



MARCH – APRIL 2007

## Finding Your Voice:

Self Improvement

# *Strategies for Living Your Legacy Each Day*

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**H**ave you ever felt inspired by people who are true to themselves and consistently express commitment to their values and goals? Do you know people who empower others but are not overpowering? Can you tell

when people's actions fully support their true intentions? These are people who actively find and claim their voice.

Make 2007 the year you toss away your fears, drown out the voice of your inner critic and be heard! Give voice to the goal that others thought you crazy to go after, to the inner child that holds on to harmful, self-defeating messages, in a personal or professional relationship when you feel certain no one will value your opinion or to a social cause that touches your soul.

David Whyte, in his book *The Heart Aroused*, says that voice "...is a powerful arbiter of our inner life, our power relationships with others and a touchstone of faith in the life we wish to lead." Your voice is your essence, gut instinct, and personal source of power. It can guide you if you learn to listen to and honor what it says. If you chose to ignore it, withhold your words and retreat, you will render yourself powerless and find your self in situations or relationships that could be harmful.

Our voice speaks to us at work, at home, in our relationships, and in the choices we make. But how do you know if the voice you are hearing is that of your inner critic (the self-

sabotaging voice) or the authentic you? Have you ever witnessed someone speaking from the heart and felt their sincere enthusiasm? When you speak your true voice, you speak from the heart and soul. The voice is undeniable—full of strength, power (without being overpowering) and influence. Here are Ten Tips to help you distinguish your true voice from that of your inner critic, claim it as your own and use it to live your legacy each day.

1. **Build Awareness** – Notice when you feel empowered and notice when and to who you give your power away. Consider my personal story. I was a hospital administrator who, despite having established a favorable reputation, felt a bit reluctant to speak up and let my opinion be known, particularly when interacting with those more senior to me. Four years ago, I committed to making a significant career move (and it took about four years to listen to my voice telling me to make a change) and for several weeks prior to announcing my resignation, I became more vocal and outspoken with an "I have nothing to lose" attitude. I began receiving positive feedback and recognition from senior management and heard things like, "We want more of that [voice] from you". It didn't occur to me until after I had left the hospital that my ability to openly voice an opinion was a result of feeling less detached to the outcome of speaking out more boldly; that is, I let go of the inner critic and any fear or concern around saying something outrageous, ignorant or irrelevant. It struck me when others

(particularly women) shared similar stories, that organizations must be missing out on constructive perspectives, creative ideas and valuable contributions when women feel hesitant to confidently speak up.

2. **Know Your Strengths** – Identify and name your personal strengths and talents.
3. **Be Grounded in Values** – Know and name your personal values. Being aware of feeling empowered and using your unique strengths provides insight to your values. Be clear on what is truly important to you and not what others say is important to you.
4. **Create a Personal Mission Statement** – Create a personal mission statement that best reflects your values and life purpose.
5. **Create a Mind/Body Connection** – Notice where in your body you feel a physical connection when acting powerfully from strengths and values. Consider the story of a woman in her forties who vividly recalls that at age six, her mother “shushed” her disapprovingly at a pivotal time when this young girl thought her words were witty and cute. This experience shut down a vital part of her body and spirit which remained untapped until 30 years later when she was able to get in touch with that place in her body, revive and share with others that comical and light-hearted element of her personality.
6. **Say “No”** – Review Tip #1 to identify situations/people to who you have difficulty saying no and begin saying “no” when it does not honor your voice or values. Women in particular often have difficulty saying “no” because they tend to be people pleasers. A Will County independent consultant and mother, juggling work and family responsibilities, recently took a stand in a professional relationship and said “no” to her key client because the work no longer met her goals. She became clear on what was important to her, created her boundaries and proposed a new work situation that best honored her voice.
7. **Practice, Practice, Practice** – Consciously choose to act based on your true voice as opposed to that of your inner critic.

8. **Create a Supportive Environment** – Surround yourself with positive energy and influences including supportive people and a physical environment.
9. **Evaluate** – Notice what is and is not working.
10. **Celebrate or Adjust** – Based on your evaluation, either celebrate what you’ve created in your life or make adjustments for what is not working.

Take the Finding Your Voice Self Assessment (see below) to determine how well you are doing in finding your voice and living your legacy. To share your story of “finding your voice” or for more information on specific action steps you can take, please email Marcie at [mstern@vocalconsult.com](mailto:mstern@vocalconsult.com) or visit the Vocal Consulting website at [www.vocalconsult.com](http://www.vocalconsult.com).

### Finding Your Voice Self Assessment

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1. I am acutely aware of my unique strengths and talents.                     | True/False |
| 2. I rarely give my power away to others.                                     | True/False |
| 3. I know my values and honor them consistently.                              | True/False |
| 4. I have and follow a personal mission statement.                            | True/False |
| 5. I can say “no” to others without guilt.                                    | True/False |
| 6. I may notice my inner critic but consciously choose to dilute its message. | True/False |
| 7. I create and keep priorities for my work and life.                         | True/False |
| 8. I surround myself with supportive people and physical space.               | True/False |
| 9. I routinely evaluate my progress against specific goals.                   | True/False |
| 10. I celebrate my accomplishments, no matter how small.                      | True/False |

*If you answered “False” to 3 or more questions, you may not be actively claiming your voice and living your legacy each day.*

Consider who and when you give your power away; when it is hard to say “no”, or when you pretend to be someone you are not just to feel accepted.

Use Vocal Consulting’s “Ten Tips to Finding Your Voice” to learn more about how you can actively claim your voice. **Voice it. Claim it. Live it.** • [www.vocalconsult.com](http://www.vocalconsult.com)