

Paradoxical Vocal Cord Dysfunction Techniques

Practice these techniques several times a day; so that when you need them, they will be automatic, and will work, right away, or very fast, to open up the spasming (closed) vocal cords. †

PREPARATION:

--Loosen clothing at waist, so nothing is tight, nothing is snug. Open top buttons of pants or skirt, unzip pant or skirt zippers, pull shirt out & over pants or skirt. The reason to do this, is to prevent any pressure on the stomach, that can cause gastric (stomach) reflux (backup of corrosive liquid, into the esophagus). Gastric reflux is a major (frequent) cause of VCD attacks.

--Sit in a comfortable chair. When you need to use these techniques, you may be standing up, lying down, or sitting, BUT – first try to learn these techniques while sitting, because they are easier to learn, while sitting, than in other positions. †

--Keep water handy. Take sips, so your mouth & throat will not dry out. Swallow carefully, to avoid choking.

--Put your right (or left) thumb on your navel (belly button), with the rest of your fingers below the thumb, so you are GENTLY touching your belly (lower abdomen). It's as if you had a belly-ache, and you were gently holding your belly (lower abdomen).

--Doing this, will focus your attention on your lower abdominal muscles.

--Relax your chest. Relax your shoulders. Relax your neck. Relax your throat. This helps you to try to use ONLY your belly (lower abdominal) muscles. Consciously try to NOT use chest muscles, etc. I don't know why, but the use of chest muscles seems to irritate the vocal cords. The use of "belly" muscles seems to relax the vocal cords. To stop VCD attacks, the vocal cords need to relax:

BREATHE OUT (EXHALE) FIRST, WITH slightly PURSED LIPS:

--Since most people cannot inhale (breathe in), during VCD attacks, please start by breathing out (exhaling) in the special way described below, and this will usually open up the spasming vocal cords, immediately, or fast.

--Start, by breathing our (exhaling), with lips “pursed”, as if you are trying to gently blow out a candle: †

--This is similar to whistling, but your lips will not be as “puckered”, as when whistling, and your lips will not be pushed forward, like when whistling. If you look in a mirror, you would see a mostly horizontal line of space, between the lips, less than an inch in length, while your exhale the “ffffffffffff”.

--This may be silent, or may sound like a gentle wind or breeze, like “ffffffffffff”, and your lips should be symmetrical, around your teeth. Your lower lip will not be touching your upper teeth, like when someone says the name FFFFFFrank. This is one continuous flow of exhaled air, either silent, or making a slightly windy “sound” (non-voiced...no vibration of the vocal cords). †

-- Feel you hand on your belly (lower abdomen) come IN, a little bit, toward your back, as you are “working” (using/contracting) only your lower abdominal (belly muscles).

--This abdominal exhaled “ffffffffffff”, alone, often stops VCD attacks, immediately, or very quickly.

--Some prefer to try a variation of exhaling “ffffffffffff”. Try exhaling † quickly, “ffff”, “ffff”, “ffff” – all part of one exhalation. Don’t inhale in between the quick “ffff”s. This helps some people to more quickly open up spasming vocal cords. This is like blowing out a slightly stubborn candle, exhaling against a tiny bit of resistance. (Like trying to blow out a trick birthday candle, that doesn’t want to be blown out too easily).

--If any of this helps, try to slow down the exhalations, and gently exhale “ffffffffffff”.

--Some people prefer to gently exhale: “ssssssssssssss”, or “shhhhhhhhh”,

rather than “ffffffffffff”, etc. Choose what works best in your case, or what is most comfortable for you.

--You may need to repeat exhaling the “ffffffffffff”, (or “ffff”, “ffff”, “ffff”), etc., several times, to relax the spasming vocal cords. Repeating this, usually stops a VCD attack, by somehow making the vocal cords open up (move apart), so that you can inhale (breathe in) again, as described below:

NOW, ALLOW AN ABDOMINAL INHALATION TO HAPPEN, PASSIVELY, IN AN UNFORCED WAY:

--When you can't exhale the “ffffffffffff” any longer, and your belly muscles are tired of coming in, a little, towards your back, just LET THE BELLY RELAX, and LET THE BELLY MOVE OUTWARDS, AWAY FROM YOU.

--Your belly (lower abdomen) will get bigger, like a pot belly. You will feel your hand on your belly move OUT, slightly, away from you.

What this does, (belly moving outwards) is to pull the muscle called the DIAPHRAGM, downwards, under the lungs. †

This creates a bit more space in the lungs, and this creates a “partial vacuum” (lower air pressure area), inside the lungs, compared with room air.

The room air is still at regular air pressure (a little higher pressure now, in the room, compared with inside your lungs), and air always wants to move from a higher pressure area (the room) into a lower pressure area (your lungs).

--This creates an easy, unforced, automatic, movement of air from the room, into your mouth &/or nose, down the trachea (windpipe), and into your lungs. This is the easy INHALATION that you've been waiting for, now that the vocal cords are open, like they should be, again! (You had opened the vocal cords by EXHALING “ffffffffffff”).

--NEW INFORMATION (2/05): Several VCD patient and one SLP/Speech & Language Pathologist have had good results using a breathing method called RESISTIVE BREATHING, that is like pretending to breathe through a straw. † The SLP said that resistive breathing should ONLY be used during a VCD attack. He

said NOT to practice this in advance of attacks. †

- 1) The SLP told patient that as soon as they felt any tightness in the voice box (larynx) area, to pretend to suck (air) through a straw, and slowly inhale (breathe in) this way, for 6 to 8 seconds, and then exhale (breathe out) slowly (as if through a straw) for 6 to 8 seconds.
- 2) Then, patient should breathe normally for 2 regular cycles (in and out, in and out), if possible. †
- 3) If the vocal cords are still closed, patient can repeat step one, followed by step 2.
- 4) If the vocal cords are still not opening up, patient can repeat step one, one last time, followed by step 2.
- 5) A patient said that the SLP told him to do the following for night time VCD attacks: Patient was told to stand up, with back against a wall, with hands over head (as if under arrest), and do above resistive breathing exercises.

Three patients with total vocal cord closure during VCD attacks told me that his resistive breathing method helped open up their vocal cords, during VCD attacks.