



GAME DAY MINDS

Lesson 11: Just Breathe

Breathing is a useful tool for athletes to calm, reset, and relax. In this lesson, athletes will learn different ways to incorporate breathing into their daily routine.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Athletes learn different ways to incorporate breathing as a tool for relaxation and enhancing performance.
- Coaches and caregivers remind athletes to use breathing as a tool for calming and focus.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Optional: [Strong Breathing Activity Cards](#) (Pages 9 - 10)

LESSON OUTLINE

20 MINUTES TOTAL	DESCRIPTION
3 minutes	Welcome and Gather
11 minutes	Strong Breathing
3 minutes	Athlete Question of the Day
3 minutes	Closing



WELCOME AND GATHER (3 minutes)

Greet athletes as they arrive. Invite athletes to walk and talk with a partner until everyone arrives.

To begin the lesson, call everyone in with your designated signal.

Once athletes are gathered, introduce the Fitness through Sport lesson of the day. *Today's lesson is called Just Breathe! Would anyone like to share what they do for their breathing exercises? How do you feel after breathing exercises?*



STRONG BREATHING (11 minutes)

Purpose: Teach athletes different breathing techniques and encourage them to think about how they feel after practicing them.

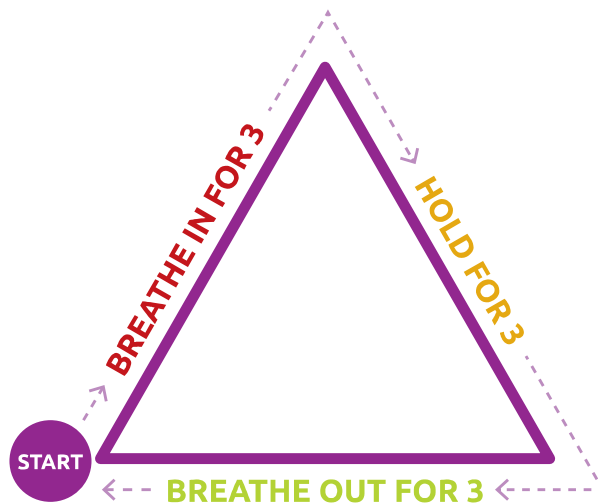
Directions:

Guide athletes through three breathing exercises.

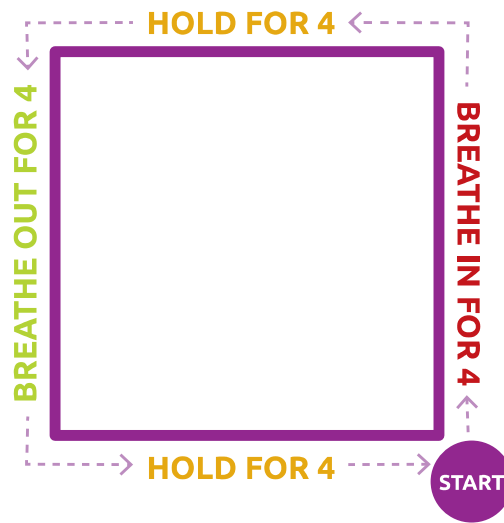
- Today, we'll learn a breathing exercise called [Strong Breathing](#). A calm breath is a slow, easy breath that feels relaxing. When you take calm breaths, it can help calm your mind. Taking calm breaths is a skill you can practice every day.
- Let's sit down for this. Find a comfortable position to sit on the floor (a chair is fine too). You can close your eyes or keep them open. Let your breaths be slow, easy, and relaxed. We are going to try 3 different types of breathing exercises.
 - **Flower and Candle:** Pretend you are smelling a flower by breathing in slowly through your nose. Pretend you are blowing out a candle slowly. Continue for around 8 cycles of breath.



- **Triangle Breathing:** Breathe in for 3 seconds, hold for 3 seconds, breathe out for 3 seconds. Repeat 8 times. Draw a triangle in the air for a visual demonstration.



- **Square Breathing:** *Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, breathe out 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds.* Repeat 8 times. Draw a square in the air for a visual demonstration.



- Once the time is up, gently let the athletes know they can open their eyes, stretch their arms, and return their attention to the group.
- Ask athletes which breathing exercise they liked best. *Raise your hand if you liked the flower and candle breathing best. Triangle breathing? Square breathing?*
- Select a few of the words below and ask athletes for a thumbs up or down response. *After practicing the breathing exercises, do you feel:*
 - *Relaxed?*
 - *Positive?*
 - *Good?*
 - *Calm?*
 - *Looser in your muscles?*
 - *Taller in your spine?*
 - *Restless?*
 - *Sleepy?*
 - *Ready to play?*
- Remind athletes that if it was hard for them to sit still and breathe, that it takes practice to train their body to relax. The more they do it, the easier it will become!



ATHLETE QUESTION OF THE DAY (3 minutes)

Which breathing exercise do you think you could try for 2 minutes every day this week?

Follow up with some prompts to help them plan, such as: *What time of day do you think would work best? Where could you practice breathing so you don't get distracted or interrupted?*

- Remind athletes to add any new goals to their Weekly Habit Tracker.



CLOSING (3 minutes)

Thank the athletes for their participation and effort. **Share how you or someone you know uses breathing exercises and how it helps.** *I practice breathing _____ (when I first wake up in the morning/ when I can't sleep/the morning of a big event) because I notice that _____ (I feel calmer/more confident/ready/less anxious).*

Reminders:

- [Homeplay: Plan Your Breathing Practice](#) — *In this week's Homeplay activity, you will have a chance to practice the breathing exercises we did today and schedule in time to breathe throughout the week.*
- Share feedback and praise for effort and healthy habits you observed.

Coach Reflection:

- What worked?
- What did not work? What can be done differently?

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Homeplay: Plan Your Breathing Practice](#)
- [Strong Breathing Activity Cards](#)
- [Take 5 Strong Minds Challenge: Deep Breathing Video](#)