

# Quick Voice Therapy & Vocal Hygiene Tips for Managing a Chronic Voice Disorder

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## Voice Technique Tips

- Less effort is more when it comes to voicing!
- Avoid straining your throat when speaking or projecting
- Speak with more airflow and increased forward focus of the voice to lips and tongue (see webinar for details on flow phonation and resonant voice production)
- Perform resonant hums frequently, feeling a strong buzz in your lips without throat effort
- Use a straw to get that same buzzy easy feeling or use the straw technique in some water!
- Try voice techniques to “warm up” the voice and to “reset” your voice throughout the day. Do resonant hums or straw phonation in between calls, teaching sessions, or conversations!
- Give yourself mini “breaks” between conversations and spread speaking duties out throughout the day if possible
- Always work with a speech language pathologist who is a specialized voice therapist to do techniques correctly
- Engage in relaxation techniques and exercises for destressing and calming not only the mind, but decreasing tension in the body
- Practice voice techniques frequently and in conversation to make them more automatic
- Keep in mind, the techniques described here are meant to help compensate for voice symptoms, not to cure a neurological disorder like spasmodic dysphonia or tremor. They *can* resolve muscle tension dysphonia when done correctly with a voice therapist

## Using “Sensory Tricks” to your Benefit in Functional Ways

- If using a higher pitch or singing temporarily relieves your symptoms use increased intonation or “sing-song” like voice to help compensate for symptoms (ensuring still a natural voice production pattern)
- Avoid consistent use of high pitch or whispering which could lead to increased strain
- Use efficient flow phonation (see webinar for demonstration) and crisp, clear articulation of sounds with the lips and tongue instead of whispering if whispering is helpful

## For Virtual Communication or Phone Calls

- Use speaker phone and headphones with an input microphone
- One headphone in the ear can help modulate volume
- Use clear articulation of sounds
- Project with more buzz/forward focus of your sounds and NOT with effort in your throat

## Vocal Hygiene Recommendations

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Adequate hydration is crucial for proper vocal fold vibration. If you have caffeine or alcohol increase your water intake. 60-80 oz per day is a general adequate estimate
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake. Both can be drying to the vocal folds
- Avoid throat lozengers with menthol, which can dehydrate and irritate the vocal fold tissue. Instead, opt for ones with natural ingredients such as pectin or glycerin. Try Ludens or Halls Breezers if you need one
- Avoid throat clearing and coughing which can be very traumatic for the vocal folds. These behaviors will not serve to make your voice clearer. Instead, try taking a sip of water with a “hard swallow” to clear any mucus or to soothe irritation that triggers the desire to cough or throat clear. If you need to reset your voice try a resonant hum
- Avoid shouting, screaming or yelling, which could cause injury to the larynx. This includes shouting through a house, yelling during a game, etc. Wait until others are close to speak, cheer silently during games, and utilize email communication more frequently
- Avoid whispering, which can be straining to the vocal folds. If whispering is the only way you can get a voice, try resonant voice or flow phonation to achieve gentle easy voice without strain or severe tension
- Reduce excessive upper body tension by engaging in upper body and neck stretches
- Limit straining to talk in virtual meetings, phone calls or over noise. Use healthy methods of increasing vocal loudness and/or consider using a voice amplification device
- Avoid inhalation of environmental irritants like smoke or dust. Avoid smoking/vaping
- Reduce intake of foods that typically trigger reflux and follow appropriate dietary and behavioral modifications for reflux as recommended by your treatment team

## General Reminders

- Be easy with yourself! Dealing with a voice disorder can be very challenging. Celebrate the small wins, maintain perspective, and appreciate when or in what ways you still *can* communicate or express yourself (even if in different ways)
- Be patient with these techniques. Benefit and gains are a process and can happen with frequent practice and through building awareness of your voice
- Always work with a speech language pathologist/specialized voice therapist when doing these techniques or engaging in any voice work
- Remember that these techniques are not designed to cure a neurological disorder but that they can help you compensate for symptoms
- These techniques are *not* designed to strengthen anything and are not “exercises” but techniques. They establish more efficient voice patterns and ways of compensating
- Acknowledge that dealing with a voice disorder is hard! Recognize that your feelings about your voice disorder are valid no matter what those are!

For more information on voice techniques, vocal hygiene, and on dealing with a chronic voice disorder you can visit [speakingboldly.com/blog-1](https://speakingboldly.com/blog-1) or email me at [christiejdeluca@gmail.com](mailto:christiejdeluca@gmail.com) with any questions. Visit [dysphonia.org](https://dysphonia.org) for more information about voice disorders and treatment.