

THE WOMAN'S VOICE- MAKE YOURSELF HEARD

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An increasing number of women are visible in the highly competitive business and corporate arena. And yet, women have a hard time being heard. People will listen to a man's words. But when a woman speaks, they first observe how she looks and sounds, before they listen to what she has to say.

Statistics show that listeners take in only about 7 per cent of information from the language you use. The rest they absorb from your tone, modulation, pitch, voice quality and body language. If you sound shrill, nasal, monotonous, hoarse or meek, their interest in what you are saying quickly wanes. An increasing number of corporate executives find that their voice and body language undermine their message and are taking lessons to improve the way they sound. But, women in the work area have to contend with certain unique issues compared to men in getting their viewpoints across.

Do women have a vocal disadvantage?

Women have a naturally high pitched voice [nature has provided women with shorter vocal folds and a smaller bone structure and resonators which reinforce higher frequencies], which tends to rise further whenever a woman is nervous or under pressure. As a result they may end up sounding shrill, squeaky or immature – vocal qualities, which undermine their professional image.

Cultural and social factors coupled with modern technology and fashion dictates have created additional problems for women's voices. Women are programmed to speak softly and daintily. "Speak like a lady. Girls don't speak or laugh loudly. Sit with your legs crossed" are just a few of the messages, a woman receives from the time she is a little girl. As a result women, especially in India, tend to develop a diffident posture and use a closed body language – factors which affect the voice. Clothes fitting tight at the waist and on the chest do not allow them to breathe deeply. High heels misalign the body and spine, thereby squeezing the voice [High heels change the configuration of the lumbar spine and therefore affect posture and breath support]. Women in urban India are increasingly taking to smoking - smoking swells up the lining of the

throat, irritates the vocal folds, reduces lung capacity and affects the power and tonal quality of the voice in the long run.

How voice training helps

An increasing number of women are seeking professional help for their vocal communication for a variety of reasons. Voice training is designed to help corporate and businesswomen be in charge of their voice and body in any communication situation – whether it is a major presentation, a staff meeting or a one-on-one interaction. Our voice training focuses on allowing a full flow of the voice through an empowering breath, a relaxed aligned body and spine and an open throat . It enables you to maximise the potential of your natural voice. More and more women are seeking to develop power and character in their voice. Women undergo voice training at our center for different reasons. A sales manager with a soft, diffident voice wanted to sound authoritative. A budding copywriter failed to put her impressive ideas across because her apologetic voice was lost among the stentorian, high-decibel ones in the room. A software professional felt that her whiny nasal tone put off listeners. A financial analyst felt she failed to make an impact because she was too shrill and spoke too fast. Others undergo voice training because they think they are too high pitched, too monotonous or sound too young. All of them know they could be more successful if they enhanced their vocal communication skills. Most women fail to utilize the full potential of their body and voice. Once you learn to use your "natural" voice to its maximum potential, you can concentrate on positive ways to differentiate yourself as a speaker.

You need to learn to align the spine and body, breathe correctly, develop the right intonation, vocal quality and power and make full use of your jaw, lips, tongue and throat while speaking. You can then project your personality and ideas clearly, with all the energy and passion you feel. Every communication whether on the telephone, in a meeting or before an audience then becomes an empowering experience.

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