

# SINGING AND LONG-COVID

Dr. Rachel Goldenberg, D.M.A.

Dr. Wendy LeBorgne, Ph.D. CCC-SLP

# SINGING AND LONG-COVID



## **Who am I?**

I'm a voice teacher with a lot of background and experience in this area.

I work collaboratively with a multidisciplinary team.

# WHAT IS LONG-COVID?

Long COVID has been preliminarily defined by The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence ([NICE](#)) as the **presence of signs and symptoms** that develop during or following an infection consistent with COVID-19 which **continue for 12-weeks** or more and are **not explained by an alternative diagnosis**.

This includes both ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 (from 4 to 12 weeks) and long term consequences of COVID-19 (12-weeks or more).

# WHAT IS LONG-COVID?

Stigma/Disbelief

Pre-existing conditions

Long-Covid?

Access to Services

Anxiety

# WHAT IS LONG-COVID?

## **Acute Phase: 2 weeks**

Initial Positive Test

## **Subacute Phase: 6-12 weeks**

Cough

Fatigue

Mucus

## **Chronic Phase: 12+ weeks**

Ongoing symptoms

Dysautonomia

Breath Pattern Disorders

Post-Exertional Malaise

Fatigue

Sensory Disturbance

Sleep Disturbance

Inability to Return to “Baseline”

Cognitive Difficulties

WHAT IS LONG-COVID?

## ME/CFS & Long-COVID

(chronic fatigue syndrome)

Fatigue that is beyond what is expected.

# AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Unconsciously regulates bodily functions...

## Parasympathetic Nervous System

Rest, Digest, Repair

Calm, Relaxed

Decreased

breathing rate  
heart rate  
blood pressure

## Sympathetic Nervous System

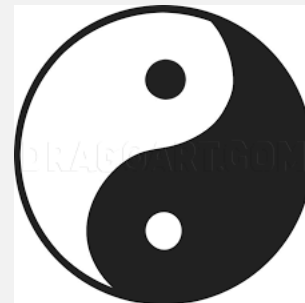
Fight or Flight

Alert, Tense, Panic

Increased

breathing rate  
heart rate  
blood pressure

## Balance



# DYSAUTONOMIA

Inappropriate responses from the autonomic nervous system...

Racing heart rate when resting

Increased blood pressure at rest

Breathlessness



# BREATHING PATTERN DISORDER

Dysfunctional breathing...

“Regular life”

Chest breathing that leads to over breathing



# BREATHING PATTERN DISORDERS

## Common Symptoms:

Sighing/Yawning  
Disturbed Sleep  
Anxiety  
Nausea  
Clammy Hands

Fatigue  
Muscle Aches  
Irritability  
Air Hunger

## Red Flags:

Breathing discomfort  
Erratic heartbeat  
Chest pains  
Dizzy spells  
Extreme hoarseness that doesn't improve  
Rapid, shallow breathing that doesn't improve

When in doubt, defer to a  
medical professional

# BREATH MANAGEMENT

## Diaphragmatic vs. Chest movement

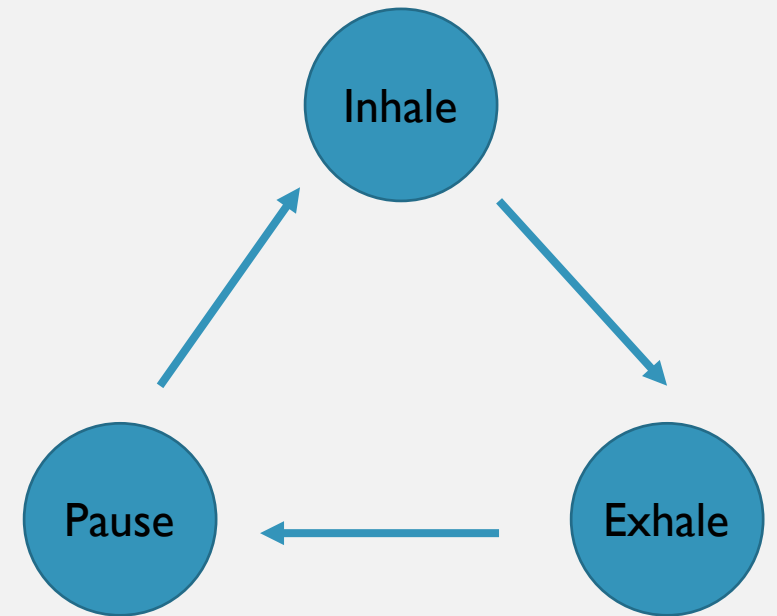


# BREATHING MANAGEMENT

Longer exhale than inhale.

Pause before inhale.

8-12 breaths per minute.



# PACING AND MANAGEMENT

## Post-Exertional Malaise (PEM)

...a **flare of symptoms** and/or the appearance of new symptoms **after exertion**, often presenting **24 hours or more** after the triggering event.



**Physical** activity, **cognitive** overexertion and **sensory** overload can all trigger PEM.

# PACING AND MANAGEMENT

## Singing is inherently athletic!

### Physicality:

Breathe to larger lung volumes

Engage the body

Coordinate our breath, voice, articulators...

Stamina required

### Sophisticated cognitive tasks:

Foreign Languages

Characters

Interaction with other musicians

Playing other instruments

# PACING AND MANAGEMENT

## Graded Exercise

A gradual increase in activity over time as directed by a clinician, until the patient returns to a healthy activity level.

While grade exercise may be useful in patients who are deconditioned after surgery or severe illness, graded exercise does not address the metabolic changes and atypical reactions to activity that lead to symptoms in people with ME/CFS.

Because post-exertional malaise is the hallmark symptom of ME/CFS, **programs that gradually increase exercise may do more harm than good.**

# PACING AND MANAGEMENT

## Pacing

A self-management strategy for activity

...active when able

...rest when tired



then





# PACING AND MANAGEMENT

## **Rest**

Rest as much as possible before a triggering event.

## **Doing less is doing more**

Whatever you think you can do, do much less until you know it's OK.

Set smaller, manageable, obtainable goals

Prioritize goals

## **Journal**

What works and what doesn't work?

## **Wearables**

In consultation with healthcare provider to keep heart rate lower.



# YOU AND YOUR STUDENT

## How to Support

Listen

Believe

Advocate

Reinforce and support the treatment plans from the health professionals.

Go slowly and be prepared for ups and downs.

# YOU AND YOUR STUDENT

## **Strategies:**

Shorter lessons

Have the student sit down while singing

Double warm up time

Adjust breaths so the volumes are not so extreme

Reduce ranges

Slower tempos

Easy repertoire to begin with

Be aware of sensory overload

Vocal hygiene strategies

Check in about the last session

Inquire about crashes

Continue to check in about energy levels throughout lesson

Cool down and return to quiet breathing

# YOU AND YOUR STUDENT

Go slowly

Give yourself and your student permission to be flexible in setting your goals.

When in doubt, refer out!

Look for support within the medical and allied health community or from other singing teachers.

**Teach the person in front of you!**

# RESOURCES

[www.breathewellphysio.com](http://www.breathewellphysio.com)

[www.themusicalbreath.com](http://www.themusicalbreath.com)

<https://www.physiosforme.com/covid-19>

<https://www.wearebodypolitic.com/covid19>

<https://longcovid.physio/>