Looking After Your Vocal Health

We will be demanding a lot from our voice boxes in Kansas. The vocal cords are controlled by a few very small muscles, which can tire. Overuse or misuse can cause tension in the surrounding muscles, which affects the voice. Most people who sing or talk all day will develop vocal fatigue to some extent. Here are some things we can do to optimise our vocal health before travelling, and help keep our voices healthy while we are there.

Do's:

- Keep your voice box hydrated – lots of water, limit caffeine and alcohol
- Warm up your voice before singing, and other high demand voice use (e.g. teaching in a loud classroom)
- If your occupation requires a lot of loud talking consider using an amplification system to reduce demands on your voice
- Treat nasal allergies (hayfever), post nasal drip, and reflux – all of these can irritate the voice box
- If you are sick be kind to your voice
- In times of high vocal demand give your voice mini breaks, and gently massage and stretch your neck muscles

Don'ts:

- Avoid vocal trauma, e.g. shouting, screaming
- Avoid excessive stress on your voice box, including talking loudly for prolonged periods in noisy restaurants. Especially important in the lead up to Kansas, and while we are there.
- Avoid smoking and exposure to smoke
- Avoid excessive coughing and throat clearing – try drinking a sip of water if you feel the need to cough or clear the throat coming on. Some people develop a chronic cough cycle (coughing irritates the voice box, leading to more coughing), which can take some time to break.

If you have discomfort in the front of your neck or a strained sounding voice after singing (or other activities) these are signs that you are demanding too much of your voice. If this happens make sure to warm up gently, reduce vocal projection and make sure you're using good breath support. Avoid singing in extremes of pitch. If it keeps happening consider voice coaching or see a vocal physiotherapist to help adjust your technique.

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