

BREATHING IS EVERYTHING

You may think you breathe correctly, but the fact is, you probably don't.

Great communicators understand that their voice is a valuable tool. It is a fragile, priceless instrument that must be played correctly.

It's time to start taking care of your voice. Here are some helpful pieces of information to help you understand how it works and how to make it sound better than ever:

1. Your voice comes from your breath. As air flows over your vocal chords, sound and voice are created.
2. Breathe from your belly, not your shoulders.
3. Stand up straight, shoulders back, chin up. Posture is key to proper breathing. When you sit, the same rules apply.
4. Locate your diaphragm. It is a dome shaped muscle located above your belly button that can help to increase the volume of oxygen you receive into your lungs when you take a breath.
5. Practice belly breathing for 2 minutes every day. You can do this laying down on your back, sitting in a chair, or leaning forward against a wall.
6. Belly breathing for 2 minutes will lower your cortisol and raise your endorphins. It is a life skill and the perfect way to calm yourself when you are nervous.
7. Are you nasal? Do you mumble? Open your mouth about 10% wider than you normally do. This will lessen nasal sounds, increase your ability to enunciate, and help you to be heard more clearly.
8. Take a deep belly breath before you begin speaking. This gives your lungs the air they need to give you greater vocal command.
9. Practice counting out loud to 15 in front of a mirror. If you have trouble making it to 15 on one breath, you are not breathing from your belly. A skilled speaker/communicator should be able to speak for about 25 seconds on one sustained breath. Make that your goal.
10. If you want to immediately change the tone of your voice, just smile! Your facial expression will change and so will your vocal tone.