

Why the voice is so important

- As soon as we open our mouths to speak we are judged - assumptions can be made about us, our intelligence, determination, confidence and power. We are 'placed' by our listeners and sometimes we do this to others too.
- The minute we speak – our tone, pitch, quality of articulation inflexions – send out subtle messages about the kind of person we are – our mood and our feelings at that particular time.
- Being able to project the 'right sound' can make a vital difference to the way we are perceived and treated . Used properly the voice can work for us in our personal relationships also, of course, in our business and professional life.
- It can be said that the voice is the primary link between the mind and the body therefore if you have a positive mindset, an awareness of posture and a basic knowledge of how the voice works – you have the potential to exercise far more control thus speaking effectively, effortlessly and with confidence.

Content

- First of all if you have been asked to do something – open a meeting- give a short speech whatever, it is quite obvious someone has faith in your abilities and respects you so think of this – hold this thought in your head whilst you prepare and before you open your mouth.
- Be sure of your brief – what have you been asked to do – if you are uncertain ask for clarification.
- If it is your choice and decision - make certain you are sure as to the purpose, content and audience
- Only then can you work on HOW you are going to put your material across and use your voice.

Performance

- Wear something comfortable – smart, of course, but not restrictive – avoid tight belts, collars or very high heels which can thrust the spine forward.
- You may feel vulnerable and in doubt but your audience will not automatically perceive that from the outset – quite the contrary, actually. remember you are the speaker and because of that very fact – you begin with credibility from the listener’s point of view.
- Show that you are **comfortable and enjoying** the experience even if you are anxious – control the fear and nerves - a little anxiety is natural and good in that a little adrenalin can drive us to prepare well, focus and to a degree, monitor our performance. Your audience will feel confident that you are in control so remember this as you approach the task and during your performance.
- Pay attention to your posture - make sure your spine is not too straight but not too slumped either.
The lungs need to be supported to enable adequate breath support – whether standing or sitting. So a balanced, long but free spine is essential.
- Check that the head is not thrusting forward and the shoulders are not raised with tension as you speak.
Speak with a relaxed jaw and use the tongue and lips freely – bring the sounds forward.
- Make the words you use work for you, words have a natural energy and life which comes from the vowels and consonants. Articulate these clearly and your speech will have a clarity, force and energy.
Avoid letting the ends of words or sentences fade away.
- Connect with what you are saying – let your facial expression, eye contact and body language compliment your message.
- Think positive and your tone will be confident; your pace and pitch will vary naturally

Vocal Care and Awareness

- If your talk or presentation is quite demanding, warm up or incorporate regular warm ups in you daily routine.
- In bed, on waking, begin with a BIG stretch. Enjoy an (un-stifled) yawn to open the throat and exercise the jaw.
- Take a deep breath followed by a BIG (audible) sigh!
- Sip some water (do this before drinking anything hot).

- Yawn again to an 'AH' sound – to raise the soft palate and open the throat).
- Hum or sing in the bath or shower to warm up the larynx.
- With an easy jaw and comfortable breath supply, say something that exercises your muscular agility.(Articulation) a tongue twister i.e. as below:
 - *All I want is a proper cup of coffee made in a proper copper coffee pot Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry. Mixed biscuits, mixed biscuits*
 - To the tune of the 'William Tell Overture'
Many men, many men, many men, men men! (nasal resonators)
Many men, many men, many men, men men
- Say on the way to work, in the car, during the day – whenever.
- Let the tone of your voice reflect a very positive mood.
- If you use your voice frequently for long periods every day make sure you drink adequate amounts of water to keep the vocal cords moist.
- Rest your voice when you can – even if only for short periods
- Limit alcohol intake, spicy foods, dairy produce and, of course, cigarette smoke
- After strenuous or extended voice use also during the evening, if you've been watching TV or concentrating hard on paperwork – stop – stretch, roll the shoulders and give your head a gently shake. This will release upper body tension.
- Do a little downward humming, a few notes only to relax the voice.
- Sleep with unclenched and relaxed jaw.

Evaluation

- If you felt unhappy about a your performance – again ask yourself honestly why was that the case?
- Did you omit certain points, did you fail to quote or give specific facts and figures?
- Did you feel you were awkward ? . Chances are the audience were not aware of any of these things; the effect you have on the audience is the most important factor.
- If you were speaking in a meeting or in a “one to one” situation - did you fail to express your own view in the way you had intended?

- Don't over analyse or intimidate yourself but consider how you might improve next time – more controlled pace, more emphasis or confident tone., fewer distracting movements, clearer articulation or improved breath control.

- Be objective – but not over critical – you can improve.

- ***Whatever your goals or specific areas of concern – vocal health, performance or specific content – we can help you to enhance your voice and your personal and professional performance– contact us now, we can help!!!***