

Highlights from Redefining Stuttering

This document is intended for those who have read John C. Harrison's 623 page triumphant gem of a masterpiece, *Redefining Stuttering*. Almost everything I highlighted in the book, I copied into this document. These highlights are intended to jog your memory. For those who haven't read the masterpiece or related articles, some highlights will make no sense because you have nothing in your mind to properly reference. If you've never heard of *Redefining Stuttering*, do yourself a favor and Google it. It might certainly redefine your life!

-Tim Steadman

Forward

Groups tend to go through peaks and valleys.

Slowly I became more comfortable in the role of speaker. Encouraged about my growing confidence, I started observing other people who are really good speakers. I tried to get inside their skin. What were they feeling? What were they doing? What made them charismatic? What made them confident?

People were finding that the information and exercises (of how to conquer your fears of speaking before people - Part 7) really helps to lessen their fear of speaking before groups by **giving people ways to perceive the speaking situation in a different light.**

Preface

It's amazing that we haven't been able to arrive at a consensus on the essential nature of chronic stuttering and what drives it.

Point of the book - Thus, over the years, even with all that intellectual firepower and all those investigations, there has still not been a definitive answer. People still keep asking the same old question, "What is stuttering really all about?" They failed to produce a paradigm, or model, that is broad enough to encompass *all* the issues associated with chronic stuttering.

Alfred Korzybski - a Polish American philosopher and scientist whose most remembered for developing the theory of general semantics. Korzybski's work, *Science and Sanity*, published in 1933 held that **we cannot experience our world directly but only through our nervous system and the way we use our language.**

Reading S.I. Hayakawa's (author and general semanticist) Book, *Language in Thought and Action* and attending his classes, helped me to **understand how my habitual thought process forced me into a performance oriented way of thinking, and how this in turn, fueled my blocking behaviors.**

Gestalt - German word for "an organized whole that is greater than the sum of all parts."

Stuttering gestalt - a system that manifested itself through a particular group of components organized in a particular way.

What I learned about stuttering was that my speech blocks involved all of me. By addressing all the key parts of the stuttering system, including the physical things I did when I blocked, I was eventually able to dissipate, or more precisely, dissolve my disfluency.

Part 1: Understanding the Stuttering System

My observation is that your speech and your life must be seen as cut from the same cloth, and that the same forces that drive your stuttering are also driving the other parts of your life.

Do You Suffer from Paradigm Paralysis? 5-10

Quartz Movement Example - How did the Swiss overlook such a remarkable opportunity? Swiss watchmakers were blinded by their rigid concept of what compromised a wristwatch. In short, the Swiss watch industry was suffering from paradigm paralysis.

A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, and beliefs that define the way we frame our thoughts.

Paradigms shape the way we see.

Paradigms cause us to notice some things and ignore others and to anticipate what is likely to occur based on a particular set of assumptions.

When the paradigm in force prevents us from formulating an accurate picture of circumstances, we are said to be suffering from **paradigm paralysis**.

We see stuttering as a cognitive problem. A behavioral problem. A genetic problem. Or a psychological problem. Unfortunately, none of these paradigms by itself is broad enough to contain all the answers.

The person who develops a new paradigm is often an outsider. This person, the **paradigm shifter**, is able to see the situation with a fresh eye. This describes some of us in this stuttering self-help community. We are not indoctrinated in the classic ideas of stuttering. We are outsiders to the professional field.

You need to observe with a *blank mind*.

Gas Pump Attendant Example - In this case my unexpressed feelings towards my wife carried over to my interchange with the service station attendant. I now have someone standing over me, and being lower down created a sense of being "less than" him. This in turn triggered my fear of authority and of expressing myself openly and assertively. If asked, I would have told you that my fear of stuttering was holding me back. But it was a lot more than that.

Most speech language pathologists are trained to work within a paradigm that calls for focusing their attention almost exclusively on speech and not on the emotions closely tied to feared words and speaking situations. As a result, clients are not encouraged to look beyond their fear of stuttering, and thus remain oblivious to the potential contributing factors.

People who have made significant progress with their speech, especially those who have recovered, represent an enormous resource for the professional community. Yet, we are seldom referenced in this way. For example, I stuttered for 30 years. And for over 40 years I've been completely recovered. Yet in the early years, how many speech pathologists said to me "Gee John, That's really interesting. I'd like to explore it with you in detail how you did it." Not a one.

I have come to understand stuttering, not simply as a speech problem, but as a *system* involving the entire person - an interactive system that's comprised of at least six essential components: **Behaviors, Emotions, Perceptions, Beliefs, Intentions and Physiological Responses**. Each component affects and is affected by the other components. I find it a useful concept because it resolves the question of whether a speech block is emotional, perceptual, physical, genetic or environmental. It is *all* these things. It is a system that ebbs and flows, depending on the circumstances.

In a system where most of the points are negatively biased, there is little likelihood that gains in fluency or *ease of self-expression* can be maintained. Negative elements create more negativity. Thus, even if one part of the system has become positive, such as speech that has improved after therapy, it will be under pressure by the rest of the system to drift back to its previous negative state to support the integrity of a negative system. On the other hand, if the points of the Hexagon are mostly positive, they'll create a positive system that will support any positive changes such as more expressive and fluent speech.

By making it possible for all members of the stuttering community - professionals and non-professionals alike - to collaborate, we are finally in a position to develop a new paradigm for stuttering that can give us the answers we're looking for.

Developing a New Paradigm for Stuttering 11-34

I've learned that whenever I struggle for a long time with a problem without making headway, I'm usually trying to solve wrong problem.

The fact that I didn't stutter in all situations made disfluent episodes all the more painful, since I inhabited the nether world of being neither normal or abnormal.

I discovered that my "speech problem" was actually a constellation of problems. True, I did things with my lips, tongue, vocal chords and chest that were counterproductive to fluent speech, but that wasn't the only thing amiss. **I lacked self-assertiveness. I was overly perfectionistic. I was overly concerned with pleasing others. I saw life as a performance. I didn't share what I felt. I didn't even know what I felt. I believed things about myself that weren't true, and blocked out things that were.**

It was during a period of self-discovery that my stuttering "disappeared," not the behaviors, of course, which took longer to tail off, but my perception of what was really going on changed. I no longer identified what I was doing as "stuttering."

What usually happens is that after therapy, most people who stutter slide back. This is because many therapy programs simply adopt a strategy of *control* in which only speech behavior issues are addressed.

Two-year-old boy and mechanical engineer example - each look at a car differently. Two year old sees the car as a single living object. Engineer sees the car as a system comprised of interacting parts. Both come from different perspectives.

As a teenager, I experienced stuttering as a thing, a life form whose behavior I could not predict from day to day. Today, having "popped the hood" and looked inside, I understand that this "thing" I call stuttering is actually a collection of components in a particular kind of relationship.

The word "stuttering" promotes confusion by being too vague and unspecific. All examples below are described as "stuttering." They are worlds apart.

Pathological disfluency - disfluencies related to primary pathology such as cerebral insult or intellectual deficit.

Developmental disfluency - disfluencies that surface as the young child struggles to master the intricacies of speech. This often disappears as the child matures. It is also highly receptive to therapeutic intervention.

Bobulating - temporarily upset or discombobulated.

Blocking - the struggled, choked speech block that comes about when someone obstructs his airflow and constricts his muscles. Unlike developmental disfluency and bobulation, *blocking is a strategy designed to protect the speaker from unpleasant consequences.*

Stalling - the person continues to repeat a word or syllable because he has a fear that he will block on the following sound or syllable. The person is just buying time until he feels ready to say the feared word. This is an alternate strategy to the overt struggle behavior associated with blocking. Must be considered in the same vein.

Since developmental disfluency, bobulating, blocking, and stalling can look identical to the untrained eye (and, unfortunately, to some trained eyes as well), calling them all "stuttering" can substantially help obfuscate the problem.

The speech block is distinguished from bobulating and developmental disfluency by an accompanying feeling of helplessness.

Similarities to weight problems example - 85% of all people who go on a diet eventually regain the weight they've lost. Remarkably, the reasons why diets by themselves are ineffective are almost identical to why over 85% of those undergoing speech therapy loose ground in the ensuing months.

The Stuttering Hexagon - a self maintaining fluency system - not only are the speech blocks addressed, but also those contributing factors which lead the person to block. All points interact with all other points. It's the dynamic interaction of ***all*** six components that lead to struggled speech. Any changes made at one point are felt at all the other points.

Physiological responses - fight or flight, how one handles stress.

Behaviors - physical behaviors such as locking the vocal cords.

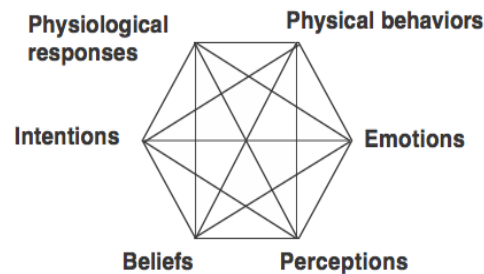
Emotions - drive behavior - which can be self perpetuating (emotions fuel behavior which fuels more emotions which fuels more behavior.)

Perceptions - what we experience in the moment. *They are shaped by our beliefs, expectations and state of mind* (if we believe we're an oddity because of how we talk, we may perceive the whispered chuckle of the person across the room as....)

Beliefs - come about in two different ways.

- 1) What we've been taught (especially by authority figures).
- 2) Our experiences that repeatedly turn out in a particular way. Beliefs remain relatively constant from moment to moment. We may believe that we're different from other people because we stutter. Once our beliefs are formed, we tend to shape our perceptions to fit those beliefs. In effect, our beliefs function like a pair of tinted glasses - they color the way we see and experience.

Intentions - behavioral programs. Two types – *Apparent intention* may be to speak the word, while our equally powerful *hidden intention* may be to hold back out of fear of revealing ourselves, our imperfections, etc. When our intentions pull us in opposite directions, we experience ourselves as blocked and unable to move.



Why we slip back into stuttered speech after fluency shaping - the system will reestablish itself. Those that are successful already have been making significant changes at the other points on the Hexagon.

Why stuttering occurs - speech blocks are an incredibly rapid series of events in which the lightning like processing of the mind references emotions, perceptions, beliefs and intentions, and as the result of a perceived danger, executes defensive strategies in a word by word basis.

The mind works in milliseconds.

I'm suggesting that, as the person with a chronic blocking problem approaches each word, his mind acts like a forward looking radar on a high performance fighter flying just a few hundred feet off the ground. The radar looks ahead for hazards, sees a hill or tall building, sends the information back to the aircraft where the onboard computer evaluates this data and sends the appropriate commands to the ailerons and other control surfaces that cause the plane to move higher and avoid the danger. This radar system (blocking system) anticipates problems before they happen, on a situation by situation and word by word basis.

Types of dangers - feared block on a particular word, feared situation in which the emotions associated with the freely spoken word represent a danger.

Bob in a bar example - Bob perceives that Sally, the young woman is attractive. He is drawn to her. However, since Bob does not perceive himself as her equal, he is automatically giving her power over him, specifically, the power to validate him. Thus, his perceptions have a negative bias. Bob is in a one down position.

He believes Sally will not be interested in him, she'll reject his offer. His beliefs have a negative bias.

His perceptions and beliefs have now triggered a melody of negative emotions: fear (of being rejected), hurt (anticipated, because of the rejection), and anger (anticipated, as the reaction to being hurt). This gives his emotions a negative bias.

Bob's genetic makeup happens to be such that he is quick to react under stress. This stress reaction is heightened as he approaches the moment when he must give his name. Saying his name is particularly difficult because he perceives that people expect him to say it without hesitation (after all, he should know what his own name is without having to think).

This pops up his fear level. Consequently adrenaline levels skyrocket and his body marshals itself for fight or flight. However, this is a social danger. The body doesn't perceive the difference between social and physical life threatening danger. This is creating additional insecurity and discomfort.

Bob also has conflicting intentions. He wants to communicate with Sally, but he is afraid of letting go and possibly being rejected - he's conflicted - intentions negative biased. If Bob says his name assertively, he be acting outside his comfort zone, reaching beyond what his self-image says is credible. Thus, as he goes to say the word "Bob," two overpowering fears surface: 1) fear that he may block, and/or 2), the fear that he may come off as too aggressive. If his will to speak and not speak are of equal strength, he'll find himself blocked, unable to move in either direction.

The block in turn will generate a sense of panic, which will render him "unconscious." In this unconsciousness, he will lose contact with the experience and with the other person. Out of desperation, he may try to forcefully break out of the block by trying to say the word anyway he can. In doing so, he will execute a Valsava maneuver, a strategy identified with performing acts of strenuous physical effort. This calls for further locking of the throat, tightening of the abdominal muscles, and building air pressure in the chest as he tries to get the words out. (As an alternative strategy, he may also stall by repeating the word "is" until he feels ready to say the word "Bob").

He will continue to be blocked until the intensity of his panic begins to drop, at which point his muscles will begin to relax, and he will suddenly find himself able to continue on with the sentence. As we can see, then, is habitual behaviors are also negative. So all the negatives reinforce each other, creating a self-supporting, negatively biased system.

We develop a strategy that calls for holding one self back until the danger has passed.

Thus, on bad days when his self-esteem is low, most words may feel threatening, on days he is feeling good, the same words will be easier to say. However, some words will probably maintain their negative or positive bias no matter what kind of day it is.

Bob in the same situation now, but his book has been accepted for publishing - Bob feels accepted, validated, and his self-esteem is at an all-time high. His perceptions are shifted from negative to positive. Previously, he felt unacknowledged; now he's been validated and feels the heady confidence that goes with. His new self-perceptions affect his beliefs. He is now somebody who has the right to speak up and assert himself. Positive perceptions and

beliefs lead to positive emotions. And of course, positive emotions lead to more upbeat perceptions and beliefs.

The negative intentions to hold back and hide that normally would have kicked in when he was trying to say the word "Bob" are no longer operating, because they don't fit with the new positive hexagon. The name "Bob" now means something he's proud of. Because he is no longer relying on Sally for acceptance, and without the same feeling of impending disaster, Bob's sympathetic nervous system does not push him into a fight or flight response.

Emotionally he remains confident and collected, so he does not fall into the physiological response - panic - that led to the previous crisis. Within this positive system, Bob no longer feels the need to hold back. Quite the opposite, Bob wants to let go and share his good feelings with everyone he meets. He expects a positive reaction so he puts out positive feelings, which the young woman responds to, causing an even greater surge of confidence. This is what it feels like to be fluent.

There is, however, another scenario that can lead to a speech block even on a good day. He goes to say the word San Francisco and experience tells him to believe that he always has troubles with "s" words. So as the word approaches, he prepares himself for the anticipated struggle by tuning the muscles of the Valsava mechanism, That is, he makes them ready to activate. He readies his vocal fold for a forceful closure. This forceful closure will be necessary to block the airflow and build up the necessary lung pressure to maximize his ability to push, which he anticipates will be needed to get the word out.

Alternatively, he may prepare his tongue to block off the airflow by pushing against his palate. He readies his abdominal muscles and anal sphincter to tighten, since these will come into play in the forceful process. Bob comes to the word "San." Because his Valsava muscles have been tuned, they instantly respond and execute the maneuver.

Unfortunately, this maneuver is counterproductive to speech. However, in Bob's more positive frame of mind, even this block might turn out to be just a momentary setback...yet you've trained your muscles while unconscious to react this way when this threat is anticipated.

Of the children who are disfluent at an early age, why do most of them not develop a chronic stuttering problem?

If the youngster is in a supportive environment free of the underlying stresses where pressures to perform do not affect his speech, then the struggle and avoidance behaviors that lead to blocking never take place. In other words, the stuttering hexagon has never been given the opportunity to form.

Why can someone talk to children without difficulty and minutes later totally choke when asked to address an adult?

The adult perceives herself into different situations. With children she clearly perceives herself as the boss, her word is law, no one challenges her knowledge or authority, she doesn't feel judged, and her intentions are always clear. Thus, there is no ambiguity around issues of control. In this nonthreatening environment her beliefs about herself closely parallel what is true. Because of this, there is no reason to hold back and the words come out fluently. While in a teachers meeting, however, she's entered a *radically different environment*. She sees judges in her coworkers, the principal as an authority, this elicits emotions such as fear and anger, feelings that she may not only find difficult to express, *but even*

acknowledge. Her body and mind don't distinguish between physical and social threats. This initiates the familiar fight or flight. Intentions become split. She wants to give her reports, but she does not want to put herself at risk and make herself vulnerable. This becomes visible in her halted and fragmented speech. *This example demonstrates how changes around the hexagon can affect the individual in significant ways and how such changes build a reality that has a concomitant effect on the person's speech.*

Building blocks for fluency in life - build personal skills, rethink values, establish support systems, and broaden your perspective on life.

You must **dissolve the glue** that holds the stuttering system together. This insures the behavior will never return. Dissolve is key.

The great irony is that the harder you try to solve a stuttering problem, the more you reinforce its presence, because in order to have something to solve, you must continually re-create it. To “disappear” something you don't have to solve it, you dissolve it.

Tom Dick and Harry and the unruly gang example - You don't address the gang directly because that confirms its identity. Instead you introduce the three boys to join a youth group and assign each of them to a different activity, the gang becomes dissolved into a larger setting. The structure that defines their gang no longer prevails. Similarly, focusing only on stuttering serves to entrench it within the individual's psyche, whereas disassembling it not only destroys its form, it automatically gives you six issues to address instead of one.

Each individual word is capable of having its own Hexagon, depending on what we associate with it and the context in which it is being used. If a person is uncomfortable with the negative feelings associated with a particular word, he may hold them back, blocking on the word to insulate himself from having to experience the associated feelings.

Certain situations may always seem to be biased one way or the other. *For example, to understand why someone may regularly have difficulty saying his name, we must look at his perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and intentions as they relate to his name.*

The more points you can change around the Hexagon, the greater chance you have to build a positive, self-sustaining system that leads to greater expressiveness and fluency.

When I “opened the hood” and peered inside, I began to recognize that I was looking at a system - I began my own recovery. My physiology shaped the parts. My emotions fueled the engine. My beliefs turned the gears. My programming wired the parts together. My perceptions set the path. My intentions drove it to move this way and that. As I identified the parts and how they worked, my perceptions of the speech block changed, and as I made progress at each of the points, the system changed, until over time, the stuttering simply dissolved.

I don't suggest for a moment that everyone can make his or her speech blocks totally disappear, but by correctly recognizing the essential nature of the problem, it is possible to maximize whatever efforts are made in improving one's ability to speak.

The Hawthorne Effect and Its Relationship to Chronic Stuttering 35-63

The most important and influential pieces of scientific research ever done in the psychology of work took place in 1927 at the Western Electric Company, Hawthorne Illinois in the coil winding manufacturing department.

The research focused on the intangible factors that affected morality an efficiency of shop workers.

It took a small group of 6 women off the production line and put them in a room together to do the same work. First scientists looked into lighting. They increased the light a few candlepower - production went up. They increased more and the production went even higher. Then they decreased light to original candlepower - production continued to go up. They decreased the lighting - production continued to go up. They decreased the lighting so dim that the women could barely see - production started to level off.

It was clearly not an improvement in lighting that increased production. The reason for the higher production lay in the fact that bringing the workers together allowed them to coalesce into a cohesive group, and it was the creation of this group dynamic that had a profound effect on the mindset and output of each individual group member.

While working on the production line, there was not much pride in what they did. It was just a job. In this private workspace, they basked in the attention paid to them by the research team. They were now somebody. Friendships blossomed. They started visiting each other's homes. Supervisor became somebody they can turn to. They no longer feared their boss. They knew him by name and he was someone they could turn to personally. It was not any one thing that accounted for the improved performance. It was the interrelations of all the positive aspects that improved the performance.

The improvements that took place were primarily explained by the impact of the social systems that formed and the ways in which it impacted the performance of each individual group member. You must look at each work group (the small group as well as the large manufacturing floor group) from the perspective of a social system. The small group system was much more positive for the workers. The positive reactions of each member increased the production of the team/system. This phenomenon came to be known as the Hawthorne effect.

What does this have to do with chronic stuttering? Each part bears a relation of interdependence to **each other part** - such as in the stuttering hexagon. This system perspective, however, is not an easy concept for many people to accept, especially those who like simple explanations.

Examples of single viewpoint causes for stuttering: glitch in the brain, emotional problems, timing problem, and mechanical problem.

People will shape their thinking according to the limited way they view the subject at hand. What confuses the issue is that each person is partially correct because, like the four blind men, each is able to accurately describe a piece of the puzzle (*four blind men describing an elephant example - one on foot, one on trunk, one on ear, one on stomach*).

Psychoanalysis. *Client centered therapy* - the therapist would simply reflect back in a supportive, caring way what the client had just said. It was the client's perception of the quality of the relationship between himself and the therapist that worked it's magic - how much trust, support, and self-esteem were created. The sense of being liked and accepted - something that might have helped me get in touch with what I

was feeling - was missing.

The clinician who focuses only on fluency shaping techniques might conclude that improvements are solely the results of those techniques and overlooks the impact of the relationship between herself and the client - Limited clinician's point of view.

HCRI example. Because Jeff the therapist is an open and accepting person, you feel, for the first time, totally self accepted even during difficult speaking situations. Your self-esteem is bolstered. Your relationship with other students is equally supportive. In this totally eupsygian (i.e. good for the psyche) environment, your sense of self begins to change. Not only is your speech changing, so is your self-confidence, your self-image, and yourself limiting beliefs. You are more willing to express what you feel. As you keep at it, the various elements of the new system continue to reinforce one another. Lo and behold, by the end of the two-week program, the system has become self-supporting. Not just your speech is transformed, but you are transformed.

Why then, unlike riding a bicycle, are there such tendencies to slip backwards after speech therapy? Once again it has to do with the Hawthorne example (effect). Without the continual reinforcement of a supportive environment, the women, now back on the factory floor, would gradually and unconsciously readapted to the old environment - one that did not encourage initiative and was not personal - an environment that promoted an adversarial relationship between the worker and manager.

Back to HCRI - since the new, positive internal system he's built up at HCRI is still very tentative and fragile, it is easy for it to breakdown due to lack of support. Suddenly the client who has been making such excellent strides in the therapist's office, is paralyzed and unable to speak when he gets back to his home or office (at some point). The speech techniques that he had worked so hard to acquire seem too difficult to use in the face of the panic that arises in particular speaking situations. The risks becomes overwhelming, and he retreats back into the old familiar speech patterns that result in a negative Hexagon.

It's the overwhelming tension of the moment that has caused you to slip back. Though you've made significant progress with the therapist, **the new perceptions, beliefs, and speech behaviors have not yet gathered enough strength to become default. They have yet to organize themselves into a self-supporting system - one that is strong enough to withstand the pressures of the outside world.**

The greater challenge, then, lies in how to make self-sustaining, the new emotions, perceptions, beliefs, intentions and behaviors even in the face of an unfriendly environment. This is **MY CHALLENGE.**

You leave the therapist's office and step out into the street. You have entered a new environment (opened a new MS Word doc). You must keep the same default setting when entering a new environment. You must program MS Word (You) to keep the default setting the same when opening new documents (entering new environments). This is my **MY CHALLENGE.**

Each of the points on the Hexagon has its own default setting. If you cannot get the default settings to change, you cannot create a new self-reinforcing system. You must change your default settings for each point.

Default #1 Emotions

The default has to do with how much and what kind of emotion we're willing to tolerate. You block from saying your feared word until it no longer feels that expressing your feelings would propel you outside your safety zone.

Default #2 Beliefs

Where do beliefs come from? They are established two ways. First, they are created by what happens to us and how we interpret it. Secondly, beliefs are instilled in us by parents, teachers, and other authorities whose word we accept as law. Almost always, their version of reality is a distortion, if only because it is filtered through their own set of beliefs about the ways things are.

Beliefs can either work for or against you.

Beliefs are fixed expectations of the way things are or will be.

Beliefs can persist in the face of contradictory evidence.

Sometimes there is a crack in the system. It can be an experience, a relationship, or an unexpected happening that suddenly *pulls that behavior out of the background and makes it visible*. Sometimes, just challenging one's basic beliefs can have a stunning and dramatic effect.

Example: Gentle soft-spoken person who changed into a gruff, unkempt guy who, overnight, spontaneously got fluent through the help of William Perkins, director of a stuttering center. They dealt frequently with the restrictions he felt stuttering imposed upon him. For several weeks, I (director) had been countering with the observation that he might be hiding behind stuttering. Am I hiding behind stuttering? Guy woke up fluent and over a week anxiety grew as fluency remained. As anxiety subsided, a personality inversion appeared. No more Mr. Nice Guy. (From Tongue Wars by William H. Perkins) In this case, the startling transformation was apparently prompted by a realization, perhaps built up over time through therapy, that the young man no longer had to govern his life according to other people's expectations. Lo and behold, he created another default that gave him a lot more room to maneuver and to act in a way that was congruent with his authentic self.

Default #3 Perceptions

People's perceptions are shaped by their expectations, prejudices, predispositions, and how they felt when they got up that morning.

A perception is something that takes place *right now in real time*.

Wherever our perceptions automatically migrate to - whether it's to other people's strengths or our own weakness - this is our default.

There is a close link between beliefs and perceptions in that what you believe sets the context for how you perceive, and how you perceive, influences how you react.

Default #4: Intentions

Intentions play a key role in the creation of a speech block. Any block, speech or otherwise, can be defined in they way: two forces of equal strength that pull in opposite directions.

Example: the beloved horse that falls and breaks a leg... George wants to pull the trigger to bring the horse out of his misery, but can't because the of other intention (the horse is very close to me), is stopping George from pulling the trigger.

In a twist (that relates to stuttering), lets say George doesn't know he has deep feelings for the horse. The feelings are there all right, but for whatever reason, he's pushed them away, so far away, that the emotions are no longer accessible to his conscious awareness. His finger is frozen. Why?

The real reason, of course, is that George doesn't want to pull the trigger at this instant. He's not ready to experience the pain. The same kind of situation can arise in speech. You want to talk at the same time that you have feelings that threaten to push you beyond the threshold of what you are willing to experience. If this becomes your modus operandi in stressful speaking situations, then this method of self-expression will be your default, and you will find yourself routinely slipping into stuttering and blocking behaviors that seem unexplainable.

Default #5: Physiological Responses

This is where genes come into play.

Example: as you stand at the head of the bus line trying to say the word "transfer," running or fighting are not appropriate options. Your physical survival is not at stake. After all, you're simply asking for a transfer. Yet, your whole body is still preparing you for a life-or-death struggle. What is threatened is your self-image and your self-esteem.

Because stuttering individuals with a hypersensitive temperament require less stimuli for responsiveness and reaction, they may be oversensitive to the negative reactions of other people and be more sensitive to stress, time-pressure, and noise.

It stands to reason that with our increased sensitivity, we will be more disposed to creating a stressful environment where struggled speech is likely to occur.

Default #6 Physical Behaviors

Stuttering is comprised of two components

- 1) The speech block
- 2) The strategy to break through or avoid the block.

The speech block is characterized mechanically by a clamping of one or more parts of the mechanisms required for speech (tongue, lips, vocal folds, chest) in a way that leaves the speaker unable to continue talking.

*The speech block is distinguished from bobulating and developmental disfluency by an **accompanying feeling of helplessness**.*

The block is created by an individual's emotions, perceptions, beliefs, intentions, physiological responses, and speech behaviors that have all been woven together by the Hawthorne Effect into a patterned response. None of these elements in and of themselves create stuttering; rather, the block is created by the way these elements interact and reinforce one another.

Sally Ordering Salmon Example: Picturing what she's afraid of is precisely the wrong strategy to adopt in overcoming a performance fear. What Sally doesn't realize is that whatever she pictures in the conscious mind, her subconscious mind will attempt to execute.

Why is this so hard? Why is it so difficult not to focus on the fear when she has to ask for salmon? It has to do with genetic programming. Whenever we are faced with a threat, nature has programmed us to feel fearful and vulnerable. We feel something is going to get me if I don't pay attention to it. It's a feeling she is unwilling to tolerate.

*Thus, there are two beliefs at work: 1) she is going to block, and 2) she has to keep focusing on the threat. As Sally enters the store where she has to say salmon, her body begins to initiate a fight or flight reaction to prepare her for the crisis. Sally is not consciously aware that her heartbeat is elevated, a subtle tightening in jaw, throat or chest, a shallowness in her breathing. **All she knows is that she has an unspecified feeling that she is going to block.***

*As Sally waits her turn in line, she starts **believing** that she will make a total fool of herself by not being able to say the word "salmon." This belief, in turn, begins to shape her **perceptions**. The frown on the clerk behind the meat counter says that he's not having a good day, that he's rushed, and that he's intolerant of anyone who would cause a delay.*

The two girls chatting in line behind her seem superficial and judgmental. They will probably laugh or snicker when they discover she can't speak. She desperately looks for friendly faces around her but does not find any.

*Notice how the various parts of the Stuttering Hexagon are being activated, and the way the Hawthorne Effect is weaving them together to create a situation in which speech blocks are likely to occur. She **believes** that she will stutter and make a fool of herself. She also has many other beliefs that are playing a contributing role - beliefs relating to how she should act, the way she could express herself, what other people want and expect of her, and so forth. Her **perceptions** are that she is dealing with people who will not be sympathetic or understanding. Her **physiological** system is ramping up a full-fledged flight-or-flight reaction. Her **emotions** are rooted in fear and terror. Then it is her turn to order, and that's when her divided **intention** comes into play.*

"Yes, ma'am. Can I help you?" "Yes, I...I...I would like two p..." "Damn. She's stuck on the word "pounds." "Um...." Sally closes her eyes as if she's thinking. Her body is pouring tons of adrenaline into her blood stream. Her blood pressure is rising. Her breathing is shallow.

Blood is rushing from her stomach into her limbs to give her added strength. Her body is preparing her to fight or run for her life...just because she wants to say the word "pounds."

*The few moments she cannot talk seem like eons. Then her **emotions** subside a bit, and suddenly the word "pounds" escapes her lips.*

"Of...."

*She has set her tongue to say "salmon," but there is no air escaping from her lungs. Sally is pulled by two opposing forces—the poles of **divided intention**. She wants to say "salmon" - in fact, the situation demands it. People are waiting, and the clerk behind the counter is anxious to complete the sale. Yet, to let go and speak means that who-knows-what may come out of her mouth. Sally later on will tell you that she was afraid she was going to stutter. But perhaps it is more than that. Perhaps it is that her body is in a full-fledged fight-or-flight response. Her emotions are rocketing off the scale; yet, Sally is trying to keep her composure. Anyone looking at her would simply see an apparently calm*

young woman, inappropriately lost in thought.

Inside, it's another story. There is a buildup of panic that she's pushing out of her awareness. To let go and say the word "salmon," means that those feelings would be engaged. What would come out? Fear? Anger? Sadness? Vulnerability? Would she go out of control? Would the word erupt as a shout? Would she sound too aggressive? For Sally, it is a vast unknown, and so she remains caught in the thrall of a speak/don't speak conflict. One thing is certain. It is not yet safe to say the word "salmon."

"Of s....."

When the word "salmon" doesn't come out, Sally cuts off the airflow and resumes her pensive look. The silence is awkward. She has cut off all communication with the world around her. The panic state has enveloped her totally. The silence is deafening.

(Unconsciousness)

But feelings cannot remain at that peak for long, and after a few moments the intensity of the fear drops to a safe level.

"...Salmon."

Phew. The crisis is over. The counter man finally knows what she wants and goes about slicing off two pounds of salmon and wraps it up in white butcher paper. The sounds of the store once again surround her. She is aware that her face is flushed.

The whole scenario consumed only ten seconds. To Sally, it seemed like a millennium. Feeling embarrassed but relieved, Sally returns to her apartment and starts preparing the evening meal.

Tonight, Karen, another young professional and an old friend, is joining her for dinner. In due course, the salmon is in the oven, and the vegetables are sautéing on the stove.

Promptly at seven o'clock, the doorbell rings. It's Karen.

The two women work to finish preparing the meal, and after it's served, Sally opens a bottle of chardonnay. Because they are old friends with lots to tell each other, dinner lasts several hours. The conversation is lively and intimate, and during this time, Sally does not block once. She also never mentions her difficult moment at the meat market.

*What you're seeing once again is the same kind of dynamic that unfolded at the Hawthorne plant. **There is nothing organically wrong with Sally's speech, but there are significant differences in Sally's emotions, perceptions, beliefs, intentions, physiological responses, and speech-related strategies from one environment to another.** It is these differences that make her speech either difficult or easy.*

***At the market Sally feels she has to perform, and that her self-esteem and self-image are on the line.** When she goes to ask for salmon, all these forces bring to bear, and she freezes and cannot say the word. At home with Karen, her acceptance is taken for granted. She doesn't have to do or be anything in order to enjoy the love and affection of a friend. There is enormous trust between the two women.*

*All the elements—the negative emotions, perceptions, beliefs, intentions, and physiological responses—that characterized the encounter in the meat market have been transformed into positive forces. There are no power struggles. There is no need to look good. It's not necessary to perform to earn Karen's high regard. **There is only freedom.** These positive forces reinforce each other to create a benign hexagon where the need to hold back is no longer an issue. Thus, Sally finds it easy to say the word "salmon" and anything else she wants to express, and her speech blocks do not appear during the entire evening.*

You have witnessed the Hawthorne Effect in action.

This scenario with Sally is not meant to represent all stuttering situations but simply to show you how the Hawthorne Effect can create an immediate environment that triggers a person to either hold back or let go. It is not any one part of the Stuttering Hexagon that creates the stuttering block; it is all the elements and the way they come together and interact.

A permanent change in your speech will happen only when you alter the various default settings around the Stuttering Hexagon. Habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting also turn into default responses.

For the change to be permanent, you need to initiate a similar process by creating changes in your habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, and practice them long enough so they become your new defaults.

Changing the Defaults

Emotions: You can change how you emotionally respond by putting yourself in situations that appear risky, but that are safe enough so you're still willing to take chances and try out new behaviors. Once a month experiences will have some effect, but unless they take place more frequently, change is likely to be slow.

Stuttering is a social issue, which is why very few people stutter when they're alone. *You need to do this socially.*

Beliefs: To change your beliefs, you have to read. You have to question. You have to experiment, even though you have no way of knowing beforehand how things will work out.

Perceptions: Learn to be an objective observer, and be constantly willing to question your perceptions. Check out Neurosemantics and neurolinguistic programming as there are many books and programs available that describe the ways people perceive and how they can change their habits of thought and reshape their perceptions.

Intentions: Question your intentions. If you follow your intentions, reward yourself regardless of outcome.

Physiological responses: Not much you can do here, however, exercising some control over your perceptions, beliefs, and intentions, you can reduce the frequency with which you find yourself in fight-or-flight responses.

Speech Behaviors: Speech clinicians can help with this. If you are unaware of what you're doing when you stutter, it becomes important to bring those speech producing muscles into awareness so you can keep them loose and relaxed, rather than tight whenever you find yourself under stress.

I have an innate curiosity about why people are the way they are, plus I'm a good observer, so I've noticed and thought deeply about virtually everything that's happened to me.

This essay has argued that stuttering is not the product of some exotic genetic glitch but a relationship of common components.

The force that binds these components together is called “The Hawthorne Effect.” What results is a living system that operates according to predictable laws and rules; as system that involves not just your speech, but also your entire self.

Why are Speech Blocks so Unpredictable? 64-83

I used to think I’d be better off if I stuttered on every word, rather than only in special situations. At least then, my life would be more predictable. It casts an uncertain shadow on every aspect of your life.

I once tried to explain this mindset to a non-stuttering friend. Imagine, I said to him, that you’re walking merrily along the street after an uneventful shopping trip to Macy’s when all of a sudden this gloved hand comes out of nowhere and — WHUMP! — it bops you on the nose. Not hard, but sudden enough to startle you.

“Hmph!” you say. “Now where did that come from?”

A bit ruffled, you continue on down the street. You walk into the bank to make a deposit. Just when you step up to teller window and open your mouth to speak, a gloved hand comes out of nowhere and — WHUMP! — it bops you on the nose. Not hard, but hard enough to disconcert you.

You make your deposit and leave the bank. Walking by a newsstand, you feel a bit rattled and decide to buy a magazine to take your mind off of your anxieties. You fish around for the right change, hand it to the man behind the counter, open your mouth to ask for the magazine...and suddenly this gloved hand comes out of nowhere and — WHUMP! — it bops you on the nose.

How is the world feeling right now? Unpredictable. It’s lunchtime, so you walk into a local eatery. As you walk through the door, you notice you’re doing something you didn’t do before. You’re scanning the room ahead of you, looking for that damned gloved hand. Your schnozz is tired of getting bopped. Except nothing happens. Reassured, you find an empty table, sit down, and open up the menu. Ah, the roast beef sandwich looks great. The waiter comes over to take your order.

“What would you like,” he says. “The roast beef on whole wheat,” you answer. “Anything on the side?” “Yeah, an order of fries.” “And to drink?” “A Miller Lite.” “What was that again” “A....” You go to repeat Miller Lite, but you never make it because suddenly, a gloved hand comes out of nowhere and — WHUMP! — it bops you on the nose. Oh stop it!!! Why is this happening? None of it makes any sense.

Why could you buy a shirt in Macy’s without incident, and then walk into the restaurant and get bopped. This constant surprise is driving you crazy. My friend said he now understood why I found the world so unpredictable.

Stuttering can come and go at odd moments and often seems to have a mind of its own.

Stuttering is a *system* involving the whole person.

Having difficulty with a particular word like “for” may not be about that word in particular. It may have to do with what has come *before* that word, or what you anticipate might come after and the emotions

that this moment are engendering.

If you're resistant to experiencing those emotions, you'll be inclined to hold them back (block) until the feelings drop to a manageable level.

Find what words have an emotional charge.

Example: Frank interrupting his boss to tell him he double booked something...get gets stuck on a word. The word "time" for Frank not only begins with a feared constant, it also completes a thought where George might not be ready to feel the emotions with completing is thought.

Frank isn't aware of a lot of things. He isn't aware of his feelings about authority figures, and how they intimidate him. He isn't aware of his compulsion to please others and to make sure they'll always like him. Most significantly, Frank isn't aware that his mind is programmed to constantly process his experience, evaluating each moment to look for what may further his health and survival, and what may threaten it.

As Anthony Robbins says, "everything you and I do, we do either out of our need to avoid pain or our desire to gain pleasure."

There is never a time when you are without an emotional track. (example - sound bar on side of film.)

Engram - a complete recording, down to the last accurate detail, of every perception present in an experienced moment. The engram plays an important role in your body/mind's survival strategy, especially in its relation to a little almond-shaped node within your brain that represents the seat of your emotional memory. The amygdala is located within the limbic system and is the most primitive part of the brain that has elements dating back a hundred million years. Its function is reactive - designed to quickly trigger a fight or flight reaction whenever you feel threatened. The amygdala is not smart; it can't differentiate between physical threats and social threats. In short, the amygdala is designed to bypass the higher, conscious brain that controls cognitive processing so that we can act first and think later.

Songs, the guy behind you with the tattoo, the lighting of a store, the smell of oil - all can bring back every perception present in an experienced moment (both conscious and unconscious perceptions), i.e. an engram. How do you feel when a popular song from your college years is played? An engram comes back to you. These engrams can be unconscious triggers for blocking. The key is to find them **through observation**.

Emotions do a number on you. The reason has to do with how your reactive mind operates. Anything that looks like or feels like or *even vaguely reminds you* of the original experience has the ability to recall and re-create the original experience.

The most inconsequential sensory experiences have the power to recall the entire engram and the emotional responses attached to it.

Example - when John Harrison felt a block 30 years after dissolving his stutter. "I stopped, took a deep breath, and finally was able to bring myself back to "consciousness" so that I could say "John Harrison." I was reacting to a tone of voice. But I do know that for an

*instant, I was reliving an incident from an earlier time and place.” The big difference between my response that night and how I would have responded 25 years ago is that, once the event was over, **it was over**. Though I was curious about it, I didn't brood about it.*

Another example from John of past experiences unconsciously reappearing - As I stood chatting with Bob, I suddenly found myself feeling uneasy about introducing myself to Blakken, whom I had not previously met. I had the old familiar feeling that I would block on my name. I had been here before. My emotional memory did not acknowledge the differences; rather, it responded to the similarities - head of company, standing in the doorway, need for approval, attitudes about authority.

These were pieces of a familiar engram that recalled the times when I waited for my dad to get off the phone. Not only did it recall the earlier experience, it became the earlier experience. All the feelings came back. In turn, these brought back attitudes and feelings I had as a young man, including those about being judged and having to perform. My amygdala, charged with protecting me from bodily harm inappropriately set off my general arousal syndrome to get me ready to fight or flee the saber-tooth tiger.

Fear of having my ideas rejected - something I took very personally in those days. It can be equally intimidating, even if you no longer deal with stuttering.

Though I felt as if I would block, I was also aware that it had nothing to do with my speech. **It had to do with my divided intentions.**

Once again, I was aware that the issue wasn't about stuttering. **It was about making myself vulnerable.**

As you can see, my mindset was totally different because my intentions were clear, aligned, and focused.

Had I only focused on my fear of stuttering the first time around, I would never have broadened my purview to include all the other issues that were involved. I would have reinforced the belief that I had a speech problem, and that it was a fear of stuttering that was keeping me back. I would have over looked the real issues.

Talking to an unresponsive listener - I'm getting absolutely no clues to how I'm being received. The need to be heard is one of the most powerful, motivating forces in human nature. It has enormous bearing upon our development throughout childhood. Being listened to is the means through which we discover ourselves as understandable and acceptable...or not. It spells the difference between being accepted or isolated.

In the absence of a response, our insecurities are awakened and questions start undermining our self-esteem. Am I making sense? Am I a fool? Am I well regarded? Am I just babbling? These questions wouldn't be so important if we *didn't give the listener such power over us - the power to validate us, to tell us we're OK.*

We hide our disfluent speech...our assertiveness...our spontaneity...our *real self*.

I constantly looked for nonverbal clues to tell me whether or not I was connecting - a smile, a look of interest, an attentiveness.

Some people are just not expressive. It is not in their nature.

The alarm clock effect - this has nothing to do with a fear of stuttering per se, but about feeling that we've been speaking too long. We've been acting too assertively, and now it's time for us to pull back.

In analyzing a speaking situation, get in the habit of noticing what your emotions are doing and whether, just before you block, your feelings moved outside your comfort zone, causing you to pull back. Then ask yourself what the threat was. You can speed up the learning process by keeping a diary and writing down the incidents you remember on file cards. If you do this over time, you'll begin to see definite trends and patterns. And those, in turn, will identify problem areas that need to be addressed.

How about people who seem to block in all situations? Refer to "The Principle of the Upside Down Triangle." This metaphor refers to the time in the child's life at which particular sensitizing events take place. The earlier they occur, the broader the impact they will have on a person's life later on.

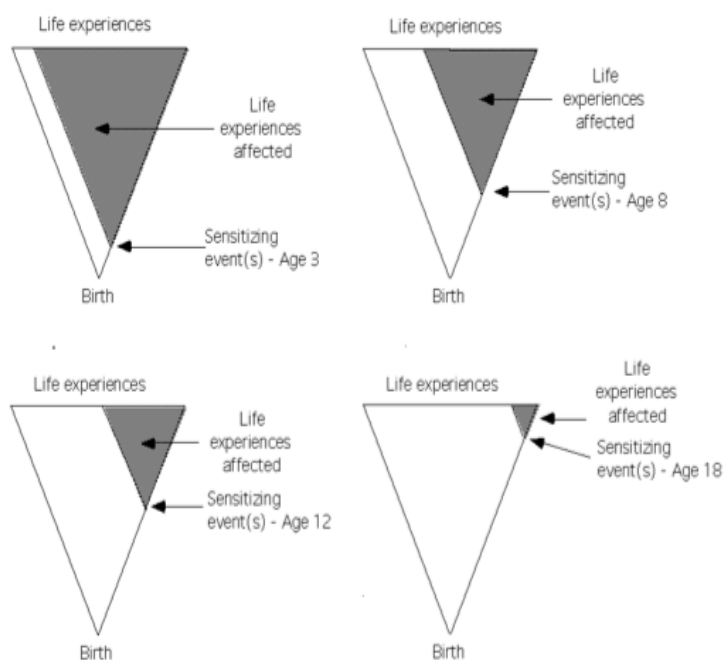
Example: A student speaks up in class and is severely criticized and humiliated by a male teacher.

Scenario 1: *An 18-year old student might develop a fear for that teacher, or similar male teachers, and be discouraged from contributing further in class.*

Scenario 2: *A 12-year student old may project that fear onto all teachers.*

Scenario 3: *A 8-year old student may end up being afraid of all adults.*

Scenario 4: *If it happens at age 3-year old student (formative years), his fear may become generalized, not only to adults, but to any situation in which he's called upon to be assertive (generalized fear). He may come to the conclusion that his true self should never be revealed under any circumstance. Self-assertion becomes a no-no. Then, almost all speaking situations will be threatening, and he'll find it difficult to speak anytime, anywhere, without blocking. Similarly, if not being listened to commences during early childhood, this would also have a broader impact on the individual's life.*



Imprinting the Brain

Changes are also more difficult to implement when the unwanted behaviors are acquired early in life.

“What wires a child’s brain, say neuroscientist is repeated experience.” This continues until about the age of 10, “when the balance between synapse creation and atrophy abruptly shifts. Over the next several years, the brain both ruthlessly destroys its weakest synapses, and preserves only those that have been magically transformed by experience.”

The good news is that you can reformat these early experiences by **refraining** them so that the old reactions are not called up. You can also provide yourself with a choice of responses by developing new behavior patterns and repeating them over and over again until you automatically default to them.

You'll have to address the perceptions, beliefs, emotional responses, and conflicting intentions that help to create the reactive patterns leading to a block.

Example: OCD patients (who like to wash their hands hundreds of times) were placed in front of a sink and not allowed to wash. At the same time, they were encouraged to question their fears and challenge their deep-seated beliefs. Gradually, after months of similar sessions, the compulsions faded.

Repeated positive experiences did not eradicate the old memories. They still exist. But it gave the individuals different ways to interpret them and alternative ways to respond. The motivated individuals were able to disrupt the old reaction patterns and relieve their symptoms, as effectively as if they had been treated with heavy-duty drugs like Prozac.

The brain changes in patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder show that emotional habits are malleable throughout life, with some sustained effort, even at the neural level.

The same principle applies to chronic speech blocks. By venturing outside your comfort zone, being willing to experience your way through the negative emotions, and by reframing the old learnings using NLP, neuro-semantic, and other tools from cognitive psychology, you can build alternative responses, even though the old memories will always exist in your emotional archives. The adage, "What doesn't kill you will make you stronger" really applies.

To effect these changes, you have to put yourself at risk (at least, in your own mind) by such things as disclosing to people that you stutter, deliberately looking for speaking opportunities, and finding regular opportunities to speak, especially in those situations that feel risky but are actually safe like Toastmasters. Such repeated tasks affect, not just your speech, but also your total self. **They reprogram your emotional memory.** They help you create a broader, more honest and grounded sense of who you are by building positive beliefs, perceptions, and emotions.

Recovered Stutterers develop a keen awareness of themselves as people. They made an effort to notice how they thought and felt, and they correlated those actions and experiences with their ability to speak. Ultimately, they came to understand that underlying their speech blocks was a need to hold back, and that the reasons for holding back were linked to many facets of their life, not just to a fear of stuttering. The self-knowledge they developed became an integral part of their recovery.

If you're one of those individuals for whom constant practice of speech controls is not working...or if the effort to remain fluent has become too difficult...perhaps it's not because you haven't been practicing hard enough. Maybe it's because you haven't established a fluency hexagon to support the fluency goals you're working toward. Your hexagon is still organized around holding back, rather than letting go.

It's time to discover the ways in your speech blocks that are intimately connected to all the various aspects of who you are.

Losing Your Will to Speak 84-90

These posthypnotic suggestions from childhood are carried into adult life and control the way we feel and act. Sometimes a well-meaning parent or other authority figures gives us suggestions that are not in our best intentions; for example, good children “should be seen and not heard,” “good children shouldn’t cry or get angry or want what they want,” etc. These suggestions separate us from what we truly think and feel and if left unchallenged, serve as guidelines for our entire lives.

Over time, we have come to believe that the compulsions to be nice, to hold in our feelings, to speak perfectly, to always satisfy other people’s needs at the expense of our own are all things we really want. We forget that we’re following someone else’s commands. So when we go to express our true desires, like asking someone in a nonsmoking area to put out his cigarette...we block and we don’t know why.

Example: Hypnotized football player who is told he can’t stand up out of his seat. Snap of fingers. He is then asked to stand up. He wants to follow your directions to the letter. He wants to please you. He doesn’t know that he’s the one who’s choosing to stay seated.

With stuttering, when your lips are locked and you can’t say “butter” to the lady in the cafeteria, it could be that you’re acting off an internalized, unspoken directive that says you shouldn’t be assertive. Or as a child, you may have picked up the belief that every word that comes out of your mouth had to be perfect. It could be any number of different reasons.

You want to do something, yet at the same time, you’re acting off of a belief (implanted years ago) that says you shouldn’t...a prohibition that you’ve totally forgotten about. This theory of conflicting intentions explains why 99% of us can talk just fine when we’re alone and not likely to be confronted with opposing demands.

Your inability to speak could also relate to the feelings associated with the words you want to say. You want to talk at the same time that you’re afraid of revealing what’s really going on. It doesn’t feel safe. Consequently, one inner voice says, “Oops, we better close up shop until it feels less dangerous.” while the opposing inner voice cries out, “But...but I gotta say this RIGHT NOW!”

Pee example: Your resolve not to pee weakens the closer you got to the toilet because you know that in a moment, it would be socially acceptable to let go. This is why you unconsciously started to relax control of your sphincter and why it suddenly felt that you couldn’t wait a second longer. It only seemed like you had split second timing because the whole locking/unlocking process took place outside your conscious awareness.

From my observation, this is similar to what happens with a speech block. We unconsciously lock our tongue, lips, vocal folds and diaphragm when expressing ourselves seems too threatening, and we don’t allow those muscles to relax until the intensity of the feelings subsides, and we feel safe to talk again. No matter how hard we try to force out the words, our will to hold back is stronger.

Summary of observations about hypnosis and stuttering:

- Someone can hypnotize you without putting you in a trance. You are hypnotized when someone else's reality becomes more "real" than your own.
- When a hypnotic suggestion comes in conflict with something you want to do, you will become blocked. Being blocked is a conflict of will— yours and someone else's.
- A posthypnotic suggestion is nothing more than taking on the other person's will and making it more powerful than your own. Be perfectly clear that this does not happen to you. You choose to believe the other person and give him or her this power.
- A speech block may represent the same kind of conflict that was experienced by the football player who couldn't get out of his seat. In this case, there is an unconscious command not to do something.
- What we call chronic stuttering (or speech blocks) may really be struggle behavior in which we try to push out a word, which at that moment, we are resolved not to say.
- There is any number of reasons why we might not want to say that word. The reasons can relate to particular emotions associated with that word, emotions that we are afraid to show, or we might be afraid to speak up because of how we might appear to others.
- We usually don't know when we are hypnotized. Therefore, we are likely to do things, or be blocked from doing them, and not understand why. Because we've forgotten that we've made all the original choices, the block appears to be outside of our control, and we feel helpless.
- We cannot be hypnotized without first having a *need* to believe. There can be many reasons for this need, such as wanting another person's approval or love, being afraid to act forcefully in the presence of an authority figure, believing that the other person's reality is more "real" than our own, etc.
- Hypnosis involves a loss of will, and in the case of speech blocks, it can involve losing our will to speak.

If being hypnotized is a loss of will, then becoming "awake" requires you to discover what is truly going on and reclaim your will.

You need to begin getting in touch with what is *true* for you, rather than what you imagine others want you to believe or feel. Notice your actions, opinions, and feelings. Through extended observation, you may discover that your speech blocks reflect a conflict between two powerful opposing forces:

1. Your desire to accommodate the will of others.
2. Your desire to speak your mind and express your true feelings.

Thirteen Observations about People Who Stutter 89-90

1. We have difficulty in letting go, not just in our speech, but also across the board...in what we feel and in what we're willing to risk.
2. We are not grounded. We don't have a strong sense of who we are, because we are overly concerned with other people's opinion of us.
3. Because we are obsessively focused on pleasing others, we constantly worry about what people think of our behavior...our thoughts...our wishes...our beliefs...in fact, everything concerning our personal identity and self-worth.

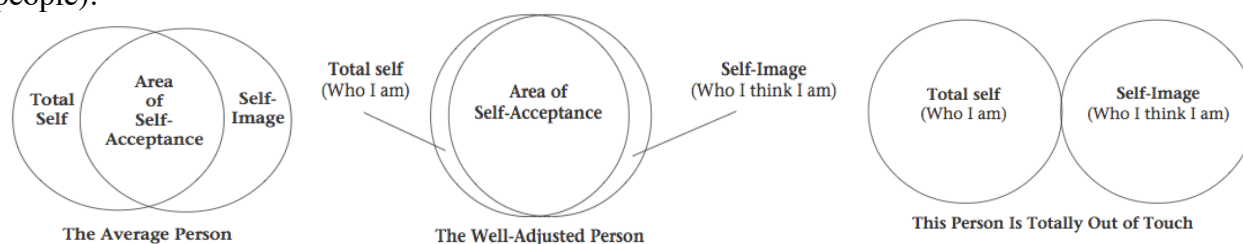
4. We have a narrow self-image. It does not encompass all of who we are. And we constantly try to squeeze ourselves into this narrow self- image. Not only is this self-image extremely confining, it is also very rigid.
5. We lack self-assertiveness. We see every self-assertive act as an aggressive act, and this helps to create a stressful world. We see ourselves as without rights. So when we do feel ourselves on top of the world, we always see ourselves there at someone else's expense (because on our mountain top, there's always only room for one.)
6. We have a great deal of misinformation about what constitutes acceptable speaking behavior. It's okay for someone else to speak forcefully and dynamically, but when we speak with aliveness in our voice, we see ourselves as coming off too strong, too overpowering, and too visible.
7. Hand-in-hand with our fear of looking too powerful, we see ourselves as powerless. As victims. As helpless.
8. We see life as a performance. This is related to our need to please others.
9. Because we see life as a performance, we are afraid to make mistakes because of how we might be judged.
10. Because we're afraid to make mistakes, we're afraid of responsibility and making decisions.
11. Because we've run from ourselves, we have little self-knowledge. Consequently, we tend to obsess on what is visible — our imperfect speech. And we tend to blame all our problems on it.
12. Because of everything previously mentioned, we see ourselves as basically different from other human beings.
13. Thus, it is not surprising that we've had few, if any, positive speaking experiences.

Part 2: The Stuttering Mindset

The stuttering mindset is created by the interaction of your emotions, perceptions, beliefs, and expectations. This interaction is so subtle that it typically operates outside your awareness. It doesn't shout, **it whispers**. And the messages are often so subtle that they pass beneath your radar. Yet these whisperings exert a powerful influence on how you think and the way you experience speaking situations.

Why Talking is Easier While You Are “Being” Someone Else 95-99

Look at *The Average Person Schematic* - Notice the part of the “Self-Image” circle to the right of the overlap area. This is where a particular false image of ourselves would reside — for example, a perception of ourselves as helpless when we're anything but. Now look at the part of the “Total Self” circle to the left of the overlap — this corresponds to the side of us that's quick to say, “Oh, I could never see myself doing that!” even though *that* may be something as innocuous as dancing the Charleston, asking someone for a date, or getting change from a busy clerk at the corner newsstand. To do any of these things would cause us to feel as if we were acting out of character. The area to the left is precisely where I hid my image as a public speaker. I simply couldn't see myself as someone who could cut loose and have fun (although as an adult I have discovered that I very much enjoy speaking in front of people).



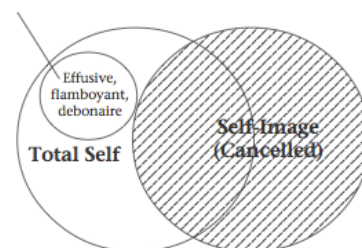
So every time my excitement would rise during a speaking situation, I'd block it out...by locking my lips, tongue, vocal cords or chest until the forbidden feelings passed. This way, I avoided experiencing — that is, “owning” — my various other sides, and saw only the tight, constricted, blocked personality that I had come to accept as the real *me*.

How then was I able to come off so strongly in the senior play (Frenchman character)?

My behavior (flamboyant) was appropriate for the image (the Frenchman character).

Notice that although my performance as the Frenchman fell outside my own self image, it was still within the larger area defined as my Real Self. It had to be. If it weren't me, I couldn't have done what I did.

The Frenchman
(borrowed self-image)

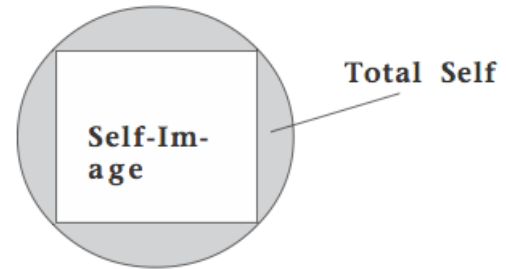


In Regards to stuttering: We might postulate that most of us have a self-image that constricts us. It has been my impression that most of us who have grown up with a stuttering problem are stronger personalities than our self-image will allow — more opinionated, more emotional, more excited (and more exciting!), more turned on, more responsible, more authoritative (and also, less perfect and less nice) than we ever dreamed we could be.

What's so insidious about speech blocks – in fact, *any* kind of block – is that in masking out those aspects of ourselves we're uncomfortable with, they help to create a confined and sometimes distorted self-image – for example, turning a well-rounded individual into a “square” (see diagram.)

Once that self-image becomes fixed, we then interpret everything that subsequently happens in a way that fits the image.

If you find it easier to speak as someone else, then maybe it's time to look at what it is about your present self-image that doesn't give you that same freedom; then find a way to expand your self-image so that more of you can fit inside. You need to find safe situations where you can try out other roles; a place where you can experiment and search for the total you. It may be therapy. It may be one of the growth trainings such as The Landmark Forum. It may be a Dale Carnegie course or the Toastmasters Club. It may be an NSA chapter meeting, workshop or convention. Whatever.



Hatched background indicates areas of the Total Self that have been blocked out. Note how the person has turned himself into a "square."

After all, isn't it time to get out of that constricting straight jacket called a *diminished self-image* and into something that fits?

Why it's Easier to Talk When Nobody's Around 100-102

I didn't want to talk funny or do anything that would set me apart from others.

The moment anyone entered my field of view, my self-awareness kicked in, and I would start judging myself.

I never stuttered in the presence of a two-year-old, because I couldn't project my judgmental self onto a two-year-old. Ditto for my dog. For someone to trigger my performance fears, that someone had to be old enough or smart enough so I could cast them as a critic.

My guess is, that early on I concluded that being loved was dependent on performing in an acceptable way. As I grew up, I continued to make the same assumptions and I projected the image of judge onto anyone who could qualify in the role - teachers, bus drivers, storekeepers, you name it.

Why we do this? According to transactional analysis, as we grow up, we learn to play **3 basic roles - child, parent and adult**. We flip in and out of these roles depending on the kind of relationship we're in and what's happening. **Many PWS seem to chronically lock themselves in a parent/child scenario.**

Example: Gas station attendant. For years, I couldn't drive into a gas station and say "fill it up" to the attendant without either feeling like I was ordering him around (parent role), or asking for acceptance (child role). In either case, playing the child or the parent brought up feelings that made me very uncomfortable, feelings I didn't want to experience.

There are many PWS that feel like a child every time they pick up the phone, or who feel judged every time another person enters the room. For those who carry this burden, the only remedy is to make an

effort to see the world...not as *they* think it is...but as it really is.

Usually, by becoming aware, I can choose what I want to do and feel okay about it.

You Can Control How Others See You 103-106

Just act the way you want to be seen. People won't know whether that's the real you or the "act-as-if" you. Most of us never bother to look beyond the obvious. So we'll take at face value whatever you give us.

I'd grown up with a stuttering problem and was always supersensitive to what I imagined people were thinking.

Caught vacuuming in underwear example: I could have 1) ran out looking like a fool 2) walked out of the room looking like a fool 3) apologized and not only looked like a fool, but felt very self-conscious and put down like I did when I stuttered. 4) stayed right where I was.

(He chose 4) I was free. I was mortified. I was damned if I was going to let my embarrassment run me.

Since I apparently was not embarrassed, neither were they, and after a few jokes, the incident passed.

If you're straightforward, up front, maintain eye contact, and look like you want to be where you are, your listeners aren't likely to be put off by your disfluency.

Surprisingly most people don't really know what they should be feeling, so they look around for cues.

By publicly acknowledging my lapse of memory, and then laughing at myself, I told the audience exactly how I wanted them to react. And what do you know, they followed my instructions to the letter.

People relate to you the way you relate to you.

Creating a Setting for Fluency 107-110

Can you fit a 2-carat diamond into a 1 carat setting? Not without changing the setting. Your speech works the same way. You - the total you - are the setting for your speech. And the only speech patterns you'll ever be comfortable with are those that reflect who you are.

*Back to the ring. You could **try** and fit a differently shaped stone into the setting. You might even get it to stay...for a little while. But you know what will happen? The setting will stand the stress of the misfit for just so long. And then, when you're not looking...**POP!**...the stone will fall out.*

*You'll have a lot better luck if you go about changing the "setting" that supports your particular speaking behavior. **Change the setting!***

What I've discovered is that the body is a web of interconnections. When one muscle becomes injured, I unconsciously adjust other muscles to compensate. You must then disable the system that you've created to compensate.

As a child with a speech problem, you made certain psychological adjustments to compensate for your speech...and especially, for the negative emotions associated with stuttering.

Apologetic posture - And of course, people who stutter should never be assertive, because their slow speech is an imposition on others. Since you desperately needed approval of others, it was always necessary to assume an apologetic posture.

In regards to relapsing from HCRI - You thought you could change the stone without changing the setting. Did you do any thing about your posture of helplessness?...Or your reluctance to communicate your feelings?...Or your lack of self-assertiveness?...Or your willingness to be totally responsible?...Or your constant grinding need for approval.

If you're in the dark about how to be assertive (like most of us) – we confuse assertiveness with aggressiveness – sign up for a self-assertion class. Or if that's too scary, at least buy a book about it, and then read it!

Why 9 of 10 won't try and change themselves: Because we have a huge investment in the status quo. We may not like what we have, but it's all familiar and totally predictable. To take a chance means to step into the unknown.

Most of us hate stepping into the unknown. We act like the man who drops his car keys on the lawn at night, but insists on looking for them on the sidewalk under the street light...simply because he can see better there...even though he dropped them over in the dark section. We don't want to risk. But the truth is, there's little likelihood of success in the safe, familiar places. Just observe your success rate to date. To find what you're searching for, you have to look where you have never looked before.

So do you want a good place to start? Let's see how serious you are.

List all the ways you can think of that you've changed your life to compensate for your stuttering.

- Now put a check after each one you're willing to give up.
- Make a list on a separate sheet of paper indicating what you are willing to start doing right now to strengthen this weakness.
- Indicate when you are going to start doing something about it.

Remember, if you want your ring to have a larger stone, you also have to change the setting.

On Being Different 111-114

I was upset by the event (Moroccan girls backing away from me and my magic trick), and that upset feeling persisted for more than two days. It didn't make sense. It didn't seem like what happened should have been such a big deal; yet, I was profoundly distressed and couldn't shake myself out of it. Why was my reaction dragging on for so long? What in the world was this all about?

I was afraid of being different. Being different meant that people might turn away from me and I might lose my connection with them. My fear of being different was a bottom line issue in my life.

My fear was in being different, in looking strange.

Unfortunately, in changing myself to please others, I paid a price because I lost contact with the real me.

For years, I had given away my power to people I thought could make me okay, which was everybody. I had allowed other people to define my life, simply because I thought I needed something from them. Now, I could see so clearly that the self-judging and the holding back were still present in my life (after dissolving his stutter). I had taken it (the backing up of the girls in the previous example) personally. I know that my oversensitivity to other people's reactions is something I need to stay aware of. If I hold back, or apologize for who I am, or only reveal a sanitized version of myself, I stop feeling good about myself.

My Moroccan encounter was useful in that it showed me how much I still looked to others for validation.

Do you take everything personally?

How much do you blame your stuttering for the “inability” to do what you want to do, when in reality, **your problem may lie in how you give away your power.**

Are you compelled to hide what is real, just so you can feel you're not different from everybody else?

If you're afraid of being different, how can you possibly say and do the things that are important in your life? And if you don't show us the real you, then how are you ever going to give up the protective behavior that underlies the speech block?

I had to assert myself in risky situations, have my discomfort level zoom off the scale, and still reveal who I was and what I was feeling. I had to start making it okay for me to be me.

Giving up protective behavior begins by recognizing that, indeed, all of us are different.

Part 3: It's All In How You See It

The greatest breakthroughs come when we are willing to stand in the unknown, observe with an open mind, and resist making premature conclusions.

As you read through these stories, you'll discover that being a clear and impartial observer is a vital key to the recovery process.

The Power of Observation 119-137

People underestimate the power of observation.

People I've met who have substantially or totally recovered from stuttering have shown themselves to be consummate observers. Each was able to speak from a unique position of authority—that is, from the point of view of his or her own experience. These individuals have known how to use their observations to work through the complexities that underlie their own stuttering syndrome.

I made stuttering disappear from my life a good while before the blocking behaviors actually left simply by observing what I was doing in a different light.

I stopped seeing behavior as something called “stuttering”—and in its place was a handful of other problems in a unique relationship that needed to be addressed. By individually addressing these issues, the actual physical blocking behaviors slowly diminished and disappeared over time.

All personal change begins with observation.

To a substantial degree, what is important to the individual and what he or she *expects* to see has an enormous impact on what he or she actually observes.

Observe objectively.

You need to be good at noticing what's going on. You need to leave your expectations at the door and simply show up ready to see what you can see.

Be observant.

Expect anything. Holmes said that whenever you have eliminated all other things, whatever is left, no matter how unbelievable, must be the truth. So first observe. Then see if anything goes together.

Question everything. Notice what kinds of circumstances or situations make you most uneasy or most confident. Notice the situations in which it's easiest or hardest to speak.

Broken down car example: We have a situation in which our speech gets hung up. We want to speak, but we can't. Yet, someone is waiting for us to say something. So where does our focus naturally turn? To our speech, naturally. We look at the problem through “stuttering-colored glasses,” because something is wrong with the way we speak. We then go outside and climb into our car and start it up, but when we give it gas, the car

doesn't move.

*What's the problem? If we apply the same kind of logic, we'd naturally look at the wheels.
They're not turning, because something is wrong with the car's wheels.*

The habitual ways in which we view events has to do with our knowledge and our beliefs.

Speech therapists who focus primarily on speech are likely to contribute to the problem because they keep our focus limited only to the physiology of speech production. What's more, even when our emotions, perceptions, and beliefs are discussed, they are usually presented as an *outgrowth* of our stuttering—things that must be dealt with because we stutter. But this is only half of the truth. What is usually not discussed, mainly because it is not understood, is the way our emotions, perceptions, and beliefs can also *create* the blocking behavior.

The reason why this second half is overlooked has much to do with the word “stuttering,” itself. The word is not functional, because it focuses only on our behavior, instead of what drives the behavior, and therefore, it does not encourage us to dig further.

Language Shapes the Way We Perceive

Eskimos Example: How many kinds of snow do I think there is? 4 - Icy/crusty, powder, packing, slush. By contrast, the Eskimos have over 26 different words for snow because their livelihood and even their lives depend on observing subtle differences. The Eskimo is able to see more, because he is looking at snow through a bigger, broader window.

Example of George saying dandelion: so he keeps hammering away at the word, repeating “dan” over and over until he feels free enough to complete the word. Do I feel free at the time of completing a word?

“Why am I stuttering” is also a kind of mushy question that is hard to respond to, especially since most people don't have a clear understanding of what stuttering is, whereas “Why am I blocking?” or even better, “What am I holding back?” is an issue that is potentially more productive. Other questions logically flow from it, such as “Suppose that I didn't block in this situation? What might happen?” Of course, most people's first response is to say, “I might stutter.” But if you're willing to look past the obvious, you may find other things that you're afraid will surface and that have to be kept under control. It may be a forbidden emotion. It could be an awareness of an issue you don't want to deal with. It could be a feeling of vulnerability that seems too much to handle. Any of these could deter you from speaking until you are feeling ready. As Tony Robbins notes in his book *Awaken the Giant Within*, “it's not the actual pain that drives us, but our fear that something will lead to pain. **We're not driven by the reality but by our perception of reality.**”

There are several disciplines that can help you to perceive more clearly and accurately. A couple that I'm familiar with are: *general semantics* and *neuro-linguistic programming*.

General semantics deals with how we perceive the world and how the language we use has an influence in shaping that perception, often locking us into seeing the world in a particular way.

Through NLP, it is possible to bring to light our unconscious perceptions and to understand, evaluate and change our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to be congruent with our deepest life values and goals.

Excerpts from Andrew Rees: Today, the power of observation has given me a totally new perspective on stammering I no longer see what I do as stammering. But when I focused on connecting with the other person and held a positive feeling in my mind about the emotional connection, the words just seemed to tumble out with no fuss or bother. When I get the feeling that I'm going to stammer, I try not to identify with the panic. I just accept it's there, but I now know that I have a choice to go with it or not. ...I just spoke.

*Biker guy in camera store with girlfriend clerk example: John found himself in a panic before saying Harrison. This was years after dissolving his stutter. He started to observe the store. He noticed a guy was there in the store with them. He remembered he was a bit scary looking, biker guy, tough guy that brought back memories of childhood, of being hassled by toughs. He also felt like he'd interrupted an important conversation as they were getting on so well. He summoned that he was holding back (like he did as a kid). He didn't want to stand out...didn't want to seem too strong or too assertive. **He slipped back into the old program.***

Through the years I've noticed that when I come upon a real truth, I have a physical reaction...a release. (he felt this when he observed and questioned the above scenario and came to his realization of why he held back). This reaction I've felt before in my own memories.

Drawing example: "Look at the spaces. Instead of focusing all your attention on the outline of the arms, look at the spaces around the arms. Notice the space in the middle that's created when the model puts her hand on her hip. Study the shape of that space. Then draw it" You can do this around stuttering. Look at the experiences around the speech block, not just at the stuttering itself. Many of the answers to the speech block are hidden there. If you keep your mind open and don't allow yourself to obsessively focus on your speech, you will begin to discover many interesting and useful things.

Are You or Are You Not A Stutterer? LABELS 138-142

Labels are potent shapers of perception. Not only do they cause you *not to* see what's there, they also lead you to see what's *not* there. For example, if someone told you I was a stutterer, and I gave a speech perfectly fluently, where would your attention be?? You'd be waiting for the shoe to fall. Your awareness would be on something that was supposed to be there but wasn't. You missed out on the content among other things.

You might also unconsciously assign to me thoughts and feelings that I didn't have - fears, perfectionism, obsessive focus on performance, etc. - because that's what a "stutterer" is supposed to think and feel. You'd turn me into something that I wasn't.

Labels also establish a frame of reference. Linebackers who are also doctors example. Suppose I had read about two doctors who were also linebackers. Same guys, different labels...different reference point.

When you assign someone a label - Yankee, defensive lineman, doctor, tennis player, stutterer - you're making a statement about who that person is and what you can expect from him.

Putting people in boxes is attractive, because you don't have to think very hard. But in doing so, you often end up seeing reality through tinted glasses.

How to Get Rid of Stuttering in Under 60 Seconds 143-149

My recovery could not have taken place without the perceptual shifts that I'm going to describe.

Language affects how we perceive

You and I have been sold the idea that “stuttering” begins in childhood and persists into adulthood. This is simply untrue.

Is one an outgrowth of another? Yes.

But they are not similar at all. The truth is, they don't even fall into the same category. One is an emotionally and (undoubtedly) genetically driven phenomenon. **The other is a strategy, a learned behavior that we developed in our effort to deal with the first problem.**

Some people have a sympathetic nervous system that overreacts to stimulation and goes into instant overload at the slightest provocation. These individuals slip into a sudden “flight or fight” syndrome, complete with high levels of adrenaline and other stress-producing hormones.

BOB-U-LATE v: to produce speech repetitions in an easy, effortless manner characterized by lack of self-consciousness, fear and embarrassment — BO-BU-LA-TION n.

Let's see what we gain by having created a separate word to describe this behavior. You've just come through a particularly hard block, and your listener, trying to offer support, gives you that famous line, “Listen, don't worry about it. When I don't have my thoughts in order, I stutter, too.”

“No, no,” you say. “It's not quite the same. You were bobulating.”

Now he realizes there's a difference, because you've used a word that describes what he's doing, and it's different from what you were doing.

“But then,” he asks, if I was bobulating, what were you doing?” “I was doing was something else,” you respond. “I was_____.” What? You could say “stuttering,” but that would just lead to more confusion since it's a word that already has so many confusing meanings and associations. We need another word. A word that is different from bobulating. A word that describes the *struggles and blocked speech* of someone who is experiencing all the feelings and behaviors that you and I are familiar with: panic, unconsciousness, embarrassment, fear, frustration, etc. These constitute a syndrome of feelings and behaviors that, over time, feeds on itself and becomes self-perpetuating as it grows into a full-fledged performance fear.

So let's call this kind of behavior blocking.

BLOCK v: 1: to speak in a manner characterized by struggle; to obstruct and constrict the vocalizing and breathing mechanisms 2: to create self-perpetuating speech disfluencies that generate fear, anxiety and self-consciousness and that frequently result in avoidance of specific words and specific speaking situations — BLOCK n.

Getting back to our friend, you explain to him, “No, what you were doing was not really the same. Your words were coming out in a stumbling, easy manner. You were bobulating. I do something different. My words sometimes come out in a halting manner because, for whatever reason, I learned to interfere with

the speaking process. I was blocking. It may sound alike, but it's not." Now he can really perceive the difference, because each behavior is identified by a different word.

See how much clearer that is than trying to explain that his stuttering is not like your stuttering?

One is an unselfconscious reflex prompted by a feeling of discombobulation, a struggle with verbal skills and maybe genetic factors of one sort or another. The other is a strategy, usually accompanied by a great deal of self-consciousness, to push through what is perceived as a difficult and threatening speech block.

Thus, if you say that Richie is bobulating and George is blocking (actually "stalling" which is a version of blocking where one repeats the previous word or syllable until one feels "ready" to say the feared syllable or word), you are able to immediately see significant differences. What's more, Richie's mom doesn't have to get all crazy because he's "stuttering." She knows the differences between bobulating and blocking and can more easily decide when it might be appropriate to take some kind of remedial action.

Positives of expanding terminology of stuttering:

Having two words would make it clearer to parents when their children have a problem that calls for consultation with a speech therapist.

It would help researchers to clarify what part of the stuttering phenomenon they want to investigate.

It would help each of us to develop a clearer self-image and better sense of what we're doing when we're blocked.

In fact, expanding the language of stuttering is so critical to effecting change that I see no way for us to make any significant and lasting progress in stuttering therapy without it.

So why not take the 60-second cure and get rid of stuttering. Instead—at least in your mind— substitute bobulate and block, or two words of your own choosing. And see if that, alone, doesn't make it much easier to understand and address the problems at hand.

Having Fun: It's More Powerful Than You Think 150-156

I also worked on my ability to have *fun* while I was speaking. That took the pressure off the performance, got me in touch with myself, and transformed the experience into something positive. I have since wondered why having fun is not universally recognized as one of the most powerful catalysts to change.

Having fun is not just the icing, it's also the cake; it's the wellspring of my strength, identity and creativity.

When I was a kid, not too many people enlightened me about fun. Oh, they told me *what* was supposed to be fun and what wasn't. But the *having* of fun was left up to me. Consequently, I learned about it on a catch-as-catch-can basis and developed some beliefs that may sound familiar: 1) Work isn't fun. 2) Fun is a reward for being good. 3) Fun is always second to achievement. 4) Other people know what is fun for you.

The truth is, fun is a process, a very personal process that involves not only *what* you're doing, but how and why you're doing it. Washing socks example. For me, it is washing clothes or dishes.

Finding your direction - Taking fun seriously can be extremely useful in establishing a career path.

Pleasure Principal - "When people are considering a career change, our workshop teaches a methodology that seems amazingly simple. We tell them to start at the bottom; namely, look at what you *like* to do. Get in touch with those activities that make you feel powerful, turned on, excited. Is it helping people, solving problems, managing others? Define it. Then look for people whose jobs involve these activities. Find out how they got where they are and what you need to know or do in order to get there yourself. It's just amazing how it works."

Most often when you're having fun, you have the clearest sense of who you are. It's also when you do your best work.

How to rediscover fun:

- 1) Begin noticing what's going on.
- 2) Trust what you see.
- 3) Examine your beliefs objectively.
- 4) Broaden your ideas about what's fun.
- 5) See whether you've set limits on fun.

Example: Beliefs are deceiving, because we tend not to see them as beliefs at all but simply as "the way things are," I'm reminded of the woman who goes to the psychiatrist with a problem.

"Tell me how you spend your day," the psychiatrist says.

"Well," replies the lady, "I get out of bed. I put on my slippers and robe, I go to the bathroom, I brush my teeth, I throw up, I..."

"You THROW UP?" exclaims the psychiatrist. "Yes," says the lady. "Doesn't everybody?"

As this story illustrates, it is often hard to separate the real world from your perception of it. Many beliefs are so ingrained that it takes major "surgery" (like running off to San Francisco) to develop sufficient perspective.

"My society looked at fun the way it looked at eating chocolate chip cookies. There wasn't much nutritional value. You had to be good to get any. And if you got too much, you'd develop an upset stomach or break out. It was a foregone conclusion that anyone who had lots of fun couldn't be very deep."

Overcoming Performance Fears 157-165

"But I left that day with some fears about jumping over chain fences."

I always approached each speaking situation from the point of view that "this time I'm going to say the word without avoiding or substituting."

It was a book by a plastic surgeon named Maxwell Maltz that first helped me identify this number and at the same time gave me my first useful tool against speech blocks. In his book *Psycho-Cybernetics* (still

in print and well worth reading) Maltz compares the workings of the mind to that of the modern computer.

Maltz explains that imagined experience is essentially no different than real experience. It only differs in *intensity*. Basically, the body/mind can be trained through imagined experience as effectively as through an actual physical enactment.

Professional athletes example - "What he's doing is picturing what he wants his body to do; in effect, he's giving directions to his body. The clear, vivid picture he creates...a picture complete with emotions...is the program he's giving his subconscious "computer" to solve. He knows that without the proper picture, he'll never get his body to do what he wants it to."

Genetic programming - our minds function in ways designed to perpetuate our survival. But evolution didn't anticipate modern society. Specifically, it didn't anticipate a new and different kind of danger. **A danger that relates, not to our physical survival, but to the survival of our ego in a social situation.** Many of these fears revolve around tasks we have to perform. How will others judge us? Will they accept us? Or will we die from lack of love and acceptance? If we do perceive our performance in life or death terms, our body/mind will react as if we're confronted with a *physical* threat. It will force an image of the danger into our mind, so we can deal with it.

The perceived danger was that, if I jumped over the chain and caught my foot, I'd trip and fall. My mind read this simply as "DANGER! Get ready. Prepare yourself." My genetic programming then caused my mind to project images of this danger into my conscious mind, so I could protect myself.

But hold on. **My conscious mind is also the programmer for my subconscious.** When I latched onto those vivid mental images of tripping on the chain, my subconscious was alerted.

"Whoopee!" said my subconscious computer. "Here's a new, interesting problem to solve. Let's check the "screen" and see what it is."

And what was on the screen? A picture of myself tripping on the chain.

"Well, then," said my subconscious. "If that's the problem, let's figure out the best way for John to catch his foot and tumble."

Sound crazy? It's not. Remember, your subconscious is not concerned with being reasonable. It tries to solve *all* problems with equal vigor and determination.

Getting Out of the Comfort Zone

We are compelled to pay attention to what threatens us.

Instead, I pictured myself sailing cleanly over the chain. I did this over and over again. But that wasn't all. I also didn't resist feeling the vulnerability and general uncomfortability associated with not dealing with the threat directly.

The key was being able to tolerate being uncomfortable.

After picturing successful jumps for a while, something interesting began to happen. My psyche, which (as Maxwell Maltz points out) basically does not differentiate between real and imagined experience, began to have a positive feeling about leaping over the chain. It's as if I'd actually jumped over the fence many times and was totally successful each time. I began to have a backlog of successful jumps. That, in turn, made the thought of a real jump less threatening. My fears began to abate. It was easier to concentrate on what I wanted to happen. And lo and behold, the actual leap, when I finally made it, was a piece of cake.

Was everything I did a guarantee that I'd be successful with the real jump?

No. There are no guarantees. But there were two things in my favor.

First, I was willing to live with the uncomfortability and uncertainty of what I was doing.

And secondly, I made sure that physically I was not doing anything to cause myself to trip. *To be successful at a skill, you must use a technique that is capable of bringing about the desired results.* I needed to make sure I was not dragging a foot or doing some little thing that was causing me to miss my mark.

The Experience of Fluency

My speech blocks were a threat to me - to my self-image and to others' acceptance of me.

Summary of old behavior:

What was the threat? A speech block.

What did my mind do? It put the threat in my conscious mind, so I could deal with it.

What did my subconscious do? It "solved" the task (that is, the image) I put before it by creating the best way to block. And as far as blocks went, it created some doozies.

How to get past this? I began to get in touch with how other people must feel when they spoke with pleasure in front of people. They weren't just fluent, they also were enjoying themselves.

Example at Dale Carnegie class: I was 24 years old. I sat in class that night and was swept away by the excitement of the trainer, because he was swept away by what he was doing.

Some day, I said to myself, I'm going to have that experience for myself; not just his fluency, but also his experience. Over a number of years these images began to build. Every time I listened to a particularly good speaker, I tried to get in touch with how he must be feeling. I tried to get inside his skin. At first the thought frightened me, because being that kind of a forceful, assertive person was not consistent with my own self-image.

But over time, that changed. Had I just left it at that, I could have gotten my speech to where it was enjoyable, even though I still experienced blocks.

But I also changed my technique of speaking. Most of it was unconscious behavior. I spent a lot of time observing exactly (and I mean *exactly!*) what I did when I blocked. I got to know my speech patterns so well that I can still duplicate my entire blocking routine at will. Step-by-step I discovered what it felt like to relax all these tension points, and then I learned what it felt like to speak with everything relaxed. One day, very much like the day I first rode my bicycle, it came together. For the first time in a pressure situation I experienced the total feeling of what it was like to do it right. (Among other things, it was scary.)

Once the technique becomes second nature, he must let go of it and concentrate on the *total feeling* of the piece. He must experience it as a *whole*. He must allow himself to be swept away. And that means not trying to consciously control what he's doing.

If I have any bone to pick with the various fluency shaping programs, it's that so many of them lead you to believe that you must *always* concentrate on your speech. They miss the point. Focusing on your speech is essential in mastering a new technique. *But at some point you have to develop a sense of how it feels when it all comes together. Then you need to learn how to reproduce that feeling.* It is at this point that positive imagery has its most powerful effect.

Those who learn a fluency technique without developing an ability to trust in their own spontaneity may be headed for considerable frustration.

- Our bodies are programmed for survival. Our genetic programming makes certain that all threats to our well-being become conscious so that we can take appropriate action.
- Evolution did not prepare our unconscious survival reflexes to distinguish between physical threats and threats to our social well-being. Our body/mind perceives them both in the same survival terms.
- Our subconscious is an impersonal problem-solving computer. It solves “dumb” problems with the same energy and thoroughness it solves “intelligent” problems. It will solve whatever we visualize.
- Speaking (like any other kind of *performance* activity) requires us to visualize what we *want* to happen, as opposed to what we're *afraid* will happen.
- Deliberately not visualizing an imminent danger will make us feel vulnerable.
- We need to be able to tolerate feelings of vulnerability, ambiguity and uncertainty if we are to avoid fixating on the danger.
- Creating positive mental and emotional pictures will affect our nervous system in the same way as real life experiences. The only difference between a real and an imagined experience is intensity.
- We need to be committed to what we're doing. A strong commitment will keep us pressing forward when the going gets tough.
- We need to know enough about our speaking techniques to know if we're doing anything wrong. We need to develop a *feeling* of what it is to do it right.
- We need to be willing to let go.

It can be done.

The Feeling of Fluency 166-187

Fluency is a state of being. Real fluency is about speaking without self-consciousness.

I discovered years ago that the best way to communicate an idea is by framing it in real life experience.

I've found that when I want to understand what someone else has experienced, it helps for me to be there with them, in their skin, to understand what they're thinking and feeling.

Quotes from speed reading example: “I was involved in yet another frustrating practice exercise when a woman student suddenly shouted out excitedly, “I'm doing it! Wow! This is wild!”

“It felt as if I was scooping up the text and funneling it directly into my brain. It required no effort.” “My eye and brain were now functioning differently. “Musicians have the easiest time.” “Mastery only came through repetition, trust and surrender.” With Reading Dynamics, you’re working with the brain’s higher centers.

**“The consciousness of self is the greatest hindrance to the proper execution of all physical action.”
- Bruce Lee**

Examples of surrendering - Blue Angels, pianist who sits with orchestra and plays Rhapsody in Blue, the actor who loses himself in the role of Hamlet, Practitioners of aikido, a championship tennis player who is one shot from losing and puts everything on the line and turns around and wins.

Zen in the Art of Archery example:

- 1) *He had to shoot thousands of arrows that totally missed their mark and not be discouraged by his lack of success.*
- 2) *He had to train his instincts without consciously trying.*
- 3) *He had to forego any time limits on his quest for success but simply accept that it would take as long as it was going to take.*
- 4) *He had to put his ego aside and fully surrender to the experience – i.e.: not personally identify with either his successes or his failures.*
- 5) ***He had to be guided and driven solely by his intention.***

What is it that inspires some people to put themselves at risk in situations where, to succeed, they have to surrender themselves to a higher force that they cannot consciously control?

Part of it is **trust**. You have to let go and trust. This is the first requirement of fluency.

The second requirement is having conviction and a clear **intention**.

Without conviction, I worried about the dangers. With a strong intention, I only focused on my purpose.

How do you change this inability to trust? First, you have to figure out what’s going on. **Personal change calls for self-observation, because without it, you’re flying in the dark.**

When I rehearsed something over and over until it was familiar, I made it a part of me, and I felt fully grounded. ***I knew and believed in what I had to say.*** I could feel my attachment to the words. There was no ambiguity, no ambivalence.

The question I posed to myself 20 years later was – “Why didn’t I feel that same groundedness and confidence when I spoke spontaneously? - Speaking spontaneously involved doubt and uncertainty, and ***I found it difficult to speak with total conviction because I never knew what I believed and whether or not it was right.***

Trusting myself to speak spontaneously and let go was akin to jumping out of the plane and not being certain that the chute would open. Without the conviction that I was doing *my* thing and doing it correctly, I just couldn’t risk it.

To do something fluently, you must give up conscious control and simply trust. You let go and

trust.

They do everything they can to master their skill, then at some point they give up conscious control and simply trust. They *must* trust, because the complexity of what they're trying to do, and the level at which they want to perform, falls outside their ability to control it consciously.

To perform all these tasks successfully, the practitioner gives over control to a higher power. *He* no longer controls what he's doing. His *intention* controls what he's doing. To perform all these skills fluently, he must trust that spontaneously being himself by losing himself will get the job done.

Lucky McDaniel method: he does not trifle with the meticulous. Lucky's method of instruction is a marvel of simplicity. There is, in fact, very little instruction because Lucky does not want to clutter the pupil's mind with inhibitions.

One reason for seeing the BB leave the gun, Lucky says, is that he wants the pupil to "learn to focus on a single object without looking at everything else around."

*"I tell him to hold the gun easy against the cheek, not force the cheek down to the gun in the regular way," he explains. "As soon as he begins to shoot I know what he is doing wrong. There are a thousand things he can do wrong. But I don't excite him. **You've got to give him confidence or he'll tighten up.** I tell him he's going to hit the target and most of the time I call 'em right. When he's shooting high I don't just point to where he should be shooting. I throw the objects and point while I'm throwing it. I keep this up steadily so he'll swing into it. Then I keep shifting the target, like from one match to another on the ground, so we won't get wrapped up in one target.*

"This is instinctive shooting and it's got to come easy."

Fluency isn't about an absence of blocks. It's about having flow.

To create flow, the one thing the spontaneous shooter and the spontaneous speaker have to have is *trust*.

You need to trust in something you can't feel or touch or consciously control, precisely what we as people who stutter and block have trouble doing.

To have the words flow easily, they *must* be controlled by your *intention*, your subconscious, or what the Zen master would call your "it." This is what runs the show.

When you try to deliberately control your speech, you end up interfering with a spontaneous act and the fluency breaks down. You may be able to speak without stuttering, but many people I've met through the years, people who have tried to control their speech, end up forsaking the fluency technique they had recently learned. They all offer the same reason for giving it up - "Sure, I can talk that way," they say, "but when I do, I just don't feel like I'm me."

Self-expression is a spontaneous act. You cannot consciously control this and *feel* free to fully express yourself.

To be truly fluent, speaking must be performed intuitively.

Summary of John Harrison system - After years of personal growth programs, I understood stuttering, not simply as a speech problem, but as a *system* involving all of myself – an interactive system that was comprised of at least six essential components: behaviors, emotions, perceptions, beliefs, intentions and physiological responses.

This model explained why you couldn't just go to a therapist, work on your speech, and have those changes last. To make the changes permanent, you had to change the system that supported the way you spoke.

More to the point, in order to change your speech, you had to change you.

I found the Hexagon a useful concept because it resolved the question of whether a speech block was emotional or physical or genetic or environmental. As you can see by this paradigm, stuttering/blocking is not an either/or issue, but rather, a system that involves the constant interaction of *all these factors*. Blocking is emotional *and* physical *and* perceptual *and* genetic *and* environmental. Each point can exert either a negative or positive force on the other points.

Thus, in a system where most of the points are not supporting your ability to trust and assert yourself, there is little likelihood that gains in fluency or ease of self-expression will be lasting. On the other hand, if you have made gains all around the Hexagon, then this will support greater fluency, because you have not just changed your speech, you've changed the system that was prompting you to hold back. Unfortunately, many therapy programs adopt a strategy in which the focus is almost entirely on creating deliberate, physical fluency. This may lead to controlled fluency, but it actually creates a mindset that works against spontaneous fluency. It stops you from ever experiencing the *feeling* of fluency, which is mindless, spontaneous, and expressive.

What was not hard-wired was how I framed my experience.

I changed my beliefs, not just about my speech, but about myself and about other people. This in turn changed how I perceived my experiences moment by moment.

I resolved conflicts in my intentions – conflicts that fueled my desire to speak and hold back at the same time.

I learned to become more comfortable with my emotions.

I better understood what I did physically when I blocked and learned to relax the muscles that caused the block.

Over time, I made a lot of changes. I practiced speaking in front of others. I learned to become assertive. I became comfortable expressing what I felt. I changed how I framed my experiences. Eventually, I dissolved my stuttering system and stopped thinking about stuttering altogether.

Very gradually, I ended up building a system in which spontaneous fluency and self-expression were synonymous.

In the Reading Dynamics and Lucky McDaniel examples, we saw that developing fluency is a complex skill and is mastered through:

- Having a clear intention

- Mindless repetition without concern for consequences
- Developing trust in yourself and in the process.

When it came to mastering speech, something ran amiss. We stopped trusting. We started holding back. Over days, weeks and months, the holding back we practiced scores of times a day had consequences. We stumbled. We struggled. We developed unconscious avoidance patterns. These led to feelings of helplessness as well as a flood of negative beliefs and behaviors. Ultimately, we stopped believing we could trust our speech, others, even ourselves.

My parting thought to you is this: it's great to work hard to rid yourself of debilitating speech blocks, but simply having an absence of blocks (ie; fluency at any price) may not be what you've really been searching for. **What seems to be the ultimate objective for most of us is the ability to be authentically and expressively ourselves. To capture the feeling of true fluency, we have to first recapture the feeling of trust.**

Observations 189-191

“I still felt there was an area for improvement. Not with my speech per se, but with being unable to truly let go.”

“I realized that for a moment, I had fallen into my old mindset and had given away my powers.”

“Once I became clearer about what had driven me to block, I actually felt elated. Elated because it was an amazing learning curve that has enabled me to understand the kinds of issues that had been behind my speech blocks for so many years.”

Just as I would get angry and berate myself when I stammered, so I would get angry and beat myself up when I played a bad round of golf. *I concentrated solely on performance. I placed all my emphasis on not hitting a bad shot. Because I was so afraid of “failure,” I didn’t allow myself free expression. I didn’t give myself a free rein.*

In short, I held back.

As a consequence, I developed a “golf stammer”! I had golf blocks instead of speech blocks!!

Although, of course, it isn’t my speech that is back to where it was, it’s my hexagon that is once again well balanced.

My performance is a reflection of my entire self: how I think, perceive, feel, and believe.

Resistance to Change - Maryanne’s Story 192-196

Then suddenly, as if we were witnessing an animator’s sleight of hand, Maryann transformed herself before our very eyes. From being tentative, she suddenly segued into an authoritative, assertive, confident teacher who was very sure of her ability to keep us in line. What really caught my attention was her change in emotionality, what psychologists call “affect.” From someone who did not make her emotional presence known, she took total emotional control of the situation. She informed us in no uncertain terms what we could and could not do, and with her new found assertiveness, it was impossible for us not

to comply. I could feel her presence.

Maryann kept it up for about 90 seconds, apparently as long as she could tolerate the feelings. Then, once again, she sat down with a gesture of finality. This was definitely going to be it for the evening.

The experience drove home the point that recovering from chronic stuttering is more than just a speech issue. It is a self-image issue. To make a recovery, you need to find the real you.

But you have to be ready for that change.

The Last Game 197-207

Robert stood in right field, his eyes squinting in the sun, and wondered what the boys had thought of him when he sat in the stands without saying a word. Did they think he was stupid because he did not answer? They must have suspected something. At least some of them were in his homeroom class and knew what he was like. Perhaps they pitied him. They could have played with only eight men. They didn't need him. Look where they stuck him...in right field. Nobody ever hit to right field. They just needed him for a dummy, a fill-in. He hoped that no one would be lucky enough to hit to right field. He prayed it would not happen.

"That's the way to pitch it," Robert yelled in a voice that seemed to him brittle and high pitched.

"I-I-I-I d-d-don't know," Robert said, trying to keep himself calm, trying to think of every word before he said it. ("Robert thinks too fast," his aunts would volunteer. "Robert stutters because his brain is going too fast for his speech.") Robert had tried many times to think of each word before he said it, but it very rarely did any good.

"I don't know," Robert said, suddenly flattered and surprised at the interest given him. He had somehow thought that Julian had avoided him.

It was nice of Julian to invite him to show up tomorrow. Perhaps if he came enough he would become very good and then Monty would let him play the infield.

Yes, he would like to play third base, for then he could show off; show the others how quick and how straight he could throw the ball to first.

It was nice to play baseball, much nicer than just watching it from the stands. Maybe if he concentrated hard, really hard, he could talk without the stutter. *Then it would be no question that he was part of the team.*

He hoped he could hit. He was not very big, but he knew that if he really wound up, he could give the ball a good sock. Not a home run. Just a double, maybe. He would eat more, he would get heavier, and then, perhaps, he would be able to hit a triple...or even a homer. They would shake his hand when he stepped across the plate, and he would grin and tip his hat the way Julian did when he got a hit. Monty might even raise him to the top of the batting order. He would be the "cleanup man", number three in the batting order. They would count on him. Monty would say to him, "Get up 'ere an' give those bums a hittin' lesson." And Robert would nod and point to center field and say, "Watch out there, Monty," and Monty would watch the ball sail into center field and see Robert run catlike and smooth around the

bases. And Julian would pat him on the back and say, “Good show.” - thoughts of grandeur?

“Hey...uh...,” Monty groped for his name. “Hey Prince, what was you doin’ out there, sleeping or sumpin? All you had to do was walk back an’ hold out your glove. That cost us two runs an’ now we’re behind.”

“I-I-I-I-I’m s-s-sorry,” Robert stammered, his face contorted with the effort. His mind seemed wild and confused, and nothing was clear. He was sure that everyone watched him and panicked at being the center of attraction.

He tried to think, but somehow couldn’t get it quite clear.

“He’s laughing at me,” Robert thought. “He’s laughing at me because I can’t talk straight, and because I couldn’t catch the fly ball.”

When he was down the street a little way, he began to run.

Ants were always in a hurry, even when they were lost.

Robert thought that evening was the nicest time of all. - out of touch?

A Long Walk 208-210

About walking to the podium to give a speech at HS class reunion:

*“As I rose and made my way past the hundred odd faces, startled and bewildered by the very thought of my soon to be delivered words, the ghosts of countless humiliations, frustrations and tears accompanied me. Although inaudible and racing almost as fast as my heart beat, these ghosts echoed every sentiment that was ever directed at me from nearly four decades of voices filled with **compassion** (“Oh my! That poor young man has such difficulty talking!”); **indifference** (“What in the world is wrong with that kid?”); and **insult** (“C’mon, c’mon, spit it out, Porky Pig!”). Yes, the distance was twenty feet. And yet, it had taken me twenty-four years to walk it. It had been a long time in coming, and the effects will be a long, long time in dissipating. I stood tall on that warm and humid evening...and I have yet to stoop since.”*

Although I was to find out soon that my disfluency had *never* been an issue for them, it was the biggest of issues for me and had left me with a gnawing, lifelong fear that they had never taken me seriously and that I had always been the “odd man out” or the “poor fellow” who couldn’t talk.

I had to let go of all those ghosts, demons, memories and self-recriminations. And, I had to do it now!

That is the truth that my stuttering did not matter to these people...or to most anyone else!

Quite frequently, our perceptions of others with respect to our stuttering are completely without foundation. As a result, all too often we *miss opportunities* for intimacy, growth, pleasure and just plain fun because we hold firm to the unsubstantiated tenet that our stuttering *prohibits* us from experiencing our own life. We hide further and further from those around us, and we sink deeper and deeper into the

mire of self- doubt, self-hatred and self-pity!

Part 4: The Role of Genetics

Create favorable conditions for stuttering, just like a speck of dirt inside the mollusk's shell creates favorable conditions for a pearl to grow.

This would answer the question of how the same factors acting in childhood could lead to stuttering in some people but have no apparent effect upon others.

Is There a Genetic Basis for Stuttering? 217-229

Serbs vs. Albanians example - is the 500 year animosity genetic? The Serbs must have a genetic predisposition to kill Albanians, while Albanians have a genetic predisposition to kill Serbs. That would explain it.

Assumption 1) We can all agree on what we mean by "stuttering."

Paradigms tell us what we need to pay attention to and what we can safely ignore. Paradigms are essential because without the ability to filter the important from the unimportant, we'd have to wrestle with too much data and too much sensory input.

By staying within a familiar paradigm, people limit their research for alternative answers.

Imagine if we were conducting a study on chameleons, but instead of talking specifically about chameleons, we constantly referred to the subjects under observation only as reptiles. Of course, we would know what we were referring to, but someone else might be picturing another kind of reptile; snakes, for example, or iguanas.

We have four different kinds of stuttering, but we have only one word to distinguish between the four - pathological disfluency, developmental disfluency, bobulating, blocking.

Car example: because an ignition system is a system, it is, by definition, composed of more than one part. Thus, although you know in general where the problem lies, the mechanic has to do a lot more investigating before he can tell you specifically where the problem resides.

Yet, most research into the possible genetic causes of stuttering does not follow the same logical approach that the mechanic does in diagnosing your car. It does not break down chronic stuttering into its components but looks instead at the whole system as if it were a single unitary problem.

Assumption 2) We can accurately identify when a person is blocked.

The difference between my speech now and forty years ago is that I don't block.

Let's take another example. One person's fluent speech is totally spontaneous while the other individual is constantly substituting to avoid her blocks. Yet, the researcher will call both of those people "fluent." Stalling is another example.

Do researchers make these distinctions? Generally not.

Assumption 3) Only genetic factors can be transmitted from one generation to another.

Yet, as we have seen in the long-standing animosity between Serbs and ethnic Albanians, attitudes and beliefs, too, can be passed from grandfather to father to son. But what do they have to do with stuttering? If attitudes and beliefs are in fact major contributing factors, why have we never considered them? **We have not considered them because our thinking has been paralyzed by an out-of-date paradigm.**

It is not the components by themselves that create the problem but the dynamic *moment-by-moment* interaction of these six components that bring to life the stuttering behavior.

The stutterer is aware of totally obsessing on his fear of saying "time." He believes he will block, and the feared word is adding to his fight-or-flight reaction.

There is also the issue of encountering a stranger. What about the momentary flick of her eye before she actually looks at him. Is she annoyed? Afraid? In a hurry? Does she resent being stopped by a perfect stranger? How does he interpret all this?

Does he feel he has to talk perfectly? Or be perfect? Does he have a preconceived idea of how he wants her to respond? Suppose she doesn't follow his script? Is it a trigger for more panic?

What about his response threshold? Is he highly sensitive? Is he quick to initiate a fight-or-flight response? Is he inclined to overreact? Is he having a good day emotionally? Is he feeling positive and confident, or insecure or dejected? The stutterer's beliefs and how he interprets his perceptions will have an enormous impact on his feelings.

Many of the forces that bring to bear on the moment have nothing to do with fear of stuttering per se but with his response to the environment. However, because these forces usually operate outside of his awareness, the only thing he may be conscious of is his fear about his speech.

Assumption 4) You can do meaningful research without having a clear idea of what you're looking for.

Stuttering is an ill-defined speech anomaly whose very definition seems to be rooted in the unknown.

Stuttering research has been akin to trawling a net behind a boat to see what you pick up. It's undertaken with the idea that if only you can just gather enough data, then the cause of stuttering will become apparent....

Like other research, it has only been used to find support for ideas.

Most studies are group studies. This would not pose a problem if all those who stutter were alike. But groups do not stutter. **Individuals stutter.** And the causes of their stuttering vary from one-person to the next.

But to start with group research? That's a guarantee that the core of stuttering will never be solved with this approach.

The only thing that researchers seem to be able to determine is that *something* is happening in certain parts of the brain when an individual stutters. But what it is, and what effect it may or may not have in creating stuttering remains totally speculative. Yet, the fact that something *is* happening does not discourage researchers from confidently asserting that there are genetic factors that cause stuttering. Otherwise, they say, these responses would not be present to a greater statistical degree in families that have a history of stuttering. But whether these are *causal* factors or by products of other events associated with stuttering is not something they are able to determine.

Finally, since stuttering does *not* appear in the family histories of 75% of people who stutter, how can we claim that stuttering is genetically driven? What other maladies that *have* been proven to be genetically determined show such a low statistical presence within the families transmitting the problem?

Where does that leave us genetic wise? Several parts of the system can, in fact, be transmitted from parent to child—namely, perceptions and beliefs about life, proper behavior, and what one should expect from others. These are elements that travel effectively through time and undoubtedly contribute to the higher incidence of stuttering in certain families.

There is, however, a genetic component that I'm sure does play a role in stuttering. It does not relate to speech directly, but to how the individual relates to stress.

I discovered that I had been preventing myself from experiencing an overwhelming sense of panic.

Fear of being overwhelmed by a sudden rush of feeling has gone a long way to explain to me what a speech block is all about, and my beliefs were validated by the years of work I did in personal growth programs. The more I became comfortable with expressing my emotions, the less inclination there was to block.

Holding back of feeling seems to be an important component of the total stuttering system.

The amygdala will effectively hijack the rest of the brain, including the rational mind.

In fact, the amygdala can often trigger an emotional response before the cortical centers have fully understood what is happening—as if our emotions have a mind of their own which operates independently of our rational mind. **(Yes it does actually – Trauma Book)**

Highly sensitive people “may have inherited chronically high levels of norepinephrine or other brain chemicals that activate the amygdala and so create a new threshold of excitability, making the amygdala more easily triggered.”

In her book *The Highly Sensitive Person*, Elaine Aron reports that **20 percent** of the general population can be considered highly sensitive and are thus more affected by people, events and environmental factors. **84 percent** of all PWS studied showed a higher level of sensitivity than did non-stutterers.

So while a child may not have a "stuttering gene" per se, he or she might have the high reactivity that contributes to the development of the Stuttering Hexagon. It is the over-excitability *in combination with* the other elements of the Stuttering Hexagon that work together to create the speech block.

Summary:

I cannot help but feel these investigations are destined to come up with findings that are inconclusive and of little practical value.

Chronic stuttering is better defined as a combination of a speech block and the strategy to break through or avoid the block.

Actor Gordon Clapp was also invited on the show to talk about his sympathetic portrayal of a character with a stuttering problem on the TV drama *NYPD Blue*. Clapp was even acknowledged as a hero by one NSA member in the audience for being a positive role model for stutterers. Lt. Medavoy, the New York detective played by Clapp, does in fact display occasional disfluencies, but there is none of the struggle behavior or the self-consciousness normally associated with blocked speech.

Researchers assume that only genetic factors can be transmitted intergenerationally, but attitudes and beliefs can also run in families. The reason why these have not been considered as contributing factors is the narrow paradigm.

Even so, there probably are genetic factors that relate to chronic stuttering, but they do so indirectly. These have to do with the degree of sensitivity of the individual and the level of responsiveness in reacting to stress, factors that can be passed along from parent to child.

The Science of Fluency 230-241

Instead of remembering all the happy moments, I would ruminate over the time when I couldn't deliver a punch line, thus turning an attempt to tell a joke into an embarrassing experience.

For someone who stuttered for almost 40 years I was blissfully ignorant.

To allow emotions to emerge, John advised me to slow down my speech and pause often. Soon I noticed that slowing down my speech and coloring it with emotions led to more fluency, since it allowed me to stay in touch with myself.

It had its ups and downs.

It seemed that this state had distinct characteristics. Words gently rolled from my tongue. I didn't plan what to say. The moment I knew what word I was saying was the moment I said it. I wasn't listening to my speech or monitoring it. I was going with the flow.

When stuttering, I'd suddenly become self-conscious. I'd become aware of the word I was going to say, and I was sure that on this word I would block. Sometimes I did, and sometimes I was able to avoid it by slowing down and trying to speak with more expression.

This was something I had no explanation for.

To my dismay, this ignited fierce discussions on whether John Harrison, Bob Bodenhamer and others who help people who stutter to regain more fluency could really do them any good, or whether they just fostered unrealistic dreams from which a devastating fall to the harsh and sobering reality would inevitably follow.

It was something that no other method of therapy had ever given me.

My goal was to find something that I could use not only to explain changes in my speech, but also to design a strategy to deal with occasional blocking episodes as well as to make sure that my old way of blocking didn't return.

But three stuttering persons from this family did *not* have this mutation and apparently stuttered for a different reason. If we are talking about something as universal as stuttering, we certainly cannot pin our hopes on a mutation that appears only in certain nationalities.

Because of the lack of available genetic mapping of the human brain, researchers used maps for the mouse brain and discovered that genes *GNPTG* and *NAGPA* were expressed predominantly in the areas responsible for emotional processing and motor coordination. As the authors pointed out "a person's emotional state can exert a strong effect on the severity of stuttering." [1] I can't agree more.

But it is still unclear what aspects of speech production are affected by genetics, since most people who stutter can speak fluently under some circumstances. Also, since there are many who stuttered but were able to gain a significant degree of fluency, it is unlikely that any of those mutations can cause direct interruption of speech flow.

It is well known now that the brain, even in adults, is plastic and undergoes structural changes. For example, a famous study of London taxi drivers' brains showed enlargement of the brain area responsible for navigation. Surely if driving a taxi for a few years can change your brain, speaking with stuttering for several decades could do this, too.

If my stuttering was caused by genes or a brain anomaly, what happened to all those factors when I started speaking fluently? Did they go on vacation? Did they take a really long nap and then wake up to nag me some more?

Science of fluency - The authors focused on two primary methods of speech control in the human brain – feedback and feedforward.

Feedback requires constant auditory monitoring of produced speech. Such monitoring is crucial for language development.

But fluent speech requires a different method of control, called **feedforward** due to its high rate and complexity. This type of control is the prerequisite for fluency and is not error-based. The brain monitors signals (commands) as they are sent to the articulators with only a minimal control of the result. The commands are so well learned that they can be trusted to produce the result without constant checking for errors.

White noise makes auditory feedback impossible and encourages a reliance on feedforward control. This phenomenon has been long known and is used in some fluency enhancing devices. The loud noise prevents those who stutter from hearing their own voice. In most cases masking out the person's speech magically extinguishes stuttering.

Feedback control is useless if speech has not even started yet and attempts to monitor something that isn't there may result in a perceived "block".

This idea confirmed my own observation that fluent speech *feels different* from stuttered speech.

In short, when we start watching for errors, we are more likely to trip.

If a traumatic accident or a brutal failure occurs before such transition is made, the switch to automatic mode may never happen.

Thus it seems very probable that when parents or teachers draw a child's attention to his or her "stutter" (which naturally occurs in the large percentage of children), they add new sinister meaning to any minor hesitations or repetitions in the speech. This lack of trust in one's own abilities can halt the transition to the feedforward mode of speech control. - Did this happen to me?

Letting go of control

The King explodes (The King's speech reference). Because at some point I stopped caring about the consequences.

The issue of trust

Another possible reason for not trusting yourself is fear of negative reaction. For example, if a husband returns home late and his wife asks him "Where have you been?" – a question for which he hasn't a good answer – he will tend to hold back and speak very carefully. In the same way, a child who is frequently unsure whether or not his or her words or actions will bring the hammer down on them may also exhibit a heightened degree of control in speech. In fact, there can be many factors that prevent a child from making a timely transition to feedforward control.

But if the need to remain in feedback mode grows deep and strong roots, the switch to feedforward control becomes difficult to accomplish.

On the other hand, some people do stutter even when they are alone, because even in the privacy of their solitude they cannot stop themselves from being their own judge.

Fear of certain "difficult" sounds also encourages feedback control, because you never let go of control as long as you have red flags all over the alphabet.

Since I spoke fluently after NLP sessions, I knew I didn't have anything that physically prevented me from using feedforward control in my speech, except for my reluctance to let it go and the lack of practice doing so in everyday situations.

My sudden realization that I did not have to monitor my speech anymore and that I could trust my ability to speak.

The profound healing of childhood hurts allowed me to reframe the experiences that had triggered distrust in my ability to simply let go and speak. Similarly it removed the need to constantly monitor my speech for errors.

I realized that my fear of stuttering was irrelevant to my current adult life and that some negative experiences that I had with my speech in childhood could have been caused by problems in my speech for reasons other than stuttering.

This positive reframing removed an invisible barrier that was preventing my feedforward mechanism (the system for automatic control of speech) from taking over. And when that happened, fluent speech followed.

I have found, however, that progress seldom follows a completely linear path. One day I had an unanticipated block, which opened a gate for an old distrust to creep in. More distrust followed a dream in which I had a vivid image of myself resuming my heavy blocking. The result was the return of some blocking due to resumed feedback control of my speech. But since I didn't have the same reaction to blocking that I had before the NLP sessions, and since I deliberately slowed down my speech rate, thus reducing the possibility for errors, I had only mild disfluency and none of my previous heavy blocking.

A vision for the future

I would like to make my small contribution and put in the center of John Harrison's hexagon two additional components:

- 1) An ability to activate and maintain feedforward speech control.
- 2) A level of an individual's reactivity to imperfections (real or perceived) in his or her speech.

Stuttering in a form of repetition and minor hesitations is more likely to occur when an individual speaks with a high degree of self-consciousness, constantly scanning his or her speech for errors.

However, people who stutter also have a high intolerance to any disturbances in their speech. And they have learned to counteract this by holding the breath and tensing vocal cords and other muscles involved in articulation. Such behavior results in more prominent and struggled blocks. An extensive "library" of difficult words and situations stored in the memory of most adult PWS makes it even more difficult to let go of control.

The fluent state achieved by a majority of the population without any effort resembles that of an athlete who is able to entrust his or her success to automatic, well-learned movements and paying little attention to minor flaws. If an athlete starts thinking "Oh, I fell down at this spot during the last game, what if I fall again today," it will be a disaster. Therefore, they don't do this.

Building this kind of trust, after keeping yourself in check for decades, is not easy. However it can be done.

Typically with very rare exceptions, I am able to jump back on the fluent tract and let go of the control.

To me fluency feels like a strong current that sweeps me and carries forward through the conversation with words rolling effortlessly wave- by-wave. It feels very good. I know that I might have had some issues with speech production when I was a small child - problems that could have made my surrounding too harsh on me and convinced me that I shouldn't trust my ability to speak. That fear could have made it impossibly difficult to switch to unconscious control at the usual time.

Zen in the Art of Fluency 242-248

Ping Pong Example: Over-controlling my swing would have simply created more tightness and ruined my timing because I would have been imposing one set of controls on top of another. Most of us who grow up with a stuttering problem see our speech blocks as threats—something we need to control. So instead of learning when to consciously focus on

our technique and when to focus on the total experience of speaking, we focus on our technique exclusively.

He must detach himself from his results. He must learn to relax his body at precisely the moment he would normally be tensed, to draw the bow “spiritually” with a kind of effortless strength, and to “get out of his own way” so that his higher power can take over. When he is able to give over control to the “it”, the arrows unerringly finds the bulls eye, even though the archer seems hardly to be taking aim. **To arrive at this level of mastery, the archer must be willing to shoot thousands of arrows that are wide of the mark without worrying about how he’s doing or trying to consciously control the flight of the arrow.** If he does try to take conscious control, he will preempt and disable his higher powers and the experience of mastery will continue to elude him. (*How I play pingpong or darts or anything. I worry and control and get mad if I do it wrong.)

Giving control to the higher self.

The “it.” Some call it the higher self.

Move your conscious mind out of the way and simply visualize, relax, and allow your inner self to take control. The technique calls for the person to develop proficiency in the sport with little conscious effort or “trying”.

By training his unconscious mind...his “it”...to do the shooting, the individual eventually got to the point where he could automatically hit the target with the pellet, seemingly without aiming.

There can be no deliberate control because there is no time to operate consciously.

When the system breaks down

Then what causes a child to become self-conscious about his speech and begin exercising deliberate control? I’ve observed three potential scenarios:

1. Self-consciousness can be triggered by speech blocks created when the child tries to assert himself while holding back his feelings(the classic approach-avoidance conflict).
2. Self-consciousness can be caused by speech blocks created by timing problems when the child tries to synchronize low-speed voluntary control of articulation with high-speed automatic vocal syllabic control.
3. Self-consciousness can be caused by speech blocks created when the child anticipates a need to *try hard* to get the words out and initiates a valsalva maneuver, an act which is counterproductive to speech. Whichever scenario holds sway (and it could be any one or all three), the attempt to exercise control over a spontaneous act ends up disrupting the speaking process, leaving the child feeling helpless, panicked, and afraid of subsequent speaking situations.

Now the ironic twist. Just like the child learns to speak by following a Zen-like approach, so does he learn to employ behaviors that are detrimental to his speech using the same unconscious process. He does it the Zen way, repeating these behaviors over and over until they become automatic and outside his conscious awareness. It’s when these unconscious controls interfere with the timing and spontaneity of speech (or when fear and panic operate outside the person’s awareness to cause the person to hold

everything back in a long, prolonged block) that they transform themselves into a chronic and self-sustaining problem.

As the child suffers the social consequences of malfunctioning speech, he changes how he feels about himself and others. He develops social strategies to protect himself from shame and embarrassment. He develops strategies for pushing out the difficult words, or hiding them. When these changes begin to influence and reinforce each other, the problem becomes self-perpetuating.

Professional golfer example. He starts to believe that he can't perform under pressure. His self-image changes to that of a loser and...well, you know the rest.

When therapy is limited to imposing a conscious set of controls on speech that is already over controlled by fears and expectations, the person simply ends up layering one level of controls on top of another. On the other hand, if the individual is willing to address the total system—looking not only at how he blocks as a speaker, but how he blocks as a *person*—he gradually becomes more willing to address the fears that hold him back.

As the person begins to develop a more realistic self-image, he can begin to relax and simply accept what shows up. This was what happened in the ping-pong game with Andy. I knew my swing was fine, because I had practiced it for many years. I simply had to decide to live with the consequences of letting go.

Similarly, the person who stutters must get his speech technique in order by becoming conscious of the subtle ways he interferes with the spontaneous act of speaking. Then he must shift his awareness from the mechanics of speaking to the total act of self-expression. He must decide to live with the consequences of letting go. Only then can his spontaneity be freely expressed as his higher self—his "it" — takes full command of the speaking process.

Disappearing the problem

There are, then, two different strategies for creating fluency. One is to constantly and consciously control the disfluency...Irony of ironies, an insurmountable barrier is created by the very method introduced to cure the problem. (In reference to fluency shaping...HCRI)

The alternative approach is to practice the proper speech mechanics, and then know when to “get out of your own way” and practice letting go. This is where visualization comes into play.

Every time I sat in an audience and was held in the thrall of a dynamic speaker, I asked myself, “What is he feeling? What is the *experience* like for him?” How would I feel if, like him, I could actually have *fun* while I was speaking?” **To help me get back to spontaneous speech, I developed an emotional picture of what letting go felt like and then practiced giving over control of my speech to that picture.**

If you were to focus on the notes and your fingering while you were giving the recital, at the very least, your presentation would be wooden; at worst, your focus would be on performing and your self-consciousness might even cause you to forget the notes altogether.

People who have fully recovered from stuttering—that is, people who have learned to speak spontaneously, the Zen way—will tell you that not only did their speech have to change, but other key

aspects of their life as well. Over time, these changes coalesced into a new system that could support effortless, uninhibited self-expression. They created a fluency *system*.

They learned to recognize when it was time to work on conscious technique, and when it was necessary to step back, surrender control to the “it”, and allow their spontaneity to carry them forward.

I don't mean to suggest that bringing this about is a simple process. Permanently removing stuttering from your life so that even the impulse to block is no longer present is a complex and comprehensive undertaking. It usually takes place over a period of time by living it through, step- by-step, and people will approach the process with varying degrees of success.

Factors for Success:

Success will depend on a number of factors such as the number and intensity of bad experiences the person must overcome, the intensity of feelings that must be managed and explored, the number of bad speech habits that must be brought into awareness, the degree of support that exists in the person's immediate environment, genetic factors that may interfere with the speaking process, the person's motivation, the level of perfection they can live with, the person's beliefs, the talent of the therapist and the quality of the therapeutic relationship.

Part 5: The Path to Recovery

Recovery is usually so gradual that the changes are difficult to spot. In general, such a "quick recovery" person had been pursuing his or her own personal growth some time before they began therapy and were a fluent person waiting to happen.

For me, recovery means that you have the ability to focus on the message and speak with a natural flow with no anticipation of blocks or avoidance behavior. Speaking is no longer an issue for you.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

An active curiosity. They question why they stutter in this situation but not that; with this person but not that; or why, just when they were speaking so easily, they suddenly locked up. How could they have talked so easily for an entire week and then suddenly find it hard to talk for 20 seconds without blocking. *They stay alert to anything that doesn't make sense and keep coming up with questions. This often leads to meaningful discoveries.*

A good observer. They notice what's happening around them and make note of anything that seems relevant to their speech.

Driven by intentions. Rather than allowing their lives to be run by their expectations, they are driven by their intentions (which also means *defining* their intentions.). This keeps them feeling that they're running their own life.

Like to communicate. Even though their speech may be very disfluent, they still make an effort to connect with others. This may include sharing personal experiences and offering suggestions to others on Internet forums and over Skype. It also can involve participating in local stuttering support groups as well as chapters of Toastmasters and Speakers Clubs.

Show patience. They recognize that Rome was not built in a day and are quick to celebrate even the smallest successes.

Stay open to new ideas. Does genetics causes stuttering? Maybe. Or maybe it's just a contributing factor. They don't lock themselves into a position and continue to see everything through the same window. They maintain an open mind and a broad focus. They read, not just books and articles about stuttering, but about anything that gives them a general grounding in human nature.

They have a sense of humor. Even when things seem to be falling apart, they keep a sense of perspective. They know that things can and do, change.

An optimistic outlook. They have an ability to not dwell on what does not work, but simply notice the results and move on.

However, this still begs the question of what it takes to *disappear* stuttering. As someone who experienced such a recovery, I feel I'm in a good position to report on the process of extinction. I can't confirm that everyone who makes the full journey will undergo precisely the same transformational stages. But I suspect that a good percentage who made it through have followed this path.

THE FIVE STAGES OF RECOVERY

STAGE ONE: Denial. Almost everyone I've met who's had a chronic stuttering problem had spent his (or her) early years in denial. Why my speech would suddenly "stop" was a total mystery to me. I just knew that it happened, and I was terrified by the social consequences. I was very self-conscious and overly sensitive about deviating from the norm. So like other PWS, I worked out ways to hide the blocks as best I could.

STAGE TWO: Acceptance. Imagine you suddenly find yourself standing in a four-foot hole. "Omygod," you say, "I've really gotten myself in a hole," as you push and struggle to climb out. But suppose you believe that smart, intelligent people should never be standing in a four-foot hole. Since you consider yourself smart and intelligent, and since you want people to think well of you, you immediately fall into denial about your current situation.

"Me? Standing in a hole? That's crazy! Why would I be doing that?" you ask. "That would be stupid." But then, when you go to walk away, you find yourself strangely hampered. For some reason you can't move forward. But if you accept where you are, you might see that you're standing in a hole. Then even though accepting this may make you feel foolish, it frees you to figure out how to climb out and be on your way.

STAGE THREE: Understanding. It helps to have people in your life with whom you can talk over your challenges and share your frustrations and successes. You can learn volumes by sharing your ideas and listening to other PWS share theirs in group meetings and on Internet stuttering forums. My involvement in therapy groups with a broad cross section of people showed me how individuals looked the best when they were completely honest, open, and forthcoming. They looked their worst when they tried to hide and present a false image. Formal programs of any sort—either in speech or in personal growth— are not essential, but you do need to be a good observer and have the willingness to reveal who you are.

STAGE FOUR: Transcending. Dissolving a debilitating self-image takes time. But as you observe yourself, a new picture will gradually form. You may not come off as nice or as good as you thought you were. You may see how you routinely yield to those who you feel are stronger or more knowledgeable. You may get in touch with how much anger, fear and sadness you've been holding in since you were young.

You may begin to understand that you've been trying to prevent yourself from knowing and experiencing the real YOU. The scared you. The angry you. The strong you. The confident you. All those yous that were suppressed years ago as you adapted to what you thought the adult world wanted of you.

Once the genie is out of the bottle, so will be your ability to express yourself. If you can combine greater self knowledge with any fluency training you've done and programs like Toastmasters and Speakers Clubs, you'll be able to progress even faster. And you may discover how stronger and more powerful and capable you are than you ever believed was possible.

STAGE FIVE: Reprogramming. Changing default behavior is like anything else. It comes through practice and persistence. It's like the martial artist student who one day is surprised that he automatically did the right thing when attacked by an opponent. The recovering PWS discovers one day that he no longer automatically resorts to blocking when faced with a frightening or anxious situation. And even if

he does block, it no longer delivers the same punch.

“Oh look at that. I just blocked,” he says. “I wonder what’s going on?” Then he can review what he experienced and what he did and heighten the awareness of his automatic fear response. In so doing, he can stop himself from slipping into a full-blown panic response.

If he (or she) has studied an approach for managing stuttering and blocking such as McGuire technique, air flow or fluency shaping, he can call on that to handle the mini-crisis, and then slip back into automatic speech.

By and large, for those who have prevailed over chronic stuttering and blocking, communicating has become fun, and they welcome any opportunity to talk. Remember that the bottom line is not perfect fluency. Some people will naturally be fluent, and others will naturally stumble when the pressure is up. **The bottom line is whether you can say what you want. The way you want. To whom you want. When you want.**

WHAT DOES RECOVERY LOOK LIKE?

The people who tell their recovery stories in this section have all faced down their stuttering monster and come out on top. Most would no longer be identified as a stutterer. And although some may still have an occasional block, it passes quickly without slipping into the old struggle behavior.

The stories are all different because the people are all different. The recipe for recovery is not a production line solution. Each success reflects the unique profile and personality of the individual.

Section Five also includes a landmark piece by Dr. Mark Irwin that introduces a new clinical/diagnostic term that recognizes the multidimensionality of chronic stuttering and blocking. It is something that has long been lacking.

Stuttering is Not Just a Speech Problem 225-276

By: Alan Badmington

I would be calculating (10 desks ahead) exactly what I would be saying.

In the company of my closest friends, I was reasonably outgoing, whilst in the presence of strangers (and those not so close), I would always have difficulty expressing myself. You see, I had particular problems with words commencing with the initial letter “b” (which was unfortunate because my surname is Badmington). I also had difficulty with “c, d, f, g, j, k, m, n, p, s, t,” and “v,” to name but a few.

I could never give detailed explanations—I made it a practice to interrupt while others were talking, so that the attention was never focused on me when I commenced speaking.

I could never speak while I was the center of attention.

I had entered a state of unconsciousness, totally oblivious to everything around me. It had reinforced my belief that I could not say certain words. That reinforced my belief that listeners became uncomfortable when I stuttered.

The point I am trying to make is that the experiences I had encountered were forming the beliefs about myself that I was to hold throughout my adult life.

I could hear my voice. I had severe problems. When the Masker (auditory feedback device) had been working I believed I could speak reasonably well.

My speech deteriorated and my comfort zones became very narrow.

If you receive therapy, or attend a fluency course, you may see an improvement in your speech in that environment because, in addition to the various control techniques being implemented, your self-image, perceptions, beliefs and emotions are positively influenced by the relationship with the therapist.

But that is not enough. If you do not make efforts to address other matters relating to your life (such as the limited way you see yourself; your long-held, self-defeating negative beliefs; your unwillingness to take risks, etc), the other points on the Stuttering Hexagon are likely to pull your speech back into balance with the rest of the system. Eventually, you will find yourself slipping back into the same old patterns.

There are certain feelings that contribute to, or result from, our stuttering. You will recognize all of them: fear, hurt, anger, frustration, helplessness, embarrassment, shame, and vulnerability. Those of us who stutter have always tried to depersonalize the speaking experience because it was painful. We did not wish to feel the feelings any more than we had to. We avoided eye contact; we detached ourselves from the speaking situation; we retreated. That very attitude of holding back is what helps to create and perpetuate our speech blocks.

My own ability to block out these feelings was so automatic that I failed to recognize that these feelings existed. When we stutter, there is a sense of panic and we are completely unconscious to what is occurring.

Instead of suppressing these intense feelings, I learned to experience them as they surfaced and to use them to energize my speech.

Our irrational thinking about our speech totally influences our perceptions. **Nearly every time I spoke, I perceived that I was being judged.**

Beliefs are the most powerful long-term influence on your hexagon and will be the last thing to change as you deal with the rest of the hexagon. In fact, I would say that beliefs are the beginning of the real change. Once you change your beliefs positively, you are well on the road to empowerment.

As I gradually changed my beliefs about myself and others, speaking situations became much less difficult.

And finally, as I became more aware of my hidden intentions (i.e., my intentions to talk and hold back at the same time), I was able to directly address that conflict.

The seeds of doubt were sown some weeks before the court appearance, when I learned that I would be required to give evidence.

Let us examine those beliefs and see how they created a negative set of **expectations**:

- Due to my previous difficulties with these letters, I believed that I would stutter and make a fool of myself.
- I believed that I could not speak in front of an audience when I was the centre of attention.
- I believed I could not say the oath, or my name.
- I believed I would be judged by my performance (especially as a young officer on probation).
- I believed the court would expect me to be perfect.
- I believed I would be performing in front of people who would not understand or be sympathetic to my problem.

My perceptions (at the time of being in court) were:

- The group of young men at the back of the court, who I had cause to deal with a couple of weeks earlier for public disorder, were talking about me and eagerly waiting for me to stutter.
- I was making a fool of myself, and news of this would quickly spread, and I would become a laughing stock.

My physiological system was generating a fully-fledged fight or flight reaction. My body was pouring adrenaline into the blood stream, my blood pressure was rising etc.

My emotions were rooted in fear and terror.

I was fearful of revealing my secret, my deficiencies, to everyone present. So I held myself back and blocked. What holding back means.

The Wedding Speech example

I believed I could speak when someone else spoke at the same time as (in my eyes) I would not be the center of attention.

Thus, with my wife and the vicar joining me, I was detached from my own speech and the negative emotional feelings were not present.

I perceived the vicar and my wife as friendly and supportive persons. Because I was relaxed about the situation, I did not experience the usual feelings of fear and panic (the physiological responses).

I intended to say the vows, and I was not holding back. As there was no conflict (divided intentions), a speech block did not occur, thereby allowing the speech function to be completed.

Every component in the hexagon was positive, reacting positively with one another.

Unlike the situation in the church involving the vows, everything had changed. Let us look at that painful episode in more detail. Stutterers Mindset:

- I believed I could not speak in front of a large crowd and would make a fool of myself – and I did.
- I believed that I could not speak while the focus of attention was on me. (I wasn't so much worried about any feared words because I had written the speech myself and carefully omitted any letters

that normally presented difficulty).

- I always spoke in short, sharp bursts and believed that I could not orate anything of a lengthy nature (even though it extended to only eight or ten lines).
- I believed that most guests would be embarrassed when (not IF) I stuttered.
- I perceived that many of those present would not understand my problem.
- I perceived that those who knew I stuttered were waiting for me to slip up.
- I perceived that my wife and parents were anxious for me.
- My physiological responses created the usual fight or flight reaction, with the accompanying bodily changes.
- My emotions were totally immersed in fear, panic, vulnerability and embarrassment.
- I was caught up in the speak/don't speak conflict. I wanted to continue speaking – it was the happiest day of my life. But I was fearful of stuttering, laying myself bare and revealing my speech difficulty to all present. This power struggle caused me to hold back, and the inevitable speech blocks occurred.
- Everything was negative, each component reacting negatively with each other to have a detrimental effect on my speech behavior.
- I had suffered so much heartache in my life (as a result of failed therapies)

And for the very first time in my life, I understood that whether or not I stuttered, depended very much on how I felt at any particular time.

When these four days ended I knew that the real challenge lay ahead. I had tasted fluency many years earlier (although never as manageable as now) but, previously, I had not been able to sustain it for any length of time outside the security and safety of a course environment. I felt this was different.

So, using the new technique I had been taught, I immediately set out to dismantle the psychological framework that I had erected to support myself during a lifetime of stuttering.

I had so many negative beliefs, negative perceptions, negative emotions and negative practices to eradicate. I knew that I had to create a fluency system in which my new speech behaviors, as well as emotions, perceptions, beliefs, intentions and psychological responses, all interactively supported each other.

I needed to challenge the negative beliefs and feelings that I had developed (in many cases unconsciously) over so many years and, above all, I resolved that I would never again practice avoidance. I would never again succumb to the temptation of substituting an easy word for a difficult word, and I promised myself that I would accept, and never avoid, the challenge of any speaking situation.

I participated in the Harrison exercises, which are principally designed to improve speaking in front of people, but also to demonstrate how to challenge and change certain lifelong traits.

I was experiencing positive discomfort. You WILL feel uncomfortable on the first occasion, less uncomfortable on the second, and so on.

Your ability to tolerate short periods of discomfort is the key to change. If you are willing to take a chance, and hang on in there, you can bring about a significant shift in your attitude and self-image.

American psychologist, Susan Jeffers – “Feel the fear, and do it anyway.”

Two things that John told me had such a positive influence upon my hexagon and, subsequently, my life. He suddenly said, “Alan, you’re a remarkable conversationalist and very inspirational.”

Various components in my hexagon changed considerably that night:

- I believed that persons enjoyed listening to me.
- I believed that I could inspire others.
- I believed I could speak well, and interestingly, for lengthy periods of time.
- I believed that others wanted to hear my opinions.
- My previous long-held perception that persons were embarrassed when I spoke, moved from negative to positive.
- My emotions took a distinct upturn; I was elated and overjoyed with my efforts.
- My self-image was widening, and I liked the person I was becoming.
- This was a stutterer’s worst nightmare...talking on the telephone before a listening audience.
- They were NOT embarrassed to hear my story, and I gained in confidence.

Never shirk from telling yourself how much you have achieved.

My eyes never fail to water when, at its conclusion, the interviewer comments, “Wasn’t that an inspirational chat.

Nothing will ever make amends for the heartache and catalogue of lost opportunities that tainted my police career but, at least, my former colleagues will now view me in an entirely different light.

Model turtle – the significance of which is that a turtle can only move forward if it pushes its neck out.

During my life, as I suffered the social consequences of malfunctioning speech, I changed the way I felt about myself, and others. I developed social strategies to protect myself from shame and embarrassment. I also developed strategies for pushing out, or hiding, difficult words. When these changes began to influence and reinforce each other, the problem became self-perpetuating.

All these adjustments were made to support my stuttering. I knew that if I did not change the components in this system, the same system would have waited for the missing component (my stutter) to reappear.

I am determined that my old stuttering behavior will never return. I am showing myself differently to the world, and I love the way it is reacting differently to me.

My program recognizes that changing personal defaults in a number of areas does not occur overnight, and allows graduates to return on as many occasions as they wish.

As a person who stuttered, I had a narrow self-image. Anything that challenged that image I perceived as a threat to my well-being. But a self-image that is too narrow and constrictive to accommodate our entire personality imprisons us.

Persons who stutter avoid expanding their comfort zones.

The moment you are willing to give up your old self-image, you will find that there are incredible opportunities for change. But unless you change your Stuttering Hexagon, you will fight any changes in your speech because it does not fit within your normal self-image.

Until permanent changes occur – through continual expansion – the hexagon will remain vulnerable.

I now realize that, although I was not aware of John Harrison’s concepts until last year, I had made considerable changes in my own personal stuttering hexagon over the years, aided, of course, by the Edinburgh Masker. Despite the setbacks, I had already set up a system that would support greater fluency and fuller self-expression.

I strongly believe that my communicative difficulties were not merely associated with the mechanics of speech.

“Stuttering is not just a speech problem.”

The need to overcome fear has been a prominent thrust of my presentation, and I would like to conclude by reciting a hastily composed limerick that, I feel, appropriately reflects that sentiment:

When you stutter, some think you’re a dope
 At times, it is so hard to cope
 Whether mild or severe
 Face up to your fear
 If you let yourself go, then there’s hope.

And the Stuttering Just Dies 277-281

By: Jack Menear

He attributed his recovery to the fact that he had adopted a different way of thinking.

It is clear now that stuttering is really a whole lifestyle founded on incorrect mental habits. When the speech blocks are identified as the outward expression of these mental habits, the habits can be changed, and the stuttering just dies.

It is important to note the passive element in this approach. Rather than focusing on “beating stuttering”, I focused on eliminating the mental habits that prompted it.

Macomb Fraser [founder of the Stuttering Foundation of America] makes an interesting statement about stuttering: “...the statement can be made that stuttering is largely what the stutterer does trying not to stutter.”

Fraser follows this up with, “If there were some way you could distract your mind from thoughts of fear, or you didn’t think about it, possibly you wouldn’t have any trouble. Or if you could forget you were a stutterer, you probably wouldn’t stutter, but we don’t know how you could develop such a forgettery.”

And since the route is based on truth and honesty, permanence is guaranteed.

Probably as a group, stutterers are the most introspective people in the world. The mere thought of stuttering is so frightening that it focuses our whole world inward. With time, this inward focus is all we

know. It becomes accepted that we consciously anticipate each time we'll have to talk. A frantic scramble to gain control becomes consuming, and by the time we actually do have to speak, we've "lived" the experience a hundred times in our mind. By anticipating and trying to control, we've allowed the fear of stuttering to gain such momentum that we force ourselves to stutter.

In essence, we allow ourselves to think about speaking like a non-stutterer. A non-stutterer just lets his words flow; it never occurs to him to anticipate his words or control how each word leaves his mouth.

Fortunately (or unfortunately), stuttering is not the only affliction based on the fear of fear. The stutterer has a fear that he (or she) may have a fear of stuttering; agoraphobias (people with a fear of leaving the safety of their home) have a fear of their fear also.

Dr. Claire Weekes has proposed four simple rules that have effectively helped agoraphobias, and these rules apply equally well for stutterers.

1. *Face: do not run.* When anticipation and control thoughts appear, look at them for what they are. Don't suppress them or hide from them; recognize and define them.
2. *Accept: do not fight.* Calmly accept that this unwanted thought has surfaced.
3. *Float past: do not listen in.* The thought is there, but you don't have to control this line of thinking (although you have a habit of continuing it.) Decide to "let it go."
4. *Let time pass: do not be impatient with time.* Stuttering won't disappear instantly with the understanding of this concept. It's a habit of years, and will take time to dissolve completely. You're not "beating the stuttering," you're just practicing your choice of letting unwanted thoughts go. As a result, the stuttering grows less and less frequent.

It takes confidence to change mental habits, and that comes from feeling "I'm okay."

Let's face it. You and I got caught in stuttering. We both wish we hadn't, but we did.

While you're letting the stuttering die, take time to let this "I'm okay" feeling filter through your mind.

I'm not talking about a few affirmations of being okay. I mean this belief absorbed throughout the conscious and unconscious minds based on a truthful inward look.

If you see something you don't like, don't feel it as a negative; it's just something you want to change. Be 100 percent open; there's nothing to hide from. And when you can see yourself without self-deception, you're basing the "I'm okay" feeling on the truth...and that's permanent!

FACING THE UNKNOWN

Years of habit become a lifestyle. To the stutterer, fear, tension, anticipation and relentless need for control guide our every move. Now you decide to give it up. Logically, you say "I want to give it up." But the inner mind wants to hold on. The fear, tension, anticipation and control are all it knows. Maybe they're bad, but at least they're familiar; and there's comfort in familiarity. You'll have to give up that comfort and enter a completely new way of thinking and living.

To give you an idea of how it feels to think the non-stuttering way, I'd like to share some thoughts and feelings I identify with.

- ❖ I feel totally aware and calm. I am aware of my actions and directions, but I'm simply floating from instant to instant, content to handle each situation as it arises.
- ❖ The conscious mind is quiet. It used to be filled with an endless chatter of words. But now I choose what I want to think about, and "don't listen in" to the garbage thoughts. As a result, fewer words are passing through my thoughts in a given period of time.
- ❖ My mind is not preoccupied with thoughts of attack or defense.
- ❖ I've promised myself to float through life applying my true self to each situation as it arises. Sometimes I'm forced to play a role (e.g.: work image), but I am aware of the role, and play the role being myself as much as I believe I can.
- ❖ I do not fear stuttering thoughts coming to mind because I know I can let them go. I say to myself, "That's just the stuttering mentality again," and I choose not to care about it or follow it.
- ❖ I try to be totally involved with everything I do, but I'm not preoccupied with the results of my action.
- ❖ Sometimes I feel almost irresponsible or undirected by just floating from second to second, but I know that this is only by comparison to the highly anticipative and control-oriented thinking I used to have. It's correct now, and wrong before. This is supported by my greatly increased performance in everything I do (including work, where regimentation and order is expected).
- ❖ I know that the stuttering is dying off, but I don't care one way or the other. Every so often I'll stutter, but it's such a rare occurrence that it doesn't matter. But I accept that it could happen; I just don't care. In fact, it's beyond my control anyhow whether I stutter. All I can do is let go of the anticipative and control-oriented way of thinking about speech. **Certainly I don't want to fight the stuttering.**
- ❖ I don't have to tell the world I stutter. But if I felt it were necessary to tell someone, I wouldn't hesitate because I'm OK.
- ❖ I have a right to live without unnecessary fear. Anyone who's willing to take the consequences of his lifestyle can make this decision. It's a choice.
- ❖ I never "rehearse" an upcoming conversation in my mind (anticipation and desire for control), nor do I avoid talking (because that's avoidance and I have a right to live without needless fear.)

Since control has been a large part of your thinking for years, it will be difficult to imagine how you can survive without controlling each moment.

Don't be fooled; it's just your control and anticipation habits reasserting themselves.

An Interview with Jack Menear: A Person Who Recovered 282-300

(Jack appeared not only totally fluent, but devoid of the kind of thinking characteristic of “fluent stutterers.”) Even less frequently had I come across someone who could clearly articulate the step-by-step process that led to the solution of his stuttering behavior.

You will be exposed to some radical thoughts about the essential nature of stuttering. And especially, you will discover the ways in which stuttering is a reflection of how a person lives his or her life.

I felt it was really restricting. And, like with most people, it cycled. Sometimes it was real bad and sometimes it was real good. It seemed like if I went out and was doing a lot of drinking with friends, I didn't stutter. That's the hard way to do it. You're always fighting. I never really solved my stuttering problem until just a few years ago. It was always there, and if I wasn't stuttering, I always had that tension, that anxiety. It was always there. Maybe I hid it from other people, but I was still stuttering inside.

And one day in class I must have dwelled on that fear long enough that it got itself going. But you know I didn't really like going out much, and stuff like that.

I did all this stuff, you know. Probably everything I tried gave a little bit of relief. But it was never permanent, and I never knew when this relapse would occur.

Incidentally, I find it difficult to believe that anybody can break the stuttering habit without the direction of a diary. It's a very strong recommendation, because it ties things together. You see the trend. And since your goal is to not think about stuttering, you don't have to if you put it down on paper. You don't have to carry the thought in your head. If you did something right, you don't have to remember how you did it.

I would go home, and every evening I would really get into becoming very calm. And I started to be open to anything that was going on. I started to set directions, and figure out logically what I could do. A lot of it came by insight. You know, when you're very relaxed, a thought comes.

It led me to all sorts of inner thoughts

I don't think I even remember what it is any more. But it was a fear of looking. Once I got over the fear of looking, I realized that there was no thought that could hurt me.

And it sounds like you became gradually more aware of yourself and what was happening, especially, what you might have been holding back.

“Without a clearly defined knowledge of inner feelings, uneasiness, anxiety and nervousness are natural.” And then a parenthesis under natural: “Sometimes this appears as a holding back or a fearful worry about what's going to happen next.” That's exactly your perception. Even your words are the same.

But I recognized that without thoughts like your “13 points” people would not be able to let go until they're willing to look at what's holding them back.

Truly the one thing that I learned was that instead of trying to write your script in life, just start giving it more fluidity. Just let it go.

Let it write itself. You can still have plans and know where you want to go. But don't try and control each second. Don't try and control each conversation. Be more part of a bigger picture. Don't see yourself so much as the center. Now, that's very oriental in thinking.

But if you go out there and you have no thoughts in your head, you'll probably win.

But if you let go, it will almost appear that your hand came up and blocked the punch at the same time that you saw it. So it gave me some insight about not thinking so much.

If you simply keep on the target and squeeze, and every time it goes off it's a surprise to you, you'll do great.

An observation I've made is that people's speech habits are really an extension of their lifestyle. So when a person changes something basic, like how he thinks or how he relates to others, frequently his speech will change also.

One thing that really helped was that I changed my posture. I would see what that felt like. It felt very abnormal. That was not a natural pose. It was the pose of a confident person. Then I would go back and assume my typical slumped position to see what that was telling me.

Now when I stand in my natural position, it is reminiscent of the confident pose that I was playing with. You know, thoughts are reflected in your body...in your body-mind. I changed my mind, and I stopped the stuttering, but my body hadn't caught up yet. That was why I did the rolfing.

I guess what I'm saying is that there's a very strong relation between your physical posture, the way you stand, and how you think.

There's a difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness.

Assertiveness can be quiet and laid back. It means basically being in touch with yourself as a person and your rights as a person, regardless of what anybody else is doing or saying.

When you're being aggressive, it's usually at the expense of someone else.

Somehow in my mind I had formatted any self-assertion on my part as a threat to someone else. It's as if when I "won," the other person had to "lose."

The stuttering mentality leads you to believe that each time you ask even a simple question, you have to struggle.

Being assertive was often seen as a confrontation, because I had confused assertiveness with aggressiveness.

But after I went through a lot of the personal growth trainings, that view of the world changed to a world in which everyone had his or her own mountain. So that instead of a one-mountain world it was a world with infinite mountains and everyone had an opportunity to climb to the top of his.

At this point everything I've learned is kind of integrated.

I began seeing a more holistic picture. After I got through the stuttering, I began to see how the mind restricts the body.

The paper I wrote about how to get past stuttering— people understand it on an intellectual level, that's going to be their first hit. But if they get stuck on the intellectual level, nothing will happen. However, if they become submissive to the habit of letting thoughts go, stuttering will die.

But if you take it on as a goal for the rest of your life, then your vision will improve.

I was going to control it, right? I wasn't going to let the body work the way it was meant to work. I was going to do it. And that screwed everything up.

I mentioned that one of the observations I've made about the Precision Fluency Shaping Program is that if someone is ready to make a change, then the program really helps their speech...in part because of all the practicing they do after the course is over.

I wouldn't call that practice. I would call that integrating it into your life.

What I notice is that some people have not made this change in their life, so that even though they've acquired a new skill, they're constantly fighting that skill because it doesn't fit into how they see themselves.

To absorb that skill they have to give up something more familiar, and they won't do it.

He was primed to learn. So when I talked about letting thoughts go and being an observer, he was very tuned to that. He came looking. He was ready to change.

I called it calibrating my mind. Every morning I would practice the yoga concept of the blank mind. I think they call it looking at the candle... You sit down and try not to have any thoughts. Of course, if you try to force the thoughts out of your mind, you just get more of them. But when you are content to simply sit in the eye of the hurricane, the thoughts die out. Then you can start to get mastery over your mind. The idea is to carry the blank mind through your life. If you can, you won't stutter, because you're not anticipating.

You know, somebody pointed out recently about anticipation that it gets you out of touch with your present experience.

If you're mentally verbalizing thoughts, you are no longer in the current experience. You are no longer able to experience fully what's going on. Because you're either in the past or in the future.

Whereas when you're really *in* the experience, you're not even aware that *you* are talking. It's more like the talking just happens.

If you know who you are, it's pretty easy to simply address yourself to each moment when it arrives. If you don't know who you are, you're not sure you can handle it.

It's hard to make changes without having at least a certain level of self-knowledge because without it you tend to work against yourself.

Yes, there will always be some unknown factor inside you that's holding you back.

Because if people don't think about your 13 points (observations of a stutterer), then what I wrote will simply be an intellectual exercise that people may say nice things about, but no one will gain from.

What I've noticed about people who stutter is that there seems to be an inordinate amount of unconsciousness about themselves as people. And especially, at the moment when a person stutters or blocks, there's a sense of panic and complete unconsciousness as to what's going on. People don't even know they're having feelings at that moment. They have this uncontrollable block, and they don't relate it to anything such as, well, I may be feeling something that I want to block and therefore I'm doing it in my speech. So, the block seems to be an unattached phenomenon. Even people's language supports this, like—"I've been hit by a block."—as if somebody dropped it on them from the top floor, rather than the block being something that they're creating themselves.

I've felt like this when I stuttered. No one can help me. No one can define it. It's coming from nowhere. Well, it wasn't coming from nowhere. I was creating it each time. I used to tell people when they would look at my article initially; I'm not proposing a way to cure stuttering. All I'm proposing is a way that you can stop creating it - because you create it every time.

Stuttering disappears as a by-product of doing something else.

You change. And then the stuttering belongs to another mentality. Or a past life style. And if you have a remission where you fall back into it, look at what happened to your life, and you'll find that you just fell back into that same old mentality again.

It's your body talking to you.

It's a message, you know, for sure. You learned an awful lot about how your mind and body work. And I think this is an advantage. **I can't say that I'm glad that I once stuttered, but being where I am now, I tend to feel like I have a very large advantage over a lot of people in terms of understanding myself. So anyone who undertakes this sort of work, his or her goal is going to be a lot more rewarding than just not stuttering. Their life is really going to get nice.**

Remember, you're not fighting symptoms. You're fighting the mentality that creates them. So you're succeeding when you're not thinking about stuttering. What they're doing is simply measuring a frequency of symptom. What you should really do if you want to monitor your stuttering is to take a hike in the mountains, take all day and go up to Muir Woods and hike. And if you spend all day thinking about the trees and nature and the plants and fresh air and sunshine, you've improved. Because you haven't thought about stuttering. **So actually, the only real measure of your improvement is how well you can stay focused on what you're doing. That's how you measure it.**

What you seem to be saying is that the best way to deal with something you're afraid of is to do what often feels unnatural; that is, take the thing you're afraid of and simply put it aside. Let it be there, but don't become obsessed with it. Instead, focus your attention on the things you really want to do. Get caught up in useful details, like how you want go about accomplishing these things.

When a fear thought comes by, if you take that fear thought and identify with it right at your center, it consumes you. And then you'll screw up because you're afraid. The other way is to say, "Oh yeah, that's a fear thought which is just the opposite of that other thought here, which is a success thought.

And you simply notice it.

You simply notice it's there and say, "Well, I'd rather go over here with this success thought."

It's the difference between "being" the thought and "having" it.

When you have good thought mastery, you can simply look at it, take from it and extract from it what you need, but it always remains just a thought.

Another thing that's a killer is the label "stutterer." They force you into a box. Whereas, if you can change "stutterer" to a "person who stutters," you've changed the language from *being* the thing to *having* the thing. The difference between a person who sees himself as a stutterer and a person who sees himself as simply a person who sometimes stutters can really be illustrated by this example. If I talk for an hour, and I see myself as a stutterer, and I don't block, then I see that hour as an absence of something that should be there. Whereas, if I'm a person who stutters, and I talk for an hour without difficulty, then that's just how it is. I'm not aware of missing anything. There's not something I should be doing.

There are a lot of thoughts that are the flip side of the fear. And those thoughts are like— "Hey, I'm doing pretty damn good." It's murder because that will start the down cycle. You'll go to another trough the minute you think about that, because that reinforces the idea of—"Hey, I've escaped for an hour."

Exactly, but your context, your frame of reference has not changed. The window through which you view the world has not changed. If you say, "Hey, I'm doing okay," you're still looking through the window of performance which says that I have to perform, and that there are a lot of things I do which aren't okay.

Right. And the only thing you can do is just decide that you're going to change that way of thinking. People are what they think. Let's say one of the changes you want to make is to take out the fear that you might stutter. There's a double fear there: *fear of the fear* of stuttering. That's the killer. **So you need to say, "Okay, I've decided I'm not going to live with that any more. I know that I can't stop it from coming to my mind, but I'm simply going to stop becoming caught up in it."**

I think that's an important thing that people need to know—that if they limit their change only to their speech, they're in trouble.

If your whole life were only dedicated to giving up something about yourself that you don't like, it would probably fail. But if you decide that, hey, what I really want to do is move myself over here, this is my goal, this is my direction—this is where the diary helps. When I first understood that I was creating the stuttering myself, then I went to this blank mind concept. It was almost scary, because my mind felt like a vacuum. I mean, there wasn't anything going on in there. And I started to feel lonesome. I started to be a little afraid, because there was a void there. I had taken out what had consumed like 90% of my conscious thinking hours, and there was nothing there to replace it. At that point I began to get totally involved in my job and my social life after work. And my life began to fill up.

But I think part of that humor was that I was relatively insecure. It was easy back then to follow more powerful people, because I didn't have to decide, and I didn't have to propose a plan. And sometimes it was difficult to say no. I found that more or less I was being whipsawed around by

what other people wanted, rather than what I wanted. A big change was that I decided to take that part myself.

I would hide from the negative or sad or emotionally drained feelings. I'd just push them to the background and cover them up with happy feelings. I don't do that any more. If something is going badly, if I feel saddened by something, I just feel it. Sometimes I'll actually come home and just cry the thing out if that's necessary and *feel* what it's like to be sad. That's a valid feeling, too. Like, get into it. Go through the thing. And it, too, will pass. But when you come out, it means that you've lived the bad times second to second just like you've lived the good times. And there's no reason why you should go back into stuttering because times are bad. If you're living second to second, if you're just flowing with this life trend, you flow through it in good times *and* in the bad times. You're complete.

I always hid from sad feelings.

So you went along with only what made you comfortable, and whatever you didn't like you blocked out. My guess is that a major way you blocked out bad feelings was in your speech...since speech is the major way to communicate feelings.

I'm still having a little bit of trouble feeling the emotions of true sadness and rage. Rage and anger.

For the first time I realized that the block served a function, which was to keep those feelings out of my awareness where I wouldn't have to experience them, let alone deal with them. That was my threshold experience.

You see that stuttering is a mechanism to stop you from being able to go inside. I used to stutter, when I went into the stutter, there was a complete block of everything. **There was a total insensitivity to everything that happened until I was done.**

What it is, is a sense of panic. It's a total unconsciousness about what's going on.

That's really true. It's total tension. Total insensitivity.

So part of what you have to do is to assist people, first of all, in staying conscious.

Number one, they suddenly find themselves talking without blocking, and secondly, the quality of their voice, what a psychologist calls the "affect," the feeling level, magically transforms.

It's simply a question of allowing people to recognize what's going on and staying in touch with it while they're talking.

I think once people open up, if they're going to live their feelings, then they're on their way. If you're not afraid of your feelings, then they can't hurt you. And they start to become valuable.

I never did any of that, but I read an awful lot.

My feelings are a lot more accessible now. And consequently my self-image is a lot broader because I've accepted a lot more in.

Exactly. Certainly from the time I saw what was going on until now I like life a lot better—more than I ever did back then.

From Stuttering to Stability 301-312

By: Linda Rounds

But when you arrive home, what if on this particular evening something new happens, and you are handed the emotional tools to immediately control the stuttering? Too good to be true? Another empty promise?

Not so fast, it really happened.

I began stuttering at the age of five, and by the age of seven I was proficient at it. I was fully equipped with every emotion and belief necessary to be good at stuttering.

During my childhood school years, once a week, instead of being allowed to go outside to play at recess time, I was often whisked away to speech therapy.

Their intentions were good but their actions left me feeling even more inadequate and fearful. It became clear to me that not only did I perceive myself as being different from the other kids, but the adults perceived it also.

You see, I have always been bothered by the theories that stuttering is caused by a physical defect in the speaking mechanism and/or brain.

It also did not take rocket science to figure out that my speech mechanisms were in good working order since even my most difficult words could be spoken fluently in certain situations. And then there was that ever-present anxiety that always preceded the stuttering. Hmmm, I wonder what would happen if there were no anxiety?

If you are trying to solve a problem without making headway, chances are that you are trying to solve the wrong problem. He felt that many stuttering treatments are not inclusive enough to fully describe the full dynamics of what drives stuttering.

To remove the problem you must destroy its structure.

John's Stuttering Hexagon was the most accurate description of the mystery behind stuttering that I had read to date.

WHAT IS NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING?

Neuro-Linguistic Programming is a model that helps you take charge of running your own brain by identifying disempowering thoughts, values, beliefs and perceptions and restructuring them to be more empowering. Neuro-Semantics works with the higher-level thought processes. It specifically involves our thoughts/feelings about our thoughts, emotions, memories, imaginations, perceptions, beliefs, etc. (i.e., fearing the fear of stuttering).

“In NLP/NS we hold the belief that each person has all the resources that they need in order to ‘fix’ any cognitive (thinking) based problem they may have.”

It is important to understand that Neuro-Semantics utilizes the person's own resources to bring about change. Everybody, regardless of his or her station in life, operates from a belief system. We reference

this belief system in determining our self-esteem, our personal limitations, our viewpoint on the meaning of life, how others view us, what we can and cannot accomplish in life, and every other judgment we make about ourselves, others and the world we live in. There are as many belief systems as there are people. In assisting individuals to overcome cognitive problems, Neuro-Semantics first attempts to discover the person's unique belief system and then utilizes it to bring about change.

Bob had effectively used my belief in God to reframe my thoughts of fear, anxiety, and phobia by forcing them together, knowing full well that my beliefs would not allow the two to reside together.

In NLP/NS we hold the belief that each person has the resources needed for his or her own healing. We also believe in utilizing each individual's resources. We do not judge the resources; we simply use them.

In Linda's case, her highest resources were her Christian faith. I have learned over the years that a person's religious beliefs usually provide the most effective resources, and that when they are applied to the problem state, the person will experience the greatest healing. However, even if you do not hold any religious beliefs, we believe you already have adequate resources to overcome any cognitively based problem you may have. The reason — every individual maintains high level beliefs, values, etc. that make for excellent healing resources.

Bob had me remember the first time I felt the anxiety related to stuttering. My first memory of feeling the anxiety was ...Bob reframed this memory, which effectively removed the impact of those past perceptions.

EARLY RESULTS

How did this work in the following days after the 45 minute call with Bob? Well, I kept track. The following Monday and Tuesday at work I had nine occasions where anxiety set in. They had nothing to do with stuttering per se but everything to do with the anxiety behind the stuttering.

My mind immediately began an internal war of “to tell or not to tell.”

I came to the conclusion that if I ever wanted to be 100 percent free of stuttering, I was going to have to step out on a limb and be willing to deal with uncomfortable thoughts and feelings.

Her thoughts had to be effectively “reframed” in order to get all the points on the hexagon positively biased.

Occasionally I would get the physical sense that I would stutter or block, but I never did. In essence the physiological aspects were still present which Bob later explained was a result of the muscles still being neurologically programmed (another point on the Stuttering Hexagon).

The four questions from Cartesian Logic are most effective in critical thinking. In the context of stuttering, ask yourself:

1. What will happen if I continue stuttering?
2. What will happen if I stop stuttering?
3. What will not happen if I continue stuttering?
4. What will not happen if I do not stop stuttering?

Now I was remembering the many times people who have crossed my path had made comments on how “private” I was in sharing personal thoughts and feelings.

I was caught in a divided intention. On one hand, I wanted to speak to please my friends and family, but on the other, I wanted to hold back to please myself and feel safe. This ultimately resulted in experiencing speech blocks.

Evaluate the reason why I felt I needed to maintain so much privacy and also if it was something that was still a valid behavior to keep today.

I also have the ability to evaluate on a different basis what should be shared and what should be kept private.

I have learned that the roots of the problem may be different for each individual, but the symptoms (anxiety, fear, muscle tension in the vocal cords and stomach, etc.) and the outcome (stuttering and blocking) appear to be the same. If, as suspected, emotions such as fear and anxiety are critical components of the Stuttering Hexagon, then Neuro-Semantics provides some useful tools for alleviating these unconscious negative emotions and effecting major changes within the entire stuttering system.

Strategies for Dealing with Stuttered Feelings, Speech and Communication 313-319

By: Mark Irwin D.D.S.

When people seek help, they usually feel they are in a lose-lose situation.

On any given day my fluency would vary from patient to patient. In conversing with the very young, very elderly and very nervous, I was relatively smooth, but with the highly impatient, fast talking and demanding businessmen, I still had serious difficulty. Between these two extremes there was a range of correlated speech success.

Eventually, it became obvious to me that my speech was a function of how I perceived the interaction between myself and the other person. My blocking seemed to be more about my perceptions than my physiological ability to produce speech (I could speak quite well when talking to myself.) Consequently, I felt that if I could change those perceptions, then I could change my speech.

HOW I WENT ABOUT IT

I became more assertive. It was silly, but even though I was the dentist, I had to realize I had as much right to be there and could take as much time as suited me. I had been giving away my power to the patient, and I had been doing quite the same thing in my interactions with people outside my work. Learning by observation was extremely important for me.

I increased my self-esteem and self-confidence. I set out to know more, read more, take more courses. My issue was communication. I read all I could about body language, improved my English expression by studying grammar and developing my vocabulary, and furthered my general knowledge by studying psychology, anthropology and history. I figured that if I was going to speak well, I also needed to have something to speak about. And having more knowledge would improve my confidence.

I focused on what I could do right in the communication process, not what I was doing wrong. I stopped obsessing on my disfluencies. I learnt to smile more, relax, listen, and breathe at the same time!

I monitored my anxiety level in relation to that of the other person. I developed this technique, which I called Controlled Emotional Response. I would simply focus on connecting with the emotional response of the person to whom I was communicating (rather than worrying about how I was performing!) by giving them a score from zero to 10 as to how anxious I perceived them to be. I would then focus on relaxing sufficiently so as to achieve a score that was equal to, if not less than, that for myself. In doing this, I was able to stand guard and stop the old uncontrolled feelings of anxiety from overwhelming me like they had always done. I was also taking the stress off myself by focusing on someone else. In addition, paying attention to what the other person was feeling also helped me in the communication process.

I restructured negative associations. I used positive replay. If for some reason I had had a negative experience, rather than beat myself up about it (like I had always done in the past), I would replay the situation in my mind. But this time the replay was changed to have me perform positively; that is, to perform in the way I would have preferred and certainly in the way I would like to when again I found myself in a similar situation. In this way I trained myself to give an automatic positive response when presented again with the same situation.

I lowered my resting level of anxiety. I developed a technique for what I call speaking with POISE that involved meditation and self-hypnosis. Have you ever noticed how some people seem to be more relaxed than others? I have, and I resolved to become more relaxed myself. I felt that I had been anxious for so long that a hyper anxiety state had become part of me. I was so used to being anxious that being anxious was normal for me. So I studied meditation and self-hypnosis and developed a mantra for myself.

Meditation. I started in a chair in a quiet room and practiced relaxing. Ideally, it's good to do this three times a day. If you return to that chair each time, the chair will soon become associated with relaxation, making it easier to enter a deeper state of relaxation and to enter that state more and more quickly each time you sit there. While in that chair, focus on the tip of a candle flame until you "see" a line of energy between your eyes and the candle flame. Breathe in the energy from that flame, calling it in turn poise, strength and self-confidence. Breathe out stress anxiety and confusion. A variation is to "see" stress, anxiety and confusion being bundled in a canoe, floated over a waterfall and drawn out to sea...way out of your life!

Self-hypnosis. I would start out by sitting that same favorite chair and calling to mind several people who I regarded as outstanding communicators. Then I read myself the following passage. "As you become...and as you remain...more confident and relaxed each day...so you will become more confident and relaxed in the presence of other people...no matter whether they be few or many...no matter whether they be friends or strangers.

"In everyday life...you will enjoy opportunities to speak...and do so with intonation and rhythm and breath support...so as you speak you will become completely relaxed both mentally and physically...quite calm and composed. If...at any moment...you should begin to feel difficulty with a particular word...you will stop speaking immediately for a moment or two...and during that brief period of silence, the muscles of your face... your throat...your tongue and your lips...and the muscles of your chest will relax completely...so that when you speak again the difficult word slips out easily. You will cultivate the habit of speaking with POISE where P stands for Projection of voice, O reminds you to

Open the mouth and articulate every sound, I reminds you to inhale, S stands for Smile and E reminds you to Exhale and speak with effortless effort.”

In addition to this approach, which I believe was of significant benefit, I would also program my mind before going to bed by reminding myself of all the things I had done well that day and looked forward to doing even better the next day.

I practiced success. Too often in the past I had tried to master my speech by simply taking a positive attitude, summoning courage and plowing ahead. Too often I had failed. I either was dysfluent, or it felt I was skating on thin ice and my fluency might fall apart at any moment. However after reading Leonard Morehouse’s Theory of Maximum Performance, I realized I needed to link successful behavior with a feeling of ease and enjoyment and an expectation of further success.

The central idea in Morehouse’s book was the value of practicing in a winning environment. In other words it is not enough to practice the successful behavior, it is also important to practice a winning attitude and a winning feeling.

Example: Sportsmen and general population - The last club they attempted to use was the driver! The general group had limited success and often gave up in frustration while the sportsmen group used each successive success to build self-confidence and enjoyed proceeding to each new level of challenge.

My steps to over come phone troubles in order were:

- Learning to relax in my favorite chair (in a quiet corner of my bedroom)
- Learning to relax in my favorite chair while looking at my telephone
- Learning to relax in my favorite chair while hearing the telephone ring
- Learning to relax in my favorite chair while holding the telephone to my ear
- Learning to relax while watching myself in a mirror hold the telephone
- Learning to relax while speaking with the telephone and watching myself in the mirror.
- Learning to relax while ringing and speaking to a friend on the telephone
- Learning to relax while making calls to strangers. (hotel and airline staff)
- Learning to relax while talking on telephones other than the one in my bedroom! (It seems funny but for a while I could only be fluent on that one bedroom telephone.)
- Learning to relax while using the telephone in front of other people

I needed to reinforce the success. Simply doing it once was not enough. I found it necessary to practice each step two to three times per day and make at least 10 calls per day. I also realized from my psychology studies that I had to be constant in my practice. The longer I left between practice sessions, the more likely I was to return to the old fears.

I have also used this strategy to develop my speaking ability and am pleased to report I have now reached division level in Toastmaster public speaking competitions. My steps here involved:

- Learning to speak well when alone (reading aloud and rehearsing my speech)
- Learning to speak well at my stuttering support group meetings
- Learning to speak well at general meetings using a delayed auditory feedback device
- Learning to speak well at Toastmasters

I learned to stay on track. It really helps to join a support group. It is well accepted that support groups have a therapeutic value of their own. This link also provides an opportunity to develop socially. (This is important for people who stutter who need to make up for lost time spent avoiding social situations.)

(People who stutter who have not engaged in discussions have missed an important opportunity for development.) The value of this to our psyche cannot be underestimated.

I changed my self-image as a speaker. My advice: keep a journal. Record your successes.

I developed a sense of humor and a realistic perspective. I find I communicate best when I allow myself a few disfluencies and let go of the need to produce perfect speech. When and if disfluencies occur, I take it as feedback to slow down and breathe more. I no longer feel as embarrassed, ashamed or as tense as I once did. With this approach, I feel certain I am not only decreasing stuttered speech but I am also decreasing, if not eliminating, stuttered feelings which after all are the real cause of the pain of stuttering.

My perspective has drawn inspiration from the following statements:

- Life is a journey not a destination.
- The journey of a 1000 miles starts with a single step.
- Obstacles are only opportunities in disguise.
- The smallest action is better than the noblest intent.

From the philosophy outlined in the verses written by Max Ehrmann in 1927. Known as the Desiderata, it reads:

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are the vexations of the spirit. If you compare yourself to others you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble, it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is, many persons strive for high ideals, and every where life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love, for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are borne of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have the right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul. With all its shame, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be careful. Strive to be happy.

Defining Stuttering From the Speakers Viewpoint 320-327

By: Mark Irwin D.D.S.

Joseph Sheehan, clinical psychologist and PWS who died in 1983, wrote a last statement on his death bed which read: “Defining stuttering as a fluency problem ignores the person; it ignores his feelings about himself, it ignores the significance of stuttering in his life; it ignores the ‘double boiler’ function of maintenance of the handicap in many cases; it ignores the principle that just because an individual stutters, that is necessarily the chief problem with which a clinician need be concerned.” Perkins (90, p. 379).

“In my experience those who have complained most bitterly and seemed most fearful of stuttering have been clients whom I have rarely, if ever, heard stutter. To say they do not stutter is to deny they consider themselves stutters.” Perkins (90, p375).

In brief this paper hopes to provide definitions and labels that enable stuttering to be defined from the speaker’s viewpoint.

How should severity of stuttering be measure? By frequency of behavior or by the degree of reaction to it?

Also given the common coexistence of psychopathology for people who stutter (figures for SAD in adults who stutter range from 50% (Kraaimaat et al, 2002) to 75% (Stein et al, 1996)), should new terminology be developed to bring awareness to this fact?

Stuttering with SAD is a different experience than stuttering without it. It could be said that it is the SAD that accentuates the situational specificity of stuttering as well as resulting in feelings of panic and loss of control. Also it is the SAD that is responsible for serious role impairment and compromise to quality of life.

Example: Consider the following scene. 3 men chat in a bar. Tom’s stutter is more obvious.

TOM: I ssstutter. When I go out it ttttakes me lllonger to order a bbbeer.

DICK: I ssstutter. I order a scotch because I can’t say bbeer.

HARRY: I ssstutter. I’m extremely embarrassed and frustrated by it. I rarely go out. I avoid relationships.

Are these three people suffering the same disorder? Who has the severe stutter? How should they be differentiated? Would they benefit from the same therapy?

First let’s consider: What is stuttering? Is it....

- a) Dysfluent speech the listener hears? (Tom)*
- b) Dysfluent speech the listener hears and the speaker hides? (Dick)*
- c) Dysfluent speech and its effects on quality of life? (Harry)*
- d) d) All of above*

A review of literature and websites would suggest the answer to “What is stuttering?” is d) all of above. The fact that stuttering can be any of the three options creates an obvious problem in communication about stuttering. More specifically it creates a problem with discussion and measurement of stuttering frequency and severity. Currently stuttering and its psychosocial impact are all described by the same word — stuttering. **Stuttering is the name of both the syndrome and the symptom.**

A person with minor *overt* disfluency may be experiencing frequent *covert* disfluency.

Children who stutter should not necessarily be denied therapy simply because they have minor *overt* disfluency. They may well have frequent *covert* disfluency.

Interestingly, selective mutism is a social anxiety disorder in which anxiety symptoms make speech impossible. Clearly anxiety symptoms impact on speech production. Since one of the negative behavioral effects of social embarrassment about stuttering is increased disfluency and more social embarrassment, then a separation of stuttering from social anxiety disorder is difficult.

To explain this point further, “low body weight” means one thing; “distorted body image” means another. Anorexia Nervosa refers to the coexistence of both conditions.

It has previously been recognized that people with phobias like Social Anxiety Disorder are unable to think clearly. Lorberbaum et al (2004) reported phobics react more with automatic emotion and less with reasoning. With too much anxiety, phobics may be unable to think clearly enough to follow rational advice. Simply providing speech technique instruction to a person who stutters with coexisting SAD is to give advice this person is incapable of using under anxiety provoking conditions. These people are functioning more on conditioned emotional responses and are therefore unable to act on advice no matter how logical. It has been recognized that the presence of Social Anxiety Disorder (or any other mental health diagnosis) will result in the sufferer relapsing from a speech restructuring treatment. (Iverach et al, 2009). Another point is strategies given as part of a speech restructuring treatment may function as safety behaviors maintaining if not exacerbating the SAD, and interfering with standard cognitive behavioral therapy techniques by preserving threat belief. (Lovibond et al, 2009).

Stuttered Speech Syndrome would be diagnosed when both disabilities of stuttering and Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) coexist.

Back to the bar example:

TOM: My speech pathologist has diagnosed I have an overt stutter with no covert stuttering or associated psychopathology. Retraining of speech muscles, breathing instruction and rate control are pro- posed.

DICK: My speech pathologist screened for Social Anxiety Disorder. That was not present but she has drawn attention to my covert stutter. I understand I need to overcome my fear and embarrassment of overt stuttering or else it may build to the psychopathology of Social Anxiety Disorder. If this happens I will be diagnosed with Stuttered Speech Syndrome.

HARRY: My speech pathologist screened for Social Anxiety Disorder and has diagnosed severe Stuttered Speech Syndrome. I have been told I need to do something about my SAD before I can expect any speech restructuring treatment for my stuttering to be effective. Cognitive behavioral therapy and participation in self-help groups are two of the treatment modalities that have been suggested. Referrals have been arranged.

Dick worked hard on his attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and emotions and overcame his covert stuttering. While he occasionally overtly stutters he is able to order the beer he wants.

Since not everyone who stutters suffers social phobia or uses the covert strategy of word omission, substitution and circumlocution, then distinctions are needed in stuttering terminology. Leaving aside questions of cause and neurological, genetic and biochemical events, it can be argued the definitions that make most sense are:

Stutter (synonymous with stammer) - to produce dysfluent speech characterized in overt form by repetitions, prolongations and blocks, or in covert form by avoidance, substitution and circumlocution.

Overt Stuttering is repetitions, prolongations and blocks.

Covert Stuttering is word omission, substitution and circumlocution aimed at hiding, what the speaker recognizes would be, an overt stutter.

For those who would like a more academic definition then, the following is most accurate:

Stuttering —temporary inability, either overtly or covertly, to move forward fluently with linguistically formulated speech. Perkins (84, p. 431).

The link of stuttering to the post 1985 definition of social phobia, is best made by creating a new term:

Stuttered Speech Syndrome - *symptoms resulting from coexistence of stuttering and social anxiety disorder (social phobia)*. Specifically these symptoms are behaviors of stuttering with feelings of panic and loss of control, situation avoidance, attitudes of low self-confidence and low self-esteem, and emotions of frustration and anxiety.

A Process of Recovery 328-333

By: Walt Manning, Ph.D.

There are many paths up the mountain of fluency.

The amount of time that is required for practicing behavioral techniques to the extent that they are over learned and permit performance amongst the stresses of the real world. It's also important to realize that it will take time for affective and cognitive adjustments to catch up with behavioral changes.

Although I was reasonably successful and really quite happy throughout high school and college, I frequently felt as though I was on the edge of a precipice as I cautiously placed my words so as not to fall off the ledge of fluency into the abyss of stuttering.

Although I was able to survive as a stutterer, I was frequently frustrated and sometimes angered by my inability to discover what I sensed was a greater potential. I was often cautious when speaking and would not allow myself to say something without first scanning ahead and looking for feared words.

Because of my fear of stuttering, I refused to even consider taking part in some conversations or activities such as presentations or school plays.

Because I expended so much effort running from my stuttering by avoiding situations and substituting words, I often did not allow myself to know precisely what I truly thought, and my thoughts never had a chance to grow.

I completed college and had a degree but knew that my stuttering would be a major roadblock in finding a job.

Most importantly, treatment helped me to understand that I had a choice; I didn't have to be helpless when I stuttered. I began to see that there were some cause-and-effect relationships about my stuttering and my response to the experience. I realized that if I avoided certain words they became more powerful. On the other hand, if I chose not to avoid the words, even if I stuttered on them, the words became less fearful.

After completing the program I returned home for the summer to find temporary work. It's difficult to go home again to the sites of many past fluency failures. I remember avoiding some places, people, words, and sounds. I was far from free. I also remember feeling pressure to maintain my fluency when speaking with people who knew that I had attended the treatment program.

Still, I continued to have many fears related to stuttering. I know that the cognitive and attitude changes necessary for success had not caught up to my ability to use behavioral techniques to achieve fluency. It would be another fifteen years before I achieved the confidence in my techniques and my ability to use them that would result in a high level of nearly spontaneous fluency — a point where I would no longer have to closely monitor my speech production or feel handicapped by my stuttering.

I know that there was no single step or event. It is a process of change that is still underway.

I think that it was especially important they were willing to walk the path with me, modeling behavior and ways of thinking that I needed to try on and experience.

I found that if I was willing to be persistent and wanted success badly enough, it would eventually happen.

It's just that I don't do it very often — maybe two or three times a month. When I do stutter, I don't avoid, I'm not likely to panic, and I have the confidence that I can stay in the moment and smooth out the fluency break. Perhaps the most important thing is that the possibility of stuttering never enters into my decision making about living.

For a few years I felt the urge to apologize for my fluency when speaking to stuttering support groups, but I no longer do that.

Finally, it's important to explain that I am comfortable with my fluency. It takes a while for that to happen and it requires some substantial shifting in the way you define yourself.

I have come to regard my stuttering as a gift, something that has taken me to exciting places, provided me with opportunities for growth, and allowed me to meet wonderful people that I would never have met otherwise. I've heard other people who stutter say the same thing, and I know they mean it.

Freedom of Speech: How I Overcame Stuttering 334-354

By: Tim Mackesey, CCC-SLP

As a result of fear, I would stutter while asking to flee.

I created massive speech blocks

I left the class that day feeling defeated.

Later that day I was in my room alone. I was reading aloud the very same text I had read earlier in class. I read totally fluently and totally at ease.

Was I hallucinating or was I really capable of speaking this way? I was in a different identity at the moment. This “alone identity” did not expect or know how to stutter. Then I got the idea to record myself. I went to push the record button, started reading it, and immediately started stuttering. I turned off the machine in disgust.

All I knew was that I was doing something to sabotage my speech.

“THE JOURNEY BEGINS WITHIN AND IT ENDS WITHIN.” — SUFI

I wasn’t dating much because I wouldn’t call any of the women I met. Not calling women was self-induced torture.

I have learned that when people finally take action they are either motivated by pain or pleasure.

In hindsight, it is clear to me that my reaction to these experiences are the reasons why I started programming myself to prevent stuttering. Many years later I would learn Charles Van Riper’s famous quote: “Stuttering is everything we do trying not to stutter.”

When I started to stutter, she looked down, and when she looked back up at me, she had an uncomfortable smile. She now knew my secret. I tried to pretend like it didn’t happen. The number of events that involved stuttering—events that helped build my phobia around speaking—developed quickly in middle school. Reading out loud was my biggest nightmare until eighth grade. Oral presentations would soon be torturous, as well. The telephone became as painful as picking up a piece of hot charcoal.

Taking a principle or belief such as “I will protect myself from feeling embarrassment by avoiding speaking and using tricks”...and translating that into physical behaviors...is called *mind-to-muscle*, by cognitive psychologist L. Michael Hall. This physicalizing of my speaking fear manifested itself in such behaviors as eye contact aversion, word changing, avoiding, sitting low in my seat in class, hanging up instead of leaving phone messages, inserting “uh um” as filler words before stuttering, using character voices, speaking on expiratory reserve and raising the pitch of my voice, jerking my head down during blocks, and so on. Over time, these avoidance strategies evolved into automatic and unconscious habits. Every behavior had a positive intention at first but ultimately, did not serve me well at all!

This mechanism inside the brain that can scan into the past and/or forward for feared words a Linguistic Search Engine (LSE).

I was back in speech therapy now. I was being helped by a lovely woman with good intentions. I was being told that if I said five words, took a new breath, and said five more words, I would stay smooth and fluent. One day before a planned oral presentation in class, I came to her with great concern. I shared my fear of stuttering. She said: “Don’t worry. Go in there, say your five words, take a breath, and five more words each breath and you’ll stay totally smooth.” I went to class that day, stood in front of the class, stuttered, and I was snickered at by several children. Speech therapy had lost credibility for me, and I convinced my parents to let me quit.

I taught myself a myriad of strategies to avoid stuttering.

I negotiated a “D” grade for not doing an oral report in one class.

I substituted words, and avoided words so frequently that when I got done saying something, I would often be asked, “What did you say?” Then I would end up stuttering through what I had originally intended to say. A very inefficient and frustrating way to communicate.

But I assigned great shame to my stuttering. I began mind reading my listeners, creating toxic thoughts such as “What would her mother think if she heard me stutter?”

I would see other kids my age organizing foursomes and playing together on a routine basis. **This self-induced outcast role was very painful.**

When drunk, I forgot about my stuttering and was more fluent—liquid fluency.

I started learning that I had some choices: I did not have to stutter the way I was stuttering, and I did not have to avoid the way I was avoiding. My covert avoidance was far from over though.

On speech “field trips” to a local shopping mall, my assignment was to stutter on purpose with store employees. When I did it, I would walk away from those sessions with a euphoric tingling in my stomach, knowing I just did what I feared the most. In retrospect, that very area around my abdomen I would later learn was ground zero for my anticipatory anxiety that precedes stuttering.

After several severe blocks on “hound,” I changed the word Greyhound into Graydog. Thinking it was cute, other drivers and dispatch adopted this new term for Greyhound. If people were in the car to hear me, I stuttered even worse into the radio.

It was show time! I decided that I was going to say it. I did my best to calm my racing mind and my panicked chest enough to use an easy onset into Henry.

I started the word by emitting air through my larynx and stretching the /h/ sound for a couple seconds. When Henry Street came out of my mouth without a stutter, I wanted to park the car and begin a Mardi Gras-sized street party. That moment changed my life.

Flo gave me a copy of an article called “And the Stuttering Just Dies” that was written by a man named Jack Menear who had overcome stuttering. A belief was born: the belief that others have overcome stuttering. Stories like this are metaphors that drove my determination.

But I kept pushing.

Once again I developed my personal list of feared situations.

You see, I only spoken of my stuttering problem with a select few people, yet everyone knew.

I was desensitizing myself to stuttering and earning new confidence.

Later I would learn the process by which I would “grow a word fear.” It helped me understand how I acquired feared words as a child; many still provoked anxiety as an adult at this stage of my recovery. In college and early careers, words such Henry Street, manager, and others entered my daily vocabulary. When I started stuttering on those words I would remember them using a phenomenon known as *somatic memory*. My brain filed them away as feared words. By attaching meaning and emotion to a stuttering event, I would remember it vividly. I would replay the moments in the cinema of my mind: hearing, feeling, and seeing the moments of stuttering. When encountering those words in the future I would feel anticipation in my stomach—a sort of panic sensation like the *fight or flight response*—and then avoid or speed up and stutter.

Opening up, talking about stuttering, and removing avoidance was essential to my recovery.

At the end of the meeting, I was asked to stand, introduce myself, and share why I was there that evening. The hounds had me in the tree, but this time I was going to bark out the words.

At the first meeting of each new club I joined, I would introduce myself and tell them I stuttered. I knew by disclosing that fact I was less prone to anxiety and avoidance behaviors.

When I first started Toastmasters, I was guilty of black and white thinking. After giving a speech I would judge my performance solely on how much I stuttered. If I had three or four significant stutters in a five-minute talk, I would beat myself up.

They had good intentions and wanted to help me, but because I was not open enough about the stuttering, I did not give them direction and guidance. It’s critical that the person who stutters “sets the frames (i.e.: framework)” for his stuttering. This means letting people know how to talk about it, when to talk about it, and anything else important to the person who stutters.

Communication is like dancing a waltz. Sometimes you have to ask your partner not to step on your toes. If you try to conceal your stuttering and act self-conscious about it, your dance partner may step on your toes without realizing it. Averting eye contact, substituting words, saying “um,” and other avoidances can discourage you from continuing the waltz.

I eventually got to where I transformed anticipation and fear into adrenaline. My black and white thinking started developing shades of gray. I was enjoying personal growth. Failure was replaced with feedback. If I slipped, I got right back up.

Example: Speed skater Dan Jansen is a role model for me. In his late teens, after training since a child for the Olympics, he fell in Albertville, France. Four years later at the next Olympics, he learned his sister died moments before his race and fell again. Four more years of training, and his final Olympics, he fell during the race he was all but guaranteed of winning the gold. He had one more chance—the 1,000 meter race.

Dan was a distant third in the rankings for the 1,000. His sports psychologist told him to

walk around saying “I love the 1,000.” His teammates and family were asked to listen and confirm he was saying it.

In his third Olympics and his final race, in an event where he was not favored, he won the gold medal. You may remember someone passing his baby to him to carry during a victory lap.

What was more important to him than falling? How could Dan keep getting up? How could he silence thoughts like “Others judge you...you’re a choker...you’ll never win.” His goal—the gold medal and personal redemption—must have motivated him to endure all the heartbreaks. In 1983, in Boca Raton, Florida, I saw my own freedom of speech as the gold medal I simply had to have.

I think I originally entered graduate school with the intention of learning to slay my stuttering dragon. I made an unreasonable goal of curing my stutter during graduate school. I was open about it, and all my classmates knew I stuttered.

Going into speech-language pathology (SLP) as a person who stutters has the potential to introduce a number of unique frames of thinking. Some of my “frames” were: “What will people think about a stuttering SLP?” “I must overcome it by the end of graduate school!” “How will my supervisors evaluate me in the clinic if I stutter with a client?” As a graduate student in the speech and hearing clinic we performed therapy while supervisors and parents observed through a two-way mirror. I quickly learned what it might be like to be a goldfish in a fishbowl. I was very self-conscious of the possibility of stuttering in front of the parents of the children I treated. **It was the meaning and significance that I gave stuttering that was at the core of the problem.**

I thought stuttering took away from my credibility. It was always a challenge for me to say “speech pathology” and “speech therapy” as I feared stuttering on those very words. That was because I was “mind reading.” **Mind reading is presuming to know the reaction of the listener.** Later, I realized the humor of introducing myself as a speech pathologist specializing in stuttering while I stuttered during it. Again, it came down to whether I personalized stuttering, whether it permeated my identity, whether I thought it took away from me as a person, and whether I would have less credibility if I kept stuttering.

One of the most important things I learned was that listeners did not react to my stuttering as I presumed they did. I learned to stutter on purpose. I learned to push myself further into speaking situations.

“What do you believe is the secret to overcoming stuttering?” He replied: “I’d want to know what I did when I stuttered.”

What thoughts and feelings preceded the stutter, what did I do during the stutter, and how did I reflect back on the blocks I experienced.

However, I still had specific speaking situations in which I consistently felt anxiety and stuttered.

One situation that speaks volumes about my status at that time was my level of comfort and fluency when at the bedside talking to a patient and the patient’s family. When a nurse walked in the room I was more self-conscious of my stuttering and, in turn, was more likely to block. Giving formal tests where I would have to read to the patient would trigger my stuttering, especially if the nurse were working in the room. This anxiety went right back to my experience of reading in middle school. The memory of those

situations, especially the way I felt at the time (my somatic memory), still had enormous power to run my life.

Speaking to doctors brought out some of my worst stuttering. **When they entered the room, it was as though I were two people.** If I had stuttered in front of that doctor before, I would remember that and get anxious. If I did not know the doctor, I would become anxious because I wanted to conceal the stuttering. Typically, I would have my worst stuttering when calling a doctor’s office for orders to see a patient.

I believed that if a physician heard me stutter, he or she would think less of me and would give me less credibility. Typically, my stuttering would be triggered by the memory of a specific phone call 20 years previously in which I stuttered. The embarrassment and shame I had attached to these early calls explained my ability to recall them so vividly. **It was those early remembered feelings—the somatic memories— that explained why I had so much anxiety in my stomach and chest before calling.** It was as if I were experiencing those early crises all over again.

I later learned that these were only my projections.

Had I responded the way I traditionally did and ended the call with my tail between my legs, it would have been a loss, not just for the both of us, but for her grandchild as well.

“And come to think of it, you are ideal for your job. When you go to see my patients who have had a stroke and cannot speak, you bring a compassion that others might not have.” **He reframed several years worth of illogical thinking about being an SLP who stutters.**

It was something I knew but was refusing to believe because of my habit of mind reading.

As toxic thoughts entered my mind, the dragon belched his nasty breath. I took a quick inventory of the mental “frames” that controlled my thinking at that moment. They could be summarized as this: “If I stutter, people will ask who was that? Oh, it is the new speech pathologist stuttering. Who hired him? They’ll hire anyone!”

I knew I had to find a reason to page someone that very day. If not, I would develop a phobia.

My Linguistic Search Engine predicted I would stutter on “respiratory.” I felt panic.

I have lost track of the number of times parents of children who stutter and/or adults who stutter have cited my history as a reason why they *chose* to work with me.

During the recovery process, there are always times when the person’s anxiety is so overwhelming that his or her speech tools don’t work. This is why it’s necessary to develop strategies for running your mind as well as your speech.

NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING

I knew my stuttering was much more than simply a motor speech problem. There were too many inconsistencies in that theory. How could I be spontaneously fluent in so many contexts using no modification strategies at all? How did I “turn on my stuttering” consistently with certain people or in certain situations? How is it that specific words from childhood would still provoke a panic attack?

NLP is an umbrella term that encompasses a myriad of therapeutic processes originating from the cognitive-behavioral sciences.

Drawing ideas from psychotherapy is not new to speech pathology, and desensitization to stuttering is absolutely critical to complete recovery.

I began learning strategies to run my brain.

By 2001, I had been using stuttering modification, desensitization, voluntary stuttering, and pushing myself into more speaking as my frame- work for recovery for 15 years.

Vince Lombardi once said: “The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender.”

Bob Bodenhamer helped me identify specific therapeutic processes in NLP to eliminate the thought patterns that led to stuttering. He put me through these processes and then taught me how to do them.

As I continued to resolve my remaining stuttering I noticed that my stuttering seemed to follow a *1-2-3 sequence*:

1. Negative thoughts. The circumstances leading up to a block usually began with a negative thought. After 15 years of hard work, my stuttering had become very context specific. I could pretty much name the people, places, and words I still stuttered on. The blocks were usually preceded by negative thoughts such as “I anticipate stuttering.” “I do not want to stutter with this person.” “This word is hard for me.”

2. Anticipatory Anxiety. This is also known as the General Arousal Syndrome or the fight-or-flight-response. My negative thoughts would instantly lead to anticipatory anxiety. When I anticipated stuttering, I always had a nervous sensation in my stomach that felt very much like panic. The level of panic was usually dependent on the situation.

3. Choice Point. *Someone once said, “between a stimulus and a response is a choice.”* In the past, once a thought about stuttering (#1) had created anticipatory anxiety (#2), I would do one of two things:

- 1) **Avoid:** use tricks like saying “um,” switch words, not raise my hand, and employ other strategies to try to not stutter. In this situation my intention was to protect myself from the pain of stuttering and more important, to shield myself from all the bad things that stuttering meant to me.
- 2) **Push and block:** this is the impulsivity that I had translated from mind into muscle. In a state of panic, to rid myself of my anxious feelings about stuttering, I would jump into a word and create some or all of my familiar stuttering symptoms (repetitions, blocks, facial contortions, eye contact aversion, etc.)

It is essential that a person who stutters slow his mind and body so he or she can make different choices and practice new behaviors. This is called “interrupting the pattern” or “breaking state.” Thus, once I was in a moment of anxiety about stuttering, or actually stuttering, I had to find ways to interrupt this *process*.

But when my anxiety was raging, my mind went numb, and these strategies would become difficult and sometimes impossible to use. The classic strategies did help me reduce the severity of my stuttering over

a 15-year period, but I found that even when using slides and pullouts, there was still a level of tension in my larynx, mouth, and *abdomen*.

Ironically, the more I would try to prevent stuttering, the more tension I created. A.k.a. Over attention

But now, I was also doing my best to desensitize myself as well. I was seeing the importance of digging deeper and understanding my anticipatory anxiety.

Since the feeling of anxiety in my abdomen was a messenger telling me to use the slides and pullouts, I wondered what would happen if I could remove that very anxiety.

Moving away from focusing on motor speech strategies to removing the process that created anxiety.

“Drop-Down Through” helped me reframe my thoughts to eliminate the panic sensation in my stomach *before* initiating speech. Now, instead of focusing on a fluency technique such as the easy onset, I focused all my energy and attention on the release of the anxiety.

Here are some of the concepts, tools, and techniques that I’ve found useful.

Somatic memory. As mentioned earlier, this refers to the physical sensations associated with a past event—a kind of mental movie in which we can re-experience what a previous event actually felt like. Try it out. See if you can vividly recall a wonderful vacation or holiday. Notice the positive sensations. If it was a holiday at the beach, notice the warmth of the sun on your skin. Smell the salt air. Feel the sand under your feet. Thinking back on such pleasant moments will help you recall the good feelings associated with this earlier experience. However, the reverse is also true. Recalling negative memories will trigger uncomfortable feelings. I started a list of specific situations, people, and words in which I anticipated stuttering.

My somatic memory would trigger the panic sensations associated with similar unpleasant experiences from the past.

“What could I do about it?” The good news is that negative memories can be cancelled out by overlying them with somatic memories of positive events. These “borrowed” positive feelings can help you transform a negative experience into a positive one.

Anchors. An anchor is a specific memory that allows you to tap into the feelings and meanings of a previous experience. For example, think of a favorite song. You can go back and fully experience where, when, and with whom you heard it, how you felt, and so on. You can choose to replay the song to re-experience what you felt like back then. The song becomes an anchor to that earlier, positive mindset. Going back to re-experience a past feel-good event explains why we like to repeatedly play particular songs, albums and movies.

Through many uncomfortable speaking experiences, I began to see how I had developed a stuttering timeline with anchors to many fearful words and situations. Whenever I experienced one of these stuttering anchors, I would slip into my familiar panic state. For example, when the assistant manager’s line rang at the hotel, I was instantly anchored to an earlier feared event, and I’d quickly slip into a state of panic.

Time line. Each situation in which I’d stuttered and endowed with embarrassment, shame, and

frustration became another point on my stuttering time line. Eventually, this time line stretched over 30 years.

Linguistic Search Engine (LSE). This refers to the mechanism in our brain that allows us to instantly identify a feared word.

The only reason we remember the stuttered words in the first place was because we applied meaning to that past moment of stuttering. Thus, when the search engine is not running any more, we remain more grounded and fully in the present.

Reframing. If stuttering events were emotionally neutral to us, would we recall stuttering and make choices to change words, look away, avoid, and the like? I think not. Anticipating stuttering, feeling panic, remembering specific words, sounds, speaking situations, and all other cognitive memories of past stuttering events are made possible only when we apply meaning (negative) to stuttering.

Alfred Korzybski, the developer of general semantics, said: “Human beings are a semantic class of life.” What he means is that humans are programmed to endow their experiences with meaning. We do that by setting up frames-of-reference. Hence, it is essential to reframe the very meaning we have created for our stuttering. Remember how I thought that my stuttering meant having no credibility around doctors? That frame was what triggered the panic sensation and led to stuttering.

Marcus Aurelius once said: “**Men are not disturbed by things, but by their estimate of things.**” He meant the meaning we give things.

One part of the recovery process, then, is to reframe the meanings we give to the speech-related moments of our life — turning negatives to positives.

Breaking state. I had to learn to identify when I was going into a stuttering state and break, or interrupt, that state. When I realized that I felt anticipation in my stomach prior to stuttering, it made sense to me to look into that and see what I could change. By using time-line therapy techniques, reframing, the Drop-Down Through process, and other neurosemantic and NLP processes, I was able to gradually dissolve the panic feeling that preceded stuttering. My speech flowed more and more spontaneously without ever having to resort to my old fluency modification techniques. I just talked without interruption.

In summary, it was essential that I re-imprint my time line—that is, reframe and revise the negative speech-related experiences covering many years—so that the memory of past stuttering disasters did not continue to cause anticipatory anxiety in my present life.

The evidence of my recovery is that I no longer think about stuttering nor do I rely on behavioral fluency strategies to produce modified fluency.

My blocking and struggle behavior are history.

This is further evidence of the power of clearing my head of stuttering thoughts. I am 100% confident that I am now cognitively Teflon-coated and relapse proof.

The journey through stuttering has been a personal metaphor that makes all things possible for me.

The Trouble with Mechanical Fluency 355-358

By: Jeff Ingram

Like many people I have met, I “graduated” from a renowned intensive fluency-shaping program and relapsed. The only advice the program had after graduating was “practice targets more.”

When I felt anxiety I was unable to control my tongue, lips, and vocal cords enough to use the targets. Countless fluency shaping grads have told me the same.

I had developed a sense of guilt after practicing the targets over and over and not getting tangible progress.

My laundry list of fears and anxiety was not addressed in the fluency shaping program.

Why do PWS change words and avoid talking? They fear stuttering.

But, my specific fears, such as cold calling prospects and professional introductions, awaited my arrival home.

I have learned what an internal conflict is. It might also be called a split intention.

When a PWS is in a panic trying to not stutter and not reveal himself, easy onsets and other targets are often impossible.

Prior to meeting with Tim, I wasted money on an in-the-ear device. The background noise was intolerable. Anticipatory anxiety was again a culprit here: when anxious I could not focus on the echoed voice in my ear. I am in sales and the device failed when I need it the most! Again, this type of treatment doesn’t address the emotional root causes of stuttering.

In contrast, Tim concentrated more on the anticipatory anxiety that makes focusing on speech targets so unreliable.

Similarly, I learned how to reframe the experience of making a phone call and speaking at a meeting so today I no longer experience the same anticipatory anxiety. I may, like most people, feel an adrenaline rush but now I experience that rush as excitement and not fear.

What a fresh and effective way to work on stuttering!

My Journey to Happiness 359-361

By: Antonio Rasco

“The proof of the pudding is in the eating.”

Antonio demonstrates how a simple shift in perspective can change everything. – JCH

I analyzed my thinking, my beliefs and consequently my behavior. I did not stop doing what I want to do because I have a stammer.

The most important thing I knew I had to do was to take action. In facing my fears, here are some of the things I did:

- Joined a speakers club
- Joined a squash league to have the opportunity to talk to many strangers
- Joined the speaking circles organized by the NHS
- Joined the McGuire program
- Read a lot of material like John Harrison's book, meditation books and books on NLP
- Made 5000 contacts in one year (stopping people on the street, asking questions in shops, phoning people I feared to talk to, etc.)
- Constantly make disclosures. I can now talk about my stammer as if I were talking about going on holiday.

ANTONIO: Would you say is it true that most people who stutter on their name do so because they do not have a strong sense of who they are, nor have they accepted many of their personal qualities into their self- image?

JOHN: I think you're right on both counts. Also, you're SUPPOSED to know your name, so there's a performance issue involved if you're afraid you can't say it.

Your name is part of you, so we stammer because we do not feel proud of who we are.

Once again, you're right on. By the way, what you say becomes even clearer if you substitute "hold back" for "stammer," something that I encourage people I coach to do.

People who know me well used to say to me, "Why do you think you are not good or competent? Believe me, you are!!!" But I always thought that they were just being nice to me.

I was totally blind when my hexagon was weak and that impacted my self-image quite badly, not only as a speaker but also as a human being.

My Development as a Person With a Stutter 362-366

By: Christine Dits

I felt myself going unconscious, a very common feeling that PWS have when stuttering or blocking.

My intentions in that moment were to impress all the adults there with fluent, intellectual speech, when in reality, they probably did not even expect that out of me at all. They just wanted to visit with me, as well as everybody else, and enjoy the good food. Who cared whether I stuttered or not?

Remember, people really do not mind that much at all that we stutter. Because we ourselves are accepting it, once they pick up on it and accept it, they will continue to treat us like everybody else – like the next fluent person out there.

I was running on my expectations and not my intentions.

Allow your intentions to run you, not your expectations, because then you are not setting yourself up for disappointment; keep your goals clearly in front of you and your motivation alive.

My goal now is to become satisfied with myself when speaking.

A Labor of Love 367-368

By: Richard Parent

It was the very first time that someone recognized the nature of stuttering and that it was, in fact, a multi-faceted system. I had suspected that my moderate stuttering was more psychological than speech mechanics, but I didn't know what to do because I was unable to clearly define it. The Stuttering Hexagon article gave me what I needed to start my journey.

Toastmasters was what I needed to heal my "inner person."

How Did the Traffic Light Turn Green? 369-378

By: Hazel Percy

When I did pluck up the courage to do so, I found it embarrassing, humiliating and a considerable physical struggle to speak.

Many a time I would stay quiet when I had something to say, because I knew that as soon as I opened my mouth to speak, the physical struggle would begin, leaving me feeling emotionally and physically drained.

All in all, because of my stuttering, I saw myself as being 'less than' other people and inadequate as a person.

At the time, I believed that stuttering was caused by some sort of physical brain malfunction, and that controlling the physical behavior was the only way forward. Also, I was pretty much oblivious to any thoughts I had prior to blocking.

Furthermore, although I always felt anxious and tense before and during blocking/stuttering, I in no way equated these as being contributory factors to the cause of the behavior.

Instead, I came to believe that it was a self-supporting system ('stuttering hexagon') which I had created and sustained over many years.

I was going along the road of controlling the blocking symptoms, but what if that wasn't the right way forward for me?

Things came to a head in June 2004, whilst having a meal in a large room of 100 people or more. Everyone seemed to be chatting away and having a good time; all except me. There was I, sat at the table, feeling frustrated and trapped; so afraid to be seen openly stuttering in front of people. Something had to change - and soon!

What I read made so much sense to me and furthered my understanding of blocking.

I am a person who had an immense fear of stuttering. This fear made me a stutterer.

Of course I also needed to forgive myself; for I realized that more often than not, through my 'mind-reading', I had judged my listener far too harshly!

Deliberately allowing myself to openly stutter. The aim was to observe how my listeners reacted to my non-fluency. I have to admit that I was amazed at the result! Nine times out of ten, there was no reaction whatsoever. People listened and appeared to be more interested in what I had to say, rather than how I was saying it!

My prior judgment of other people's reactions to my stuttering had been totally wrong, and as a result, my perceptions changed.

I needed to uncover the negative thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and emotions that were underlying my blocking. For at that time, I had very little idea what they were.

Then came the night of January 8th 2005! Lying in bed, it was as if the floodgates of my mind suddenly opened! It felt as if a torrent of buried negative beliefs and perceptions about myself came rushing to the surface all at once. Among other things, it became clear that I was always craving for other people's approval of me (a sign of low self-esteem). Also, I feared social rejection and felt inadequate as a person because I stuttered.

I realized that I had intertwined my identity as a person with my blocking and stuttering behavior, and they needed separating.

It reinforced in my mind, the fact that I and I alone have control over what I think and feel, and how I behave and speak. I also realized how important it was to give other people permission to own their powers too, instead of trying to 'mind-read' what they may or may not be thinking.

I thought I was coming on too strong and too loud but they thought I just sounded more confident and more alive when I spoke.

He emphasized that blocking could also be seen as a form of holding back, of sucking in one's energy in an attempt to blend into the background and become 'invisible'.

By this stage too, I had pretty much desensitized myself to blocking and stuttering in front of people. I no longer felt embarrassed, and didn't particularly fear doing it in front of people; yet the behavior was still there, and it was an inconvenient way of expressing myself!

'Deliberate disfluency'; that is, choosing to prolong the first sound of a word or words, or imitating a block, immediately releasing it and saying the word again. The point of this was to advertise ourselves as people recovering from stuttering, but in a dignified and controlled way, without genuinely blocking. But I realized the fact that I felt uncomfortable, indicated that I needed to do it!

Or I could imitate a block and release it, without experiencing the real, 'out of control' blocking. It was so liberating and fun to do!

Furthermore, I no longer found it the great physical and mental effort that I had five years ago. This time round it felt a lot more natural and easier to me; I think, because of the internal changes that had taken

place in my mind.

If I do notice myself starting to hold back for whatever reason, I either reframe the situation while I'm in it, or analyze afterwards what was going on in my mind. I always find that some slight approach/avoidance conflict had been going on. Sometimes it has merely been the fact that as I've started to present myself differently in a speaking situation, I've been aware of displaying the 'real Hazel' like never before; and because that's a fairly new experience for me, it has felt uncomfortable. As a result, I've sometimes had a slight tendency to try and block out those feelings by holding myself back. However, I realize that I need to allow myself to feel uncomfortable; it is only a feeling!

Neurosemantics in particular has played a key role in helping me to change my beliefs about myself, and my perceptions of other people.

How different life is now! Instead of waking up each morning with a sense of heaviness, wondering how I'm going to get through each speaking situation, I now wake up looking forward to enjoying speaking as much as possible.

Befriending My Monster was the Key to Recovery 379-387

By: Anna Margolina, Ph.D.

The world is frozen around me, and even though I know that my face is contorting into a horrible grimace, there is nothing I can do to stop it. For a few eternally long seconds, I am left alone, face to face with my personal monster – my stuttering.

The techniques were quite efficient in controlling blocking, but the downside was that they made my speech sound “different” and “not natural” (or at least I thought so). That was precisely what I was most afraid of.

No matter what I did, my monster was always there; lurking in the back of my mind, ready to pounce, making me feel small and helpless and inferior, different from fluently speaking people.

Even though I kept relapsing after each course of therapy, over time my speech gradually improved, so when I grew up, I was more or less able to communicate my ideas

In 2001 my husband and I came to the U.S. And here, in a matter of a few months, my fluency deteriorated to the point that I was unable to say even a few words without heavy blocking.

But now I spoke with a heavy Russian accent and was painfully aware of it.

Above all, my speech was different, and, therefore, unacceptable. This led to increased blocking, and increased blocking made my speech even more difficult to understand, which added stress and perpetuated the problem. This process was so deleterious to my self-esteem that all my confidence went down the drain together with my fragile fluency.

“Disillusioned and frustrated, I gave up, and for the next several years, I did nothing to improve my stuttering.

Could it be that in four decades nothing changed in stuttering therapy? Then one day my speech therapist asked me if I could stutter on purpose. To my surprise, immediately after I intentionally tensed my muscles, the block was released and the next stretch of speech came out almost fluently.

In some sense, I was cured from stuttering right on the spot, even before I started to apply the principles outlined in the book, because the problem that I had to “dissolve” wasn’t the same stuttering that I had dealt with before.

Although I still viewed it as “my monster,” now I could see that it was made up of diverse but quite manageable problems (points on hexagon) for which solutions already existed.

There is no point to starting out by trying to measure up to the world’s greatest orators. This approach will lead you to failure and frustration. Instead, you may focus on simple and realistic goals for each speech such as speaking in a bigger voice, or maintaining good eye contact even during blocking episodes, or you can even explore voluntary stuttering.

To prevent yourself from accidental hurts, it is better to disclose your speech problem during your introductory speech and explain your goals as a Toastmaster member.

If I experienced a speech block during a presentation, I tried to remember not to push through it (as was my habitual way of dealing with blocks). Instead, I would intentionally prolong it, as if saying to my stuttering “come on, buddy, lets see who gives up first.” This voluntary stuttering technique produced an amazing effect of releasing tension, and, most importantly, emotional liberation. After a lifetime of futile attempts to blend in and be accepted, I gave myself wholehearted permission to be different. It felt so good.

The most important thing was that I stopped getting frustrated over failures. I stopped being afraid. In fact, I became so fascinated with my monster that I decided to befriend it. Since then, all the actions I’ve undertaken to facilitate my recovery have been driven, not only by my desire to overcome stuttering, but also out of scientific interest and deep curiosity.

As my knowledge and confidence grew, so did my fluency. I also began to feel myself more and more in control of my speech.

In those moments I felt small and powerless, and I didn’t know why. In those moments I didn’t want to express myself or to connect with other people. I wanted to withdraw and hide. The answer came with the book by Bob Bodenhamer, *Mastering Blocking and Stuttering*. Thanks to this book I made a startling discovery. It appeared that my belief system, with which I evaluated my relationship and myself with other people, was built on logical speculations and assumptions made by a child – a much younger me, a girl between the ages of four and eight. This is why I was feeling so small. This is why I felt so inferior compared to other adults. And this is why I was so desperate to blend in, to be accepted and approved. This was a revelation.

NLP is a form of cognitive therapy that gives people the power to revisit their past and re-evaluate it from a different perspective. This shift in perspective (called reframing) is what helps a person to arrive at a different conclusion. It is especially useful when applied to childhood experience, because we can use our mature brain, our adult knowledge and our life experience to correct the flawed logic of a small child.

It is interesting that all of the childhood episodes that we revisited and reframed during these sessions appeared so insignificant. It was hard to believe that they could lead to such a severe condition as stuttering. But as I understand now, they created a certain landscape, an environment, in which the stuttering monster felt right at home. After my mental landscape was changed, my speech started to flow

much easier and much of the tension that accompanied speaking situations was gone for good. As I understand it now, changing my beliefs was the most difficult part in my “Hexagon therapy” and using NLP saved me many months or even years of effort, not mentioning a great deal of frustration that would inevitably accompany my attempts at battling my childhood fears on my own.

What I got from all this hard work was something that no therapy before could give me: freedom. I was free from the exhausting struggle that accompanied all my conversation before.

This for me was far more precious than the artificial fluency that previously required me to monitor my breathing or produce the sounds in a special way and that threatened to evaporate the very moment I needed it most.

As soon as I realized that stuttering is not some permanently ingrained defect that I have no control over, but a system, all components of which are manageable, the possibility of relapse lost its doomsday flavor.

My stuttering mindset is gone. My fears and self-doubt are gone. I know how to be fluent.

How the Hexagon Took the Scary Out of Speech 388-410

By: Ruth Meade

It was a long journey from “perplexing” to “understanding.” Understanding is always in retrospect. The fact that I became fluent before I understood what was behind my stuttering taught me that **understanding doesn’t necessarily precede fluency; neither does understanding cause fluency.**

“Holding back” implied there was a purpose for blocks I had experienced. It also implied personal responsibility, something I do.

If I had a conversation with a fixer-upper type of person, the type of person who picked lint off my shoulders and brushed imaginary dandruff off my collar, I stuttered more.

If I thought about stuttering or obsessed about it, even when I was simply trying to fix my speech, I stuttered more. If I was too busy to think at all, I stuttered less.

If I talked to the tick-tock of a metronome and then tried to carry the technique over to my classroom, the new way of talking got into a fist fight with my natural mind (“What are you trying to do? Prove to everyone you are a robot? Well...that’s what you sound like...a stupid robot. Go back to stuttering. It sounds a *lot* better than *that*.”) And then I had *two* things in my head fighting like two pigs in a gunnysack, and I stuttered more.

My emotions affected my stuttering. Feeling inferior affected my stuttering. Being around critical people affected my stuttering. Trying to fix myself affected my stuttering. Obsessing about stuttering made stuttering infinitely worse. **So everything affected my stuttering.** Succeeding at something affected my feelings and this generally meant I stuttered less.

Those beliefs, in turn, produced certain behaviors (the more I thought about speech, the more I stuttered.) And the more I stuttered the more it affected my emotions: helpless, frantic, and “copeless,” (“Copeless” was Dr. Wendell Johnson’s word that reflected my feelings very well.)

As my emotions became locked into the fear-mode, this also affected the way I felt about myself and the way I felt about myself affected my personality (as I became more and more fixated on conscious intention...constantly willing myself to speak.) Nothing kills the personality like being controlled by one's own critical censoring mind. And of course, spontaneity and conscious effort work in inverse proportion: the more effort expended on speaking, the less spontaneous I became.

In other words, when my mind exerted control over what was meant to be "the spontaneous act of speaking" I ended up disrupting the speaking process and this disruption left me feeling afraid of future speech. Attempting to control speech consciously was the primary culprit because control disrupted flowing spontaneous speech.

The question at one time was "Which came first the stuttering or the emotion?" Or "Which comes first, a persistent fear of one or more unfamiliar social situations...or stuttering?"

I learned from Maslow: namely, fear is a reaction. Feelings are reactions: sometimes reactions to events, sometimes to behavior, sometimes to beliefs, values or attitudes. All I can tell you is that once I stuttered horribly and now I don't...and **along with the stuttering went the fear.**

This led me to believe if the stuttering went away (regardless of the cause of stuttering) so would the fear of stuttering (this turned out to be true).

But I couldn't will stutter away. My mind was unable to control it. I had to understand how blocking was related to everything else going on. Was it possible that holding back was a by-product of my beliefs about what I had to do to improve speaking? Was holding back a by-product of my will taking over an activity that was meant to be both spontaneous and automatic?

Then he connected everything about how fear would not exist without thought and to understand thought you must separate thought from observation.

PARALYSIS BY ANALYSIS - My blocking was like paralysis: Paralysis by analysis. When I tried to analyze what was happening when I spoke, I blocked. When I attempted to fix the way I spoke, I blocked. When speech was viewed by me as a performance, I held back. (I wasn't conscious that I viewed speaking as a performance, I *acted as if* speech was a performance.)

I was finding something else that messed with my stuttering: When ever the relationship between intuitive spontaneous expressive Big Me and intellectual judgmental Little Me was out of sync, I blocked worse. When I was speaking and suddenly my intellect would "take over" and critique what I was saying, I lost my enthusiasm for what I was saying. This led me to believe that my spontaneous flow decreased as my resistant intellect increased. How did this all fit together?

I didn't know, but I intended to find out.

CONNECT, CONNECT, CONNECT

Buckminster Fuller used to say, "Thinking isolates events and understanding interconnects them. Understanding is structure" he declared, "for it means establishing the relationship between events."

One day I wrote out some of the things I had observed about how some elements of speaking related to other elements. I had been taught that I could fix stuttering through certain conscious mind techniques so I somehow assumed that speech is a product of my conscious mind. Certain beliefs about speech

followed logically: I need to think about speaking. I need to make Herculean efforts to breathe correctly, plan my words, practice. I held back until my censor approved of what I said. Speech was hard, but I had hope in this: the harder I tried the better I thought I would speak.

Action followed: I tried, pushed, and forced words through clenched muscles. I froze up. No words came out no matter how hard I pushed.

I was embarrassed by this freeze-up. I was frantic, confused. I felt all kinds of turmoil going on in my body: my heart raced, my face felt hot, I had the urge to run. My body responded by holding back because no matter what I said, my inner critic would reject it.

I keep repeating this behavior, stuttering, freezing up, and being embarrassed. My conscious mind then took over more aggressively, trying harder and harder to break through the blocks it created. My conscious intention (will) became more entrenched. Confusion reigned. I felt disappointed: I believed my conscious will could accomplish this task and yet it failed me every time.

When my mind exerted control over the spontaneous act of speaking I actually *disrupted* the speaking process and this disruption left me feeling afraid of future performances, frustrated, panicked and helpless. Fear then caused me to hold back and block even more. It seemed like a vicious circle.

All the things I had been observing for myself in my own experience suddenly had names and the names made sense.

It is worth noting that Harrison didn't list six techniques, or six theories. He listed six elements with which I was well acquainted. The interconnections I had been noticing now started to make sense, simply because Harrison was able to *name* those elements. I felt like I was home.

When I intended to speak fluently but failed or when my energy split between following my natural tendencies and following conscious intention, he might have used the word "*Intention*."

I told my dad that I wanted to be positive above all else. He said, "Well, good luck. The danger is that pretty soon you will water down everything you see and everything you say and you will lose sight of what is true and real."

My father reminded me: "If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. Period. If *you* can't swim as long as you are holding onto the side of the swimming pool, it means *Junior Lindberg* can't swim if he is holding onto the side of the pool."

He told me that **positive thinking is still thinking and 'positive' is just a label**. He said "It's not up to you to judge reality as either positive or negative. **The question you *can* answer is 'is this true?'**"

What I was running away from was the control of my vastly inferior bossy conscious mind.

I instinctively knew what to say and how to say it without thinking about it. I knew what I meant (starting out strong and full of meaning) but my Censor watered everything down, condemned me, intimidated me, and a tired washed-out feeling took over, accompanied by the guilty feeling that I had no right to an opinion...and if I *did* have a right to an opinion, I certainly had no right to *express* that opinion.

PESKY BELIEFS - As I backed out of the driveway of my parent's home I told them that one of the well-intentioned Positive Thinking gurus had inadvertently messed with my speech with her belief that

before we made any statement at all about *anything* we should think carefully about each word we say, sending our words through three gates. The three gates were 1) Is it positive? 2) Is it necessary? And 3) is it kind? By the time anything I had to say got through all three gates I was stuttering so badly it didn't matter anymore. My mom was still laughing when I waved good-by.

It occurred to me once or twice that I didn't know myself. We were asked certain questions in a discussion group so we could all get to know each other. One of the questions was "what is your favorite color?" I looked around the room thinking, "What is wrong with me? I have no favorites.

Your friends are talking about Elvis Presley and even though your parents lived across the street from Elvis and your mother walked his dog every day...no, no, better keep that under your hat. You would get stuck on the word Elvis for at least two minutes while everyone suddenly looked shoe-ward.

Or how about this...how about when they needed a great idea at work last week and you thought up a real doozy, but you mumbled so softly no one heard your insightful profundity except the guy who sits next to you (in order to capitalize on your depth), then brazenly swaggers to the front of the group and describes your ideas as if they are his own. Oh wait! I forgot! He's no longer with us...he was promoted last month to upper management.

I had experienced limitations all my life. And if its okay with you, I'm going to assume that maybe one of the main reasons I was as tolerant as I was had to do with having to meet the challenges faced by all people who stutter as severely as I did.

When I told them, they did not laugh. They didn't see the humor in it at *all*. They said things like "What is *wrong* with you, Girl?" or "Anyone in their right mind would get mad as a hornet at that lady." Or "What in the hell happened to your brain? I learned from that experience and many others that it is okay to ask Harold Snodgrass to go home after 8 hours...and that's a step in the right direction.

I was 31 years old and had never been angry in my life. I just couldn't get it. What was wrong with me? It never occurred to me to even question whether or not I was justified in getting angry. In my mind, there was no excuse whatsoever for losing my cool.

...stuttering was caused by shallow breathing and if she could simply get us to breathe deeply ("diaphragmatic breathing" was what it was referred to at that time), maybe we wouldn't stutter so much (even though she didn't believe in the word "cure.")

"Do you know what you educators do?" I screech. "You teach people like me to distrust our own impulses, reject our own observations.

"I'm *tired* of not saying what I see! The more I think about how to speak or how to breathe, the more conflicted I am and the worse I stutter. It's *thought* that messes me up..."

It is worth noting that **I stopped stuttering temporarily for a few weeks after this blowup**. But once again, "temporarily" is the word to remember here.

MY PRE-STUTTERING HEXAGON

1. I saw speech as painstakingly manufactured by conscious will/intention. (Perception)
2. My conditioned mind was convinced that conscious knowing (instruction, skill, talent, effort) was required to speak well. My inherited conditioned belief system placed great value on "perfect product"

rather than originality and spontaneity. (Belief)

3. This conditioning was a pervasive barrier to flow. The harder I tried to speak well, the more I held back and blocked. (Behavior)

4. The more I blocked and held back, the “worse” I felt. (Emotion)

5. My perceptions, beliefs, behavior and emotions affected my physiological responses. My heart pounded and stress mounted.

6. I woke up each day with new resolve to speak fluently but failure destroyed this resolve.

MY POST-STUTTERING HEXAGON

1. I see that speech is a gift, a flowing river that does not depend on conscious control. Speech is part of my spontaneous nature not created by my conscious mind. (Perception)

2. My perception of how speech happens changes my beliefs. I don't have to manufacture speech anymore, so speech is easy. I no longer believe I have to think before speaking. When my conscious mind attempts to interfere, I recognize this as resistance to flow. (Belief)

3. I speak freely when I go with the flow. I am centered on saying what I mean and meaning what I say, and I watch your face to see if you understand me. (Behavior)

4. Free and easy speech affects my emotions. I don't have to try anymore. Effort and turmoil is gone. I feel peaceful. I calm down. I feel free to respond to what you say and notice your response to me. (Emotion)

5. My muscles relax. I notice the warm glow I feel when letting go of conscious control. I notice there is no stress, effort, trying, and pressure. No more pounding heart; no more desire to run away. (Physiological responses)

6. I can now carry out my intentions. This is the meaning of success for me. As I give up control of my speech, I attain a single-minded state of high clear-sighted functioning and satisfaction. I have a clear resolve to say what I mean and mean what I say and am able to do so without holding back. (Intention)

At first I had been stuck on “behavior” alone. Although the successes I was able to achieve under certain circumstances (when I was around supportive people, for example) affected certain components of the Hexagon (especially “emotion”), those improvements also turned out to be temporary for me. Many times, after meeting with supportive people, I would temporarily improve, **but I realized I needed to move on. What I was doing was addressing other parts of the hexagon, particularly perceptions and beliefs. Only then did I realize permanent gains.**

When I was holding back and blocking to an incredible degree I was operating under dinosaur beliefs. My inherited mental conditioning tended to believe in (value) “perfection” or “perfect product” rather than originality, meaning and spontaneity. This conditioning served, without question, to hold back natural and spontaneous flow.

I also believed that conscious knowing (instruction, skill, talent, effort) was required to speak well (denying that speech is the natural way I express my spontaneous intelligence.)

I simply became aware for the first time that this distorted twisted little belief, along with many more just like it, had hunkered down in some dark corner of my mind, making trouble for me every day until the day I noticed it. I grabbed it by the nap of the neck and jerked it out of hiding.

The moment I became aware of this ridiculous belief...poof, it went away. I didn't have to try to change that belief. I didn't have to talk about it. All I had to do was turn the light on that particular silly belief, and it went away, never to appear again. As soon as the belief went away, so did my fear. Over and over I found that ridiculous unobserved beliefs were inextricably linked to emotion and when the belief went away, my fear did, too.

It all reminded me of what happened when the children were small and believed there was a "boogieman" hiding in the corner of the dark room at night. As soon as I switched on the light, poof, fear was gone (until their imaginations were able to create another boogieman...and another, and another). **But for the moment, turning on the light was all it took to evaporate the belief...and the fear.**

When I discovered this particular wrong belief I had created out of thin air (the belief that I had a literal lump in my throat), I began to take personal responsibility for creating blocks. I saw that blocks didn't just happen to me. My imagination (part of Little Me) had been busy creating one boogieman after another most of my life. I opened my eyes and kept them open, hunting down these distortions and bringing them into the light of my awareness...and I got pretty good at spotting these images and confronting them. My ability to see (perceive) what was going on took the scary out of life.

I also dealt with what Harrison refers to as "perceptions." I could not get rid of wrong beliefs without perception. Sometimes I call this "observation" or noticing or looking.

So I asked "You mean you don't have to think of every word you say, like how to form words in your mouth, how to slow down when you talk, how to take a deep breath before a long sentence?"

"I can't imagine how weary I would be if I had to do that" he said. "I guess I would never bother to say a word."

Paying attention to all elements of the Hexagon eliminated blocking and holding back in this one area of my life (speech). I am now using this same Hexagon to rid myself of writing blocks.

How I recovered from chronic stuttering 411-430

By: John C Harrison

I knew that at some point I had to recount my own recovery story, but the process seemed daunting.

Stuttering had a major impact on my life in any number of ways. It affected how I saw myself. It influenced my choice of careers. It colored my ambitions. And it contributed to my uncertain view of the world and of life in general. Stuttering was woven into the very fabric of my existence, and I wrestled with it more or less for 30 years.

When I say I recovered, I don't mean that I'm a controlled stutterer. **I mean that the impulse to block is no longer present.**

Mostly, they talk about controlling one's stuttering. But they don't talk about disappearing it.

If you're trying to solve a problem, the way you *define* and *frame* the problem has everything to do with whether you'll be able to come up with an answer.

Another reason why we've been stuck in our thinking about stuttering is that, by and large, most of us focus our attention in looking for answers in all the familiar places.

It's like the man who's walking home one night, and comes upon a fellow crawling around on his knees under a streetlight, obviously looking for something.

"Hey, buddy, need some help?"

"Sure do," says the man. "I lost my car keys."

"Well, let me give you a hand," says the passerby. And for the next five minutes they both crawl around under the streetlight, looking for the keys.

Finally, the passer-by says, "Are you sure you lost the keys here?"

"Oh no," says the man. "I lost them over there," and points to a section of grass beyond the reach of the light.

"Well, for Pete's sake," says the passerby in frustration. "Why are you looking here?"

"Light's better," says the man.

Therefore, I never worked with a speech therapist. Therefore, I never got into the traditional thinking about stuttering as something you had to control. Therefore, my search for answers was not colored by other people's ideas. I was not told what was important and what was not. I never developed the familiar filters through which most people viewed stuttering. And that's why I was able to see more clearly what was going on with my speech.

What I discovered over time was that my stuttering was not about my speech per se. It was about *my comfort in communicating with others*. It was a problem that involved *all* of me — how I thought, how I felt, how I spoke, how I was programmed to respond.

I'm talking about struggled, blocked speech in which you are unable to say one or more words in a timely manner; speech that feels "stuck."

I'll also relate this to the Stuttering Hexagon so you can see how the changes in my speech were a reflection of the way I changed *as a person*.

NSA member Libby Oyler, who is both a person who stutters and a speech language pathologist, conducted some fascinating research on the relationship of sensitivity and stuttering for her Ph.D. thesis. The numbers she gave me took me by surprise.

Libby found that although 15 to 20 percent of the general population can be classified as "highly sensitive," that number climbs to a startling 83 percent for people who stutter.

What does "highly sensitive" mean? On the plus side, it means that you're more intuitive. You pick up feelings and subtle aspects of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, that don't register with less sensitive people. But it also means you're more quickly aroused. Your senses are easily stimulated and

sometimes, overwhelmed. You react more strongly when somebody yells at you. It's easier to get you excited or upset. If somebody doesn't like the way you act, they don't have to yell at you or openly mock you to deliver their message. They just have to raise an eyebrow or give you a look, and the message comes through loud and clear.

Libby's research also highlighted something else. About 10 to 15 percent of the general population can be classified as *behaviorally inhibited*.

For the stuttering population, the percentage of behaviorally inhibited people is not 10 or 15 percent...it's 42 percent.

People who stuttered were more nervous or tense or excessively excitable than people who didn't. And they also had a greater startle response.

Did all that apply to me? I think so. If someone were cross with me, or raised their voice, just like that, I'd be upset. I was totally focused on pleasing others and on being nice. And because I was highly sensitive, I was quick to pick up any signs of disapproval.

Is this hypersensitivity what caused my stuttering? No. But it was part of it.

Here are more things about me. I never got angry. In fact, I was uncomfortable with emotions, just like everyone else in my family.

Then there was my compulsive need to do things right.

Is this perfectionism what caused my stuttering? No, it's not what caused it. But it was a contributing factor.

I did survive it, because I had a trick. I discovered that if I could evacuate most of the air in my lungs, I could talk on the residual air and get the word out. And that's what I did. When the time came, I said, "I came with (long exhale) Hermia hither." Oh, I got some funny looks. But I got the words out.

Nevertheless, that experience and many others like it reinforced my belief that I had a speech problem. How wrong I was. I didn't have a speech problem. I could speak just fine when I was alone. The problem lay in my *relationship* with the people I was speaking to. I had a problem with *the experience of communicating to others*. It was my *experience* of expressing who *I* was that I had fears about. And it manifested itself in my speech.

I believed that everyone was judging me...not just my speech...but *me*. I had very low self-esteem. Whatever I did, I had a fear of not being good enough.

Looking back to that "Hermia hither" moment, it's very clear what I was afraid of. I was afraid of experiencing the excitement of being *me*. I was holding back *me*, using such strategies as locking my vocal cords, pursing my lips, and holding my breath. For some reason, there was something bad about showing up as myself.

How did this happen? **How did I get divorced from my real self?** How do any of us get so cut off from who we are that we feel compelled to hold back and create a false self?

One of the most elegant statements of how we lose ourselves appeared back in 1962 in a book by Abraham Maslow. Maslow was part of a group called the "third force psychologists." These were

psychologists whose main interest was not in pathology. They wanted to understand the self-realizing individual. The person who was super healthy, who consistently operated on a higher level than the rest of us. The person who frequently had what they called “peak experiences.”

What stops us all from being able to reach that same level of functioning?

As little children, we need the approval of others. We need it for safety. We need it for food. We need it for love and respect. The prospect of losing all that is terrifying. So if we have to choose between being loved and being ourselves, it’s no contest. **We abandon ourselves and die a kind of secret psychic death.**

Maslow wrote a seminal book called, *Towards a Psychology of Being*, which looked at these issues. In that book was a beautiful description, written by G. Allport, of how it is possible to lose yourself and isolate yourself from your deepest sources of power...and not even know that you’re doing it. Listen to Allport’s description of a child who’s forced to make that choice:

*He has not been accepted for himself, as he is. “Oh, they ‘love’ him, but they want him or force him or expect him to be different! Therefore he must be unacceptable. He himself learns to believe it and at last, even takes it for granted. He has truly given himself up. No matter now whether he obeys them, whether he clings, rebels or withdraws — his behavior, his performance is all that matters. **His center of gravity is in ‘them,’ not in himself.** Yet, if he so much as noticed it, he’d think it natural enough. And the whole thing is entirely plausible; all invisible, automatic, and anonymous!*

*This is the perfect paradox. Everything looks normal; no crime was intended; there is no corpse, no guilt. All we can see is the sun rising and setting as usual. But what has happened? **He has been rejected, not only by them, but by himself.** (He is actually without a self.) What has he lost? Just the one true and vital part of himself: his own yes-feeling, which is his very capacity for growth, his root system.*

*But alas he is not dead. ‘Life’ goes on, and so must he. From the moment he gives himself up, and to the extent that he does so, all unknowingly he sets about to create and maintain a pseudo-self. But this is an expediency—a ‘self’ without wishes. This one shall be loved (or feared) where he is despised, strong where he is weak; it shall go through the motions (oh, but they are caricatures!) not for fun or joy, **but for survival; not simply because it wants to move but because it has to obey.** This necessity is not life—not his life—it is a defense mechanism against death. From now on he will be torn apart by compulsive (unconscious) needs or ground by (unconscious) conflicts into paralysis, every motion and every instant canceling out his being, his integrity; and all the while he is disguised as a normal person and expected to behave like one!*

So there I was, afraid to say, “I came with Hermia hither”...**feeling that it was not okay to be myself in front of the middle school. But all I could see was that I had a stuttering problem.**

Something that greatly contributes to the holding back process is the relationship you have with those around you. Have you noticed that it’s easy to speak to some people and impossible to speak to others without stuttering? I noticed that.

My parents had friends who lived in New Jersey, and they had a daughter named Barbara Lee. We were invited out there one weekend, and I spent two days with Barbara Lee and her crowd. I hardly

recognized myself. I was outspoken, I was funny, I didn't hold back, and I didn't stutter. People listened to me if I had something to say. Then I went back home and instantly turned back into this shy, quiet kid that nobody listened to. A shy, quiet kid who held himself back and who stuttered.

In retrospect, it became clear that over time, my friends expected me to show up as shy and unassertive, and they related to me accordingly. I, in turn, related to them the way they related to me, and presto! I was locked in a role I couldn't get out of.

Over the last 26 years, I've seen many examples of how a person gets locked into a role and how it affects his speech.

At the end of the meeting, I asked Frank how he managed to let go so much. You know what he said to me?

“You gave me permission.”

I looked at her and thought, “I know why Frank doesn't let go and be himself. He married his mom. He was still caught up with being a good boy.”

So the people around you and how you relate to them will have a big impact on your willingness to let go — that is, if you choose to hand over your power to them.

What I discovered through my own recovery process was that, at the heart of it, stuttering isn't a problem with the *production* of speech. All of us can talk just fine when we're alone. **It's a problem with the *experience* of speaking. It's a problem with our discomfort when we communicate to particular individuals and in particular situations.**

And it's about the strategies we adopt to manage this discomfort.

What really frustrated me in high school was that one moment I'd be talking, and the next moment I'd be locked up and unable to say a word. I could talk to my friends in the schoolyard and be perfectly fluent, but giving a book report in front of those same friends in the classroom, I'd only get a few words out before I'd block. Sometimes I wished that I'd stutter all the time. At least then I'd know who I was.

By the time I graduated college, I still blocked, though not as much. But more than anything, I had started to observe, not just my stuttering, but all the areas around my stuttering. And while I didn't have any answers, I was starting to define the questions.

The ability to observe is absolutely critical if you want to change yourself in any way. Observing, in its highest form, is called mindfulness. It's a meditation term. What it calls for is to clear your mind and simply notice what's going on. Don't just notice the familiar things. See if you can observe everything, dispassionately, without an agenda. When you can do that...when you can observe without trying to fit what you see into any preexisting paradigm...it's often surprising the kinds of things you discover.

Other days, when the attendant came over, I *knew* I was going to block, and I'd have to resort to starter phrases like, “Mmmm, ahhhh ‘ow are ya an’ can ya fill it up please.”

Why were those days different?

But on days when I was feeling angry or resentful or hurt and was holding all my feelings in, those were

the days I'd have trouble.

Now don't get me wrong. I'm not against speech therapy. In a very real way, I did go through speech therapy. I went through my own. And it really does help to know what you're doing when you stutter, to know it so well that you can reproduce it on purpose and learn to relax the muscles that you're tightening. It's like taking apart your tennis swing. The reason you hit too many balls into the net *may be* because you have a performance fear. But it may also be because you're not swinging correctly.

Will changing your swing make you as good a player as Serena Williams? Probably not. But having a proper swing *is* one of the factors that makes a good tennis player. And speaking in a way that does not interfere with the production of speech *is* one factor you may need to address in the recovery process.

So again, proper speaking technique is not the whole story. But it's a part of it.

Toastmasters is one of the truly great organizations for those with speaking fears, because it gives you an opportunity to speak in front of others in a risk-free environment. Oops. Did I say "risk free?" Not quite.

The risk is to your ego and your self-image.

It was just my old self-consciousness and perfectionism coming up. But by showing up week after week, I slowly became more comfortable in front of people.

I realized that I didn't block because I had something wrong with the way I talked. I blocked because I had difficulties with *the experience of communicating to others*, especially in particular situations. It was as if I finally looked under the hood to see what was *really* making the car run. And it wasn't what I thought it was.

What did I find? Well, you name it. I had difficulties with self-assertion. I found it hard to express my feelings. I was a rampant perfectionist. I was overly sensitive. Most times, I didn't know what I felt, and even when I did, I often wasn't forthcoming because of how people might react. I had very low self-esteem. I was obsessively focused on being nice and pleasing others. I was constantly beset by my conflicting intentions. Oh yes, I also had a tendency to hold my breath and tighten my throat when I moved too far out of my comfort zone.

If I wanted to survive in those Games, something had to give. I couldn't survive by being nice and trying to please everyone, because every time I did, I'd find myself pushed into corners and looking totally stupid. You see, people wanted you to define who YOU were. What YOU wanted. What YOU stood for. I didn't start out having answers to any of these questions, but over time, the answers began to come.

In the Games, I also had my first exposure to strong emotions.

I stopped seeing what I was doing as something called "stuttering." I started seeing it as a system of behaviors and personal characteristics that were organized in a way that caused me to hold back and block.

Do you find it more difficult to talk to authority figures like a boss or a parent or an expert of some sort? S. I. Hayakawa who had written a landmark book called *Language in Thought and Action*.

Slowly, I was beginning to become my own authority.

In general semantics, which is what Hayakawa taught, I learned how the structure of language shaped my sense of reality. I began to see the way English forced me into either-or propositions and how easy it was to attach labels. I'm a success. I'm a failure. I'm a stutterer. I'm not a stutterer. I'm good. I'm bad. It gradually dawned on me that I was creating my own stressful world by my habits of thought. General semantics gave me tools to circumvent these problems.

I was encouraged to constantly challenge my own perceptions.

It taught me that my *perception* of reality was not reality at all.

Similarly, my beliefs were not reality. They were just a map of reality. I learned to question whether or not my maps were accurate and to not take anything I perceived on face value.

Something I came to realize was that whenever someone was upset, I automatically thought it was because of something I'd done. That created additional stress.

Once I got in the habit of challenging my perceptions, I started to see that most events had many possible explanations. Changing how I thought played a vital role in my recovery.

Do all perfectionists stutter? No. Does everyone who holds back his feelings, stutter? No. Are all highly sensitive people subject to stuttering? No. Do all people who grow up with a higher level of childhood disfluency stutter? No. Does everyone who gives up his or her real self and creates a false self-stutter? No. Do all people who use the language in a non-self supportive way stutter? No.

But what happens when you take all these factors and pull them together? If you pull them together in the right way, you create a self-reinforcing system that's greater than the sum of the parts. It's not the parts, *but how they go together* that creates the blocking behaviors that most people call stuttering.

Remember, unless you put the parts together correctly, you don't end up with chronic blocking.

By the age of 35, stuttering had pretty much disappeared from my life. To understand why, it might be useful to compare my hexagons as an early teenager, and as someone in his mid-30s.

John, age 15

BELIEFS

I have no worth (low self-esteem). I must be nice at all costs. What I have to say is unimportant. I have to please everybody.

People are focused on me. The world wants me to be good. Expressing feelings is bad. The world has to meet my mother's standard. My needs always come second.

PERCEPTIONS

People are judging me. I'm not measuring up. I'm being aggressive. The other person is speaking the "truth."

INTENTIONS

My intentions to speak and not speak are fighting each other.

PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES

I am sensitive and quick to react.

PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS

I tighten my lips and vocal chords and hold my breath when I'm worried about speaking.

I hold back.

John, age 35

BELIEFS

I am worthy (good self-esteem). I must be genuinely me. What I have to say is important. I have to please myself.

People are focused on themselves. The world wants me to be me. Expressing feelings is desirable. The world is perfect the way it is.

I can decide when my needs have priority.

PERCEPTIONS

I'm the one who's judging me. I'm doing the

best I can. I'm being assertive. The other person *may be* speaking the truth (and maybe not.)

INTENTIONS

My intentions are in alignment. I'm clear when I want to speak. I'm also aware when I'm resisting speaking.

PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES

I am sensitive and quick to react.

PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS

I keep everything loose and supple.

I let go.

As you can see it wasn't just my speech that had changed. It was the total me. My fluency wasn't just the result of correcting bad speech habits, it had equally to do with my willingness to let go and be me.

Where are we going with stuttering? Are we starting to make some progress? I think so. My guess is that midway through this decade; there will be definitive answers to what chronic stuttering is all about and how to approach it. In fact, I believe we have most of the answers right now, if we only recognize what we already know. The reason why I think this will happen is similar to what is happening with the SETI project.

With hundreds of thousands of consumers working to solve the problem, and with the Internet as the means to share their experiences, we now have the firepower to solve what so many people have thought was an unsolvable problem. **That's because *everyone* is empowered to be part of the solution. Coming up with answers is no longer the exclusive domain of the professionals. It's an effort that involves all of us.**

You may be saying, "Great! But what can *I* do?" How can I start dismantling my stuttering hexagon? How can I start getting past my speech blocks? How can I get to where speaking is fun?"

For openers, start reading. Not just about stuttering. Broaden your reading to all those areas that have to do with who you are as a human being. Start being a good observer. Notice the subtle ways in which the way you function as a person affects your speech. Start asking questions like — "Suppose I didn't block in this situation, what might happen?" Don't stop with the obvious answers like, "Well, if I didn't block, I might stutter." Go deeper. What else might happen if you really showed up as the full version of who you are? Keep a journal. Get out of your comfort zone. Experiment. Try new things. Remember, there's a good chance that the answers may not be under the streetlight, but in the dark where you have to feel your way around.

Get involved in programs that promote your growth as a person, like the Landmark Forum, or Toastmasters, or Speaking Freely (Speaking Circles). Get to know your stuttering behavior in intimate detail, so you can duplicate it on purpose, down to the finest degree. Know what you're doing when you

block. Don't allow yourself to go unconscious. Work with a speech professional, if you need to, in order to get a handle on this. And for Pete's sake, get on the Internet if you're not there already, and start dialoguing with people who have an enormous amount of wisdom and insight to share.

I now realize that just letting go of my stutter would have left the same old me, just without a stutter. If I had "fixed" my stutter, life may have been easier, but I would have been in the same model of my world. It is myself that I have needed to heal.

I have reached the point where I realize that effective speaking is so much more than just NOT stuttering!

The most important thing of course is my own relationship with myself, which has improved vastly.

Ladies and gentlemen, big changes are now taking place in the way we view stuttering. It's happening now. There are thousands participating in the transformation.

Part 6: A Three-Year Recovery Story

This kind of feedback – whether it comes from fellow members on a discussion list or from an experienced professional or from a knowledgeable friend – stops you from being limited by your own subjectivity. **This is especially true when you feel demoralized because change is happening slowly or not at all. The fact is, if your intention is clear and you continue to make an effort, you will eventually see progress.**

Andrew's Recovery pp.435-517

By: John C. Harrison

A lot of people like myself have relapsed because I tried to recover in an old skin. It doesn't work because in the old skin, the Hexagon is not positioned for recovery.

I have fallen into the denial stage of "[I have] everything to lose, and the world will end if I block," and of course you block more then.

Voluntary stammering is no good if you are trying to deny that you stammer.

My speech returned to being block free. My hexagon had changed dramatically almost in an instant, and my speech improved beyond recognition.

When I speak to people and block, it's my reaction to the block that people react to, not the actual block. I always thought that their reactions further signified that stammering was a real oddity and increased my resistance and continued the blockage. The block signifies a temporary loss of connection, but a smile and dignity to let the other person know that connection has not been lost is very helpful. As I now see, **connection is it.**

When I block now, it's because I'm treating the word as a performance. But it shouldn't be a performance. I shouldn't have to struggle when I speak.

I'm beginning to see that the fight to be fluent is what's causing me to be disfluent.

I tell myself don't struggle to speak like them.

I have to not let the performance mode kick in now that I'm aware of it. And that's a start. Once you start to think "Hey I'm doing pretty damn good" it'll start the stress and performance instincts again.

When I spoke, I was trying to go in three directions – whether to heavily coastal breathe, or to try not to look at the words as a performance or to try not to stammer.

I had to stop seeing my speech as a performance, and have to be prepared to communicate my feelings. I feel by doing this my feelings become a valuable asset which I can PROJECT as opposed to hold back.

I don't see myself as a stammerer now, which is liberating in itself. I'm learning more to see myself as someone who occasionally blocks out his feelings as to not experience them.

I'm using my feelings to communicate rather than my words.

I have meditated before because I think thought mastery is ONE way to let stammering die.

This mindset is what stammering is borne out from, the need to control, need to accumulate. If we can't control, will our ability to accumulate be hindered etc.?

I'm beginning to realize that this world is as much mine as anyone else's and that I can do whatever I want to, within legal boundaries, of course.

I did a presentation to my seminar class recently, and beforehand, whenever fear thoughts about it came up, I attempted to let the thoughts go. As I result I felt nervous but accepted this. I didn't try to control the perceived reality. Initially I really stammered even though I tried to slide through the blocks, but after a while I began to notice my shallow breaths. I tried to have fun with the blocks, incidentally your section about voluntary stammering really helped.

When I went back to concentrating on trying to get the words out just purely out of performance I struggled and fought. When I focused on the connection and held a positive reaction in my mind about the emotional connection the words just happened with no fuss or bother.

Hi John, something I have been thinking recently. I used to think I was the way I was because I stammered. Now I know that I stammer because of the way I am. This is very liberating.

It will take time for this tendency to dwell to diminish, but I know what's going on now and stammering doesn't hold the same mystical fear for me as it once did.

I did feel the old control and anticipation thoughts entering my mind at first. Then I did something interesting. I asked myself what I really thought about what she was saying, not what I thought she wanted to hear, or what I should say in order to not stammer.

The words just happened. I didn't have to struggle. I went with the flow of the feeling, and the words just surfed.

Hi John, I now understand what you meant when you said that I would experience many lows. I go through a trough every couple of weeks. I feel I know why though. **When I feel as though I have made a breakthrough, I feel this has to be maintained by performing.**

But having lived with a mentality, which created the stammering for many years, I know that I slip back from time to time.

Later after the telephone conversation I didn't feel elation, I didn't feel great about having spoken fine. Why should I? I have always been able to speak this way, but I choose to interfere with nature.

What I'm trying to say is – use the McGuire method to experience YOU, not to perform.

He told me that he wasn't thinking about the motion of his hand or the way his hand was positioned. He just followed the rhythm and let go. He was actually in the rhythm. More importantly the rhythm GUIDED HIM.

Throughout the lesson I got caught in my old mentality of trying to anticipate and control what I was saying or about to say. I wasn't letting go and allowing my feelings to guide me just like I wasn't letting the rhythm guide me musically.

What happened? Unconsciousness.

I was either in the past or the future BUT NEVER REALLY IN THE MOMENT. I wasn't immersed in the rhythm of who I am, because who I am guides me when I talk, just like when I play, the rhythm of the music takes over.

I think it's important for McGuire graduates to grasp this. You can be the most mechanically fluent person in the world but still not know you haven't progressed past the stammering mentality.

It may be important to adopt a kind of performance mentality at the beginning of therapy, but it's important that you use the technique to LET GO and explore yourselves. I think a lot of successful graduates have moved past this performance stage and have actually adopted the mentality of a fluent speaker, WHICH IS CRUCIAL.

Those who have not let go like I have done in the past become lost, don't know what they feel, therefore don't really know what to say and relapse because what they have got (fluency) doesn't fit the setting, it doesn't fit into who they are because they haven't felt who they are. Trying to keep fluency when you don't allow yourselves to experience YOUR RHYTHMS I think is why some people relapse. This is certainly true for me.

During the interview I hadn't made a conscious decision to stay open and say what I actually felt like saying that would be a true indication of how I felt. I was trying not to stammer.

A CHECKLIST TO GO THROUGH AFTER A RELAPSE

Andrew: Had a job interview today and it's fair to say that I blocked my feelings throughout. My speech was very disrupted. After the interview it was hard not to feel some embarrassment and sadness. However I remained positive like I always do and tried to learn from the experience. John: Ah yes, I know these experiences well. This is how you learn. I don't know how much you've reviewed and processed this experience so far, but here are some questions you might pose to yourself:

1. What was at stake in this interview? Not just the job, but what were your personal issues that were at stake? List them out.
2. Did this situation remind you of earlier situations in your life? (for reference, see my article, "Anatomy of a Block.") In order to get a handle on this, you have to replay the interview in your mind a number of times and as you do, continually broaden the number of things you observe.
3. What did the interviewer NOT get to know about you because you held back?
4. What might you have been holding back?
5. What did you notice about your other behaviors, apart from your speech?
6. Did you see this person as an authority figure? And were you trying to please him or her?
7. What aspects of your REAL self did not come through because you held back?
8. If you DID allow yourself to experience your feelings during the interview, what might have you been experiencing?
9. What kind of attitude did you perceive the interviewer had? Judgmental? Supportive? Etc. What verbal or nonverbal cues allowed you to reach this conclusion?

10. What was the setting like in which the interview took place? Was the interviewer in an obvious power position? Were you in an obvious subordinate position?

11. How were you feeling that day before you went into the interview? What kinds of things took place? What were your thoughts like? Were you holding back about other things? Were your thoughts preprogramming you to hold back? In short, what kind of a hexagon did you have when you went in for the interview?

12. What could you do if you had an opportunity to do the same interview over again to make the situation easier for you to express yourself in?

Got the idea? There may be other questions that come to mind as well.

You have the perfect attitude for working through this. So give it a shot and see what comes up.

I have been interested recently on the point at where one actually speaks. One challenge is to stay conscious.

I believe this to be the building stage. It's up to me to rebuild my life in the way I want to.

The weeks before the interview I was blocking my feelings, this is why my inner harmony was disrupted. Out of curiosity, how did you know this? The way it works for me is that the bottom of my neck gets tight, which is where my emotions get blocked when I'm not letting them out.

Or perhaps you were in resistance to doing something you didn't want to do. What were the issues?

I always wondered what "holding back" meant. In my experience, it means not allowing yourself to feel negative feelings. That's true. But there could be more. Some people are afraid to feel positive feelings because it makes them feel vulnerable. They are unwilling to let themselves love someone or some thing because they inevitably feel they will get hurt. So as their feeling of love deepens, so does their resistance to the feeling.

It is important to get in touch with the specific things you do, feel, and think when you remove yourself from the flow. You do have to tailor what you show, at least a little, to the situation at hand.

By the same token, there is no rule that says you cannot be yourself — that is, be genuine, spontaneous, honest, etc. Our problem as people who stammer is that we grow up tailoring ourselves TOO MUCH to what we think the other person wants. We SELL OURSELVES OUT to please another person. (Even though, ironically, we make ourselves less pleasing to the other person by doing this because we're not coming across as our real self.)

Another good thing to do if you have the time and the discipline (which I don't most of the time) is to write out what you're feeling. Just free associate. Let the idea and the feelings flow through you. Allow yourself to just be the scribe for what comes up.

Yet another suggestion — if you're angry at someone or something (or even if you're not) take a section of the newspaper, roll it up into a baton, put the phone book on the chair, and beat the hell out of the phone book

Another thing I like is, when I'm on the highway, to roll up the car windows, and yell obscenities at no one in particular, just to get my lungs working and my energy projecting outward.

In the days when you're not talking, you're probably not CONNECTING with other people. It's through the connection and the transfer of energy and emotions that you stay open.

I identify with that 100%. And the only way you'll get out of that box is to put yourself in situations which push you out of your comfort zone; that is, where there is something at risk. Such things might be establishing (or breaking off) a relationship, applying for a new job, sharing a thought or feeling with someone you've been avoiding, giving up your resentment over something. If you continually stay in safe situations where nothing is at risk, you will not be providing yourself with any opportunities for change and transformation. The major challenge, then, is to go into situations where you can feel that element of risk, and in which there is no way you can anticipate the outcome. "Dancing in the void" I call it.

You know more than you think. The more you find out about stammering, the more you know about life, because the problems inherent in stammering are broad and far reaching and involve the complexities of the human psyche and soul. All of the aforementioned is equally true about golf. ;-) Which is why golf is such a gratifying and at the same time, a complex and frustrating game.

The thoughts, when I do hold back, are usually stimulated by the way I perceive the world from the perspective of someone who doesn't stammer and the reality that I don't want to embrace which is me, the stammerer. I try to imagine me in the world if I didn't stammer against the me in reality and this is why I get periods of holding back. I try to control this inner conflict.

Say — "I try to imagine me in the world if I didn't hold back." **Remember that stammering consists of two parts — the block and the strategies to break through or avoid the block. When you perceive a compound problem as a single, unitary problem (called stammering), it often masks and confuses what is really going on.**

And over controlling your spontaneous self is what contributes to the problem.

Sometimes when I stumble on a word this does distract me from the flow of how I feel, but it's improving all the time.

You are building a heightened awareness that will enormously help you in addressing the problem.

Sometimes I get caught trying to challenge myself to say particular words. But now I just remind myself that we talk with our feelings, and words are just the vehicle through which these feelings are transmitted.

My hexagon totally changed. Suddenly I felt a more mature person, a person of experience compared to them. No longer did I see them as arrogant and ignorant.

In one conversation I was asked if I lived alone. In the past I have had unresolved feelings about that.

(It's like a car on a grand prix circuit! Years ago I couldn't move the car. Now as I'm gathering momentum – developing a clearer self-concept – my car is gathering speed but does occasionally stall. But I know why it's stalling and take it to the garage and work on it.)

The boys I work with were initially very quiet, and this caused all sorts of problems for me until I looked at it. I had a perception of them (true or not), which was similar to a perception that I had about certain guys in high school. They were very intelligent and full of wit, and I admired this. They were

always laughing, and even though stammering wasn't a problem for me, I could never trust them. I wanted to get on their good side. I wanted to try to become invisible to them so I acted the clown in front of them. I tried to make them laugh. I always thought that if I did, then they would look at me as fun and so would not comment about me.

The people I work with are quiet but laugh and are witty. I began to hold back in the same way I did in high school. I took it upon myself to be funny, but this was holding back in itself. Over the weekend I wasn't happy. I am naturally witty and funny, anyway but this wasn't me, I felt that there was a danger of them losing respect for me altogether!

It's perfectly okay that your car periodically stalls. What is important is not perfection, but building awareness of what's going on.

If you set yourself apart from them and hold back even though you'd like to connect, you instantly start building a holding back mentality in which establishing a connection and expressing your feelings becomes threatening.

Great stuff! What you're doing is living in the moment, which is the antidote to all the anticipating that is associated with chronic stammering. You experience something, notice what's happening, take what comes up, and let it go. An analogy would be that of floating down a river in a rowboat. If you get worried about what's around the next bend and grab onto a rock or a bush, forward progress is halted until you're willing to let go and just allow the river to take you where it's going to take you.

I regretted saying anything, not because I blocked but because I didn't consider the content and how it would relate to me as a person. I felt far worse about the content making me look silly (caring more about what others thought on this particular day was to do with my hexagon) rather than I did about blocking and panicking.

After the episode I felt slightly self-conscious that I had stammered in front of a large group of people. In the past I would have been destroyed and held back indefinitely. This time I made a conscious decision to stay in touch with these emotions, to accept and feel them. Within half an hour my equilibrium returned, and I began to challenge my default beliefs.

I have generally been fine by trying hard to challenge my default beliefs, but in doing so I found that I was not allowing myself to experience the negative feelings that I had caused by being the way I am at the moment. I tried to cover over having to feel these feelings by trying to focus on new beliefs about myself, I have only recently found out what I have been doing, and gradually I'm getting back in touch with the flow.

An important realization I think is that fact that I have the right to adopt and develop a new default hexagon, as opposed to feeling that I'm trying to cover over my old default.

The only price you have to pay is that you must stay in touch with who you are and take what comes up, good or bad. When your power comes up in the form of negative energy, you have to figure out how to use that negative energy to your benefit, **rather than to hold it back and contain it.**

I walked into a shop and bought a salad. The lady asked me whether I wanted a fork or was I going home to my HOUSE. I said that I was going home to my FLAT. When she said goodbye, I blocked and couldn't say goodbye. This was because I didn't want to experience the feeling of her thinking I corrected her by saying that I was going home to my flat rather than what she said. It's amazing!

One of them was a performance fear for when I talk to you on the phone! Little things, which you may think have little importance, tend to be the ones you hold back.

What I had been doing, I believe, is simulating feelings in accordance to the new beliefs I was trying to incorporate about myself. And in doing so was not flowing with the sine wave.

It's important to know when a situation is not serving you, and then make it okay to move on.

It's easy for us to pull the wool over our own eyes. The fact that you can see the difference between real and simulated feeling is a big step.

The real changes took place over a **three-year period** in California when I was intensely involved with a particular group that was oriented towards personal growth.

Acting as if is all about practicing the way you'd LIKE to be...to find out how it feels.

It's hard to know what you're reaching for if you don't have a sense of what it would feel like when you get there.

The perceptions of the aftermath of each stammer were causing me to hold back.

The way I perceived the stammer was changing my beliefs about myself, and the threshold of what I was willing to emotionally experience was affecting my intentions.

When I looked at stammering in the old negative sense, I was almost looking for a miracle spontaneous cure, a quick fix. When I changed tact I realized and was comfortable with the fact that it would take a long time.

It fascinates me how, once a person is able to step back from an experience or group of experiences and gain some perspective, it is possible to see the bigger picture. This is what they talk about in chaos theory, which is a hot subject in certain circles. The theory postulates that so called random groups of events do have an organization and relationship when looked at over time and from sufficient perspective. This is why continuing to keep a broad focus is so important when you're trying to work through stammering.

This was one of the earliest personal growth programs in California and was the environment in which my stammering disappeared before it actually disappeared (if you recall, because I stopped seeing it as stammering.)

I became involved with a weekly encounter group run by a woman named Nadine. Nadine, as it turned out, was on a secret little power trip of her own. The group she ran had a hidden agenda, namely, that she had to be the only powerful person in the room. Little did I realize that week by week, little by little, I was handing my power over to her. The situation reached a breaking point after a 24-hour marathon group experience during which I wanted to be loved and held by Nadine and was rebuffed. That experience, and all the evenings leading up to it, caused my hexagon to change. I was now once again holding back my feelings, especially my anger, and that strong, resonant feeling that I'd been left with from my Synanon experience was no longer accessible to me. A new system had established itself. And it took almost a year before I began to feel like I had my power back.

The annoying thing was that all throughout my relationship with Nadine I was aware that what I was doing was bad for me. But at that time, I chose not to trust my own perceptions, partly because I still

wanted an authority figure in my life that had the “truth.” So I constantly ignored and discounted my own perceptions.

When you do the same thing repeatedly over a period of time, it eventually becomes a habit of thought, and ultimately, an UNCONSCIOUS habit of thought. That is, it becomes invisible, and these “invisible” feelings attitudes, beliefs, etc. eventually become self-supporting, which is why it becomes so hard to change them. This is why being a good observer is so important. Being a good observer is necessary to becoming a good detective and ultimately it can lead to uncovering the truth.

...ask whether you’re changing your actions in ways that put your feelings at risk.

...the fact that if all you did was to sit around figuring out what was going on, you were still going to remain stuck. **What ultimately changes you is experience.**

Sample for acting “as if.” Similarly, if you tend to talk in a quiet voice, double your volume when you speak—even triple the volume, if you talk in a thin little voice—and discover what it feels like. I’ll guarantee you that it will feel strange and uncomfortable and ungainly at first, because you’ll be way outside your comfort zone. But you’ll be training yourself about and learning about various experiences that are unfamiliar to you. And as you continue to move more and more new experience into your comfort zone, it will start to become part of your self-image. And the two circles of your real self and your self-image will more and more begin to overlap.

What’s been bothering me lately is the comparison between the McGuire course and the route I’m following now. I know I did my best on the McGuire course. No one worked as hard as me I’m told, but I just kept relapsing. What’s bothering me now is that it’s difficult to not feel like I need to perform. Some people on the McGuire course told me that many just focus on the hexagon because they are lazy. I know as far as observing is concerned that I’m not lazy.

I felt undecided, and this was causing tension and anxiety. So I remembered what you told me ages ago – to make it Ok to feel tense and anxious (make it OK to feel how you feel), and I felt it and felt it. When the phone rang I embraced the feeling and picked up the phone. By embracing it I used the feeling to fuel what I said.

It’s just come to me, on the McGuire course – you get immediate results because of the Hawthorn affect, Quite right. You get immediate results because you’re addressing many points on the Hexagon simultaneously, which is what initiates the Hawthorne Effect. The constant concern, caring, and support from the coaches and other course members creates a strong sense of community. This cannot help but have a profound effect on each course member, just like putting those ladies at the Hawthorne plant into their own group gave each of them a powerful sense of community and helped them to raise their self-esteem.

BTW, if you haven’t already, you should check into the Stuttering Home Page and read the papers posted on the International Stuttering Awareness Day (ISAD) 99 Conference. The one by Woody Starkweather is particularly good.

I wasn’t using the method to create a new hexagon, I was just using it to keep up a performance.

He advised me not to come back onto the course for a while until I have a better concept of who I am.

Speech is not important compared with the piece of mind I get when I follow my gut instincts, something that I'm learning to do.

I also have had the experience of doing a personal growth training in 1977 and then doing it all again in 1988, and the second time, I entered at a much higher level and got more out of it. Well, I say more, but that's not quite right. You always get what is appropriate for who you are AT THAT TIME. But the second time, I did push myself further because I'd had 11 years to work through my first round of insights and experiences.

I also saw this principle at work in the business world. There are some people who go from home to college to the big corporation, and they are always in a paternal environment where Big Brother is looking out for them. And they have a very fixed view of authority. Then there are those who go out in the world and have broader and varied experiences. Perhaps they try to do something independently. If these people then decide to work for a big corporation, they view the corporate authority figures differently, because they've had the experience of being their own authority for a while.

Right on, bro. Learning to trust yourself is where it's at.

Thoughts float around my mind naturally, but when a thought triggers an anxiety response I usually don't like the physical reactions of anxiety. And noticing my physical reactions, I start to get more and more anxious which stimulates more thoughts, and it gets into a cycle.

It seems to me the nature of this thing is that you think you've got it licked while it's been reinforcing itself.

The harder I try to just let myself feel, the worse it gets. The thing is, I find myself reacting to every thought I'm having, and the reaction is one of fear. The reaction is one of fear because of my hexagon, which at the moment is pretty negative.

I have got to find a mentality where recovery is fun and where I don't put pressure on myself to PERFORM!

Okay, try this one. If you were going to explain your mind and emotional set over the last few weeks WITHOUT talking about stammering — that is, explain it solely by non-speech related factors — what kinds of things come to mind?

Feeling the feelings is part of it, but not all of it. Do you have anyone with whom you can SHARE the feelings? What opportunities do you have to express what you feel? Are you trying to go it alone?

The thing is, I find myself reacting to every thought I'm having, and the reaction is one of fear.

Of...? (List at least five things that bring up fear.)

I tend to get perfectionistic when my personal relationships aren't going well, when I'm not in touch with the real me, and when I'm not doing things that I really care about.

Focusing on reducing the fear of failure is like focusing on being fluent. The more you think about the problem, the more it runs you. To reduce the fear of failure, you have to remove yourself from the Win-Lose game and start playing a different game altogether.

How come you're so caught up in performance fears right now? What is triggering this? University. Not

feeling I am enough. Over the summer I was gradually breaking through the layers to the real me, and when it came to it, a girl said something to me that sent me spiraling. She said, “you make me laugh as a person.”

What’s happening is that I don’t feel I am enough; I’m not prepared to be me and relax. I feel I have to be something more than I am. With University came new responsibilities – talking in seminar groups, fear of not making friends, etc. I also do a job in the evenings. I don’t like the job, but do it for the extra income. A guy in work makes me feel vulnerable.

But it sounds like you’re backing away in all these situations. And each time you do so, it’s just that much more that you’re holding onto.

Eventually, you end up with this big gunnysack of feelings that you’re carrying around with you, and that threaten to rush out any time you’re in direct contact and communication with someone. How can you handle these situations so that you don’t always walk away feeling like you’ve lost something from the interchange? Take the situation with the girl. **What other options did you have that would have allowed you to preserve your self-respect and self-esteem?**

Eventually, you end up with this big gunnysack of feelings that you’re carrying around with you, and that threaten to rush out any time you’re in direct contact and communication with someone. That statement is the most profound I have ever heard with regards to stammering, wow!!

My problem, as you so rightly put it, is my lack of self-assertion.

A lot of my problem is mistrust of others. There is more, but I have been emotionally dysfunctional for a long, long time.

I HAVE ADOPTED a more assertive role, which I’m trying to consciously develop.

The beauty of it is the longer you act as if, the more your subconscious catches up and becomes what you’re acting. It’s amazing the way you filter your thoughts differently when you act as if.

When I take a particular sleeping pill, which has a sedative affect, I don’t stammer. The problem ceases to become a word-by- word trial. I’m fully immersed in the moment, and I’m not aware that I’m talking. It’s amazing.

The undercurrent of anxiety never left which caused me to hold back, I never allowed myself to fully engage with the person I was talking to.

Now I see that you need to develop a mental representation of the nature of people and speak to them through this impression, but crucially ALLOW this to engage you and let the river lead you to wherever it will.

I experienced what you said to Jack Menear about talking and not even knowing you’re talking. You just get an idea of what you want to say and override the forward-looking radar, which evidently scans each word for possible dangers. Anyway, all for now.

I never allowed myself to fully engage with the person I was talking to.

THAT, my friend, is one of the most enduring truths about people who stutter. We attempt to get the words out without putting ourselves at risk (or what we think of as at risk!) by establishing an

emotional connection with those we're speaking to.

*You just get an idea of what you want to say and override the forward moving radar, which evidently scans each word for possible dangers. You betcha. That's the way the typical speaker operates who has not learned he has to protect himself from speech-related dangers. **It is, in effect, the Zen of speaking.***

You're right in that it's the same forward-looking process in which you initiate a strategy to avoid a potential danger. Sailing smoothly around the ditch would be an effective strategy. On the other hand, jamming your foot on the brake and abruptly stopping the car until you feel ready to move on would not be a particularly effective strategy (and could even get you rear ended).

Right. Acting "as if" replaces behavior which plays to your weaknesses and fears. That is, it reinforces more confidence-building behavior.

Perhaps there is a correlation there somewhere between stammering and mental illness. Do you remember a few months ago I told you about a drug I was taking and it was preventing me from stammering? This drug is a hypnotic sleeping pill. When I take it, it more or less curtails a greater proportion of my conscious thought.

The question I ask myself is "when you have defeated it, then what"? My reply – 'I don't know'! Maybe this is why I kept relapsing. Ever heard the term "we are what we eat"? It can also apply to what we think!

My world is not so egocentric (me against the world, or as you said, having to get someone off the mountain, rather than allowing everyone to stand on top of their individual mountains.)

It strikes me that reading could be a key element in my recent fluent episode. I find reading totally engaging. **In my current opinion the stammering mentality masks the person from experiencing who they are.**

When I do lock up, usually when I'm caught up in the mentality mid-conversation, I remind myself that I am equal to everyone else, and it really doesn't matter if I stammer.

I've read a little in the media, but I really can't get too interested in it because people are not clear about what they mean by stammering. Therefore, the discussions seem like a lot of vague nonsense to me.

Was it preventing you from stammering, or was it diminishing the unwanted and uncomfortable feelings that contribute to the speech block?

You're not the only McGuire graduate to be dealing with relapse. Keep in mind that if you don't address all of the hexagon, those parts that contribute to the blocking behavior will still want to push to the surface. It's like trying to keep a beach ball underwater. It takes a lot of effort, and once you stop pushing down, the ball pops to the surface again.

So then how do you keep the beach ball from popping to the surface without having to effort so hard? Think about it. What ELSE has to change?

I never did defeat stammering. I simply disassembled it, changed myself and how I thought and felt, developed awareness of what I was doing when I blocked, started showing people who I was, and the problem disappeared. There's a BIG difference between the two approaches.

“You are what you practice each day.” And I’m not just talking about speech.” Some aspect about YOU has to change that relates to how you think, feel, and perceive. When those changes take place, you will look at yourself differently.

Phew! Now the adventure of life is starting! To think I thought beating stammering was the real battle! As you said, you don’t beat it, you dissolve it.

Having the freedom to speak has highlighted many characteristics about my personality, which I don’t like. I initially felt at one with everyone else. Then I began to react to everything as a child would – tantrums, aggression. It got to the stage where I couldn’t bear to hear me!

We grow up thinking that our problems all stem from our stammering, and what a shock it is to find out that they stem from who we ARE.

Cooley (1957), He suggests that the self-concept is developed through the reflections of others regarding our own behavior. Our behaviour, then, is reflected by others, and this is how the self develops.

So I’d be careful of not allowing the professionals to program you into either or thinking.

How did you FEEL when you ran out of things to say? What thoughts came to mind? What beliefs took over?

If you DIDN’T hold back, what might have happened? (Let your imagination roam free on this one.)

Stammering is just a technique used to hide from yourself the fact that you have a tendency to hold back. Yup! The struggle to speak while at the same time secretly desiring to hold back is what creates the visible behaviors we know as stammering. You were being pulled in two different directions.

Why were you going unconscious?

You apparently felt that you had something to lose. Are you aware of what that might be?

What has really helped me is that when I talk, I don’t see it as “I’m doing pretty good, I didn’t stammer.” I see it as “Well, what I just said reflected me through not holding me back. I have the right to be me!”

YEAH! RIGHT ON THE MONEY!!! Next step is to be able to say the same thing without adding, “through not holding back.”

I blocked because often even when one talks clearly, certain foreign people have difficulty understanding what you say.

When you first began to overcome stuttering, did you just talk regardless of the fact that you might stutter, or did you control the stutter first? I’m getting to the stage where I just follow my instincts and just talk regardless.

If you wait until you can control the stutter first, you’ll never end up saying anything.

Dave McGuire talks about “killing” a feared word or situation by purposely going out and using the word scores of times until the situation doesn’t feel scary any more. I don’t know that there’s a substitute for this.

What helped me get past the holding back was not any McGuire technique (which didn't exist in those days), but learning how to assert myself and to live with the feelings that came up. That was a by-product of all those personal growth programs I did. Whatever fears I had about looking bad were dealt with big time in those trainings.

Right now I'm not having much difficulty with the stuttering, although the symptoms fluctuate in accordance to the way I look at the disorder. When I accept and truly regard myself as someone who will occasionally stutter, I tend to experience the moment and react accordingly. When stuttering doesn't fit in with how I want to view myself, then I have all manner of problems talking, never experiencing the moment perhaps through the constant anticipation.

I think that by now you have a pretty good handle on what's going in. Future progress will depend on getting out there and doing a lot of speaking, or perhaps, taking a McGuire refresher...or both.

I now get to the stage where I prevent the holding back even before it occurs. I have been trying to consciously change the many schemas I hold within my psyche. I have approached people in my past with whom I felt I had let myself down (many years ago). I have found that many of my schemas erode within minutes as opposed to trying to change through years of intellectualizing about a situation etc.

A friend of mine has a stammer. What I find about him is that he seldom has an opinion about anything. He NEVER initiates a conversation. He just fills in the blanks, usually with a patronizing statement for the person who is filling the room with energy. I can't help but feel that there is a lot of arrogance with him and denial.

WOW!!!! That's fantaaaaastic! You're really a walking advertising for the power of a holistic approach, and for the belief that persistence pays.

We MAKE it happen. As much as I know it FEELS like it is happening to us, WE are the ones who are tensing up in advance of words. This is a LEARNED behavior. And sometimes, even as you begin to reprogram your mind, the learned behavior will kick in as a conditioned response to various stimuli.

If we let this frustrate us, then we begin to recreate the pattern, and we lose confidence in the anti-stuttering stuff we've been working on. Remember, you've stuttered a ZILLION times over ___ years. You can't become perfect right away. **Don't CATASTROPHIZE each stutter.** You need to have a tranquil response to each block. Otherwise, your subconscious mind keeps learning that it is something to fear, to dread, to hate, to loathe. And it places too much importance on stuttering (which ultimately causes more stuttering). You can't spend your whole day worrying about your next block. (I don't know if you DO, but sometimes I sure did !) It's counterproductive and, ultimately, it is worse than the block itself.

Be patient. You are undoing YEARS of learned behavior and conditioning. It takes time.

But in my opinion the real work begins when you learn not to block.

I remember last week I was walking up a hill not thinking about stammering but thinking about the Thomas Harris novel, "Silence of the Lambs". One girl said "Hey, Andrew," and I replied, "Hey love, how's things?" without even thinking about it! Before I would have fallen all over myself to try to get the words out but nothing like this happened.

What I'm also finding is that I'm easily influenced and not at all assertive but that is something I can work on.

In the past I received a lot of sympathy (because of the stuttering), but now I have to deal with people naturally and absorb their moods (maybe they have had a bad day, etc.) **It amazes me how people without the blocking mindset can take speech for granted, but talk to them is cheap. To me, I treasure every day since I stopped blocking.**

“To Andrew. Your search for the truth will take you far. ‘I’m very upset about losing the book it was like a bible to me. I studied it everyday.

You are so right in your analysis of what’s happening. Without resorting to blocks to blot out what’s uncomfortable, you’re having to experience the “real” life that’s been flowing under the surface.

The challenge is to live through your difficulties as they present themselves and build up emotional muscle. What will make that happen is your INTENTION.

When you run your life by your expectations, you give away your power to others. How people react to you and how events work out controls your self-esteem. Under such circumstances, it is easy to feel disempowered.

On the other hand, when you run your life by your intentions, you end up having a totally different response to things not working out. Each time your expectations don’t work out, you simply know a little more about the problem. Then you reaffirm your intention to accomplish what it is you’ve set out to do. In this way, you continue to empower yourself. Of course, to do all this, your intentions have to be clear. That’s been the biggest challenge in my life — getting clear.

Every time I talked I had a panic attack, which led to all sorts of tricks and different methods to pronounce words.

I have not blocked now for over eighteen months, and it’s quite a relief, but I was so unprepared for what life without blocking would have in store for me. My social life began to expand as I made new friends. My experience was like getting up out of a wheelchair and walking again!!

Like everything else that was happening during the day, anything negative or positive was due to my speech. I had gotten into the habit of rewarding myself when I was fluent and was really hard on myself when I stuttered through blocking. **Now that I haven’t blocked for a while I don’t reward myself for being fluent anymore which I think is quite progressive.**

I got to the stage where I would speak but allowing myself to feel the panic and putting the fear to one side almost as if the panic was a distraction. What I discovered was that in doing this I would reduce the fear and talk without blocking. Many people rant and rave about fluency courses but to overcome stammering you need to understand the dynamics of what is going on. All the clues are in John Harrison’s book as mentioned earlier.

But what I can do is allow the feelings to be there and just notice them, put them to one side and continue the CONNECTION I have with the other person.

John Harrison has taught me that connections with the person you’re engaging with are invaluable and

the connection will help you acknowledge the potential to block. Immerse yourself in the connection, smell the scent of the other person, notice what they are wearing, how do they look? KEEP THE CONNECTION. When these horrid feelings arise, be BOLD. Keep moving forward. Don't lose the connection.

I'm interested in what I can offer to people who might be in a vulnerable position.

Dr. Weeks writes that when a fear thought comes by, FACE it, and don't run from it! Accept the fear thought. DON'T fight it (allow it to be there). And finally, FLOAT past, DON'T LISTEN IN (to the fear thought), and finally LET TIME PASS. Continue dancing with life and continue feeling the connection.

“One of the most powerful influences on emotional health and well being is the capacity to accept reality, to accept what is. The extent to which one can accept what is profoundly affects his psychological ability to adapt.” – Joseph Dunn, Ph.D. Psychologist

I learned this surprising secret very early when I came across a shocking quotation from Alfred Alder and then another from Carl Jung. Both said that you can never get over a neurosis until “you can love your neurosis.” My first thought was, “Love one's neurosis?”

Yet it is in and through acceptance that we are healed, released, and freed for emotional health and well-being.

...acceptance, as a key ingredient for effective coping and for mastering the challenges of life, acceptance surprisingly and paradoxically offers us one of the most powerful transformative tools. There's hardly anything more profound in human nature than acceptance.

Now if this seems preposterous, remember that acceptance, as a transformative process has long been known. Consider the serenity prayer: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

The word acceptance (from Latin and French) literally means, “to take, receive, or hold.”

This is the paradox of acceptance. What we accept, we defuse and release. What we do not accept, but fight against and resist, we give energy to so that it grows. It becomes increasingly unmanageable, and controls us. The opposite of just accepting ourselves, life, the world, others, the constraints that we face everyday, the cards life has dealt us, is the first step to true mastery and empowerment. It is the first step, not the last.

The lack of acceptance leaves us unable to face reality. It undermines our ability to cope with the basic facts of what is. When we don't accept something, we are rejecting, denying, repressing, and fighting. We pump our brains full of thoughts about non-acceptance. We do so with unrealistic expectations, impossible desires, and erroneous understandings that set us up for refusing to face things.

Acceptance is not resignation. Resignation refers to giving up or giving in. In resignation a person lies down and takes it. That's not acceptance.

Acceptance welcomes into mind and life with the purpose of effectively responding to it. In this, acceptance is not complacency or passivity, and it does not indicate the lack of high standards.

Again, Dr. Joseph Dunn on this subject:

“Acceptance is usually the initial step and a critical one, in any psychological condition or symptom. Dealing effectively with depression, anxiety, conflict, or destructive habits begins with acceptance. Often the most difficult part of therapy is struggling with resistance to face reality.”

The lack of acceptance drives perfectionism. Conversely, acceptance of what is conquers perfectionism and other forms of mental and emotional intolerance. In the real world we find all kinds of ambiguities. We don't have neat categories of black-or-white compartments.

Acceptance is critical for relationships because without it, we go about trying to change the other. And that interferes with allowing each person to take responsibility for changing. Acceptance enables us to suspend our defenses and judgments that interfere with accurate perceptions. **Relationally, the ability to live with differences depends upon acceptance.**

Forgiveness is an acceptance grace. It enables us to come to terms with major hurts that we cannot just dismiss. Acceptance enables humor and laughter. Humorist Woody Allen illustrates the power of humor in acceptance, “I wasn't born a good looking kid, I didn't acquire these looks until later in life.” As part of the art of acceptance, humor, as a way to gain psychological distance, enables us to laugh things off.

We can accept without endorsing. We can accept a person without approving of everything that person thinks, feels, or says. Acceptance is part of contentment. Learning to accept life circumstances while fixing our eyes on values that have true meaning is essential for living a contented and peaceful life. Releasing what we cannot control makes for acceptance.

The Art of Acceptance

- What do you have a challenge accepting?
- What problems or situations do you find yourself fighting against?
- What do you say, “I can't stand...?”
- How well do you accept yourself with all of your imperfections and fallibilities?
- How well do you accept your world or others?

If acceptance is such a powerful and healing influence as a state and as a frame of mind, how do we learn it? How do we practice it? How can we develop more ready access to it and use it when we need it?

The art of acceptance starts in the mind as a way of thinking about things and perceiving. It begins as we notice what we already “accept” rather than reject. It's best to begin by thinking of something small and simple that you accept. How about the rain, traffic in a big city, lines at the airport, the baby's diaper needing to be changed, someone has to take the garbage out? Think about something perhaps that you once did not accept, but rejected, hated, and found intolerable yet over the years, you have come to just accept.

As you think about something small that you accept, see and hear it on the theater of your mind until you step into that experience and feel it. When you do, notice how you are breathing, your muscle tension, your gestures, movements, voice, tone, eyes, face, etc. Take a snapshot of this experience of acceptance. To learn this even better, think of something that you definitely do not accept. Do the same with it, see and hear it until you step in and feel it then take a snapshot of that state. Are these different states?

Identify the language of acceptance and nonacceptance. When we don't accept we typically utilize the language of the can'ts. – "I can't stand to fail, that would be terrible." "I can't stand to be laughed at." "I can't tolerate having to wait."

Of course, these are psychological can'ts, not actual limitations and constraints as in "I can't fly." Psychological can'ts drive our intolerance and nonacceptance and indicate frames of prohibition, which taboo the experience under consideration. **Now to undo the damage of prohibition, there's a radical operation needed: we need to step up and give ourselves permission.**

"I give myself permission to fail." "I give myself permission to be human, fallible, to live in a fallible world, to make mistakes, to learn from them, to make the most of things," etc.

Resetting your frames occurs as you give yourself permission. Simply continue to do so until it becomes a felt reality for you, until it becomes emotional acceptance. This is the power of changing our internal dialogue. Dr. Joseph Dunn writes:

"Real acceptance involves being open to emotionally absorb or digest what is. There is an absence of emotional defensiveness and avoidance." **In the end, acceptance is just a state of mind-and-emotion.** While there are spiritual traditions that have rituals that take years to achieve in terms of achieving acceptance, it doesn't have to be that difficult if it is just a state. Nor does the "stages of grief resolution" have to be so long and hard. In Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' analysis of the grief stages, a person moves from shock, denial, bargaining, depression, and finally moves on to (guess what?) acceptance. **Yet if acceptance is just a mind-body state, why not just start there?**

Every mind-body-emotion state is simply that – a state of mind, of body, and emotion. This gives us the "royal roads to state" of what we're thinking and show we're using our physiology. That's why "thinking about a time when you had an experience of acceptance with something small and simple and noticing the state of your body in all of its dimensions empowers you with the ability to access acceptance and use it to set accepting frames of mind about other things.

To summarize the process:

1. Identify an experience of acceptance.

When have you just accepted something for what it is? What do you now accept that once you fought, rejected, and hated? How does your current acceptance improve the quality of your life?

2. Fully access the experience.

What do you see, hear, and feel when you recall that accepting experience? How much do you feel the state of acceptance? What would make it stronger for you? What is it like in your body? Breathing, gestures, movements, etc.?

3. Set an anchor for this state.

Link some special word, gesture, symbol, etc. for this state. Step in and out of the state until you can trigger the anchor and quickly get back into state.

4. Apply the acceptance to another area where you need and want acceptance.

What other area of life are you non-accepting, judgmental, intolerant, rejecting, resigning? Trigger the

anchor of your acceptance state and hold as you link that state with whatever you want to be more accepting.

Summary

There's hardly another state as healing or freeing as acceptance. It powerfully enables us to adjust ourselves to reality for what it is and to then take the next step in moving forward in a positively creative way.

Ultimately, acceptance is just a state, which means we can use the tools and processes in NLP and Neuro-Semantics to access the state and use it to set new frames of mind about other areas of life where acceptance would free and renew us.

Embrace life; embrace Christmas (the terrible dinner, the socks or under-wear you didn't need). See yourself as someone who stutters rather than a stutterer.

I have posted quite a few tools that I gained from a conversation with Jack Menear and John Harrison in John's book. Claire Weeks, Ph.D. writes:

- 1) FACE don't run when a fear thoughts comes by.
- 2) ACCEPT don't Fight (the thought that you might stutter).
- 3) FLOAT PAST. Don't listen in to the thought because if you do this you BECOME the fear that you are resisting.
- 4) LET TIME PASS.

Dr. Weeks didn't write this about stammering or stuttering, but she uses this method to overcome all sorts of anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and this is what Jack Menear did to totally cure himself of stuttering. I use it, myself.

I need to allow the potential to block to be there but ACCEPT IT, notice it, and put it to one side. (Easier said than done, I know.) It takes time to master it, but when you master it, you fall in love again with life. You fall in love again with yourself. YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH CHRISTMAS!

I have come a long way from my chronic stuttering days, days spent at home alone, shutting myself from the outside world. YOU CAN fall in LOVE with yourself again. You can FALL in love with reality, but in my opinion one does need to take baby steps.

I tried and tried, and when she could see my frustration she began to panic too! This had an adverse affect on me. The interesting thing about the whole episode was that I went into the bank with stammering not even on my top ten list of worries, and I was quite verbal at first with the boy's mother. I said, "Hi, how's the family?" Then it hit! I did not want her telling her son that I stammered badly in front of her because what sort of a role model would I be to her son if I couldn't even get my account number out. I've been through the whole episode and had a quiet laugh! So, first we have the build up of the queue, which rushed me. Secondly, I was served by a mother of a boy that I know. And hey presto, I began to hold back.

...because I hadn't thought about stammering for two years!!

When you block, REALLY feel the block. See what the block has to offer. Think on your feet give yourself a few extra vital seconds to compose yourself. When you feel what the block has to offer you, notice that you're still here living and breathing and with experience you learn to notice the block. Allow it to be there and keep moving forward.

This last email from Andrew was a landmark, because nowhere does he ever refer to stammering. He had finally moved on. He had made it through. His stammering problem had become history.

Part 7: How to Conquer Your Fears of Speaking Before Others

Most are uncomfortable because they feel on the spot. They feel they have to perform, and their self-judgment kicks in.

SPEECH 1: Claiming Your Space 523-528

The stage at the Palladium is 50 feet from left to right, and Danny Kaye moved about as if he owned every inch of it.

The average individual stays rooted within the same three foot "island."

Our Survival Instincts at Work

Standing stock-still is a natural reaction to danger.

When people feel relaxed and safe, they move freely. So one way to tell your emotional, non-thinking self that everything is okay is to move about. Moving freely...claiming all the space you need to make yourself comfortable and in charge...is what this first speech is all about.

Don't rush. Take a moment and collect yourself. Get in touch with the way your feet feel on the floor - make sure they're solidly planted. If you feel nervous, or if your legs or stomach are shaking a bit, just notice it. Do not try and contain this energy. You don't want to block it; you want to use it. You want to make it work for you.

Now begin your talk.

Use every bit of floor space you can get your feet on.

Don't fight the blocks; just experience them.

Resting your foot on something is what people do when they're comfortable and at ease. Notice how this feels. If there's a little voice whispering, "You're not supposed to be this free and easy when you speak." - simply notice that the voice is there. But don't stop speaking.

When really good speakers and professional actors are before an audience, they're usually operating in a state of high energy and excitement. **It's releasing this energy during their presentation that creates their charisma.**

One of our major tasks, then, is to begin to change how we regard the feelings that surface as we speak. We need to understand the differences between "creative" discomfort and "negative" discomfort.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING UNCOMFORTABLE

"Negative" discomfort, the kind that debilitates us, is usually associated with holding back something that wants to be expressed.

"Creative" discomfort, on the other hand, is experienced when you let go. It comes with the release of energy. For example, actors are taught to use the tension that naturally arises in front of an audience. They use it to put oomph in their performance.

Let's review some of the differences between "creative" and "negative" discomfort.

"Negative" discomfort:

- Results from resisting what is taking place
- Is fraught with fear and anxiety.
- Tends to undermine your self-confidence.

"Creative" discomfort:

- helps you to feel powerful and in charge.
- comes from heightening what is taking place.
- is savored as a moment of high excitement.

Transforming your discomfort into something positive — actually learning to make it work for you — will be a major step in overcoming your fears.

Ever heard a speaker fluff a line, and then chuckle over his faux pas?

But how about the senior giving a graduation speech who draws a blank and become excruciatingly embarrassed?

We're picking up the speaker's feelings...or what we imagine them to be. And we're making them our own.

It is an instinct in all of us to pick up on other people's feelings.

When you move about and touch things, you're telling the audience that you're in charge. They become more comfortable, and this, in turn, makes you more comfortable. You have begun to establish a new, more positive cycle.

It is not your disfluency that the audience will react to, but how you feel about yourself as a speaker. If you feel okay, so will they.

Our fear of being different and/or looking strange keeps us from letting go and having fun.

SPEECH 2: Speaking Up 529-532

The average person has no problems talking animatedly to the neighbor over the back fence, but put him in front of an audience, and his voice is barely a whisper.

When you're in front of an audience, you're in a place of power. Acting forcefully in that role indicates that you really enjoy being there.

Before we get involved with your second talk, take a moment and reflect on how you feel about being in charge. Here are some questions you might ask yourself:

- How do I feel about having others see me as strong?
- Do I feel that others are jealous whenever I look powerful? (Clue: do I feel jealous or resentful when others act commanding and confident?)
- Do I fear coming on too strong?
- How do I feel physically when I experience myself as powerful? (ie: Do my feet feel securely

planted on the ground? What do my stomach...my chest...my throat...my face feel like? What do I notice about my breathing?)

- In a two party relationship, am I comfortable with the more dominant or less dominant role?
- Is it a relief to me when neither party dominates?
- What kind of a boss do I make? Do I gain people's respect? Do I let people walk over me? Do I feel relief when I can avoid dealing with responsibility?

Take the time to formulate some responses to these questions.

If you can begin to recognize your hidden attitudes about power, the sudden emotions that crop up in "power situations" won't seem like they're coming out of the blue. You'll begin to know what's causing them.

As you speak, notice your impact on the members of your audience. (In other words, stay CONSCIOUS!!!)

Increased volume has a way of communicating to someone that you mean business.

...you may also notice that you're shaky. This trembling may extend to your hands, your legs, your chest, your voice — perhaps even throughout your body.

This is perfectly natural. You're experiencing the conflict between holding back and letting go.

Sometimes, those who do this exercise notice a substantial drop in the frequency of their stuttering blocks. That's a by-product of letting go.

Cognitive dissonance (the discrepancy between what you experience and what actually is) plays a big part in the integrated behaviors and attitudes that comprise stuttering. As you bring your perception closer to reality, you'll have taken another step in dismantling your stuttering system.

Speech 3: Adding the Music 533-536

And if you really took a chance and extended yourself, you made some interesting discoveries:

- 1) People thought that you were more alive and forceful as a speaker.
- 2) What you thought was "coming on too strong" seemed to others to be quite within the ordinary.
- 3) You may have even found it easier to speak.

Let's look at another way to add excitement to your speaking.

Small children have a short attention span and are easily bored. Because their intellectual faculties have not had time to develop, it is usually difficult to get and hold their attention by appealing only to their mind. **To be successful, you also have to appeal to their emotions.**

Want to know why we never stutter when we sing? In part, it's because singing forces us to be emotional.

If we do sing in a monotone, it's no longer called singing, but "chanting."

Take a moment to ground yourself before you start to speak. This means standing without saying

anything for a few moments to check out how you feel. Notice your emotions. Notice how your body feels. Notice your audience. LOOK at them. Don't allow yourself to go unconscious!

But you know the real tragedy? You sold yourself a bill of goods. This isn't the you that people want to meet. This is only a held-back version of the real you. The irony is that if you could only let go and be yourself, you could make it easier for others — your friends, relatives, even the strangers you meet — to let go and be themselves. But nobody may have ever told you this...until now.

Occasionally we have to exaggerate an action before we can truly experience it.

And continue to notice whether adding more emotion to your voice makes it easier to speak without blocking.

SPEECH 4: Learning to Live with Pauses 537-539

RAY: Who's running the meeting tonight since you're not there?

BOB: The.....vice.....

RAY: President? PRESIDENT???

BOB: ...squad.....busted.....the.....club...so we're...not...meeting.

Those of us who grew up with a stuttering problem have learned to detest pauses, because we've always associated a pause with a lack of fluency. We try to fill every moment with wall-to-wall words. Every half-second pause feels like an eternity. **WE HAVE TO KEEP TALKING!!!**

Pauses can be very useful, even long ones.

The best, and perhaps only, way to become comfortable with pauses is to try them out. Speech Number 4 is designed to give you this opportunity.

STAYING CONSCIOUS AND AWARE

A question that may come up is, "What should I be doing while I'm pausing?"

What you **DON'T** want to do is look up at the ceiling or out into space. That's what those who stutter usually do when they block.

What you **DO** want to do is establish strong eye contact with members of the audience.

Make those pauses as long as you like. In addition, stay in touch with your body. What do your feet feel like? How does your entire body feel when you consciously and deliberately set the pace?

Make it *your* choice.

SPEECH 5: Look ‘em in the Eye 540-543

In fact, some so-called aphrodisiacs do nothing more than dilate the pupil to artificially create this nonverbal cue. As long as you avoid looking the other person in the eye, your interchange with him (or her) loses a measure of intensity.

Eye contact serves as a bridge over which emotions travel between you and your listener.

What’s the fear?

It could be the fear of being judged. Or a fear that you’re looking foolish or coming off too dominant.

Many of us who stutter are frightened of feelings. We tend to be overly controlled. Therefore, we see involvement (eye contact) as forcing us to give up some of this control over our emotions.

True, if you don't invest your emotions in the speaking situation, you have less likelihood of being hurt.

But there’s a catch.

Without your emotions, you have no power, no strength, and no presence. You’re just a bunch of words.

It’s an exercise in visualization. Before your imaginary talk begins, allow your eyes to meet the eyes of several members of the imaginary audience. Really look at them. *Picture how it feels to be in contact with your audience.* Now continue the fantasy and begin to make your talk.

Don't focus on fluency. Instead, focus on what it would feel like to be confident. *What is that feeling like?*

Keep doing it until you have a clear sense of how you want the experience to *feel*. Get yourself so fired up, so ready for this wonderful experience that you can hardly wait for the meeting date to come around.

Most of us who stutter see our audience as judges.

...confidently establish eye contact with your audience, and ask yourself — "Who's in the commanding position now?" Or better yet, simply imagine they are there to totally support you, which by and large, audiences want to do anyway.

SPEECH 6: Letting Your Feelings Show 544-548

The problem is – an emotion doesn’t go away just because we hide it. Emotions correspond to biochemical changes inside our bodies. When we’re stressed, our bodies respond in a “fight or flight” syndrome. Adrenaline and other biochemicals shoot into our blood stream to provide us with the strength and stamina to meet the crisis.

Here’s the bad news. These chemicals recycle in your body for as long as three weeks. If you don’t release these energies, you literally stew in your own juices.

As you anticipate the dangers of talking (i.e., you’re next in line to give your report), your body begins to marshal its forces.

A person can talk if he has a tight back muscle. It doesn't interfere with his ability to communicate. But a person who has locked his vocal cords together cannot create a sound. His fear at not being able to speak then becomes an *additional* source of stress, which prompts more blocking which prompts more stress which prompts more blocking, etc. The cycle has become self-perpetuating. **Although the fear of blocking *does* become a stimulus for more blocking, the *original* reason you hold back may not have anything to do with speaking per se.**

Or just being in front of others recalls a similar childhood situation where you were judged and felt rejected.

You may not know it, but audiences LOVE to get angry. And they'll love you for giving them the chance to let off steam.

- When we felt we were angry, others saw us as annoyed.
- When we felt we were enraged, others saw us as angry.
- When we felt we were overbearing, others saw us as forceful.
- When we felt we were loud, others saw us as energetic.

SPEECH 7: Stuttering on Purpose 549-554

Why go public with THE GREAT SECRET?

The guru sitting on the rock said it best: **“You are what you resist.”** He means that if you want to get rid of a problem, you first have to embrace it. Accept it. Make it part of you.

Only then can you begin to let it go.

True, you can seem to make a behavior disappear by focusing hard on not doing it — as is suggested in “fluency shaping” type programs — but unless you carry this process one step further...to where you also dissolve the “glue” that holds the problem together...the behavior tends to return.

Why?

Very simple. To solve a problem, you have to continue to recreate it. (Otherwise, you have nothing in front of you to work on.) Therefore, — and here's the great irony — the harder you try to solve your stuttering problem, the more you're establishing its presence.

SOLVING VS. DISSOLVING

When you dissolve it, the subject disappears because you have dismantled it. (Rather like what you did as a child when you took apart the "car" you made with your Lego set and put the parts back in the box.) You have disconnected the parts so they no longer interact. You have removed the problem by destroying its structure.

10-year-olds Tom, Dick, Harry and Johnny comprise a gang that's continually in trouble. You want to curtail their activities. How do you do it?

You'll probably have only limited success if you deal with them as a gang. That's because there's a chemistry between them that spells trouble. The more you deal with them as a gang, the more you confirm the gang's existence. And the more you reinforce its behaviors.

But if you induce them to join a youth group and get involved in other activities, the Tom, Dick, Harry and Johnny gang becomes dissolved into a larger setting. The structure that defines their gang no longer exists. The “parts” become dismantled and reassigned to other areas. The gang...and the problem...have disappeared.

Just like fighting the gang reinforces its presence, focusing on the speech block - resisting it, fighting it - only further entrenches it within your psyche.

Since you are what you resist, maintaining an attitude that says, “I will do anything rather than stutter in public” only makes sure the problem stays with you for a long time.

So what keeps you stuck? In part, it's the reluctance to experience the feelings that come up when you block; feelings like fear, shame and embarrassment.

Doesn't it stand to reason, then, that the issue of stuttering (not the stuttering, itself, but the perception of what's really going on) could dissolve (disappear) into a larger context if you can:

- 1) Allow yourself to experience the feelings.
- 2) Explore whether these feelings are as intolerable as you think they are.
- 3) Discover that allowing yourself to "have" the experience gives you a measure of control over it.
- 4) Be open to the other non- stuttering related issues that may also affect what's going on.

You may find that your stuttering is really the product of a constellation of problems, including difficulties with self-assertion, a confused self- image, a reluctance to express what you feel, bad speech mechanics and so forth. Seen within this context, what you thought was simply a speech problem may be transformed into a different set of issues.

After all, speech blocks are not something that happen to you. **They're something you DO.** They involve specific muscle movements and behaviors. And if you're like most people who stutter, you have a very unclear idea of what these behaviors are.

Because we have spent so much of our lives trying to pass for “normal,” what is really threatened by this exercise is...our self-image. When we really get down to it, what we're most afraid of is not appearing “normal”.

You're the one who cares. Because you're trying to look good. To you. The moment you are willing to give up your old self-image, you make possible incredible opportunities for change. **What this speech is about is learning to expand your self-image to include your occasional disfluent self.** This will free you from being locked in a two-position game of being either “normal” or “abnormal”. These are not meaningful labels, and they force you into a corner. In fact, the fear of “being abnormal” may well be the key to your resistance.

And it gives you a wonderful feeling of being in control.

When you block on purpose, you are in control. So exercise this control. Find out how good it feels to be holding the strings.

There will be a tendency to be so relieved this exercise is over that you'll want to shove it out of your consciousness and into the cosmic void.

Don't.

Remember, you're trying to alter your attitudes about your own disfluency.

And above all, acknowledge yourself for doing something that 99% of all those who stutter would never have had the guts to do.

SPEECH 8: Using Your Body 555-557

So what does the typical person do when he speaks in front of others? He stands still. Perfectly still.

At best, he white-knuckles the podium, holding it in a death grip while his emotions fight unsuccessfully for release. That's doing it the hard way. It gets back to that genetic tendency we all have to stand still in the face of danger.

But think how contradictory and defeating it is to give a talk and at the same time act as if you didn't want people to notice you.

And this situation - where two forces pull you in opposite directions — is exactly the kind of circumstance that encourages you to block.

SPEECH 9: Interacting with an Audience 558-562

One of the best ways to break down this barrier is to reach out and actively involve yourself with your audience.

Not only does it warm up the room, it's actually fun because you're engaging your listeners on a personal level.

Most speakers isolate themselves within a protective cocoon.

Those of us who stutter have always tried to depersonalize the speaking experience because it was painful. We didn't want to feel the feelings any more than we had to. We didn't want to be in contact with anyone while we were experiencing those god-awful blocks.

So we retreated. And that attitude, that holding back is exactly what helps to create and perpetuate our speech blocks.

So it will be important to stay aware of how this makes you feel.

Typically, those of us who stutter have mixed feelings about our own power. We're both attracted and frightened by it. We fantasize what we'd do if we spoke fluently. We see ourselves getting things done, running our lives efficiently, perhaps even being a leader. Yet, when faced with an opportunity to play a more powerful role, we hold back.

You want to provoke your listeners.

Speech 9 can challenge the way you've traditionally seen yourself, because it encourages you to really connect with the audience. If your image has been that of "the stutterer who sits quietly and never disturbs anyone," then personally interacting with your listeners will probably stimulate a little voice that says, "I'm not being myself."

But is that true? Are you really not being “you?” It depends on what you mean by you. If you mean the constricting self-image you created that tells you who you should be, then it’s true. You’re not being that “you.” But if by “you,” you mean the person who’s just chosen to have fun with the audience, then of course it’s the real you.

Each of us builds a self-image that tells us “who we are.” This picture of ourselves helps to orient our life and give it focus. Anything that challenges this image, we perceive as a threat to our wellbeing. (Check it out. When we're unsure about who we are, how do we feel? Anxious and confused.) However, a self-image that’s too narrow to accommodate the full sweep of our personality imprisons us. It forces us to curtail our activities so we may continue to act in character.

You simply need to practice the exercises over and over until the behaviors become familiar and you become used to seeing yourself in these new roles. Only then will they become a welcome and acceptable part of the "real you."

SPEECH 10: Inciting People to Action 563-568

He was one of that small group of people consistently willing to venture outside their comfort zone. Most of us go the other way. We put our lives on automatic, settle into our safe, predictable world and do what we can do maintain the status quo.

People tend to be herd animals. They move in the direction of the pack.

But there are just so many things he’s willing to expend his energy on. And everything else...that is, everything that doesn’t impact him personally...he’s willing to relegate to others.

If you can translate your message into terms that are personal to your audience and allow your conviction to sweep them away, you’ve empowered them to take an action. Then you just need to tell them what to do. Remember, your belief adds credibility to the cause. Your enthusiasm and belief are infectious. So look around for something you feel inspired about, something that needs doing, and make that the subject of your talk.

Any good salesman can tell you that there are two basic parts to making a sale: first you need to create the desire, and secondly, you need to deal with resistance. Now, resistance can take several forms. There is the resistance that comes from being *afraid* to do something. For example, the thought of doing this speech will undoubtedly bring up a certain amount of resistance that will show up in inner dialogues such as...

“I don’t need this added stress. I’m dealing with enough right now.”

“I’m not ready to try this yet.”

“This is a stupid exercise.”

“I’m too busy.”

There is also the resistance that comes up because a person is having a hard time justifying something he or she wants to do. All of us a familiar with the inner voice that says...

“But I really don’t *need* a third TV.”

“There are too many calories in a double scoop Rocky Road ice cream cone.”

“I really *shouldn't* stay up and watch the 1 a.m. movie.”

This is why enthusiasm is so important when you're trying to get people to act. Your logical arguments can give them the “reason why” to do something, but it's your *enthusiasm* that gives people the strength to set aside their fears. It diverts them from worrying about themselves by making something else more important.

When people care, they are willing to act. Just think about the father who jumps into the river to save his child from being swept downstream. Would he normally risk his life that way? Not unless he were Dar Robinson, and even Dar put himself at risk only after weeks and months of preparation. But the child's father has made something more important than his own fears. That caring is what fuels his efforts.

So how do you get people to act?

As we mentioned, you need to find something that *you* care about, and then find ways to communicate that caring to your audience. How do you do that? Well, for one thing you don't want to stand rigidly before your audience, arms clamped to your side, and talk in a monotone. *That* won't allow them to feel what you feel. You'll be more persuasive if you...

- Make yourself comfortable by claiming your space.
- Speak up so your energy can come through.
- Heighten your emotion by adding inflection and pitch to your voice.
- Create drama by adding pauses.
- Look 'em in the eye so they know you mean business.
- Let your emotions show.
- Stutter on purpose to really demonstrate that you're in command.
- Use your body to create emphasis.
- Interact with your audience to break down the barriers.

In other words, this is the speech in which you can put to use everything you've learned and practiced in this manual. It's your chance to really have fun with speaking, and to discover that the only limitations you have are the ones you place on yourself. So pull out all the stops, and don't forget to have fun.

Maybe you turned their apathy into mild interest...or their mild interest into curiosity.

Part 8: Where Do You Go From Here?

Tapping the Resources on the Internet 573-579

Most experts place the incidence of stuttering at just one percent of the population, although even this may be high if you factor out those children experiencing developmental disfluency, a condition that often disappears of its own accord as the child matures.

Nor has it been easy for people who stutter to share ideas with the professional community.

Nonprofessionals can be astute observers of their own speech. Their “insider’s” point of view can give them privy to insights about the nature of stuttering that are not easily accessible to the average professional who must view the problem from the outside. This is especially true of that small number of people who have recovered from stuttering on their own, without therapy. If they’ve been good observers, they have a unique perspective of the entire recovery process and what it entails.

I could not help but notice the correlation between who I was and my ability to express myself.

General semantics eventually gave birth to Neuro- Linguistic Programming (NLP), and that, in turn, gave birth to Neuro- Semantics (NS).

The discussions about the stuttering experience are on a level of sophistication that I have seldom seen elsewhere. If you have the time, read some of the earliest emails sent to the list.

www.stutteringhomepage.com

www.nsastutter.org

www.stutterSFA.org

caps.webcon.net

www.speakeasycanada.com

www.stammering.org

www.stutterisa.org

You need to hear what the stuttering experience is like from other people’s points of view, and discover the ways in which your experiences are similar. You also need an opportunity to share yourself—your ideas, fears, hopes and ambitions—and to see that you have the power to reach and influence others. This is all part of the process of empowerment, of discovering that you are no longer a victim but a potential agent of change.

The Value of Internet Discussion Groups 580-586

By: Alan Badmington

I needed to change my disempowering mindset. Another contributory factor was the absence of support, which is so essential whether you are recovering from stuttering, drugs, alcohol, or whatever.

Having been provided with new tools and techniques (that enabled me to combat blocking and deal with troublesome words/sounds), I devised an extensive and pro-active plan of action designed to challenge my self-limiting beliefs and widen my restrictive self-image (as outlined in the following paper that I contributed to the 2003 International Stuttering Awareness Day online conference “STEP OUTSIDE: Why expanding comfort zones can improve our stuttering and lead to more fulfilling lives.”
<http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/isad6/papers/badmington6.html>

Like the turtle, we can only move forward when we stick our neck out.

For over half a century, I constantly reminded myself of what I could NOT do, or the dire consequences of attempting to speak in certain situations. I spent a lifetime accumulating, recounting and giving far too much prominence to the memories of negative speaking experiences. As a result, my stutter flourished and thrived.

The more I nourished and sustained it, the more it impacted upon my daily existence. I make no excuse for having reversed that trait. The worm has turned and, in direct contrast, I now constantly remind myself of my successes.

They also counteract the effects of painful experiences, including trauma.

I frequently receive feedback from people (both within and outside the stuttering community) who generously confide that my revelations have influenced them to confront obstacles in their own lives.

I never cease to be amazed by what the sub-conscious can unveil when it is stimulated or interrogated.

Fear and self-doubt figure prominently in the lives of many people, not just those who stutter.

However, as a member of an online forum, some people gain confidence and encouragement by leaning upon the knowledge, camaraderie and collective support that are present within that group.

Those who invite guidance and suggestions from others in advance of an upcoming event (maybe a job interview or public speaking engagement) report positive outcomes. But, of course, prior consultation does not always guarantee success.

I believe in the effects of “coaching” and positive speech.

Best coaches (and champions) in the world had provided me the best advice. I have been very lucky.

We originate from different backgrounds; are subjected to different life experiences; and accumulate different degrees of emotional baggage. We commence from different starting lines; operate in accordance with different beliefs, self-concepts and values; and possess different aspirations.

While some hope to deal effectively with their stuttering issues, others may not believe that this is possible.

For example, the Yahoo neurosemanticsofstuttering group was set up for the “primary purpose of helping and working with PWS to overcome stuttering, utilizing Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), Neuro-Semantic tools and other cognitive methods to help achieve that outcome.”

For so many years, transferring my thoughts to paper was the only effective way in which I could meaningfully express myself. My past oral exchanges were littered with words that I considered to be

inferior or, in some cases, totally inappropriate. I succumbed to mediocrity simply because I did not want the listener to see/hear me stutter.

Many of us now possess a far greater understanding of the issues that shape our lives. We are also better informed about how we (and others) react to the diverse challenges that confront us, and have discovered that there are exciting and fulfilling paths available for us to tread.

Divulging even the most intimate details to “total strangers” can sometimes be less challenging than revealing them to someone you know.

Greater openness about my lifetime struggles has proved invaluable in helping me to overcome my previous embarrassment. Revealing my “darkest secrets” (both online and in everyday situations) has greatly aided the desensitization process.

Resources for Change 587-598

Some have terrible childhood memories they have to work through. Others don't. Some grow up with simple stuttering patterns. Others have constructed complex struggle behaviors they must unlearn.

The stuttering system is different for each person, which is why a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to have success unless your story just happens to fit a standard template. Solutions have to be tailored to the individual.

Chronic stuttering is a multidimensional program and usually needs to be addressed from many different directions.

Chronic stuttering is a much different problem from, say, a lisp or an articulation problem. More facets of the individual have to be addressed.

Life experience is important. Therapists who are most effective are those who have lived through their own personal growth issues.

I do know that experiential knowledge is every bit as important as abstract knowledge. In the best possible world, your therapist will have a healthy dose of both.

There are therapists whose *only* focus is on fluency, and who encourage you to make that your permanent goal. What is ironic is that the very focus that allows you to attain mechanical fluency can militate against your reaching the next step of spontaneous self-expression.

That's because total fluency may not be your natural way of speaking.

What the PWS is looking for is freedom from blocking.

I cannot tell you how many PWS I have met through the years who have confided that they gave up their fluency technique because in using it they felt too mechanical. Sure they could speak but it didn't feel like they were themselves. Something was missing.

If you want to reach a high level of comfort when you speak, you need to address the entire stuttering system. *You have to become comfortable with letting go and being yourself when you talk.*

Personal coaching is a newcomer to the stuttering scene.

We can help you explore your stuttering system and give you guidance on what steps and strategies will be most productive.

A coach also helps you to identify and define your unique issues. Proper coaching improves your chances of reaching your goals faster and more efficiently.

I can help you identify, decipher, understand and work with your total stuttering system.

Remember, if you cannot properly define the problem, your chances of solving it are dim. But if you understand the parts and how they work together, it becomes more likely that you can put together an effective strategy for recovery.

My job as a coach is to help you to identify the elements in your daily life that contribute to your stuttering hexagon. Typically, many triggers will be things you're not even aware of.

As we work together, we'll explore situations in which speech is easier, as well as situations where speech is challenging, and you'll begin to see the common threads that are woven throughout your speaking world. You'll start to see patterns. You'll identify triggers. You'll discover what these situations have things in common. And you'll understand the way these components come together to form a system.

We also explore such resources as Toastmasters, Speakers Clubs, and Internet discussion groups where you can enlist the support of other people. We might even experiment during the session, trying out various strategies in the moment to see how they impact your speech.

Since blocking is a survival strategy, it's really important to understand how and why you perceive the world the way you do. Equally important is developing a cache of tools and techniques that allow you to exercise control over your cognitive processes, instead of being totally at their effect.

Today an NLP coaching session can run you through various processes that will help you get in touch with the thoughts and feelings that trigger your blocking behavior. The coach can also teach you tools that you can work with on your own.

Neuro-Semantics refers to the way we create meanings in our minds, and how these meanings become transformed into beliefs, perceptions, emotions, and ultimately, the very frames of reference that shape our life. By helping us to become conscious of and alter these mental frames, Neuro-Semantics gives us a way to shape our own reality.

Your involvement in Toastmasters simultaneously strengthens many points around the Stuttering Hexagon. Your *beliefs* will change as you discover that your effectiveness is not tied up in how fluent you are but how effectively you communicate. (Many NSA members become president of their Toastmaster clubs, and many others do extremely well in the semi-annual competitions.) Your *perceptions* will change as you begin to see that your fellow club members are supportive and that perfection is not required to have fun. Your *physiological responses* are less likely to slip into a fight or flight reaction because you've become used to being in front of people. And your *emotions* gradually segue from fear and anxiety into confidence and connectedness.

Forty Years Later pp.606-611

Just the idea of standing in front of all those "judges" made me a queasy. I didn't feel that what I had to

say ever counted for anything. So I limited my focus to making a living and pursuing my curiosity about people.

I like making the complex simple.

Most important, there was no pressure to perform, because I was doing everything I did for free.

“If you want to find out who you really are, notice what you do for free.”

Oh my god! If you wanted to see one nervous, uptight John Harrison, you would have found him in Reno. This was my second non-stuttering audience, and these people were Management Consultants. They were Authorities. They were Very Important People. My fears of authority figures kicked in big time.

The self-consciousness that had hounded me all my life also began to develop cracks. A big contributor to that was an article I wrote entitled “**How Your Expectations Can Sink Your Ship.**” In getting clear about the distinction between running my life by my expectations vs. my intentions, I was able to see how much and how often I gave away my power to other people. The clearer I got about that, the more I realized that other people’s opinions took second place to what I wanted to do. As I began to value and support the need to express myself honestly, my self-consciousness has fallen away. I will note your objection, disagreement, or dislike, but I’ll continue to focus on fulfilling my intentions if I think they have merit.

It works. Amazing!

I hope you find this book useful. I give anybody and everybody permission to use this material however they see fit. You don’t have to check with me. If you can make a difference out there—if you can help someone take the next step toward being the person they want to be—just do it. Get out the word. That’s how we’ll lick this thing.

After all, if you want to think outside the box, it helps if you’re not living INSIDE the box.

Academics are influenced by the professional books, papers, ideas and discussions they are exposed to in school. Their framework is set by everything that’s come before. That body of knowledge is hard for them to challenge, and the tendency is to accept that information on face value. After all, it has been published, hasn’t it? Then it must be true. (How many students have enough nerve to question their textbooks?)

Furthermore, researchers are committed to following a formal protocol when they research and develop new ideas and theories. This formal protocol works very well for the hard sciences like biology and physics. It can also work well for the social sciences...PROVIDED the problem can be broken down into meaningful segments that can be isolated and studied using a scientific method.

The problem is that much about stuttering does not lend itself to study through a formal scientific method in which you isolate a part of the problem, propose a theory and then test only for that theory. Stuttering/blocking is too “messy,” too intertwined with the individual’s personality. **Some things are better studied empirically through observation and personal experience.** (This process was followed by Charles Darwin in developing his theories on evolution and the survival of the fittest.)

Most of the difficulties in understanding stuttering relate to the fact that, for the last century, the phenomenon has not been correctly characterized. At least in my opinion and the opinion of a growing number of others. This has biased everything that's been written about stuttering. Furthermore, it's very difficult to study a problem in isolation when the workings of that problem are closely tied into the workings of a larger system—OF WHICH THAT SEGMENT IS ONLY A PART.

To use an old analogy, it's like trying to define an elephant by ONLY studying one of its parts, like the trunk, the leg, or the tail. It can't be done. You must look at the whole elephant if you want to place the part that you study in the proper context.

The best way to learn about stuttering is empirically, by personally listening, trying, exploring, experimenting (as well as reading, not just about stuttering but about related subjects as well.)

If I had a theory, all I had to do was to get on a bus and ask for a transfer. I could tell in an instant if I was on to something or not. I could try a hundred different things in the time it took for a formal academic study to look at just one of those factors.

Each of you has had unique experiences and insights, which are potential enlightenment triggers for other list members.

The Power of Intention 612-619

Some time ago I heard about a fascinating laboratory experiment. A biologist filled a large fish tank with water and separated it into two sections with a glass divider. On one side he introduced a good-sized bass. On the other, he released a school of tiny minnows. He wanted to see how the bass would react.

For one full week the bass continually beat on the divider, trying to get at the minnows without luck. The next week, it still kept trying, but as the week progressed, the bass slowly lost interest. By the third week, it had learned that it could not get to the minnows and stopped trying altogether.

Then the scientist removed the glass divider. What do you think happened?

Did the bass say to itself, "Whoopee, I can finally gobble up those minnows!"

It did not.

In fact, the minnows even swam around its mouth and the bass paid them absolutely no attention. After all, the bass had found out what was "possible" and what was not. Its expectations had been set. It was an experiment that can be easily replicated.

Now be candid. Does that bass sound like you? Have you let your expectations run your life? Have you let the beliefs and survival strategies of childhood limit your possibilities as an adult?

Do you know that things won't work out so you don't even try? And do you miss even seeing those opportunities swimming in front of your very nose?

If so, you may be responding just like that bass.

Fortunately, unlike the bass, you have options. You have a choice in how you want to run your life.

- ❖ You can base your motivation and self-esteem on how others judge you and on whether or not your activities were successful.
- ❖ Or you can base it on how successfully you've defined and followed your intentions.

For most of my life I ran my life by my expectations. If I tried something half a dozen times and it didn't work out the way I hoped and expected it to, I would get discouraged and go on to something else. I had little staying power. So you can imagine how shocked I felt when I read the following story.

What kept him from becoming discouraged and quitting?

Two things. First, Edison liked what he was doing. Equally important, Edison didn't measure himself by how well his expectations were met. But Edison was motivated by his intentions. So whenever an experiment was unsuccessful, Edison would simply turn and say to his lab assistants, "Well gentlemen, now we know a little more about the problem." Thus, even those experiments that didn't meet his expectations were still experienced as having value.

She received rejections one after the other. But she wanted to open a cookie shop. Her *intention* was to open a cookie shop. So she kept on looking. And after more than 20 attempts, she finally found a bank that agreed to loan her the money...at an exorbitant 21% interest!

In case you don't know, I'm talking about Debbie Fields, creator of Mrs. Fields Cookies, whose chain of over 1400 stores has more than \$400 million in sales per year.

There are thousands of stories like this one – stories about people who had every reason not to push forward. And still did.

But how do you keep up your spirits when things aren't working?

I reward myself for following my intentions, no matter how the results turn out. Yes, you heard that right. If I give it my best shot and it doesn't work out, then I provide the reward.

If I clearly defined and then followed my intention, THEN I REWARD MYSELF...*not for having success (which in this case I didn't have), but for following through on what I set out to do.*

I do this whether or not I got the results I wanted!

As I slowly enjoy the ice cream, I remind myself that I've given myself this treat for clearly defining and following my intentions.

I also follow the example of Thomas Edison. If my efforts are not successful, I tell myself, "Well, now I know a little bit more about the problem." This process is effective in yet another way: it disables the negative self-talk that used to consume me after unsatisfying results. It brings it all to a screeching halt.

Tangible reward plus the chance to learn something valuable — it's a no-lose proposition.

Those of us who grow up with stuttering live in a world of expectations. From an early age, we become outwardly focused. Our fortunes...our very survival...depend on whether others like and accept us. We think that whether we're okay, whether we have standing in our class, our social group or our community all hang on whether we fit in. We believe in our hearts that people won't like us if we can't talk like them. So we mold and shape our personality in order to fit what we think other people expect from us.

And what gets lost is ourselves.

We watch others hawk-like to see whether what we do and want and say is approved. **If our friends and associates like us, then we feel validated. If not, we feel disempowered.** If projects work out successfully, we hold our head high. If they don't work out, we desperately hope that people will still want us, so we mold ourselves in other people's eyes so we can be likeable.

As time goes on, these hundreds of day-to-day compromises add up and become our point of view about life. It becomes standard operating procedure to automatically see anything that happens from this perspective. It becomes The Way It Is.

Eventually, we leave childhood and grow into adults without a strong sense of identity. We don't acknowledge what we like and want because to do so might require taking an unpopular position. We don't pursue activities and careers because we don't think we can do them...not only because of our speech, but because we learned early on that what we feel and want don't count.

By not surrendering, you keep yourself open to opportunities. In repeatedly asking those two key questions — “What is my intention?” and “Did I follow my intention?” – and by always rewarding yourself for following your intention – you can slowly migrate from a person who's focused on pleasing others to a person who's major commitment is to do what is important to you.

Never lose sight of the fact that, as challenging as it may be, you still have the power to determine the way you want to live.

The question remains – How does one keep motivated?

Here's one way: combine the activity you resist doing with an activity you like doing.

I love finding out about people and what motivates them to act.

The truth is, if you want to recover from stuttering, it's hard to do it alone. It really helps to have understanding people in your corner who will support and encourage you.

Everyone is pulling for you as well as for themselves.