

Classroom Online Resource Document (Gluck Program)



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Our voices are a complicated part of us. They are part of our bodies, but they also sometimes feel out of our control. Reflect on how you feel about your voice at this moment. Draw a picture of your voice.

Name:

Date:

Share with your group.

Why did you draw your voice that way?

Does your voice feel tense?

Weak?

Strong?

Shrill?

Deep?

High?

Are you afraid of not being heard?

What do you love about your voice?



Exercises for Freeing the Voice (Kristin Linklater)

Stand comfortably with feet shoulder-width apart.

Sway gently from side to side. Feel what happens in your body as your weight shifts.

Picture the bones in your feet...ankles...shins...thighs...and hip joints.

Picture your sacrum—the large bone in the middle of the back of the pelvis—at the base of the spine. Rotate your hips in all directions. Feel how your spine responds.

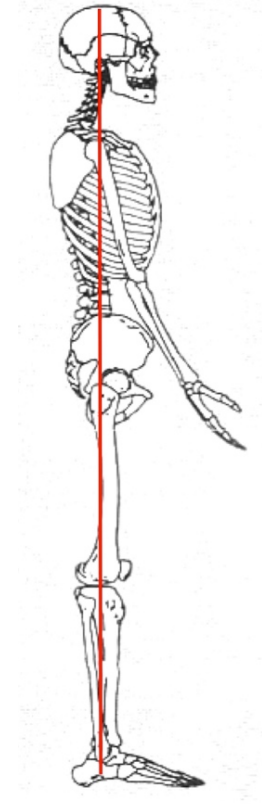
Take a slow, deep breath. Do you sense the downward expansion of your diaphragm, making space for your lungs to expand?

Lift your arms out to the side and above your head, then let them drop. Feel your arms hang.

Move your head from side to side. Feel how it balances on your spine. Feel where it takes more effort to hold your head up. How can you hold it up with the least amount of effort?

Most muscles in your body work in a simple way: They contract in one direction and release in the opposite direction when a different muscles contracts or when the body is supported. When we speak of “tense” muscles, we mean muscles that are habitually contracting more than they need to be.

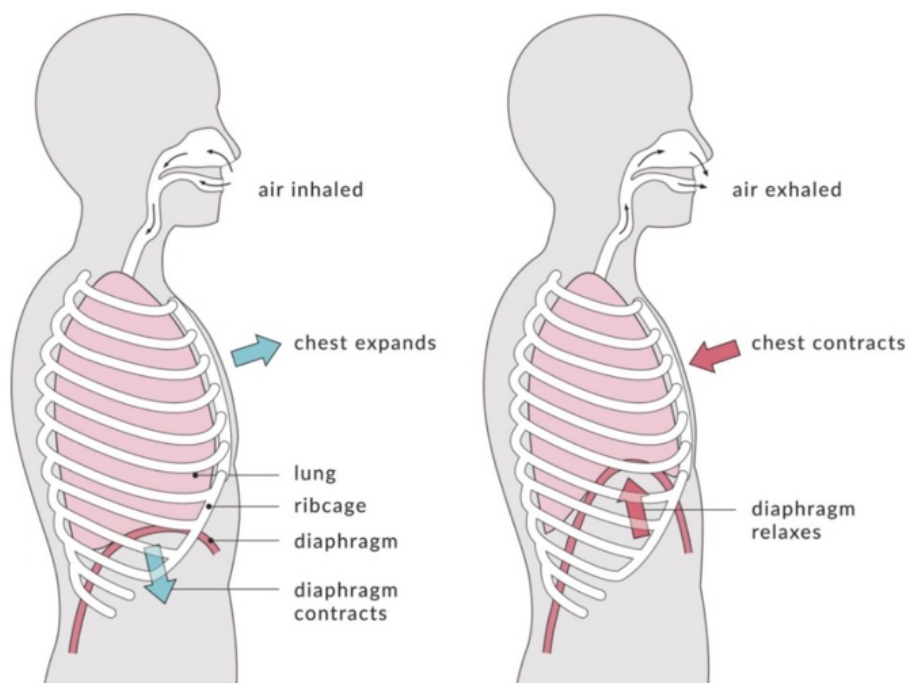
Try turning your head to one side. What muscles contract? What muscles release? Do any muscles feel like they should release, but are holding on? Encourage them to let go with a thought, a touch, or a stretch.



Approaches to Breathing

Lying, sitting, or standing comfortably, allow your breath to flow.

Observe what happens when you breathe, but avoid making conscious efforts to change your breath.



Explore this description of the breathing process:

The outgoing breath is complete inner relaxation.

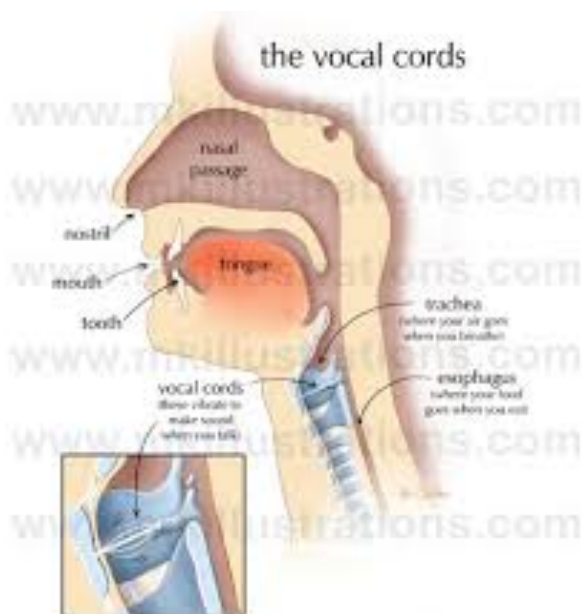
The incoming breath will happen automatically if I wait.

Adding the Voice

When a baby is born, its first act is to inhale and phonate—cry. Human beings have a compulsion to communicate. Singers have often added

muscular tension to try to change their singing voices in an artificial way.

For this reason, our first vocal exercise starts with speech. Say the syllables [ni-ne-na-no-nu] in a plain, blatty way. Avoid taking too big a breath.



After mastering the feeling of un-entangled speech, try saying the same phrase with projection, as though speaking to someone in the next room.

This should simply increase the intensity of the voice without adding pressure.

After mastering this feeling, try slowing down the projected voice, or speaking with line. Focus on returning to the energy of speech throughout the line.

Next, try speaking the same phrase, with projection and line, on an approximate pitch. Choose a pitch comfortable within your speaking range.

For women, Middle C is a good place to start. Men may speak naturally between E3 and A2. Speaking naturally is most important than pitch.

The muscles that make pitch—the vocal folds and the muscles that contract them—are tiny. Most people can hardly feel them contract. These exercises try to isolate them.

If you feel pressure on the voice as you sing, it could be due to two general issues: **Supraglottal pressure** (from above the glottis) is caused by tension in the tongue or jaw. **Subglottal pressure** (from below the glottis) is most often due to tense breathing or forcing the vocal folds together.

Healthy singing takes energy and focus, but it should feel no more stressful or tense than these exercises.

Quiz:

1. What does your diaphragm do when you inhale?

2. What does your diaphragm do when you exhale?

3. What is subglottal pressure? What does it feel like? What are some likely causes?

4. What is supraglottal pressure? What does it feel like? What are some likely causes?

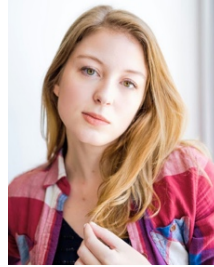
Reflection

How did your voice feel after completing these exercises?

What did you discover about your vocal habits?

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References:

The Naked Voice: A Wholistic Approach to Singing by W. Stephen Smith

And

*Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and
Language* by Kristin Linklater

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