The 8 - 4 - 7 Breath

“The Relaxing Breath is the most powerful relaxation method I know, and one that I teach to almost every patient I work with. You may feel a little lightheaded when doing it for the first time, but the sensation will disappear as you practice this breath regularly. It is also the most effective anti-anxiety technique I know.”

Andrew Weil, M.D.

- Sit comfortably with your head, neck, and trunk aligned, maintaining the natural curvature of your spine.
- Do a body scan -- make sure you are not holding tension anywhere in your body.
- Bend your arms at the elbow and gently place your hands on your thighs, palms up. Let your thumb and first finger lightly touch with the pressure it would take to hold a single sheet of paper.
- Place the tip of your tongue gently behind your front teeth. Now, gradually slide it higher to where you feel a series of ridges on the hard palate. Keep your tongue in place here throughout the ENTIRE exercise.
- Close your eyes.
- Step 1) Open your mouth. Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound (optional) as you do, for a count of eight (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). Really wring out your lungs. Close your mouth.
- Step 2) Inhale through your nose smoothly, quietly, and fully to a count of four (1, 2, 3, 4).
- Step 3) Contain/hold your breath, for a count of seven (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), mouth closed.
- Repeat this 3-step cycle three more times for a total of four breath cycles.
- Relax your tongue and return it to its normal resting position. Relax your jaw.
- Breathe normally so that the length of your inhalation equals the length of your exhalation.
- Open your eyes slowly by casting them down first, with a soft gaze, to a spot on the floor about two and a half to three feet in front of you. Then very slowly raise your eyes to horizon level.
- To reap the long-term benefits of The 8-4-7 Breath, do a minimum of four breath cycles twice a day. After a month you can increase the number of cycles to eight, twice a day - but don't do more than eight breath cycles.
- This is a very powerful technique and has profound effects on your physiology.