

## **5 Reliable Ways to Develop a Warmer, More Pleasant Voice**

Ever find yourself unpleasantly surprised by someone you admired but had never heard speak? What a disappointment that can be! Being successful in your industry is a fine thing. But it comes with a responsibility. You can't have a poor vocal style that turns off people who came to hear you.

### **Your Voice Is a Key Factor in Professional Success**

Audiences respond to your voice in ways that predate modern speech by tens of thousands of years. Critical factors that influence people—including likability, credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness—depend in part on how you sound when you speak to others.

So if you haven't done any work in this area, perhaps it's time to get started. Below are five ways you can strengthen one essential component of an engaging vocal style: a warm and pleasant voice. Let's look at how you can consciously work toward improving this winning aspect of your voice so that listeners will respond to you positively.

### **1. Learn Diaphragmatic Breathing for a More Pleasant Sound.**

It all starts with breathing. Diaphragmatic breathing, specifically, is the key skill in achieving a powerful voice while reducing speech anxiety and nervousness. It's also an asset that helps boost your focus and presence.

Proper breathing that's sufficiently full also helps create a softer and more pleasant sound in the voice. If you have a harsh or nasal voice, giving yourself a sufficient "cushion" of air will help diminish the harshness. To experience this, try the following: eliminate nearly all the air in your lungs then try speaking in a large room. Not much power or personality in that voice, is there? Now, fill your lungs or "reservoir" with air and try speaking again. Your voice will be softer and more pleasant, while still maintaining the level of power you need.

### **2. Balance Your Head and Chest Voice**

Have you noticed an epidemic of little voices, in which seasoned business professionals sound like they're in their teens? That's an example of head voice, or speaking too thinly with the voice located only above the neck.

Chest voice, on the other hand, situates the sound in the thoracic or chest region. While adding depth and resonance, too much of this can make the voice sound like it's stuck in an elevator a few floors down. That voice has a lot more wisdom than a head voice. But it can also be a fuddy-duddy voice with a pompous quality.

### 3. Relax Your Vocal Cords to Sound More Empathetic

Once you're breathing well and you know how to create a more balanced sound, pay attention to how relaxed your vocal cords are. The vocal cords (thyroarytenoid muscles) are actually folds of muscle in the larynx. When you speak, exhaled air activates these folds so they vibrate, producing sound waves that we hear as your voice.

Like any muscles in the body, the focal folds can become tight from tension and stress. We're all good at recognizing when our shoulders are tight. But what about when the same thing is happening in your throat?

You can easily test this yourself: Tighten your vocal cords when you speak and listen to the sound that emerges. Harsh, isn't it? Now relax them completely, using a soft, breathy, looser way of speaking. Your voice took on a warm, buttery sound, didn't it? You can overdo it, of course. But try making a relaxed voice more of a habit. You'll sound more empathetic.

### 4. Adjust Your Pace to Make Things Easy for Your Audience

If you're rushed as a speaker, you're putting pressure on your audience. They won't like it, and they won't feel comfortable.

You're also doing yourself a disservice. When you rush through your talk, your voice can't do its job. That includes coloring what you're saying, though emphasizing and de-emphasizing, pausing to create anticipation, slowing your speech to indicate the importance of key items, and all the other vocal effects that bring your intelligence and sensibility to the game. When you rush, you're speaking in black and white, and not allowing listeners to understand your intentions.

### 5. Think in Terms of Connecting with Listeners

If you're at all anxious about the quality of your voice, you may be tempted to write out everything you'll say, so you'll be sure to get things "right." What's wrong with this? Nothing, if you want your audience to feel like you're focused on your manuscript rather than on them.

Your job as a speaker is always to establish a connection with your audience. When you look at people and relate to them, your voice suddenly sounds like that's what's happening. There's all the difference in the world between someone reading versus participating in a conversation. When you make the effort to talk to an audience as if you're conversing with them, everyone hears the result. Your warmth, personality, and all the rest of who you are begin to emerge. You and the audience will immediately hear when you're on the right wavelength.

# BOOKS BY GARY GENARD

Gary Genard

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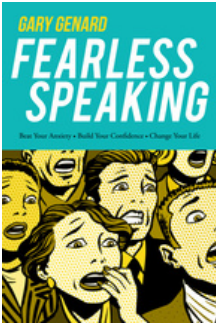
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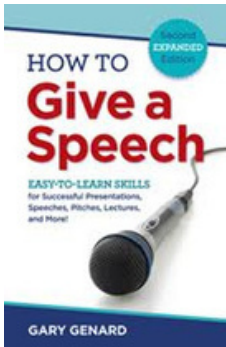
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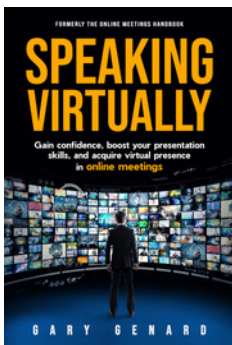
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Gary Genard, Ph.D., founder of [The Genard Method](https://www.GaryGenard.com), is an expert in theater-based public speaking training. As an actor and speech coach, he uses performance techniques to help executives and leadership teams speak with confidence and influence. He consults and trains for corporations, governments, nonprofits, and individuals worldwide.

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