



## Reaching Peak Performance in Sport: Energy Management TSC – Mental Skills Training Program

---

Athletes experience differing levels of energy before and during games. Sometimes athletes have energy levels that are **too low** (lethargic, unmotivated) or **too high** (tense, stressed, anxious). Regardless of whether an athlete's energy level is too low or too high, the result is the same: *performance is not at its best*. Following are some common energy management techniques that can help an athlete reach peak performance in sport.

### Relaxation Techniques

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation  
-tensing and relaxing of muscles
- Breath Control  
-slow, deep breathing
- Visualization  
-using your imagination to relax
- Music  
-listen to music that slows your heart rate, breathing rate, and muscular tension

### Energizing Techniques

- Listen to music that pumps you up
- Think of past successful performances
- Ask a friend to help get you energized
- Use high-energy cue words  
-“I’m ready!” “Let’s do this!”

### **BREATHING:**

Breathing is key to achieving relaxation and is one of the easiest and most effective ways to control anxiety and muscle tension before, during or after a game. When you are calm, confident, and in control, your breathing is likely smooth, deep, and rhythmical. When you're under pressure and tense, your breathing is likely short, shallow, and irregular. Smooth, deep, and rhythmic breathing is an integral component of peak performance during games as it increases the flow of oxygenated blood to muscles, which helps with optimal performance.

**Quick Breathing Exercises** - These exercises can be used immediately before, during, or after a game to help lower energy levels that are too high. Following these exercises are some general relaxation and energizing techniques.

**Mini Version 1:** Count very slowly to yourself from ten down to zero, one number for each breath. Thus, with the first diaphragmatic breath, you say "ten" to yourself, with the next breath, you say "nine", etc. If you start feeling light-headed or dizzy, slow down the counting. When you get to "zero", see how you are feeling. If you are feeling better, great! If not, try doing it again.

**Mini Version 2:** As you inhale, count very slowly up to four; as you exhale, count slowly back down to one. Thus, as you inhale, you say to yourself "one, two, three, four," as you exhale, you say to yourself "four, three, two, one." Do this several times.

**Mini Version 3:** After each inhalation, pause for a few seconds; after you exhale, pause again for a few seconds. Do this for several breaths.

### **PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION:**

**PMR** involves tensing and relaxing specific muscles, until all major muscle groups are completely relaxed. These tension-relaxation cycles develop your awareness of the difference between tension and lack of tension. With skill, you can detect tension in a specific muscle or area of the body, like the neck, and then relax that muscle. Following is a sample PMR activity.

Begin with your feet, press your heels into the ground as you tighten all the muscles in both feet. Hold for as tightly as possible for one... two... three... four... five... six... seven... eight... nine... ten... and release... Try to feel the difference between being tight and being relaxed... just let your feet relax.... Tighten your feet again for one... two... three... four... five... six... seven... eight... nine... ten... and then release... Feel your muscles relax as the blood rushes back into the muscles. Tighten your feet again for one... two... three... four... five... six... seven... eight... nine... ten... and release... feeling completely relaxed [note: as you progress, or to save time you can go through this routine tensing and releasing each body part only once]

- Next move to your calves... [repeat three times as above]
- Next tighten your hamstrings... [repeat three times as above]
- Now go to your quadriceps and buttocks... [repeat three times as above]
- Tighten every muscle in your lower body... [repeat three times as above]
- Do the same with your lower back... [repeat three times as above]
- Now move to your stomach... [repeat three times as above]
- Next clench your hands into fists... [repeat three times as above]
- Now do the same with your upper arms... [repeat three times as above]
- Next tighten your chest muscles... [repeat three times as above]
- Tighten all the muscles of your upper body... [repeat three times as above]
- Next move to your neck muscles... [repeat three times as above]
- Now tighten your jaw muscles... [repeat three times as above]
- Now tighten your facial muscles... [repeat three times as above]
- Lastly tighten every muscle of your body at the same time... make your body like a bar of iron... [repeat three times as above]