



Check-list of Points to Cover in a Presentation to SLP Students

National Spasmodic Dysphonia Association

Only organization dedicated to SD

Not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization

Mission:

- advance medical research into the causes of and treatments for SD
- promote physician and public awareness of SD
- provide support to those affected by SD

Publications and Materials:

- *Easier Done Than Said: Living with a Broken Voice* by Karen Adler Feeley
- *Speechless* by Dot Sowerby
- DVD: Understanding Spasmodic Dysphonia
- Brochures and Awareness Materials

Brief description of SD

Typically affects the voice so that words and sentences are broken up, and it is an effort to talk.

There is nothing wrong with the vocal cords themselves – the problem is with the brain sending inappropriate signals to the larynx, so that the vocal cords go into spasm, slamming together or flipping apart at the wrong time.

This interrupts conversational speech because the patient cannot produce a smooth, flowing voice.

The spasms either restrict the voice, because the cords close off, and are limiting the smooth outward flow of breath needed to vibrate the larynx; or alternatively force the vocal cords wide apart, wasting the outward flow of air so that nothing is left over to vibrate the cords.

SD only affects the ‘conversational’ voice. More primitive vocal functions, such as laughing, crying, humming etc. that do not involve fine motor control of the larynx are unaffected.

Possible effects of SD

- Social withdrawal and embarrassment in some cases
- Depression because the SD patients feel they should be able to control their voice
- Unable or difficult for an SD person to participate in meetings
- Many SD patients report difficulty in using the phone

SD Facts:

- Form of dystonia
- Focal dystonia of the larynx
- Unknown cause
- Movement disorder in the same category as Parkinson’s Disease & Tremor
- Usually strikes between the ages of 30 and 50
- Over 50,000 people in North America
- No cure
- Treatments: botulinum toxin injections, surgery, voice therapy
- Types: adductor, abductor, mixed
- Adductor: strained, tight, strangled
- Abductor: breathy, whispery
- Mixed: has features of both adductor and abductor
- Neurological disorder: improper signals being sent from the brain to the vocal cords producing the muscle spasms that interfere with voice production
- Not a psychiatric or psychological disease
- Diagnosis by medical team: otolaryngologist, speech-language pathologist, and neurologist
- Celebrities with SD: Scott Adams (*Dilbert creator*), Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (*environmentalist, author, lawyer; son of Bobby Kennedy*), Johnny Bush (country & western singer), Diane Rehm (*National Public Radio host*), Jimmie Rodgers (*singer of ‘Honeycomb’*)

