

# MUSICAL THEATRE VOICE CLASS

*with kakkie galo*

## Nervousness and the Voice

When trying something for the first time, our bodies naturally react with a fight-or-flight response. Even a beautifully polished audition can be sabotaged in the audition room when this response takes over. Knowing what your voice is going through and how to relax it can help you keep control and accurately showcase the cut you've worked on.

Note: The information in this document is not meant to be taken as official medical advice.

### What happens to the voice with nerves?

The fight-or-flight response causes a buildup of tension in the larynx and the rest of the body. Tension in the larynx can cause the voice to shake or tremble (Wetzel et al.).

Another common bodily response is chills, which can cause even more restriction in the voice. This often affects people with dysautonomia like POTS. Chills are caused by "the redirection of blood flow to areas of the body that are signaling the greatest need for it, for instance, the heart... The areas of the body from which the blood is being taken still need a certain amount of blood flow to function, and, with the decreased blood flow, those areas of the body become cooler" (Abraham and Jarrold).

### How can I help relax my body and voice?

1. Slow down. Breathe slowly from your diaphragm and speak/sing with control over your pace. We tend to speed up when we get nervous. Don't forget—the stage is yours when you are in your audition. Use up all the time you need (Wetzel et al.).
2. Reset your nervous system. Jump, dance, or sing to help work the cortisol out of your system. See Dr. Neff's article (cited at the end) to see a list of other strategies like tapping, stimming, chewing on ice, using a weighted blanket, and using essential oils (Neff).
3. Pat or massage your armpits. This is another way to stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system and help your body to relax, and it's one of my favorite techniques. Other lymphatic drainage exercises work great as well (Lymphatic Drainage Massage Clinic).
4. Pray or meditate. Fall back on practices you already use to give you comfort.
5. Wear warm clothing and/or bring a blanket. If you know your body responds to fight-or-flight situations with chills, make sure to be prepared for that. You will typically have to wait for your turn at an audition, and having a blanket on hand can help you regulate body temperature and make sure your voice stays warm and relaxed.
6. Ghost noise— See this video to learn another breathing technique to relax the larynx:  
[https://www.tiktok.com/@mokoab/video/7327797461588725035?is\\_from\\_webapp=1&sender\\_device=pc](https://www.tiktok.com/@mokoab/video/7327797461588725035?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc)

## Works Cited

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- Neff, Megan Anna. "13 Effective Ways to Reset Your Nervous System and Regulate Well-Being." *Neurodivergent Insights*, 1 August 2022, [https://neurodivergentinsights.com/13-ways-to-reset-your-nervous-system/?srsltid=AfmBOop4R2cOho2Y-zy\\_pDY-hFUqQ-TV6aXEXyTnlMlVTuJxJK3DC1vJ](https://neurodivergentinsights.com/13-ways-to-reset-your-nervous-system/?srsltid=AfmBOop4R2cOho2Y-zy_pDY-hFUqQ-TV6aXEXyTnlMlVTuJxJK3DC1vJ). Accessed 7 February 2026.
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