[**Breath Mastery Fundamentals Day 1**](https://www.o2collective.com/products/breath-mastery-fundamentals-2/categories/553605)

Module 11 **Diaphragmatic Breathing**

Diaphragmatic breathing. We talk about the excursion rate of the diaphragm. With a complete exhale, the diaphragm takes on a dome shape, like an open parachute, or an umbrella that is open. When the diaphragm contracts, it flattens with a full inhale. And on a full exhale, the diaphragm resumes its dome-shape. When the diaphragm contracts and flattens (moves downward), the belly pops out. It displaces all of the organs in the abdomen and that’s why the belly pops out when you breathe in and why the belly flattens when you breathe out.

The greater the “excursion rate” of the diaphragm the healthier you are. And there is an easy way to test the strength of the diaphragm. If someone has a very weak diaphragm, when they say “hey” (have them shout “hey!”) and you watch their belly. With some people when they say do this, the belly pops out, because the diaphragm collapses under the pressure of the voice. So you’ll see that in an older person, in a weak person, they say hey [motions belly popping out low]. The diaphragm is so weak, that it collapses under the pressure of the voice. When you shout “hey!”, the diaphragm should rise up, and the belly should be drawn inward. It shouldn’t collapse under the weight of the voice. So you can test a person’s strength, and you can see how weak a person’s diaphragm is, because it’s giving under the weight of the voice. So you want to strengthen that. And it was always thought that you really can’t strengthen the diaphragm, you can’t get at it, it’s not a muscle you can exercise.

But back in the 60’s Carl Stough proved that you can exercise and strengthen the diaphragm, and he used the counting technique. The idea is to count out loud until you run out of breath on the exhale.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,   
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,   
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,   
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,   
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,   
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,

[in breath]

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,   
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.  
And so on…

He realized that if you tell a person to exhale or if they focus on exhaling, they do artificial stuff. So, he used counting as a trick to teach people to lengthen their exhale. They’re not thinking about breathing, they’re thinking about counting. But all the time I’m counting, I am exhaling.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,   
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

As I am counting out loud, that’s an exhale happening. He just trained people to increase their count. I mean he was doing other stuff, you know… I worked with him, he was really beautiful, working with muscles… and he had this model of the breathing mechanism like a ball and socket joint. The socket being the ribcage and the ball being the diaphragm.

And you know that runner’s side stitch, when you get that pain in your side, that’s the diaphragm rubbing on the ribs. And it’s because the diaphragm is out of place. And as you complete the exhale, the diaphragm gets tucked back up high in the socket where it belongs, and then you don’t get that side stitch.

There’s lots of ways to play with it. In our advanced training, as a practitioner, as a coach there are tricks and games you can play. For example, use a brick. Lay on your back, bend your knees up, put a brick or a heavy book over your belly button, and when you inhale, lift the book. With the exhale, let the book come back down. And play with the arching of the lower spine. When you inhale and arch the spine, the pelvis wants to rotate down and back. When you exhale, you flatten the spine, and the pelvis rotates up and forward. Watching Angie, she’s a master at this, and she can demonstrate the movement of the body when you’re doing diaphragmatic breathing perfectly.

Audience member:

Do you think about the diaphragm as something you can train in building resistance, the contractions and things like that?

Speaker:

Yeah, Carl Stone discovered that you can use pressure of the voice to tone and strengthen the diaphragm with his counting technique.

Audience member:

But what technique, specifically building up resistance to contractions [inaudible]

Speaker:

You know you train for what you want to do, right. You train for the arena or the field in which you perform, so a lot of the training that you do as free diver has few applications outside of free diving. I mean the training is specific to free diving and there’s no carry over into life.

Audience member: like for abalone fishing

Speaker:

Yeah, yeah, right right. And you know, there are ways of breathing that work everywhere in life but would not help you in free diving. So the question is: what are you training for?

So I’ll jump really quick... No, let me skip it, because I’ll get into a whole lot of other stuff.

So back to diaphragmatic breathing.

Let’s start and let’s make sure that everybody’s got it. Pick a partner. We should have enough people. But just pick any partner. One person is going to lay down, the other person is going to sit next to them, watch, evaluate. And then you’re going to switch places afterward.

Ok, so bend your legs, put your feet flat on the floor, it just helps in the beginning. You can stretch your legs out after a couple of minutes when you get it. Don’t think about the breathing alright? Don’t think about the breathing. Arch your lower back and create an arch. You should be able to slide your hand under their lower back if they create an arch.

And then press your lower spine to the floor. Arch your lower back, and then press your lower spine to the floor. When you arch your back, that’s an inhale, when you press your spine to the floor, that’s an exhale. As you’re arching and flattening your spine, notice that your pelvis wants to rock. As you arch your spine, the pelvis tips down and back, as you press your spine to the floor the pelvis tips up and forward.

There is a rocking motion, and the motion of the body supports diaphragmatic breathing and that’s the way that diaphragmatic breathing wants to move the body. So the breathing is supporting the movement, the movement is supporting the breathing and you can exaggerate it, you can take it further. Extreme arch and tipping of the pelvis with a deep inhale. And then flatten the spine with the exhale.

Exhale and squeeze everything out, pelvis tips up and forward. Inhale, pelvis tips down and back, spine arches. Exhale, spine flattens, pelvis tips forward and up. And then start to pump the breath. Use the body to pump the breath. Even without breathing if you start moving your body this way, you will feel the breath being sucked in and being pushed out. You don’t even have to breathe, you let the body pump the air in and out of your system.

See if you can feel that happening. You’re not even thinking about breathing, not doing the breathing: you’re just moving the body in that way. And if you’re relaxed, if your mouth is open, if your neck and spine are relaxed, if it’s all relaxed, then you’re going to feel this pumping motion of the body causing the breath to come in and out.

Then begin to breathe in harmony with the movement. When you’re arching the spine, you’re breathing in. when you’re breathing in, you’re arching the spine. When you’re breathing in and arching the spine, you feel your pelvis rotating down and back. Then when you exhale, you feel this flattening of the spine and the pelvis is tipping forward and up.

[end of video 11].