WHY IS STUTTERING SO INSIDIOUS?

BY RICHARD PARENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHY IS STUTTERING SO INSIDIOUS?
A SUMMARY OF TRANSLATED TEXTS ON NLP AND NS
By Richard Parent

This paper is a "summary" of some 54 articles on Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) and Neurosemantics (NS), articles written mainly by Drs. Bobby G. Bodenhamer and L. Michael Hall, as well as some other contributors. This synthesis helps us to better understand the evolution of stuttering and how it becomes so pervasive and pernicious in our lives. It describes in detail <u>what happens in our brain</u> when stuttering occupies a too-dominant place in our lives. It also introduces solutions. As someone said so well: "It's only by finding out what's really going on in the background that we're able to deal with it and make changes." The aim of this review is not to reproduce the step by step of the many models for problem solving. I rather chose to direct you to the related articles through hyperlinks. I also want to add that Bob (Bodenhamer) has a positive experience of some ten years with people who stutter (PWS). RP.

WHAT IS NLP?

Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) is a coordinated set of knowledge and practices in the field of psychology based on a pragmatic approach to modeling, in relation to communication and personal change. It was developed in the United States in the 1970s by Richard Bandler and John Grinder, co-founders.

In 1976, when psychologist Richard Bandler, still very active, and linguist John Grinder, coined the term "NLP," their approach was restricted to the field of psychotherapy, drawing on the works of other psychotherapists, including Fritz Perls, Milton Erickson and Virginia Satir. By 1980, these pioneers were interested in other areas, including creativity, sports, management, education and communication. If the first models are described in NLP language, they were followed by other tools to identify and change one's <u>sensory mental representations</u>. The logic levels pattern of Robert Dilts subsequently offered a more comprehensive problems analysis and a coordinated organization of all NLP techniques. More recently, a third generation of developers is working specifically on human groups.

NLP is also based on assumptions and a set of techniques to describe and act on subjectivity (unconscious mind).

NLP aims to improve communication between individuals, self-improvement and tends to become an integrative psychotherapy, seeking to integrate in a practical way the contributions of various theories. Neurolinguistic psychotherapy (PNLt) can be used in various areas, both personal and in the business world (marketing, sales, pedagogy, athletic performance) and, why not, in seduction.

NLP is the subject of many critics, among them its lack of therapeutic validation, its references to out-dated theories, its tendency to allow manipulation of minds and, finally, its use of sectarian slides, so that it is considered, in some academic fields, as a [pseudoscience](#).

STUTTERING:

North American context: especially in the United States, the approach mainly used in the stuttering treatment is focussing on its physiological aspects (the symptoms). In fact, the teaching provided to speech pathology students boils down essentially to show them how to help the person who stutters (PWS) to form her words and promote more appropriate breathing techniques. Widespread theory among American pathologists still considers stuttering as merely a physical problem and not psychological. In Europe, it is the opposite. This explains why NLP is more recognized as a treatment in Europe than in the United States.

Stuttering is a speech habit that usually occurs when, wishing to say something, the PWS has a "holding back" reaction, knowing that he/she will not be able to speak easily and spontaneously. At times, the PWS seems to fight against a state of stress and a high level of *anxiety*.

Nature of stuttering in a NLP/NS perspective:

Simply defined, NLP and Neuro-Semantics aim to change our psycho-logic[1] in modifying a behavior while teaching how to better control our brain. To achieve this, these disciplines explain how we program our mind-emotions in our neurology (neuro), all this being influenced by our language (semantics) and the coding (referential matrices) used to treat, store and subsequently accessing such information. To summarize, we learn how to control our brain by taking advantage of its flexibility and neuroplasticity and how to renew our neural circuits.[2]

More specifically related to stuttering, the contributions of NLP/NS are based on the following premise:

> "If you can speak fluently, even in only one situation (for example, when you are alone) then you should speak fluently in all circumstances. You already have everything you need; it's only a question of freeing you from undue interferences. "

Stuttering is neither a breathing problem nor genetic: this is a problem involving one's mental frames, a behavior deeply ingrained in the neurophysiology of the PWS. The fact that most PWS speak fluently in some situations but not in others clearly indicates that cognition is, in chronic stuttering, important. In fact, as we shall see later, the problem is firstly semantic - it lies, indeed, in the meanings, the connotations that we attribute to our physical actions, to our stuttering behavior.

Using Neuro-Semantics and NLP modeling processes, it was found that when an individual performs a set of actions that trigger a stuttering experience, we can intentionally reverse and/or refine that experience in order to open the way to a set of renewed resources and new choices. ***This requires revisiting frames that favour stuttering and finding "new ways" to reference them.*** While discovering new ways to refer to experiences, the PWS learns how to "change meanings" attached to these referential frames so that they become more favourable.

---

[1] Psycho-logic is referencing to one's psychological logic.
[2] A new science is emerging: regenerative neurology aiming to accelerate the capacity of the human brain to repair itself.

"In truth, the primary cause of stuttering is not for us, NLP practitioners, an important issue. What we are interested in are the negative mental frames (meanings matrix) that feed the fear of stuttering, the latter "triggering" a strategy called stuttering."

Bob Bodenhamer

« In order to get rid of the basic structure of the "stuttering" experience, we used the NLP basic principle that <u>every experience has its own structure.</u> So we refused head on to agree with any preconceived notions and definitions of the medical model on its cause or its cure. Thus, we refused to *identify* these people as "stutterers," as if that was what they were, what defines them. We have also turned our backs on this fatalistic attitude that "Once a stutterer, always a stutter." »

Alfred Korzybski, founder of General Semantics, would say that it is neither the world nor our territory that cause blocks; <u>unconscious learning triggers them.</u> We are not conscious of them: it is at the subconscious level that we find the various meanings behind our "dreaded words".

The psychological model theory tells us that by focusing on a specific goal (e.g. fluency), we risk worsening our condition by not addressing other stuttering difficulties like our feelings, emotions, thinking patterns and contexts/situations. **Our "holding back" reaction** is the main trigger of stuttering. **It occurs when we are torn between two opposite intentions:** the desire to express ourselves freely and the fear, if we let go, to stutter and be perceived as inadequate, incompetent, disabled or anything similar. As long as the individual remains frozen right in the middle, between two conflicting alternatives, he will remain unable to act.

A major problem with stuttering is that we do not tolerate non-fluency and we seek to avoid it at all costs. We want to be fluent, free of any imperfection; we want to be perfect; we seek acceptance and valuation from others; we don't want to be embarrassed or maladaptive. Wendell Johnson demonstrated (1946), by General Semantics, that stuttering was a phenomenon implying the meta-level structure of a fear or hatred of non-fluency and a refusal to tolerate any verbal hesitation. Stuttering operates on a simple belief: "It forbids you to stutter; so, you're better to monitor your speech and, if necessary, correct yourself when speaking." This follows from a <u>very specific use of fear and anxiety,</u> an attitude and a way to cope and respond to events, all this impacting on our muscular and respiratory functions.

Muscle memory / imprints

When a way of thinking and feeling has become familiar, our muscles of the mouth, of the throat and of our lungs learn (are conditioned) to respond "appropriately." For stuttering, we are in presence of a state of anxiety that manifests in breathing, in our laryngeal muscles and the muscles of the chest controlling breathing. The more we repeat the conditioned behavior, the more it becomes embodied, habituated.

These imprints involve both unique and serial experiences. These experiences lead us to believe that these imprints are the reality: "That it is so!" Imprints can also stem from beliefs of influential people. They can also come from the beliefs of any other person and soak in the child's tissues (embodiment phenomenon).

That's how we convert informative and revealing principles or concepts in neurological models that will be coded into our muscle memory. Thus, *the principle becomes muscle.*

Concepts have been embodied as "muscle memory." As incredible as it may seem, once an idea transforms itself neurologically into a muscular reaction, to become a *neurosemantic* condition, you can forget it, your body taking care that your throat and lungs muscles will respond appropriately to such programming.

When we keep categorizing problems as bad, we reinforce this belief to the point that it will permeate "into our muscles." When we say "imprint" in the person's muscles, or that it is "installed in her muscles," we refer to the ability of our mind-body system to learn unconsciously. Our nervous system expands throughout our whole body. We have nerves "everywhere." We strongly believe that learning, to instil certain beliefs in this way, becomes part of our muscle tissues (muscle memory).

In fact, Bob suggests that blocking and stuttering are a form of panic attack that occurs in the muscles involved in breathing and speech. He adds:

> " In working with people who block/stutter, I quickly noticed that, in the muscles controlling breathing and speech, they felt fear and anxiety hiding behind their blocks. I concluded that the blocks had a structure similar to panic attacks and anxiety. The processes behind the blocks are, in fact, identical to those of panic attacks and anxiety. "

Bob develops further: "I have heard several PWS using the same language to describe how they felt when they block. These emotions were expressed in their body. Soak these emotions in the muscles that control breathing and speech and you get a full-fledged block. Panic attacks and blocking frames are the same; only their physical expressions differ. Reprint or heal the emotions and this physical manifestation will disappear. "

Stuttering is the most eloquent evidence we need in order to understand that *ideas become muscular habits?* The stuttering experience testifies that we can *so deeply* embody an idea that it will become totally impregnated in the neurological and physiological tissues of our body. Neural circuits did, so to speak, "favour an imprint" in such a way that they will be predisposed to respond to specific stimulus.

STUTTERING HISTORY

We "select" some of our experiences to set them in time and we too often think *they are always breeding.* Even if such events occurred in the past and that we consider them as "completed," what happens is that we codify them so that our brains believe that these past events are still with us in our everyday reality. And of course, when such events were painful, such coding will perpetuate and amplify the injury. To use, as *frames of reference,* our most hurtful, most unpleasant and most traumatic memories this can only serve to weaken us. Doing this means that we will constantly encourage our mind-body system to "live in the past," to relive such injuries and always refer to negative emotional states. This can only perpetuate the wound and weaken us further. This is, you will agree, far from being the best way to manage our brain.

To properly deal with these representations of past experiences, we must reframe those negative memories in more neutral and less damaging ways, thereafter reintegrating them into our Time Line, which sometimes gives rise to a positive resource. Reprint over our negative memories is necessary to remove them from our Stuttering History, which, in turn, will reduce or eliminate the anticipatory anxiety.

OUR EMOTIONS

We know today that our human mind-body system has something like a feeling of semantic meaning. What looks like such a feeling of "meaning"? It looks like an emotion! When you feel an emotion, you experience the feeling of what a meaning looks like. And this is a result of the nature and operation of an emotion.

First, emotions are a derivative of our "expectations." When our expectations are positively met, we feel positive emotions (joy, surprise, excitement, passion, love, empathy, compassion and so on). But if our expectations are not met, our emotions will be negative (annoyance, stress, frustration, irritation, fear, anger, disappointment and loss). In other words, our emotions stem from our "evaluation" of a situation/experience and they tell us whether or not our expectations were met. Moreover, Wendell Johnson said that stuttering was "a disorder of evaluation" (a terminology specific to General Semantics) for creating a negative Meta-State - a dragon state.

We dislike negative emotions because they record the message that something goes wrong with our world, with our environment. So like a car's brakes, negative emotions inhibit our neurological reactions by telling us " Stop! Look and listen! Something goes wrong over here!"

> "My brain and my being "know" how to respond to the evaluation I do – and they have learned, a long time ago, endlessly repeating their reaction and maintaining a deep and lasting impression of "what should be done in this case." They activate this memory by sending to my body chemicals and electrical messages on the appropriate reaction: how to hold myself, how to hold my head, how to tighten or loosen the muscles in my chest, where to direct or avoid directing my eye contact, to which extent I should use the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism, to decide whether to flee or fight or stay relaxed; who I am - what is my status - all in relation to the situation that I face. And this is repeated endlessly."
>
> Roddy Grubbs

But regardless, these memories and emotions that follow are always identical: they are creatures of our thoughts. Emotions are a by-product of our *evaluative judgments, our beliefs, our values* and of our *meanings.* Our emotions are dependent upon our *expectations* of the world and whether or not our experiences of the world - and of its people - meet our personal expectations. In other words, **our emotions are *the* product of *the difference in our evaluation* between our *model of the world*** (needs, expectations, what should have been, understandings, etc. – (our personal mapping) **and our *experience of the world*** (Territory).

The *pulse* that we feel in our body (our somatic reactions) is the result of our *evaluations* (i.e. our emotions). The *difference* between the two (expectations versus experiences) is *recorded* in our mind-body as an "emotion." (An emotion is thus an **informative signal** about such discrepancy, about an inconsistency between the model (our mental maps) and our experience of the territory. This fact means that there is no "bad" emotion per se. Note this: even if *there is no bad emotion*, an emotion can however induces us in serious errors on the outside world, resulting in distorted thinking (distortion) or fallacy.

MEANINGS (those meanings we give to our experiences)

As we have seen, stuttering implies our consciousness of not being fluent. Indeed, the biggest difference between a PWS and a fluent person is that the latter does not have to think about speech. As we are all mostly not fluent (PWS or not), there must be something else that triggers the "stuttering." One must *not love, hate* or *forbid himself from* non-fluency.

There are certain criteria stuttering must meet before we can call it stuttering… we must classify, categorize and describe that experience. The experience must have a meaning, a negative and painful connotation, accompanied by an important psychological torment: embarrassment, shame, low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, a feeling of inadequacy or disability. All these negative states of the Joseph Sheehan's Iceberg analogy hide under the water line and are not visible to our listeners.[3] It is also by associating negative connotations that we classify stuttering as socially undesirable.

And we will keep reinforcing these negative meanings by other experiences to which we assign other equally negative meanings. Such layering of negative meanings helps to consolidate a neurology that will maintain a *stuttering strategy.* This overall process influences our neural circuits by provoking an unbalanced secretion of neurotransmitters, among them serotonin and dopamine.[4] Stuttering is undesirable for each of the following classifications: **self-concept, relationship with time, with others and our conception of the world** (is this world we live in safe, friendly or unfriendly?)

After weeks, months and years of such a regime, no wonder these *semantics* become embedded in our physiology so that our breathing, and how we use our muscles of the tongue and mouth, *promotes* such a negative Meta-State, a stuttering mentality. Then, stuttering becomes neurological. In truth, it became a Neuro-Semantic condition.

The semantic environment refers to the interpersonal context and explains why the context holds such a dominant place in our reactions. As long as we worry about the quality of our performance and about what other people think of us, as long as we have this tendency to evaluate our Personal Identity by what we do (blocking) - we semantically overcharge our environment or the context. This will increase our levels of pressure, anxiety and stress, transforming speech into something else than just *speaking*; the act of *speaking* is then so much overloaded that, neuro-semantically speaking, it became full of meanings:

A demonstration of my effectiveness.

A demonstration of my worth as an individual.

The expression of what I really am.

The expression of what will determine what others think of me.

The speaker doesn't help himself with such negative thoughts, fears and terrors, shame and anxiety and the fear of what this *will mean.* We are in presence of semantic damage.

---

[3] This explains why stuttering is so much unknown to the general public.
[4] Researches indicate there is an excess of dopamine for PWS.

Social Desirability (SD) that prompts the PWS to adopt social expectations perceived as desirable is motivated by a **desire of approval from others.** For spontaneous speech is not limited to pronouncing words and communicating ideas through the use of symbols; it is also a test of our normality as human beings, the ability to speak being one of our most basic human powers…the ability to communicate, to express who we are, to connect with others, to heal, to hurt, to create links, to break-up these links, to discover new ideas, etc.

Being aware that articulate speech is an advantage to communicate in our modern society, we develop a need for Social Desirability (SD) resulting from a need of validation by others, which causes stress and anxiety because of what we perceive as a failure when we engage in conversations that are, for us, difficult. Sheehan and Sheehan (1984) claimed in their analysis of stuttering: "... *stuttering is an approach-avoidance conflict*." This is the true nature of holding back/blocking. The individual doesn't run away from the situation, nor does he fight against it (apart from his muscular contortions); he rather alternates between his desire to go away from it and his desire to face it (both internally), ending by "freezing" between these two opposite forces.

Because we obviously do not wish to block: in fact, *not* **to stutter becomes our number one priority.** Efforts will be made to "block" stuttering. Several problems arise when we try to control stuttering in this way. First, we fill our head with *commandments* that introduce pressure and stress, a stress that hinders our natural learning and self-development capacity, while increasing our consciousness. The second problem lies in the type of commands used, *commandments of negation.* Negative commands such as "Do not stutter ... do not make a fool of yourself ... Avoid ..." make things worse and increase the vicious spiral. There are ways to negate something; well, to make certain things disappear. And commandments of negation are certainly not among them. **The more you make efforts to reject something, the more you give life to it.** *Denial and avoidance merely fuel, sustain and perpetuate our habits of stuttering.* By not being honest with ourselves, by not recognizing us as Person Who Sometimes Stutter (PQPB), we become more confused, hence the holding-back of emotions that causes stuttering. *You understand that by attempting to block stuttering, you are merely promoting it.*

BY-PRODUCTS OF OUR FIVE SENSES

Richard Bandler and John Grinder identified cognitions and thoughts as by-products of our five senses[5] in addition to conceptualizing our ability to create - in words - meanings.[6] They determined that our thoughts were the product of our Internal Representations (with images, sounds, sensations and taste) that we create in our minds and, equally important, the meanings we attribute to these images, with language - in words - including the "language of the mind.**"** **These internal images and the language used form the basis of our thinking patterns – our perceptions.** They are the first components of our brain's Internal Representations. In NLP, we call this "mental mapping."

The *meaning* created by these "words" will influence our speech. We have a set of *meanings* for fluency and another for blocking. We have, for each behavior, a separate "mental map" and it is this mapping that will determine whether we will block or express ourselves freely, naturally

---

[5] We designate them VAKOG for picture (**V**isual), sounds (**A**uditory), feelings (**K**inesthetic), smells (**O**lfactory), and tastes (**G**ustatory).

[6] To further read about this subject, click *Eight « Keys » to Personal Change*

and spontaneously, fluently. Whatever the trigger of a block, there is no doubt: whether we will be talking fluently or blocking will depend on the way we have previously mapped a situation similar to the one in which we are about to speak.

To create a good dose of stuttering, we must make our own these negative meanings attached to stuttering and raise them to a higher level by adding a good dose of fear to such negative *connotation* that came to instil stuttering in our mind. We came to assign such negative meanings to it that we feel threatened by stuttering, as already mentioned, at the levels of our self, our resources, our relationships and at the work place. Any existential threat to values that are important to us puts us in a state of fear.

> "Personally, I've learned that when I evaluated a situation as "threatening," "my brain and being" wanted to protect me from danger. Then I asked: "What is the threat and how will you protect me?" This reaction to protect me against threats goes back to my childhood – if not to my birth. The threat may well be verbal or physical, it is nevertheless perceived as "a danger to my safety and my well-being," threatening in all respects."

> Roddy Grubbs

It is precisely *such ideas,* converted into belief frames that amplify the problem. They sometimes turn into cognitive distortions. And they are accompanied by secondary problems: conditional self-esteem, lack of assertiveness, refusal to take risks, holding back or blocking when we anticipate not being able to speak properly, fear of strong emotions, belief that life is a performance and so on. Bob gives us an example:

> "I'm just saying (speaking of trauma) that the child interprets the divorce of his parents, the lack of attention from his father, the lack of emotional support from her mother, the emotional and physical abuse, etc. as painful and difficult experiences. The child does what all children are accustomed to do in such circumstances: he personalizes the problem, and then, with this experience and this injury impregnated in his muscles involved in breathing and speech, the child blocks. For the fluency to come back in all situations, this kind of painful memories will necessarily have to be cured."

This explains why the *fear in* our mind-body-emotion system has a tendency to become uncontrollable and seem so *real*. Fear *resides within* our mind-body system. But does this mean that fear is immutable? Of course not! You do not exactly fear today the same things you feared when you were a child.

There is obviously an association between our mind, our brain functions and the neurotransmitters. By activating such a system, we become human beings that semantically overcharge speech and its verbalization. We semantically charge the act of speaking whenever we face a disfluency and are looking for easier words (avoidance), planning what we will say, thus giving life to a *semantic reaction* of fear, terror, anxiety and to an incessant consciousness about our speech. In evaluating our experience of speech according to others' reaction (actual or presumed), we come to be constantly on our guards and to adopt a cautious attitude. One becomes much more aware of his non-fluency, constantly monitoring during or just before speaking. Worse, being so much concerned about the consequences of a speaking failure, we dissociate ourselves from the present moment.

"Guess what? When I feel that way, it is impossible for me to breathe "normally." This means that, almost instantly, the air no longer flows between my vocal cords. And without air passing through the vocal cords, no speech. Desperately fighting such a reaction with all my strength, "without air circulation, there is no sounds," much less speech."

<div align="right">Roddy Grubbs</div>

But we might as well lessen the overcharge imposed on our speech so that it loses its negative meanings and, over time, detach ourselves from it, with the goal of eventually giving up all thinking about it. We just need to access to states of acceptance and even enjoying non-fluency and apply a resourceful Meta-State. All we have to do is to welcome and enjoy the non-fluency as just that, a non-fluent speech. Isn't what most normal speakers do?

Our Parts[7]

What we call in NLP "Our Parts" come from various sources, including our education and knowledge base. Our significant emotional experiences are the main sources of our unconscious Parts, which become embedded in our human "system," whether positive or negative (but especially our emotionally painful experiences). These "Parts" are incompatible with their environment (our brain), they constitute separate and disowned "personalities" in conflict with the rest of our nervous system. The majority of Parts take form over our learning period (before the age of 7). They will cumulate years of experiences controlling our behaviors.

Anxiety and other stuttering symptoms are exacerbated by the repeated failures of speaking situations. Anxiety triggered by stuttering (submerged part of Sheehan's Iceberg analogy) will have, over time, a much greater impact than the symptoms thereof (visible part of the Iceberg). This anxiety is caused by a need for others' approval, as well as wanting to avoid punishment or other negative social consequences, real or perceived. Both these needs - other people's approval and avoidance of punishment from others - will also be high.

In short, we entertain thoughts, feelings, beliefs, understandings, memories, fantasies, hopes, dreams, expectations, fears and concerns about our disfluency. However, the disfluency is just that - disfluency. Therefore, avoid overcharging it with too many meanings, too many negative meanings. Don't put into play your self-esteem as an individual: avoid relating your disfluency to meanings for your Self and your own identity, who you really are. Do not semantically charge it with negative meanings for your relationships. Learn to rather welcome this disfluency. Learn to embrace it. To have fun with it. To enjoy it! Let's have fun with your stuttering! Here's what Bob said about it:

"This is always what I do with my clients. I stutter (Bob speaking – Bob is a fluent speaker) intentionally on the "S" or "F" or "P" or any other letter while provoking and teasing my clients saying: "Can you do better?" "My goal is to get them to *play*, to graft *fun* and *humour* to the disfluency. This has the effect of reducing the *semantic charge and to replace a fear structure by a fun structure*."

---

[7] **Parts** : Like a « part of your mind » generating other structures/frames of reference, including structures relating to our beliefs, values, our understanding, etc. When we ask "Is there a part of us (negative cerebral frames) objecting to this new way of thinking, of feeling or reacting?", we are looking for "**internal conflicts"** between various sides of our personality to better align and be congruent with yourselves. Parts are considered sub-personalities, the functions of which having "a life on their own." When their intentions are opposing, we run the risk of an intrapersonal conflict and, therefore, to experience an inconsistency.

OUR REFERENTIAL FRAMES

The matrix of meanings is, as we have seen, the very first and most important set of integrated frames to which our thinking process refers to because it is at the root of our reality and constitutes what needs to be reframed for us to change, to change our thinking patterns and our attitudinal and behavioural reactions. Which habits of thought are we using to create our realities of fluency and of non-fluency? Do we personalize our language errors to the point of integrating them into our identity? Do we consider the slightest embarrassment as if it was the end of the world? Are we so much "sensitive" as to thinking that what we feel is necessarily what we are?

Situations and traumatic reactions are often caused by traumatic experiences or negative information transmitted in the form of memories, stories, visual representations or imagination. It is a fact that many PWS started stuttering due to a trauma. Once the "trauma" is mapped,[8] it *will imprint* a *belief and an identity* that will lead to reducing beliefs. *But our beliefs underpin our feelings, our actions, our behavior, our thoughts, our memories and our communications.*

Such thinking patterns, combined with others, identify our style of meanings-making. From that moment, they become a referential structure to which a collection of similar specimens, further to other painful occurrences, will be added, thus nurturing this category.[9] As one identifies himself to this, stuttering is no more something we do: it is what we "are": "I'm a stutterer!" What kind of personal assessment can we make from such a statement? "Because I stutter and am a stutterer, I am disabled and incompetent." "I worth nothing." "I never do anything good." "To have a personal value, I have to act in accordance with others' expectations; I am not worthy by myself." And so on. Such a low self-esteem shows that the individual has developed, because of his stutter, a rather horrible vision of himself.

Such frames are inevitably rooted in our past. These are, mostly, attitudes acquired in childhood, reason why such frames become unconscious and so difficult to change without the help of someone else. No wonder the black magic, with such inner language, darkens our reality. Almost every time we allow a thought or a "negative" feeling to arise *against* us (be it fear, anger, disgust, contempt, rejection, etc.), against our states, our thoughts, our feelings ... we disagree with ourselves. And when we play that kind of game, we generate internal conflicts, inconsistencies and "dragon states."

The person isn't the problem; we are neither inadequate nor in a cul-de-sac. We're just caught in a Matrix Structuring. **Those *Frames* that direct and lead us, leading us to interpret our world in a certain way and make us believe certain things – THEY are the problem.** We are possessed by and are prisoners of our structural matrices.

Our "instinct" encourages us to reject our fear, to flog ourselves for our angers, judging ourselves for our imperfections and to be ashamed of our mistakes. This is the kind of reactions that lock us into ourselves and creates taboos against the recognition of our own experiences and achievements, whatever they may be.

---

[8] **Map/mapping** : Perception of the world; unique individual representation of the world based upon our perceptions and experiences, including neurological and linguistic mapping, and our Internal Representations (IR).

[9] That's the process by which our Stuttering History is formed and expands.

QUESTION OF PERCEPTION

Just like the frame around the paintings decorating our walls or outlining the borders of our TV set, the mental frames that we maintain about our world are discreet, unpretentious and invisible. Combined with our frames of mind, their influence is so much decisive and pervasive that they *control* our sense of reality: in fact, *they determine our reality.*

Although we *do not* create reality, we are the ones giving *a meaning* to this reality. **This means that *we are responsible for the way we react to what happens to us, and, therefore, the quality of our lives*.** The external world (the territory) is what it "is." But *how* each of us *perceives* the world - what this world means to each of us and the inner feeling that we have about it - our internal reality - depends on the frames of reference we nurture about it. To label our non-fluency as "stuttering" is to begin integrating this word into *our* reality. Associate negative feelings to such labelling and we have a negative reality to fear.

But we don't need to remain imprisoned in such a state of mind-body as we can *transcend* these unwanted thoughts-feelings by **going out** of them to rather integrate desirable and more appropriate thoughts. By "repairing" ourselves, we remove (it is, of course, a metaphor) these old frames of mind, replacing them with new frames that will be much more favourable to us. Having created something ourselves, we can destroy and replace it with something much better! Here is the power, the magic and this much exciting feature of neurolinguistic and Neuro-Semantics. Our memory being a construction,[10] that led the NLP cofounder, Richard Bandler, to say: "*It's never too late to have a happy childhood*."

Considering a behavior or a perception from a different angle modifies the meaning we give to it. Such reframing changes *the frame of reference* from which we perceive our world and thus alters our sense of reality. And when our meanings change, so do our reactions and behaviors. The main purpose of all NLP Reframing Models is to change our internal reactions by changing our frames of perception. Such reprinting contributes to update our internal maps by highlighting resources that we can use to solve and/or avoid traumatic situations. These models are useful for those behaviors, habits, emotions and even physical symptoms that we don't like.

Reprinting is done, among other methods, using the Meta-Yes Meta-No Pattern. Applying a *Meta-NO* against an old and limiting belief and then a *Meta YES* to a new desired belief, we inform our brain on *the direction* to take in order to replace old diminutive thoughts by new and stronger ones that will be much more useful to us. **Here is the essence of Neuro-Semantics: being able to change our sense of reality by asking ourselves what could be the best meaning to assign to a specific experience/context.** Yes, we are the ones that should find the best meaning to restructure an experience as simply something with which we must deal rather than seeing it as a personal limitation? *Rather than living in fear, why not choose to live in peace and serenity? By diverting the object of our concentration, we, by the same token, change our referential state.*

Why is Tiger Woods so good? Because he is able to instantly and automatically reframe his bad shots, never letting them affect the next one. He remains fully associated to the actual moment (Mindfulness), always in "**the Zone**." Same thing with stuttering: it is crucial to

---

[10] **Construct**: The way in which the human brain creates meanings; to build meaning frames that will become our meaning matrices.

immediately get out (forget about) of a stuttering moment in order to prevent relapse and to return to a resourceful state.

Often, rather than being honest about what happens to us, we play a game by presenting to the world a false image of ourselves, a fake, still worrying about others' opinions; we wear a mask to hide our personal doubts.

> "Our whole life was made "as if," striving to present ourselves to the world as fluent speakers. Whether we like it or not, we simply fooled ourselves. We are not fluent speakers. We are people who sometimes stutter (PWSS). And only full acceptance of this reality will free us from this anticipatory anxiety that hinders an increased fluency. Do not misunderstand me: I'm not saying we have to accept our condition and abandon any hope of improving our lot. What I'm saying is that, right now, we stutter because of complex factors, including anxiety."

> <div align="right">Geoff Johnston</div>

Hiding ourselves behind a character is the best way to lose touch with ourselves - to get away from our true identity? We must begin by mastering this childish fear that others will judge us and that their judgment will be without mercy. **But what is more important is to master our own judgments about ourselves.** In order to fulfill ourselves as individuals, we must first assume full responsibility for who we are, being really honest and as we really are, first and foremost, to ourselves.

Having worked with several clients who stutter, Bob Bodenhamer found that, in all cases, the stuttering anticipatory anxiety always preceded the act of speaking. The NLP/NS idea is the following: by establishing a state of acceptance[11] over this anticipatory anxiety, acceptance will take over and anxiety will disappear - an upper structure always leading the game. As Bateson said : "Higher levels modulate lower levels." Here is the testimony of a client of Bob:

> "I now apply a Meta-State of courage over fear. Inspired by my adult personality, I revisit my childhood memories to convey courage, self-esteem and peace to this small little girl I was then. I mentally practice placing my resourceful state in the foreground while putting the blocking state in the background (pushing it off far away)."

Almost all our reactions are *semantic reactions*[12] We never leave home without these meanings that we have created and that follow us everywhere. To control our matrix, we must reclaim the power to fabricate our own meanings while managing our brain and establishing frames that will enrich our lives. Because these meanings were not passed on to us (imposed) at birth, **we, you and I, as manufacturers of meanings, have the power to invent what represents to us a thing, an event or a condition.** We realize that none of our "meanings" has arisen independently of our personal reflection - this is the power of control over our emotions. Knowing this, we realize that all the meanings we have are *ours*. We, therefore, have the power to change those that do nothing to improve our quality of life.

---

[11] Or any other positive, and resourceful state.
[12] Semantic: Meaning – the meaning we give to things.

SELF OBSERVATION

But to succeed in doing so, we must first, for a moment, *distance ourselves* (dissociate) from our actual thoughts and feelings to better look at - and get a better awareness of - the frames they create and the states they provoke.[13] The Time Line Processes partly work through the power of *dissociation* from a painful situation. When we learn to distance ourselves (go Meta) from our negative emotions, our poor decisions, our inadequate generalizations, etc., we *dissociate* ourselves to better see them *as maps* (in the sense of mapping). We then have a more accurate perspective of our actual thoughts-emotions; we are also thinking more clearly and objectively. We may even add to our states other resourceful understandings. Thanks to such dissociation, we consider ourselves *superior* to our experiences in "time."

It also gives us the opportunity to check the quality, the ecological contents of our brains and bodies. Camp yourself into a state of observation to simply note what you think and feel, without judging yourself. Be curious. Mastering our matrices frees us and allows us to reclaim our lives, to become more independent and livelier, empowering us to launch ourselves enthusiastically on this wonderful adventure of accessing our Personal Genius.[14]

One of the great mysteries of neuroscience and neurology is how the brain creates these abstractions from the electrical manifestations of our neural circuits. We still don't know. But we do know they are the basis of the way we operate as if they were real. Precisely because they are not, for instance, real, they can only have the reality we attribute to them. Similarly, "*our limitations are not real":* this is one of the most powerful NLP and Neuro-Semantics premises. In other words, the fact that an individual feels limited is the result of a strictly personal inner dialogue. Since its inception, NLP argues that *we are first limited by our mental maps and not by our reality*. When an individual is limited or has the impression of being so, this limitation is almost always based on a mental map that always drags him. This means that the reality of our limitations measures up to what we gave to them. ***This is what happens in most situations of blocking.*** You stop functioning according to an adult map full of resources to operate according to a child's map assailed by fear, anxiety, embarrassment and doubts. And this triggers your blocking strategy, which triggers, of course, blocking.

FEAR AND ANXIETY

Fear and stress emerge when we perceive and interpret situations as stressful and fearful. When fear and stress are intense enough, our animal instincts take over. When we perceive danger, threat, insecurity, etc., these messages send signals to our brain cortex (part *of the upper brain*), which then forwards it to the Thalamus. The Amygdala is also involved. The Amygdala is a neurological structure, the shape of an almond, at the base of the brain that produces and responds to non-verbal cues of anger, avoidance, self-defence and fear. These, in turn, activate the Fight-or-Flight response (or General Arousal Syndrome). And while the triggering of the General Arousal Syndrome takes place, all of our inside body turns to perform what is necessary for our survival. This is the time to face (fight) or escape (flight).

---

[13] For a PWS, we evaluate a mental state in terms of her general mood, her feelings of security or threat, her level of anticipatory anxiety, her self-confidence, her beliefs about her listeners' reactions and other cognitivo-linguistic phenomenon. By managing your sate, you control your brain, and vice-versa.

[14] **Flow** or *Flux*: Mental state that one reaches when he is totally immersed by what he is doing, into an optimal concentrated state. He then has a feeling of total commitment and success. This concept, first coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, has been used in various fields, from sport to seduction.

The fact that a severe block triggers the General Arousal Syndrome also explains why it is so difficult to access our personal resources when we are right in the middle of a block. Once our Fight-or-Flight response is activated, it seems that we are unable to *think.* When we are feeling intense fear/threat, our primitive instinct takes over, undermining our ability to think and eventually suggesting to us to *fight or* to *flee.* There is no other alternative, being at that time to the mercy of lower (primitive) brain processes at the expense of our cerebral cortex. In general, when under stress, our dependency to such a state takes control so that we are no longer in a position to acquire new habits.

Dependency on a state means that all our *communications, behaviors, perceptions, memories and learning* are almost entirely under the influence of a given state, at a given moment. In the case of PWS, this state takes the form of a block. This state (be it anger, fear or anxiety) controls what we see, how we think, what we feel, our memories, our behaviors and communications. When this dependency takes over, our neurotransmitters, our adrenaline and our automatic nervous system take longer to activate.

For PWS, the secret to managing stress is to learn not to send *"distress"* signals; after all, we are not in presence of a physical threat. But it requires some work. We must learn to control our mind and control the upper levels meanings we gave to situations. This means learning not to react to circumstances involving communication as if it were a real threat, a physical threat. This implies that the individual learns to react more realistically from his *adult* brain, the latter taking control. This means that the PWS should stop considering speaking as if it were a threat to her security. "Is it really necessary to associate so much fear to the act of speaking, to the point of activating the General Arousal Syndrome?" Are you *really* in a threatening situation for your survival?

Having submitted the above reflection to many PWS for their feedback, one of them sent me the following comments on the previous statement:

> "I think the real fear is that they do NOT die. For death would deliver them from shame and humiliation. These are not threatening situations for their lives, but threatening situations for their self-esteem. Which one is more painful? To experience humiliation or to die? Death has the advantage of putting an end to your suffering while humiliation seems to perpetuate over time and constitutes a real threat ... reason why it triggers the Fight-or-Flight Response. Seriously, death is less painful than living a life of humiliation. Although such a question may seem odd, ask how many times PWS wished to die. It is not the fear of death that triggers the "Fight-or-Flight" mechanism, but the fear of humiliation. Does it make sense?"

By accessing our brains' upper levels, we can better manage stress *by eliminating, from its outset, the* **perception** *of "stress."* And when stress is gone, so are unnecessary feelings of fear and anger. When this occurs, it prevents us from stressing. When our thoughts and beliefs are contaminated, *i.e.* when we think our *own identity* depends on the opinion of others, on the work that we do, on status symbols, etc.., we create *Dragons spitting fire* that can consume much of our psychic energy.

A state, how we are feeling, is an energy field charged with connotations we associate to things, meanings that we have attributed to them, the emotions we associate to them ... and we "retain it all in our minds" ... waiting for something to happen. The development of emotional

states such as anxiety and well-being is related to neurotransmitter's secretion and controlled by the prefrontal cortex. And the most obvious problem with PWS seems to be that excessive anxiety facing the likely failure when conversing with others. The main cause of such a stress, of our anxiety, lies in our anticipatory anxiety that we may not be able to hold clear conversations or that our speech won't demonstrate an acceptable level of Social Desirability (SD).

Therefore, PWS should immerse themselves in more positive experiences to develop their ODV/ikigai (life purpose) and transform their neural circuits thanks to many better balanced secretion of neurotransmitters: *provoking new (positive, successful) experiences triggers, indeed, repeated secretion of neurotransmitters, thus changing our neuronal circuits. Such a process reduces, gradually, stuttering.*

"*THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY*" Alfred Korzybski

We are not dealing directly with our world; we do it indirectly through the whole electromagnetic spectrum arbitrated by our sensory receptors, our neural circuits, our cerebral cortex and our beliefs systems.

The territory is the outside world, our experience, our words, events and everything that happens "in this world." We are, indeed, a "class living by symbols." We do this through the VAKOG and the meanings in words, both acting as "symbols" of our experiences of the world as experienced through our five senses.

How do we realize that our emotions are based on our maps and not the world? To which extent are we intuitive enough to recognize that an emotion reflects the incongruence between our map of the world (our perception of it) and our actual experience of this world? *It is when we confuse the two that we take our "symbols" for "the reality," that we are in a stalemate.* We certainly do not facilitate our task by thinking that these "symbols" are faithful representations of the world: these are only symbols of our world; they are not THE reality.

It is unconsciously that PWS confuse their perceptual mapping with what is actually happening in the territory (the world in which they operate). Our maps are metaphors for our world and our experiences in and of this world. They are "not real": they have the reality that we ascribed to them. **In other words, our perception is not the reality.** It is only our perception of it, regardless of the level of fidelity with which we map our actual reality. We operate according to these perceptions as generated and managed by our higher mental frames.

"So, if our thoughts and emotions **affect** something that is outside of us - there is no problem?"

Exactly!

In summary, our thoughts and impressions are signals about the relationship, the mismatch between our Model of the World (perception) and our actual experience of this world, indicating whether things are headed toward the right direction ("positive" emotions) or an undesirable direction ("negative" emotions).

"So simple, yet so profound. So simple but so easy to forget. How and when do we forget? It is when we think (and feel) that what we think (our maps), what we perceive, what we believe in, what we hold dear and what we identify to represent reality. It is an illusion. It is never the reality and cannot be. This is, at best, a map that aims to be a fairly accurate and useful representation. "

Personal responsibility

We treat the information according to various frameworks, frameworks that, mostly, escape our conscious mind. We are so accustomed to them as models of our reality that they filter and influence, as we have seen, our perspectives. These frameworks, we repeat, are formed by our "beliefs," our "understandings," our "knowledge" and our "decisions."

The transition from disfluency to fluency requires that we stop forming the opinion we have of ourselves with a particular habit of talking and to accept, appreciate and consider ourselves as full-fledged human "beings". To create a real feeling of *acceptance, appreciation* and *self-esteem,* we must use an empowering language, an affirmative, positive and persuasive language. We must, in addition, reclaim the opinion one has of oneself instead of surrendering that power to others (what they might think of the way we speak). **We should also stop doing just the opposite by *mind reading* or, more accurately, *assuming* what *they will think* about our speech**. For as long as, consciously or unconsciously, we allow the fear of the judgment of others to dictate our undesirable behavior, we will never fully assume responsibility for ourselves. It is only by taking full responsibility (by reclaiming our words and actions) that we will be on the right track to recovery.

Take the habit of taking a break, instilling silence around you (mindfulness) *to better rely on your own Supreme Court*. Fostering the emergence of our Higher Self, of the best we can be, requires that we redirect within ourselves, move in us, this *authority* we have left to others. It means to become responsible *for* our choices and us. This means growing by being the *author,* the writer of our own life, personally defining our beliefs, our values, our code of ethics, our lifestyle and what is good for us.

> «What I mean is that from the moment that I realized I did not have, in order to feel safe, to let others control my life, I jumped in with both feet in this new life, free from both old fears and "prohibitions."»
> René Robben

To accept our fears, our anger, our disgust or the stress we experience does not mean that we *approve* or *excuse* them all. By applying a Meta-State of *acceptance,* we can more effectively control our fears and use them in a smarter and more human way. We are only recognizing their presence, witnessing them, observing them *to determine* their educational or training value and to take any action we believe appropriate given the circumstances. This is the first step towards a true state management.

Ditto for our speech: accept stuttering, simply note and welcome it by practicing it. The heart of the solution is to embrace the "dragon" of non-fluency. We all talk, normal speakers as well as PWS, with more or less non-fluency. Feeding our brains with large structuring that consider such a non-fluency as normal, acceptable and pleasant, in addition to knowing how to appreciate it as a tool to explore and discover, we will then talk calmly and with humour, in a non-fluent (normal) manner.

Caution: there is another school of thought that believes to be able to solve stuttering by the most unacceptable attitude, the most foolish and counterproductive way: mere acceptance thereof. Such acceptance is precisely what the PWS does not want to do and not only doesn't believe in it, but never will. Her whole mind-body system will resist that! Why? Because such a matrix means to abdicate, to resign, to tolerate the stuttering block, meaning that your work will lead nowhere, that you failed and are powerless in front of stuttering.

But how do we motivate a person who stutters to embrace, even temporarily, a dragon? By using the various NLP models as basic models to help the PWS to solve her problem. So here is the paradoxical advice: **try-not-to-be-fluent**. Then go ahead and watch your disfluency.

> "This is why, when I coach a PWS, I always ask her: "Every morning, while preparing yourselves to leave for work, practice to stutter for 5 minutes." Why? Because by "remotely controlling" it, it becomes yours! You *are mastering* the dragon rather than it *taking you on a leash,* holding you back, blocking you, this thing that you hate so much because, so far, it was controlling your life."   Bob Bodenhamer

VOLUNTARY STUTTERING

For most of us, stuttering is not an option. But we can choose how to stutter. Our stuttering can, in fact, either be a struggle or be gracious ☺. It is so much easier to stutter voluntarily and in control than to do it unwillingly and with obvious tension.

Although several avenues are available to us, voluntary stuttering, also called "deliberate disfluency," is an interesting tool. It is a bit like "playing with stuttering" because it reflects better the attitude to adopt towards this strategy: having fun with it.

But how to break loose from the fear of stuttering, how to stop denying reality, how to stop our avoidances? How to present ourselves to the world as we really are? How to directly expose ourselves and looking to others straight in their eyes rather than look away, avoiding eye contact? The answer: by doing what we fear most! But this time, with one difference: by *stuttering voluntarily, we monitor this disfluency instead of letting it to control us*! The only way to overcome a phobia, and we believe that stuttering is, essentially, a social phobia, is to face our fear head on by doing exactly what we fear. In other words, to "embrace the dragon."

BUT it must be done the proper way, using the following technique.

To stutter on purpose by rrr-repeating only the first sound can only engender a real block (loss of control). You must rather say, with confidence, the first sound of the word and release all your air, pause for about two seconds, then take a deep breath and say, always with confidence, the whole word.

In releasing .... P ...... pausing ..... take a deep breath ..... exercising with this mode of B ...... relax .... pause .... deep breath ... stammering deliberately, smiling, you demonstrate to your listener that you are in control.[i]

Should you be so much concerned about stuttering that it is painful, it is frightening; or should you be ashamed or intolerant, then you should realize *there is hope* because this experience is, as we have seen, structured. The fact that you have embodied some ideas into your neurology and physiology means only that you have many ingrained habits that operate and of which you are not really conscious. But a structure implies that we can intervene on several elements of the system, sometimes shaking its structure, spreading too, sometimes ... a mess.

We can challenge our inadequate frames supporting our stuttering. We must isolate these "linguistic dragons" to see if they will stand the test of a more appropriate language. The shiny side of our metacognitive powers is to be able to establish mindsets that will support our resources, our empowerment.

Our mind creates our internal states by this process of thought-emotion over another thought-emotion - in fact, adding a state of mind over another state of mind. And this is true for both negative and positive states. *By learning to master this infinite state stranglehold on another, we learn how to build frames that we want to instil to the higher levels of our minds.*

Our flexible and neuroplastic brain

Among the six elements of John Harrison's Stuttering Hexagon, four are cognitive in nature: perceptions, beliefs, emotions and intentions. That is to say how much our brain, and especially certain components of its architecture, play a leading role.

Here are the rules to control our brain (for more details, read *Brain 101*)

Rule # 1: Check the quality of your instructions.

Systematically *consider as absurd everything that is not of top quality for your brain.* Isn't it ridiculous to always rehash our old movies of injury and suffering in the theater of our mind? Don't you think once is enough?

Rule # 2: Keep your minds alert to remain aware of what is happening (mindfulness).

Let us be fully aware, fully anchored to the present moment. Listen carefully to your listener, looking him straight in the eyes.

A new discipline of Oriental origin is increasingly going public: the Full-Awareness (Mindfulness). With the advent of modern communication technologies, especially smart phones, we are more and more inclined to multitasking. In doing so, we are not really attentive to the main action we do at any given moment. Mindfulness reminds us to focus on this action we do at any given moment. And this also applies to stuttering because our mind, mostly due to our anticipatory and contextual anxiety, has a tendency to wander elsewhere.

Rule # 3: Let us beware of our referential frames.

We all know people who have experienced one or more adverse events, and (as if that were not enough) *built their lives around such event(s).* Difficult, you will agree, to do worse. As everything becomes customary, it is the same with our neuronal circuits and cerebral inner processes. *When getting used to a way of thinking, a way of information processing or to a directive sent to our brain, these eventually turn into Meta-Programs or become our default information-retrieval setting.* Our frames become our operating software - our default personal mapping - for any aspect of our lives.

We need to find (or imagine) wonderful references around which to rebuild our lives.

To reach our sprawling frames that make up the upper frames of our mind means reaching our beliefs and our beliefs systems. **It is at this level that we find the problem structure and its solutions**. By shaking this old structure, we can then access higher levels of our minds to introduce new and empowering energy and intentions, visions, values, identities, pleasures and so on.

Rule # 4: relax and let's have fun with our brain.

It is amazing to realize how much we are improving our speech by accepting and practicing our non-fluency, by exaggerating this non-fluency and giving us permission to be imperfect human beings who, too ofter, worry too much about what other people think. Only then can we relax, breathe more easily and get rid of all these negatively charged semantic meanings that we have assigned to this non-fluency.

Being too serious about everything, taking it all too seriously, we end up looking stupid. Being too serious usually minimizes the precious contribution of states such as humour, laughter, joy, playfulness, idiocy and stupidity. Because those are indeed graces that make us human beings. You must find pleasure in your total fallibility. Our brain being fallible, it makes everything we think also fallible, be it our emotions, our words, our attitudes and actions. All these are "subject to error." Beware of your words and be aware that the dragon can burst at any time from the back of your brain ... Tell yourself this:

> "I give myself permission to stutter and have fun knowing that I am much more than my speech and I refuse that this speech defines me as a person. I am somebody and I have the power to speak; I can and I will learn to stop giving stuttering so much meanings and power."

In their book, *Instant Relaxation*, Michael Hall and Debra Lederer talk about accessing our "Relaxed Core Self." This refers to our feeling of being relaxed, with the feel we have of ourselves, to feel relaxed with ourselves, to feel confident, secured and well balanced. These mental frames shape a state of mind (a mindset) by which we operate with a sense of security. This prevents messages like *"Danger! Threat! Overload or overwork!"* to lead us nowhere. Wouldn't it be great? This is precisely what needs the PWS to speak with confidence and fluency in all situations, not just in times perceived as "safe."

When we reach this kind of feeling or state of personal balance, we have the benefit of a platform of comfort and security, platform from which we can propel ourselves into the adventure of life. This balances our vital energies and opens the way to fluency in *all* circumstances. How do we get there? Very simple. Here is an induction written by Michael in our book, *Games for Mastering Fear:*

> "Imagine what it would look like, how it would sound and what would be the feeling in fully accessing your primary state of relaxation, making it your playground. Go back in your imagination to capture flanges, here and there, everything that would enrich the design of a particular image of self and allow these various pieces to form a whole in order to give life to a powerful feeling of your being; relaxed, confident, secured ... feeling good about yourself, breathing deeply, taking charge of your thoughts, emotions, words and behaviors ... Just imagine the feeling that such a state would give you and how it could change your life ... "

We can have most fears blowing up by using the power of humorous exaggeration, exaggerating fear to the point where it would be ridiculous. Then exaggerate a little more. At one point, the situation will become fun and your humorous perspective will make you operate in a more human and enjoyable way.

Instead of fearing what your listeners might think about your speech, should you not rather enjoy the fact that most of them are patiently listening to you and with empathy? We are so much more than our speech. Talking is one thing we do, just an expression, a most imperfect expression. It is therefore a proof of wisdom not to semantically overcharge it. Otherwise, we are giving speech more power to control us and define who we are.

Do not limit ourselves by merely accepting this fact: make it fun. Because humour is a salvation grace that frees us, helping us to let go and realize that all our mental mappings are just that - at best, fallible human mappings, resulting from our highest personal reflection available at the time of their inception.

Rule # 5: Never stop teaching new tricks to your brains.

Never stop to instil your brain with more productive things. (After all, the brain takes whatever we refer to it, regardless of quality.) So, nurture it with the best available data: inspirational ideas, impressive thoughts, enriching beliefs and understandings that will be useful to you. By creating, each week, a new structure that will empower you - after a year, you will have 52 empowering frames for the benefit of an improved matrix of mind.

EIGHT "KEYS" TO PERSONAL CHANGE (Hey Yes! Still the brain)

Here are some basic principles of Neuro-Semantics on how our brain "works." The brain doesn't care whether or not you feed it garbage, as does the stomach. In truth, the brain doesn't care if we feel bad or are in a great shape. It simply does what we ask it to do.

Those who changed their thinking patterns understand and agreed with the following beliefs. (To read the full article, click *here.)*

1 - The brain simply treats information received from the outside world through our five senses.

2 - The brain gives to the images derived from our five senses meanings in words (semantics). We already have discussed this.

3 - The brain does not stop at the first level of meanings in words that we give to an image, to our Internal Representations (IR). *It keeps generating thoughts (mainly in words) about our initial thoughts.* This is what we call Meta-State (the word meta meanings above, over).

4 - Repetitive thoughts create unconscious frames of the mind that will channel our conscious mind to the five to nine items on which we will be able to focus. These frames of the mind operate in our brain without our knowledge. Once we become accustomed to these (at a subconscious level), these thoughts become the frames of our mind - those filters through which we perceive the world.

5 - Those who change understand and realize that "The map is not the territory" as well as "The menu doesn't constitute the meal" and know very well that they operate according to a map they themselves have drawn.

Those changing recognize the importance of establishing a mapping that corresponds as **symbolically as possible** *to their reality*. But these are only symbols of our world. They are not the reality.

When we, consciously or unconsciously, operate on mental frames that date back to our childhood, we operate under a mapping that is far from adequately representing the adult world in which we now live. *What resources do you now have,* as an adult*, that would have enabled you, when you were younger, to build a different set of beliefs?* Therein lies the source of most of our problems, if not all.

We have the power to "reclaim" our brain, to regain control of our brain and to learn new ways of thinking. The brain is, thanks God, very flexible; it is, in fact, plastic. Old habits of thought are only unwanted habits of thought that "look real" because they became, over time, parts of our subconscious and, thus, "appear" to be real to us. But guess what? They are modifiable.

Each time there is a decision/thought that you do not want to take, say "no" and immediately say "yes" to what you want. By doing so, you will "break" this old undesirable mould and instil a new direction that will guide your mind toward a mindset that will be much more supportive and helpful. Because they are only thoughts, why not choose only those that are favourable to us and that suit our needs, what we are looking for?

> "Almost without exception, I discovered that my adult clients were experiencing problems because they were still thinking as children. They were still using their childhood experiences as structure of reference. This is called "association.""

> Bob Bodenhamer

6 - The power to distinguish between association and dissociation.

Mentally revisiting a painful experience makes us feel the negative feelings we felt when we actually experienced this painful situation. You are associated to a memory when you do not see yourself in the picture. On the other hand, dissociation takes place when we see that younger self in the mental picture. This has the effect of reducing the discomfort while the association with a memory tends to increase these feelings (at least for most people).

When, consciously or unconsciously, we associate with painful memories of the past and operate according to the mental frames that we have assigned to them, we *confuse the map with the territory.* And when we do this, we live our adult life in the suffering of painful childhood memories. The thinking patterns we developed at that time were useful; but this is no longer the case once we became adults. Bob says:

> "If I had to pinpoint a common element to the problems I faced over my fifteen years as therapist, that would be associated with painful memories of the past. This problem of subconscious association with problematic childhood states, transposed to adulthood, is the source of many problems I encountered in therapy."

By *using* your current resources on an event, the latter will have new meanings that will be much more useful to you.

7 - People who change know how to apply higher Meta-Level States to lower level problems.

What does that mean? Fairly simple. If we fear an experience and that this experience leads us to fear our fear, then what happens? Fear will only intensify. In truth, using fear over fear, we are heading toward paranoia. **And if, instead of being afraid of our fear, we welcome the fear with open arms?** We would then be saying: "This fear has some value to me and I welcome it." What will happen to this fear? The fear will decrease to the point where we can go out of it and learn from it. Then, once we have learned the lesson from that fear, we apply a thought of Faith/Courage thereto; what will happen? What happens to fear when we oppose faith and courage to it? Fear eclipses in front of courage and of an unwavering faith.

Can you imagine how easy it is to change your states of mind using a thought (constructive) on another thought (reducing)? Whenever we apply a thought on another, the latter is modified or changes in one way or another. We refer to this as Meta-Stating: applying a thought over another. And therein lies the magic. There is our ability to reformat, to reprogram our thoughts, our thinking.

8 - Those who change will examine a problem from different perspectives.

The fact that we, humans, can look to our experiences from five different angles (we call them "perceptual positions") represents a huge potential to control our states and improve our communication. *Neither of these positions is superior to another.* Each perceptual position is as important as the other. The skilled communicator will move freely from one to the other. To read about them, reach the number 8 of *Eight "Keys" to personal change*.

FOREGROUND/BACKGROUND

You are so focused on the person/context, fearing it will trigger your blocking, that you see nothing else. By placing your problems to *the forefront,* you give them greater proportions and they seem almost insurmountable. But when you put your resources to the *foreground -* you become more skilled, more competent and more reckless.

Look to the image below. For you to see the girl, the old woman should be in the background. And to see the old lady, the girl must be in the background. It all boils down to this - Who do you really want to see: the girl or the old lady? How do you react to this? You are stunned, aren't you? Assuming that you know very well that the two were there, it boils down to *what you want to see*.

Consider a boy who sees himself as a frightened boy freezing in the presence of authority figures. When he freezes this way, he blocks. But there is also another image of him, that of a resourceful adult that always speaks fluently. Guess where was the adult when the boy was visualizing the frightened little boy? The frightened little boy was in the foreground while the mature and fluent adult was hiding in the background.

Now, look carefully *behind* or *beyond* this image and notice **the resources** *therein.* Yes, these resources were hiding behind and you can only see them by looking closer. Noticing these resources, you may also see the [fear and anxiety](#) of blocking, which were in the foreground, disintegrate far, far away in the background while, simultaneously, moving your constructive resources in the foreground. **The secret lies in taking your resources - to apply to your experiences/situations - from the background and bring them to the foreground**.

Foreground/Background

1) Detect the foreground/background structure.

2) Become aware of your own foregrounding/background patterns.

3) Decide to take charge of switching the images.

4) Commit yourself to foregrounding your resources.

5) Switch the background to the foreground.

Should you *be able* to put at the forefront of your mind resourceful thoughts, beliefs, images, sounds, music and sensations, commit yourself to always do so.

Symptoms

Such a paper would be incomplete without addressing the issue of symptoms. Unfortunately, it seems that some therapies, especially in North America, focus too much on the symptoms of stuttering at the expense of the underwater part of Joseph Sheehan's Iceberg and of some components of John Harrison's Stuttering Hexagon.

By believing our symptoms are inevitable and permanent, we only solidify them. In believing "it is so" or "this is what *I am,*" we integrate such beliefs deeper into our neurology. Negative Identity beliefs install and solidify the symptoms, giving them a greater control over us. That is why identity statements such as "I am ..." "He is ..." "They are ..." imprison us into a system that is, to say the least, toxic.

Are you still fighting your symptoms and do they give you the impression of growing to the point of mentally turning into dragons? You will go nowhere fighting your symptoms. They are simply reporting the presence of a problem; they are not the problem, even though we have the bad habit of transforming them into a problem. We make the mistake of focusing on the symptoms, striving to control them **without addressing the ubiquitous frames that have given life to them.** Efforts will thus be made to *avoid* the behavior and any sign of its presence will only cause more anger, depression and self-depreciating. **To reject our symptoms steers us against our psychological energies, emotions and physiology**.

That is why the mere symptoms management addresses merely the *symptoms* of the evil rather than the real problem. So stop it! Embrace the dragon ... give him a juicy kiss and see his reaction. Most of the time, his size will decrease and he may well deflate completely. *Accept the*

symptom. Greet it fully, in front of all, and do not judge; be aware of its presence, explore it, watch it, understand its positive intentions (see next paragraph), align yourself with it and neutralize all those frames and negative meanings you have given to it over the years. Welcoming and embracing your symptoms may even transform if not exterminate them.

ANY BEHAVIOR HAS A POSITIVE INTENTION

In NLP, we believe that all behavior, be it good or bad, has a positive intention: when the individual selected this behavior, it was, at that time, the best solution available to deal with a problem he wished to quickly address. But what may well be the positive intention behind a stuttering block? Bob Bodenhamer noticed that the four following intentions were dominant:

1) Blocking/stuttering may serve as **protection** for some who stutter having grown up in an environment that was, in one way or another, painful for the child. This situation is encountered quite often. For some people who stutter, stuttering protects them against the fear of failure. These individuals believe that, as long as they will stutter, they have a good excuse for not assuming full responsibility for their lives. The stuttering protects them against the fear of failure and success - by not risking anything, you will know neither failure nor success.

2) **Control -** Occupying the second place, perhaps the need for control serves as a higher intention/purpose of stuttering. "This family is out of control and I can't help. So, *I will control my speech.* I know how to stutter. Look at me stuttering. Now you know I can exercise some control over my life!"

3) **Attention gathering -** Another unconscious objective of stuttering is to attract attention. The stuttering child certainly learned that blocking/stuttering drew the attention of others, not only at home, but also at school. This is another thinking that can contribute to "imprisonment in the block."

4) **Vengeance -** The use of stuttering as revenge is not frequent, but it happens. A PWS confessed to me: "Because they (my parents) have complicated my life, I will complicate theirs by stuttering."

NOW THAT I KNOW ALL THIS…

In Neuro-Semantics, we believe in the principle that every experience has a structure. **Any meaning being a <u>built</u> reality, it is therefore suitable to <u>rebuilding</u>, to a reprint**. In other words, it is subject to modelling; in fact to *remodelling the structure of an experience.* We can revisit an experience and penetrate its Structural Matrix. Several models are then available to transform or reprint an experience or a situation.

In finding the original experience that caused an imprint and by recoding/reprinting it with the resources that everyone involved would have then needed, we change both the perspectives and beliefs that resulted from this experience. Reprinting has the advantage of creating viewpoints offering different perspectives, a source of wisdom that will underpin our decisions, helping us to better deal with conflict, to negotiate better and to better handle our interpersonal relationships.

Our "emotions" are, as we have seen, by-products of our "thinking." **These emotions being a creation of our "thinking," we can rebuild and replace them with new ones**. New neurological findings repeatedly demonstrate to us that old neurological circuits can be modified, eliminated and replaced by new ones. We can indeed transform our emotions by renewing our personal mapping or improving our skills. Yes, we can indeed change our emotions.

Furthermore, by developing new ways of reacting to them (because we also have this choice), we have the benefit of a wider choice and of a better control over our life.

Welcome any negative emotion, befriend it and embrace it. By turning against negative emotion, you deprive yourself of the benefit of "emotions" in addition to creating the foundation of a dragon state. Get used to short term discomfort, learn to tolerate them. Accept a moment of embarrassment because it gives you the opportunity to stretch, to get out of - to widen - your comfort zone, a proven method to help to recover from stuttering.

Because there is a mentality for fluency and another for stuttering, we must first stop classifying the speech in terms of stuttering or fluency: let the speech be speech and communication be just that, discussion.

If I say to myself "I must speak fluently," this "I must" implies that "I should not talk in a non-fluent way." Really? Who said that? It is precisely this kind of taboo, this kind of prohibition that prevents us from accepting, appreciating and using this non-fluency to search for our words and be normal human beings using speech to develop new ideas. And that is precisely why <u>we must</u> be **very, very, very careful** when congratulating a person who stutters for her fluency, such an attitude giving credentials to the idea that non-fluency is prohibited.

> "Most people tend to praise the person who stutters when speaking fluently. Such an attitude only reinforces her belief that she should not talk in a non-fluent way; she will tend to become a little more anxious and demonstrate a greater tension in her efforts to precisely avoid this non-fluency ... It is best to congratulate the PWS every time she deals with her disfluency calmly and without undue tension ... The best attitude to adopt is to show that she has no obligation to speak fluently." (P. 455) Wendell Johnson

> "As the PWS stops being terrorized by the non-fluency/disfluency, she will express herself with less anxiety, less hesitations and tension - and therefore less stuttering."
>
> (P. 456) Wendell Johnson

Establish a strong semantic foundation for the idea you hold about yourself, promoting your empowerment (your personal resources), your capacity to enter into relations with others and your ability to evolve in life. This should neutralize the damage of the past, your Stuttering History. Think of yourself as a human being in your own right, with a value by yourself and an intrinsic dignity. "I am somebody and I have the power of speech; I can and I will learn to stop giving so much meanings and power to stuttering..." You are someone, you are important; live your life by speaking loudly.

> "Slip into your favourite armour, i.e. nothing except your smile ... and some clothes; then confront these fears, embrace them, tell them that you understand the reason for their presence and you know they are there to warn you, to protect you. Do CHOOSE to jump into the world, realizing that you are as unique a creature - made of carbon, water and thoughts – as the creature next to you." René Robben

Being autonomous, in possession of our means, signifies to glorify this power of ours to design our own meanings. You know that none of your "meanings" comes to birth regardless of your personal reflection - therein lies the power of control over your emotions.

Could such inability to make one's own choices be the result of childhood or adolescence programming as dictated by parents and other influential adults? Because of such past programming, the individual feeds himself with feelings related to his refusal to make his own choices. Since childhood, we believe we are unable to make our own choices, believing that the best way to feel "secure" was to let others choose for us. We call this co-dependency. We depend on others to make our life choices for us because we believe we are unable to do so by ourselves. And this is the number one attitude dating back from childhood when our parents were making these choices for us.

What we remember, *why* we remember and *how* we use our memories challenge our response-ability. Take for example the teasing you were subject to in school when you were a child. The *problem arises when you transpose the resulting negative emotions into your adult life and color most people of your adult environment with these childhood experiences or with the negative emotions you felt from other experiences of the past*. Ask yourself: "**How many adults laughed at me, as did my classmates?"** Face the reality. *Take care not to assume that others are judging you when, in reality, they are not. **They are far too preoccupied with their own agenda***. Too many obstacles arise precisely because we fear the judgments of others regarding the way we speak. Too often, this fear is rooted in those painful emotional experiences of the past that became, as we have explained above, related to speech, due to their embodiment in the muscles that control breathing and speech.

You have to move this judgment, this *modus operandi*, this "external" reference where it belongs: "within you." For as long as you allow your alleged judgments (on your listeners' opinion if you stutter) influence your state of mind, you will have difficulty overcoming stuttering. **You should understand that this old spirit of "<u>fear of what others may think</u>" has never "evolved."** Therefore, revisit this picture of "younger you" developing this "fear" that others discover your biggest secret: that you stutter. And discard it.

THE WELL-FORMED OUTCOME PATTERN

Self-fulfillment (or self-actualization) is a process that requires discovering our inner identity and the courage to let our Higher Self blossom. When we say that we must "listen to our inner voice," I mean that we need to promote the emergence of our self, our true identity. *You know you are empowering yourselves when you live with passion.* Autonomous people have a purpose in life. They are listening to their inner voice, motivating them to excel. It is this desire for self-fulfillment and excellence which is found in all of us but which, unfortunately, is too often cold, repressed and even suppressed in so many people.

Venture into the world with your power (your amazing brain); publicize your personal views on issues you care about and support; show the world all the respect you have for yourself by making this choice to treat yourself with respect and see how much others will respect you for who you are. **We must forget about those authoritative personalities that we place on a pedestal, moving into ourselves all these other external references; such external references must be recaptured and possessed by and within ourselves.**

When the goal of a person who stutters is "to be fluent," this goal turns out, alas, to be counterproductive. Obviously, such an objective brings to the surface a whole wealth of painful memories for the PWS.

It is human to wish to change that! Working for several years with PWS, I (Bob) found that, when they are doing the same things than normal speakers, the PWS became fluent. What does this mean? Very easy: normal speakers never have to worry about the "fear of stuttering"; in fact, they rarely have to think *about how they speak.* Nor do they plan what they will say (except, of course, in exceptional circumstances). In other words, normal speakers trust their subconscious to find the words that will convey the message they want to say. They are simply talking by "**letting themselves go with the flow**". **Of course, this requires a lot of practice to embed such an attitude into your subconscious so that it becomes automatic.**

So, what should be your goal? Take into consideration the following ideas, select one, or find one that suits you better.

1. I focus only on what my listener is saying.
2. I trust my subconscious to convey to my conscious mind the words to say what "It" wants to say.
3. I'm talking "letting myself go with the flow." (See Ruth Mead's book: *Speech Is A River*)
4. To communicate with others is fun.
5. When I communicate, my concentration is always disturbed (by the fear of stuttering, planning what I will say, and so on. All these thoughts mean that my mind is wandering instead of concentrating mindfully on my listener.) It is of the utmost importance that you understand this.

SELF ACCOMPLISHING

Learn to recognize your "Peak Experiences." We assume that you can, without knowing it, live such moments. Surprisingly enough, it can be anything - an athletic event, a puzzle, mountains climbing, reading a book, having a coaching conversation, writing, exchanging live on Skype or Facebook, cooking, making love, playing with your dog - the list is endless. The problem is that these moments are often so "ordinary" that we simply do not know because we don't give them enough importance, enough M E A N I N G.

> "Find out who we are, what we are, what we love, what we do not like, what is good for us and what isn't, where we are heading for and our mission here on earth - in short, opening oneself - all this exposes us to psychopathology. This means identifying our defenses, and once they were identified, to have the courage to give them up. It is difficult; after all, have not these defenses been erected against something unpleasant? But it is useful to give up our defenses."
>
> Abraham Maslow.[15]

---

[15] **Abraham Maslow**, already quoted, was a well-known American psychologist considered as the father of the humanist approach, mostly known for his explanation of motivation by the hierarchy of needs, often described as the pyramid of needs. Self-accomplishing is the utmost human goal in Maslow's hierarchy.

In the same vein, it certainly takes courage to identify our day-to-day defenses and give them up. After all, are not these defenses the expression of an internal disorder that occurs when we are not at our best, when we are avoiding something, when we are hiding from ourselves? Holding back, rejection, judgment, fear and avoidance are all things that block us, preventing us from becoming fully **what we can be,** what we really are. For self-fulfillment *is to raise ourselves in order to become all we can be*, to reach and deploy the best in ourselves. That is, in Neuro-Semantics, this kind of total commitment we call "**Personal Genius**."

We hypothesize that the ODV/ikigai (life's purpose) can reduce anxiety in people who stutter as well as the need for Social Desirability (SD), thus reducing the stuttering symptoms. We also wish to take risks, get out of our comfort zone and fully discover our own humanity, as fallible as it may be, that enables us to be authentic and be ourselves. In fact, self-fulfillment is much more down-to-earth than we think. It is to be fully alive and fully human, despite our weaknesses and concerns, our daily concerns. It is to live in harmony with our true nature, what we really are.

The PWS who grows up freely verbally expressing who he/she is, becomes aware of the need to adapt their mapping (perception) so that it corresponds, as symbolically as possible, to reality.

One who has understood and accepted that his perception is not, and cannot be, the territory (the world), stops this nonsense of believing that others control, without his permission, his mind and his thought. *No one can lead you to believe or feel anything that you did not choose to believe or feel.* This "other" person (whom you fear judges you if you block) has no power over you <u>without your permission</u>.

If no one can lead you to believe or feel anything you do not choose to believe or feel, then what prevent you from choosing what is best for you and who can demand that you think you are inferior to others? ***What motivates you to "do" rather than "be"?***

Although it can be a daunting personal work to stop blocking, it can be achieved. You choose your thoughts; you have the power to choose them. Nobody else can drive your bus for you. You are THE sole driver. *Because meanings, the meanings of these images and words in your brain, are not "real" in the sense that they are cast in stone, immutable; they can only have the reality you assign them.*

How is it possible to train our mind-body-emotion system to stop overloading fluency and non-fluency with all kinds of meanings? Well, as paradoxical as it may seem, simply by practicing non-fluency!

What can we gain from doing this?

First, a change of orientation, of attitude towards this non-fluency/disfluency. This will associate to the non-fluency positive emotions such as joy, glee, ease, confidence and humour. These are antidotes to fear and shame of non-fluency, against the taboo while thwarting it, *because we then give ourselves permission to be non-fluent*. We can then, and only then, enjoy this "so human" non-fluency rather than considering non-fluency as the "end of the world."

All this clarifies what happens when our brain decides when and when not to block. When the PWS is not in a threatening situation and is able to freely express herself/himself, these

mental representations and the language frames we discussed above are conspicuous by their absence since they could not trigger the neural circuits that created these mental representations and the second level negative language frames.

> «When I will feel a "threat," protect me from the "danger of panicking in this situation," keeping me calm and relaxed. Relax my chest muscles. Relax my Valsalva muscles. Make me breathe heavily and increase the volume of my abdomen. Make me to stand straight. That I look at my listener right in the eyes. Make me proud and strong. Make that I view mental images promoting a feeling of strength and courage. Make me to visualize these mental images that stimulate a feeling of "relaxation." Yes, always be my best friend, my guardian and protect me from the greatest threat to which I am exposed.»

Roddy Grubbs

If, before speaking, you are subject to anticipatory anxiety, the Swish Pattern will deal with that feeling. It also helps you, when you experience negative emotions after a stuttering moment, to prevent the addition of another somatic memory in your Stuttering History. The **Swish model** - combined with Drop Down Through - is a powerful tool to "**guard against relapse.**" Its aim is to make you instantly pass from a non-resourceful state to a **resourceful one.** It breaks undesirable state. It is used when we feel anxious, angry, nervous or any other toxic state deprived of resources. Why get bogged down in a toxic state when you can **instantly change that state and be taken out of it?**

Each PWS has *exceptions - places, times and people with whom/where she does not stutter.* What are those occasions when you don't stutter? Do you stutter in the presence of your dog? Do you stutter when praying? Talking to a child? So if there is an exception, *what then is this difference that makes this exception?* Think about it. In answering this question, you make another step toward solving your problem.

And never forget visualization. Unless you inform it, *the brain cannot distinguish between reality and what you represent in your imagination* - hence the power of visualization.

Avoiding eye contact is directly related to anxiety about stuttering, another symptom of dissociation. Always maintain eye contact, even when you stutter. *You must convince yourself that eye contact is a prerequisite for generating a state of confidence and relaxation*.

Each time we do an action that should normally be automatic, spontaneous or unconscious, such as sleeping, breathing or talking, and we become so much conscious of it to the point of self applying Meta-States of fear, exaggerated expectations and judgments - *we run the risk of jeopardizing the whole thing*! This process is operating when you have learned a discipline so well that you have mastered each movement, even in its smallest details, to the point of being able to perform out of awareness (being in the "Zone", in the Flow), out of your awakened knowledge, operating in automatic or feed-forward mode as when practicing a sport or artistic discipline, driving a car or making a bow tie. But as soon as we pay attention to it, and this is especially true with judgments, we run the risk to skid. The whole idea of Timothy Gallway in his best seller, *The Inner Game of Tennis*, can easily be summed up by the following formula:

PERFORMANCE = (POTENTIAL – INTERFERENCE)

FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WHO STUTTER: The excessive need for others' approval develops from exaggerated expectations from parents and teachers vis-à-vis the child. For this reason, they (parents, teachers and other caregivers) must refrain from imposing excessive expectations to the child who stutters. Here are some tips from Anna Margolina addressed to a mother who stutters and whose daughter also stutters:

"I'm not qualified to give you professional advice. But here's a course of action to which I believe:

1) Don't make any comment on your child's speech. If the child mispronounces a word, just use this word more often by saying it more slowly and clearly, but without it being obvious. If the child increases his speed and is difficult to understand - first determine yourself the speech rate (speak at the same rate than him) then, slowly, decrease your speed. Should the child be disrespectful or use rude words - do not react emotionally; wait for a better time to tell him about the rude words. **Your goal will be to prevent her from having anxiety and worry about her speech.**

2) Carefully listen to her, giving her your full attention, being authentic. Striving to retain the attention of an adult is stressful for a child who is a little bit emotional. If she fears that you may not listen to her, she could become anxious, which might aggravate her difficulties.

3) Accept the fact that your child stutters.

Be aware that, with your support and your knowledge, her stuttering experience will be quite different from yours. 80% of children will have ceased to stutter at school age. Children are very sensitive to body language and emotional energy. If you become nervous whenever she freezes, she will notice. If your heart breaks each time she blocks, she will notice. When my son had disfluencies around the ages 3 ½ - 4 years, I applied these guidelines while accepting the fact that he may stutter. I knew, stuttering or not, that **it was up to us to help him grow up happy and confident**. Today, his speech is not different from other children of his age. He stumbles when excited, just like other children. Although these are not the opinion of an expert, you may well find something that will be useful."

Anna Margolina, Ph. D.
Hypnotherapist and NLP Practitioner

« If you like me, you accept me as I am and you just made yourself a new friend; if you don't like me, don't count on me to stay in your shadow and become your friend in doing so ... I promised myself I would never tolerate that anyone can make me feel inferior, angry, frustrated or any other negative emotional structure to which one can think of ...**I made the choice, the vow to choose what is best for me** because that's what I need to be able to excel in the coming years. The only person to whom I am accountable is me. »   Rene Robben

I conclude with this most eloquent comment from Anna Margolina and which, I believe, captures the essence of this paper:

« But, in any case, once gone these enormous weights that represent the fear and shame, and we stop those extra efforts that accompanied our speech, we are releasing a powerful energy that, until then, has been channelled to cope with the emotional burden of stuttering/block/holding back, energy that we can now use to propel ourselves towards a well-being, to move us forward. »   Anna Margolina, Dr. CHT

To access *neurosemanticsofstuttering*, click HERE

Summary of readings made by Richard Parent, April 29, 2014. Revised/edited by Ruth Mead to whom I am most grateful for generously taking her time to do so. Rév. : 09/12/2014.

This « summary » has been written mostly from articles written by Drs. Bobby Bodenhamer and Michael L. Hall and some other contributors extensively quoted throughout this paper.

Pour la version française de ce document, cliquez sur : https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BydM9-AV4MpjT201RFZMcmd1ZUE/edit

---

[i] I also invite you to read *Self-Therapy for the Stutterer*, pages 72 to 75, and *Redefining Stuttering*, pages 549 to 554. These referential works also discuss Voluntary Stuttering.