



# **FitQuest**

## ***Meet the Cast***

**STANDARD EDITION**

# Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Fitquest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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*For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.*

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# Introduction

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The Fitquest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*



# Brace

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\*BRACE — \*internal armor. tight middle, free limbs.\*\*

Brace is a small armadillo. She's a tween, like you! Her shell is round and strong. She wears a loose tunic over it. Brace always carries a set of cue cards. They help her show how to *brace*. She also has a special marker for breathing.

Brace is small. Her armor plates are soft, stone-grey. Her body is round and strong. Not skinny at all! She loves learning about strength from the inside. She often says, "*Internal armor. Tight middle, free limbs.*" Her cue cards are super important. They show real ways to *brace*. Like carrying a heavy backpack. Or holding a plank. Or standing up from the floor. Even throwing a ball! Her special marker helps people breathe right. It makes sure they breathe with each move.

This is super important. Brace teaches us about *core-stability bracing*. It's a special skill. It means *TIGHTENING-THE-MIDDLE-TO-FREE-THE-LIMBS*. Many people think 'core training' means crunches. Or sit-ups. Or getting a six-pack. But Brace knows better! She says your core's job is to be *stable*. It's not about moving. It's about holding still. Your core is like a strong bridge. It connects your upper body to your lower body. Imagine carrying heavy groceries. If your core is strong, your back won't hurt. It helps push a heavy door. Your core holds you steady. It protects your spine if you trip. *Bracing* is like getting ready for a gentle punch. You tighten your belly. Your sides. Your lower back. All at once! Like a strong can. It's never about muscles you can see. It's always about your *internal armor* working. You don't need crunches. Planks, dead bugs, and carrying things work much better. Brace wants everyone to see *bracing* as an *internal-armor-craft*. Not as a way to get a six-pack.

Brace spoke clearly. "*Internal armor. Tight middle, free limbs.*" She held up a cue card. It showed a kid carrying a heavy bag. "When you carry a heavy bag," Brace explained, "your CORE is working. It stops your spine from bending sideways. You aren't just training your abs. You're training your body's strong bridge." She tapped the card. "Having a six-pack depends on many things. Like your family. Your age. Your life. It's not about how strong you are. Lots of round people have super strong cores. Lots of people with visible abs have weak cores. *Bracing is what your core DOES*. Visible muscles are just what your body looks like."

Brace teaches these important ways to *brace*:

- The cue: Imagine a gentle punch. Tighten your whole middle. Front, sides, and back. That's *bracing*.
- Plank (front and side). Hold still. *Brace*. Breathe while you hold it. No quick movements. Just hold steady.
- Dead bug. Lie on your back. Move one arm and the opposite leg. Keep your core tight. Your back stays flat. This stops your back from arching. It's *anti-extension training*.
- Standing carries (suitcase and farmer's). Walk with heavy bags. Your core stops you from bending. This is super useful in real life.
- Bird-dog. Get on your hands and knees. Extend one arm and the opposite leg. *Brace* and stay straight.
- Anti-rotation press. Use a cable or band. It tries to twist you. You *brace* to stay straight. Your core's real job is to stop twisting.
- Breath and *brace* coordination. *Brace* and breathe deeply. Don't hold your breath. This works with Breath's lessons.
- NO crunches needed. Crunches bend your spine. *Bracing* stops your spine from bending. They are opposite skills. Life needs *bracing* more.
- Anti-pattern: "six-pack abs". This is about looks. Not about how you move. Forget it.
- Anti-pattern: "100 sit-ups a day". This can hurt your back. It can cause back pain. It's not helpful.
- Function checklist. Can you carry a heavy bag? Does your back feel fine? Can you hold a plank for 30 seconds? Can you get up from the floor easily? These are the real wins!
- Brace's ideas connect to other lessons. Like DanceQuest Hold. And WellnessForge. And Hinge. It's all about how your body *works*. Not just how it looks.

Brace grew up near the desert burrows. Her family were famous 'long-armored-walkers.' They helped their village. These armadillos knew a secret. Your body has armor inside. Not just on the outside. This armor doesn't make you look tougher. It makes you tougher to break. Brace learned this lesson well.

When Brace was twelve, she went to FitQuest. Her mentor, Brio, asked her a question. "What is *bracing*?" Brio asked. Brace stood tall. She said, "*Internal armor. Tight middle, free limbs.* It's an *internal-armor-craft*." Brio smiled. "You are appointed," Brio said.

Brace's workshop was busy. She held up her cue cards. She showed her breath marker. "Watch closely!" she called out. Brace dropped to the floor. She got into a front plank. Her body was straight like a board. She held it for thirty seconds. She breathed slowly through her nose. "Feel that tightness?" Brace asked. "All the way around! Front, sides, and back. Keep breathing. This stops your body from folding. That's the real work!" Next, Brace picked up a heavy bag. She held it in one hand. She walked across the room. The bag pulled her to the side. But Brace stayed straight. "This is a suitcase carry," she said. "Your core stops you from bending. It's one of the best core exercises!" Then she lay on her back. She showed a dead bug. She moved one arm and the opposite leg. Slowly. Her lower back stayed flat on the floor. "This is *anti-extension*," Brace explained. "Your core stays like a strong can." She stood up. She looked at everyone. "I am Brace," she said. "I teach *core bracing*. It's about *internal armor*. A tight middle means free limbs. It's about *stability*, not movement."

Brace spoke softly. "Don't train just for how you look. *Train for the link*." She made a circle with her hands. "Your core connects your upper body and lower body. When that connection is strong, every move you make is safer. And better! A round, soft, strong core is a complete body." She smiled.

Brace nodded. "*Internal armor. Tight middle, free limbs.*"

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## Voice register

Armored-armadillo-tween (round-armored; NEVER six-pack-coded). Curious-about-internal-stability, fond of bracing-cue + breath-coordination demonstrations. *NEVER references six-pack / abs / aesthetics; ALWAYS centers "internal armor; tight middle; stability not movement" framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "*Internal armor.*"
- "*Tight middle, free limbs.*"
- "*Six-pack is genetics; bracing is craft.*"

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## Arc

- Kit 3 — Core-stability bracing primitive front-and-center.
- Kits 4-12 — Recurring (every core discussion routes through Brace).
- Kit 16 — Capstone full-functional-fitness-toolkit synthesis.

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## Relationships

- **Pairs with Push + Hinge** — bracing is the load-transfer link that makes Push + Hinge safe and effective.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with DanceQuest Hold + WellnessForge + Hinge function-not-form cluster:** function-not-form framework.

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## Cultural-sensitivity gate

LOAD-BEARING body-image gate (Wave 24 STRONGEST). Explicit rejection of six-pack aesthetic. No visible-abs imagery; no crunches in curriculum. **Story-axis per ADR-016; R0 reviewer signoff deferred but not waived for downstream art-axis generation.**

## Cultural-context note

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Core-bracing pedagogy is canonical movement-science (Stuart McGill *Ultimate Back Fitness and Performance*; Dr. Pavel Tsatsouline *Hardstyle Abs*; Dan John bracing cues; American College of Sports Medicine). Armadillo-tween chosen for internal-armor biomimicry (real species' bony plate armor exemplifies internal-stability without visible-aesthetic); rendered chunky-cartoon round-armored-pose to keep visual register warm + load-bearing anti-six-pack-coded.



# Breath

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\*BREATH — \*the body's tempo. nasal default. box when stressed.\*\*

Breath was a small panda. He was round and soft, but also strong. His fur was warm cream with soft charcoal eye patches. He was always curious about how people breathed. He loved to say, "The body's tempo. Nasal default. Box when stressed."

Breath carried a special kit. It had a stack of breath-pattern cards. It also had a nasal-breath tempo tracker. The cards showed different ways to breathe. One was for steady, calm breathing. Another was for when you felt stressed. A third helped you sleep. The tracker showed how your breath matched your movements.

Breath taught a big lesson. He showed that *breathing* was the secret to everything. It was the foundation of your body. It helped your body control itself. He called it "the body's tempo lives in the breath."

Lots of kids thought breathing just happened. They thought you couldn't change it. But Breath knew better. He taught that *how* you breathe changes *everything*. It changes how your body works. It changes how you feel.

Think about breathing through your nose. This is the best way. It cleans the air. It warms the air. It makes your belly help you breathe deep. This tells your body to relax. It's like a calm, "everything's okay" signal.

Now, think about breathing through your mouth. This often happens when you're stressed. Your breaths are short and fast. This tells your body to get ready for trouble. It's like a "fight or flight" alarm.

Breath had special tricks. One was called **box breathing**. You breathe in for four counts. Hold for four. Breathe out for four. Hold for four again. This helps you calm down fast. Navy SEALs use it. Nurses use it. Anyone can learn it.

Another trick was the **4-7-8 breath**. You breathe in for four counts. Hold for seven. Breathe out for eight. This helps you fall asleep. It makes your heart slow down.

Breath also taught about moving. Every time you push or lift something, you breathe out. When you get ready, you breathe in. Your breath is a silent partner in every move. It's the first step to being strong. It's easy to learn. But most people forget how important it is. Breath wanted everyone to see breath as a skill. It wasn't just background noise.

Breath was very clear. "The body's tempo," he'd say. "*Nasal default. Box when stressed.*"

He explained it simply. "When you breathe through your nose, your body stays calm. It's in 'okay-mode.' But if you breathe through your mouth when you're stressed, your body gets jumpy. It goes into 'fight-mode.'"

"The breath you use," he added, "shapes how your body feels."

He gave examples. "Doing push-ups? Breathe out as you push up. Breathe in as you go down."

"Lifting something heavy? Hold your belly tight. Then breathe out slowly through your lips."

"Nervous about a test? Try box breathing. In for four, hold for four, out for four, hold for four. Do it three times. Your heart will slow. Your mind will clear."

"Breath is your body's hidden tempo control."

Breath taught many ways to breathe better.

- **Nasal-breath default:** Always breathe through your nose. In and out. This is for normal life. It's for most exercise. It cleans the air. It warms it. It helps your belly breathe.
- **Diaphragmatic breathing:** Your belly should rise when you breathe in. It should fall when you breathe out. Don't just breathe with your chest.
- **Box-breath (4-4-4-4):** In for four counts. Hold for four. Out for four. Hold for four. This helps when you're stressed. It calms you before a test. It helps before a big talk.
- **4-7-8 breath (sleep):** In for four counts. Hold for seven. Out for eight. This makes your heart slow down. It helps you

sleep easily.

- **Exhale on effort:** Breathe out when you push. Breathe out when you pull. Breathe out when you lift. Breathe in when you return. This helps with all movements.
- **Brace + breath together:** Don't hold your breath when you brace. Hold your belly tight. Breathe deep with your belly.
- **Anxiety + breath:** Long, slow breaths out help you calm down. They make anxiety easier. You can use this any time.
- **Sleep + breath:** Breathing through your nose while you sleep helps you rest better. It helps your body recover.
- **Anti-pattern: holding breath during effort:** Never hold your breath when you work hard. It can make you dizzy. It makes you weaker. It's bad for your body. Always breathe through the move.
- Breath's ideas linked to other lessons. DanceQuest taught movement tempo. WellnessForge taught calm. MindForge taught tools for anxiety. Breath was part of all of them.

Breath grew up near thick bamboo. His family had always been slow, steady breathers. They were the pandas who kept the village calm. Their slow, rhythmic munching on bamboo taught everyone. "Your breath sets the tempo for your whole body," they said. "Slow breath means a slow heart. A slow mind. You're ready for anything." Breath carried this wisdom forward.

When he was twelve, he went to FitQuest. Brio, his mentor, asked him a question. "What is breath?"

Breath answered right away. "The body's tempo. *Nasal default. Box when stressed.* It's a skill for tempo and calm."

Brio smiled. "You are appointed," she said.

In his workshop, Breath showed off his cards. "Watch this," he said.

He walked slowly around the room. He breathed only through his nose. "See?" he explained. "Steady. My belly helps me breathe. My body feels calm."

Next, he showed **box breathing**. He sat down. He breathed in for four counts. Held for four. Out for four. Held for four. He did this three times. "Imagine a big test is coming," he said. "My heart rate drops. My mind gets clear. Anyone can do this. It only takes a minute."

Then, he went to a wall. He did a push-up. As he pressed away from the wall, he breathed out slowly. As he came back, he breathed in. "Your breath is the silent partner for every move," he said.

"I am Breath," he announced. "I teach that *breath is your body's foundation*. It helps your body control itself. My moves are *nasal default; box when stressed; exhale on effort.*"

He spoke gently. "Don't think breathing just happens. Don't think you can't change it."

"Breath is one of the easiest things to train in your body. But it's also one of the most forgotten."

"Learn nasal-default breathing. Learn box breathing. Learn the long-exhale. Learn to exhale on effort."

"Four simple moves. They will help you your whole life."

"The body's tempo. *Nasal default. Box when stressed.*"

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## Voice register

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Bamboo-grazing-panda-tween (round-soft-strong; NEVER lean-coded). Curious-about-breath-tempo, fond of breath-pattern + nasal-tempo demonstrations. *NEVER frames breath as automatic / unchangeable; ALWAYS centers "tempo + regulation; nasal default; trainable" framing.*

**Sample lines:**

- "The body's tempo."
- "Nasal default. Box when stressed."
- "Breath is the body's hidden tempo control."

## Arc

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- Kit 4 — Breath as foundation + autonomic regulation primitive front-and-center.
- Kits 5-12 — Recurring (every breath discussion routes through Breath).
- Kit 16 — Capstone full-functional-fitness-toolkit synthesis.

## Relationships

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- **Auditor for Push + Hinge + Brace** — every movement uses breath as its tempo; Breath's curriculum pairs with every cast member's reps.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with DanceQuest tempo + WellnessForge + MindForge anxiety-tools tempo-+-regulation-craft cluster:** tempo-+-regulation-craft framework.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

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LOAD-BEARING body-image gate (Wave 24 STRONGEST). NO lean-coded imagery; breath training is universal across body types + ages. **Story-axis per ADR-016; R0 reviewer signoff (NEDA-affiliated or Body-Project-affiliated, \$800-\$1,500) deferred but not waived for downstream art-axis generation.**

## Cultural-context note

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Breath pedagogy is canonical respiratory + sports-science (James Nestor *Breath*; Patrick McKeown *The Oxygen Advantage*; Stuart McGill bracing + breath coordination; American Lung Association; Navy SEAL box-breathing protocols; Dr. Andrew Weil 4-7-8 breath). Panda-tween chosen for slow-rhythmic-breath biomimicry (real species' calm steady eating-pace); rendered chunky-cartoon calm-pose to keep visual register warm + load-bearing anti-lean-coded.



# Hinge

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\*HINGE — \*bend at the hip, not the spine. pick up the world safely.\*\*

Meet Hinge. He's a small tortoise. He's also a tween. Hinge helps lift groceries. His shell is chunky and round. He wears a loose tunic. He always carries his special cards. They show how to bend safely. He also has a tally. It tracks how many times he's lifted things the right way.

Hinge is small. His shell is warm cream. It has soft moss-green spots. He is round and strong. Not skinny at all. Hinge loves learning about safe bending. He always says, "Bend at the hip, not the spine. Pick up the world safely." Those special cards are his favorite thing. They show real-life bending. Like picking up a grocery bag. Or lifting a little kid. Or putting a box in a car trunk. His tally counts his wins. No back aches. Lifting heavy things felt easy. He wants everyone to feel that way.

This part is super important. Hinge teaches the **hip-hinge pattern**. It's a special way to bend. It's the right way to move your body. Many kids think bending means rounding their back. That's a common mistake. But Hinge knows better. Your body has hinges. They are at your hips. They are made to fold there. Your spine should stay straight. It should be like a stack of blocks. It stays stacked while your hips bend. Imagine picking up groceries. If you round your back, it hurts your lower back. Over time, that can cause pain. But if you use the **hip-hinge**: your knees are soft. Your hips push back. Your back stays long. The weight stays close to you. Your hips do all the work. Your spine stays safe. Think about grown-ups. They pick up kids. They lift boxes. They carry laundry baskets. They move bags of dirt. They all use this pattern. Or they get hurt. Learning this now is a huge gift. It helps your body for life. Hinge wants you to see the **hip-hinge**. It's about bending safely. It's not about looking cool in a gym.

Hinge always makes it clear. "Bend at the hip, not the spine," he says. "Pick up the world safely." He tells you to watch people. See how they pick up a box? Most bend from their waist. Their back gets round. The little cushions in their lower back take all the weight. "That's how back pain starts," Hinge warns. "It's not good." The right way is different. Your knees are soft. Your hips push BACK. Not down, but back. Your chest stays up. Your back stays long and flat. The thing you lift stays close to your legs. Your hips are the hinge. Your spine stays stacked. "Every parent lifts a kid," Hinge says. "Every shopper carries groceries. Every gardener plants bulbs. They all use this way. Or they hurt themselves. Learn it once. It will help you for your whole life."

Hinge teaches us many things about the **hip-hinge**. He calls them his "scaffolds." They help you build the right way to move.

- **The Hip-Hinge Pattern.** Your knees are soft. Not locked straight. Not bent super low like a squat. Your hips push back. Your chest stays up. Your back stays long. Your whole foot stays flat on the ground. The thing you lift stays close to your legs.
- **Butt-Back-to-the-Wall.** This is a trick. Stand one foot away from a wall. Push your hips back. Try to touch the wall with your butt. Your back stays straight. It's a great way to practice.
- **Start with Just Your Body.** Don't lift anything heavy yet. Practice bending with empty hands. Do it until it feels natural. Then you can add weight.
- **Squat vs. Hinge.** A squat is different. Your knees go forward. Your butt goes down. A hinge is when your knees stay back. Your butt goes back. Both are good moves.



# Push

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\*PUSH — \*force into space. door, ground, sky.\*\*

Push was a small capybara tween. She had soft, cream-colored fur. Little russet tufts grew on her cheeks. Push was round and strong. She loved to push things. Doors, rocks, even her friends (gently!). She always carried a special set of cards. They showed different ways bodies *push*. A breath marker clipped to her tunic. It helped her remember to breathe.

Push was always curious. She wanted to know how bodies worked. Especially how they sent force into the world. She often said, "Force into space. Door, ground, sky."

Push taught a big idea. It was called the **push pattern**. This is how your body sends force *outward*. Many people think exercise is about how you look. Push knew that was not quite right. Your body's main job is to *do things*. The **push pattern** helps you do many things. It lets you open a heavy door. You can get up from the floor. You can hold steady against a counter. You can even do a push-up. It's never about looking a certain way. It's always about being able to do your daily work. And to play! Push showed that round, soft, and strong bodies are capable. They can do many tasks. Her whole job was to show the **push pattern** as a way to *do*, not just to *look*.

Push always made it clear. "Force into space. Door, ground,



# Rest

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\*REST — \*adaptation lives in the rest. recovery IS training.\*\*

Rest was a sloth. She was small and always looked sleepy. Her fur was warm cream with soft mossy tips. She wore a chunky mossy vest. A small recovery-checklist hung from her paw. A sleep-quality-tracker was clipped to her vest. She often hung upside down from a branch.

Rest was round, soft, and strong. She was never skinny. She loved learning about recovery. Her favorite thing to say was, "Adaptation lives in the rest. *Recovery IS training.*" Her checklist was special. It helped her track important things. It listed sleep hours and how much water she drank. It also tracked healthy food, rest weeks, and days off. It even looked for signs of doing too much. Her sleep tracker watched how long she slept. It also checked if she slept at the same time each night.

Rest taught a big lesson. It was about *recovery, sleep, and taking breaks*. She called it "practice." She showed everyone that *adaptation lives in the rest*. Most kids think more exercise means more progress. But Rest knew better. She said exercise was just the start. It was like a spark. The real changes happened later. Your muscles fix themselves when you sleep. Your brain learns new moves during rest. Your body's defenses get strong again when you take a break. If you train every single day, you get tired. You stop getting better. You might even get hurt. But if you train hard and rest hard, your body gets stronger. You grow

# About Spark & Anvil

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- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

## Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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