

Flying and the Voice

An excerpt from The 3-dimensional voice by Joni Wilson

Many of today's jobs involve air travel. Not only is the voice effected by the pressure in the cabin of the airplane, but the voice must also adjust to extreme climate changes.

When traveling from the hot, moist east coast to the crisp, dry climate of Denver Colorado in a few short hours to attend a very stressful meeting, you should be prepared for some physical adjustments in the voice.

Going from climate to climate takes a lot of adjustment in the body, and when stress is an added factor it decreases the body's natural ability to handle the adjustment. This has a definite impact on the voice. The altitude of "Mile High Denver" affects the delicate muscles of the vocal cords as they try to adjust to a lower density of air. Even your intonation, (the rise and fall of your pitch), can be affected. Who would have thought?

One more thing before we leave the traveling voice...

When going from Southern California to Chicago during the winter, we believe (because our mommie's's told us it was true), we should "bundle up" in the cold weather or we will catch a cold. Nothing could be further from the truth. (Sorry Mom.)

Wearing too many heavy layers of clothing will cause the skin to perspire, making it impossible for its natural climate adjusting process to work. This will open you up to all of those "nasty" germs hanging around just waiting for your defenses to come down. Our climate comfort zone is so small (between 76 and 78 degrees, give or take), that we like to carry it with us wherever we go, inside or out. This weakens the body's natural ability to adjust itself. To help it stay strong, allow yourself to feel a little uncomfortable. Begin to expand your comfort zone a few degrees each month, especially when you are sleeping.

For those times when you have no control over the elements, here are a few travel tips:

If you are a speaker, carry with your important stuff a small moisturizer or steamer to transform your night time dry air into warm, moist air.

Always carry water with you on the plane. I know along with "coffee tea or milk," you can get water, but it is always chilled. Ice is not what you want for your vocal cords. Besides, the cups are so small that you may annoy the stewardess by asking her to "fill you up" one time too many. Stay in control! Bring your own water.

When "climate jumping," wear clothing you can shed easily. Keep your layering light and removable. Be aware when your skin starts to "leak," it's just the body's signal to remove a layer. If you perspire easily, you may have to show some restraint. Sitting in the airplane in your undies is not acceptable.

When traveling by air, avoid lengthy conversations with the person sitting next to you if you are facing a day of voice performance, even if its Harrison Ford. Cabin pressure and talking over the drone of the engines will tire and weaken the voice.

