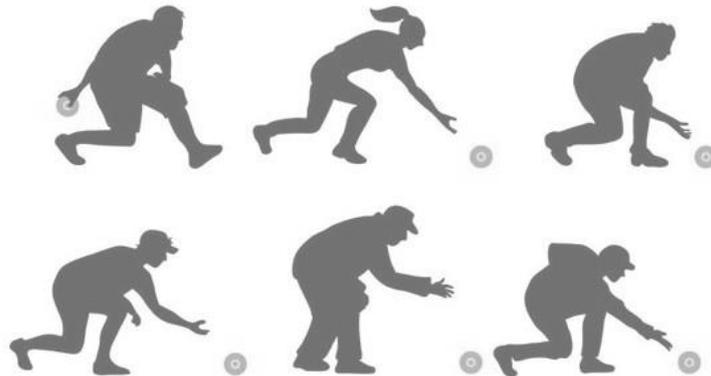




**FROM THE DESK OF THE  
KRUGERSDORP BOWLING  
CLUB'S COACHES  
IN CONJUNCTION WITH  
THE SABLES ACCADEMY**



**“HOW TO PLAY BETTER BOWLS”**



**“DON'T DO WHAT WE DO”**

**“DO WHAT WE TRAIN YOU TO DO”**

## PRESSURE ON THE GREEN

I don't care who you are. You can be the top bowler in the world or the normal club bowler but at some stage during a game you are going to be under pressure, and you are going to feel the stress / anxiety of the **expectations** building up inside you.

Pressure can make the easiest shot turn into the most difficult shot. It can turn your tummy into a knot, make your heart race, cause you to lose your concentration and focus so much so, that an easy draw becomes the toughest shot in the book.

### So how do we deal with it?

To start off with, you first need to know what pressure is, and recognise the signs when it is happening.

#### Pressure is:

**“The psychological stress associated with the expectation to perform well in a situation”**

Some of the signs are:

- Anxiousness
- Nervousness
- Heart rate increases
- Self-doubt and loss of focus
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling tense

You might be able to add more of these symptoms that you personally feel, but the point is that you need to recognise when this is happening to you and deal with them.

### Expectations

One of the biggest contributors to pressure, is the “expectations” we put on ourselves

An expectation is a belief about what should happen in the future, or an anticipation of what we are going to achieve in the future.

Now at this stage I need to point out the differences between “goals” and “expectations”, because setting yourself a goal is an extremely positive thing but profoundly different from an expectation, which is a negative thing.

### “A Goal”

Simply put, a goal is something about your performance you want to improve, but you know you can't achieve it right now because your current ability doesn't allow it, although with practice and determination it is reachable. If you don't reach your goal today, it's ok, because it just means you need more time and preparation.



## **“An Expectation”**

An expectation is something that you feel you should be able to get right now and achieve it right now.

- Goals are motivational and positive
- Expectations are judgemental and negative

**Beware of expecting too much from yourself, but always strive to reach your goals through practice and determination**



## **Dealing with Pressure**

We need to understand and accept the fact that we are going to put into pressure situations, and that pressure is not always a bad thing, if controlled.

We need to acknowledge that pressure on a bowling green is not life threatening! Remember our motto : **“everyone tries & no one dies”**.

Recognize that not everything is going to be smooth sailing. Develop your own style of dealing with pressure, and remember that there is not one solution that suits all. We are all unique and therefore we will all handle pressure differently,

**However - “Its all about balance”**

Now I am not a qualified psychologist, but there is talk, in the psychological field, of a red and blue brain, one (red) being the crisis mode and the other (blue) being the calmer thinking mode.

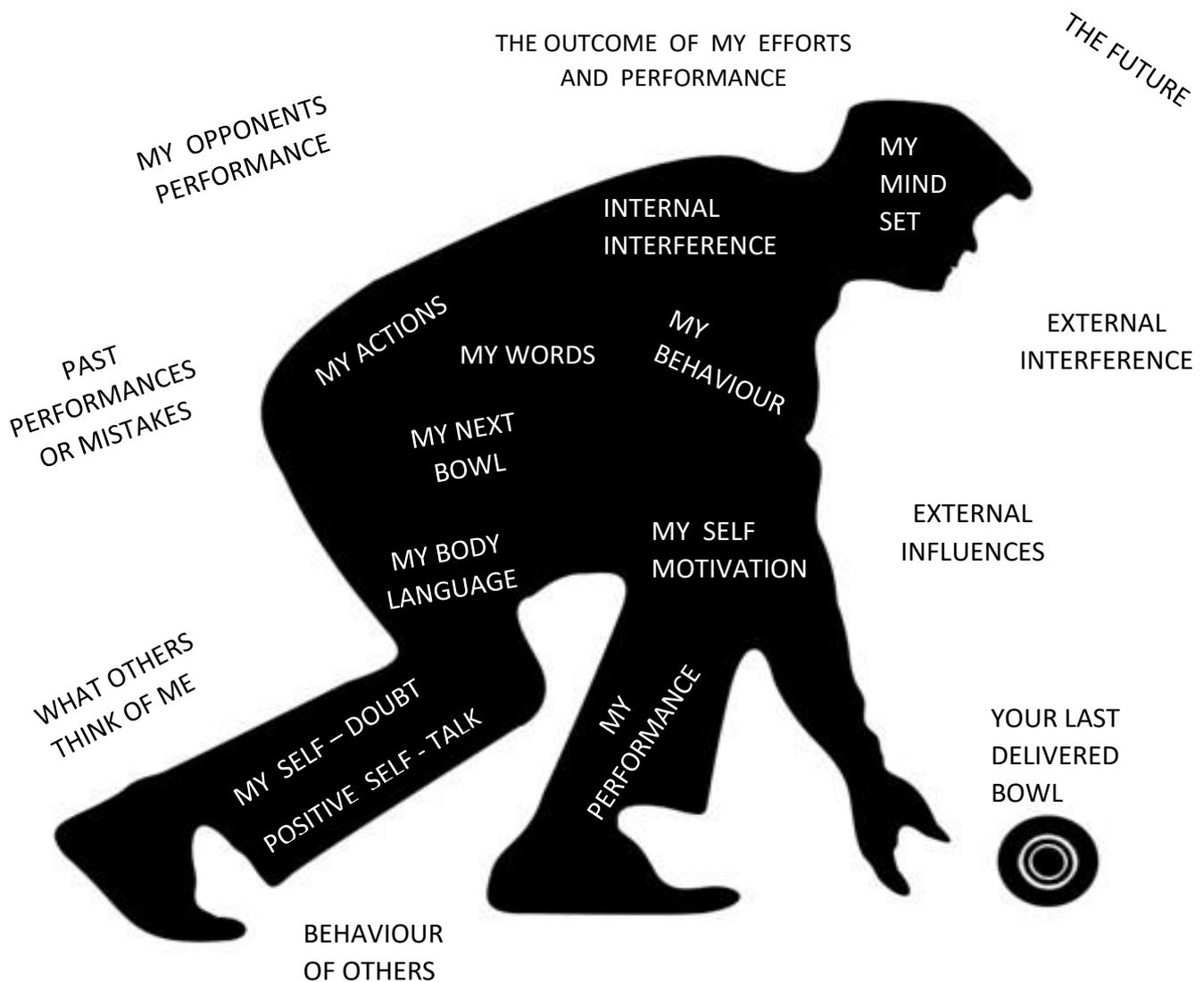
**The key is to “balance” the two. We must not let the blue brain become overwhelmed by the red brain, or otherwise the imbalance can be detrimental, and our next actions just become chaotic. Just as much as, we must not be too calm and relaxed (blue brain) or no enthusiasm or arousal will occur, and we need these to keep our concentration and focus, in order to perform at our peak.**

In order to achieve this “balance” mentioned above, we must firstly, appreciate that there are factors within our control and factors which are outside our control, and you, as a person, only need to be concerned with controlling your own internal elements.

The external factors in the sketch that follows, are merely there as **uncontrollable distractions**, and therefore should not form part of your thinking process. Tell them to **“GO AWAY”**

We should only be considering and focusing on the internal elements which we can **teach ourselves to control**.

## WITHIN MY CONTROL / OUTSIDE MY CONTROL



OK, so now that we know what the elements are that fall within our control, we can put into practice a method of reducing the effect they have on our game.

I have listed them below and methods of dealing with each

- My Mind Set
  - As discussed previously, our mind needs to be in a positive mode - no negative connotations, only positive
  - Have the balance between the “red brain” and the “blue brain”
  - Always have a “growth mind set” where learning becomes the most important aspect, and not just “win at all costs”
- My Performance
  - Only you can control how well you play. If you have put the effort in and practiced well enough, it will show in your performance.
  - So if you play well and lose, so be it. Be happy and pleased with your performance. You can't control the outcome of a game

- My Behaviour
  - Sportsmanship to the end
  - Win humbly
  - Lose gracefully
  - Compliment good bowling
- My Words / Positive self-talk
  - Only positive language
  - Never get down on yourself or team mates
  - Always “you can”- never “I can’t” or “I’ll try”
- Body Language / My Actions
  - Never show your opponent anything except positive vibes in your body language
  - Never show any negative emotions, only positive signs
- My Next Bowl
  - Your all-important next bowl is a product of all of the above
  - Every negative connotation is only going to make that “next bowl” so much harder to get under your control
  - Only through your positive thoughts and actions, will your “next bowl” be better than your “last bowl”

A couple of years ago, there was a serious concern, world-wide, on how to go about managing anxiety caused by the pressure of competing athletes during the common wealth games.

After plenty of money had been spent on studies etc., they found that the easiest way to alleviate anxiety during pressure situations was **6 deep breaths**.

**So remember, don’t look for complicated solutions to the way you deal with pressure. Sometimes the simplest and easiest remedy is the best**

## “JUST BREATHE”

### Breathing

So now we know that Breathing is probably the best way of dealing with anxiety, stress and tension brought on by pressure, **but how and when do we initiate breathing exercises and how can we control it.**

Unfortunately, not much time is spent on practicing breathing, probably because it’s a natural thing that we do daily, although, **breathing is very unique, in that it’s something we do both sub-consciously, as well as consciously, and if we can consciously control it, it can be a huge advantage**

### **Types of breathing**

There are namely 3 types of breathing

1. **Ordinary breathing (sub-consciously done)**
  - As you would normally breathe throughout the day
2. **Tension / worry breathing (sub-consciously done)**
  - Quick deep breathing through the chest area
  - Quick shallow breathes, can’t seem to get enough air in the lungs
3. **Relaxed breathing (consciously done)**
  - Slow rhythmic belly breathing

The type of breathing we need to discuss is No 3, Relaxed Breathing or “belly breathing”, this type of breathing has the following benefits

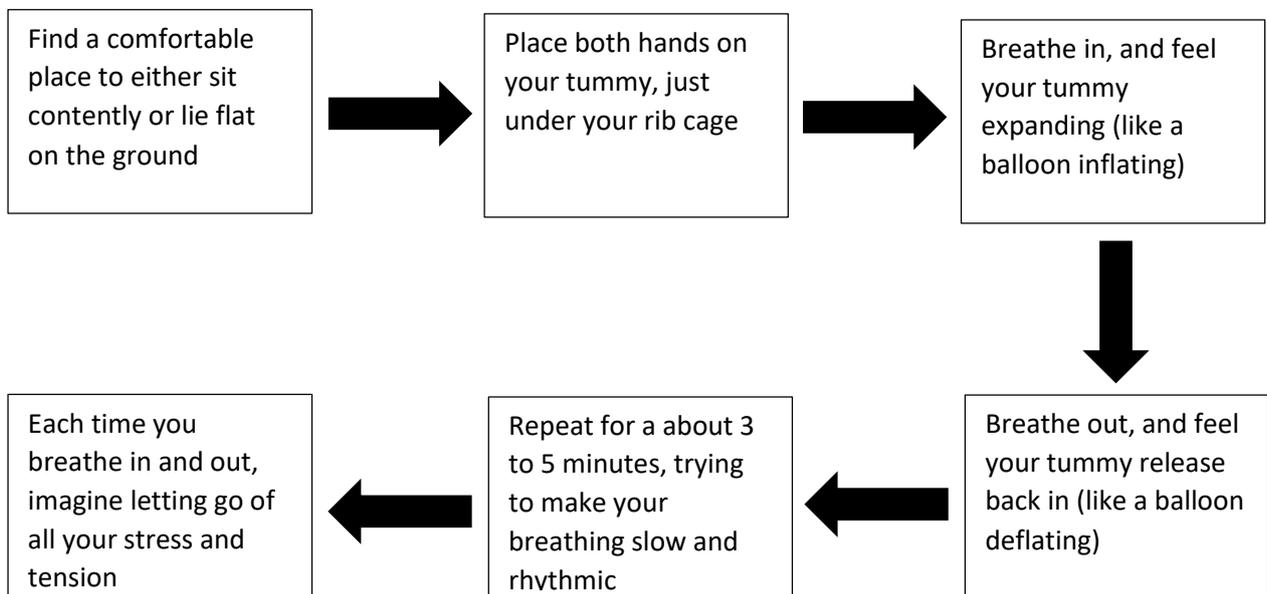
- removes tension,
- it de-clutters your mind,
- it relaxes your muscles
- and allows you to think clearly

### Relaxed / Belly Breathing

Belly breathing is also known, as diaphragmatic or abdomen breathing, and the easiest way to describe it is to use a baby as an example.

Have you ever watched a sleeping baby, and how their tummies go up and down as they inhale and exhale in a slow rhythmic motion, **that is “belly breathing?”**

### Learning to belly breath



Additional benefits to breathing like this (if done correctly) are:

- improved blood circulation
- slows your heart rate down
- relaxes you and calms you down
- increases the amount of oxygen getting into your body

On a psychological front it:

- helps you focus and concentrate
- makes you more grounded



## When to do your breathing techniques

### Before the game

- if you are feeling a bit tense about the game you are going to play, the ideal time is about 10 minutes before the game, it will help relax you and calm your mind
- even if you are not feeling tense before the game, it's always good to go through the breathing exercises, to help centre your mind as well as refocusing on the game about to begin

### How to do it

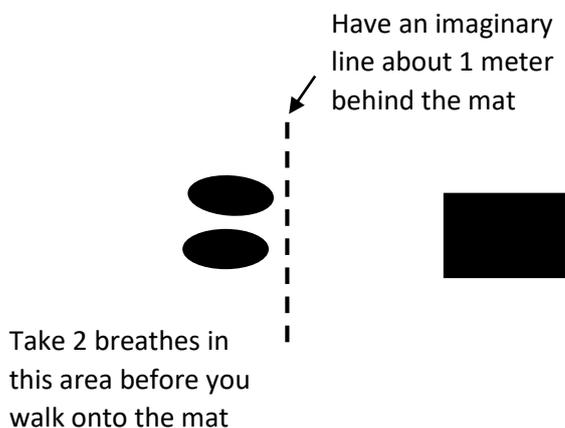
1. Find a quiet place to sit
2. While doing a 5 minute "belly" breathing exercise
  - a. Calm your mind
  - b. Narrow your focus
  - c. Enhance your concentration
3. Warm up properly
4. Start the game
  - a. Ensure you are calm
  - b. Ensure you are focused on your objective
  - c. Be relaxed

### During the game

- The first step, is to ensure that you have practiced it, it won't be beneficial if you haven't rehearsed how to do it
- you need to incorporate a breathing exercise into your pre-delivery routine, it is going to help you to relax and re-focus on your next bowl
- it's amazing what just 2 (two) belly breathes can do for your concentration and focus during a game,

### How to do it

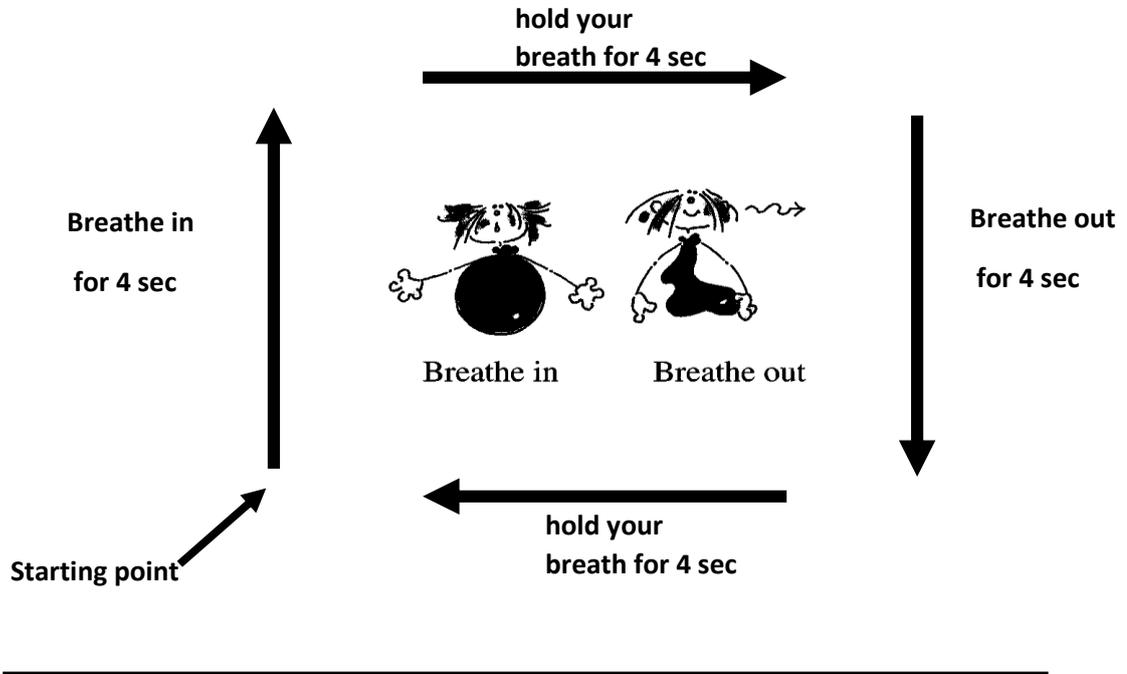
- the ideal, is to rehearse the breathing technique that suits you, every time you go and practice, even when playing a social game, before delivering your next bowl, do the breathing
- **the idea behind this, is to form a habit of doing it, it has to become part of your routine**
- check the sketch below
  - stand behind the mat
  - 2 (two) belly breathes before getting on the mat
  - Walk your line and play the required shot



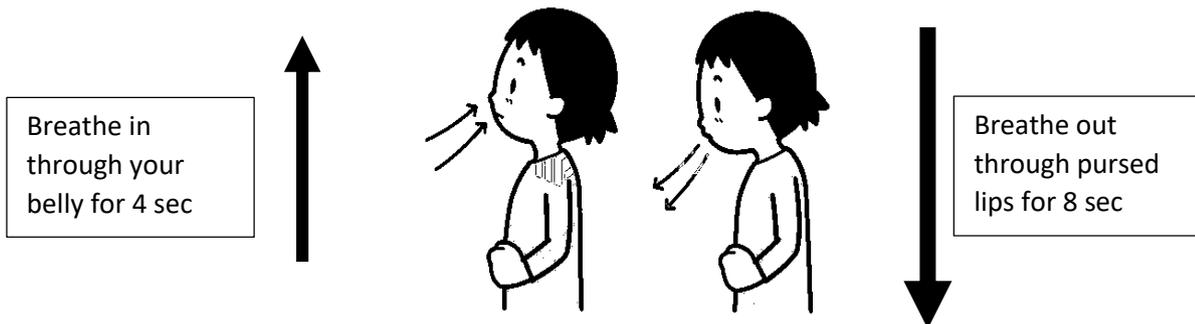
## Breathing Techniques

Listed below are a few examples of different breathing techniques, which you can use, remember that they are all “belly” breathing exercises.

### A Simple Example of “box breathing” by Dr Jo



### Belly Breathe in, and breathe out through pursed Lips



#### REMEMBER BELLY BREATHING:

- REDUCES STRESS
- CONTROLS ANXIETY
- ENHANCES YOUR FOCUS

**“PRACTICE WITH A PURPOSE”**

