

## Self-Check for Myofunctional Therapy Needs

I began to figure out that some minor annoyances I ignored actually indicated big health problems I needed to address. Some of these were:

1. Frequent sighing and yawning
2. Sometimes feeling I could not quite catch my breath even though breathing seemed normal
3. Constant chapped lips
4. A consistent “drippy” nose for no apparent reason
5. A clicking and popping jaw joint that sometimes locked while open.

Nothing to write home about, right? At the same time, I was smug that I never needed braces. My teeth were straight save one – and I thought it just added character. However my studies led me to realize my tongue needed more room so my airway would be less compromised. Also, my perception was that my tongue *was* up and my lips *were* always sealed.

It turns out only the tip of my tongue was up on my “spot.” And true, I didn’t mouth breathe – except (as I started to notice slowly):

1. When I talked 8 hours a day to my clients while working as a hygienist. Just as with most newscasters and actors, I feel I don’t have time to pull in air through my nose before I speak. That has become a habit I still work to correct. Ditto during public speaking.
2. When I exercised. This big no-no affects performance.
3. While I slept.

In other words, except for most of the day (17-18 of 24 hours) I didn’t predominantly breathe through my nose. Awareness makes all the difference. I’ve corrected points 2 and 3. It will take continuing effort to address nasal breathing while talking. Now, go entertain yourself by watching the news or a movie. Maybe it will never be quite the same for you, but hey, didn’t Jon Heder nail his part in *Napoleon Dynamite*?

Only slowly have I come to recognize the common habits I have that contributed to my negligible airway. In *Facial Meltdown* I relate incorrect oral posture to at least 38 health challenges, some as serious as diabetes, heart disease, erectile dysfunction and ADHD – of which crooked teeth are only a symptom. Airway problems develop before crowded teeth.

Question	Yes	No
1. Do you snore?		
2. Do you have apnea? (Most people, even with severe apnea have no idea they have it. The Epworth Sleepiness Scale is a quick self-screen, if only a start. See: <a href="http://epworthsleepinessscale.com/1997-version-ess/">http://epworthsleepinessscale.com/1997-version-ess/</a> )		
3. Do you clench your teeth?		
4. Does your tongue feel too big for your mouth?		
5. Do you have acid reflux?		
6. Does your chest rise and fall when you breathe?		
7. Do you have frequent sinus problems?		

8. Did you suck your thumb?		
9. Do you bite your nails, frequently lick or bite your lips or chew on your cheeks? Are your lips constantly chapped?		
10. Do you smoke?		
11. Do you have forward head posture or frequent muscular soreness of your neck and upper shoulders?		
12. Can people hear you breathe while you are resting?		
13. Do you sigh or yawn often?		
14. Do you routinely wake up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom?		
15. Is it difficult to breath 23 times in a row through your nose?		
16. Where is the tip of your tongue at rest? Is it in the middle or floor of your mouth or against front teeth?		
17. If you put a raisin halfway back on your tongue and pressed it to the roof of your mouth, does that feel unnatural to you?		
18. Are your lips apart instead of sealed (lightly pressed together) while not talking?		
19. Is the roof of your mouth narrow and/or high?		
20. Do your lips ever separate while chewing?		
21. Does your upper lip, if you are an adult, measure less than 15mm from the base of your nose to where your upper lip begins?		
22. Do you have flattened, rather than prominent cheekbones?		
23. Would you say your chin is "weak"?		
24. Does your tongue protrude between your teeth at any time during speech (except while pronouncing the "th" sound)?		
25. Do you have problems with saying the letter "R" or "S".		
26. Are you tongue-tied? (See the following trailer to help determine.)		
27. Do your tonsils partially obstruct your airway or did you need them removed?		
28. Does your jaw joint click or pop? Does your lower jaw deviate when you open and close your mouth straight up and down?		
29. Do you feel a strong urge to close your lips when you swallow? (See self-help video below and the Facial Meltdown blog link.)		
30. Do you burp often?		

Additionally, consider:

31. How do your teeth fit together? Or what problems did you have that orthodontics corrected?
32. Symmetry and facial balance.

The more "yes" answers you give, the more likely you are to need myofunctional therapy as part of addressing silent – and not so silent – health issues.