

## 20 IMPORTANT FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR VOICE

by Joni Wilson

The voice is an incredible tool that we human beings use to communicate with each other. We can voice the same words in different combinations and create amazing poetry, song lyrics or one line zingers. A few badly chosen words in the wrong combination can start a war, while a few well-chosen words masterfully woven together can bring peace. Words can be as sharp as a sword and wound just as deeply. Sometimes just saying one word can make the heart leap for joy and change a life, words like yes, good and innocent!

As authors we are masters of the written word but most of us could use a bit of help when it comes to speaking those words. We can no longer hide behind our computers if we want our books to sell. The key word to selling today is promotion and the biggest arena to promote our books is the media. Lets face it, radio and TV interviews sell books and the people who buy our written words want to see us, know who we are and hear what we have to say. Today good voice training should be part of your basic media training. It's not just for those who choose to sing their words, or people with *extreme* vocal problems anymore. Interviews are not as easy as they look and voice skills are a must. If you are wise, you will learn vocal technique *BEFORE* the big opportunities come. Don't you want to be ready for that interview with Oprah?

There are some basic facts everyone should know about the voice. I'd like to share twenty of my favorites with you. Drill these facts *deep into your brain* until they become part of your belief system. ***The voice has no brain of it's own. It only believes what you believe! That is fact number one!***

***Fact Number Two:*** A powerful voice must be able to go in three directions at the same time: down for depth (1st Dimension), wide for fullness (2nd Dimension), and out for length (3rd Dimension).

***Fact Number Three:*** No *quick vocal fix* is ever a substitute for good voice technique.

***Fact Number Four:*** With good vocal technique and a healthy body, your voice only improves with age!

***Fact Number Five:*** Never whisper if you are losing your voice. The whispering effect will further damage the cords. Use a pad and write notes if you have to communicate.

***Fact Number Six:*** Excessive heat and air-conditioning affect the voice by dehydrating the vocal cords. For the sake of your voice, turn them both OFF when you are sleeping.

***Fact Number Seven:*** Vocal nodules on the cords (calluses) are caused by one thing and one thing only. Bad vocal technique. Surgery can not cure bad technique.

***Fact Number Eight:*** If anyone tells you, "Voice rest will solve your vocal problems." don't believe them! Vocal problems are caused by overuse and abuse of the vocal cords. You can rest them, but if you do not learn how to use them correctly, the problem will always return!

***Fact Number Nine:*** If you catch a cold and have to use your voice, do not take any decongestants. Their job is to dry up mucous no matter where it lives in the body. Your vocal cords live in mucous. If you dry it all up, the voice will sound rough and scratchy.

***Fact Number Ten:*** Don't clear your throat with a vengeance. Excessive throat clearing is a very bad habit. The more mucous you try to clear out, the more mucous will be created to protect your vocal cords. It is a never ending battle and you can not win it. Try sipping water to move the larynx into a lowered relax position. ("Yawn sighs" also work, haaaaaaa.)

***Fact Number Eleven:*** Smoking is the worst thing you can do to your voice. Period!

***Fact Number Twelve:*** Verbal abuse can cause severe vocal stress and damage to the vocal cords. Keep your relationships stress-free for the sake of your voice. (Not to mention the rest of your body.)

***Fact Number Thirteen:*** Never use any cough drops with menthol in them if you are going to speak. The cooling factor in menthol will freeze the cords. You want them warm and *plumped*, not cold and *shrunk*.

***Fact Number Fourteen:*** A big chunk of your emotional stress accumulates in the jaw causing TMJ (Temporomandibular joint dysfunction) and other tight jaw problems. Becoming the master of your jaw is vital to good voice projection.

***Fact Number Fifteen:*** A weak voice is only the *effect*. To strengthen it, you must find the *cause*.

***Fact Number Sixteen:*** The vocal cords work like valves and need a strong supply of compressed air to perform their magic! Keep pumping that air.

***Fact Number Seventeen:*** No matter what size the mouth is, for your words to be heard in the back of the room it must be OPEN!

***Fact Number Eighteen:*** To create the warm lower tones in the voice, the throat must be completely open and relaxed. (Think yawn again.)

***Fact Number Nineteen:*** If your voice is your livelihood, avoid situations that cause stress and excessive vocal abuse, even if it means a career or relationship change.

***Fact Number Twenty:*** Whether speaking or singing, you and you alone are the master of your vocal instrument. Take the time to play it correctly and your voice will be a delight to all of the ears it reaches.

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