I. Introduction
   A. Is physical tension always bad? No.
   B. What is good physical tension?
      1. Lip tension (buzzing)
      2. Muscles to hold up instrument with good posture
      3. Balanced pucker/pressure
      4. Breath support
   C. What is bad physical tension?
      1. Raised shoulders
      2. Grunting sounds in throat
      3. Bad posture (result = tension/resistance while breathing)
      4. Unbalanced pucker/pressure
      5. Constricted airflow
      6. White knuckles; death grip
      7. Stress
   D. What are symptoms of bad physical tension?
      1. Poor/strained tone
      2. Inefficient playing
      3. Reduced endurance
      4. Dizziness
      5. Tender lips
      6. Poor accuracy
      7. Hernia
      8. Inaccurate playing
      9. Red face, bulging veins
      10. Stiff muscles
   E. Reducing tension will:
      1. Improve tone
      2. Encourage efficiency
      3. Improve endurance
      4. Enable accurate playing
      5. Be more comfortable

II. Diagnosing Tension
   A. Watch yourself in the mirror, if you look uncomfortable then there is too much tension
   B. Record yourself playing in all registers and listen for a consistent, pleasant tone
   C. When you play, do you feel noticeably different than when you are talking? If so, there is too much tension.
   D. Feel your throat with your left hand during articulation and lip slurs to feel for guttural noises. When you articulate, slur, or release a note, do you grunt?

III. Reducing Tension
   A. General
      1. Physical stretches, yoga, etc.
      2. Breathing Gym exercises (not just stretches, but all exercises)
      3. Daily physical exercise
      4. Get plenty of rest
B. Specific to playing  
1. Exercise #1 – straw method  
   a. Stand up  
   b. Place big straw between lips  
   c. Cover end with finger so no air escapes  
   d. Blow air and deliberately create tension all through body  
   e. Slowly release all tension while still blowing air  
      - Keep shoulders down  
      - Reduce neck to normal size  
      - No blood rushing to head  
      - Only tension you should feel is in lungs and gut  
      - Notice difference between tension and backpressure  
   f. Release finger and let air flow naturally  
   g. This is the way we need to play all of the time  
2. Exercise #2 – Pendulum inhale/exhale with large straw  
   a. Place straw between lips  
   b. Take a full breath (as if playing) and exhale through straw  
   c. Make sure there is no hesitation between inhale and exhale  
   d. After air is exhaled, inhale again (as if playing)  
   e. Exhale, repeat  
   f. Inhale/exhale should be one motion like a pendulum  
3. Exercise #3 – tonguing (single or multiple) through small straw  
   - Same as exercise #2, but with an articulation pattern on exhale  
4. Exercise #4 – feel the tension (good and bad) while playing  
   a. Play a 2nd line G as relaxed as possible  
      - Locate the tension in all parts of your body  
      - Now eliminate tension in places where it is not needed  
      (i.e. toes, legs, hands, chest, neck, eyebrows, etc.)  
      - Feel how good and comfortable it is to play relaxed  
   b. Ditto, but then slur to 3rd space C and stay equally relaxed  
   c. Ditto, but then slur to 4th space E and stay equally relaxed  
   d. Etc.  
   *Remember to feel air resistance instead of tension  

IV. Conclusion  
A. How often should these exercises be practiced?  
   1. Whenever you notice any of the symptoms  
   2. Daily, in different varieties and order  
   3. While resting during practice  
B. Are these the only exercises to reduce tension?  
   - No. Create your own!  
C. Reducing tension will increase endurance. But be aware that as endurance wanes, tension may creep in.