
How to: Paced Respiration

Paced respiration is one of the easiest relaxation techniques to use that has scientific evidence supporting its efficacy. There is evidence that doing just a few minutes daily can help lower blood pressure and increase the number of "Killer T Cells" in our blood. It has been shown to successfully to reduce:

- Anger
- Depressive symptoms
- Anxiety
- Night Eating Syndrome

Relaxing is a skill that can be learned. Most behaviors are largely dominated by one nervous system or the other. Breathing is a unique and interesting behavior because it is both involuntarily and voluntarily controlled. For instance, if you try to not breathe, your body will try to do it anyway it can. You can also willfully change your breathing rate. Our rate of respiration is a response, but it can also affect other bodily symptoms.

If we become stressed, our breaths may become shallow and rapid. We can take control of this, though. By slowing down our breaths, we can reduce the stress response. In general, stress is reduced by **slowing down the whole cycle** (inhale-hold-exhale). Slowing the exhale is especially important for reducing the stress response.

Below are two different counts to try. Keep in mind, slowing the exhale is the goal, so any change in that direction is progress. Straining to hit the exact counts will be counter-productive. Just use the counts as general guidelines to experiment with how you can slow your breathing cycle.

4-7-8 Breathing

Find a comfortable position.

1. Inhale gently through your nose (& mouth if necessary) to a "4" count.
2. Hold your breath at the top to a "7" count while doing your best to let go of the tension in your face and shoulders.
3. Exhale from your mouth very slowly to about a count of "8" before inhaling again.

Paced Pursed Respiration (PPR)

Find a comfortable position.

1. Inhale gently through your nose (& mouth if necessary) to a "4" count.
2. Hold your breath at the top to a "4" count while doing your best to let go of the tension in your face and shoulders.
3. Purse your lips as if you were holding a drinking straw, and exhale from your mouth very slowly, to a count of "8."
4. (Optional) Repeat step 2.

Contact Info