



*I run out of air when I speak... What can I do?*

One of our earliest lessons in elementary school dealt with reading out loud. Because of choppiness, in which we would often breathe after each and every word, the teacher would instruct the class not to take a breath until we came to the end of the sentence. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade our sentences had only 5 words. Not a problem. In 12<sup>th</sup> grade, however, we were faced with 3 lines of sentence with little or no punctuation and we were locked into that elementary principle, "You cannot breathe until..." And, I say, "No!"

Look at the following sentence.

*I can't imagine how that little puppy  $\Lambda$  escaped the blazing fire.*

Now read that sentence, take a breath after the word *puppy* where you see the  $\Lambda$ , and then continue. If you have any emotion in your delivery, you will find that the pause worked. For the written word, that sentence demands no comma; for the speaker, however, as long as you have some life, some color in your voice, you can pause almost anywhere in conversation. If you speak in a monotone, it will not work because you have no emotion in the voice to carry that break. Try that sentence again and pause after the word *imagine*. Now try it after the word *blazing*.

I am not advocating constant pausing in which your sentences take on a rhythmic style of sing-song. If you were to pause after every 3-4 words, your delivery would become choppy, predictable and boring. Again, in normal conversation we don't breathe after every few words. Most of us in **normal**

conversation breathe subconsciously, without thought. Before running out of air, we will take a breath even if that means mid-sentence. That is exactly what should be happening in public speaking.

At the lectern, however, we experience breathlessness certainly due to the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade rule; but, breathlessness also occurs because we often take in huge quantities of air which places added tension in our throat, neck and shoulder regions. That tension lifts the pitch of the voice and we then rush through our speech, trying to catch up on our air supply. It becomes a never-ending cat and mouse game.

My advice for eliminating breathlessness in any form of public speaking is:

1. Forget the elementary rule, “You cannot breathe until...”
2. Take a comfortable amount of air and supplement your supply before you are depleted, just like you do in normal conversation.

*What do you mean by “just like you do in normal conversation?” I’m the speaker and all eyes are on me!*

That’s right. And if you listen to dynamic speakers, you will see and hear that they treat their audience just as if they were talking to them in their living room – just as if they were having a conversation, which means that they breathe throughout their presentation, throughout their talk, not just at the end of sentences.

3. Learn to breathe with the support of your diaphragm. When you make diaphragmatic breathing a habit, then you are in control – not your breathlessness, not your nervousness, not the pitch of your voice, and, not your speed.

Supported breathing is the first thing we do in ***The Voice Dynamic Approach*** and it is the secret, not a trick or a tip, but a physical activity that allows you to *eliminate breathlessness in public speaking*, project without shouting, control your volume, control nervousness on the podium, improve the sound of your speaking voice, be more dynamic in your delivery, and handle stress much more effectively.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Daniels". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Terry" and last name "Daniels" clearly distinguishable.

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