

## MASKS & YOUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE

Current CDC regulations are designed to help us stop the spread of COVID-19, but wearing a mask absolutely affects a person's ability to communicate. Here's a tip sheet designed to help you harness your body language and your vocal ability and break through that mask to become a better communicator during the pandemic.

- 1. First Impressions:** You only get 5 seconds to make a first impression. Some of the signals we all look for to determine how we are feeling about someone when we meet them are covered by the mask. We all have to try harder. Increase your energy level: energy is palpable!
- 2. Eye Contact:** Shakespeare said it best: the eyes are the window to the soul. Now that your nose and mouth are covered, your eyes have to work harder to project your personality. What is perfect eye contact? A steady, level gaze.
- 3. Smile with your eyes:** Oh, yes, your eyes can smile! When we smile under a mask, our eyes smile too. Keep in mind that with your mask on, you will need to smile more deeply and purposefully to get your emotions across.
- 4. Gesture more:** Gesturing is the physical extension of a thought. When we use gesturing effectively, we heighten our ability to communicate how we are feeling and our message becomes more powerful.
- 5. Adjust your voice:** Whether your mask is made of fabric, or a paper product, it is going to affect the quality of your speaking voice and make you sound muffled. To improve your voice quality, just follow Coach Candy's 10% rule for speaking with a mask on:
  - \* increase your volume by 10%
  - \* annunciate your words by opening your mouth 10% more
  - \* slow down your rate of speaking by about 10%

**No matter how you sound, I can make you sound better.**