

4-7-8 Technique

Another effective breathing technique to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system is the "4-7-8" breathing technique, also known as the Relaxing Breath Exercise. This method was popularized by Dr. Andrew Weil and is designed to calm the mind and induce a state of relaxation.

Get Comfortable: Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Place the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, just behind your front teeth, and keep it there throughout the exercise.

Exhale Completely: Close your mouth and quietly exhale completely through your mouth. Make a whooshing sound as you release all the air from your lungs.

Inhale Quietly through Your Nose for a Count of 4: Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four. Focus on filling your lungs with air, expanding your diaphragm.

Hold Your Breath for a Count of 7: Once you've inhaled, hold your breath for a count of seven. Focus on a steady and calm pause.

Exhale Completely through Your Mouth for a Count of 8: Open your mouth slightly and exhale completely, making a whooshing sound, to a count of eight. Allow all the tension to leave your body as you release the breath.

Repeat the Cycle: This completes one breath cycle. Inhale again and repeat the process for a total of four breath cycles when starting. You can gradually increase the number of cycles as you become more accustomed to the technique.

Practice Regularly: Aim to practice the 4-7-8 breathing technique at least twice a day. It's especially useful before bedtime, or whenever you feel stressed or anxious.

Tips for Success:

1. Maintain a gentle and effortless pace throughout the exercise.
2. Focus on the counting and the rhythm of the breath to divert your attention from distracting thoughts.
3. As you become more proficient, you can adjust the ratio to suit your comfort, but always maintain the 4-7-8 sequence.