Recovery by Sheri Gould

Most everyone will experience some type of vocal damage in their lifetime. This could be the result of a sickness, allergy, overuse, abuse, surgery, etc. How recovery is handled can have a lasting impact on your voice. I get asked for information with regard to this very frequently so I know it is a common issue that so many of you deal with. I am going to try and give you some tips that can help to speed recovery and maximize your vocal effectiveness as soon as possible. [Here] we will discuss dealing with recovery from sickness and allergies.

Sickness

Try as we might, there may be times when we get hit with a bug of some sort that seems to find its ultimate resting place in out vocal cords. Bad singing habits, such as failing to warm up, can contribute to vocal injuries but more often the culprit, in my experience, is this: Most worship leaders, choir directors/singers and background singers carry on even when they're ill or over-fatigued, making their voices especially vulnerable. They may not be doing anything incorrectly vocally but they more than likely just have an amazing commitment to what they do. They don't call in sick.

Let me first of all say this unequivocally; if you are sick you should not sing. Period. This is a fact and I cannot say it more emphatically. Singing when your vocal cords are damaged will only cause more damage and prolong the healing process—possibly forever if you do it enough. I hope that was a strong enough warning. I have to make it as strong and scary as possible because it's true and because I know this about you—you are going to sing anyway. IF I could stop you I would, but since I can't, let me give you some help.

Go Gently-Try to avoid coughing and clearing your throat as much as possible. When you absolutely must cough or clear your throat think *GENTLY!!*

Don't talk-Talk as little as possible to give your voice as much rest as possible. This might mean that you have to disappear from sight in between services. *REST YOUR VOICE!!*

Hydrate like crazy-**DRINK A TON OF WATER***!!* Stay away from things that you know dehydrate you (like coffee). Even if you normally can get away with cheating in this area don't even try when you are hurting. Steep a bunch of Throat Coat Tea for a half an hour and sip it constantly instead. (http://www.traditionalmedicinals.com/products/throat-coat/) Do everything you know you are supposed to do (breathe through your nose, use a vaporizer, stay away from lemon and caffeine, etc.). Don't use conventional cough drops, find one with NO MENTHOL.

Warm-up-Although you want to give your voice as much rest as possible, *YOU STILL NEED TO WARM UP!!* Again, this should be done very gently. It would be best if you could warm up in a steamy bathroom-the more moisture in the air the better. Even if all you can manage is a gentle humming—at least do that much. Stretching the cords carefully and getting the blood flowing into them will help you when you actual do start singing.

Don't push- Change keys if you have to but do not push your voice. Let others take the lead and sing as little as possible. Although your role is important the world CAN get by without you for a moment or two. *TAKE IT EASY!!*

Try some" Vocal Rescue"- I am in the process of gathering research on a new product I have come across. So far I am very impressed. I will be doing an in depth review in the near future but for now check it out yourself and give it a try. Let me know how it works (or doesn't) for you. Be sure to follow directions carefully, this product is to be *gargled with warm water and not*

swallowed. (http://store.superiorvocalhealth.com/?Click=296) I have a link on my website (http://sherigould.com/blog/) that will take you there as well. You can even use the promo code GOULD and get 10% off. I'd love to hear about your experience with this product.

I also like to recommend a homemade solution of 3 parts Aloe Vera Juice (George's tastes the best-it's distilled and tastes like water!) and 1 part organic edible vegetable glycerin. Put this together in a spray bottle, shake well and spray toward the back of the throat while breathing in vigorously. Swallow any remaining solution. Repeat this as often as you like throughout the day for maximum help with healing the vocal folds.

Get some sleep-Your voice needs rest but so does your body. When you are sick your body is working extra hard so make sure to get a good night's sleep and *TAKE A NAP!!*

Even if you have mostly recovered from your illness, you should follow these steps until your voice is fully recovered. This could take days, weeks or even months. Continue to "baby" your voice. As you start to feel stronger, take care to warm-up and work-out your voice daily working back up to your normal capacity.

Allergies

There are thousands of different types of allergies that can affect people and they can manifest themselves in a myriad of ways. Unfortunately, many of these ways have a detrimental effect on the vocal cords leaving a singer in a quandary. They aren't sick, so to speak but should they sing? The short answer is; if your vocal cords are stressed you short not sing. However, for the millions of allergy sufferers this could mean a lifetime of no singing! So with some care and preparation you can (hopefully) successfully keep your voice healthy enough to sing.

Many people take some sort of allergy medicine to help them cope with their symptoms. When your body comes into contact with whatever your allergic trigger is it makes chemicals called histamines-these cause your allergic symptoms. The medicines are typically antihistamines designed to reduce or block histamines, so they stop allergy symptoms. However, this is a double edged sword. Unfortunately, one of the many possible side effects of antihistamines is dry mouth. So although the medicine may help to reduce many allergy symptoms, it will most likely leave you feeling dehydrated and making it difficult to function vocally—at least not at your full capacity.

During an allergy "attack" when you're feeling the effect on your voice, you need to follow all of the same suggestions for being ill or recovering from an illness that has affected your voice-especially with regard to staying hydrated. Although you may not be "sick", your vocal cords don't know the difference. In the 12 hours prior to singing you might want to try experimenting with a saline nasal rinse in place of your antihistamine. After you're finished singing you can resume with regular use. This may help to alleviate some of the dryness. The Aloe Vera recipe I describe above will be especially helpful for keeping the vocal cords moist. The Vocal Rescue can give you an immediate ability to use your voice much more easily.

God bless you as you seek to serve Him through song and hopefully make it through the cold, flu and allergy season a little more easily!