

# 4-7-8 Breath Relaxation

“A natural tranquilizer for the nervous system” — Dr. Andrew Weil

Simple | Quick | No equipment needed | Do it anywhere | Anyone can do it

**Before you begin:** Sit comfortably with your back straight. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth and keep it there through the entire exercise. Exhale through your mouth around your tongue — try pursing your lips slightly.

4  
INHALE

7  
HOLD

8  
EXHALE

## THE STEPS

1

### Exhale

Breathe out completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound. Empty your lungs fully.

2

### Inhale 4

Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of 4.

3

### Hold 7

Hold your breath and silently count to 7.

4

### Exhale 8

Breathe out completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound, to a count of 8.

## WHY IT WORKS

### The science

Rooted in ancient yogic Pranayama practices. The prolonged exhale activates the parasympathetic nervous system — your body's rest and digest mode — slowing heart rate and signaling safety to the brain.

### Does the ratio matter?

The absolute speed isn't critical — the 4:7:8 ratio is. If holding for 7 is difficult, speed up the counts but keep the proportions. With practice, slow it all down.

### How often

Dr. Weil recommends at least twice daily. Do not exceed four breath cycles at a time for the first month. Later, extend to eight cycles.

### When to use it

Before reacting to something upsetting. When you notice internal tension. Before sleep. Anytime you need to return to calm.

*This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.*

*“Unlike tranquilizing drugs, which lose their power over time, this exercise is subtle when you first try it — but gains in power with repetition and practice.”*

— Dr. Andrew Weil, Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine