



## BREATHING FOR SPEAKING

It is not uncommon to feel breathless or tired after prolonged periods of talking. Teachers, receptionists, telephone operators, presenters, councillors, mediators and actors are some of the professions that may find their breathing challenged by the large amount of speaking required. Do you get thirsty or hoarse when public speaking or perhaps after prolonged periods of talking? Susceptible individuals may also experience breathlessness, asthma, coughing sneezing fits or fits of coughing? These symptoms are indicative of a faulty breathing pattern.

The reason is that most people are massively over-breathing when talking. Large inhalations through the mouth at the start of each long sentence and overuse of the upper chest muscles results in loss of CO<sub>2</sub> and the warm humid air that helps maintain healthy airways. Airways become dehydrated resulting in excess mucus production and even inflammation with airway narrowing in susceptible individuals. This can bring on fits of coughing, sneezing and also asthma and breathlessness.

Here are some suggestions for symptom free talking:

- Try to talk less
- Talk more slowly
- Breathe in through your nose at the start of each sentence
- Do not take a big breath in before talking
- Breathe more gently and quietly when talking
- Speak in shorter sentences

### Reading out loud exercise

This exercise involves reading out loud from a book, magazine or newspaper article and is designed to retrain your breathing pattern to conserve air during conversation.

- Select a passage to read.
- Start by closing the mouth and taking a breath in through the nose.
- Begin speaking and breathing gently out through the mouth as you speak.
- Stop talking and close your mouth before you run out of air and take a breath in through the nose.
- Continue in this way taking a small breath in through the nose at a comma and a bigger breath through the nose at a full stop.
- Insert as many commas as you need.

Avoid long sentences. As a rule someone with a control pause less than 20 seconds will probably only manage 4-5 words before needing to take a breath.

## Counting out loud exercise

Try this exercise as an alternative to reading out loud. Kids like the counting exercise as it can be competitive.

- Start by taking a small breath in through the nose and then count out loud up to four.....
- Repeat and count out loud up to five.
- Continue adding numbers to see how many numbers you can count up to on one (small) breath.

Remember the in-breath should be small and gentle. If it gets too big then you have gone too far.

It is important to soften the belly and remember to breathe using the diaphragm when practising these exercises.

Practise for 5 minutes or more daily until you have mastered the art of nasal breathing on the in-breath in every day conversation.