

# #SettleIn

The mind-body connection is a critical component to success on and off the tennis court. From a physical perspective, a settled body allows for free-flowing, explosive movement and consistent strokes to emerge. Low tension levels throughout the body also lays the foundation for a settled and keenly focused mind. Being aware of physical tension and developing skills to reduce it when required are key factors for maximizing performance. Having the ability to settle in effectively is the first component to building a purposeful and effective routine. Learning to relax and refocus between points allows for the skills gained in training to consistently emerge in the heat of competition.

- Awareness - Understanding personal tendencies (ball flight miscues, physical sensations, and mental/emotional factors) that coincide with increased tension provides valuable feedback. Increased awareness of these tendencies allows for quicker and more seamless recovery from the pitfalls of becoming excessively tight.
- Skills - There are a few ways to turn down the tension dial. One of the most effective methods includes deep “belly” breathing with extra attention placed on the exhale. A total exhale circulates the used, stale air (and mental frustration) out of the system, allowing the body to settle and calm down. An effective exhale also makes way for a naturally full, deep inhale breath to re-energize the mind and body to surge forward with renewed purpose and enthusiasm. Other useful methods for settling the body to reduce tension include bouncing/springing in place; shaking/rolling out the neck, arms and legs; and taking a slow walk to the fence/towel to slow down tempo and rhythm.

Confident performers are those who have a deep understanding of themselves and their tendencies. Even more importantly, these competitors know they possess the mindset and skills to handle any situation thrown their way. Understanding how to settle one’s body is a critical factor in maximizing confidence and reaching one’s ultimate potential.

For individualized, extra help on the mental game reach out to Matt Cuccaro at [matt@telos-spc.com](mailto:matt@telos-spc.com)

***Written by Matt Cuccaro, Ed.M.***  
***Smith Stearns Mental Conditioning***  
***Instagram/Twitter: @MentalCoachMatt***

***E-mail: [matt@telos-spc.com](mailto:matt@telos-spc.com)***