

How To Instantly Boost Endurance? Smile!

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Author, Fighter's Mind/Fighter's Body

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A simple smile carries a lot of benefits for the fighter, in and out of the ring. It can unnerve your opponent. It can bolster your confidence. It can even entertain your ringside audience. But a smile's effect on endurance is one of its most compelling features.

Let's run an experiment. Clamp down your teeth and lips in a tight frown. Really grimace, like you're angry and upset. Now bring your attention to your diaphragm, your chest, and your throat. Notice the tension. This tension will impair your breathing, restrict your inhalations, and make your muscle activity less efficient. You'll probably even notice it affecting your mood. Your body language has a strong effect on your mental state. By exhibiting negative body language, you'll actually depress your emotional state.

Now smile. Really smile now — a big, toothy grin. Involve your whole face. Did you notice your chest expand? Maybe you even inhaled deeply. What about the tension in your abdomen? I'd wager that your nostrils even flared, improving the volume of your breathing. Your shoulders might have relaxed and dropped, too. All of these changes will give a huge boost to your endurance.

There's even more to smiling, however, than these obvious physiological changes. Smiling releases neurochemicals called endorphins, which have several physiological effects: they relax muscle tension, they improve your mood, and they reduce pain. Even if you don't feel like it, the physical act of making yourself smile will release endorphins.

In addition, we're psychologically conditioned to feel that, when we smile, things are going well and we're happy, satisfied, and excited. Again, even if you don't feel happy because your opponent keeps peppering you with stiff jabs, smiling will help because our brains have difficulty reconciling mental states with contrary body language. Even if you really, really want to be tense, angry, or scared, you'll have a difficult time maintaining your negative mental state if you're smiling.

Whether you're running, wrestling, or striking, the more intensely you're exerting yourself, the more you should smile. Go out there, kick ass, and smile!