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Leadership Development Initiative (LDI) Curriculum

Media Tip: Finding Vocal Power

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In Moore SY, Cameron-Lewis RG, Ferris FD (eds). Leadership Development Initiative Curriculum, 2014. © The Leadership Development Initiative.

ISBN: 978-0-9884318-0-5

Originally Presented by [Ron Cameron-Lewis](#)

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The Leadership Development Initiative gratefully acknowledges the support of:

- International Palliative Care Initiative, Open Society Foundations, New York, NY
- National Cancer Institute Center for Global Health, Bethesda, MD
- The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, London, United Kingdom
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, Alexandria, VA
- Pettus Family Foundation

The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and editors, and does not necessarily represent the official views of any of the funders.

Acknowledgment and appreciation are extended to faculty and staff of the OhioHealth and the Institute for Palliative Medicine at San Diego Hospice (which housed the International Programs and the Leadership Development Initiative from 2009 to 2012). Special thanks to the Mentors, Consultants and the LDI Team who contributed so much to the LDI Curriculum.

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Overview

This session involves a series of participatory exercises to optimize public speaking skills. Five key vowels (found in the line "Who calls play with me") are used as a foundation. Adding resonance, increasing volume and relaxing all at the same time can be practiced, and will not place strain on the larynx.

To illustrate the English pattern of alternating longer and shorter vowels, simple lines of poetry are used. For example, "I think that I shall never see a thing as lovely as a tree" has an absolute pattern in English of "unstressed-stressed" (or "shorter-longer") vowel sounds. Even if a native English-speaker, attention to the rate and quality of vowels pays dividends. Other languages give equal emphasis to all vowel sounds, which presents challenges to those learning English as a second or third language. Singing helps identify the natural longer vowel sounds.

Tongue twisters or nonsense words in English can help build resonance, such as "Many might men making mounds of marvelous money" or "Niminy-moominy-piminy-piminy-moominy-niminy".

Continued emphasis on connecting to one's optimum pitch and building volume with resonance is practiced with a variety of creative exercises.

Objectives

After this presentation, participants will:

1. Focus on using vowels to slow rapid speech patterns (a personal habit or triggered by anxiety).
2. Identify long and short vowel-sound patterns in English, and emphasize for clarity.
3. Demonstrate practical exercises to enhance vocal range and power.

Important Teaching Points

- Pronunciation of vowels changes the flow and meaning of speech.
- Speaking at a comfortable rate augments effective communication, especially in larger spaces.
- Stretch the vocal range to bring life and sparkle to speech.
- How you say something is more important than what you actually say.
- Use longer vowels to help slow down or emphasize key words in every phrase.
- There is only one chance to be understood when speaking in public; practice, practice, practice.

Resources / References

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