

## Do You Need a Pre-Warmup Ritual?

### Description

It was the last week of the school year, and all of us parents were invited to attend a play that the entire 2nd grade class had been working on all semester.

So, an auditorium full of busy parents were gathered together at 9am, chatting amongst themselves, checking their cell phones, and antsy to get off to meetings, classes, and morning yoga sessions.

The director welcomed us, explained what our children have been up to for the last few months, and then it was time for the production to begin. But before he would let the kids come out on stage, he asked us to participate in an activity he had them do before every class.

It was the kind of thing, that once upon a time I would have rolled my eyes at. Yet I and the other parents did just as he requested.

The activity took just a few moments, but had a palpable effect. Not only was the auditorium noticeably quieter, but you could *feel* a difference as well. The energy of the room went down a notch or two. I felt more present. Less scattered. And more focused on what was in front of me *now*, not what I had to do when I left in 30 minutes.

So what did he ask us to do?

### Breathe in. Breathe out.

He simply asked us to breathe together. To take a deep breath in...and slow easy breath out. Simple. Easy. Just three deep centering breaths.

It doesn't sound like much, but it changed my experience of the performance. I was able to enjoy and appreciate the show, instead of sporadically checking my phone and drifting in and out. I was actually *present*.

### Take a deep breath...

I often see the same phenomenon play out at my kids' Tae Kwon Do classes. The students enter the dojang after a busy day of school and other activities, and are often scattered and bouncing off the walls a bit. Their movements are rushed, and it's apparent that they aren't focused or paying full attention to either the execution of their skills or the instructor's input.

But when the instructor tells them to stop for a moment and take a few deep breaths, the tone of the class

changes. Everything slows down a notch, everyone settles down, and they appear to be more focused.

## Practicing before we're ready

We all have a ton to do, with to-do lists that only seem to grow longer with each passing day and seemingly less and less time to do everything in. And with a big performance or audition on the horizon, the passage of time can feel very much like a ticking time bomb. So naturally, it is easy to feel pressured, rushed, perhaps even a little frantic, and jump into a practice session without taking the time to get into a good head space first.

But like trying to cut thin slices of tomatoes without first taking a moment to sharpen our chef's knife, that can lead to a ton of frustration and more harried, aggravated, hacking away at our instrument.

## Try a pre-warmup routine

So the next time you step foot into the practice room, and even before you begin your warm up routine, try this short *pre-warmup* ritual.

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. *Listen* to the air on the inhale...and the exhale (it sounds different in each direction). *Feel* the cool air filling your lungs, and again as you breathe out (it feels different in both directions too). Let your attention turn inwards as the outside world fades away and everything becomes quieter....less hurried.

Then slowly get your instrument into position and play a few notes. Long, slow, easy notes, paying attention to how things feel. Relishing the sensory experience of every nuance and detail of your sound.

On paper, I admit this might sound silly. Or seem like a big fat waste of time (though we're really only talking about a few minutes of actual clock time).

But don't dismiss it out of hand quite yet. Give it a try. See how it feels. You might be surprised.

Do you have a *pre-warmup* routine that helps you get into the right mental state for a nice, productive practice session? Share below in the comments – I'd be curious to learn more about it.

## The one-sentence summary

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." ~Abraham Lincoln (or at least, often [attributed](#) to Lincoln\*)

*photo credit: [lucaohman](#) via [photopin cc](#)*

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