



3 DAYS.
200 MILES.
1 PURPOSE.

...just breathe...



How to Breathe Through TdP, by East Coast Ride Marshal Nonnie H.

... just breathe...



You've likely said it yourself....

You see your little one fall off their bike and they start to panic as they see a little red peeking through their knees: "It's Ok, just breathe, you'll be Ok..."

Your breath is the most powerful tool you own.

Take a moment....

...*just breathe*....

inhale...

exhale...

– your lungs expand and contract without you even thinking. What a gift.

Take a journey with me if you will...

Imagine it's the first day of Tour de Pink. You are sporting your new kit, there's lots of excitement as everyone is adjusting their helmet straps, getting last minute hugs from your supporters, and saying hello to old friends in the TDP family. The kickoff of the ride starts with a loud cheer and, although nervous, you lift your feet off the ground and onto your pedals to start the day's adventure.

You hit the first climb and you're thinking, "I got this, no problem." Half way up the climb you start to see your riding partner pedaling away from you as your legs get heavier. Maybe you try to push the pedals faster. You start to panic a bit, but then you see the top of the hill and are able to catch up on the next flat section. All is well and good, until after a few climbs. You start to get nervous at the bottom of each climb.

"Am I going to make this?"

"I don't want to walk my bike."

"I don't want to have to sag to the next stop."

Interestingly, **your physical strength has little to do with whether you make it to the top with ease or whether you struggle through each pedal stroke.** What's happening in your body at that time is controlled by the back of your brain – called the amygdala. It's your fight / flight function. Your mind's way of protecting you from a real or perceived threat. Your heart rate rises, your breathing quickens, your brow begins to sweat, and the voices in your head begin to argue amongst themselves.

Some use that energy to **fight** their way up the climb to prove to themselves they can do it. Others take the **flight** option and decide they can't make it to the top, so why bother. Either of those scenarios takes a toll on your body, physically and emotionally.

Imagine if your mind could seamlessly move from the fight / flight response to the calm response where you find your breath.

...just breathe...

...inhale....

exhale....

Relax, stay focused, one pedal stroke at a time, no wasted energy.

Keep your heart rate lower, expend less energy on stress, and more energy in driving your pedals around in circles. Physically, you are more efficient but, emotionally, you can make rational decisions and quiet the negative voices in your head just enough to get you up that one hill. Maybe giving you an extra hour in the saddle to get through the next hill and the next.

How can you seamlessly move from fight / flight to a more controlled state of calm?

Practice breathing. Take time every day to focus only on your breath. Maybe it's a 20 minute meditation practice you do each morning as part of your spiritual practice. Maybe it's in your car after you've arrived at work, but before you open the door to enter the building.

... just breathe...



Yoga, Mindfulness, meditation, breathing...call it whatever you like, but practice. There is a reason yoga is called a practice. And a reason it's said that you are practicing meditation. It is just that... a practice. No expectations. No judgments. Give these a try:

- Take just 2 minutes to count while you breathe. What number can you count to while you inhale? 4, 5? What about the exhale? Do you count to the same number? Is it longer than your inhale? Can you try to change your breathing pattern so it's the same count for both. Inhale for 6 seconds, exhale for 6 seconds.
- Can you feel your chest rising on the inhale? Can you notice the back of your tongue relax on the exhale? Allow the muscles in your jaw to relax a little more. Imagine a slight smile in your eyes.... A slight smile in your eyebrows and forehead. Don't judge it. Don't expect anything, just notice.

By the nature of your brain, it will wander, it will ask you why you are wasting time sitting when you could be picking up your dry cleaning, or even riding your bike to prepare for the TDP. When you recognize that happening, you are actually waking up – you are aware that your mind is drifting. The more you practice the less frequent the drifts will be. You will start to notice that outside of your practice (whatever that might look like), you are able to be awake more often. More aware, more mindful, more calm. You will find that you are more willing to forgive others (and yourself). You are more able to give and to receive love.

For those of you who want to dig more, it's not just me sharing how cool I think this is – there is science to back this up. And this is where it gets fascinating. Science has proven that you can rewire your brain to be calmer. Brain scans show that Meditation slows down the activity in the back of the brain (your fight/flight response to fear) and increases activity in parts of the brain that are responsible for your sense of consciousness, your compassion, intuition, and empathy.

Check out leading neuroscience experts [Andrew Newberg](#) and [Mark Robert Waldman](#). Their research studies are so detailed they differentiate effects of meditation from various spiritual or religious practices and atheist practices. The effects of Buddhist practitioners contemplating the universe, yoga practitioners, Franciscan nuns, Pentecostal practices of speaking in tongues and atheist practitioners meditating on an image of God. Though [scans](#) show different areas of the brain activated by different practices, they all showed practitioners with a greater level of sensitivity and compassion for others.

[Click here to see other resources I've come to love and continue to explore.](#)

... just breathe...



At the end of most yoga practices you'll hear the exchange: Namaste. It means, "May the light in me, honor the light in you." May my joy and love, bring out the joy and love in you.

...with that...

Namaste

 /TdPSouth

 /TdPEastCoast

 /TdPWestCoast

 ysctdp

 @YSCTdP

