



Hello all,

Welcome to Coherent Breathing®, Volume 3, Issue 11, September 2025, *Mirror, Mirror On The Wall...*

Over the years that I've been writing articles about breathing, I've spoken little about breathing through the nose vs. breathing through the mouth. In my early years of yoga practice/study, I learned that one must breathe through the nose and I've never looked back at this matter critically. In recent years, others have dedicated articles and entire books to this subject, but I have remained pretty much silent.

This being said, I have some formative thoughts that are grounded in Coherent Breathing theory. I introduced this line of inquiry in the article *Breathe For Beauty*, published under the Swan & Stone imprint December, 2017. In that article, I explored the circulatory advantages to the skin, particularly the skin of the head and face, leaning on what I had recently confirmed about giraffe circulatory physiology by instrumenting a giraffe's head with *Valsalva Wave Pro*, courtesy of The Dallas Zoo veterinary staff.



Your mirror is a telling biofeedback device.

I'd been casually watching people for 20 years, wherever I happened to be, where my primary interest was observation of breathing rate and depth. Only after my giraffe experience did I widen my focus to begin observing overall countenance, posture, and whether or not people had their mouths open, i.e., were they mouth-breathing or nose-breathing? When we breathe with mouth closed, all of the air we inhale and exhale flows through the nose. When we open our mouths, most the air we inhale/exhale flows through the mouth. Technically, when our mouths are open, a relatively small portion of the air we breathe is still flowing through the nose, depending on the state of nasal turbinates which are under autonomic nervous system control.

It has become clear to me that there is correlation between one's countenance and how one breathes, mouth vs. nose. Facial tone, skin health, and facial wrinkles tend to tell the story. People often look older than they really are, sometimes much older. Why? Is their external appearance indicative of their internal biological age? Here I quote a sentence from my 2017 article, *Breathe For Beauty*: *There is a saying in Traditional Chinese Medicine, that after age 40, the outside begins to reflect the inside.* We're rapidly closing in on the understanding that mouth-breathing (under normal non-exercise situations) harms health. My thesis is that it harms health by bypassing the nasal turbinates which have the express function of regulating the flow of air into and out of the lungs, this being for the purpose of controlling flow and pressure of blood entering and leaving the lungs, this having the purpose of facilitating blood flow upwards in the venous tree against gravity, equaling blood flows in venous and arterial trees, thereby avoiding the pervasive pandemic before the pandemic – essential hypertension. By mouth-breathing we are cheating our circulatory system, particularly the circulatory system of the head, face, and brain, which are the most dependent on countering the constant downward pull of gravity.

I am postulating that here there is a *conundrum—because of mouth breathing over a long period, we are incapable of realizing its harmful affects.* There is a feedback loop that reinforces mouth-breathing preventing one from realizing its detrimental affects to one's own health. We already know this to be true of rapid shallow breathing, whether by nose or mouth – realizing it often requires intervention. Breathing is a central determinant of autonomic nervous system state, our internal state, both mental and physical, where I posit that it even affects one's external appearance. A mirror is the only biofeedback device we need to test this hypothesis. Mouth-breathing has a place, this being hard work and vigorous activity, where we have no choice but to breathe through the mouth. The cells of the body are demanding increased circulation of blood and fluid for purposeful energy production. If we run a mile at a relatively quick pace, there comes a moment when we must open our mouths to breathe. This is perfectly healthful and natural.

Stephen Elliott, President, COHERENCE LLC

Subscribe To Coherent Breathing® – An Occasional Journal Of Complementary Solutions
For Health, Well-being, Performance, & Longevity – It's FREE!

COHERENCE® - THE NEW SCIENCE OF BREATH