Why Gut Health Starts With Your Nervous System Transcript

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Welcome to the Gut Health and Longevity Summit

Welcome everyone back to the Gut Health and Longevity Summit. I am so glad you're here, and I want you to take a breath right now, because what you're about to hear and experience over these sessions could genuinely change the way you think about your body, your health, and your future.

Most people have never been told that movement, breath, and stillness have a direct and measurable impact on the health of their gut and through it, on how long and how well they live.

The science here is remarkable, and today's conversation brings it to life in the most beautiful way. My guest today has built her life and her practice around the idea that healing is not just something that's happening in a clinic, it's something that can happen even on a mat.

So my next guest has spent years teaching something that most wellness experts overlook entirely. The body's capacity to heal is not separate from movement.

It is activated by it. She has built one of the most engaged holistic wellness communities in the world, and today she's going to show us how breathwork and are just not stress management tools.

They are also gut health interventions. Koya Webb is a globally recognized holistic health coach, yoga teacher, and author. She holds certifications in yoga instruction, life coaching and plant based nutrition and has trained with leading teachers across many lineages.

She is the founder of Get Loved Up, a wellness platform and community that has reached millions worldwide through our online programs, retreats and social media presence.

She is also a committed plant based advocate, which this is how we are connected. So Koya, welcome so much. I've been wanting to have this conversation with you for a while.

The connection between gut health breathwork movement, something that our audience really needs to hear.

How Breathwork Regulates the Nervous System and Gut

So let's dive in with the first question and where I always like to start as the foundation. So when we think of the foundation, let's talk specifically about how the nervous system can influence gut health and where does breathwork fit into that relationship.

I love that question because most people think the gut starts in the kitchen. But actually what I've witnessed after teaching holistic health and wellbeing for over 25 years is actually the gut starts with the nervous system.

So not just what you eat, but how you feel, how much stress you're holding so you can be healthy eating plant based, vegan or whatever you feel like a healthy diet is.

But if you're dealing with high stress, it's going to affect your gut. It's going to affect your nervous system. And what I realize in myself, my clients and my community that the key to regulating the nervous system, which directly impacts the gut is breathwork, which I affectionately call breath healing, because the breath healing that I do is a little bit deeper.

It's more a healing process. Just a normal breathwork. It starts with, you know, deep inhale and exhale to calm. But it also I go deeper into what are people holding on from their lives, from their past that's actually causing dysregulation in the body.

So that's the first thing that I want people to know, that, you know, your good health starts with your nervous system. So is it fair to say or a fair way to put it, is that the gut is essentially listening to every breath we take?

Absolutely. Your gut is listening to every breath you take. And when you take a shallow breath that's in signals to your gut that, hey, something's not say.

But when you take full breaths, it's your body feels safety. And if the body doesn't feel safety, it tenses up, it constricts, and that affects your digestion.

It's like, I don't need to eat. I don't need to digest. I need to protect myself. So focusing on breathing fully improves your digestion. Okay, so when we are breathing fully, what state are we in?

Because I feel like some people know, like, all right, I'm in a sympathetic, driven state or I'm in a parasympathetic state. What are we actually activating when we are doing this really intentional, focused breathwork.

So when you are doing the intentional focused breathwork, you're activating the vagus nerve. And that allows you to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps you rest and digest and respond versus reacting.

But if you're not, if you're breathing shallow, then you have a quick response. Your body tenses up and you're in survival. Say you're like, I need to survive. I need to attack.

And unfortunately, people are in this state most of the time. They're drinking lots of caffeine. They're eating lots of inflammatory foods. So the body is like, we might have to fight and save our life at any time.

And living like that over time, it wears down on the gut. The gut becomes exhausted because it's like fighting, fighting, fighting, fighting all the time.

And then we start to feel tired. The caffeine is not working, so we need more. The food is not working, so we're taking more sugar. And it's just this cycle of inflammation that's really caused by stress and stress.

It impacts the nervous system, which I just explained. It gets the gut. So we have to really start looking at our stress levels and how we can take those deep breaths, lower our stress, trigger the vagus nerve, trigger our parasympathetic so that we can actually feel more calm and digest better.

Yeah. You would. You wouldn't think that coming to a listening to a Gut health and Longevity Summit, a lot of my, my experts and questions are leading to this.

How do we come our body down so we can actually digest. So you mentioned stress. Let's talk about that. We hear a lot about stress and inflammation. But what is the actual chain of events like what's the connection between chronic stress inflammation microbiome imbalance and how do they feed each other over time?

That's such a great question because they all work together. So let's start with stress. So stress can be good stress or bad stress.

Stress, Inflammation, and Microbiome Imbalance

A lot of people think it's just one or the other, but the body actually and the nervous system receives it in the same way. So if you're excited you're getting married, you're having a baby.

All those things. It is stress on the body. Something happens. You're in a car accident, you have an argument, a friend, stress on the body. The body is receiving stress.

So stress is a normal part of life is is part of the human experience. So we're no one's going to escape through life with no stress. But the thing is, how we regulate that stress and how we have our relationship with the stress.

So most of the time, with the good stress, the baby, the, the marriage and things like that, you have a regulation because I have my partner and I'm cuddling, I have my baby and I'm cuddling.

That's balanced regulation, right? But then when you have the hard stress, like an accident, your body tenses up. You're mad. You have to do a police report.

The person tried to get up, it escalates dysregulation. It triggers the nervous system that says, I'm not safe. And of course, your gut is like, I'm not safe.

I need to eat. But I'm processing all this trauma so it's not getting regulated. So it's not about never stressing. It's learning how to process your stress again.

Most good stress processes itself with the benefit. It's the stress that's not so great if we don't process, which is like, oh, I had the accident, I'm fine.

I had the argument. I'm fine. I broke up with my partner. I'm fine. Keep going, find another. But the truth is you're not fine and the body is keeping score of every time you're harm and you don't process it.

So the breath healing actually helps the body breathe into all those times we constrict it, and it helps your body release and you start to become aware of like, man, my shoulders are tense.

And after I started breathing, they relaxed because the body starts to feel safe. And so I encourage people to do breath healing every single day to help the body release compounded stress from all the ways we were dysregulated.

So someone who's been chronically stressed for years, what's actually happening inside their gut right now. So if they've been like, I'm sure you've worked with many people like this that come to you and they've just been stressed for years.

What are you seeing? I am seeing that people like it starts to harden and stones start to form. Fibroids can form any like. It really depends on the person.

There's not one diagnosis that happens across the board. Usually things form on where the body is the weakest and that pulls in your DNA, your epigenetics, your environment, and so many other things.

But what is real that it affects the body. So someone like me, it might affect my body. If I hold too much stress, I might start developing ulcers, or someone else might start developing fibroids, or someone else might start developing something else, some disease in the body.

But it's not a disease. It's disease. The body is fighting to like, keep itself. And it has to put that trauma somewhere. It has to put that stress somewhere.

So the body just holds on to it. It's like, okay, she's not going to process, I got you. Her body is our best friend. And a lot of times I like to say I teach people to learn the language of your body, become fluent in the language of your body because your body is always speaking to you.

And a lot of times you want to take pills and stop the body from like, if we have gas, it's like, okay, let me take a pill and stop that. But gas means your body's not digesting.

If you're burping, your body is communicating with you. So instead of taking a pill to stop it. We have to learn the language of the body so that we can actually give it what it needs.

So I see people coming with all types of symptoms, and first I take them to the breath. Let's start doing the breath. Let's start getting into a calm state and let's process some of the stuff you've been holding on to.

And then after we get through the breath and get them more regulated, then we go through. Okay. What is your lifestyle look like? Let's look at the things that are causing stress in your life and dysregulation in your life. Do you like your job?

Do you like your partner? Do you like being a parent? You know. Do you like being in the US? You know, whatever it is, we started dressing the lifestyle factors and in my new book, Wellbeing Rituals, I actually have over 50 rituals that I share different ones with people depending on the stress that they're holding.

Okay. So probably by now a lot of people are thinking can breathwork realistically improve my digestion? Can breathwork realistically change the trajectory of my health.

So if it can, how quickly can somebody actually notice a difference from doing, you know, things like diaphragmatic breathing or breath healing as you're saying?

So the diaphragmatic breathing, box breathing, capella breath for those who are in yoga and breath of fire, things like that, that can definitely benefit.

It can benefit and it can benefit. It's almost like giving yourself a light massage and think of breath healing, which is the conscious, connected breath of three part breath.

It goes a little bit deeper. You're breathing directly into your stomach and into your heart, where we hold a lot of stress. For at least working with me, it's at least 15 minutes.

I encourage people to do five minutes on their own, but if I'm working, it's like at least 15 minutes. People see changes within one session. You will notice like tension releasing from the body, tension, digestion, being building better people that have migraines like oh my god, I can't believe my migraines are so I've heard a possible depending on what they're feeling that it lightens.

What Chronic Stress Does to the Body and Gut

And the more people do it. Like right now this is the first day because I'm gaining testimonials. I'm doing a 21 day experience where we do at least 15 minutes every single day, and I call it the regulated rituals.

And going through this experience every single day, people are like, wow, wow, wow. And there are some days they release more, some days less, but every day something.

So to answer your question, you can start seeing the first with the breath healing right away. And I think even with yoga and breathwork, you start to feel when you take a deep breath.

Just right now, you feel relaxed in your body right away. So just think about the more you do it. It's kind of like walking. If you go for a walk, you're going to feel good.

If the longer you walk, the better and the better you're going to feel are like lifting weights. If you lift a little bit, you'll feel good. But the more you live consistently, the more resilience you build over time.

So the same thing with breath healing. The more that you do it, the more relaxed you feel. The more calm you feel, the more stress you release from your body that you've built up every day in your life.

Until now, it actually starts releasing from your body. All right. So let's let's summarize a little bit so far what you have mentioned. So I want to think of this as so where doing breath healing.

That breath healing is activating your parasympathetic nervous system which your parasympathetic nervous system is your rest and digest system. So when you're activating that you're actually also activating your digestive enzymes the bile release.

So any food you're putting in, you're going to be able to absorb the nutrients better. And I know from like research that individuals who have things like IBS is very, very common when they start incorporating these kinds of things, breathwork practices and are really regulating the nervous system, vagal tone, addressing that, that they have, you know, decreased symptoms.

So what do you find is the most effective breathing technique you have seen really make a difference for individuals? Because there's so many to choose from.

There's so many to choose. I'm going to give you two. I'm going to give you two that really move the needle for me, and that I got certified in breath and breathwork as a facilitator four years ago.

So I have four years of experience with leading these practices. I would say these two breaths are the most important. Number one, the circle breath. And that's just regulating in through the nose and out through the mouth and through the nose.

And I'll do the mouth. So doing that 3 to 7 times before you eat, when you wake up, before you go to bed, will help you regulate and will help you digest your food better.

It will help you sleep better, and it will help you start the morning, especially if you use an alarm clock, which I. I recommend music if you can find a tune that can wake you up, but it helps you regulate at the beginning of your day when you're wanting to digest, and also before you go to bed so that you sleep better. That's the number one.

And then the number two is the breath healing, which is the conscious connected breath. The first inhale into the stomach, second into the heart, and then release for at least 10 to 15 minutes.

And that what that does is it gets into stress from the past, where the one breath is immediately regulating and the breath healing is healing constriction in the body that is built up and constriction in the gut, and issues in the gut that have built up over time.

A lot of people realize that they try to work from the inside out or the outside in, and it's really both. You really have to hit it both ways. You really have to eat properly.

And you know that part is important and you have to regulate the impact of stress on your body. Okay. We're we're going to return to this breath healing conscious breath.

We'll return to that. But okay. So this is something I find really fascinating both as a physician and somebody who practices integrative medicine. As a yoga teacher myself, how do emotions and stress patterns actually get stored in the body and how does that affect the gut over time?

So when you are stress, your body is not thinking is prioritizing survival, right? And so when your body is in survival state, your brain is not in its highest executive state.

So I'm a certified nor emotional coach. And we talk about the three states, their survival state, emotional state and executive state. And executives say is your highest functioning state where you're making the decisions in alignment with your soul, and that's going to send you to your results and survival state.

You're just trying to stay alive. You're not going to necessarily make the best choices for yourself. You're going to make the choice best.

Breathwork Techniques That Improve Digestion

So based on whatever you think you need to do, survive. So if you have trauma from the past and someone looks at you funny, if you're in survival state, you're going to stay away from them.

You're scared their threat stay away from me. You're your jaw clenches, your stomach clenches, your shoulders

clench. And this is causing dysregulation in the body and affecting your digestion.

If you're in an executive, say, and someone looks at you and you're like, oh, I wonder what's going on with them today. It's not personal. You don't take it personal, maybe like, hey, how you doing?

You have a conversation, but it's not the same as survival, say. So that's the biggest difference of like how your body responds based on your triggers.

And your triggers directly affect your stress. And of course, that stress directly affects your brain and what you decide to do. Because if the brain is survival state, it's going to do whatever it needs to do to protect you, even make up stories from the past.

And those stories start to loop. So you get these relationships and you're like looking at all the things that hurt you in the past versus you're talking to a person that's not perfect.

So if everything they're saying is triggering you, you won't ever be able to have a healthy relationship until you deal with the stress and trauma of the past, because your mind is constantly trying to keep you safe.

And so you won't look at like, okay, let me talk to this person about why they said this or why they did this, or why they think this, and then decide, do I need to create a healthy boundary?

Do I need to have something to know? Your body is going to be like, oh no, red flag, I'm out, you know? And so that's how it starts to affect our lives.

And it affects everything. Like everything is affected by the regulation or dysregulation of the nervous system. So this is an interesting example you gave because it makes me think of an interaction I had last week with an individual.

And I think, you know, usually many times when somebody is going through a health journey and they're trying to figure it out, they are in this survival state.

And one of the challenges that I see is, okay, you want to heal and you're in the survival state. Yet at the same time, you can actually prevent yourself from healing.

Because I had somebody come to one of my discovery calls, and if she's watching this right now, I want her to listen that she she basically came and she's like, well, I've already changed my diet.

I gave up alcohol, I did this, I did this, and she basically turned off her brain to what could help her based off of her own past experience and thinking, oh, this is this is the only way.

So what you just said, like when somebody gets triggered, it's like this automatic thing in their brain that doesn't even allow them that space to start that healing process, which I think that's why this is so beautiful, this like breathwork allowing you, you know, to really start tuning into and wakening your body at this deeper level rather than like even that's a vicious cycle.

You think stress is a vicious cycle. What we do to ourself, you know, by not allowing ourselves to heal, can be a really vicious cycle. So my heart goes out to her because chronic stress doesn't just affect your body, it affects your microbiome and it affects.

So even if you're eating the healthiest food and working out and doing all the things, if you're stressed because you feel like it's not working, that's actually causing it not to work more.

And I laugh with you because I've been doing this work for over 25 years, and I'm just making this connection now. Was I experiencing it? Yes. But having clients similar to what you just spent like dysregulated dysregulation.

Last year, I went through the deepest grief of my life, and even with all the rituals, I was writing my book, wellbeing rituals. With all the rituals, I was dysregulated because I was angry and I was mad, and I was frustrated, and rightly so.

All those emotions were valid and I didn't understand that. Girlfriend, you got to do even more of your regulation practice in order to deal with the deepest grief you experienced in your life.

So what I would say to that person and what I've said to my clients now prioritize breath healing. I used to have the get loved up yoga school. I literally changed it to the Get Loved Up Embody Leadership Academy.

And in order to get certified with yoga and certified as a life coach with me, you must first get certified in Embody Breath. You must first know how to use the breath to regulate your nervous system.

How Emotions and Trauma Affect the Gut

Because what I now know is, if you're not able to regulate your breath and regulate your nervous system and your stress, all the other stuff it comes after, this is the core.

It starts in your gut. It starts in your nervous system. It starts with stress. And you need to understand and be able to use this free tool of the breath to keep your body, letting your body know that even though that happened to me, I am safe.

And so my heart goes out to that person. And I hope you are listening and I hope you get into breath healing and do it every day and watch daily how your results.

If you're doing the exact same thing, I invite anyone listening. If you feel like you've been doing a protocol and it's not working, I encourage you do the exact same thing you're doing now.

Don't change anything else, just add breath healing for seven days. Just seven days and 21 if you if you want to go for the long haul, the least seven days of of breath healing and notice the difference, don't change anything else.

Do the same thing and then notice if your digestion improves. If your happiness improves, if your awareness improves, I don't know. Anyone has done at least seven days of breath healing with me, and they haven't seen improvement in every area of their life.

So, you know, it makes me think right. These chronic nervous system patterns that we've developed, it really allows breathwork to create that window for releasing that stored tension.

So if we were going to provide the audience with a little mini practice right now, something they can do, you know, especially if they're new to this, if we kind of just I'd love to go back to this breath healing that you teach, you know, with these different levels.

If we could just kind of guide them through a little bit of a practice right now, because they might be sitting at the edge of their seat like they're a few, you know, interviews in and they're like, I just really need to heal.

I've already eaten all the kale. You know something else? Maybe this is the interview that they need to, like, listen to. So would you agree says with walking us through this, I absolutely love to.

So before all my meetings and I've only had one meeting that I've had an offer, the breath and someone was like, no, I just want to get right to work.

But I actually start with three breaths and so I'll take you all through that. Now it's just in through the nose and out through the mouth and just invite you into it.

So I invite you to place your right hand over your heart and your left hand over your right. I invite you to gently close your eyes or gaze down softly at the floor.

I want you to take a deep inhale through your nose and audible side through your mouth. Again, deep and healthy your nose and very slow audible sigh out of the mouth.

Last inhale through the nose. I invite you to hold the breath at the top option to sip in a little more air. And whenever you're ready, slow exhale is slowly as you can.

Deep inhale and exhale. Relax your hands. Notice your body. You might be feeling tingles or chills in the body. Like that felt so good. But I invite you to just do a gentle body scan and notice how that changed the energy and frequency of your body, and then slowly blink your eyes open.

So one thing ritual that I teach is the three part breath and the seven sacred breath. So I just took you through the three part breath, which is the quickest, fastest way to regulate your nervous system in real time.

And did you feel that? How did that feel for you? You know what that felt like. You know what words came to mind when you when you when you said, all right, like identify what that that feels like self-love.

That's what came to my mind. I'm like, this is me giving love to my body, which I just don't spend enough time doing. And I'm sure many people don't. Right?

So imagine just a few seconds of breath can create love. And why I love that is because then me, I'm going, well, now I'm creating oxytocin. You know what oxytocin does for the body, you know, so I'm going down that whole pathway.

But yes, I love that. Exactly. And that it does. It triggers those happy hormones and the oxytocin. And I love that you said self-love because that's actually what breath is.

It's the one free tool that we have when we enter this human experience. And it's the one thing that we don't need when we leave. And as a spiritualist spiritual law is there's nothing that you can can happen to you in the world that there's not a solution for.

And so it makes sense. The one thing anyone listening to this and anyone alive can do, what is the one thing we can all do? We can all breathe. Right.

Guided Breath Healing Practice

So that from that one free tool, it connects to every single thing. So even if you are not able to move, you're able to breathe. And that breathing stimulate circulation.

It triggers self-love and those happy hormones. And that alone is communicating to yourselves, I am safe. Let's heal versus being tense. If something negative happens to you and chronic stress, it really does negatively impact the brain.

The gut and every area of your life is negative impacted if you don't regulate when you're experiencing chronic stress? So if somebody wanted to do this.

How often should they do this? Is once a day enough to actually change something like what is what is your recommendation of how often minimum once a day.

If you're doing the breath healing practice, which is a 15 minute practice, I recommend once a day, but I recommend at least three times a day. If it's just the seven sacred breaths or the three breaths that we did again in the morning before you eat.

And if you eat multiple times a day, then you got a couple most of the time where you eat one day or three times a day, everyone's different. I respect it, but each time you eat, just remember to breathe before you eat.

That's automatically going to improve your digestion in your gut. And then before you go to bed, it's really important because we go to bed. Sometimes it's just on the phone, off the phone, and we close our eyes.

But what about if once we put the phone down, we actually regulate? We can actually sleep deeper, faster, go into deeper, slave, deeper REM states if we actually do a little bit of breath healing before bed, or even just the three part breath, you know, it doesn't always have to be so deep.

It can just be those three best. So I would say, anyone just getting started, try those three breaths multiple times a day. When you wake up, when you go to bed, and bonus every time before you eat.

And because this is a gut health summit every time before you eat, for sure, every time before you eat. Okay, so I actually do breathwork before bed too.

Like if I don't hit the pillow and just fall asleep, I am usually doing breathwork. So is there any experience or any research that you have seen around how breathwork can influence longevity?

Yes, 100% like breathwork influences longevity because it influences the nervous system and the stress state and because it's influencing. I mean, it's just like, again, before you change your diet, try changes in your nervous system and try changing your how many hours or moments you spend in dysregulation.

Try breathing more, spending time in nature more, turning your routines into rituals. So for instance, like if you go for a walk and normally you go for a walk.

You're listening to a podcast, you're talking to the friend, you're on the phone. How about just go for a walk and listen to the birds? Or go for a hike and just be with the trees and just leave the phone, right?

And hey, I'm the queen of multitasking. I love multitasking, I'm on a book tour. Look, I'm in my bed and I'm texting, but when I put the phone down and now I'm taking it to an opposite room and turning it off because I don't want those emfs.

But then I allow myself to breathe, and I allow myself to sleep deep every single time I do that.

Breathwork, Longevity, and Recovery

So I would just recommend, just like making it a part of your lifestyle and noticing that when you make it a part of your lifestyle, it will affect your longevity.

Because we already discussed it affects your gut. It also affects your sleep, how much you sleep. Of course, that's going to determine how much you recover.

How much you recover directly affects your longevity. So it's your nervous system state is going to affect every single part of your life. And breath work and breath healing is the makes the greatest impact on your nervous system in real time.

So it's a number one tool. Beyond workout, beyond diet, beyond everything that I've been doing for 25 years. That's what spirit downloaded into me when I was regulating myself from grief.

And I got back into my highest up. And the science says, what's happening? Let me just talk about the science for a little bit. So what's happening when you do that?

Breath healing. Inhale inhale exhale. The conscious connected breath is that you're oxygenating. You're bringing in oxygen at a high rate for 1015 minutes.

So you're deeply you're not hooking yourself up for two machine. You're not paying thousands of dollars for someone to pump oxygen. You're doing it yourself, and it's absolutely free.

But you need to do it for a period of time longer than the three breaths or the seven Sacred Best. That's why it's more healing, right? And that's why I call it the breath healing.

And you're eliminating the carbon dioxide. You're decreasing the carbon dioxide for that short amount of time that triggers your subconscious. Right. So you actually know and your cells know what you need to do to heal.

You have more clarity because it also gets your focus on the best, or you're not focusing on your boyfriend or your work or other different things. A lot of people who have trouble meditating and just sitting still love breathwork and breath healing because it gives them something to do, and that's something to do.

Where your mind is not ruminating is what allows the body to heal. It's what triggers the parasympathetic nervous system so you can rest and digest and recover.

And so I just think people have to you have to know that it directly affects longevity, because it literally affects everything that has to do with recovery and repair.

Yeah, absolutely. Koya. Thank you. This has been genuinely moving in every sense of the word. The idea that the way we breathe, the way we move, and the way that we rest can reshape the biology of our gut and extend how well we age.

That is a message that I want everyone in the audience to carry with them. So, Koya, if people want to learn more about you, more about what you're up to, your latest book, where can they reach out to you and find you?

You can find out more about me and my work, which is all about nervous system regulation through breath healing and holistic wellbeing. Through my new book, Wellbeing Rituals, which you can purchase online and anywhere books are sold and my website.

Koya Well, my email is Koyawebb.com if you have any questions, but my website is koyawebb.com koyawebb.

Where to Find Koya Webb and Final Takeaway

com and that's where you'll see my seven day experience, my 21 day experience. So again I encourage people, change nothing else and just do the breath healing.

And I love to see how it impacts people's lives. And I'm just I'm really excited to start seeing like the testimonials and the life changes that happen when people really focus on the breath in a deeper way than we have been so far.

Because now meditation is mainstream. Breathwork is mainstream, but we're not getting into the depths of it that really impact the nervous system. So with the breath healing, we're getting a little bit deeper and I'm starting.

I'm very excited about what I'm feeling in my life and what I'm seeing in my community. Amazing. So here's the key takeaway. Audience. Your gut and your nervous system are in constant conversation.

Every time you take a conscious breath or choose stillness over stress, you are sending healing signals to the very bacteria and the cells that determine how long and how well you will live.

So stay tuned for another episode and I will see you all soon.