VOCAL DISORDERS
Giving a voice to the voiceless

How to Talk with Someone with a Vocal Disorder

by Andrea Hardaway

Vocal disorders do not have to be a barrier to having productive and engaging conversations.

When you are talking to someone with a voice problem, there are several things you can do to help make the discussion better for everyone involved.

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Just a few tips...

Keep reading to find out

5 things you should know about how to talk to someone with a voice problem

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Practice active listening

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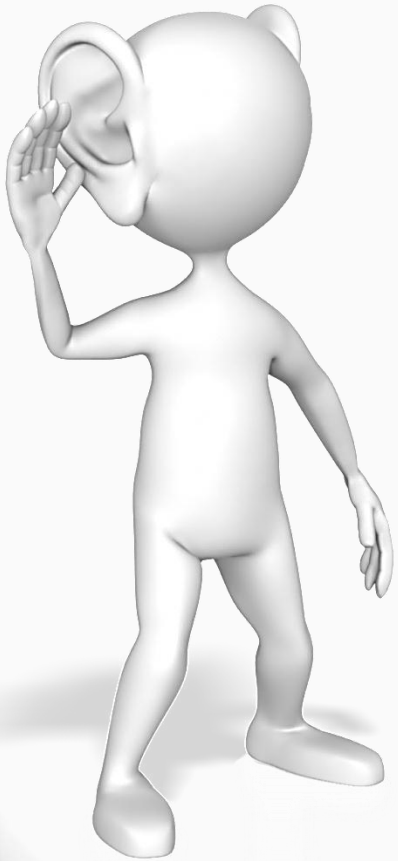
Active listening means you are working to ensure you hear everything that is being said by the other person.



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You should wait until the other person is finished speaking before you talk.

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Also, to ensure you understand what is said, find ways to repeat back.

Practice saying things like:

- *"So what I hear you saying is..."*
- *"If I understand correctly, your main concern is..."*
- *Do I have this right? Are you saying....?"*

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Active listening will help you stay focused on what is being said and also ensure the person with the voice disorder that you hear them.

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Exercise Patience

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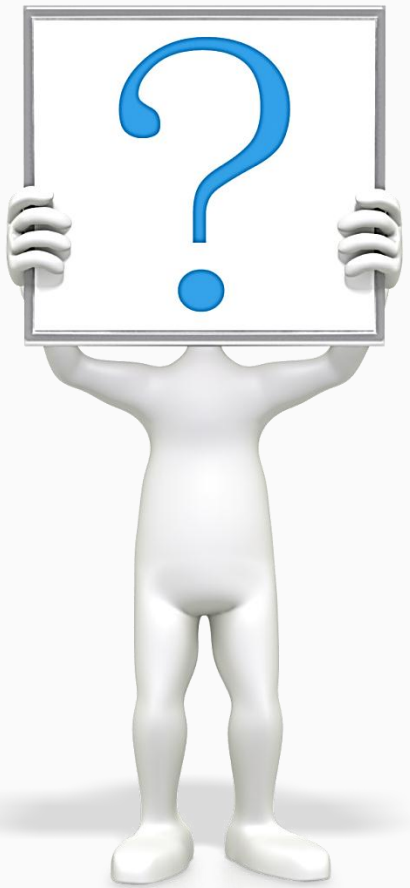
Patience goes a long way in communicating with anyone. However, when talking with someone with a vocal disorder, it can be the difference between consensus and total confusion.



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When communicating with someone with a vocal disorder, your lack of patience could create additional tension in the conversation.

Tension and stress usually make the effects of vocal disorders worse!

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Speak Normally

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When conversing with someone with a vocal disorder, be mindful that **their limited voice does not require you to alter the pace or volume of your speaking.**

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Unless other conditions are involved (such as hearing loss or some other factor), you should speak normally when talking to someone with a vocal disorder.

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Vocal disorders may limit one's ability to speak clearly, but it does not prevent them from processing information and understanding you.

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Talk with respect, not sympathy

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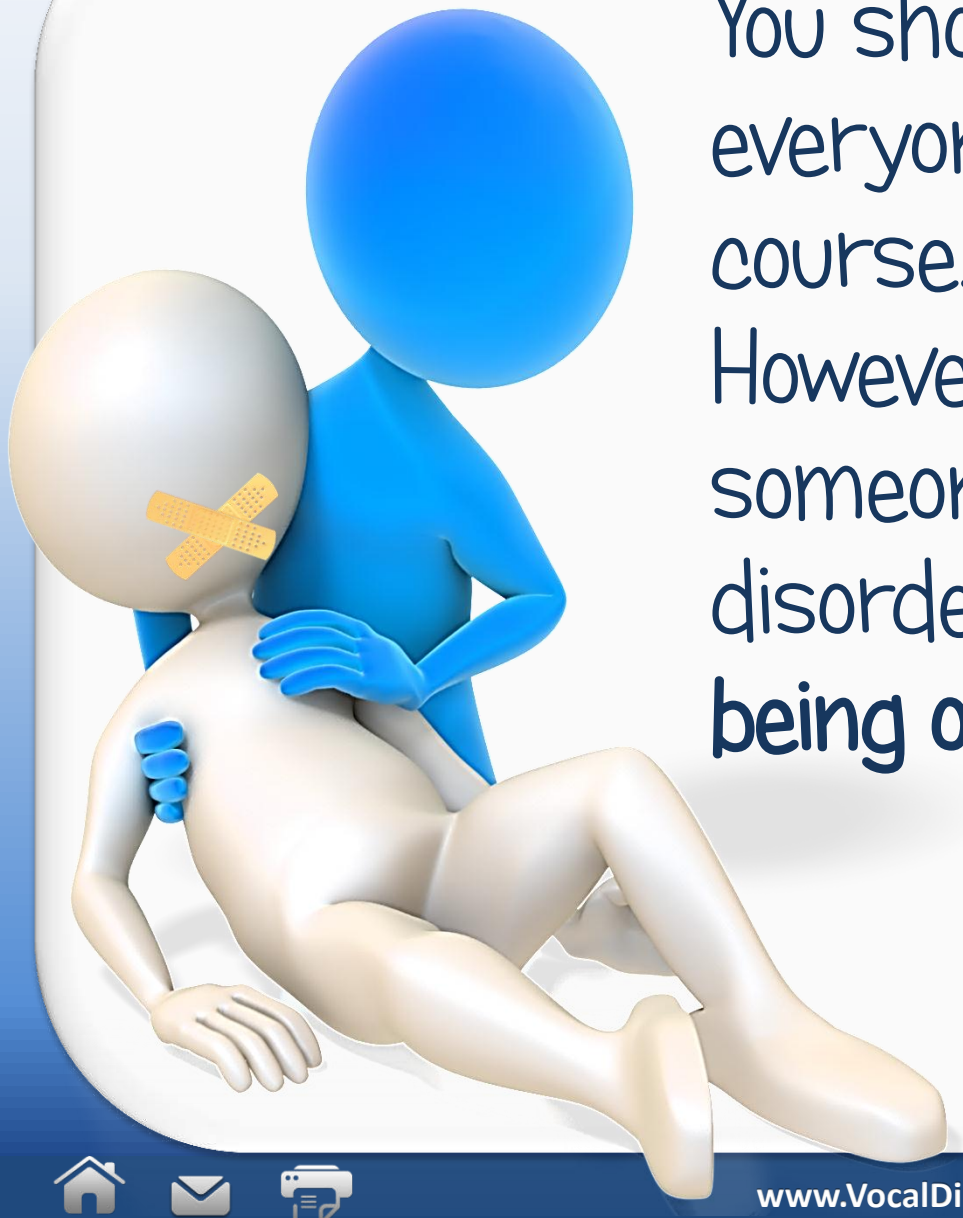

You should speak to everyone with respect, of course.
However, when talking with someone with a vocal disorder, be sure to **avoid being overly sympathetic**.

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Vocal disorders impact a person's day-to-day activities. However, **even with limited voice, it is possible to live a fulfilling life.**

So, you should seek to offer encouragement and empowerment. It will mean much more than sympathy.

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Focus on the topic, not the disorder

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Generally, people with vocal disorders do not want their voice to always be the focal point of every conversation.

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So, if the conversation is about a business deal... focus on that deal. If you are tackling family issues... focus on the family. If you are discussing hobbies... dig into that topic as well!

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It's OK to ask questions and seek to learn about vocal disorders. As a matter of fact, it is encouraged. Just be sure you do not focus on the voice so much that you unintentionally cause someone to feel isolated and out of place.

So, let's summarize...

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You can have wonderful conversation, even when one or more people have a vocal disorder. Here are your 5 tips to consider when talking with someone who has limited voice.

1. Practice active listening
2. Exercise patience
3. Speak normally
4. Talk with respect, not sympathy
5. Focus on the topic, not the disorder

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Andrea Hardaway

Andrea Hardaway is the founder of *VoiceMatters.net*, the first social networking community for people impacted by vocal disorders. She is motivated and inspired by her Mom (**Belinda**), who has had voice problems since 1997.

Andrea recognizes people with vocal disorders have similar daily life challenges, regardless of the disorder.

Andrea says, "*I can't heal people. However, I can help by letting people know vocal disorders exist! No one should feel their voice is not heard; that their words do not matter.*"

Belinda

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Contact: For more information on vocal disorders…

Web: http://www.VocalDisorders.org

Community: http://www.VoiceMatters.net

Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/VocalDisorders

Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/VocalDisorders

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