



Use the 4-7-8 breathing exercise to help find calm

Do you ever feel frazzled at work? Overwhelmed at home? Frustrated during your commute? Or simply stressed out? If so, then try using the 4-7-8 breathing technique. It can help you gain a sense of calm. You can also use it for general relaxation, such as when you're getting ready to sleep or taking a break.



Integrative medicine specialist Dr. Andrew Weil is the Clinical Professor of Medicine and Professor of Public Health at the University of Arizona. He developed 4-7-8 breathing as a simple and useful way to help manage mild-to-moderate stress and anxiety. He calls it a “natural tranquilizer” for the nervous system.

When you feel stressed out, your body's sympathetic nervous system takes over. That leads to what is commonly known as your “fight or flight” response. This response helps you when you're in danger or in a situation that requires acting quickly. But too much stress can become chronic. And it can lead to serious health conditions that include:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Anxiety

When done properly, 4-7-8 breathing activates your parasympathetic nervous system. That decreases your heart rate and blood pressure. It also helps promote digestion and other important life-sustaining functions. It can help you build resiliency and overall well-being over the long term.

As you learn to relax and control your breath with 4-7-8 breathing, your body will be learning, too. After a while, your body will get used to triggering the exercise when your stress level rises – to help you find calm.

To practice 4-7-8 breathing:

- 1 Get into a comfortable position, such as sitting up straight or lying down.
- 2 Place the tip of your tongue against the tissue behind your upper front teeth.
- 3 Slowly inhale through your nose to a mental count of 4.
- 4 Hold your breath for a mental count of 7.
- 5 Exhale – making a “whoosh” sound – through your mouth to the mental count of 8.



It is recommended to repeat the exercise for **4 breath cycles, twice a day.**

Sources

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