

SEPTEMBER — BACK TO CENTER: SHARPENING FOCUS

(DBT ORIGIN: MINDFULNESS BASICS)

ACRONYM: CENTER!



GET READY:

September is always an adjustment month. Everyone is finding their rhythm again — athletes are learning new systems, coaches are establishing culture and expectations, and parents are suddenly balancing school pickups, late-night practices, and everything in between. With so much change happening at once, attention naturally scatters. Minds drift to yesterday's turnover, the test coming up tomorrow, or the pressure of trying to impress new coaches and teammates.

Back to Center, based on DBT's foundational mindfulness skills, offers a quick way to pause, breathe, and step back into the present moment. It is simple, yet one of the most powerful tools for grounding early-season nerves.

HOW TO PRACTICE (FIVE MINUTES):

- SIT STILL AND SOFTEN YOUR GAZE OR CLOSE YOUR EYES.
- TAKE THREE SLOW BREATHS, LENGTHENING YOUR EXHALE.
- NOTICE THREE SOUNDS AROUND YOU, TWO SENSATIONS IN YOUR BODY, AND ONE THING YOU CAN SEE.
- FINISH WITH ONE INTENTIONAL BREATH THAT BRINGS YOUR ATTENTION BACK TO WHAT IS IN FRONT OF YOU.

Hockey Example:

A player lines up for a defensive-zone faceoff. Their mind is racing from a mistake on the last shift. Instead of carrying that frustration into the next play, they take one slow breath, feel their skates under them, and focus on the puck. That single moment of awareness changes their entire presence on the ice.

CENTER:

- CALM BREATH
- ENGAGE SENSES
- NOTICE THOUGHTS
- TUNE IN
- EXHALE
- RETURN TO THE MOMENT

WHY IT MATTERS:

When attention is anchored, athletes make clearer decisions, recover from mistakes faster, and feel more in control of their emotions. A one-minute reset lowers anxiety, evens out breathing, and creates an internal “quiet” that helps the body settle, and the mind sharpen. Coaches can use it to reset a team. Parents can use it on the drive to the rink. Officials can use it after a heated call. It is a universal skill.

TAKEAWAY:

Build one Center Moment into your daily routine, before practice, before school, before bed, or anytime you feel overwhelmed. It may only take a minute, but it teaches athletes how to reset quickly, let go of noise, and come back to themselves. When this becomes a habit, players start showing up to every drill, shift, and moment with clarity and intention, rather than stress or distraction.

BACK TO CENTER

SEPTEMBER – A 60-SECOND RESET

*When the season is new, everything can feel loud:
new systems, new expectations, new pressure.*

*Back to Center is a quick way to pause, reset, and bring
your attention back to what matters right now.*



Instructions:

Read through the CENTER steps once. Then, walk yourself through each step in order. Move slowly, follow the prompts, and actually do each part as you go. This should take about one minute.

The goal is to practice the reset, not just read about it.

CENTER

C — Calm breath

Slow breath in through the nose. Longer breath out.

E — Engage senses

Notice what you can hear, feel, or see.

N — Notice thoughts

What is showing up in your mind right now?

T — Tune in

Where is your attention? On the past, the future, or the present?

E — Exhale

Let go of extra noise, tension, or frustration.

R — Return to the moment

Bring your focus back to the puck, the play, or the task in front of you.

Circle the step that helped you most today:

C E N T E R

When is CENTER Most Useful for Me?

Instructions:

*Think about moments when your focus
tends to drift or when emotions run
high. Mark the situations where using
CENTER would help you reset and
refocus.*


(Check all that apply)

☐ **BEFORE FACEOFFS**

☐ **AFTER A MISTAKE**

☐ **ON THE BENCH**

☐ **BEFORE A SHIFT**

☐ **BETWEEN PERIODS**

☐ **OFF THE ICE**

BACK TO CENTER

SEPTEMBER – A 60-SECOND RESET

My Personal Center Cue

Instructions:

*Write down one simple action or phrase that reminds you to use **CENTER** when you feel rushed, distracted, or frustrated.*

When I start to feel rushed, distracted, or frustrated, I will:

(Example: one slow breath, feel my skates, eyes on the puck)

Takeaway:

Build one Center Moment into your day — before practice, before a shift, or anytime things feel overwhelming. It only takes a minute, but it trains your ability to reset quickly, let go of noise, and play with clarity and intention.

REFLECTION:

Instructions:

You have already completed one full **CENTER** reset.

Now, reflect on how your focus felt before and after the reset.

Circle the option that best fits your experience.

BEFORE CENTER, MY FOCUS FELT LIKE:

☐ Scattered ☐ Okay ☐ Locked in

AFTER CENTER, MY FOCUS FEELS LIKE:

☐ Scattered ☐ Okay ☐ Locked in

“You can’t worry about what happened in the past or what’s going to happen next. You have to stay in the moment.”

– SIDNEY CROSBY

