Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth

Question: How important is breathing to your health and is there a proper way to breathe?

Answer: Fortunately, breathing comes natural to most of is. It's something we rarely think about until an emergency.

For the most part we want to breathe through our nose. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, as we breathe through our nose, tiny hairs that line our nostrils can filter out particles that could injure our lungs. In dusty situations we automatically secrete more mucous to trap the particles of dirt. By sneezing or blowing our nose we remove these particles.

Another reason to breathe through the nose is that doing so can help warm and humidify the air to prepare it for our lungs. Breathing properly helps maintain the correct balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood. It is the amount of carbon dioxide in our blood that helps regulate the pace of our breathing. If we release carbon dioxide too quickly as we do when we breathe through our mouth, arteries and vessels begin to constrict, reducing the amount of oxygen getting to the body and our brain. This can increase anxiety and induce a "fight or flight" response. Bottom line? We don't think as clearly.

Hatha Yoga teaches alternate nostril breathing which balances oxygen flow to both sides of our brain. Constrict one nostril while breathing in through the other to the count of five. Hold for the count of five. Next release the constricted nostril and blow out though it while constricting the opposite nostril to the count of five. Keep the breath out for the

count of five. Alternate for two to three minutes and your brain will be oxygenated and you will feel life return to your body.

If you breathe through your nose take deep breaths rather than shallow ones and you will healthy, more awake and feel less anxious.

Quote of the week: *"When you cease to dream, you cease to live."* – Malcom S. Forbes