

Breathing Exercises

4-7-8 Breath

4
7
8

4-7-8 breathing is an effective way of getting the body into a state of deep relaxation which makes it a great practice before bedtime. You may experience light headedness or shortness of breath at first as you learn to slow your breath.

Sit up straight in a supported position or lie down comfortably. If it feels safe close your eyes or look down if that feels more comfortable. Let your lips part. Exhale through your mouth by making a whoosh sound.

- 1 Inhale.** Close your lips and inhale through your nose while you count to four in your head.
- 2 Hold.** At the top of the inhale hold your breath to the count of 7 in your head. Try to keep the back of your throat open and do not strain. Just rest for a count of 7.
- 3 Exhale.** While pursing your lips breathe out slowly while making a whoosh sound for a count of eight.

Repeat up to four times.

When first learning this technique repeat the cycle a maximum of 4 times. As you feel more comfortable with 4-7-8 breathing you can work your way up to 8 cycles twice daily. Do not exceed 8 breath cycles at time.

Alternative Nostril Breath



Alternative Nostril Breath counteracts the "fight or flight" response and helps relax the body. Use Alternative Nostril Breath anytime you feel stressed or anxious and as a part of a daily meditation practice.

Sit up straight in a supported position with your left hand resting on your left knee. Hover your right pointer finger on your left nostril and right thumb over your right nostril. If it feels safe close your eyes or look down if that feels more comfortable. Exhale through your mouth by making a whoosh sound.

- 1 Inhale.** Use your thumb to push down on your right nostril blocking it. Inhale slowly with your left nostril to the count of three.
- 2 Hold.** Use your index finger to push down on your left nostril while continuing to keep your right nostril closed. Hold to a count of two.
- 3 Exhale.** Release your thumb and exhale through your right nostril for a count of three.
- 4 Hold.** Pause at the bottom of the exhale for a count of two.
- 5 Inhale.** While continuing to keep your left nostril closed inhale to a count of three with your right nostril.
- 6 Hold.** Use your thumb to push down on your right nostril while continuing to keep your left nostril closed. Hold to a count of two.
- 7 Exhale.** Release your index finger and exhale through your left nostril for a count of three.
- 8 Hold.** Pause at the bottom of the exhale for a count of two.

Repeat for up to 5 minutes.

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Mindful Breath



Mindful Breath pulls the focus off of things that might be troubling you and instead focuses your attention on the simple act of breathing. Any time of day is a good time to practice Mindful Breathing.

Sit up straight in a supported position with your hands resting palms up or palms down on your knees. If it feels safe close your eyes or look down if that feels more comfortable.

- 1 Settle In.** Allow yourself "land" in your body. Feel the support of the chair and the floor underneath you. Notice the temperature of the room. What sounds can you hear? Try to relax your body while still feeling supported.
- 2 Turn inward.** Without changing anything bring your focus to your breath. Notice the inhale and the exhale. Ask yourself where your breath is going in your body. If it feels comfortable put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Is your breath going to your chest? To your belly? Can you feel the air coming in and out of your nose? Can you feel your breath in your mouth? Is there a pause between the inhale and exhale? No need to change anything. Simply sit here and breathe and pay attention.
- 3 Notice your thoughts.** It is completely natural for your mind to wander. Try to not judge when this happens. Instead congratulate yourself for noticing that your thoughts have begun to stray. Gently bring your focus back again to your breath and continue.

Repeat for up to 10 minutes.

Some find it helpful to set a timer for this practice.

Box Breath



Box Breathing is one of the easiest of the "focusing on the breath" practices which makes it a great introduction to deep breathing exercises. A good time to practice Box Breathing is before or during stressful events and as a part of your bedtime routine.

Sit up straight in a supported position with your hands resting palms up or palms down on your knees. If it feels safe close your eyes or look down if that feels more comfortable.

- 1 Inhale.** Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose and count slowly to four. Feel your belly and lungs expand.
- 2 Pause.** At the top of the inhale pause for another slow count of four. Try to keep the back of your throat open during this pause.
- 3 Exhale.** Exhale through your mouth for the same slow count of four as you expel all of the breath from your belly and lungs
- 4 Pause.** At the bottom of the exhale pause for another slow count to four.

Repeat for up to 10 minutes.

If you are having trouble staying focused during this exercise tap each fingertip to your thumb as you count to four.