

Bertram Gulhaugen, Personal Trainer for Exceptional Speaking and Singing

# Steps to Vocal Success: How Your Body Wants to Sing and Speak

## Session 1 – Overview

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### **Assignments:**

Reading: Appendix B – Biography of David Blair McClosky (first half).

Appendix A – Illustrations of the Anatomy and Physiology for the Vocal Mechanism.

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*“Students should have an adequate knowledge of their own instrument – including how it works and how to work it – before asking them to use it as a means of expression... Do not attempt shortcuts. Do not expect to accomplish in a week what [may] require a year or more of close application. To produce a completely reliable singing and speaking technique, well-coordinated practice and muscular development will be needed. During this period of development, the attention and advice of an experienced teacher are indispensable.”*

Speaking: *“Well-spoken is half-sung”*

Singing: *“Singing is speech on pitch”*

—David Blair McClosky

1. Introductions
2. Discussion
  - a. Class Goals
    - i. To bring a Beginner’s Mind: consider your whole vocal mechanism as a blank canvass.
    - ii. To begin to work toward healthy, completely relaxed speaking and singing through heightened awareness of your body to feel the sound and function of your voice.
    - iii. To develop a clear understanding of how your voice works using applied science: Learning an anatomically, physiologically, acoustically, and psychologically based voice development; Comprehending how your body naturally wants to produce spoken and sung sound.
    - iv. To understand the athletic aspects of speaking and singing and to understand how motor memory functions: *“In singing and speaking we have to pay a great deal of attention to [how we breathe] until, through careful thought and with helpful exercises, correct breathing for phonation becomes as automatic as driving a car”* —David Blair McClosky.
    - v. To gain knowledge and confidence and develop more joy with speaking and singing.
    - vi. To dispel commonly held myths about the voice.
3. Commitment and Goals
  - a. Commit to succeed
    - i. What does voice success mean?
    - ii. Identify goals
4. Steps to success:
  - a. **Body Mapping:** Body self-awareness. Learn which muscles, cartilages, and bones are involved with speaking and singing. Know your instrument.
  - b. **Physical exercise** - Whole body approach:
    - i. First step – To sing and speak effectively and expressively it’s necessary to develop the voice-related musculature. Use simple exercises and remember to

always breathe while exercising. (*Important*: If you aren't currently engaged in an exercise routine please talk to your doctor before proceeding).

1. Stretching and planks:
  - i. Release whole body tension.
  - ii. Develop abdominals to achieve strength and flexibility for breath management.
2. Aerobic training: walking is best.
3. Resistance training:
  - i. *Lats/upper body* – stabilize your rib cage.
  - ii. *Abs* - Do not overdevelop your abs as hard abs can negatively impact your breath management.
  - iii. *Legs/gluts* - underlying support.
- c. **Self-massage**: Daily massaging specific regions of your body that will free-up your voice.
- d. **Posture and Breath**: Understand how posture and breath are inextricably related to relaxed speaking and singing.
- e. **Daily vocal exercise**: Make hast slowly. Be fully conscious while working on vocal exercises, body and mind, to develop effective motor memory that will allow your voice to work with complete relaxation for effective, expressive speaking and singing. Perfect Practice makes Perfect.
  - i. We learn technique to put in the back of our minds as motor memory takes over.

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### **Assignments:**

Training: Ease into an exercise routine (talk to your doctor). If you already engage in an exercise routine, analyze it considering what you know about exercise for singing and speaking.

### Reading:

Introduction

Chapter 1, The McClosky Technique™: Posture and Breathing.

Chapter 2, Freeing the Voice through the McClosky Six Areas of Relaxation.

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*“The McClosky method itself is beautifully simple and easy to comprehend. Its goal is functional efficiency: coordinating the different parts of the vocal mechanism to that, whether in song or speech, each part of the body is doing its proper job, with little or no effort wasted.”*

— Jay D. Lane, CMVT, PhD

*“The McClosky Technique® requires the [speaker and] singer to develop an awareness of his or her entire body, especially the condition of the muscles that influence the voice most directly.”*

— Maria Argyros

## **Session 2 – The McClosky Technique™**

1. Discussion
  - a. Breath management.
  - b. Like the Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method.
  - c. Intrinsic/extrinsic muscles.
  - d. 6 areas: Trust the process.

## 2. **Lecture: The McClosky Technique™**

- a. Basic voice disorders are both functional and psychological:
  - i. Muscle tension dysphonia most common. Functional dysphonia
  - ii. Speech: wrong speech pitch, fry, lacking breath, clearing throat, musicality
  - iii. Teaching adults: Suffer from negative messages they received in childhood or as adults

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### **Assignments:**

Training: The McClosky Technique™ and your physical exercise routine.

Reading: Chapter 3, Phonation (pages 11 and 12 only, up to exercises).

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*“It is not enough merely to produce a pleasant sound. This sound must be controlled, supported, and sustained; in doing this correctly, you will call upon the action of a combination of the rib muscles, the pelvic and abdominal muscles, and the leg muscles running all the way down to the feet”*

— David Blair McClosky

### **Session 3 – The Simple Basics of Phonation**

1. Questions
2. Discussion
  - a. Phonation: “The production or utterance of vocal sound. To vocalize. [to speak]”
3. **Lecture: The Anatomy and Physiology of Vocal Production**
4. Review: The McClosky Technique™
5. Phonation: The Breathy Sigh, Coordinating Relaxation and Posture
  1. Check for good posture.
  2. Inhale and exhale while keeping the rib cage expanded. Repeat two or three times.
  3. With the vowel sound “hah” in mind, inhale again then exhale while emitting a breathy sigh in the mid-range. Repeat several times.
  4. Repeat the breathy sigh but this time form a light, relaxed “m” sound: hum-mum-mum-mum... on the exhale. Repeat several times

#### Summary

1. Your breath powers your voice.
2. Correct postural alignment makes efficient breathing possible.
3. Balancing your head on your spine reduces tension in the vocal mechanism.
4. Relaxation of extrinsic muscles will free your voice.

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### **Assignment:**

Training: The McClosky Technique™, phonation, and your physical exercise routine.

Reading: Chapter 4, Freeing the Voice from Song to Speech (pages 15 and 16 only).

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*“We take our speaking voice for granted. However, speaking incorrectly can be more damaging to the larynx and vocal folds than singing incorrectly – simply because most of us speak more than we sing. Ideally, we should speak as we sing*

*and sing as we speak, maintaining the same healthy techniques and principles for both.”*

— Maria Argyros

#### **Session 4 – Speakers Sing and Singers Speak**

1. Discussion
2. Review: The McClosky Technique™
3. **Lecture: Speakers Sing and Singers Speak**
  - a. Most voice problems are caused by
    - i. Speaking or singing in a pitch range that is too low (or high).
    - ii. Not breathing often enough and speaking or singing without breath flow (fry).
    - iii. Speaking or singing with too much tension and effort in the neck and articulators of the mouth, including the tongue, lips, soft and jaw.
  - b. Feel your voice versus listening to it.
4. Speech pitch exercises

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#### **Assignments:**

Training: The McClosky Technique™, phonation, speech pitch exercises and sentences, and your physical exercise routine.

Reading: Chapter 5, Articulation of Consonants in Detail.

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*“Consonants are the bones of speech”*

— Edmund J. Myer

*“If the ‘bones’ of phonation are neglected, the listener can spend the whole evening guessing how to fill in the gaps between the vowel sounds.”*

— David Blair McClosky

#### **Session 5 – Freeing the Voice from Sing to Speech: The Articulation of Consonants**

1. Discussion
2. **Lecture: Articulation of Consonants**
3. Review:
  - a. The McClosky Technique® and phonation.
  - b. Speech pitch exercises and sentences.

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#### **Assignments:**

Training: The McClosky Technique™, phonation, speech pitch exercises and sentences, consonants, and your physical exercise routine.

Reading:

Chapter 7, Resonance and Color

Chapter 8, Expressiveness and The McClosky Technique™

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*“It is the unique resonance of each individual that makes each voice recognizable and interesting, and great artists are known by their distinctive vocal sound. Therefore, the development of an individual’s unique sound is a worthy aspiration...The wonderful thing about the human voice is its great variety of expression. Your voice mirrors your every feeling. When you call your best friend, doesn’t he or she know immediately how you are feeling, just from the sound of your voice?”*

— David Blair McClosky

## **Session 6 – Resonance, Color, and Expressiveness**

1. Discussion
2. **Lecture: Resonance, Color, and Expressiveness**
3. Review:
  - a. The McClosky Technique™ phonation.
  - b. Speech pitch exercises and sentences.

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### **Assignments:**

Training: The McClosky Technique™, phonation, speech pitch exercises and sentences, and your physical exercise routine

Reading: Chapter 6, pages 31 – 33

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*“Any student of singing [and speaking] should know and understand how the human voice functions. Such knowledge can help inspire a sense of respect and wonder at how many intricate muscles work together to give us our method of communication, expression, and connection to each other through language and sound.”*

— Maria Argyros

## Session 7 – Vocalizing with the McClosky Technique™

1. Discussion
2. 2 steps
  - a. Exercises on phonation, breathing , and relaxation.
  - b. Exercises that expand to those that require longer phonation while still maintaining the basics.
3. Review:
  - a. The McClosky Technique™ and phonation.
  - b. Speech pitch exercises and sentences.
4. Vocalizing

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### **Assignments:**

Training: The McClosky Technique™, phonation, speech pitch exercises and sentences, consonants, vocal exercises, and your physical exercise routine.

### Reading:

Chapter 9: Care of the Voice

Chapter 10: Voice Disorders

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*“For optimum voice use, good health is of vital importance; in a sense, all voice users, whether their primary activity is speaking or singing, are vocal athletes...Each of us is occasionally aware of the voice’s vulnerabilities...Yet, with good care, the voice can function quite well into advanced age.”*

— Bonnie Pomfret

## Session 8 – Care of the Voice and Brief Overview of Voice Disorders

1. Discussion
2. Review:
  - a. The McClosky Technique® and phonation.
  - b. Speech pitch exercises and sentences.
3. Vocalization
4. **Lecture: A Lifetime of Phonation**