

Raise Your Voice

2nd Edition

The incredible new vocal system
designed to increase the *range, power,*
and *quality* of your voice!

Jaime Vendera



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*This book is dedicated to
five of the most important people in my life*

My beautiful wife and soulmate

DIANE VENDERA

My mother

LINDA FAGAN

My grandparents

RON AND JEAN HADSELL

&

My teacher

JIM GILLETTE

*For helping me
To fulfill my dreams*

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You are now a member of an elite group.

This book comes with lifetime free access to
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The Members section contains all of the audio examples from
this book, downloadable vocal exercises, a message board to
discuss the techniques, and hours of instructional videos to
guide you through the *Raise Your Voice* system.

Enjoy!

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Foreword

BY TONY HARNELL

HAVING SUNG FOR A LIVING FOR over two decades I can honestly say that without proper vocal coaching in my early years I would not have lasted as long as I have. I still feel fresh after all these years and still have the confidence that I can deliver a top notch performance that on many nights is even better than when I was 20 years younger. I recommend to every singer that they get some knowledge of technique and vocal care under their belt as it will allow them to just sing and not think about the state of their voice all the time, which only gets in the way of the art.

What I love about Jaime's book is that it is user friendly. You could carry it around on the road or take it in the studio and refer to it when needed. It's easy to read and comprehensive. If you can't fix whatever physical issue you have with your voice using *Raise Your Voice*, you probably need professional help, meaning a good ear, nose and throat doctor OR perhaps rest and a good thorough cleanse. Jaime has done the research and he knows his stuff. Having gotten to know the man I can say without hesitation that I have never met anyone with as much passion for singing and for helping singers. This will take him very far and give you, the singer, a mentor to follow as you develop your talent. This is not to say that Jaime's books are for beginners, quite the contrary, they are for every singer! I found things in his book I didn't know about and found they worked, so anyone of any level will benefit from these discoveries.

My personal view on singing is that you really have to be willing to get naked. You really can't hold back. You have to get out there, take off your metaphoric clothes and show the world who you are. If you aren't willing to do that, then you might as well do something else. One doesn't need to have that kind of personality in everyday life, but one needs to find that within themselves and give it through their performances. Art is expression and communication or it doesn't communicate. It needs to reach people regardless of its style and texture.

As Jaime's book focuses mostly on technique, I would just like to add to the above by saying that technique, as it were, is only as important as it allows you to communicate as a singer and not more; it is only a means to an end.

Obviously one needs to sing on pitch and have some control over his or her voice, beyond that it's all about the communication. Some will naturally have stronger voices, higher voices and more dramatic styles to draw from. Others will have soft, sweet tones and still others will have rich, dark, smoky tones; but that's mostly just nature. Everyone with some talent can learn to communicate through whatever type of instrument they've been given. The important thing is to learn to appreciate your natural voice, embrace it for what it is and if it's got a unique quality, well that's all the better. Money can't buy originality so if you've been given the gift of an unusual or distinctive voice you have been truly blessed.

Raise your Voice is about using and keeping your voice, and that's important for any singer who wants to sing for a living. One needs to have some understanding of basic care of the voice if they are to last for years. These books are to be used not just read. So take them with you, use them and sing, sing, sing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaime', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent horizontal stroke at the top. A large, semi-transparent watermark reading 'scribefreelance.com' is overlaid diagonally across the page, passing behind the signature.

My Story

BY JAIME VENDERA

WELCOME TO THE SECOND EDITION OF *Raise Your Voice*. I have received thousands of emails from around the world concerning my approach to vocal technique. The biggest issues have been centered on the fact that *The Voice Connection* is a rock vocals-based website. If you are one of the singers who are wondering if the techniques in *Raise Your Voice* will work for all styles, ask no more! I present you with this simple answer: Correct technique is correct technique! The techniques presented in this book are the most powerful tools I have found for strengthening the voice. This system will work for any style!

If your goal is to become an amazing country vocalist, like Wynonna Judd or Vince Gill, this technique will work for you! If your goal is to be the next Luther Vandross, Stevie Wonder, Sting or Mariah Carey... Well, I can't make you sound like Luther, Stevie, Sting or Mariah, but I can show you how to develop an amazing vocal instrument and present you with the tools needed for vocal success.

If you want to be the next big thing, I can give you the keys to unlock your voice potential. If all you want to do is be the vocalist in a Soundgarden or Led Zeppelin cover band, then I'll show you how to develop the strength and stamina to tackle songs by Chris Cornell and Robert Plant. No matter what you want to sing, the goal should be the same: To strengthen and develop the singing voice to your fullest potential.

Singers from all styles have studied with me; including pop, gospel, rhythm & blues, country, rock, hard rock, and of course, heavy metal. I consider myself more of a voice-strengthening specialist. Although I spend a lot of time on style with my students, my forte is helping eliminate poor vocal habits and problems that most singers—including amateur, professional, and touring musicians—have to contend with.

I teach singers how to strengthen their instrument and increase the range, power, stamina, and quality of their voices. This book contains the exact same principles that I teach to all of my students, including rock stars. Just

remember, technique is technique, regardless of whether you are a beginner or a seasoned professional.

Everyone wants a quick fix. There is no such thing. You are going to have to work for it. I've had new students come to me for one lesson and expect to walk away a superstar. It doesn't work that way. Anyone who tells you that they can dramatically transform your voice in one lesson is only in it for your money! Although I've seen amazing changes in singers' voices, it's all about the work.

My goal is to help every singer and speaker who reads this book fulfill their dreams of developing their best voice possible. Let me start by painting a picture for you to understand my story:

With your voice, you have the ability to form vivid pictures through sound. You can produce intimate emotions, ranging from great joy to extreme sadness, all through the tonalities of your voice. Once you understand how it works, you will be able to apply your knowledge to strengthening the different aspects of your voice and release the passionate singer within.

If you desire to improve your singing voice and want to increase your vocal range, then you have found the right source. Although this is not a book of magic formulas for singers, it will give you the keys to unlock your singing potential. These keys have extended my upper range by more than an octave in full voice and even higher in whistle tones, enabled me to sustain notes longer than I've ever imagined, allowed me the choice of coloring my vocal tone any way I chose, from falsetto through mix voice to full voice, to adding vocal inflections, such as vibrato and grit and enabled me to sing as loud as 120 decibels. Applied properly, the knowledge contained in this book could extend your range, color, volume, and sustain time by much more. However, this will not happen overnight. It will take hard work and dedication.

Trial and error best describes my case; and I mean a lot of it! I have been singing since I could talk, but I didn't start studying voice until 1988. Around that time, I had been singing in a rock band for several years and doing fairly well, but I was having trouble hitting all the high notes with the same power and ease as all of my favorite rock stars. I listened to the popular rock singers of that time, and was awed by their vocal ranges. I just couldn't figure out how they sang so easily, especially night after night of touring. Singers like David Coverdale of Whitesnake, Marq Torien of the BulletBoys, Jim Gillette of Nitro, and Tony Harnell of TNT seemed to possess an uncanny natural ability to sing higher, louder, longer and stronger than any other singer on the planet.

I knew that they knew something I didn't. (Yeah, I got a little obsessed with

So in closing, I just want to say that as you read through these pages, I hope that you gain as much knowledge from this method as I did creating it. I also want you to know that I am NOT some Guru, magically sent here to lead the way; I am just a guy who had a lot of vocal problems and I simply figured out a way to combine different methodologies to eliminate my particular problems. This isn't a brand new methodology; it is just my approach to tried and true ways of vocal strengthening.

There are hundreds of different ways/methods for improving your voice and my approach is just my take on vocal improvement. In fact, you'll notice many tips from other vocal coaches and artists as you work your way through this book. I did this because there are many roads to self-improvement, so I wanted to introduce you to other vocal training methods for bettering your voice because I truly want you to succeed no matter which route you choose.

If you choose to follow this particular route and you apply the instructions in this book correctly, this program should help to save you all of the excess frustration, as well as the trial and error, in time spent searching for ways to improve your singing voice. Just remember, you can study all you want, but you'll only improve through practice! This isn't a magic book, it is a workbook; so study, do the exercises and sing, sing, sing!

You can never learn too much about singing. I encourage you to continue to read and learn everything you can about the voice. I am constantly researching and studying the voice and I'll never stop! (In fact, I still have my original journal and I am still writing in it.)

Hopefully this manual will become a major vocal stepping-stone towards the improvement and self-discovery of your sound. I wish you the best on your journey. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to raise your voice, so good luck! **(Welcome)***



* All Bold Words in parenthesis refer to audio demonstrations on the Members section of www.raiseyourvoicebook.com and www.thevoiceconnection.com.

Part One

UNDERSTANDING THE VOICE

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND the whole vocal mechanism before approaching the act of singing. If you develop a clear mental picture of what physically takes place when you are singing, it will make the vocal process easier. When you first learned how to drive a car, you had to understand the difference between gears like park, drive, and reverse, as well as how to steer. It was equally important to know the difference between the gas and brake pedals, too. The same rules apply to the voice. You should learn what makes your voice run before taking it for a test drive.

Before taking your driver's test, you committed to memory certain traffic rules for safe driving. If those rules were ever broken, you could put yourself in danger. Singing follows along that same line, because several rules should be followed in order to protect your voice. These rules were created for a reason. If you break any of these rules, you could put yourself in harm's way, and your voice could crash.

The following chapters are broken into sections pertaining to different parts of the vocal mechanism. All parts ultimately work as a whole. When you establish a working knowledge of the voice you will better understand the vocal exercises found in the later chapters of this book, making it easier to obtain the desired results at an accelerated rate. So, if you are ready to raise your voice let's move on!

1

LEARNING TO BREATHE AGAIN

I WANT TO BEGIN THIS FIRST chapter by stating that as a singer, you are going to have to forget what you think you know about breathing and learn to breathe again. True breathing, to release your singing potential, consists of breath support and the natural “placement” or focus of the tone created by the breath. Understanding the breathing mechanism (as applied to singing) is the first crucial step to developing support and learning how to sing with complete vocal freedom. This is much like learning to crawl before walking. Let’s begin by taking a long, deep breath. Breathe in slowly and visualize filling your entire body with air as if you were a balloon. Feel your lower abdomen expanding outward, all the way down below your navel and around your waist. It should feel as if the mid-section is expanding in 360 degrees. Feel the sensation of your ribs expanding out to your sides and your entire chest expanding until you are completely full of air. Next, steadily exhale until you feel that your lungs are completely empty.

This is considered one full cycle of breathing. In everyday life you would never inhale as deeply and exhale as completely as you just did. This exercise demonstrates what an enormous lung capacity we possess. It also proves what little capacity we normally use. This deep breath is the energy we need to feed our singing voice. And what exactly are we breathing? AIR...

Have you ever blown on or waved your hand at a small fire burning from a wood pile? People usually do this to keep the fire going or from dying out. Why? Air feeds the fire. The flames will rise and the embers will burn brighter. For now, compare your voice to a bright burning flame. In essence, there is a fire inside of you. This fire—your voice—needs air to burn. When you release air in order to sing, you vibrate the vocal cords; which means you are adding fuel to the flames of your fire.

What would happen if you forced too much air on an actual fire? You could put the fire out. This can happen to your voice. Excessive air pressure from

singing too loudly forces bursts of air through the opening of the vocal cords.

This opening between the vocal cords is more commonly known as the *glottis*. (Speaking of vocal cords, the technical name is vocal folds, but “vocal cords” is the term I grew up with and the term I choose to use.)

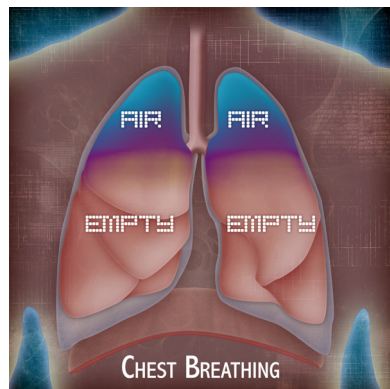
The vocal cords are delicate and should be treated with care. If this is the case with you, you will strain your voice by singing louder than necessary. Forced air pressure creates a loud and/or breathy tone, which rapidly dries out the vocal cords, leaving you with a dry, hoarse voice. Continuing such abusive vocal habits for extended periods of time can eventually cause you to lose your voice: You are putting out the flames to your fire, so to speak.

You must learn to breathe correctly, in order to gain maximum breath control. Maximum breath control leads to maximum voice control. Don't freak out and think that you must control your voice; this isn't the case. Singing should be a natural and relaxed act. What this basically means is that the way you breathe affects your singing voice. Air is your fuel—your source of energy. Air feeds the voice and provides the energy needed to sustain the song within you, but you must learn how to control the amount of fuel you use to feed your voice, because most singers are using much more fuel than is necessary. If you do not breathe properly, your cords will not vibrate properly. I cannot put it any simpler.

There are three types of breathing that I am going to explain to you. They are called chest breathing, diaphragmatic breathing, and what I like to call your “maximum breath potential”.

CHEST BREATHING

Breathe in as quickly as you can, then hold it. What part of your body moved the most? I know I wasn't there, but I'll bet that your upper chest inflated like a balloon. Most people actually breathe entirely with their upper chest. This is the incorrect way for a singer (or anyone for that matter) to breathe and the way most people have learned to breathe. Chest breathing is limiting for a singer and only utilizes about one-third of your lung capacity. This limits your ability to sing long phrases: You won't have enough air to make it through the entire passage.



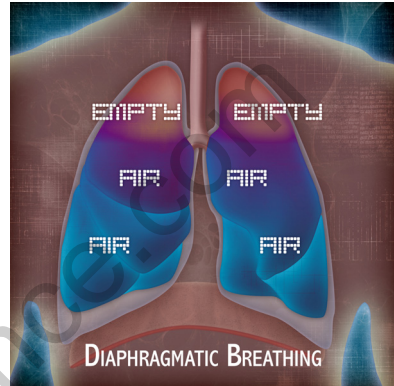
DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

A major improvement over chest breathing is diaphragmatic breathing. You might have heard it referred to as belly breathing because when you engage and contract the diaphragm, the stomach will be forced out as the diaphragm drops and it will look as if you were breathing into the stomach. And if you are curious, the truth is, you are NOT breathing with the belly, it just looks that way. This type of breathing allows the bottom two-thirds of your lungs to fill with air, creating a larger air supply than in chest breathing. More air enables you to sing longer phrases. (As you'll soon learn, more air is NOT necessary to sing long phrases.)

So what is the diaphragm and what does it do? The diaphragm is a dome-shaped muscle that divides the body in half. It rests above the stomach, along the edge of the ribs. All you need to know is that the diaphragm is crucial to singers because it controls the inhalation process and can be used to lengthen the exhalation process.

As you inhale, the diaphragm drops toward the abdominal area, creating room in the chest cavity for the lungs to expand. As the diaphragm drops, a vacuum is created within the lungs, drawing in more air. The stomach is forced down and out, and the back and ribs expand as the diaphragm muscle descends.

If the thought of a bloated stomach poses some concern, don't worry, because your stomach won't stick out enough to notice. I'd rather have my stomach stick out than my throat blow out. If you are a practicing diaphragmatic breather, you are on the right track.



MAXIMUM BREATH POTENTIAL

Reaching your breathing potential is as easy as combining the two previous types of breathing to achieve your maximum lung capacity. This provides the best of both worlds. When you breathe with only your chest, you are filling up about one third of your lungs. When you utilize diaphragmatic breathing, you only fill up about two-thirds of your lungs.

If you learn to fill the entire lungs from the bottom up, (by expanding all

the way around your body below the navel, and then expanding your ribs) your breath supply will almost seem endless. Not every phrase you sing will require this much air. In fact, once you learn how to support the breath correctly, you won't need much air for singing. In time, you will learn to adjust the amount



accordingly. Utilizing your maximum breath potential will allow you to grasp that extra lung space required for long phrases, if so desired.

Useful Tip: Truth about Maximum Breath Potential

What's the truth about maximum breath potential? Although I explain to you the process of filling the lungs with air from the bottom up and expanding all the way up through the chest, you don't actually need to take this deep of a breath during singing. In fact, you'll only need to take a very quick, small, quiet breath to support the tone. But the room is there if you ever need it, although it's doubtful you'll ever need that much breath. The secret to singing is precise breath control with a minimal amount of air. In all actuality, "filling the lungs from the bottom up" is meant as a visual in order to get you into the thought of expanding the lower abdomen. The lungs are actually like balloons and fill up accordingly, just like a balloon. But by visualizing the lungs filling from the bottom up, I feel you can better mentally connect to your maximum breath potential.

RE-LEARNING TO BREATHE AGAIN

Many voice teachers tell their students to sing from the diaphragm. This usually means that they want the singer to add more support to their tone by increasing breath pressure. It's rather difficult to sing from the diaphragm when it cannot support the tone and isn't actually used for increasing breath pressure. Singing is a controlled, but effortless, exhalation process. As far as singing is concerned, the diaphragm is mainly used for the inhalation process. In singing, your stomach and back muscles are used for controlled exhalation.

There is a delicate relationship created in the way that pressure is placed upon the diaphragm from the stomach and back muscles, which, when done correctly, allows the diaphragm to naturally move upwards as it relaxes, without overburdening the lungs. This is where your support comes from. This is

breathe in, your hands should widen, with the fingers moving forwards and thumbs moving backwards.

Useful Tip: Spread Your Ribs

To enable maximum breath potential, it is important that the very bottom ribs—or floating ribs (the small ribs at the bottom that are connected at the back to the spine, instead of the sternum) expand out to your sides. When using your hands to check for expansion, make sure that the floating ribs “push” your hands out.

Keep the floating ribs expanded outwards as you sing, even when releasing your air supply. An expanded ribcage is crucial for producing a solid rich tone, sustaining notes, adding power and developing vocal freedom.

The lower organs drop down and out in all directions as you inhale and the diaphragm is engaged (descends), causing the bloated look. As the lower ribs (floating ribs) expand outward, the lungs will continue to expand all the way up your ribcage until the upper chest has slightly or fully expanded, depending on the amount of breath you decide to take in.

Do not purposely expand the chest, except for chest expansion to the sides. Allow upper chest expansion to happen naturally. Concentrate on the feeling of the upper lungs expanding. There is absolutely no need to forcefully raise your chest; it will expand on its own. Remember not to raise the shoulders. If you do, you will create unnecessary muscular tension in your neck, which will cause your throat to tighten and create constriction in the lungs. With all of this accomplished, you are very close to your maximum breath potential, with the exception of one thing: correct posture.



You must make absolutely sure that you try to maintain correct posture. Poor posture limits full lung expansion, and creates tension throughout your entire body. To check your posture, stand up with your back against a wall, and your feet parallel to your shoulders. Your back should be straight. This aligns your spine, allowing the vertebrae to be stacked on top of each other in a straight line. When the spine is out of alignment, your body will be out of balance, and you will create unnecessary

muscle tension. Walk away from the wall while maintaining the same position and then wrap your hands around your neck. Use your hands to stretch your neck straight up. This will give your head an elevated feeling.



This simple movement is just to get your posture back to normal. If you'd actually force yourself to hold this "elevated head" position, you'll only end up distorting your posture. This is only a "posture reset" exercise, so once you feel you've reset your posture, simply let go of your head and go about your business. If you find yourself slouching or forming any other distorting stance, check and reset your posture. Allow yourself to physically feel the same as you did when you were against the wall with your spine straight and your head elevated.

Useful Tip: Stand Up Straight

You are probably wondering, "Does this guy really expect me to stand up straight and sing completely stiff throughout the entire song?" The answer: No, not exactly. I have performed for years and I know how demanding a singer's performance can be, especially in rock singing. I run around on stage, crouch down, crawl on my knees, lean back when I sing high notes, and jump across tables. It's all part of the show. But I try to reestablish my posture as much as possible to center myself and keep my body relaxed. Singing is all about physical freedom, and maintaining correct posture helps to somewhat prevent muscle tension.

Useful Tip: Discover the Alexander Technique

The Alexander Technique, (created by Australian actor and teacher Matthias Alexander) is a mind-body technique that enables the body to work freely and naturally flow as was originally intended, to release all unnecessary physical tension, postural imbalances, restrictive breathing habits and mental stress. It was originally developed as a method of vocal training for singers and actors in the 1890s. Alexander realized the direct correlation between singing, posture,

occurs naturally.

So now that we've mastered the art of micro breathing, how do we apply our newfound knowledge to mastering true breath support for the act of singing?

Step one to mastery begins by taking your micro breath and immediately releasing a steady controlled stream of air by hissing on a sustained "s". Stop right here and give it a try. As you release the sustained breath, do not forcefully hiss the air out; keep the airflow as steady as possible. Did you feel the constant downward pressure in your stomach and back muscles? This is the physical downward sensation for which you are aiming when you sing. Your stomach and back muscles must stay firm but flexible.

So the secret to correct breath support is to maintain a downward sensation at all times. This sensation is similar to sneezing, peeing, going to the restroom or having a baby—with one exception: You should never feel this sensation in the throat, like grunting! It is a separate feeling and should never be felt in the throat. This downwards pressure will keep all excess pressure away from the diaphragm, allowing the diaphragm to relax naturally, thus minimizing the pressure placed upon the lungs by the diaphragm, while also minimizing air release and excess pressure on the vocal cords.

It is extremely important that you understand how to release only the minimal amount of air needed in order to protect the cords from breath overload and vocal stress. In fact, from now on, although singing is done on the exhalation of breath, I never want you to think of singing as an exhalation process. I want you to start thinking of singing and exhaling as two different acts. All breath is converted into energy to vibrate the vocal cords, and when you hear excess breath in the voice, this is an exhalation process, which singing is not, and you are not converting all of your breath into energy. In other words, you are wasting energy.

How would you feel if you got an electric bill every month for your singing and discovered that you were paying for energy you were losing and not using? I don't know about you, but I'd be trying to repair the leak just to save a buck or two. By releasing more breath than is necessary and making the sound airy, you are losing energy that could be converted into a beautiful sound and you are also putting strain on the voice. Excess breath can cause the cords to become irritated and swell when done excessively. (Yeah there are times I am aiming for a breathy sound for a certain tonal color or feel for the song. During those times I don't mind paying a little extra on my energy bill, ha-ha.)

Your support is your generator; the turbine engine that creates the energy that runs your voice. So never force the air out, because if you do, you are wasting energy. To control, produce and adjust the amount of energy, you'll need to learn to change the amount of downwards pressure. The key thing to remember is to keep a firm but flexible sensation in the abdominal muscles to monitor the energy production.

If someone pushed on your stomach while you were singing, your stomach should go in very easily. Basic support is not about tightness or tension; it's about easily locking down or zoning in that downwards support.

This brings me to my next point: As a focal point of breath support, in my opinion you should never focus on inwardly locking your stomach muscles (like sucking in the stomach) or pushing your stomach out while singing. Locking the stomach muscles in either manner will tense the vocal cords, because these methods of adding pressure are related to grunting, which tightens the throat. You are setting your voice up for problems. Incorrectly tightening and applying too much pressure by trying to force excess air through a now tightly clinched passageway only ensures possible vocal blowout which could ultimately lead to something as drastic as vocal nodules (little calluses on the cords from abuse). If you wish to physically feel an incorrect locked stomach position, try grunting or mimic vomiting. Incorrectly locking your stomach muscles will lock up your vocal cords.

Useful Tip: Is This Method Safe?

To elaborate further on what we just covered, I'd like to add that some coaches and schools of thought have said that there is a connection between tension in the larynx and tightening the stomach. It has been said that you cannot have one without the other and that you will notice the tension because the larynx will be "pulled" downwards as you support downwards. But I am here to tell you that is a lie! I can sit here in silence, talking or singing as I tense down and release and there is no larynx movement. The remedy to downwards support has been to "pull in" the stomach muscles for support. Now I am not trying to belittle any coach or vocal method that uses this approach, because different techniques do work for different people. But I can personally and honestly say that when I tried this approach to support, I always felt strain, had a lack of power and did feel movement or a tightening in my larynx. If you want true full voice power that last for hours on end, then this is the best and safest method

of support for you!

Now, concerning the downward sensation; this type of support does consist of a basic locking action. I catch myself telling my private students quite frequently to “lock down for support”. But they understand that when I say this that I am not implying any incorrect method of abdominal tightening or clenching in the throat. Allow the stomach to contract at its own natural pace while maintaining that downward sensation. A helpful hint is to visualize that downwards sensation as your means of transforming the inhaled breath into energy to vibrate the vocal cords.

Okay, I know that you’ve just had a lot of information thrown at you, but let me take it one step further by summing up the basis of your maximum breath potential in one paragraph:

Maximum breath potential occurs by inhaling via micro breath on a yawn, focusing that breath below the navel, then adding a slight downward sensation (locking down) by engaging the stomach muscles (to produce energy), while visualizing that you are inhaling when you sing.

“Inhaling? What’s this? On no, not another term!” This is the last breathing term, I promise. The inhaling visualization is known as the *inhalation sensation*, and is one of the keys to correct breath support. Just imagine how it physically feels as you slowly inhale: Your diaphragm drops, your stomach, sides, floating ribs, and chest expand, and air fills the lungs. Now, if you cannot quite grasp this inhalation concept, try to imagine sipping the air in, like sipping through a straw, whenever you vocalize.

Concentrating on the inhalation sensation keeps the diaphragm from contracting as quickly and eases stomach muscle tension. When the diaphragm isn’t forced to contract quickly, you will be able to sing with less air pressure and less stress on the vocal cords. This is an essential element to singing all notes freely, especially high notes. Most singers think that it takes a lot of air and loud volume to sing high, when just the opposite is true. In fact, less air is required the higher you sing because the vibrating space between the cords is becoming smaller. This means less air folks! If you use more air to increase the volume, you only increase the chance of hurting your throat. The way to get more volume is by creating more energy and resonance through the downward support. (I’ll present more on this topic later.) So quit thinking of singing as an exhalation process and starting visualizing sipping the air in and allowing it to convert to

energy.

Useful Tip: Inhaling and Singing Equals AC Current

Singing and the inhalation sensation go together like Alternating Current. AC current actually flows in both directions simultaneously. When singing, you should feel the inhalation sensation, or the sipping in of the breath, as the sound is being produced and released.

So before you begin to sing, take a micro breath on a yawn, allowing the belly and back to expand. As you sing, maintain a slight downward pressure for support using your stomach and back muscles while you visualize that you are inhaling or sipping in the air. Keep the floating ribs expanded out to your sides as long as you possibly can. Keeping the ribs expanded works hand in hand with the inhalation sensation, helping to control breath release and minimizing pressure on the diaphragm. You can put your hand on your sides to make sure your ribs remain expanded.

Does this still seem like too much information for you? Are you still a little confused? Don't worry, so am I, ha-ha, so let's simplify it even further:

1. Take your micro breath on a yawn, filling from the bottom up, and lock down for support.
2. As you sing, maintain constant but minimal downward pressure with your stomach and back muscles like going to the bathroom or sneezing. It should feel as if you were blowing out a candle or sustaining the consonant "s".
3. To counterbalance this pressure and minimize the airflow, pretend that you are sipping the air in (the inhalation sensation) while simultaneously releasing the airflow and converting it into energy with the vocal cords. (Don't forget to think about correct posture.)

After all this information, I'm guessing you just now figured out that I could have explained it in three easy steps. Quit whining for a moment and just think about all the cool knowledge I just helped you cram into your brain, haha. Mastering the breath is a major player in the battle of mastering the voice. Correct breathing is both mental and physical. Practice this method of breathing until it has become second nature to you. Without breath control, the quality, range and power of your voice will be limited.

Useful Tip: Mastering Support

Now it is up to you to master your breath support. Just keep in mind that you generally will not need a lot of downward pressure. Minimal intensity is sufficient for singing pop, country and some rock songs. Songs sung in the upper register, with grit or aggression and singing styles such as heavier rock and opera will require more lock and more energy. It's really about learning how to relate the amount of pressure to the energy and intensity of the individual song. So learn to adjust this pressure. This I cannot teach you. Just remember to lock down for support at all times regardless of the amount of pressure and created energy.

Useful Tip: Reach Out, Not Up

A typical habit that I catch students doing is stretching their torso upwards as they are inhaling, thinking that they are filling up the lungs correctly when they're not. This is a typical "chest breather" move. Keep the shoulders relaxed and breathe outward, all the way around your midsection. If you catch yourself reaching up (sometimes on the tips of your toes), STOP! This causes vocal tension and limits your breath capacity. Always reach (breathe) out; never reach (breathe) up!

Useful Tip: Breathe Low, Support Low

Along with the previous tip, I also tell my students to "breathe low and support low". Once I get the student breathing properly and reaching out, not up, I sometimes have to coax them along a little further. Some students will get the inhalation process and immediately forget to support. So to them I say, "Breathe low, support low." Once you take a micro breath on a yawn, make *absolutely* sure to support by adding the downward pressure, thus supporting low. This must *always* happen immediately before creating the initial vocal sound if you wish to obtain a strong healthy supported tone.

Useful Tip: An Extreme Breathing Exercise

So now that you are mastering support, you might want to think about ways to strengthen the support mechanism. Of course, any form of cardio vascular exercise would suffice, but here is a great breathing exercise that will help you to strengthen the lungs, diaphragm and stomach muscles while enhancing your metabolism through oxygenating the blood. Oxygen is such an important part of overall health. When the blood is rich in oxygen, your body will fight infection better and you'll speed up your metabolism, which will give you more

energy and help you to lose weight...because oxygen burns fat! This is why cardiovascular exercises are an important factor in calorie and fat burning. So you see, you can improve your breathing for singing and get a little healthier at the same time!

This exercise is simple but extremely effective. You must follow this formula in precisely the same order as it is presented. When performing this exercise, each count is approximately one second long.

1. Inhale through the nose for four counts and then exhale through the mouth for four counts. Perform this breathing step five times in a row.
2. Inhale through the nose for two counts and then exhale through the mouth for two counts. Perform this breathing step ten times in a row.
3. Inhale through the mouth for one count and then exhale through the mouth for one count. Perform this breathing step twenty times in a row.
4. Pant like a dog at least forty times in a row, but you can pant for as long as you'd like. Then reverse the whole process for a warm down.
5. Inhale through the mouth for one count and then exhale through the mouth for one count. Perform this breathing step twenty times in a row.
6. Inhale through the nose for two counts, and then exhale through the mouth for two counts. Perform this breathing step ten times in a row.
7. Inhale through the nose for four counts, and then exhale through the mouth for four counts. Perform this breathing step five times in a row.

Are you getting a grasp of the equation? The breath count will always be four-two-one-PANT-one-two-four, while the repetitions always double. If you decide to change the amount of repetitions that you perform, you must always double the times for each step. Again, you can pant for as long as you like, as long as you at least double the amount from the last breathing step. So if you decided to change the beginning count to ten, the new order would be like this: Ten, twenty, forty, pant for eighty, forty, twenty, ten. I think you get the picture.

In order for this exercise to be effective, you must complete the breathing sequence from beginning to end. If you feel dizzy, don't worry; it's just the sudden rush of oxygen to your brain. **DO NOT DO THIS EXERCISE WHILE DRIVING!** You don't want to be lightheaded behind the wheel of a vehicle.

Useful Tip: More about Breathing

If you want to master your breathing, we offer a line of advanced products for everyday breathing. The majority of these products were developed and written by breathing specialist Michael White. You can check out my book *The Ultimate Breathing Workout*, Mike's Breathing Kit and line of books on the **STORE** link at:

thevoiceconnection.com
and at: **ultimatebreathing.com**
or: **ultimatebreathingworkout.com**

You can now that you are a breathing master, let's move onto a new piece of the puzzle in the next chapter.