

Managing Stress Through Breath

Deep breathing is an effective technique to help manage unhealthy stress. This exercise is simple, takes very little time, and can be done anywhere.

1. Sit comfortably with your back straight – either in a chair or on the floor
2. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth and keep it there during the entire exercise.
3. Exhale completely through your mouth making a *whoosh* sound (purse your lips if this makes it easier)
4. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four **(4)**.
5. Hold your breath for a count of seven **(7)**.
6. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a *whoosh* sound, to a count of eight **(8)**.
7. This is one breath. Now inhale and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

The total time you spend on each cycle is not important, however the ratio of **4:7:8** is important, as the exhalation should be twice as long as the inhalation. If you find it difficult to hold your breath, speed up the exercise but maintain the **4:7:8** ratio. With practice you will be able to slow your breathing down and your counting can be spaced out over a longer period.