

React vs. Respond

Observe, Don't Absorb: A 5-minute reset you can scale to 30 seconds

Why this works (*in one breath*)

When emotion surges, the brain's alarm (amygdala) grabs the steering wheel and your prefrontal cortex (planning/filtering) goes offline. "Observe, don't absorb" creates a tiny pause, lowers physiological arousal, and brings the thinking brain back online—so you respond by choice instead of reacting by impulse.

The 30-Second Micro-Reset (*use anywhere*)

SAY (*silently*):

"Observe, don't absorb" – or pick your own pause phrase; e.g., "Pause & Reset!", etc.

BREATHE:

Inhale quietly through your nose for a count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 7, and exhale completely through your mouth with a whoosh sound for a count of 8.

The 4-7-8 breathing technique uses a specific breath ratio to calm the nervous system by activating the parasympathetic "rest and digest" response, counteracting "fight or flight".

Neuroscience studies show this practice can increase heart rate variability (HRV) and parasympathetic tone, associated with a calmer mind and body, and can also increase theta and delta brain waves linked to relaxation.

How to practice 4-7-8 breathing:

- Sit comfortably with your back straight.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a "whoosh" sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a mental count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth to a mental count of eight, again making a "whoosh" sound.
- Repeat this cycle up to four times initially.