

I Run Out of Breath When I Speak

Problem Areas:

- You don't have enough breath support because your breathing is centered in your upper chest rather than your abdomen. Under stress many of us take much shallower breaths than we should.
- You're taking too many breaths, overly concerned that you'll run out of air. By overcompensating you lose control over the air you are taking in.
- You're exhaling most or all of your air and then proceeding to speak. That won't work because our speech needs to ride on the air as it is exhaled.

Tips for Easy Speaking and Breathing:

1. Get back to basics. Observe relaxed, deep, abdominal breathing patterns in yourself and others. Watch the rise and fall of a baby's abdomen as she sleeps or your own abdominal breathing when you are stretched out in a warm tub or relaxed in bed.

2. Transfer that relaxed breathing pattern--inhale, abdomen out; exhale, abdomen in--to situations outside the tub or bed. You do not have to try it in stressful speaking situations yet. One thing you can count on is having plenty of opportunities to breathe (about twelve to eighteen cycles per minute for the rest of your life).

3. Start to build your breathing and speaking coordination. Try beginning to speak when you begin to exhale. Your goal is to spread your breath efficiently over the phrases. You should not run out of air before the end of the phrase, nor should you have a lot of air left over. Use the following increasingly longer sentences for practice.

"Hello."

"Hello, I'm here."

"Hello, I'm here and breathing."

"Hello, I'm here and breathing correctly."

4. Practice effective breathing daily. Choose an article from a newspaper or magazine and mark in advance the spots for a natural pause for breathing. Remember to initiate speaking at the beginning of an exhalation. Here is a marked paragraph to get you started. The slashes indicate where you should begin a new inhalation. Practice this way and then introduce your own variations to suit your style of speaking.

Congratulations./ You've achieved control over your breathing./ You don't waste air/ and you don't hold air in./ At first it will feel strange./ Then, with practice,/ coordination will be more natural./ Good luck!/ You're on the right track!