

Circumferential breathing instruction manual

If you want to move like a ninja you have to breathe like one.

The best technique I have found to open up your movement options is circumferential breathing. The key difference is a focus on what is happening at the rib cage when you breathe.

Here are 3 ways to breathe that do NOT improve your movement options:

1. Use accessory muscles to lift up your rib cage during an inhale. To see if this applies to you:

Palpate your neck and feel for effort and tension.

Watch for a mini shrugging motion of your shoulders.

I spent a long time in yoga feeling uncomfortable in inverted positions. In positions like the downward-facing dog your arms are bearing weight, And you can't lift your rib cage using your neck and shoulders. Bad times.

2. Belly breathing: Disproportionate expansion happens in the lower frontal portion of the cylinder. In circumferential breathing, we want expansion all the way around.
3. When we breathe we tend to either bias front to back (anterior/posterior) expansion-contraction or a lateral expansion-contraction. Our job is to figure out which one you favour. And then give you the right option to encourage circumferential breathing.

Circumferential breathing works like this:

On inhale. The rib cage goes up and out.

And on exhale. The rib cage goes down and in.

If we imagine that our lungs and abdominal areas are one cylinder. We want that cylinder to expand all the way around. Circumferential. Not just forwards and backward (anterior/posterior) or side to side (lateral) but all the way around.

On inhale. The rib cage goes up and out.

And on exhale. The rib cage goes down and in.

Here are the stages of circumferential breathing:

1. Learn to nasal breathing. Always
2. Resting tongue position
3. The Stack
4. Full exhale
5. Control Pause
6. Deep abdominal control on inhaling

Let's dig in.

1. Nasal breathing

Block one nostril. Continue to nasal breathe. No issue?

Repeat with the other nostril.

If you have one or both nostrils blocked.

Here is how to improve nose breathing:

Walk with your nose pinched and your mouth shut. Build up an air shortage but remain in control. Unpinch your nose. Regain control of your breathing within 2-3 breaths. If it takes longer you held your breath too long.

Track how many paces before you felt the need to breathe.

Repeat until your nose feels decongested.

Problem-solving:

I personally use a [Breathe Right](#). An ENT operation, dental extractions, and a few broken noses have meant I can't breathe as effectively through my right nostril.

I've found a [Turbine](#) that works best for prolonged sweaty exercise.

Neti pots techniques work a treat.

And something worth thinking about is speaking to your doctor or dentist about a CBCT scan.

2. Resting tongue position

Maxillofacial and dental experts have come around to the idea that resting tongue position is important for full facial development.

If you have kids. Get their thumbs out of their mouths. Stop them mouth breathing and teach them to nasal breath.

The ideal position for your tongue is pressed against the roof of your mouth.

Don't let your tongue rest at the bottom of your mouth.

Do rest your tongue against your hard palate. The roof of your mouth.

Don't press your tongue against the backs of your teeth.

Do keep the front tip of your tongue about half an inch higher than your front teeth.

3. The stack

It's time to learn how to stack the thoracic and pelvic diaphragms underneath each other.

If you drew one line straight through your rib cage and one through your pelvic floor.

A stack would be when the lines would be parallel with each other.

Unless you are pregnant or your back is so bad lying on the floor is a bad idea. The best place to learn is on the floor.

Lie on your back with bent knees and the soles of your feet on the floor.

In this neutral position, the natural curve of your lumbar spine will lift the lower back slightly off the floor.

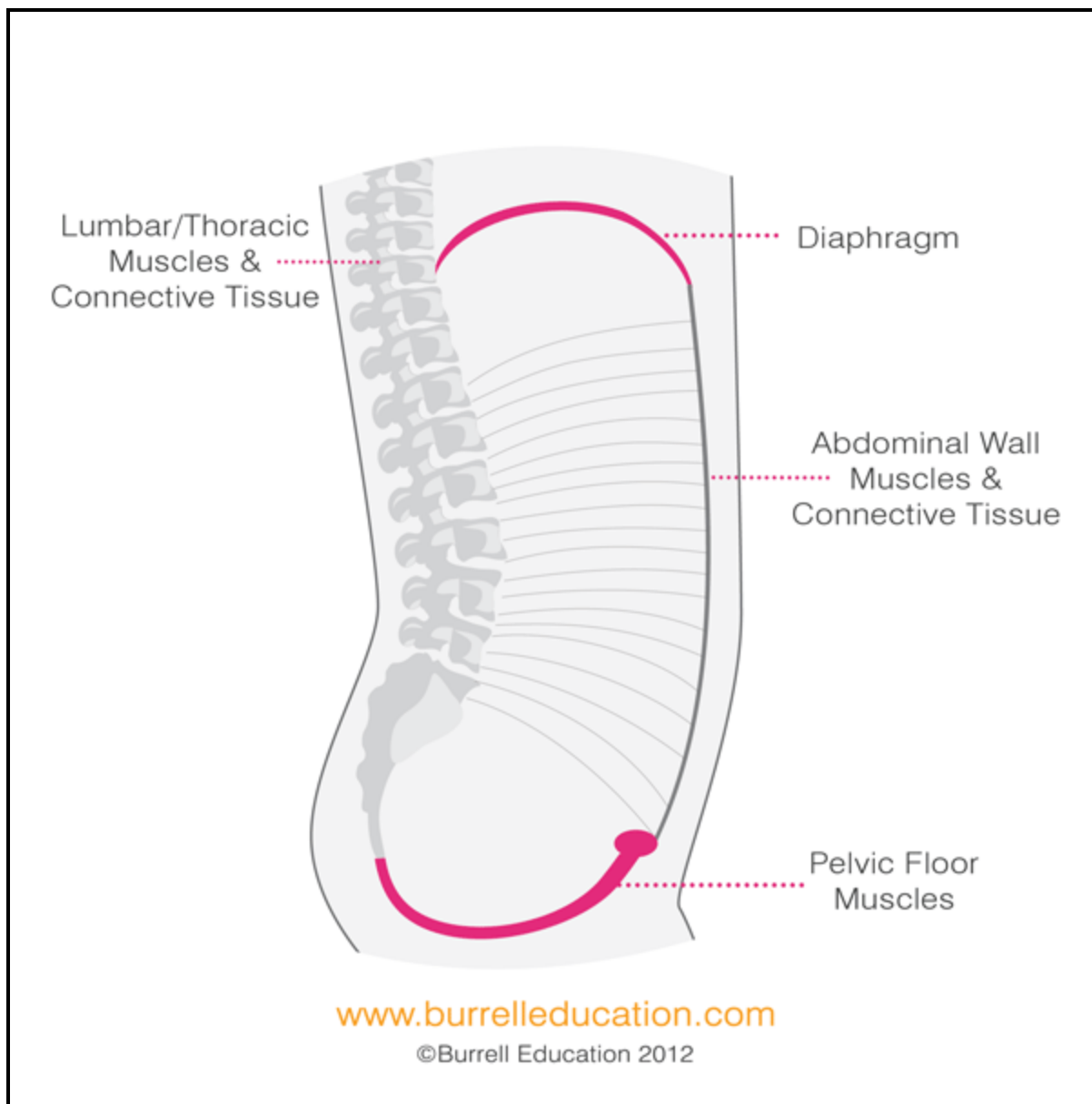
Gently rock your hips toward your head. As you do this, you'll feel your lower back pressing into the floor.

Rock your hips away from your head to exaggerate your natural lumbar curve.

Then come back to a flat back. Repeat this process 5 -10 times.

Settle on what feels like a pelvic tuck.

For most people that will feel like your rib cage is down and your back is flat to the floor.



If you perform a pelvic tilt like a grade A student. You will feel deep abdominal muscles working.

Don't use rectus abdominal muscles or lift your hips off the floor. There is more work to do. Slow down, relax and keep playing with it until you become an A grade student.

Once you are happy that your pelvic tuck will get you an A star. Time to try in a standing position.

Standing pelvic tuck

Place your back against a wall and lean slightly toward it

Inhale and allow your knees to bend slightly.

To flatten your back. Lift your pelvis up away from the wall toward your face.

Rock your hips away from your head to exaggerate your natural lumbar curve.

Then come back to a flat back. Repeat this process 5 -10 times.

Settle on what feels like a pelvic tuck.

Seated pelvic tuck

Follow the same process but seated.

It's time to move on. You are an A-grades student at the pelvic tilt.

Full exhale

On exhale to achieve circumferential breathing we are looking for the rib cage to go down and in. We also need a relaxed abdomen while feeling the deeper abdominals kicking in. A relaxed abdomen allows us to fully exhale.

Check-in:

Roll your hips up underneath you

Imagine the last determined breathe to blow up a balloon; a long and full exhale

Check-out: Does your abdominal area feel relaxed apart from the deep abdominals working?

Yes? Move on.

If you are not sure. Flick the switch and turn your abs to full power. Can you feel the difference now?

No? It's quite common - almost crunch up and use the superficial rectus abdominis to empty the lungs. Relax. Try again and stay curious.

Control Pause

If breathlessness is chaos. Then the Buteyko breathing method is control.

The Buteyko method argues that asthmatics over breathe, hyperventilate. Central to the Buteyko breathing method is replacing over-breathing with controlled effortless breathing.

To create a controlled pause between your full exhale and your inhale. It makes sense for us to use the techniques of Buteyko breathing.

Be aware:

For some people building in a control pause might feel stressful. The feeling that you need air is not your body screaming for oxygen. It is the body's response to an accumulation of CO₂.

With prolonged exposure to CO₂ the body will adjust. As the body adjusts the feeling that you need to breathe will disappear. It just takes perseverance and a little practice.

Here's how:

- Keep your mouth shut and nasal breath
- Practice slowing down the number of breathing. Quiet and gentle breathing is the aim. The goal is to achieve six breaths per minute.
- A simple cue for the tempo of your breathing is to trace an outline of your

outstretched hand using your index finger of the other hand. On inhale trace up towards the tip of the index finger and on exhale trace the finger back down. Pause at the base of the finger, the palm, and then repeat using the remaining fingers of the outstretched hand. .

- You should feel a tolerable air hunger
- Pay attention to your rib cage.
As Inhale feel your rib cage go up and out
And as you exhale feel your rib cage go down and in

Once I could master nasal breathing. I then learned the Buteyko breathing method. It was a game-changer for me. It really did change my life.

Using breathwork I learned to control my asthma symptoms. Quit my asthma medication. And began to pay attention to how much control I had over my sensory input on a daily basis.

Deep abdominal control on inhaling

This is where we split the camp in two:

I'm about to show you two breathing methods. It doesn't matter which camp you are in. It does matter that you pay attention to what happens when you try both methods.

The method that makes the biggest difference to the four-movement drills that I have already given you. That's the one to master.

The two breathing techniques I am going to show you assume that you either bias lateral expansion (side to side) or front and back (anterior/posterior) expansion.

But before we check-in and try the new breathing technique. Check out how you currently move by going ahead and trying the four-movement drills.

The order of learning is the same for both:

Check-in:

Sit on a chair

Roll your hips up underneath you

Take a big exhale

Pause for around 5-10 seconds

Hold on to the deep abdominal tension as you gently inhale through your nose.

Now take a full exhale through pursed lips to make that exhale a little harder

Pause for around 5-10 seconds

Hold on to the deep abdominal tension as you gently inhale through your nose.

Repeat 4-5 times.

Once you are happy that you have changed how you breathe through inhaling and exhaling. Go ahead and try the four-movement drills.

What difference did you notice?

Now let's try the second version of this breathing technique this time exhaling with an open mouth. It will look like you are trying to fog up a mirror. You might need some alone time for this one.

Check out:

Sit on a chair

Roll your hips up underneath you

Take a big exhale

Pause for around 5-10 seconds

Hold on to the deep abdominal tension as you gently inhale through your nose.

Now take a full exhale through open lips as you try to fog up a mirror

Pause for around 5-10 seconds

Hold on to the deep abdominal tension as you gently inhale through your nose.

Repeat 4-5 times.

Once you are happy that you have changed how you breathe through inhaling and exhaling. Go ahead and try the four-movement drills.

What difference did you notice?

Check-in: Which breathing technique made the biggest difference to your 4 movement drills?

Exhale through a pursed-lip?

Or

Exhale through an open mouth?

Or

No difference. Hang tight if this was the case.

We will be applying these two new breathing techniques to a few exercise drills in a moment. And that might make all the difference to you.

Final check-in: Now that you are comfortable with the additional work at inhaling and exhaling pay attention to what is happening at your rib cage

Is it circumferential?

Forwards - Backwards and Lateral?

Or just one of those?

For now, continue being a curious observer. As you get more comfortable with each stage.