THE EBOOK



GROUNDED

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM UPGRADE

CALM UNDER PRESSURE. ON COMMAND.

COLLIN CHARTIER

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This is coaching and education, not medical or mental health treatment. This ebook is not therapy or medical care, and it does not diagnose or treat any condition. It doesn't replace your doctor or a licensed mental health professional. Read Safety and Scope before you try any of the breathing.

WELCOME

Hey, I'm Collin.

I spent my twenties as a professional triathlete. I won an IRONMAN and the PTO US Open, and I raced for Team USA. From the outside it looked like I had it handled.

THE PRESSURE NOBODY SAW

On the inside, every race was a verdict on whether I was enough. When I won the PTO US Open, the biggest check of my career, the celebration lasted maybe an hour. Then my mind was already on the next race.

I ran on fear. Fear of being ordinary. Fear of being found out. Fear of not being number one. It worked for a while. I pushed until something broke, more than once: stress fractures, illness, a race week spent mostly in bed. My nervous system had one setting, and it was on.

I knew how to turn on. Nobody ever taught me how to turn off.

In 2023 I tested positive for EPO and lost my pro career. That one's on me, and it played out in the news.

THE BREATH

After racing ended, I rode a bike from California toward Colombia with every day planned in a spreadsheet. About two months in, someone at a hostel in Nicaragua asked if I wanted to do a three-day breathwork retreat that weekend. I decided to stay instead of riding on. It was the first time I'd broken the plan, and the first time in a long time I felt free.

That was my turning point. Not because breathing fixed me. Because it gave me something I'd never had: a way to change my state on purpose. I learned how to breathe. I learned the voice in my head was trainable, the same way my legs were. And I learned that calm isn't the absence of pressure. It's a skill.

RUNNING HOME

In the summer of 2026 I put it all to the test. I ran 2,000 miles from Potts Field in Boulder to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial: 79 days, June 13 to August 30, for the Herren Project. I called it Running Home. I started every morning with breathwork, 10 to 30 minutes, and I breathed through my nose on every run.

On Day 16, June 28, on a dirt farm road in Kansas, it was already over 80 degrees when we started. By the time I finished 28 miles, around 3 p.m., it was 106, the hottest day of the run. I had to pace myself slow enough to keep breathing through my nose, because I couldn't regulate myself breathing through my mouth at a high breath rate.

WHY I WROTE THIS

I don't coach people to stop feeling pressure. Pressure means you care about something. I coach people to carry it without it running them. This ebook is the short version: how your nervous system works, how to steer it with your breath, how to use it when it counts, and how to start this week.

Let's get to work.

Collin

HOW TO USE THIS EBOOK

Read it in one sitting, or one chapter at a time. The order is on purpose. The body goes first, because mind work lands better on a calm body. You can't talk yourself out of a pounding heart. You can breathe it down.

1. **Your nervous system in plain English.** What's going on inside you, and why breath is the way in.
2. **Breath is the control panel.** What breathing does to the system, and five breaths you can use this week.
3. **Mental performance on a calm system.** Reframe the pressure, then use cue words, imagery, routines and the GROUND Reset.
4. **Your first 7 days.** A starter plan, a tracker and a short check-in.
5. **Where to go next.** Three free ways to keep going with me.

> **Coach's note**
> If you only do three things: some slow breathing before you look at your phone, three slow sighs whenever stress spikes, and one line at night: my state today, one win, one thing I'm setting down.

THE GROUND RULES

- **Consistency beats intensity.** Five minutes every day beats an hour on Sunday.
- **Never miss twice.** Miss a day, fine. Don't miss two in a row.
- **One tool at a time.** Learn it, use it, then add the next one.
- **Train it calm, use it stressed.** Practice when nothing's on fire, so it's there when something is.
- **Discomfort is okay. Strain isn't.** If a count feels like a fight, shorten it.
- **The return is the rep.** Your mind will wander and your week will slip. Coming back is the skill.

HOW TO READ THE BREATH COUNTS

Counts are seconds, roughly. "In 4, out 6" means about four seconds in through your nose and about six seconds out. Breathe in through the nose unless it says otherwise. Sit tall or lie down. If a count feels too long, shorten it. Comfort beats the number every time.

Where research is strong, I say so. Where it's early, small, or argued over, I say that too. Breathing here is a tool for shifting your state, not a treatment.

SAFETY AND SCOPE

I'm a coach, not your doctor or therapist. This ebook is education and coaching for healthy adults. It doesn't treat any condition. The breathing here is a tool to shift your state, a pause button. It is not a cure.

Talk to a mental health professional first if you:

- Have panic disorder or frequent panic attacks. Breath-focused practice can bring up the body sensations panic feeds on, especially at first. Start only with what your provider approves.
- Have PTSD, or a trauma history that still shows up as flashbacks, numbness, or feeling far away from yourself. Body-focused practice can stir it up. Use this alongside a trauma-informed therapist, not instead of one.
- Are having thoughts of suicide or of hurting yourself. **Stop here and call or text 988**, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (US, 24/7). If you're in danger right now, call 911.
- Have an eating disorder, now or recently.
- Have a mental health condition that makes it hard to get through most days.

Talk to your doctor first if you:

- Are pregnant.
- Have epilepsy or have ever had a seizure.
- Have a heart condition (arrhythmia, past heart attack, angina, heart surgery), high blood pressure that isn't under control, or a history of stroke or aneurysm.
- Had surgery recently, or have a detached retina or glaucoma.
- Have severe or uncontrolled asthma or another lung condition.
- Take medication for your heart, blood pressure, sleep or mental health. Tell your prescriber you're starting daily breathwork. Slow breathing can lower blood pressure a little, and so can some medications. Don't start, stop, or change any medication because of this ebook.

Breathing rules, every practice

- **Sit or lie down.** Get up slowly afterward.
- **Never practice breath holds or fast, heavy breathing in or near water** (pool, bath, open water), **while driving**, or anywhere passing out could hurt you. Over-breathing before a hold can make people black out without warning, and in water that can kill (Boyd 2015).
- **This is calm breathing only.** Slow breaths, long exhales, and short, comfortable holds (4 to 5 seconds in box breathing, 7 in 4-7-8). No fast or forceful breathing. Energizing styles belong in a coached setting, not a self-guided ebook.

- **Pregnant, heart condition, or the hold makes you uneasy?** Drop the holds and just breathe slowly.

Stop rules

Stop, open your eyes, and breathe normally if you feel:

- **Dizzy, light-headed, or tingly** in your hands or face. You're probably breathing too hard. Go slower and softer next time.
- **Chest pain, fainting, or severe dizziness.** Get medical help now. A racing or skipping heartbeat that doesn't settle: tell your doctor.
- **Panic rising, numbness, feeling unreal, or old painful memories flooding in.** Open your eyes, press your feet into the floor, look around the room, and name five things you can see. If it keeps happening, stop and talk to a trauma-informed therapist.

Discomfort is okay. Strain isn't. You never have to finish a round.

Where to get help (US)

- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** call or text 988, 24/7, for any emotional crisis
- **Crisis Text Line:** text HOME to 741741, 24/7
- **Emergency:** 911
- **Find a therapist:** Psychology Today's directory lets you filter by specialty

Outside the US? findahelpline.com lists free, confidential crisis lines by country. In an emergency, call your local emergency number.

YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM IN PLAIN ENGLISH

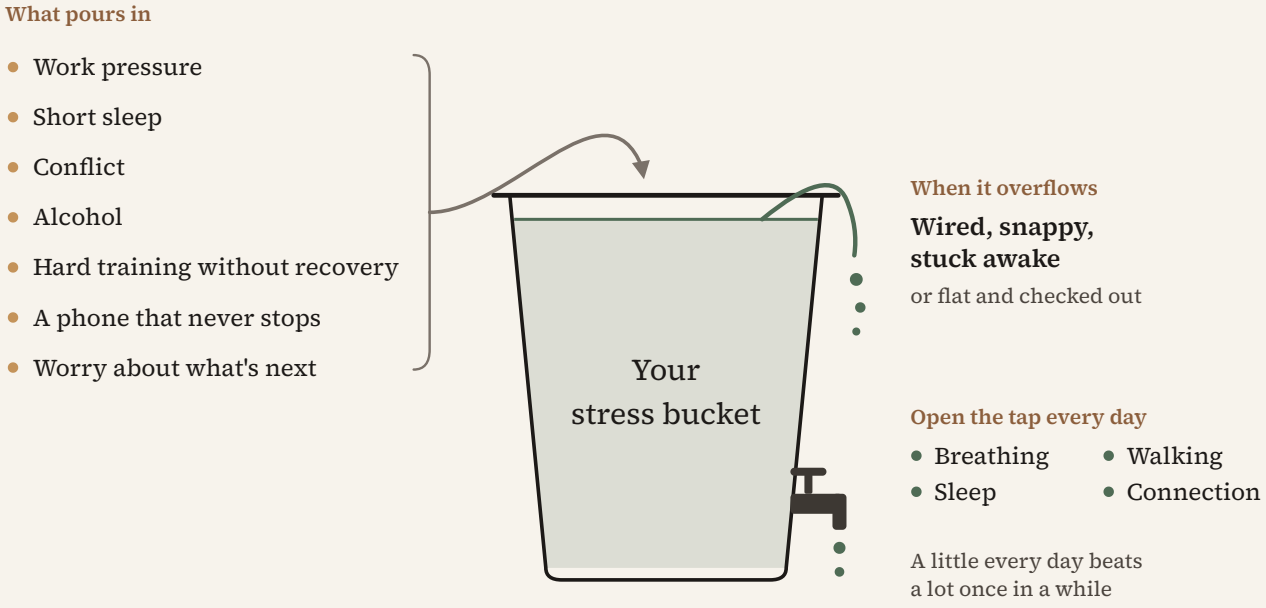
You breathe somewhere around 20,000 times a day without thinking about it. Under stress, most of those breaths get faster, shallower, and higher in the chest. Before we steer anything, here's the machine you're steering.

GAS AND BRAKE

Your nervous system has two gears. The gas is your stress response, built for real danger: lions, not leaderboards. It's supposed to switch on, then switch off. The brake is your recovery response. Healthy people move between the two all day, and slow breathing is how you tap the brake on purpose (Laborde 2022).

Modern stress (deadlines, the inbox, the race, the bills) keeps a foot on the gas when nothing is actually trying to eat you.

Think of stress as a bucket. Pressure, short sleep, conflict, alcohol, and hard training without recovery all pour in. When it overflows, you get wired, snappy, and stuck awake. You can't stop everything pouring in. You can open the tap every day.



You can't stop everything that pours in. You can open the tap every day.

WHAT THE STRESS RESPONSE DOES TO YOUR THINKING

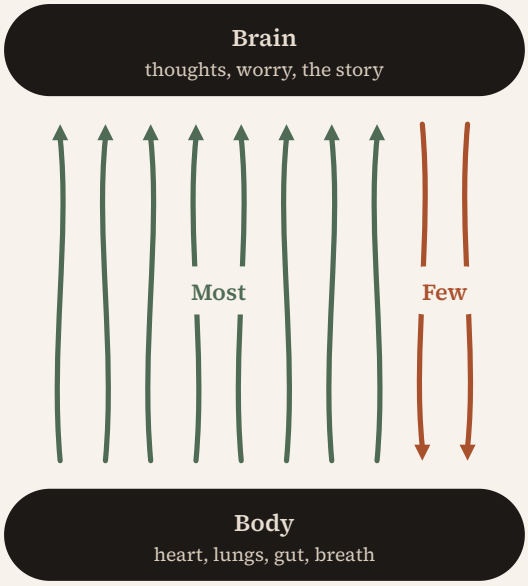
When you're wound up, the part of your brain that plans and weighs consequences works less well, and fast habits take over (Arnsten 2009). That's why rushing, snapping and sloppy mistakes show up when you're most wound up.

So you don't think your way out. You get your body back to where thinking works. Regulate first, then think.

THE VAGUS NERVE AND THE TRAFFIC BETWEEN BODY AND BRAIN

The vagus nerve is the main line of your recovery system, running from your brainstem to your heart, lungs, and gut. Most of its fibers carry information up, from body to brain (Breit 2018).

Worry travels down: "what if this goes wrong?" and your body answers with a faster heart and a higher breath. But most of the traffic runs up. A fast, high breath reports danger, and your mind gets more tense. A slow, low breath reports safety.



Body to brain

Most of the traffic

Your body reporting its state up: heart rate, tension, and the pace and depth of your breath.

Brain to body

Less of it

Your brain sending orders down. This is the road worry takes.

A slow, low breath sends one message up: we're okay. We can stand down.

Illustration. Most estimates put the majority of vagus fibers on the body-to-brain side (Breit 2018).

WHY YOU CAN'T THINK YOUR WAY OUT OF A BODY STATE

Put those together and you get the rule this whole ebook runs on: the fastest way to a calm mind usually isn't through the mind. You can't order your heart to slow down. You can slow your breath, and your heart follows.

Words help too, as a second step. Putting a feeling into words seems to turn the volume down. In one brain-imaging study, labeling an emotion quieted the brain's alarm response (Lieberman 2007). Breath first, then name it.

THREE STATES

To read your own dashboard, I use three simple states. You can't shift a state you can't see.

State	How it feels	How it shows up under pressure	What helps
Grounded	Alert and calm. Breathing slow and low.	You think clearly. You choose your response.	Keep going.
Revved	Wired, tense, irritable, racing thoughts, shallow breathing	You rush, snap, over-talk, make sloppy mistakes, can't sleep	Long exhales, slow sighs, a short walk
Flat	Heavy, foggy, numb, checked out	You go quiet, procrastinate, stop caring, scroll	Stand up, move, get daylight, a fuller inhale, a real conversation

No state is bad. Revved is useful at the start line. Flat is fine on the couch on Sunday. The trouble is getting stuck, or landing in the wrong state at the wrong time.

Try it now. Which state are you in? Give it a number, 1 to 10, for how activated you feel, and one word for the feeling. That's a state check, and it takes about 20 seconds.

> **Coach's note**
>
> You may have heard of polyvagal theory, Stephen Porges' model of three nervous system states. It's influential, and many coaches and therapists use it as a map. Some of its specific biology is still argued over by the researchers who study it (Grossman 2023), so I use plain words here instead of its anatomy. What isn't in dispute: slow breathing with a long exhale calms the body, and feeling safe and connected lowers stress. Porges also gave us a useful idea called neuroception: your body sizes up safety and danger before your thinking brain weighs in. Therapist Deb Dana says it another way: story follows state. Your body shifts first, then your mind writes a story to match. That's why this ebook starts with breath, not analysis.

BREATH IS THE CONTROL PANEL

Your breath is the bridge. It runs on autopilot, but you can take the wheel any time. That makes it the one part of your stress response you can steer by hand.

Try it now. Find the pulse on your wrist, breathe in slowly, then breathe out long. Feel it speed up on the way in and slow on the way out? Heart rate rises a little on every inhale and eases on every exhale (Russo 2017). That's why a long exhale is a brake you can press on purpose.

WHAT BREATHING DOES TO THE SYSTEM

The exhale is the brake. Heart rate eases on the way out, so the exhale is the part you lean on. That's why most of the breaths in this chapter make it long.

"I can't catch my breath" usually isn't about oxygen. In healthy people, the urge to breathe comes mostly from rising carbon dioxide, not from running low on oxygen. When you feel short of air, the instinct is to breathe faster. But fast breathing blows off carbon dioxide, and that brings light-headedness, tingling, and more tension (Meuret and Ritz 2010). Slowing down lets it come back to normal.

Heart rate variability. It's how much your heart rate swings from beat to beat, and voluntary slow breathing is one thing that moves it (Laborde 2022). Breathing at about 5 breaths a minute, in 6 and out 6, sits inside the slow range where heart rate variability swings the most (Lehrer and Gevirtz 2014). It's often called resonance breathing, and it's the rhythm of the three-part breath below.

Your diaphragm is a muscle. Train it like one. It's a dome of muscle under your lungs. When it contracts on the inhale, it flattens and drops, and your belly moves out. On the exhale it relaxes and rises back up. For most driven people, the chest, neck, and shoulder muscles are stronger breathers than the diaphragm, so under stress that's where the breath goes. So we practice low, slow breathing when you're calm, until it's easier to find when you're not.

How much does it help? A fair amount, not a miracle. Across randomized trials, breathwork lowered stress by a small to medium amount (Fincham 2023). A reliable tool you train, not a cure.

FIVE BREATHS, FIVE JOBS

All of these are calm breathing: no fast or forceful breathing, holds short and comfortable. Sit or lie down, and follow the breathing rules in Safety and Scope. Learn one at a time.

1. The physiological sigh (cyclic sighing)

When to use it: any time you catch yourself Revved: before you reply to a message that made your heart jump, between meetings, at the start line. It's the acute tool: the one you use in the moment.

1. Breathe in through your nose for about 2 seconds.
2. Take a short second sip of air on top, about 1 second.
3. Breathe out long and slow through your mouth, about 6 to 7 seconds.
4. Do 1 to 3 sighs. Or, as a daily practice, 5 minutes once a day.

In a Stanford study, five minutes a day of cyclic sighing lifted mood more than the same five minutes of mindfulness meditation (Balban 2023).

Safety: keep every breath soft and comfortable. If you feel dizzy or tingly, make the breaths smaller and stop.

2. The extended exhale (in 4, out 6 to 8)

When to use it: to come down after a hard moment, and as your steady morning breath. It's the brake in its simplest form.

1. Sit tall. Breathe in through your nose for 4.
2. Breathe out slowly for 6. Over a few days, stretch the exhale toward 7, then 8.
3. Keep it smooth. The exhale should feel like letting go, not pushing.
4. Go for 5 to 10 minutes, or just a handful of breaths.

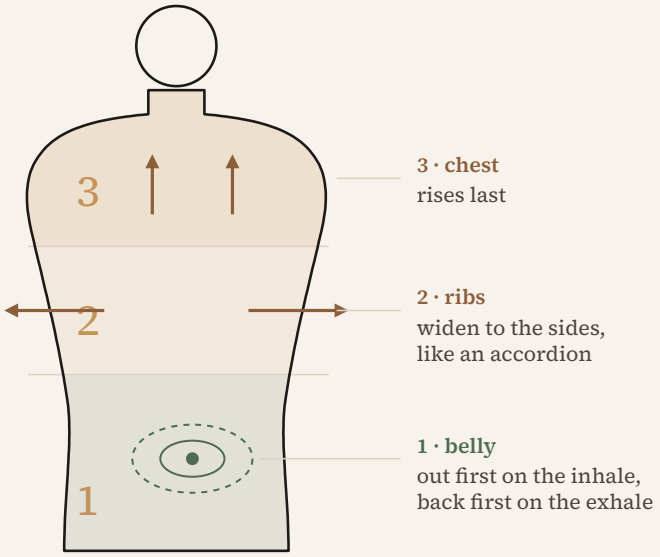
Safety: if you can't finish the exhale count, it's usually strength, not effort. Shorten it (in 3, out 5) and build a second at a time. Comfort beats the number.

3. The three-part breath (in 6, out 6)

When to use it: your daily foundation. Every other breath sits on top of it.

Sit tall in a chair, cross-legged, or on a cushion, shoulders open. Breathe in and out through your nose.

1. **Belly.** Hand on your belly button. Breathe in and push your hand away without your chest moving. Breathe out and draw your belly button back. The exhale is active.
2. **Ribs.** Hands on the sides of your ribs. Breathe in and feel them widen out to the sides and back, like an accordion. Breathe out and draw them back toward the center.
3. **Chest.** Let the breath rise into your upper chest last. Notice how much your neck and shoulders want to jump in. That's your old default, which is exactly why it goes last.



One breath, to scale

In 6 through the nose, out 6

BELLY	RIBS	CHEST	EXHALE 6

Inhale 6: belly 2, ribs 2, chest 2.
Exhale 6: belly button draws
back first. Keep your spine long.

Too long?

Start at in 4, out 4 and build.
Comfort beats the count.

In 6 (belly 2, ribs 2, chest 2), out 6. That's 5 breaths a minute, inside the slow range where heart rate variability swings the most (Lehrer and Gevirtz 2014).

Start with 4 minutes and add a minute a day, up to 10. Use a timer.

Safety: one catch: while the diaphragm is still weak, belly breathing feels harder under stress, not easier. That's why we train it calm. If your belly pulls in when you inhale, your breath is running in reverse. It's common and very fixable. And if you get dizzy or tingly, take smaller, softer breaths through your nose until it passes.

4. Box breathing (4, 4, 4, 4)

When to use it: one to two minutes right before anything that tightens your chest: a pitch, a start line, a hard conversation. It steadies focus.

1. Breathe in through your nose for 4.
2. Hold for 4.
3. Breathe out for 4.
4. Hold for 4. Repeat for 1 to 5 minutes.

When the box is easy, move to 5, 5, 5, 5. Stop there. Longer isn't better.

Safety: this is not a breath-hold contest. If the holds make you uneasy, or you're pregnant or have a heart condition, drop them and breathe in 4, out 4. Never practice holds in or near water, or while driving.

5. 4-7-8

When to use it: falling asleep, winding down at night, or a circuit breaker when your mind won't stop. Popularized by Dr. Andrew Weil. Save it until a long exhale feels easy.

1. Breathe in through your nose for 4.

2. Gently hold for 7.
3. Breathe out through your mouth for 8.
4. Do four rounds, then breathe normally.

Safety: shorten the hold if it makes you uneasy, or drop it if you're pregnant or have a heart condition. Do it sitting or lying down, never in water or while driving. Stop if you get dizzy.

WHEN YOU'RE FLAT, NOT REVVED

Don't use calming breath to fix Flat. You're low, not wound up. Try the wake-up breaths:

1. Stand tall.
2. Breathe in for 4, a full breath.
3. Breathe out for 2, relaxed, not forced.
4. Take five breaths, then move for a minute.

That's 1 to 2 minutes, and it is not fast breathing. **Safety:** stop if you get dizzy. Then get daylight, and talk to someone. Flat most days for weeks: see your doctor.

QUICK PICKS

When you're...	Reach for...
Revved	Three sighs, then a long exhale (in 4, out 8).
Flat	Stand up, wake-up breaths, then move, get daylight, talk to someone.
About to perform	Box breathing for 1 to 2 minutes, then your cue word.
Just lost it	The GROUND Reset (next chapter).
Winding down at night	4-7-8, or a slow exhale.

MENTAL PERFORMANCE ON A CALM SYSTEM

Now the mind. Mental skills land better on a calm body, so everything in this chapter assumes you've started with breath. The ideas here follow the way Dr. Jim Taylor teaches mental training; the wording, examples and drills are mine (see Credits).

AROUSAL AND PERFORMANCE

Pressure is the feeling that something you care about is on the line. It isn't the enemy. It means you're in the arena. The goal isn't to feel less. It's to carry more.

A little activation sharpens you. Too much tightens you up. Composure isn't zero activation. It's enough to be sharp, and steady enough to use it.



A simple model, not a law of nature. Where your best zone sits depends on you and the task. The skill is moving toward it on purpose.

Find your number, then turn the dial. Think of your best day under pressure. How revved were you, 1 to 10? Now your worst. For a lot of people, the best days sat in the middle: alert, not frantic. That's your zone.

- **Too high?** Long exhales, slow your walk and your talk, drop your shoulders, use a Steady cue word.
- **Too low?** Stand tall, take a few fuller inhales, move, use a Go cue word.

FEEL IT, NAME IT, REFRAME IT, REDIRECT IT

Here's the part most people miss. **Nerves and excitement feel almost the same in your body.** Racing heart, fast breathing, a jolt of energy. The difference is the story you tell about it. In a set of studies, people who told themselves "I am excited" before singing, public speaking, or a math test felt more excited and did better than people who tried to calm down (A. W. Brooks 2014). In another, people taught to read a pounding heart as their body getting ready handled the stress better, in body and mind (Jamieson 2012).

That's reappraisal, and it comes in four steps:

1. **Feel it.** Ten seconds. Let the sensation register. Don't skip this. Arthur Brooks puts it as "Feel the feel, then take the wheel."
2. **Name it.** "I notice my heart pounding and my hands buzzing." Labeling quiets the alarm (Lieberman 2007).
3. **Reframe it.** "I'm not falling apart. I'm activated. My body is getting ready."
4. **Redirect it.** Give the energy a job. "This goes into my first two minutes." "This goes into my opening line."

Use it honestly. A reframe isn't a lie. If something is truly wrong, the move is to deal with it, not to talk yourself out of it. And if the reframe feels fake, you're probably skipping the feeling step. Use a line you actually believe: "This matters to me. That's why my heart's going."

Ride it, don't fight it. You don't pick the first feeling. You do pick the next move. Find the feeling in your body and breathe around it with long exhales. Don't fight it, don't feed it. In a review of more than 300 experiments, trying to shove a feeling down didn't help. Seeing the situation in a new way did (Webb 2012).

CUE WORDS

You talk to yourself more than anyone else talks to you, and most of it isn't kind. In sport, a review of 32 studies found that training your self-talk improves performance (Hatzigeorgiadis 2011).

You can't stop the thoughts from showing up. You can stop them from sitting down and staying. Not all negative talk is the enemy. Quit talk ("I can't do this") drains you. Fight talk ("No way I'm letting this beat me") can fuel you. So: notice the thought, label it, and replace quit talk with something true and useful, or just a cue word. Then anchor it to a body signal: a slow exhale, a fist squeeze, a foot tap.

Build three cue words, one or two words each, not sentences:

Kind	Use it to	Examples
Steady	Bring it down a notch	“Smooth.” “Breathe.” “Here.”
Go	Bring it up	“Commit.” “Attack.” “Now.”
Reset	Recover after a mistake	“Next play.” “Back to the plan.”

Mine at the start line was “Here.” Not the past. Not the future. Here.

IMAGERY

If you can worry about the future, you can rehearse it. Worry is imagery pointed the wrong way. Mental rehearsal isn’t magic, but it’s real. Across many studies, picturing a situation in detail and repeating it has a small but real effect on what people actually do (Conroy and Hagger 2018).

Most people only picture the perfect version. That’s almost useless. Rehearse the chaos. See it through your own eyes, add sound and the feeling in your hands, then add the moment something goes wrong and you handle it: breath, cue word, next action. Build it in levels: a calm scene first, then one skill done well, then the whole moment with the room, the noise and your heart rate up. Start short. Thirty seconds of a clear picture beats five minutes of fog.

ROUTINES

A routine is a practiced sequence that gets you ready: breath, focus, a cue. A ritual is superstition: the lucky socks, the same meal or else. Rituals add pressure. Routines build trust, because you’ve done them a hundred times. Four steps carry into any moment:

1. **Arrive.** A physical transition. Change clothes, stand up, walk, put on a certain song. It tells your body: we’re switching modes.
2. **Breathe.** Get into your zone. Revved? Long exhales. Flat? Stand tall, move, take a few fuller breaths.
3. **See.** 30 to 90 seconds picturing the first few minutes going well, plus one hiccup you handle.
4. **Cue.** Your word. Your body anchor. Go.

Here's one routine, for a big meeting or pitch:

When	What I do
10 min out	Phone away. Walk if I can.
5 min out	Three sighs, then 1 minute of box breathing.
2 min out	See the first two minutes going well. Know my opening line cold.
Walking in	Shoulders down, slow exhale, cue word.
If it goes sideways	Pause, one slow exhale, "Next play," ask a question.

Plan the curveball with an if-then. "If my heart starts pounding when I walk in, then I'll exhale slow and say Here." Plans in this if-then form help people follow through (Gollwitzer 1999), including when the goal is to stay steady under stress (Gallo 2009).

Close the loop afterward. After any big moment: What went well? What did I learn? What do I release? Then one line: "This is complete."

THE GROUND RESET

Breathing every morning trains the system. But pressure doesn't wait for your morning practice. You need a reset for the moment it hits: the email at 9 pm, the cutting comment, the gun going off, your heart slamming before the hard conversation.

The GROUND Reset takes 60 seconds to 3 minutes. The order matters: body first, then notice, then decide. Regulate first, then think. The card on the next page has all six steps. Here's what it looks like.

It's 4:55 on a Friday. Your boss messages: "Got a minute?" Your stomach drops. You push your chair back and feel your feet (G). Three sighs, five long exhales (R). Activation 8, the word is dread, it's in your gut (O). What's your body bracing for? Being blamed. What do you need? Facts before you react (U). You type: "Sure, give me two minutes." You walk in with one question ready: "What's going on?" (N). It's a scheduling thing. No replay loop on the drive home (D).

One more thing. The HALT check in the U step comes from recovery communities, not a lab. It's there because hunger, anger, loneliness and tiredness all make pressure feel bigger.

THE GROUND RESET CARD

Cut this out. Put it where pressure finds you: your desk, your bathroom mirror, your phone case, your gear bag.

THE GROUND RESET

G	**Get still.** Stop. Feet flat on the floor. Hands still. Step out if you can.
R	**Release with breath.** 2 to 3 slow sighs. Then 5 slow breaths, exhales longer than inhales.
O	**Observe.** Activation 1 to 10? One-word feeling? Where is it in my body? Feel it for 10 seconds.
U	**Uncover the need.** What is my body bracing for? Hungry, Angry or anxious, Lonely, Tired? What do I need?
N	**Name your move.** One next action, out loud. Respond, don't react. Or meet the need.
D	**Drop the shame.** I paused. That's the rep. No replay loop. Next moment.

When to use it: any time you catch yourself Revved, any time something lands hard, and before you reply to anything that made your heart jump.

How long: 60 seconds to 3 minutes. Five-second version: one slow sigh, feet on the floor, "What's my next move?" **After the fact counts.** Remembered an hour later? Run it then.

YOUR FIRST 7 DAYS

Knowing it isn't the same as training it. Here's a week you can start tomorrow. It builds the way I'd build a training block: one small piece a day, nothing new until the last one is easy. About 10 minutes a day at the top end.

THE PLAN

Do your morning breath before you look at your phone. Hook it to something you already do: "After I pour my coffee, I breathe for five minutes" (Clear 2018). The breath is the three-part breath from Chapter 2, in 6 and out 6, unless the table says otherwise.

Day	Morning breath	Add today
1	4 minutes	Take the check-in below. Start **Catch it**: every time you notice yourself breathing high and fast in your chest, take three slow belly breaths. Keep a tally on your phone or a card. Every catch is a rep.
2	5 minutes	Tonight, the belly check. Lie on your back, one hand on your chest, one on your belly. Breathe so the bottom hand rises first and the top hand barely moves.
3	6 minutes	State checks. Set three alarms: 10 am, 3 pm, 9 pm. When one goes off, take 20 seconds: which state, activation 1 to 10, one word for the feeling.
4	7 minutes	Learn the physiological sigh. Use 1 to 3 sighs any time you catch yourself Revved.
5	8 minutes	Shift the breath to in 5, out 7. Same 12-second breath, more of it on the exhale. That's where the brake is.
6	9 minutes	Run your first GROUND Reset. After the fact counts.
7	10 minutes	Sunday review, 5 minutes: which state did I spend most of the week in, and what pulls me there? What went better than I expected? What's one thing I'll do differently next week?

Every day, one base habit: same wake time, within about an hour, then 5 to 10 minutes of daylight outside. Hard week: same wake time and 2 minutes outside.

THE HARD-DAY MINIMUM

Some days will be a mess. Your hard-day minimum is the smallest version that still counts: **three slow belly breaths before you look at your phone.** That's your recovery day, not a failure.

Never miss twice. Missed three days? Don't restart on Monday. Do the hard-day minimum today.

YOUR TRACKER

Copy it into your notebook or print it. Hard-day minimums count.

Week 1	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Morning breath (minutes)							
Catch it (tally)							
GROUND Resets (tally)							
My state most of the day (G / R / F)							
Stress today (1 to 10)							
One win							

One line at night: My state today. One win. One thing I'm setting down.

YOUR BASELINE CHECK-IN

Before you change anything, find out where you are. You'd never start a training block without knowing your fitness. Your nervous system deserves the same.

This takes about three minutes. It isn't a clinical test and it isn't a grade. It's a map. When I first scored myself honestly, my map looked like a collapsed tent. That wasn't a verdict. It showed me exactly where to start.

Rate each statement for the **last two weeks**. 1 = rarely true, 2 = sometimes, 3 = about half the time, 4 = often, 5 = almost always. Don't overthink it: your first answer is usually the honest one.

#	Statement	Day 1	Retake
	BODY AND RECOVERY		
1	I notice stress in my body early, before it takes over.		
2	I can calm my body down on purpose within a few minutes.		
3	Most of the day my breathing is slow and low, not fast and high in my chest.		
4	I can switch off at the end of the day.		
	PERFORMANCE		
5	When the pressure is on, I stay composed enough to do what I've practiced.		
6	My self-talk under pressure helps me more than it hurts me.		
7	I can keep my attention on the next action instead of the outcome.		
8	I have a routine I trust before big moments.		

Your scores. Add up each group of four. Each runs from 4 to 20. Then add both for your total, 8 to 40.

Area	Day 1	Retake
Body and recovery (1 to 4)		
Performance (5 to 8)		
Total (8 to 40)		

What your numbers mean. For each area:

- **16 to 20:** a strength. Use it.
- **11 to 15:** building. Normal, and the place most people start.
- **4 to 10:** focus here. This is where to put your first few weeks.

Your lowest area is a good place to start. If it's Body and recovery, lean on the three-part breath, the sighs and your state checks. If it's Performance, lean on the reframe, cue words and routines. There's no pass mark. Retake it in a few weeks, and cover your old scores before you rate yourself again. Look at the trend, not one number.

One more number. Sitting quietly, count your breaths for 60 seconds without changing anything. Write it down and count again in a few weeks.

> **Coach's note**
>
> Some scores go down on a retake. That's often a good sign. You're noticing more than you did on Day 1, so you rate yourself more honestly.

An honest check. If most of your answers are 1s, and it's been that way most days for weeks, or you're struggling to get through the day, talk to a doctor or therapist before or alongside this. That's a strong move, not a failed one. If you're having thoughts of hurting yourself, stop and call or text 988 now.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

You now have more than enough to start. Here are three free ways to keep going with me. Pick one. You don't need all three.

JOIN THE FREE LIVE MASTERCLASS

Join the free masterclass on Tuesday, October 27, at 6:00 pm Mountain, on Zoom, and then every Tuesday after that. It's free and it's live, about an hour with me. We work out which state you're in, run a guided breath practice together, and I take your questions. Bring this ebook.

Save your seat at collinchartier.com/masterclass.

GET THE FREE GROUNDAPP

GroundApp has guided versions of the breathing in this ebook, in my voice. Use it when you'd rather listen than count.

Get GroundApp on the App Store

https://apps.apple.com/app/apple-store/id6760352779?pt=128638571&ct=ebook-pdf&mt=8

BOOK A FREE 20 MINUTE INTRO CALL

If you'd like to work one on one, book a free 20 minute call and tell me what you're working on.

Book at collinchartier.com/book.

WRITE TO ME

Questions, wins, a week that went sideways: hello@collinchartier.com. I read every one.

Train it calm, use it stressed.

Collin

CREDITS AND REFERENCES

CREDITS

- **Mental skills.** The mental performance chapter follows the way Dr. Jim Taylor teaches mental training in Train Your Mind for Athletic Success (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017): intensity, self-talk, imagery, emotions, and routines. The wording, examples, and drills are mine.
- **Arthur Brooks.** "Feel the feel, then take the wheel" comes from the work of Arthur C. Brooks, including From Strength to Strength (Portfolio, 2022) and Build the Life You Want, with Oprah Winfrey (Portfolio, 2023).
- **Polyvagal theory and neuroception** are Stephen Porges' ideas. "Story follows state" is Deb Dana's phrase. Both are used here as plain-language maps, with the debate about the underlying biology noted in Your nervous system in plain English (Grossman 2023).
- **Small doses, and looking around the room to settle,** draw on Peter Levine's work (Waking the Tiger; In an Unspoken Voice). This ebook is not Somatic Experiencing and doesn't teach it. Trauma work belongs with a trained practitioner.
- **Habits and plans.** Habit stacking and "never miss twice" come from James Clear's Atomic Habits (Avery, 2018). If-then plans build on Peter Gollwitzer's research on implementation intentions.
- **4-7-8 breathing** was popularized by Dr. Andrew Weil. **Cyclic sighing** follows the protocol tested at Stanford (Balban 2023). **HALT** comes from recovery communities.

The GROUND Reset, the Grounded / Revved / Flat check-in, the three-part breath, "Catch it," the four-step reframe, Arrive / Breathe / See / Cue, and the baseline check-in are my own, built from my one-to-one coaching.

A note on evidence. Where research is strong, I say so. Where it's early, small, or argued over, like the biology behind polyvagal theory, I say that too. Breathing here is a tool for shifting your state, not a treatment. If you think a claim in this ebook is wrong, tell me at hello@collinchartier.com.

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