

RECOVER · PILLAR SERIES

THE RECOVERY TOOL EVERY ATHLETE ALREADY HAS

Most athletes spend countless hours training their body. Very few spend any time training their nervous system.

Recovery doesn't just happen when you stop exercising. It happens when your body shifts out of a high-alert state into a relaxed one where healing and adaptation can occur. That shift is called down-regulation – and the most powerful tool for it is your breath.

01 WHAT IS DOWN-REGULATION?

Practices, games, school, screens, stress – all of it activates your sympathetic "fight or flight" system. It helps you perform, but it isn't where recovery happens. Recovery starts when the parasympathetic "rest and digest" system takes over: heart rate slows, muscles relax, stress hormones drop, digestion improves. Learning to shift into that state on purpose improves both health and performance.

02 WHY BREATHING MATTERS

Breathing is one of the only automatic functions you can also control. Stress makes it fast and shallow; slowing it down tells your brain you're safe. Research shows slow, controlled breathing can reduce stress, lower heart rate, improve focus and sleep quality, and enhance recovery after training. It takes less than five minutes.

03 TWO ROUTINES TO TRY

Box breathing – inhale 4 seconds, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4. Repeat for 2–5 minutes after practice, before bed, or anytime you're stressed.

Physiological sigh – one deep breath in, a second small breath in, then a long slow exhale. Repeat 5–10 times to calm the nervous system fast.

04 RECOVERY ISN'T JUST PHYSICAL

Stretching and foam rolling help, but true recovery is also mental and emotional. Calming your mind and regulating stress is a skill, just like skating, shooting, or lifting. Athletes who train it recover faster, sleep better, perform more consistently, and handle pressure more effectively.

> **Athlete challenge** Spend 3 minutes each night this week on box breathing before bed. See how your sleep, recovery, and energy feel by the weekend.

TESTIFY TAKEAWAY

TRAIN HARD. RECOVER HARDER. THE FASTEST WAY TO IMPROVE IS TO SLOW DOWN AND BREATHE.

You don't need expensive recovery tools. The most effective one is with you every second of every day – a few minutes of intentional breathing lowers stress, improves sleep, and accelerates recovery.