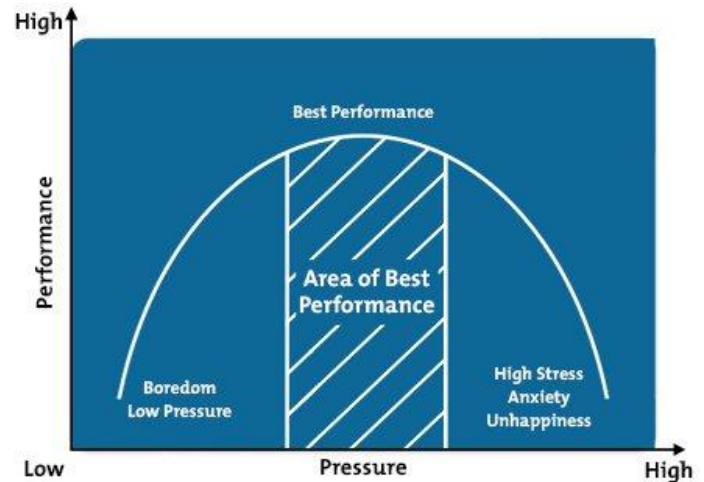


# Activation Regulation

The relationship between activation and performance is curvilinear. Too little or too much activation can hinder performance while a moderate level of activation leads to optimal performance. Each performer has his/her unique optimal activation level.

Once a performer has determined his/her optimal activation level, he/she can learn to regulate activation using relaxation and energizing techniques.



## RELAXATION TRAINING

### Natural Ways to Relax

Take a nap, read a book, listen to relaxing music, take a warm bath or shower, go to a movie, enjoy a nature walk, play with a child, draw, write in your journal, talk to a friend, laugh, smile, or pray. Relaxation methods vary from person to person. Find what works for you and choose to make time to relax. This is a skill that must be developed through practice so that you can control your activation level quickly during stressful situations and at performance time.



### Breathing Exercises

- **Complete Breath:** Concentrate on breathing with the diaphragm, filling lungs from the bottom. Practice 30-40 deep breaths a day, especially when feeling stressed.
- **Sighing with Exhalation:** Breathe deeply and hold breath for 10 seconds, then exhale through mouth and sigh. Feel tension release with exhalation. You should feel calmest during the moment just after exhaling.
- **Rhythmic Breathing:** Inhale for a count of 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4.  
Variation: Inhale for count of 4, exhale slowly for count of 8.
- **5-to-1 Count:** Take 5 deep breaths, counting each exhale down from 5 to 1, and feeling more relaxed each time. Breathe for 2-3 minutes.
- **Mindful Breathing:** Concentrate on your natural breathing rhythm for 2-3 minutes. When your mind wanders, notice it, accept it, and then gently return your focus to your breath.

## Muscle Relaxation Exercises

- **Active Progressive Muscle Relaxation** - Alternate between tensing and relaxing the major muscle groups throughout the body. Tense one muscle group, then relax. Repeat through all muscle groups: feet, calves, thighs and buttocks, abs, back, arms, shoulders and neck, arms, hands, and face. An abbreviated version of this exercise can also be used by combining muscle groups.
- **Passive Progressive Muscle Relaxation** - Relax the major muscles groups without tensing first. Focus on one muscle group at a time and allow those muscles to relax by thinking about or softly saying words like “warm,” “heavy,” and “limp.” Continue to move from head to toe in a progressive manner until your whole body feels relaxed and comfortable.

## TECHNIQUES FOR INCREASING ENERGY

- **Breathing** - Focus on your breathing rhythm and consciously increase it. Imagine generating more and more energy with each inhalation.
- **Using Energizing Imagery** - Use images that conjure up ideas of power, excitement, or momentum and use this imagery to get a quick boost of energy when needed.
- **Formulating Energizing Verbal Cues** – Say words to yourself that you can quickly associate with energy buildup, such as “explode,” “charge,” or “attack.”
- **Combine All of the Above (Breathing, Imagery, and Cues)** - Choose a phrase such as, “Strength is *flowing into my body.*” Inhale on the words in italics. Other suggested phrases are: “My body is *becoming powerful,*” or “I am *full of energy.*”
- **Transferring Energy** – Allow anger and frustration to be converted or channeled into positive and useful energy.
- **Use the Competition Environment** – Draw energy from the spectators and opponents.
- **Listen to music that energizes you in positive ways.**
- **Improve pacing so as not to use up your energy too quickly** – Minimize sources of energy drain, like muscle tension, anxiety, anger and self-doubt.
- **Using Distraction** – Focus your attention on your performance cues instead of the fatigue.

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