



Bear Clan, LLC

Empowering Balanced and Transformative Lives

4-7-8 Breathing

There's lots of effective breathing exercises you can practice. In my work, I've used the *Beginner's Guide to Healthy Breathing* by Ken Cohen and *Breathing: The Master Key to Self-Healing* by Andrew Weil, M.D. It's from Dr. Weil's recording that I found my favorite, which is the 4-7-8 Breathing sequence.

As a counselor and as a therapist I've frequently taught this technique to clients while counting for them. I've also used a recording of myself counting out the sequence so that I can do the exercise with them – creating a co-regulating experience.

With some of my clients I've used a lot of Native American themes to add appeal to the therapeutic work. Here's a brief story I created for some of my clients:

Bear and King Snake are very different animals.
However, they have a lot in common – for instance, they both hibernate!

When Bear needed additional help learning how to be a calmer, more thoughtful, and more centered creature, he went to King Snake. King Snake taught Bear a powerful breathing technique.

With your tongue pressed gently against the roof of your mouth, behind your front teeth,
breath in through your nose for a count of 4;
hold your breath for a count of 7; and
in an even fashion breath out through your mouth for a count of 8.

King Snake Breathing for Centering your Inner Spirit
(repeat 8 times)
(use in the morning and during all time outs)

“In”...2...3...4
“Hold”...2...3...4...5...6...7
“Out”...2...3...4...5...6...7...8

When you become more skilled, you count slower. You can download different versions of this exercise on the Resources page of my website (www.BearClanllc.com).

Some people feel a little light-headed after doing this type of breathing, which fades with repeated practice. If you're prone to dizziness, until you get used to this exercise, please be careful when you first stand up. Also, if you're just starting with this exercise, remember to do the exhale slowly and smoothly. There may be an impulse to explosively exhale. Instead, practice relaxed control of your chest muscles and use the entire 8-count to exhale. Practice when calm for maximum positive effect when upset.