

## HEALTHY TIPS FOR TEACHERS

### 10 things to keep your voice beautiful!

1. *Limit intake of dehydrating fluids - coffee, tea, alcohol; up water intake*
2. *Avoid whispering if you "lose" your voice. Speak quietly instead with support*
3. *If you must shout, use support muscles!*
4. *Match your phonation to your breath length*
5. *Excessive throat clearing is too harsh for the vocal folds. Try to avoid this*
6. *Improve your posture, so muscles can work effectively*
7. *See if you can have voice naps during the day*
8. *Use giggle technique to help blow away any constriction in larynx*
9. *Articulate well at front of mouth*
10. *When you have a cold, avoid decongestants; steam instead*

Become aware of voice use. What demands are you making of your voice "off-duty" in addition to "on-duty"? If you have overdone it, try and take it easy.

#### POSTURE - a reminder

Knees over ankles, Hips over knees, Rib cage over hips, Shoulders over rib cage  
Ears over shoulders, Stand with your feet hip width apart so you have a good base

#### BREATHING

If you have an important "speech" to make, low abdominal breathing as opposed to clavicular breathing will ease muscle tension and help abate nerves by circulating the oxygen instead of going into "fight or flight" syndrome. It is a great stress buster. A quick way in, is to imagine you are smelling something wonderful and feel your ribs expand without raising your shoulders. The air has the sensation of dropping into the bottom of your lungs.

Focusing on your breath will help you relax and give your vocal folds much needed moments of rest!

#### SPEECH

Speak for a breath's length

Energise your speech with different voice qualities; add in pauses; don't be afraid to experiment with dynamics and pitch. It is the contrast which keeps people listening.

Speaking above noise for any length of time will have a detrimental effect as will yelling at a sports event whether as a spectator or participant. If you must shout, activate your lower abs - belly button to backbone - and keep your throat un-constricted!

Limit the gap between you and your pupils as much as possible in the classroom so they are nearer your voice.

Factor in rests when the pupils can be listening to a CD or watching a DVD or at the computer, maybe debating amongst themselves, or even writing!!

Look at the environment in which you teach - is there a bathroom acoustic? Is it poorly appointed - noisy heating? Are you outdoors where there are no hard surfaces to bounce off acoustically? Are you at a swimming pool? Is your environment drying? Are there a lot of chemicals about? (Art, Science, DT) Is it too cold? - when we are cold we raise our shoulders and tighten our necks and jaws. Are you constantly going from warm to cool environments? (PE) Are you having to yell to students far away?

How aware are you of what your body is saying to you? At the end of your day, maybe sitting in your car or at home, just do a quick check as to where tensions may be. The more you get to know your body, the easier it will be to undo the building tensions. One way to release is to imagine breathing warm, relaxing air through the affected muscles. Visualise lengthening your muscles and opening up your lungs, wider/ broader.

How much exercise do you do? Do you talk while exercising? Do you have long conversations immediately after, while the cords have extra blood supply pumped into them? They are slightly swollen in this state and no singer would sing for an hour after exercise! Nor would they go out into the cold and stand around without wrapping up - singers and their famous scarves!

## **INFORMATION on the INTERNET**

Science of voice is not an exact science. By putting any combination of "voice, vocal cords, teachers and voice, vocal function, vocal dysfunction" etc into a search engine, you will come across numerous sites dedicated to this matter.

On **Wikipedia** you can learn more about the actual physical anatomy of the voice and larynx and attendant muscles with clear diagrams - type in "human voice" and you will find a wealth of information.

An American foundation at the University of Iowa has an inspirational man with the unlikely name of called Ingo Titze, whom I have heard lecture and he has set up a site for teachers called The Voice Academy. You can access that at [www.ncvs.org](http://www.ncvs.org) - home page - current research - The Voice Academy There you will see some of the information you have today with some good graphics. NCVS stands for the National Center for Voice and speech. This is packed with fascinating information.

Vocal Osteopathy is a relatively new and controversial strategy - by manipulating the larynx, the muscles which have gone into compensation mode are released. Jacob Liebermann is its founder and leading practitioner. He has a private practice. [www.jacob-lieberman.co.uk](http://www.jacob-lieberman.co.uk).

## **JANET SHELL**

*As a soloist, Janet sings around the world. Whether at the Royal Opera House or the Royal Albert Hall, she is equally at home in opera or concert. She has given live broadcasts for Classic FM and the BBC and continues to combine a busy performing schedule with her vocal coaching. She teaches singing and is a member of the British Voice Association and AOTOS. Affiliated to the Harley Street ENT Clinic, Janet is interested in voice dysfunction and promotes awareness of vocal health amongst other professional voice users through Talking Voice. A qualified teacher, Janet was a head of department for several years before re-training at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She can be contacted on [janet@talkingvoice.net](mailto:janet@talkingvoice.net).*

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