

BREATH CONTROL

BREATHING plays a very important role in human speech. The speech organs and the participatory muscles in the respiratory system gradually release the air of our breath. The system is so efficient that there is usually no need to breathe in more rapidly to sustain our speech. This however is not to oversimplify the task of speaking. A lot of complex activities go on in our bodies unknown to us. They are natural and not burdensome. Yet the quality of speech is sometimes determined by the ability to control the breath. Conscious control of the breath is even more vital especially when there is a speech challenge or impediment. Some of these speech challenges are stammer, lisping, consonant issues, etc. In this program, we will be focusing mainly on stammer and how to stop it.

What is stammer? In the context of this course, stammer is the inability to coordinate the speech organs to say the first sound. This usually results in stopping and attempting to say the word several times before saying it correctly.

Stammer however, does not refer to any distortion of the organs of speech themselves.

These organs in most cases are in good working order. That is why it is no wonder that a stutterer may speak fluently on certain occasions, but dysfluently at others.

There is a gene for stammer recently discovered by some scientists around the year 2012. This means that stammer can be a family trait. But even in many families where some children show the trait, hardworking parents have been able to help such children to resolve the problem in them. This goes to show that even though stammer could be present in the gene, the environment to a large extent, level of anxiety and stress determine whether a person shows it or lives with the trait or not. Knowing what to do, consciously doing them, or having someone reminding us to do them are all actions that work against the stammer genetic traits.

Stuttering is also associated with about three other causes. Neurological abnormalities, trauma and phobias and anxieties are in the number.

Learning to control the breath is where it starts. As already mentioned, breathing affects our performance in speeches. This could be seen in the depth and the clarity of voice, speech pace, sound pitch as well as the stability of the voice. For example, a shallow breathing causes a clipped or high-pitched sound, while a deep breath produces a thunderous one.

Many people are not concerned about controlling their breath. It is usually because they speak normally and the mechanisms for their speeches are driven by nature. But if you are a stammerer, you have good reasons to care. To learn to speak smoothly, you need to consciously control your breath until your speech becomes normalised. This lesson will show you just what breath control is all about and what you should do to gain the skill.

Filling the lungs: There are two kinds of breathing. They are: 1. Breathing from the chest and 2. Breathing from the lungs. Either of the two kinds affects the speech negatively or positively.

When a person breathes from the chest, he fills only the upper part of the lungs. This affects the amount of air he has in him to speak and in turn the quality of the sound produced. Breathing is often this way when a person is anxious. Then the muscles become taut including those for speech. This situation is responsible for a high rate of word jam in a stutter.

To breath from the lungs on the other hand, the lower part of the lungs is filled first. Then the rising of the rib cage is observed as the filling of the upper part followed. Breathing from the lungs

neutralises the tension in the muscles. And it is recommended for a stutter. It also increases confidence and poise.

Having come to understand the kinds of breathings there are, what can you say about your regular breathing at present? You can start now to breath from the lungs if you have observed differently. Fill the lower part of your lungs. Then, your ribs will expand to fill the upper part as you continue to suck in air. Consciously avoid filling only the upper part of your lungs.

Verify your breathing: To find out where breathing originates, place a palm of your hand on the lower part of your belly. It should rise and you will feel pressure at the waistline before you observe the rib cage expanding to fill the upper part of your lungs.

Breath control is the primary level of this program. It helps to relax the muscles of the throat, the jaws, the vocal cord and those of the rest of the body. It brings a person to the right mind frame too. Such calmness is groundwork for the muscles around the vocal cord or pharynx to adjust freely. This leads to fewer cases of word jam and less struggle to make the first sound.

Probably you have started already, to practice breathing properly from the lungs. Why not stand before a mirror and start discussing a subject that often poses some challenge. Does the mirror say that your neck is still taut and stiff? What about your shoulders? Of course, your breathing deep will eventually correct the situation.

Another indication of poise and calmness is the use of body members such as the hands, the legs, the eyelids, etc, when talking. If they move involuntarily, awkwardly, then pay more attention to your breathing.

Practice! Practice! Practice! Controlling the breath is not going to be automatic. But with practice and conscious efforts, you will surely gain it and the ability to coordinate your speech organs. And you will acquire the ability to speak fluently.