

## **Sleep Apnea, Snoring and Impaired Oral Function: A Link To Complementary and Alternative Health Care Arthur M. Strauss, DDS**

I believe complimentary and alternative healthcare, as a field, focuses on living in a health-supporting environment. Holistic health focuses on the interconnections in the body – the long and short-term chain reactions and their impacts. The goal is to discover and address the “root” cause as well as immediate concerns, maladies and malfunction. Prevention, focusing on the root cause, is the priority.

Many health providers, including complimentary and alternative healthcare, and some religions, appear to recognize breathing as our body’s highest survival priority. Many practitioners stress helping our body to be “in balance,” which would make breathing easier.

Breathing is not the body’s highest survival priority, keeping our throat opened to allow air to reach the lungs is. This is clearly noted in the A-B-C’s (airway, breathing and circulation) of CPR (cardio-pulmonary-resuscitation). Our jaw-tongue-throat relationship, an oral function, controls airflow and, therefore, breathing. Our tongue, fully or partially blocking the throat impairs breathing. This is referred to as an obstructive apnea event, while asleep or awake.

Essentially our body has a survival mechanism, the autonomic nervous system (ANS), to adapt itself instinctively to compensate for lack of balance as in difficulty breathing. Its first priority is to keep the airway open. A signal that we are choking, or may choke, tells our body to do whatever it has to, to keep the airway open. As I have expressed in prior articles, Oral Systemic Balance® (OSB) observations show three adaptive body compensations for a partially or fully blocked throat:

- Increased state of “fight or flight” as in an adrenaline response,
- Postural changes that often appear to be characterized by forward head posture, and,
- Clenching and grinding of the teeth, this leads to most TMJ symptoms.

Their impact is both immediate and chronic, the wear and tear on our body and subsequent effect on all body systems is enormous. I have given you some tools for testing these adaptive responses on yourself (go to the Your Health Magazine archives and review my prior articles.)

OSB, the work of Farrand C. Robson, DDS, focuses on improving oral function, and that of our tongue, for greater ease of speaking, swallowing and breathing, enhancing balance and the body’s need to constantly work so hard to stay alive. Accordingly, symptoms are not viewed as defects; they are seen as signs of adaptations and compensations. If we back track, looking through the chain of various reactions, adaptations and compensations we can find the root cause and source, where intervention is most leveraged and far reaching with the greatest impact. Look at the airway.