

The 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise

The key to this exercise is to remember the numbers 4, 7 and 8. It's not important to focus on how much time you spend in each phase of the breathing activity, but rather that you get the ratio correct.

Here's how it's done:

1. Sit up straight
2. Place the tip of your tongue up against the back of your front teeth. Keep it there through the entire breathing process
3. Breathe in silently through your nose to the count of four
4. Hold your breath to the count of seven
5. Exhale through your mouth to the count of eight, making an audible "woosh" sound
6. That completes one full breath. Repeat the cycle another three times, for a total of four breaths

You can do this exercise as frequently as you want throughout the day, but it's recommended you don't do more than four full breaths during the first month or so of practice. Later you may work your way up to eight full breath cycles at a time.

The benefits of this simple practice are enormous and work as a natural tranquilizer for your nervous system.

Personally, I think one of its greatest values may be gained when you combine it with your meals. Most of us eat three meals a day, so it makes remembering to do it easier. Also, I believe that combining it with the attitude of gratitude for the healthy meal you just ate, or are about to eat, can have a powerful, beneficial influence on your health.