

# Suzette O'Byrne

Phone: (403) 651-3569  
Web: [www.suzetteobyrne.com](http://www.suzetteobyrne.com)  
E-mail: [suzette@flowtraingandyoga.com](mailto:suzette@flowtraingandyoga.com)

## **Breath Balancing**

We have many rhythms in the body such as our heart rate, cerebrospinal fluid pulsations and the flow of inhale and exhale. It is less known that we also have a flow of breath from left to right nostril dominance every 90–120 minutes. When a nostril opens, an energy channel turns on and activates corresponding aspects of body and mind. Breathing through the left nostril is traditionally associated with the moon, right brain, open and intuitive thinking, and a calming, relaxed state. It is during the moon breath that the body processes fluids thus the left nostril should be ideally open when you drink water or when you urinate. The right nostril breath is traditionally thought of as the sun or active breath, brings into play the left brain and gears you to act assertively and think linearly. The sun breath prepares your body to carry out its more active physiologic processes - eating, digesting or defecating.

Check in for a moment and concentrate on the sensation of air moving through the nostrils and see if you can feel this dominance. You can gently block off one side and inhale/exhale through the open side and then try the other to see which one feels more open and how different they are. Ideally our breath regularly changes dominant sides and the difference between them is subtle. A breath that is blocked on one side or doesn't shift can lead to trouble sleeping or calming (if left is blocked) or lack of energy (if the right is blocked). When there is a significant difference in how open the left or right side is, people can have either high or low energy, or be anxious or depressed. It can also be common for those with bone and joint issues all on one side to also be blocked in that nostril.

A common way to to balance the the left and right dominance breath is with alternate nostril breathing (Nadi Shodhana). You can get fancy or you can be simple. A simple way is to block off one nostril by pressing gently against the left side of the nose. Exhale through the right and then switch which nostril you block off and inhale through the left. Repeat this 6 times and then switch directions. Then relax the hands and feel the breath through both nostrils for 6 breaths. Repeat this whole process 3 times. Notice how your mood and energy change and the degree of dominance in your breath.

To help open a blocked side or change dominance you can try lying on the side of the closed nostril, stimulate the inside of the closed nostril with a tissue or nasal wash, or just concentrate on the sensation of air against the inside of the closed nostril (this requires mental control but can be amazingly rapid and effective).

Now put your awareness into action throughout the day. Watch how your energy changes when you lay on one side versus the other or try to sleep on your right versus left. Notice which breath is more dominant and then choose a restorative pose or active flow in your personal yoga practice. Try having a fluid at lunchtime when your left side is open and wait until your right opens to eat and see how good food tastes and to optimize digestion. By becoming aware of the dominance and how it influences you, it opens the possibility of coordinating your urges and inclinations with the larger patterns of which you are a part.

Namaste,

## **Suzette O'Byrne**

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