APPENDIX K

The Singer's Ten Steps to Wellness

Karen Wicklund

The following article is a modified excerpt from Karen Wicklund's 2010 *Singing Voice Rehabilitation: A Guide for the Voice Teacher and Speech-Language Pathologist*. It is used with permission of DelMar Cengage Learning.

The vocal hygiene guidelines in chapter 6 of Karen Wicklund's *Singing Voice Rehabilitation: A Guide for the Voice Teacher and Speech-Language Pathologist* include twenty-three points. Because some singers find it difficult to remember such a lengthy list of precautions, the following provides a step-by-step daily list that will remind the singer of vocal hygiene habits at different points throughout the day. While some of these steps, for example, exercise, might occur later in the day, all of the steps should be done on a daily basis.

1. RISE two to three hours before having to vocalize, after adequate rest.
   RATIONALE: Rest gives the body time to recover from the stress of the previous day. "A fair amount of sleep is essential for good general health and for proper functioning and resilience of the vocal organs" (Brodnitz, 1988).

2. HYDRATE. Try to drink at least two cups or more of water on rising, to start you on your daily goal of half your body weight in ounces of water.
   RATIONALE: Your body loses water overnight in respiration and perspiration and needs replenishment immediately on rising (Batmanghelidj, 1997).

3. EXERCISE: Move your body! Walking, running, elliptical—whatever form of aerobic movement you like, you need at least twenty minutes at least four times per week. If you are a weight trainer, take care not to strain your neck muscles while weight training.
   RATIONALE: Studies have shown that without exercise, the cardiovascular system declines 30 percent between ages thirty and seventy in its ability to deliver blood to the tissues (Smith and Zook, 1986). And, other studies have shown that exercise maintains the elasticity of the lungs, allowing them to retain their capacity for residual volume (Milic-Emili, Petit, and Deroanne, 1962).

4. EAT something before warming up the voice.
   RATIONALE: The act of chewing and swallowing warms up the vocal mechanism. Though it is probably not a good idea to eat a large meal right before a performance, some singers feel better after eating a moderately sized meal a couple of hours before (Ware, 1998). Adequate nutrition throughout the day maintains blood sugar levels and provides energy for singing (Harvey and Miller, 1998).

5. WARM-UP the voice/vocalize daily.
   RATIONALE: "A pitcher knows better than to throw a fastball before a number of warm-up throws . . . yet most singers will start belting high notes with hardly any exercise. . . . Avoid singing any high notes until your voice is thoroughly warmed up. . . . Start with exercises of limited range and then move to wider ones as the voice becomes more responsive" (McKinney 1994, p. 179).

6. STUDY singing. Engage in consistent study of the voice by seeing your teacher on a regular basis.
   RATIONALE: "An alert singing teacher may detect deficits in support, breath control, pitch, or other speaking habits that may produce voice fatigue and aggravate laryngeal injury" (Sataloff, 1991, pp. 249–50).

7. SUPPORT the speaking voice in the same way as the singing voice.
   RATIONALE: The singer should learn to use a supported, properly placed tone in the proper range for that individual singer (Westerman-Gregg, 1995). Those speakers who manage vocal demands by increasing both breath support and laryngeal resistance experience less vocal fatigue than those who deal with the problem solely at the laryngeal level (Kostyk and Rochet, 1998). Also, a recent research study found that a group of teachers with voice disorders who used an amplification system reported that the result was more "clarity of their speaking and singing voice" (Roy et al., 2002). In addition, a recent study showed that in singers using

microphone systems, risk of noise exposure was alleviated more by use of in-ear monitors than with floor monitors (Federman and Ricketts, 2008).

8. MONITOR stress levels hourly by taking deep breaths, stretching, and relaxing the body and vocal mechanism.
   RATIONALE: Studies regarding prolonged periods of stress have shown a link between voice dysfunction and stress and/or anxiety symptoms (Tolkmitt and Scherer, 1986; Long, 1988; Sapir, 1993; Goldman et al., 1996).

9. AVOID SMOKING/SECOND-HAND SMOKE or toxic/irritating chemicals in the atmosphere.
   RATIONALE: Smoking causes edema of the vocal folds and generalized inflammation in the vocal tract (Sataloff, 1991). Cigarette smoking is also a primary causative factor in emphysema, bronchitis, and lung cancer, as well as other diseases (Estes, 2006). Singers should also avoid exposure to stage smoke and the chemicals in the air of print shops or hair salons.

10. AVOID EATING within two to three hours of going to bed.
    RATIONALE: Laryngopharygeal reflux disease (LPRD) can be exacerbated by a singer's prone position during sleep and also by lifestyle factors, because singers often eat late at night (Sataloff, 1991). Management can include acid-blocker medications, elevation of the head of the bed, and, in extreme cases, surgery to tighten the lower and/or upper esophageal sphincters (LES and UES).

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