

Teaching From Your Diaphragm

(Using Your Voice Properly)

Your diaphragm is a muscular, membranous partition separating the abdominal and thoracic cavities. It is an essential muscle for speaking and projection, although many people do not exercise this muscle.

Proper speaking and breathing are important tools of our everyday jobs. Do you sometimes lose your voice or have a constant sore throat? Do you begin to lose your voice after leading a couple of parties? When speaking with enthusiasm, is your voice high pitched or whiny? Are you constantly tuned out by parents and children?

Proper technique can help you in becoming a dynamic teacher and will save your voice from the repeated strain of everyday use. Breathing and speaking from the diaphragm will give you a “healthier” voice and avoid future complications from continually straining your vocal cords.

Find your diaphragm.

Place one hand on the upper portion of your stomach, just a few inches above the navel but below the breastbone. Sniff in several small inhalations per breath through the nose. The movement in that area is the diaphragm working at its best.

Control of your breathing can give you a louder, more powerful voice. Here are a few tips to help achieve the right balance for a louder, healthier voice that remains healthy and commands control.

- Breathe out when talking.
- Put resonance in your voice by contracting your abdominal muscles and speaking from the diaphragm. To correct a nasal tone, put one hand on your abdominal muscles and the other flat on your chest. Say “low, low, low” over and over until you feel vibrations on your chest bone as you speak.
- When you are on the floor, stand up straight and maintain good posture to maximize the use of your diaphragm.
- Watch what you eat before you teach. Avoid dairy products. Coagulation occurs around vocal cords and makes you want to clear your throat. Avoid having a large meal beforehand.

What are the benefits?

Your voice is a valuable tool in the gym and in life in general. Proper use of your diaphragm will decrease your chances of damaging your vocal cords. You will also lessen the possibility that your voice will become constantly raspy and/or that you will lose your voice.

The tone of your voice will also drop and become more compelling. Your voice will not rise in pitch, as it does under stress. The way you breathe will also change. Shallow breathing, which is typical when “talking through your head” not “your gut,” reduces oxygen flow to the brain and may cause you to lose your breath. If you breathe correctly, you may notice the toning of your abdominal muscles, as proper breathing and speaking will repeatedly use these muscles. Give it a shot. It will take some time; but, with a little effort, you can be on your way to developing a healthier, more powerful voice.