds until you can do all 3 levels for one minute without a problem.

When you can perform each level exercise for one minute then it’s time to start holding the breath. As described in the video, begin holding the breath on the inhale for 10 seconds. Work your way up in increments of 10 seconds until you are able to hold the breath for a full minute.

**Other Ideas**

- Use the Upper Respiratory exercise to flush your body with energy in the mornings or before a workout.  
- Use the Diaphragmatic Breathing in your conditioning sets to recover between rounds.  
- Use the Square Breathing at the end of the day to relax and unwind. You can even use it while lying in bed to help you fall asleep.  
- Use principle behind Breathing Push-ups in literally any exercise you can think of. The idea of breath being the engine and leading the physical movement is an extremely powerful one; you just have to practice it!  
- Use the Rapid Fire Breathing to push out one more rep, run one more mile, and fight one more round.
There are literally dozens of ways to integrate the breathing techniques in the video and this manual into your training and life.

**If possible, all breathing exercises should be done in the morning, outside in the fresh air.** If not, at least open a window and get some fresh air when performing the exercises.

**Don’t just read and watch the video for informational purposes.** Put it into practice. These exercises have the power to catapult you to the next level and beyond in whatever physical training you are doing!
Additional Recommended Resources

**Warrior Fitness: Conditioning for Martial Arts** – Warrior Fitness will help you and your students attain a new level of strength, flexibility and endurance — quickly and with little chance of injury. **Warrior Fitness combines old school fitness with modern exercise science.**

**Guide to Striking Power** – **Specific Physical Preparedness for ALL striking arts from old school Traditional Martial Arts to modern MMA!** Learn how to build a powerful structure to stabilize punches, kicks, and martial movement! Discover how to use low-tech, high yield tools to strengthen strikes throughout a range of motion!

**Dad Strength Program** - A full 10 week program to go from Dad to Super Dad! A Three- Phased Approach to Recover and Sustain Strength