

Live Well, Be Well

Let's Talk about *4-7-8 Breathing*

Welcome to Season 2 of Live Well, Be Well! My name is Renee Dell'Acqua and I'm a Health Educator in Health Promotion Services here at UC San Diego. We at Health Promotion Services are beyond excited to continue this podcast journey with you all, discussing strategies and sharing lived experiences to enhance and strengthen your health and well-being, and also to remind you that you are not alone, that we're in this together. We have so much in store for you this season so please continue to follow along with us, to listen and learn with open minds and hearts, and to spread the word to your friends, family, and peers about Live Well, Be Well and all that you've learned thus far.

So let's kick off this season with an episode that focuses on a simple yet effective breathing technique called 4-7-8 Breathing. This exercise strives to calm your mind and body by harnessing the power of mindful breathing.

So I hope you get inspired, I hope you feel connected, and I hope you discover new ways to live your best life. Let's get started!

Even though we may not consciously be aware, the way that we breathe in terms of the pace and pattern play a huge role in how we feel -- physically, mentally, and emotionally. Let's think about this. Take a moment to think about what your breathing is like when you're feeling stressed out, anxious, overwhelmed, sad, or even angry. I know it seems a little tricky to think about something so innate as how we breathe, but one can guess that when you're under a lot of stress or are experiencing negative emotions, you're probably practicing, subconsciously of course, shallow yet fast-paced breathing -- the feeling like you're out of breath or short of breath or just can't seem to catch that breath. As humans, that tends to be our automatic physiological response when we're met with stressful situations or negative emotions.

Now, think about how your breathing is like where you're in a relaxed and calm state? You're likely taking deeper and slower breaths, helping you feel more at ease, and helping you feel calm and relaxed. So this is really the goal of breathing exercises to bring your body down from a heightened, overactive and overstimulated state of shallow-fast paced breathing, to a more relaxed and calm state. And that is why breathing exercises play such a powerful role in stress management and healthy coping.

Practicing breathing exercises is a powerful tool in coping with stress and finding relaxation. In fact, the American Institute of Stress notes that breathing exercises have many physiological, mental, and emotional benefits, to include: slowing down your heart rate and blood pressure, calming your mind, alleviating anxiety, and reducing muscle tension. Ultimately, culminating into feeling calmer and more at ease.

And the cool thing about utilizing breathing techniques as a form of stress management and relaxation is that (1) it's free and (2) you can do these exercises anywhere! And today we're going to go over a simple yet effective breathing technique called 4-7-8 Breathing. The idea behind this is to take a slow, steady and deep breath in through your nose as you mentally count to 4. Then you hold that breath for a count of 7. And lastly, you slowly exhale through your mouth for a count of 8 making a "wooshing sound" wooshhhhhh. Repeat this exercise 5-10 times until you feel calmer and more at ease.

So now that you know what this exercise entails, let's practice this technique together and I will help guide you along.

Okay, so first, I want you to find a relaxing and comfortable position either sitting down or lying down. Remember this is your time to relax and to find peace so let go of any tension you may be carrying in your neck, shoulders, arms, legs, hands, or feet. If you'd like, you are welcome to gently close your eyes during this practice. Now, place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Next, close your mouth and take a slow, deep, and steady breath in

through your nose for a count of 4 (1-2-3-4). Now gently hold that breath for a count of 7 (1-2-3-4-5-6-7). Now exhale through your mouth for a count of 8 making a 'wooshing' sound (1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8). So that completes 1 cycle of this breathing technique. Typically, you would continue this for another 5-10 cycles or until you feel calm, relaxed, and at ease. And if you like, you are more than welcome to pause this episode right now and complete this exercise.

The beauty about this breathing technique is that it's simple, it's easy to remember, and it's something that you can do anywhere -- whether that be before an exam, before a big interview, or even when you can't seem to fall sleep at night.

So that is the technique I wanted to bring to you all today. But before we conclude. Let's practice this exercise one more time but with a positive affirmation twist.

So once again, find a relaxing and comfortable position either sitting down or lying down. If you'd like, you are welcome to gently close your eyes during this practice. Now, place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a slow, deep, and steady breath in through your nose as you envision inhaling peace, love, happiness, and hope. Gently hold that breath for a count of 7 allowing that positivity to cultivate deep within your body. Now exhale through your mouth for a count of 8. And while you exhale, imaging releasing fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, and/or any sources of toxicity that may be weighing heavily on you right now. And when you're ready, gently open your eyes and always remember this: that you are worth so much, that you are never alone, and that you bring to this world so many wonderful traits and qualities. So be proud of who you are and who you're becoming. Endless love and gratitude to you all.

So that concludes this episode of Live Well, Be Well! If you like what you heard today and would like to learn more about topics related to health and wellness, there's much more to come!

Please be sure to check out our website healthpromotionservices.ucsd.edu and also follow us on Instagram and Facebook under @UCSDHPS. Stay tuned for our next episode of Live Well, Be Well.

Until next time, be kind, be true, be you. And remember, to be well is to live well.