

WHAT IS YOUR VOICE SAYING ABOUT YOU?

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Your voice sends signals about who you are, which the listener picks up instinctively. People automatically associate certain voices with certain personality types.

Association of voice and personality

A major part of communication is subliminal. As soon as you see or listen to a person, you have labelled her/him and attributed certain personality traits to her/him. You will be surprised to know that we attach a personality to a voice [when I use the word voice, it also implies the body. We label people based on how they use their bodies even before they start speaking. Therefore working on the body forms a vital part of voice training]. This happens at a subconscious/unconscious level without our being aware of it. e.g. If you hear a person speaking with a nasal voice, your unconscious mind instantly labels the person as a whiner or complainer.

The following are a few personality traits that we attribute to people based on their vocal characteristics. This may not always be true. But these are voice stereotypes we recognize.

<u>Voice</u>	<u>Label</u>
Shrill, high pitched	Tense anxious
Hard hitting, staccato	Abrasive, curt
Loud	Extroverted , aggressive
Soft inaudible shaky	Diffident, shy, introverted
Thin	Immature, childish

These are not natural vocal characteristics. We often shy away from using the full potential of our natural voice and speak with a voice, limited by physical and vocal constraints and unnatural breathing habits. We therefore limit total and free expression of who we are through this beautiful instrument - a powerful link between our inner world and the outer world. Emotional blocks, social, cultural

conditioning, unconscious benefits of holding on to a vocal pattern/image [secondary gain from a behaviour] often contribute to vocal limitations. Girls are programmed to speak softly while boys are not allowed to cry or fully express their softer, feminine side. Speaking like a little girl may get you the kind of attention, you are unconsciously looking for - these are just a few pointers to social cultural binds and psychological issues, that fetter our natural voice.

Taking the first step towards expressing your true self- Freeing yourself from limiting vocal patterns

Awareness is the key. Start by being aware of your posture, breathing, tensions and constrictions you hold in the body; how different emotions affect your body, breath, throat and consequently the voice. Be aware of how your voice feels in your body in different situations. Listen to your own voice and that of others. In short, experience your voice not just through listening but through seeing and feeling.

You needn't get stuck in the image that people have of you. Let your personality and true self shine through your voice and let your free and natural voice help you discover who you really are.