

Just Breathe: Breathing for Rehabilitation and Performance

2022 Annual Symposium Workshop, Voice Foundation, Louise Pinkerton, MM, MA, CCC-SLP

We reviewed different ways breathing is used from regulating emotional states, to illustrating the kinesthetics of breathing, for rehabilitation, and for enhancing the healthy speaking and singing voice. The focus was on viewing connections between breathing exercises and tasks across the SLP scope of practice and considering changes in my perspective from being a voice teacher to being an SLP. Demonstrations of these or similar activities are in my YouTube playlists (listed in parentheses) www.youtube.com/user/lpinkerton2. Items in italics may not be demonstrated today, but are on YouTube. Other activities from this workshop will be posted after I do a second workshop in August. My email is louise-pinkerton@uiowa.edu.

Regulating Emotions and Mindfulness

Breathing patterns can produce a calm state or an energized state, and they facilitate focus and kinesthetic awareness. (Breathing: Mindfulness Playlist)

Activities

Meditation

- Color breathing

Ratio Breathing

- Long exhale for calming, 4:8 breathing
- Short exhale for activation, Snuff, Hiss from *How to Teach Voice and Communication to Transgender Women*

Illustrating and Exploring Kinesthetics

Activities that draw a person's awareness to what happens during breathing can guide self-discovery of more accurate body maps and more efficient breathing. (To be posted on YouTube)

Activities

Exploring Physiology—memorize the sensation

- How breathing works: Physically find structures and feel movements (My teaching Spiel)
- Breathing into locations: Breath & feel movement in the abdomen, ribs, lower back
- The no-breathe breathe: Exhale and tighten the abs. Relax the abs and observe what happens. You should feel the air come in the lungs without consciously thinking “breathe”

Negative Practice—which is freer and has less tension?

- Overfilling: Fill your lungs completely including the upper lungs. What does it feel like?
- Nose vs. Mouth: Try fast & slow breaths both ways. Do both together.
- Different Sizes: Do spoken/sung phrases of increasing length. Notice breath size & ease
- Focus on Outcome: Compare what happens when taking a big breath and going as long as possible versus holding a note for 12 beats

Managing Disorders in Speech-Language Pathology

Breathing is a therapeutic tool across SLP scope of practice. Considering these exercises and eliciting tasks for different disorders together helps to conceptualize breathing as a whole.

Activities

Maintaining the Airway

- Paradoxical Vocal Fold Motion/Vocal Cord Dysfunction (Irritated Larynges Playlist)
 - Pursed lip or “sh” breathing
 - Rescue breathing – single and double sniff
 - Olin EILOBI, Step 3 Splitting at tongue, tooth and lips
 - *Buteyko Breathing Method*, certification needed

Clearing the Airway

- Chronic cough/throat clear (Breathing: Beyond Voice Therapy Playlist)
 - Silent throat clear, voiceless ‘eh’
- *Dysphagia* (Breathing: Beyond Voice Therapy Playlist)
 - *Supraglottic swallow*

Modifying Hyperfunctional Physical Behaviors

- Stuttering (Breathing: Beyond Voice Therapy Playlist)
 - Easy onsets with /h/ to avoid tension with phonation onset
- Vocal Process Granulomas (Vocal Function Exercises and Oodles More Playlist)
 - Use initial airflow (/h/) to reduce VF impact at glottis, “Elliot ate an apple”
- Breathy voice for transwomen
 - Add airflow during phonation for a more feminine voice quality
- Dysphonia (Vocal Function Exercises and Oodles More Playlist)
 - Confidential Voice uses a soft, but not whispered voice quality
 - Accent Method focuses on abdominal breath and unvoiced to voiced phonemes

Addressing Intelligibility and Intensity

- Dysarthria Compensatory Strategies
 - Pace speech rate with frequent breaths (Breathing: Beyond Voice Therapy)
 - Talk louder to slow rate, improve articulation, increase intensity
- Presbyphonia
 - PhoRTE and *LSVT LOUD* exercise target loudness (*LSVT LOUD*, *SPEAK OUT!* and PhoRTE Playlist)
- Parkinson’s Disease
 - *SPEAK OUT!*, *LSVT LOUD*, and PhoRTE are high intensity programs
- Other Neurological
 - *LSVT LOUD* has evidence for adults and children with dysarthria

Enhancing Healthy Voices for Performance

Breathing is a frequency and consistent target when teaching singing and acting. Though SLPs do not study breathing as intensely, my perspective changed as I changed fields.

Activities

Target Speaking or Singing (Breathing: Performance Voice Playlist)

- Breathe 5-Sustain 5-Exhale 5 changed to Breathe 5-Sustain 5-Exhale on a sound 5

Focus on the Performance Outcome

- Messa di voce: Speak “Hey, you” at 4 levels getting louder and softer
- Messa di voce: Sing “mah meh me moh moo” crescendo & diminuendo on last note

Gauge Breathe to Task

- Practice catch breaths on “he;” 1’ 1’ 1-5-1 and demonstration of Jazz Swing Scale “Dot”
- Exercises: Richard Miller, Estelle Liebling, Catherine Rundus, etc.
- Vocalize phrases from repertoire or method books by Vaccai, Sieber, Peckham, etc.