

The "Relaxing Breath" to Ease Anxiety

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Anxiety is a very common stress-related symptom, and has even been called the 20th-century disease. There are many ways of dealing with anxiety, including medication, relaxation, physical exercise, meditation, and other stress management techniques.

One of the most effective ways of reducing the symptoms of anxiety is deep breathing. According to Andrew Weil, MD, author of *Natural Health, Natural Medicine*, the "relaxing breath" is one of the most powerful tools available for anxiety and stress management.

Below are directions for practicing the "relaxing breath."

- Sit up, with your back straight.
- Place your tongue against the ridge of tissue behind your upper front teeth and keep it there.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four. Make sure you breath deeply, inhaling air into your lower abdomen.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound, to a count of eight.
- **Repeat this cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.**

To combat symptoms of anxiety, try to do this breathing exercise at least twice a day. Dr. Weil recommends that you do not do more than four breaths at a time for the first month, as this exercise has a profound effect on the nervous system, and more is neither necessary nor better for you.

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