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A SHREDDED VOICE IS NOT RECYCLABLE!

by Poll Moussoulides, Director of Voice Coach Training and the Irish Voice Association.

Can you imagine a Tennis Player without a tennis racket, a Photographer without a camera, a Make-Up Artist without brushes, or a Teacher without a voice? Without the tools of the trade, there is no job.

Occasionally the Tennis Player's racket will break a string, but that's ok - they always seem to always have a couple of hundred wrapped up in a sponsors bag by the side of the court. Sometimes a Photographer will say they need new film (batteries or memory card), but that's ok - in one of the many pockets of that faded green waistcoat there will always be spares. Make-Up Artists may run out of particular shade, but that's ok - they always have a dazzling array of colours and can re-create a hue from others if one runs out.

When it comes to the voice, we have no sponsors to replace the old one if it gets damaged, we can't replace the batteries if things start to slow down, and we can't magically rustle up a new vocal mechanism from other organs if our voice fails and disappears! The bottom line is that we only have one, magnificent, irreplaceable voice. It needs to be cherished and looked after with a greater love and respect than Tennis Players give to their rackets, Photographers to their lenses, and Make-Up artists to their brushes.

Over the last 18 years I have given hundreds of workshops and courses for Teachers and other professional voice-users, but in the last two to three years I have become very concerned by the sharp increase in serious vocal problems that I am seeing around the country. These range from sore throats that last for weeks, raspy voices that would not be out of place in a horror B-movie, and most worrying more and more Teachers being diagnosed with vocal cord nodules. The latter of course can be rectified with months of Speech & Language Therapy or by Surgery, but then we get into recovery, time off work and in some cases an enforced change of career to one where the voice is not essential.

Recently some members of the Irish defence forces received compensation for preventable damage to their hearing. How much longer will it be before Teachers become embroiled in a similar claim for preventable damage to their voices? It's an interesting thought - and there is no doubt of the lack of voice coaching, training and support in this area - but I think there has to be a degree of personal responsibility. The truth is that many Teachers do not look after their voice with the same degree as they might their hair, clothes or cars (unlike the voice, all renewables!). You could argue that there are other burning issues like class sizes, teaching conditions and pensions to focus on, but what could be more important than the vocal process that allows Teachers to motivate, inspire, educate and guide?

There is nothing more rewarding than owning a durable, versatile, resilient and vibrant voice. We all want to be more effective in our personal and professional communication,

and a healthy voice is the greatest asset a Teacher can have. Taking some time to invest in strengthening your voice and protecting your vocal health could not be easier. Voice work can be incorporated into your day to day activities. Vocal warm-ups can be done in the shower, whilst getting dressed or travelling into work – you don't need to set aside any extra time! Within six to ten minutes your voice can be activated and ready to face the day. To get started, and to receive free tips, advice, informative articles, and to be eligible for exclusive discounts, why not sign up for our monthly Newsletter? The newsletter is read by thousands all over the world, and you can join us on any page of our website www.voicecoach.ie . For details on our 'Vocal Fitness For Life' course, click here <http://www.voicecoach.ie/courses.html>

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