



## 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

This breathing technique developed by Dr. Andrew Weil is a powerful way to elicit the relaxation response that gets more effective over time. It is a tonic for the nervous system, shifting energy from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic system, with many physiological benefits, including lowered blood pressure and heart rate, increased circulation to the extremities and skin, and improved digestion. It can also help you let go of emotional upset and cravings.

### Instructions

1. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge behind and above your front teeth and keep it there through the whole exercise.
2. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a *whoosh* sound.
3. Close your mouth and inhale deeply and quietly through the nose to a (silent) count of 4.
4. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
5. Exhale audibly through your mouth to a count of 8.
6. Repeat steps 3, 4, and 5 for a total of four breaths.

This breathing practice can be done in any position; if seated, keep your back straight. Note that you always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth. The tip of your tongue stays in position the whole time. Exhalation takes twice as long as inhalation. The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases.

Practice the exercise at least twice a day and, in addition, whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or off center.

Do not do more than four breaths at one time for the first month of practice but repeat the exercise as often as you wish. After a month, if you are comfortable with it, increase to eight breaths each time.

# SOUL PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

## Deep Breathing Script (Self Controlled)

The following is a brief relaxation method to be used at times when you are experiencing anxiety or just prior to an activity that is likely to produce anxiety. It should be practiced many times until you are able to do it on your own. With repeated practice you can achieve very deep levels of relaxation in a short period of time.

Begin by sitting in a chair with your arms comfortably at your side, hands in your lap. You may wish to loosen your neck and shoulder muscles by rolling your head and raising your shoulders several times.... close your eyes and let your head come forward until it is resting comfortably. Begin to focus on your breathing. Breathe slowly and gently...inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth ... As you breathe in, concentrate on using your diaphragm ... as you breathe in you should notice your lower chest and stomach expanding greatly all of your bodily tensions.

Continue this slow and gentle breathing as long as necessary and notice that your muscles will become heavy and your mind will clear. As you start to relax imagine that you are engaging in a favorite relaxing activity: laying on the beach, sitting by a lake, listening to favorite music, and taking a bath. You choose the scene; make it comfortable and very relaxing.

When you are fully relaxed and ready to return, open your eyes and begin your task.

# SOUL PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

## Deep Breathing Script (Guided)

Take a few moments to relax as much as you can totally on your own.

Settle back as comfortably as you can. Close your eyes and, if you are sitting up, let your head come forward until it is resting comfortably.

Begin by sitting with your arms comfortably at your side, hands in your lap.

Let yourself relax to the very best of your ability.

Begin to feel that comfortable heaviness that accompanies relaxation.

At this time, breathe easily ... freely in and freely out.

Try and assume a passive, detached attitude. Concentrate on what is happening and the sensations you feel.

When your mind wanders, just gently bring it back to the present.

Now, slowly touch your chin to your chest and then bring it back up. Slowly bend your head back to gently stretch the back of your neck and then bring it back up.

Slowly bend your head over to your right shoulder and back up.

Slowly bend your head over to your left shoulder and back.

Slowly rotate your head to the right and back.

Slowly rotate your head to the left and back.

Tighten your shoulders by raising them up as if you were going to touch your ears.

--hold --

# SOUL PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

Release

Push your shoulder blades back as if you were going to touch them together

--hold --

Release

**Next are some gentle breathing exercises.**

Continue to relax as you practice your breathing.

Remember to breathe from as low as possible...with your abdominal muscles.

Let the motion of breathing be like filling up a glass with water. The glass fills from the bottom to the top.

This is how air should fill your lungs...from the bottom to the top.

Don't force your breathing; it's not a contest to see how much air you can take in. Just do it in a relaxed, peaceful manner.

Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose.

Hold the breath for a bit, filling your lungs up with as much air as you can, not forgetting to fill from the bottom up... and then slowly release the air through your mouth.

The key is to breathe slowly and deeply by using your diaphragm to draw air in and out naturally and effortlessly.

Feel the comfortable heaviness that accompanies relaxation and deep, cleansing breathing.

# SOUL PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

Continue breathing deeply and slowly as you focus on the following breathing visualization.

As you breathe, imagine that colored air is flowing into your lungs.

Choose any color you like, from a single color to a rainbow.

With each breath, the air fills your body from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.

Continue inhaling the colored air until it occupies every part of you, bones and muscles included.

Once you have completely filled yourself with the colored air, I am going to ask that you begin letting go of the colored air with each exhalation.

Allow a small amount of the warm, colored air to leave your body with each breath you exhale.

The level of the air (much like the water in a glass as it is emptied) will begin to drop.

It will descend progressively lower, from your head down to your feet. As you continue to exhale the colored air, watch the level go lower and lower, farther and farther down your body.

As the last of the colored air leaves your body, the level will drop down to your toes and disappear.

Stay quiet for just a moment.

Then notice how relaxed and comfortable you feel.”