

## **The Benefits of Controlled Breathing by Marion Bachra, MS, RD, LN:**

*Andrew Weil, MD states:* Breathing is the bridge between mind and body, between unconsciousness and consciousness. Breathing has direct connections to emotional states and moods. You cannot always center yourself by an act of will, but can use your voluntary nerves and breathe slow which in turn will effect your emotions. Breathing is unique in that it is controlled by the voluntary nervous system and the autonomic nervous system. By using the voluntary nervous system to breath slow, deep, quiet, and regular, you can change your autonomic tone and change many of the involuntary functions including blood pressure, heart rate, anxious racing and repetitive thoughts, obsessive thoughts, gastrointestinal disturbances, circulatory and sexual problems. Andrew Weil's breathing exercise helps you change from a sympathetic dominant state (fight & flight) into parasympathetic dominant state (calm state). The longer you practice the more effective this breathing technique becomes.

### **Breathing exercise (antidote for elevated blood pressure, stress, anxiety, emotional upset)**

Place the tip of tongue against the ridge just behind your front teeth, keep it there throughout the exercise. Nerve currents enter the tip of the tongue and leave the ridge. Placing the tip of tongue at this ridge completes the circuit keeping the energy of the breath within instead of letting it dissipate. First exhale completely through your mouth making a whoosh sound

#### **One breath:**

Next close your mouth inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four

Next hold your breath for a count of seven

Then exhale through your mouth making a whoosh sound to the count of eight

Start with 4 breaths at a time 2 X day, than move to 8 breaths at a time 2 X day

#### **Blood Pressure:**

Blood pressure is regulated in part by the autonomic nervous system. Emotional stress places your body in a sympathetic dominant state also called the *Fight or Flight* response. This sympathetic dominant state can causes an increased heart rate and narrowing of blood vessels with a resultant rise in blood pressure. This breathing exercise helps pull you out of this sympathetic dominant state into the more relaxed parasympathetic dominant state which causes a state of relaxation and therefore a lowering of blood pressure. The longer you practice the more effective this breathing technique becomes.