



COMMUNICATING WITH A MASK



People who work in healthcare settings - including nurses, security guards, consultants, service managers and receptionists - have reported feelings of frustration, discomfort and disconnect when wearing masks.

CHALLENGES INCLUDE:

- Struggling to communicate when your mouth is covered
- Shouting to try and make yourself heard
- A loss of energy from straining your voice all day
- A lack of rapport with people when they can't see you smiling

Here, expert voice coaches share some simple vocal techniques to make communication easier, to help connect with colleagues and patients and to preserve energy.

While some of these exercises can be done anywhere - on the ward, in the park, in a cafe - some are best done in a quiet, private place and are indicated by the house icon.

Click on the speaker link next to each heading to access a series of guided voice exercises that accompany this resource. You can listen along as you read, or save for later.

You can see the full playlist of 7 clips by clicking on the speaker icon here.



MENU

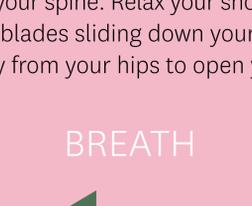
POSTURE

BREATH

PITCH & VOLUME

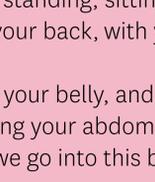
PACE & PAUSE

ARTICULATION



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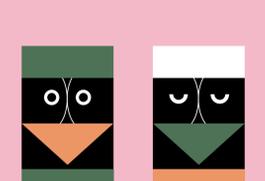
POSTURE



Awareness of your posture will help you to use your voice well.

First, stand on both feet, wiggle your toes, let your arms hang loose at your sides, with your head floating above your spine. Relax your shoulders. Imagine your shoulder blades sliding down your back. Lift your torso away from your hips to open your chest.

BREATH



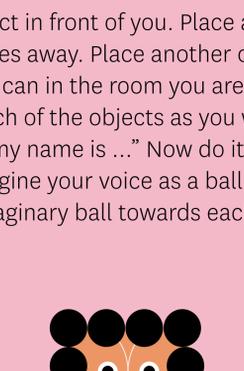
Become aware of your breathing. You can do this standing, sitting, or lying down on the floor on your back, with your knees bent.

Place one hand on your belly, and one on your chest. Focus on moving your abdomen, rather than your chest as we go into this breath exercise.

Breathe in for a count of 4 (counting in your head and letting your abdomen expand and rise freely as you breathe in). Breathe out for a count of 4 (counting in your head and feel the hand on your belly coming down coming down as you exhale while keeping the abdomen relaxed.) Repeat again a few times. Now repeat, but this time breathe in for a count of 4, and out for a count of 6.

Now let's connect the breath to sound. As you breathe out, make a ssssssssss sound. Breathe in again, and as you breathe out, make a shhhhhh sound.

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PITCH & VOLUME



It can be difficult to make yourself heard in a noisy and busy hospital environment. Do you ever notice yourself or others shouting, straining or making your voice higher pitched in order to be heard? This can be tiring for our voices and ourselves more generally. Instead of raising the volume of your voice you can try lowering the volume and changing the pitch.

Place an object in front of you. Place another object a few metres away. Place another object as far away as you can in the room you are in. Introduce yourself to each of the objects as you would normally - "Hello my name is ..." Now do it again, but this time imagine your voice as a ball and "bounce" that imaginary ball towards each object.

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PACE & PAUSE



If you speak too fast in a mask it is difficult for people to understand you because they can't see your mouth.

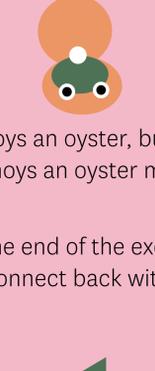
Try saying this sentence, adding in pauses:

"Take 2 tablets **PAUSE** twice a day **PAUSE** for three days."

It might be helpful to imagine your message as a car. Every so often park the car and take a pause. This will allow the other person to comprehend and digest your message.

"Take 2 tablets **PAUSE** twice a day **PAUSE** for 3 days **PAUSE**."

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ARTICULATION



There will be situations where you need to speak quickly in a hospital but in order to make sure that you are understood underneath your mask, you need clarity. Practise articulating the ends of words and the ends of sentences.

Here are some tongue twisters as a fun way of loosening up the articulators. Start slowly and build the speed into them taking care to articulate each of the sounds. Concentrate on the ends of the words.



There's a chip shop in space that sells space ship shaped chips

You can have: Fried fresh fish, fish fried fresh, fresh fried fish, fresh fish fried, or fish freshly fried

Any noise annoys an oyster, but a noisy noise annoys an oyster most

We have reached the end of the exercises. Here, take a moment to connect back with your breath

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