

4-7-8 Breathing

Introduction / Definition

The 4-7-8 breathing technique, sometimes called the “relaxing breath,” was popularized by Dr. Andrew Weil as a way to calm the mind and body quickly. It involves inhaling for 4 counts, holding the breath for 7 counts, and exhaling slowly for 8 counts. This extended exhalation helps the body let go of tension and activates the relaxation response.

Why it helps

The 4-7-8 rhythm slows down the breath and encourages more oxygen intake, which can settle the mind and reduce stress. The long exhale signals to your body that it is safe to relax. People often find it especially helpful at bedtime, or in moments of anxiety. Benefits include:

- Reducing anxiety and stress
- Slowing heart rate and lowering blood pressure
- Helping with sleep difficulties
- Calming racing thoughts
- Promoting mindfulness and presence

Guided Instructions

1. Sit upright in a comfortable position. Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth, just behind your teeth, and keep it there.
2. Exhale fully through your mouth, making a gentle “whoosh” sound.
3. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose for 4 seconds (1...2...3...4).
4. Hold your breath for 7 seconds (1...2...3...4...5...6...7).
5. Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth for 8 seconds, making a “whoosh” sound (1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8).
6. This is one cycle. Repeat for 3–4 cycles. (*Do not exceed 4 cycles when first starting out.*)
7. After finishing, return to natural breathing and notice how your body feels.

Reflection / Notes

Did you feel calmer or sleepier? Was it difficult to hold or exhale at first?
