

Notes from Looking after your voice session presented by Debbie Chatting, Voice Synergy

<https://www.voicesynergy.co.uk/>

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The session started with a brief description of how the voice is produced, with the breath supporting the voice as it passes over the vocal folds in the larynx.

The air we breathe in through our nose and mouth enters the lungs, assisted by the diaphragm dropping and the ribs expanding. This breath is used for voice, when we need it.

Exercise 1. Stand up and put your hands on your ribs and feel the movement as you breathe in and out deeply, this is the powerhouse for your voice

It is important to speak when at the top of the breath, i.e. before breathing out, otherwise you will lose voice power.

The main tip was to drink WATER. You need this to keep your body healthy, but especially while giving a talk or presentation, as it lubricates the vocal cords. Taking a sip of water can also be used to take a pause and collect your thoughts.

It is **your** knowledge that people are seeking, so take your time, view knowledge as currency, and recognise you are gifting yours to others. Give yourself permission to be the expert in that moment.

Often we give very short answers or statements in our workplace, 'yes, that's fine' or 'I don't think so' and are not used to saying longer sentences.

Exercise 2. Practice vocalising longer thoughts, by building a sentence up slowly, repeating and adding to it at each repetition.

When you breathe in, you supply the brain with oxygen – termed **Inspiration**, which gives you the power to think. If you think of breathing out as **expression** rather than expiration, then you will get the idea of the rhythm of speech.

Hint: When talking to men it may be beneficial to lower the pitch of your voice. This can convey more authority and seems to be easier for men to listen to (for example the difference in Margaret Thatcher's voice during her political career [Margaret Thatcher voice before/after - YouTube](#))

To speak well, preparation in addition to filling the necessary handy water bottle is needed.

*Exercise 3. Remove tension in the body by tensing **all** your muscles for 5-10 seconds and then relax them, repeat several times.*

Exercise 4. Take a breath, then hum out a note and feel around your face, head and throat to see what you can feel, where the vibrations are, massage the muscles of the face and temple to release tension in the jaw muscles

Exercise 5. Stand up and take a good breath. Hum a note continuously. Try different notes and also try going up and down in pitch whilst humming

Exercise 6. While humming a note, lift your arm and point, relax and drop your jaw as wide as possible and let the voice out in an 'ahh'. Direct the voice along your arm to where you are pointing

Exercise 7. Practice lip trills ([Lip trills exercises](#) | [CUH](#) may be useful?)

When speaking (or at any other time) be aware of maintaining good posture.

Exercise 8. Stand up with your feet shoulder width apart, pointing forward. Gently sway backwards and forwards until you find the centre point, then do this side to side. Once you have found your centre, release the tension in your knees.

You should also be aware of this when you are sitting, your thighs should be fully supported by the chair and your knees and ankles should have a relaxed 90° angle, either raise your chair or get a footrest to allow this.

The **Alexander Technique** looks at posture and suggests you imagine your head being lifted from the crown by a golden thread. Think your shoulders wide and your spine long.

Your physical posture will affect how you feel and your emotions and a larger, more open physical presence will make you feel more confident. Generally think **up, wide, forward** when you are presenting.

When presenting, slow down, pause between sentences and take a drink of water if you feel yourself getting flustered and remember to breathe. If you find yourself using 'filler words' such as 'err' um' just stop, pause, take a breath if necessary to collect your thoughts, then carry on. Practise this at home, using a recording device to check back. Smiling can also make you feel positive and you will look and feel more confident.

Mentally break the audience into three and shift your attention between blocks during your speech or presentation. If you pause and someone tries to butt in, just gently but firmly say you hadn't finished, and you will come back to their comment once you have concluded.

Once you have finished your presentation (and are alone) praise yourself out loud, tell yourself you did well.

To improve your skills in talking publicly or in meetings you need to **practice**:

- *Do your humming and trilling exercises*
- *Record yourself so that you can identify and address anything which you feel would be detrimental to your message*
- *Practice talking on any subject for a minute without hesitation or repetition – describe your shampoo in the shower, or explain a process*
- *Practice good posture*
- *Remember that you are worth listening to, you hold the knowledge and experience and you are being generous by allowing other people to have it*

And don't forget your water bottle!