

**Ep #219: Mechanics of Breathing Part 5
– An Ayurvedic Approach to Tongue, Sleep,
and Sleep Apnea with Mona Warner**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Susi Hately

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Ep #219: Mechanics of Breathing Part 5 – An Ayurvedic Approach to Tongue, Sleep, and Sleep Apnea with Mona Warner

Male Announcer: You're listening to *From Pain to Possibility* with Susi Hately. You will hear Susi's best ideas on how to reduce or even eradicate your pain and learn how to listen to your body when it whispers so you don't have to hear it scream. And now here's your host, Susi Hately.

Susi: Welcome and welcome back. I'm so glad that you're here because we continue this series on mechanics of breathing and all the things that I have been able to pull together over the past year that can support you and your clients who are wanting an alternative way to work with TMJ issues, sleep apnea and all those things related to that.

And today, I have Mona Warner, who is our resident Ayurvedic doctor inside of my certification program. And we are going to dig into the piece around the tongue. And a lot of people don't really think about the tongue as it relates to TMJ issues and sleep apnea. Dentists will, yes.

I want to talk about the tongue from an Ayurvedic perspective and sort of bring together a number of concepts. Like for one, we know that the dentistry industry takes a look at the tongue. We also know from the bodywork industry, thanks to Tom Myers, that there's this correlation or connection with the tongue to what he calls the deep core line or the deep front line. So we know that there's this connection down through to at least the adductors and into the inner side of the ankle. So here your feet and your tongue have a relationship.

And then we're going to talk about this from an Ayurvedic lens, but also bridge the gap from the tongue to sleep apnea. So let's have some fun here. So, Mona, welcome, I'm so glad you're here.

Mona: Thank you so much for having me. It's always a joy to be part of all your programs.

Susi: So the lovely thing with Mona is if you really like what you're hearing, and you're new to listening to her, I think we've recorded what, like four or

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five episodes on various topics of Ayurveda and fill in the blank. So we'll put those into the show notes if you want to go back to listen to those because I think for some of you, again, if it's your first time or if it's multiple times listening to Mona, Mona is consistently and always learning.

And Ayurveda is this massive, massive body of information, so that each time she comes back, it's like listening to her totally newly. And I've already taken a 200-hour training with her. She and I talk regularly because she's in the certification program and I'm consistently learning from her.

So do go back to those other episodes, if you're resonating with it. And if you or your client is having breathing issues, or sleep apnea, or TMJ issues, or even, you might realize, tongue issues, then she might be someone that is really interesting for you to engage with. So with that, why don't we just start with like, the tongue and Ayurveda.

I know for myself I've had a history where I can feel my tongue getting thicker. And the only reason I even knew that is because one day many, many moons ago when I was working with a herbalist and then when I'd been working with my acupuncturist, they will point out that I'll have a serrated edge on the side of my tongue. And each of those folks will have their own meaning for what that actually means to them.

But then, when I would shift up what I was eating over a period of like, I don't know, two to three weeks, when I would look at my tongue, guess what? That serrated edge was no longer there, and the tongue was just sitting more easily in my mouth. And it wasn't jutting forward and it wasn't doing a number of the things that we'll have talked about with Dr. Larry. But it's like I can feel the distinction.

And interestingly enough, my digestion is better when that happens. And interestingly enough, if I spend some time of self-reflection around those thickening tongue times is also when my stress levels are a little bit higher. And then I'm choosing habits that would be akin to when you have stress

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levels, which might not be the things – They're soothing mechanisms, but probably the ones that aren't as supportive or at least are supportive at the time, but then they might lead to more inflammation.

So with that, let's kind of dig into this. Let's just start with when you think of the tongue, Mona, what comes to mind?

Mona: From an Ayurvedic perspective, the tongue being one of the five sense organs, so one of the five ways that we connect with the world around us, the tongue is very important. And so it's the sense organ that connects with the water element. It's what allows us to perceive taste. It's what allows us, in a way, to connect with the water element outside of us to the water element inside of us.

And really interesting because the water element is also very much connected to emotions. And so it's curious because often we crave certain foods that actually create a certain emotional response within us. Like you were saying about I might have been stressed and therefore I was leaning into these particular types of foods. And the soothing they provide is actually their water connects to and cultivates a certain flavor of water within us.

And so this tongue is a very important sense organ. It's one deeply connected to our emotional layer of being. And this is why I think so many of us could very quickly identify that I'm feeling disturbed, I'm feeling ungrounded, I'm feeling upset food. This is what I want to eat because it actually changes our inner waters, right? It changes the emotional flavoring inside of us. And so that's a really powerful organ.

A sense organ that can change how you feel on the inside, that's really potent. And not only that, the tongue is the opening of one of the most important channels in Ayurveda.

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So in Ayurveda we view the whole physiology, both biological, so very obvious physiology, as well as subtle physiology, energy channels and things like that, as a series of channels. And things come into channels, things hopefully flow through channels, different things happen within the channels. And hopefully, what needs to can then also flow out of the channels.

And so the tongue is the beginning of the digestive system, which is huge. And from an Ayurvedic perspective, our digestion, if it is strong and if it is balanced and if it is healthy, will reduce systemic inflammation, or we won't have any systemic inflammation.

Whereas when our digestive system is challenged in whichever variety of ways that can happen, it can be maybe we're eating too much too fast, maybe we're eating on the go, maybe we're stressed, maybe contextually there are all these things going on. Whatever the case, when we don't digest well, this is where we then build inflammation in our system.

And that's why it will track all the way up to the tongue. It starts in the guts, but the tongue is at the beginning of that channel. And this is also why when we are stressed and when we have systemic inflammation, we might also notice an issue in bowel, urinary and menstrual elimination, because those are sort of at the bottom end. Those are the bottom end channels where we get to move wastes from digestion out of the system.

And so from an Ayurvedic perspective, the tongue is very important. It allows us to add flavor, emotional flavor as well as literal food flavor. It gives life flavor, it gives life rasa, right? It gives life taste. And it is the pathway to our digestive system, which from an Ayurvedic perspective, if we have inflammation, it starts there.

Susi: When you're looking at a tongue, what are you looking at?

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Mona: Really good question. In Ayurveda, tongue analysis is one of the ways that we can assess the state of someone's being. And when we look at the tongue, we're looking at a lot of things. We're looking at the shape of the tongue. We're looking at the color of the tongue.

I know for me, when I have a little more inflammation in my system, my tongue gets more red. Whereas when that inflammation subsides, I just finished five weeks away with a lot of travel and a lot of busyness. And when I got home, after my 36 hours of travel back home, I looked at my tongue and I was scraping my tongue, I was like, oh, that's a lot of red. This travel, this time away has had an impact. And it's okay, there's always things we can do.

And so we're looking for shape. We're looking for color. We're also looking for texture and coating on the tongue. The tongue often gets coated with all sorts of things.

So if you eat certain foods, if you eat a blue popsicle or blue ice cream, you'll notice your tongue turns blue because part of that didn't actually digest or go in, it's just sitting on top. If you go to bed at night, and you have whatever night's rest or unrest you have, however that process is, the next day there is almost always a bit of coating on the tongue and some days, a lot of coating on the tongue.

And sometimes that coating is more white, sometimes more clear. I've also, in my own tongue, had a wide variety of what I like to call technicolor. And so I've had brown coating. I've had a darker coating. I've had an orangey coating, again, depending what we eat, depending how we digest it.

And it's really interesting, the tongue can have different imprints you described, Susi, how sometimes it's almost like you can see the outlines of your teeth. The scalloping on the outsides of the tongue tells us something. If there are cracks in the tongue, where the cracks are tell us something about levels of dryness, hydration, emotionality, stress levels.

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And I've also seen, I had somebody text me a picture of their friend's tongue the one day because the person wasn't feeling well and they couldn't figure out what it was. And when I looked at it, the area of the tongue that was the most raised had a different – It was almost like the papillae, the little round taste bud kind of things, the texture of the tongue had a completely different shape. It was raised. Underneath the raise, you could see it was very red, but on top it looked like whitish yellow.

And it was in the area of the kidney that is represented on the tongue by the kidneys. So many areas of the body are maps of the whole body. And if you're familiar with reflexology, a very popular form of the map of the body, the feet map out the whole body. So there are areas that indicate the sinus, the lungs, the spine, the kidneys, the stomach, all that stuff. The tongue does the same. The ear does the same. The eye does the same. The hand does the same.

So we have all of these holographic representations of ourself within ourself and the tongue is one such area that does that. And so I had said, if it were me, I would recommend that person get their kidneys checked. And sure enough, when they went to the doctor, they had a kidney infection, it just wasn't strong enough yet that there was blood in the urine.

And so the tongue can actually give us a lot of information about what is happening systemically. So when I look at a tongue, I'm looking for a lot of things. But I'm not looking specific, it's more of like a global, I'm observing. And I'm waiting for the tongue to tell me what it wants me to know about the body, if that makes sense. I'm not trying to make something be there. I'm just open to seeing what the tongue wants to share with me.

Susi: Well, I sometimes think of it, like when I'm watching movement, I'm just watching how someone moves. And I think it was an Ayurvedic practitioner who taught in one of my programs many moons ago, she used the analogy of a sunset. Like you're just looking at the sunset. You're just

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watching the sunset. What's coming to you from that sunset? So I get that, it's like you're seeing the mapping of the tongue and you're seeing all the things that you've been trained to see around the tongue.

I look at the tongue and I've been given sort of an eye to just look at these particular things, these are the things that typically show up on your tongue. Now I can actually feel when those things are showing up in my tongue, as opposed to cognitively paying attention to these things on your tongue. Now it's like, oh, I bet my tongue is scalloped now, because this is how my tongue feels, right?

And I can also now feel, particularly if I've been through a particularly challenging period of time like we all go through with the curve balls and the ups and downs of life. I can now feel the relationship to that and my breathing, and that and my digestion, and that and if my rib cage is tight or not.

And I really want to emphasize, particularly for someone who's a new listener at this, this has happened over time. This learning and this relationship between the various parts of my body that I may have had more somatic awareness over and then it's just been more and more integrated over time, because I'm a curious cat when it comes to that. And it harkens back to listen to your whispers so you don't have to hear the body scream. And I just kind of take this mapping of what's what, right?

And then, like I mentioned earlier, I'll notice that, oh, maybe I'm consuming just a little bit too much of X, Y and Z. So how might I soothe myself or support myself? Or I find sometimes there's the soothing phase, and then there's, okay, so now it's time to actually institute some practices that will kind of get me up and over and evolve from this, right?

And I don't want to go down that particular rabbit hole, but I offer that just so people can get, like when we're talking about it from this Ayurvedic perspective of like the tongue can be like – I don't want to say a tool – but

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it's a barometer of sorts, perhaps, is a better word. It's a compass. It's a way for you to explore how you are functioning.

So when we're thinking about this then in relation to breath, and then momentarily after we speak about breath and tongue, we'll move over to the sleep and sleep apnea piece of this. How do you see the tongue and someone's capacity or capability or disruption of or support of breathing?

Mona: For this aspect this is where I lean a little bit more into my yoga background. Yoga and Ayurveda being of the same cup, coming from the same set of teachings. And when we think about breath and breathing, we're hoping that breath is coming in through the nose going down the throat into the lungs.

We know there's a backup plan. Breathing is so important, there's a backup plan. If you can't breathe through your nose, you can breathe through your mouth, which means breathing over and past your tongue. However, that tends to be, from a physiological perspective, the backup as opposed to the first line of practice for respiration.

And in yoga, when I think about breathing and the tongue, I often think about how in some really classical yogas they have you do, I call them tongue tricks to try to create more of an even passage from the nose down the throat and into the lungs. And if we consciously are using the tongue to create more flow, we could also very much use that as a disruption.

So as much as it could be a tool that can help with respiration, we can see how it could also cause blockage or impairment of respiration. And if folks are in a position for whatever reason, I think of a few family members who were very athletic and had broken noses throughout high school and how this led to then deviated septums, which led to issues with breathing through the nose at various times.

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Thank goodness, they have the backup of the mouth. However, if their tongue was swollen, then we can see how it would impair their ability to maybe regulate breaths, smooth out breath, and get enough breath.

And when we think of the physical positioning, for the most part if we think of ourselves during the day, we think of ourselves more in an upright position, you know, the head is on top, and then the neck and then the chest with the lungs in it. However, there are other times of day where our position changes. Sleep is a perfect example where we are reclined.

And so when we think of the orientation of the structures from a reclined perspective, we could definitely see how if the tongue is falling back or if the tongue is feeling thicker, if the tongue is in a wide variety of positions or contexts, how that could actually create a block, as opposed to support the flow of air.

And Ayurvedically, to again step back out of yoga land and into Ayurveda land. Ayurvedically, the body is a series of channels. And so it also has me thinking about when it comes to respiration, what is the status, the strength and the integrity of those channels? The channels of respiration, the channels of digestion.

And if there is, for whatever reason, weakness in any of the channels, then this is going to, as we move in three dimensions living our lives, whether we're coming to lie on our bellies to watch TV, lying on our backs to go to sleep, or some other position that we're putting our bodies in, if the integrity or the tone or the strength of the channels isn't there, then you could think of it as almost getting like sag.

The channels are kind of going to sag. And if they sag, they're likely going to kind of close a little bit. So now all of a sudden, we don't have as much space for the air to flow through the channels, if those channels are weakened, collapsing, and in that kind of state. So it strikes me how many different ways we can look at it.

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Susi: Totally. And now I want to take that and bridge us towards sleep apnea. Because the dentists and the body workers and the yoga folks and the Ayurveda folks will see this connection, but we don't typically hear about this connection out in the world. And so let's look at this from how does this then impact sleep apnea?

And we can't have this conversation without talking about sleep because sleep is such a foundational component, not just in Ayurveda, but really in our lives, right? So you can start either with the sleep apnea piece or the sleep piece, but what's this bridge? Let's build the gap or let's fill the gap between those two arenas.

Mona: Yeah. And from the Ayurvedic perspective, sleep is really important. They've designated three pillars of life and health, and sleep is one of them. And so if we want to have health and well-being and be able to live the life we want to live, sleep is a really important component for all the reasons we already know.

So I think when I introduce people to Ayurveda and I talk to them about how Ayurveda's second pillar of health and life is sleep, everybody kind of goes, "Yeah, I know." I say, "Yeah, I know you know." You just have to be sleep deprived, you know, have one night where you lose out on sleep and you can immediately recognize how physiologically you're no longer functioning optimally, mentally and emotionally you're no longer functioning optimally.

We need this sleep, it is of paramount importance for all the reasons you've already heard and all the reasons you know internally from your own experience of getting good sleep versus not getting good sleep.

So we'll just say Ayurveda agrees with everybody else, sleep is really important. And it's something that we definitely, if we're not getting a good quality of sleep, it's worth exploring how we can do that, right? All the

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different ways from whichever method you want to choose to study and explore.

Getting a good night's sleep pays for itself. It's one of the greatest wealths that we're going to cultivate, is that sense of well-being from a good night's sleep. So we'll just say Ayurveda is pro sleep.

And then from there, how does Ayurveda view sleep apnea? Which is one of the bigger growing disturbances of sleep that we're seeing out there from a diagnosis in that kind of perspective. It's starting to climb the ladder of being at the top of sleep disturbances.

And so, from a sleep apnea perspective, in order to understand how Ayurveda sees sleep apnea, we have to understand a little bit about what makes Ayurveda different as a medical science than a lot of the other medical sciences. And one of the big distinctions in Ayurveda is the way Ayurveda sees the world is that the world is made up of five basic elements.

And these elements are earth, all things solid. Water; all things liquid. Fire; all things changing and transforming. Air; all things moving, flowing, right, all things mobile and subtle. As well as space, the fifth element, in which all of these things exist. So the world is made up of, you could basically look at a periodic table of elements and see the solids, the liquids, where fire comes in, the air and gasses as well as the space in which it all exists.

And in Ayurveda, they have this concept of dosha, which is energies that organize how these elements work. And when it comes to sleep apnea, there's one organizing energy in particular. It's called vata and it basically regulates how air moves through space. And this is the dosha of most importance when we're talking about respiration, and therefore when we're talking about not respiration.

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And so the urge to breathe and the need for respiration is considered paramount to existence, to life itself, no one disagrees on that. And anything that is obstructing that ability for ease of respiration means that it is affecting this vata dosha.

And when vata dosha gets affected, it's interesting because these doshas are systemic. They run through the whole body and they govern a variety of different functions. And vata not only governs breathing and respiration, vata also governs grounding, which is what allows us to sleep. Vata also governs the nervous system and our stress response, and sometimes that has a huge effect on our ability to sleep or not sleep.

Vata governs our ability to digest in the food moving through the system, as well as the nourishment moving to the periphery to build the channels that hopefully have good integrity and structure so that when we lie down, there is enough internal structural integrity that the channels can stay open as they need to. Vata governs so many things that are not only related to our health and well-being, but to our breathing and to our sleep.

And so, from an Ayurvedic perspective, almost all the roads of sleep apnea point in one direction. And as I said, it's a concept that's very unique to Ayurveda. It's not something that maybe if we've been in different forms of medicine or medical practice that we're familiar with. However, from an Ayurvedic perspective, sleep apnea makes 100% of sense in so many ways, in all the ways in which we can think about it.

Again, if I'm stressed and I change how I eat or I change how I sleep, and this changes the level of systemic inflammation, which can affect all my channels, including my tongue, at the very beginning of my digestive channel, and then it's affecting how I sleep, the way I lie down, my position when I lie down, my breathing when I'm trying to sleep, everything from an Ayurvedic perspective is pointing to that vata dosha.

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Susi: So what's really interesting is that the gold standard of treatment for sleep apnea currently is the CPAP machine. And in engaging with many different folks in the dentistry industry who are spending a lot of time thinking about the role of the mouth and how that plays into airway, there's a movement, and it seems to be that the research is headed this way as well, is that how someone uses a splint becomes really important, rather than forcing air into one's mouth.

And what they're also starting to see is that the long-term use of a CPAP can actually put more pressure on facial structures and start to change the myofascial structures of the face. And I don't share any of this to scare anybody or to concern anybody, but it's something that is interesting to keep in mind, because then how does that play into what's going on within one's body?

And so, again, from an Ayurvedic perspective, when you're working with someone who is on a CPAP, can you give an example of a process that you might work through with someone who might be interested in getting off the CPAP? Maybe they're working with a dentist, like, how might this weave through in an integrative way?

Because sleep apnea didn't show up one day. This is something that was in our former version of Mechanics of Breathing course from last year that Dr. Larry clearly outlined this trajectory of process, leading towards sleep apnea. So it doesn't just show up one day. There is a process over time, which has this change within the structure of our body, which then is leading to this breathing issue.

So if you're working integratively with folks, what might that look like? Can you give an example?

Mona: Yeah, absolutely. As you were saying, sleep apnea doesn't just happen overnight. And in my experience of practice, it also isn't the only thing that's happening for folks. So sleep apnea may be a thing, but often

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there are other things that came before the sleep apnea. And so from an Ayurvedic perspective, we would actually be definitely concerned with the sleep apnea because we value sleep so much.

However, we would also be looking at the other things that came beforehand that might have eventually set the stage for the sleep apnea to come into being. And so, often what we will see are a variety of different digestive issues. And so we would then work with that individual to support the healing and the stabilizing of their digestion to reduce the systemic inflammation.

And so this looks different for each person. It might be a change in diet. It might be a change in lifestyle. Lifestyle change might involve things like getting specific about when we eat and how we eat. So any of the mindful eating teachings that you've learned; chew your food, take breaths between bites, sit to eat, focus on your food when you're eating, chew 30 times, all of these kinds of things.

And it might also involve a certain amount of herbal intervention. So we might need, and a lot of people benefit from the use of different herbs and herbal formulas to support getting rid of the systemic inflammation and the stabilizing of the digestion itself. So we would start there.

I also tend to notice that when sleep is impacted, stress levels are a huge component. And so how can we provide tools to support the managing of said stress? And there are certain stresses that, honestly, we can outright eliminate from our lives. And in a way, that's the low hanging fruit, that's awesome. So we can just medicine of subtraction that and move on.

However, some of our stresses are very contextual, and there isn't anything we can do about it. But what we can try to do is find ways to increase our resilience. And so Ayurveda has a lot of different strategies. And this is, again, where we overlap a lot with yoga. So maybe it's a breathing practice, meditation practice, movement, practice.

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I'm a big fan of people going for walks. Go for a walk. Go walk outside. Go be in nature. Go let the sun touch your skin. Go let your nose breathe in some real fresh air and let your mind try to digest all of the stuff that's kind of building up in there and creating tension and creating that constriction of those inner channels, making it harder for everything to do whatever it is it's trying to do.

And so we would work on all those other factors. And then when it comes to the respiration part, we might also work on breathing techniques. We might work on strengthening certain aspects of musculature. We might also work on releasing tension from the face.

My internship, when I was in India I got to do a rotation with a really amazing Ayurvedic ophthalmologist. And one of my takeaways is how much tension we build in our head from not blinking enough and not doing our simple eye exercises. Look up, blink, look down, blink. Look left, blink, look right, blink.

And it's funny because we joked, the group of us that were there as part of the internship, how can it really be that easy? Can I really just release stress in my face? And by releasing the strain in my eyes, I'm releasing strain in my occipital lobe and my jaw is right between these two things.

And then we also talked about, again, different exercises we can do with the tongue, with the jaw, with the mouth, different forms of massage. We also had an Ayurvedic dentist at the hospital where we were working at, and she was a typical dentist who had focused on bringing the Ayurvedic approach into dentistry.

And it was fascinating to also learn a little bit about the face massage and how to create space in the jaw and how to relax the tongue. So we think there are all these, you know, if you want to feel like you're doing a thing about the thing, we can zoom into the site itself. However, context is always really important.

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And so how is the digestion? How are we managing our stress? What are the other conditions that are present? And if we're able to bring some stability and some ease in all those things, we bring more ease in the whole system, right?

Because we're less like a bunch of levers and pulleys, and we're more like a spider web. And in a spider web, if you pull on one strand of the spider web, the whole web moves. And so humans are more like a spider web. And us in our environment, the whole world is like a big spider web and we're one strand, but our one strand is its own spider web.

So you pull on or you shift any one thing and it's amazing to notice all the changes that happen everywhere else in the system as well. So Ayurveda being holistic in its perspective in nature, we do our best to look at the whole person and in their whole context. And then we pull on whichever strands are available for us to pull on to effect change.

Susi: The piece of this that I would love listeners to take away, particularly if you're thinking, "All right, where do I begin," right? Especially lots of people listening to this podcast, and they might be using things like a tool like a CPAP, for example, or a mouth splint that does push that jaw forward, and they're interested in shifting this up because just internally they have a knowing that they can make a change.

And if you do a Google search on movements or exercises, there's not a lot out there, right? And frankly, it's your breathing. It's your breathing, you want to do this in an obviously intelligent way, right? And so this integrative idea here, and building into it is really what I'm hoping you're hearing as you're listening.

So we started off with the idea of the tongue. And it may simply be that you do a few different things around just noticing your tongue. And, Mona, if you were going to give three things that someone can do about noticing their tongue, what might those be?

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Mona: One of the recommendations I make to all my students and clients is when you're brushing your teeth, before you brush your teeth, just stick your tongue out and look at it in the mirror. And when you do that, notice what you notice.

Do you see a coating? Do you see colors? What color is your tongue? Is it pink? Is it red? Is it more pale? And just notice what there is to notice, remembering that these things are always changing over time.

The second recommendation I tend to make to folks is to scrape their tongue. So you can just use a spoon and the part of the spoon where the soup would be faces down. And you can just really gently pull some of that coating off the tongue, you pull from the part of the tongue that's in your mouth towards the tip of the tongue that's sticking out of your mouth. It's easier to scrape your tongue when you're sticking your tongue out of your mouth.

And again, then just look at the coating. Look how thick it is. People often ask me how often do I need to do it? Do it once? Do I do it 10 times? How often do I do it? I do it until I either don't feel like I want to do it anymore or I do it until what comes off in my tongue scraper or on my spoon is clear, just looks like saliva. Again, a way to clear the tongue to reduce some of the inflammatory factors.

When we sleep at night, some of the factors that can create systemic inflammation, your body loves you so much it is always pushing that towards the gastrointestinal tract for elimination and it builds from the tip of the tongue all the way through to the rectum, which is why a healthy bowel movement – We'll do an episode on poop. We'll talk about poop for y'all later.

However, this whole poop every day, scrape your tongue every day helps us to get some of this buildup that can affect the whole system out in a

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really simple way. So before you brush your teeth, look at your tongue, feel your tongue, scrape your tongue.

And I think the other thing I'd say around the tongue might be when you're eating, because you're going to be using your tongue, notice the taste. Notice what tastes good to you. What tastes off to you? What tastes different to you? Which tastes do you like? Are you a sweet taste lover? Are you a salty lover? Do you adore the sour taste, the bitter taste, the pungent taste? Start to notice all the different tastes in your food and notice if you can notice tasting the tastes.

And like I said, the tastes on our tongue cultivate and change our inner waters. It starts to actually create certain different emotional flavors within us. And that's a really cool relationship to get to know. If a certain taste cultivates a certain emotion or a feeling within you, even if you don't have a word for it, the words don't matter as much as you starting to tune into what's happening inside your own being.

So when you brush your teeth in the morning, take a look at your tongue. What's it showing you? Scrape your tongue. And then when you eat, see if you can be present with the taste of the food and what sort of inner flavor that cultivates within you. I'd say those would be the three things I'd suggest.

Susi: I love it. And then if you combine that with some of the baseline and the breathing activities that are throughout this podcast mini-series and the various other things you're learning, you'll get a very well-rounded sort of toolkit of things that you could play with. Because ultimately, if you're wanting to make a change and you're wanting to improve your well-being, the idea here is to start with awareness, right?

You've got to grow the awareness first, because we can't change anything we're not aware of. And then as you even just use these tools or these

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ideas that Mona has shared, your growing clarity of just what's actually there.

And then you can take that information to somebody who can help you work through it. Or you can even work through it and start playing around with tastes or changing foods or any number of things that you might already have in your back pocket, and then start to see the impact on the change.

I mean, I just think it's so cool when I notice my tongue getting a little bit thicker, and it's like, oh yeah, this makes total sense. Of course, my tongue is getting thicker, right? I don't get down on myself and I don't belittle myself, I'm just like, "Yeah, this is the response physiologically, to this anatomical structure because of what I am doing. And it makes sense that I'm doing what I'm doing, given what's actually going on."

So what I'm hoping out of this conversation with Mona and I, that there's some more information that you have around this one structure and how it relates to some perhaps structural changes in your body that have led to sleep apnea, knowing that tissue can change and there is availability here and this is a way toward that.

And, of course, all the other episodes in this mini-series point you in that direction as well. And if you have enjoyed this, like the other episodes, and you would like to delve in deeper, then check out Mechanics of Breathing 4.0, which you can find over at functionalsynergy.com/breathing.

Mona will be there diving deeper into the Ayurvedic pieces of this. And of course, if you want to reach out to Mona even before that and you want to start working with her, or at least have some questions, Mona, what's the best way for them to find you?

Mona: My website, monawarner.com, it'll be in the show notes. And you can reach out to me through my website. There's all sorts of places where

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you can send an email. Wherever you send an email through the website, it all comes in my inbox.

Susi: Awesome. Thank you so much again, Mona.

Mona: Thanks for having me. Enjoy your tongues, everyone. Yeah, that probably didn't come out the way we thought it was going to, did it?

Susi: I love it. Take care everyone, we'll see you next time.