

Guide to the CD

Overview

This CD has been designed to accompany the *Singing for Breathing* programme at Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust. But it will also help anyone learning to sing – especially people with obstructive lung disease such as COPD, asthma and bronchiectasis.

If you have a restrictive condition, i.e. an interstitial disease such as idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, or if you are recovering from COVID-19 it is recommended that you take care with exercises 11, 12 and 13.

Be sure to sing the arpeggios gently without breathing in between the notes with just a soft bounce in the belly. Feel free to pause and just sing every other set.

Please read this booklet before you start using the CD or exercise downloads.

This CD should be used for short practice sessions.
Please DON'T try to work through the whole CD in one go!

Singing for Breathing is a charitably-funded programme providing group and one-to-one singing sessions at Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust, a world-renowned specialist Trust providing treatment for people with heart and lung disease.

The singing sessions are designed to support people with lung disease by teaching breathing technique in a fun, supportive environment.

A randomised controlled trial and qualitative evaluation based on the programme (*Singing teaching as a therapy for chronic respiratory disease*) was published in 2010 in *BMC Pulmonary Medicine*. The trial concluded that 'singing classes can improve quality of life measures and anxiety and are viewed as a very positive experience.'

“These workshops are invaluable, and a vital part of respiratory care” (Singing for Breathing workshop participant)

In 2014 the British Lung Foundation commissioned Phoebe Cave to deliver resources and training to hundreds of singing leaders. More groups emerged and more research was undertaken. Details can be found at www.themusicalbreath.com.

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Introduction to the CD by Phoene Cave

So, how can singing help you if you have chronic lung disease?

A Sidney de Haan Centre¹ review of research into singing and health reported the following positive effects:

- Physical relaxation and release of physical tension
- Emotional release and reduction of stress
- A sense of greater personal, emotional and physical wellbeing
- Stimulation of attention, concentration and memory

Of almost 300 people who have been to *Singing for Breathing* sessions at Royal Brompton Hospital, 83% feel noticeably better immediately afterwards, and 98% feel the workshops have taught them something new about breathing.

The very act of singing will allow your breath to deepen, releasing and engaging muscles lower down in your body. This in turn should enable you to sing longer phrases than you might expect. And as you become aware of what you are doing and begin to make a conscious choice about when you take breaths, you will start to manage your breathing better.

Over the years the body sets into habitual 'holding patterns': our history is imprinted in our muscles, our emotional stories embedded in our bones. Singing comes from inside our bodies, and to sing well we need to release these deep-set patterns.

Much of the initial work, therefore, concerns the body and posture. This is not so much about 'standing up straight' as getting the body into the best position to allow you to sing with freedom.

For some people with chronic lung disease this will be harder than for others, but even if the diaphragm is less flexible, space can be made by moving the ribs, and the muscles between them. Essentially, there is always a way, whatever your condition, to make space in your body to allow breath to move in and out.

Most people I asked to join the sessions at the hospital said they couldn't sing. In 12 years of teaching, I have never met anyone who can't sing. But I have met many people who have been told by other people they can't sing – maybe an insensitive schoolteacher, or a sibling who puts their fingers in their ears.

Sometimes it's just a lack of confidence, a fear of making a fool of oneself or making a mistake, perhaps coming from a culture where making noise isn't acceptable. Because of all this, I'm an advocate of the 'wrong and strong' approach (loud and confident is more important than getting it right!) and hope to inspire others with the confidence to make noise.

"It made me feel a lot happier than before"

"It's marvellous – makes you feel less ill"

"[I feel] optimistic that I can improve breathing and life-quality"

Participants in Singing for Breathing workshops

¹ *Singing and Health: a systematic mapping and review of non-clinical research*, Clift et al, Sidney de Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health (August 2008)

Getting started

It's better to do both the warm-up and the singing exercises standing up. Only sit if you get really tired or breathless, but whether you're sitting or standing, don't *collapse*.

Old habits die hard, but I will be asking you to challenge them: when you stand, see if you can find a way of standing which produces little or no strain in your muscles. This usually means you need to plant the soles of your feet solidly on the earth, and relax the top of your back.

Years of poor posture, made worse by breathing issues, may have tightened the muscles you use to breathe and sing. Particular suspects are muscles around the base of your neck, your shoulders, upper back and under your collarbones and pectoral muscles.

There are many schools and philosophies of singing. My main interest lies in releasing sound which is not constricted by tension in the vocal cords or neck, or held back by tensions in the chest or belly. This means learning to use the necessary support muscles when singing, and letting go of the *unnecessary* ones. And I hope you'll really enjoy singing as emotional expression, as well as physical exercise!

What's on the CD

The Singing for Breathing CD was created to help you:

- Develop awareness to improve postural and breathing patterns
- Learn to change old habits through learning new exercises
- Return to a more optimal breath pattern reducing 'top up' breaths (using primary not secondary muscles)
- Extend outbreaths through sung phrases
- Improve expiratory muscle strength and co-ordination
- Improve vocal production including any associated dysphonia
- Build physical and vocal stamina
- Have fun

Remember: practice practice practice brings change!

I recommend starting with 30 minutes a day. For the first week this might be in two 15-minute sessions, but the more you practise, the more you'll be able to do.

The CD is 80 minutes long, so you need to choose which sections to work with each time. For a 30-minute session, try:

- **Ten minutes from Section A** (relaxation or physical warm-ups)
- **Ten minutes from Section B** (breathing and vocal exercises)
- **Ten minutes of singing songs** (either Section C at the end of this CD, or your own favourites).

The vocal exercises get more difficult as they go on. In the first few weeks you might want to use only the earlier exercises, extending to the later ones as the weeks progress – but I would suggest trying Track 21 right from the off: it's a good way of measuring how many beats you can sing on one note – and if you practise, you'll notice that this improves week-by-week.

It's important you find a balance: try to do a little each week, but don't exhaust yourself. Don't drive yourself. So much of this work is about letting go and releasing first.

Introduction to the CD (tracklisting)

Track 1

Introduction

Section A

Track 2

Relaxation

It's vital that you don't approach singing stressed and uptight. Singing is a balance between relaxation and engaging the correct support muscles. Use this guided relaxation to ease you into a place of softness before you start your practice.

Track 3

Physical warm-ups:

It is important that your body is warmed up and ready to sing, so enjoy these simple and gentle physical exercises to release any muscular tension and wake up your body.

Track 4

Posture

Continuing your physical warm ups with some gentle stretches to open up the body.

Section B

Track 5

Observe and manage your breath (1)

This exercise, on 'SSSSSSHHHHHHHH', is about rediscovering the way we all used to breathe as children. Many people with lung problems allow the breath to rise higher in the body, taking 'top-up' breaths under the collarbone. Let's see if we can encourage the lower part of the body to release and get more involved.

Track 6

Observe and manage your breath (2)

Building on exercise 4, we will now try the same thing but pitched to 'SHHHHEEEEEEEEE'.

Track 7

Voiced fricatives (ZZZZZZZ or VVVVVV sounds)

This exercise is about engaging with abdominal support muscles to take the effort away from your neck muscles when singing. Remember that the belly is soft and moves in while you are making the sounds and the jaw, lips and cheeks are relaxed.

Track 8

Oohs and Aahs

This is a gentle introduction to sung melody. Stand tall and enjoy.

Track 9

Major scales

This exercise extends the length of phrases and the range of pitch, using ooh and eeh.

Track 10

Vowels and scales

This exercise uses all the vowels (oo, ee, eh, ah, oh, oo) and moves a little quicker.

Track 11

Panting and Laughing

Some panting and laughing to get the abdominal muscles moving a little quicker.

Track 12

Staccato arpeggios (FOR MEN)

To hee, ha and hoo. Don't be put off if this sounds complicated. Staccato just means short and bouncy, and an arpeggio is a simple a kind of melodic phrase that takes you from low to high and back again.

Try to keep the light, free feeling in the body from the previous exercise. This is quite advanced; you may need to practise slowly first, without the backing track.

Track 13

Staccato arpeggios (FOR WOMEN)

Track 14

Introduction to 'Legato arpeggios'

Legato means 'smooth'. The two next tracks ask you to sing longer phrases to the words 'I can hardly believe how singing is helping me breathe'.

Release for breath in between the words 'believe' and 'how'.

Track 15

Legato arpeggio (FOR MEN)

Track 16

Legato arpeggio (FOR WOMEN)

Track 17

Sounds and scales

This uses different vocal sounds to a simple scale to help you control your voice (brrr, zzz, nnn, eee, ooo, aah)

Track 18

Sirens

This introduces the 'vocal siren' – like a police siren, sliding from the very lowest note you can manage to the highest and back again. This helps you control your vocal cords better.

Track 19

Melodic exercise

This is a nice, long exercise with a more complicated melody, leading us into the songs. We siren, hum, eee, ooh and ah over the tune.

Track 20

Articulation exercises

Before you start practising your songs, let's make sure your lips, teeth and tongue are working well with some call-and-response articulation exercises.

Track 21

Longer phrases

This is designed to help you sing for longer without releasing for a breath. I'm sure before you began this CD you thought you couldn't sing for more than a couple of beats before taking a breath in. I hope you've discovered you can do **much** more than that and can actually sing for longer than you can speak. This is a fun exercise to discover exactly how far you can sing on one breath. I guarantee this will get longer the more you practise, but **don't do more than is comfortable for you!**

Section C – Song Lyrics

Track 22

Daisy, Daisy

This is a simple, well-known tune. Your aim, eventually, is to sing through the whole first line on one breath. But take breaths where it's comfortable for now. Or you might want to practise it more quickly, without the backing track.

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do;
I'm half crazy all for the love of you.
It won't be a stylish marriage; I can't afford a carriage,
But you'll look sweet upon the seat of a bicycle made for two.

Harry, Harry, here is your answer true:
I'll not marry all for the likes of you.
If you can't afford a carriage, there won't be any marriage,
And I'll be switched if I'll be hitched on a bicycle made for two.

Repeat 1st verse.

Track 23

Down by the Salley Gardens

A beautiful, slow folk ballad: a nice one for those of you who want to challenge yourselves and extend your range. Read the lyrics first, and concentrate on extending your breath to the end of phrases, whilst keeping a sense of the storytelling (try to avoid breathing in the middle of a word!):

Down by the Salley Gardens my love and I did meet
She passed the Salley Gardens with little snow-white feet
She bid me take love easy as the leaves grow on the tree
But I being young and foolish with her did not agree

In a field by the river my love and I did stand
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand
She bid me take life as the grass grows on the weirs
But I was young and foolish and now am full of tears

Down by the Salley Gardens my love and I did meet
She passed the Salley Gardens with little snow-white feet
She bid me take love easy as the leaves grow on the tree
But I being young and foolish with her did not agree

Track 24

Sloop John B

A fun sing-along for all to enjoy – the challenge is the pauses!

We sailed on the sloop John B
My grand pappy and me
Round Nassau town we did roam
Drinking all night, we got in a fight
I feel so broke up, I wanna go home

CHORUS

So hoist up the John B's sails
See how the mainsail's set
Send for the captain ashore
Let me go home
Oh let me go home
Please let me go home
I feel so broke up
I wanna go home

The first mate he got drunk
Broke up the people's trunk
Constable came aboard and took him away
Oh Mr Johnstone, please let me alone
I feel so broke up I want to go home

CHORUS

Poor cook he got the fits and throw away all the grits
Then he took up and eat all of my corn
Let me go home, I want to go home
I feel so broke up, I want to go home

CHORUS

Track 25

Wild Rover

This last one is for endurance! As in many folk songs, it's long and narrative, with many verses and an enjoyable repeated chorus.

I've been a wild rover for many a year
And I spent all my money on whiskey and beer
Now I'll save up my wages, keep my money in store
I never will play the wild rover no more

CHORUS

And it's no nay never, no nay never no more
For I've played the wild rover but never no more

I went to an alehouse I used to frequent
And I told the landlady my money was spent
I asked her to trust me, her answer was 'nay,
Such custom as yours we can get any day'

CHORUS

Then out of my pockets I took sovereigns bright
And the landlady's eyes opened wide with delight
She said 'I've got whiskies and wines of the best
And the words that I said sure were only in jest'

CHORUS

You can keep all your whisky and your beer likewise too
For not another penny I'm spending with you
For the money I've got I'm taking good care
And I never will play the wild rover no more

CHORUS

If I had all the money that I left in your care
It would plough all my lands and my family rear

It would thatch all my houses, it would build me a barn
It would buy me a coat for to keep my back warm

CHORUS

I'll go home to my parents and tell what I've done
And I'll ask them to pardon their prodigal son
If they forgive me as they've oft done before
It's ne'er will I play the wild rover no more

CHORUS

These are just to start you off.
Do find other songs.
You can use songbooks, or find backing tracks on the internet.
Or even better, join a local singing group!

A breakdown of the technical elements

THE BODY: HOW YOU STAND, WALK AND SIT (Posture)

We will try to find a balance between appropriate tension and relaxation: addressing physical tension (how it might affect your singing and how it can be released) and learning to pull yourself back together into one piece and sing within a connected body. Awareness of habitual posture is the place to begin.

THE BREATH (Respiration)

Breath is the power-source for your singing; inhalation is an unconscious action – ‘get out of the way’ and let it happen – we can however manage and make choices about the exhalation.

THE SOUND (Phonation)

Phonation is what happens when your vocal cords in your larynx vibrate together to make a sound. Singing is about finding the balance between forcing your vocal cords together (causing a strained or constricted sound), and allowing too much air to pass through (causing a breathy sound). Clear phonation might be harder for some with a chronic lung disease; they may have a hoarse, weak or breathy voice (possibly caused by smoking, or the use of inhaled corticosteroids). This is called ‘dysphonia’.

AMPLIFICATION (Resonation)

The sound-waves produced by the vibration of your vocal cords bounce off the back of your throat and mouth (this area is called the pharynx) and the position of your jaw, larynx, tongue and soft palate can all have an effect and either make the sound brighter or more muffled.

WORDS WORDS WORDS (Articulation)

What is the story you are trying to convey? Can the lyrics be heard? What is the role of your lips, teeth and tongue in producing the vowels and consonants?

Our main focus will be on posture, breath and articulation. Our goal is for you to use singing as a means to improve your breathing.

For more information and further references see www.themusicalbreath.com/singing-for-breathing-resources

References

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020 7352 8121 x84087

Details of singing groups in UK: <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-in-your-area-details/singing-group>

More on the growth and development of Singing for Lung Health: www.themusicalbreath.com

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