

DeMystifying Breath:

Finding the Missing Pieces to Unlock Breath Support

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Authors of:

“Body Mapping for Clarinetists: New Frontiers in Clarinet Pedagogy”
GIA Publications, December 2023

“The mBODYed Breath: Body Mapping, Balance, and Breathing for Musicians”
mBODYed Publications, Summer 2024

What is Body Mapping?

What is a Map?

- A representation of one thing in a different medium.
- Maps show specific information at the expense of other information.

What is a Body Map?

- Also known as the body image, your body map is a representation of your body within your nervous system.
- Your body map is informed by your lived experiences, your knowledge, as well as our ideas of “body” that is informed through our culture, community, society, religion, race, gender, and sexuality.
- Body maps are learned and thus, can be changed.
- Sometimes these maps do not change and become outdated, leading to confusion, excessive tension, discoordination, and even injury.

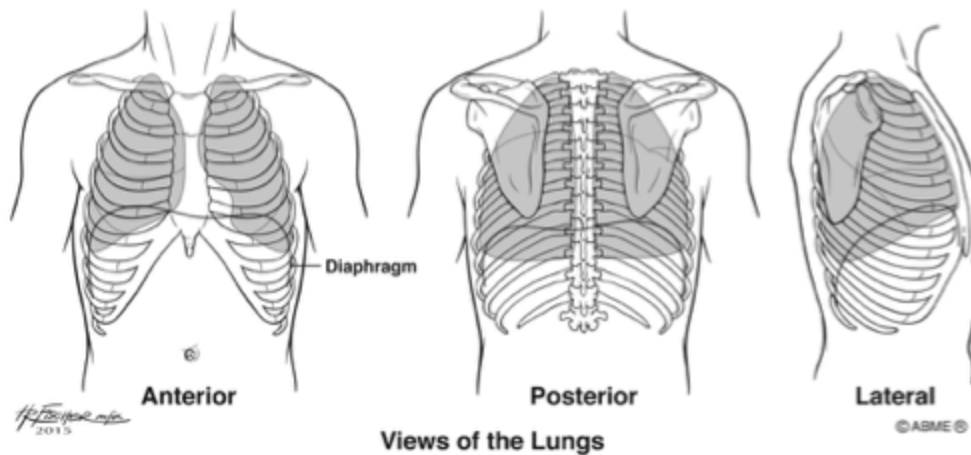
What is Body Mapping?

- The intentional relearning of our maps to align with anatomical reality.

Central Tenant of Body Mapping

- All sound is the result of movement.
- The quality of movement is determined by the quality of thinking.
- The quality of thinking determines the quality of sound.

Structures of Breathing



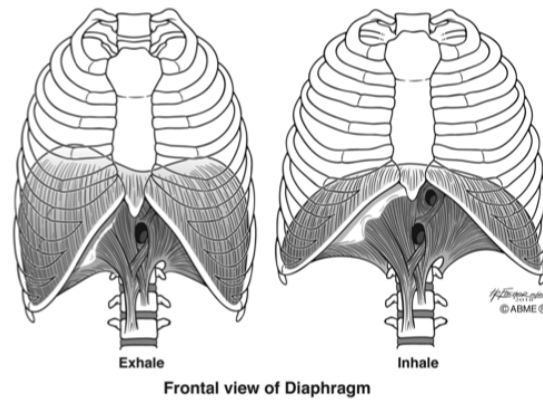
Lungs

- The lungs start above the collarbone.
- The bottom of the lungs are even with the bottom of the sternum.
- The lungs are sealed within the airtight rib cavity with the heart.

Breathing Joints

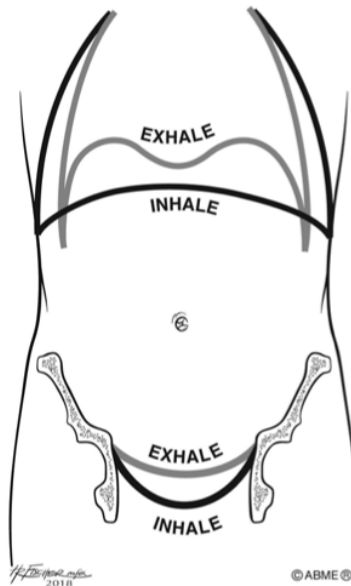
- There are 24 ribs, 12 on each side of the spine.
- There are joints where the ribs meet the spine that result in significant expansion throughout the entire rib cavity.

Diaphragm



- Dome-shaped muscle.
- Primary muscle for inhalation.
- Contracts on inhalation.
- Rests on exhalation.

Abdominal and Pelvic Movement



- On inhalation, the diaphragm pushes everything in the abdominal cavity down and out.
- Air does not travel into the abdomen.
- While the expansion of the abdomen is essential for a full-capacity breath, freedom and movement of the ribs allows for more expansion of the lungs.

Chicken or the Egg?

- The movement of expansion happens first. As a result of this expansion, air rushes into the body.
- In order to inhale, we must first exhale.

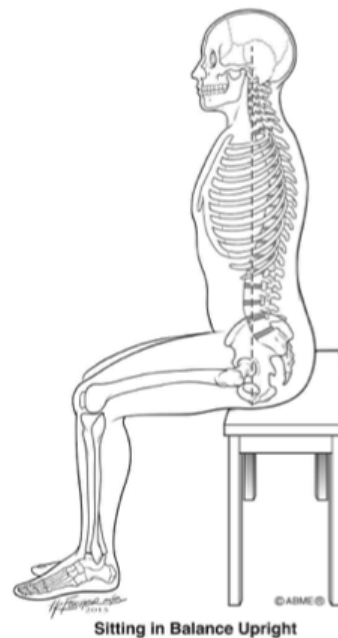
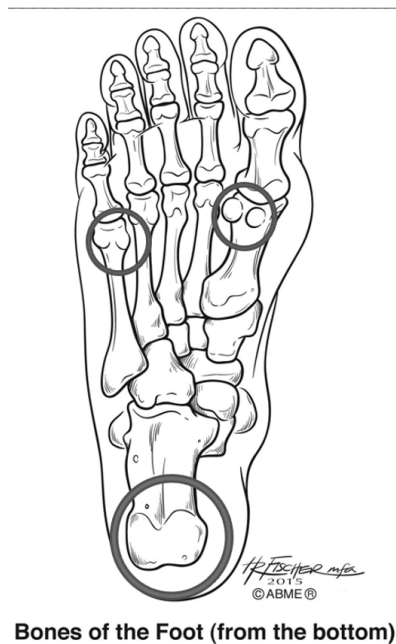
What is Air Support?

- The assistance of air to the sound.

Optimizing Breathing Pedagogy

Setting the Stage

- Find your tripods or sitz bones



Choosing a strategy

1. Full Explanation
2. Fewer, succinct cues

Responding

- Recognize the “rule followers” who are trying to be good students may take instruction to an extreme.
- What do you notice? If you see someone expanding only in the front, try mentioning the role of the back (breathing joints) and that over half of our lung tissue is in the back half of the body.
- Do you notice students bringing their head forward in an effort to breathe quickly? Ask them to breathe through the ears.

Common Obstacles

- Tension in the lower abdomen can cause raised shoulders, an upward expansion, increase panic, and stale air.
- Breathing too often or not enough.
- Confusion about the function and roles of the musculature.

Thank you for your attendance!

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