

Facilitating Approach #3: Changing Vertical Focus

Goal: To develop improved voice quality and resonance by transferring the child's vertical focus from the lower vocal tract to the upper vocal tract.

Many children with dysphonias have long histories of concern about their voices. They clear their throats constantly, they make phonation rehearsals, and they worry about the kind of voice that might pop out the next time they speak. In the search for a better sounding voice, the clinician may help to bring about improvement by transferring the child's mental focus away from the lower vocal tract to the middle of the face.

Changing vertical focus is similar to the approach used by singing teachers, who employ imagery by asking their students to place the voice somewhere behind the facial mask (i.e., the nose and cheeks). This type of instruction often results in a measurable change in voice quality. The technique should be used in conjunction with other facilitating approaches that produce softening of glottal attack, improved pitch and loudness, and reduced overall effort while speaking.

Although nasal resonance is heavily utilized in the beginning to develop focus on the area of the nose and maxillary sinuses (the middle of the face), the approach is not designed to increase nasality. This approach should not be used with children who have hypernasality problems, and should be discontinued with any child who cannot easily perform the task.

Facilitating Approach #3 consists of the following procedures:

1. utilization of small steps to balance vocal resonance and improve voice quality; and
2. habituation of improved resonance and quality.

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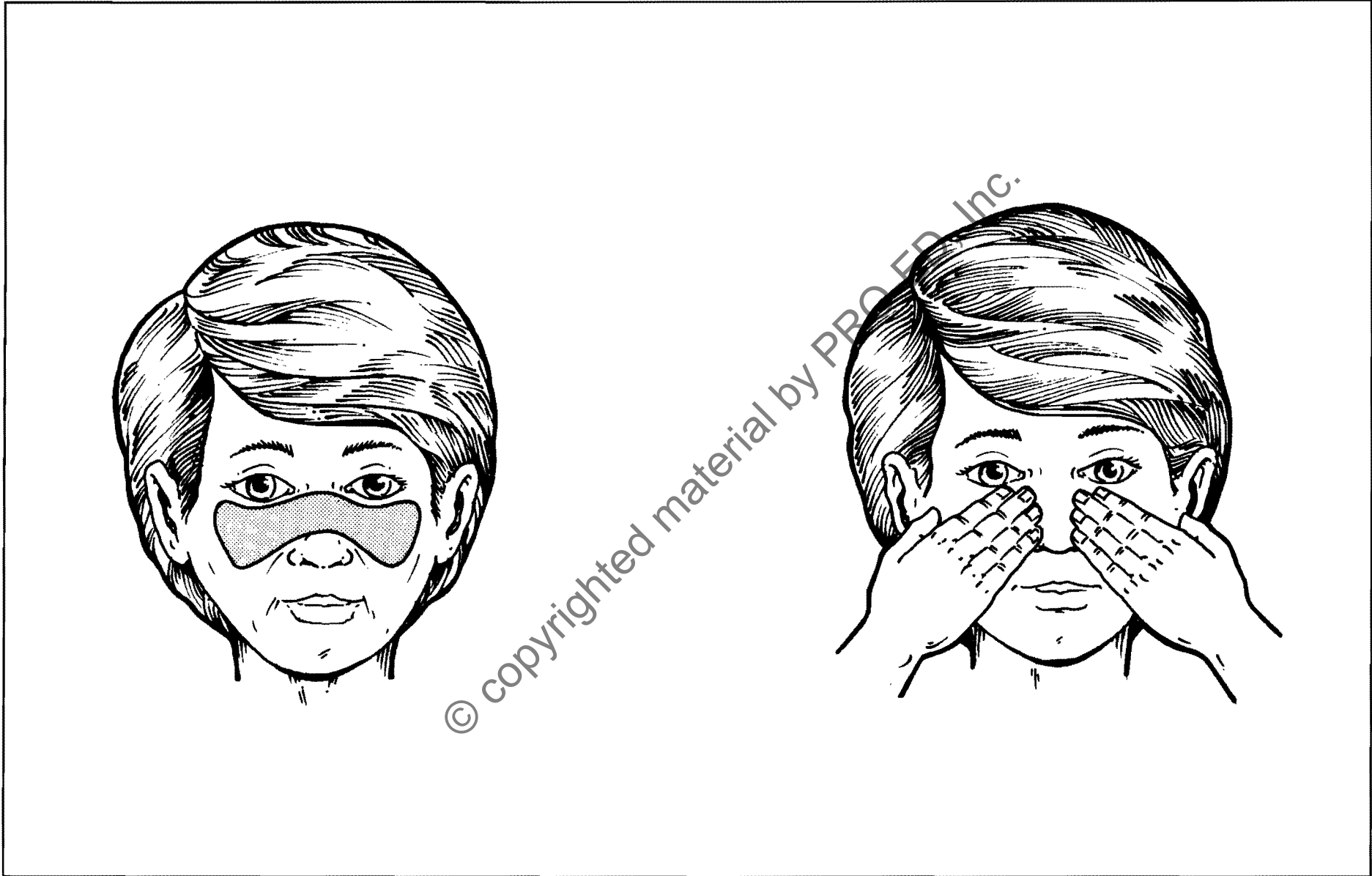


Figure 27.