

Comprehensive



Therapy

*A stuttering therapy
program that you can
follow from your home
and will enable you to
effectively and durably
control your stuttering
by addressing every
single element of the
stuttering phenomenon.*

Phillip J. Roberts

COMPREHENSIVE STUTTERING THERAPY

2nd Edition

by Phillip J. Roberts

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Table of Contents

Preface 3

Part I - Theoretical Descriptions of Stuttering

Chapter 1 - The Stuttering Iceberg	6
Chapter 2 - Tightening the Wrong Muscles	11
Chapter 3 - Interactions between the Different Elements of the Stuttering Iceberg	16
Chapter 4 - The Fluency Iceberg	22

Part II – Therapy for Adult and Teenaged Stutterers

Foreword	30
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First set of exercises - Valsalva control

Exercise 1 - Stutter on Purpose	36
Exercise 2 - Relax Your Rectum	40
Exercise 3 - Abdominal Breathing	43
Exercise 4 - Don't Perform Valsalva Maneuvers When Unnecessary	45
Exercise 5 - Change the Way Your Body Reacts to Stress	48
Exercise 6 - Change the Way You Perceive Words	50
Exercise 7 - Phonate!	51
Exercise 8 - Air Flow and Easy Onset	55
Exercise 9 - Voiced Speech	59
Exercise 10 - Demosthenes' technique	62
Exercise 11 - Daily Exercises	79

Second Set of Exercises - Changing Your Behaviors, Perceptions and Feelings

Exercise 12 - Listen to Others	88
Exercise 13 - You Are not Alone	90
Exercise 14 - Recall Enjoyable Speaking Experiences	92
Exercise 15 - Acknowledge Your Stuttering	94
Exercise 16 - Behave Like a Non-stutterer	99
Exercise 17 - Mirror	101
Exercise 18 - Keeping Eye Contact	102
Exercise 19 - Move Your Body	106
Exercise 20 - Speak With Your Body	108
Exercise 21 - How to Interrupt People	111
Exercise 22 - Speak Up!	113
Exercise 23 - Sing!	116
Exercise 24 - Pause!	118
Exercise 25 - Show Your Feelings	120
Exercise 26 - Don't Hold Back	122
Exercise 27 - Be a Leader	124
Exercise 28 - Unveil Your Hidden Intentions	126
Exercise 29 - Avoid Avoiding	128
Exercise 30 - Adopt a Positive Attitude	131
Conclusion	134

Part III – Therapy for Children

Chapter 1 – Your Child Stutters	137
Chapter 2 – Indirect Therapy	140
Chapter 3 – Direct Therapy	148

Bibliography	152
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Preface

You are a stutterer and your dearest wish is to become fluent. You have the feeling that stuttering is controlling your life and you would like to find a way to control stuttering. Maybe you already explored several therapies and none of them really worked.

This book should allow you to improve your fluency and eventually totally eliminate stuttering from your life. The process will take a long time: probably several months and maybe more than a year. You were probably dreaming of a therapy that would enable you to control stuttering in just a few days and might be somewhat disappointed to read that it will take a longer period of time. You have to understand that you have been stuttering for several years or decades. Stuttering is a habit that is now deeply rooted inside you and changing this habit will inevitably take time.

The first part of this book will give you theoretical descriptions of stuttering. It will provide you with the basic understanding that you need in order to control stuttering. You will learn that stuttering is a complex phenomenon that is not limited to your speech system. The stuttering phenomenon also includes all kind of behaviors and these behaviors will have to be changed one by one if you want to be able to durably control stuttering.

The second part of this book is composed of 30 exercises aimed at controlling your stuttering. These exercises are divided in two sets. The first set directly addresses the speech process while the second set addresses the different behaviors associated with stuttering.

It is possible that you will achieve fluency before you complete all the exercises. If this happens, I recommend that you nevertheless keep on working your way through the remaining exercises. Achieving fluency is a daunting task but maintaining fluency is not easy either. After you achieved fluency, it is very likely that you will relapse sooner or later. The exercises

contained in this book will not only help you to become fluent, but they will also help you to maintain fluency.

Now a word of caution: stuttering is a complex phenomenon and no two stutterers are alike. This book should be of great help to most stutterers but I cannot guarantee it will work for everyone. There is a slim possibility that after reading this book and doing all the exercises, you won't notice any improvement. If such is the case, don't give up. You can consult a speech pathologist or search the Internet for additional help. If there is a will there is a way. If you really want to control stuttering, you will find a way to achieve that goal. It might take time, but with perseverance, you are bound to succeed, with or without the help of this book.

If your Child Stutters...

If your child stutters, you should first read Part I (Theoretical Descriptions of Stuttering). These pages will help you understand the stuttering phenomenon and provide you with an insight of the feelings and perceptions of a stutterer. It will then be easier for you to understand your child and help him/her improve fluency.

Part II (Therapy for Adult and Teenaged Stutterers) was not written with the young child in mind. This part is primarily intended for teenagers and adults. Older children can also benefit from these exercises under the guidance of an adult. Whatever the age of your child, I recommend that you read Part II as the information contained in these pages will help you gather a better understanding of stuttering.

Part III (Therapy for Children) was written specially for you. It provides valuable information about children and stuttering. Part III also explains what you can do to help your child eliminate stuttering and become a fluent speaker.

I wish you good luck in your endeavor. If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact me through the contact page of <http://www.stuttering.ch>.

Part I

Theoretical Description of Stuttering

Chapter 1

The Stuttering Iceberg

In the Dictionary

According to the dictionary, *to stutter* means *to speak with a spasmodic hesitation, prolongation or repetition of sounds* (American Heritage Dictionary).

Every stutterer will probably agree that this definition is too short as it only describes the visible part (or more adequately the audible part) of the stuttering phenomenon.

To the stutterer, stuttering indeed means a lot more than a mere repetition of sounds.

Stuttering is also that strange feeling you feel in your guts when you know you are likely to stutter.

Stuttering means frustration, shame, guilt and lowered self esteem.

Stuttering means that you will buy an apple pie instead of a doughnut because you feel that “apple pie” is easier to say than “doughnut”. Or maybe you will buy two doughnuts instead of one because you feel that “two doughnuts” is easier to say than “one doughnut”. Then you will pretend to wonder why you are not hungry enough to eat both.

Stuttering means that you will find all kinds of good reason for not asking for a pay raise although you obviously deserve it.

Stuttering means that the other guy will date that beautiful girl simply because you were worried that you might stutter when inviting her for dinner.

Stuttering also means using all kinds of avoidance techniques like using starters (you know..., you see..., well..., Yes..., uhhh...) or using another less appropriate words simply because it seems that it will be easier to say.

Stuttering means you have to hear people giving you stupid and useless advices such as “take it easy”, “breathe”, “speak slowly”.

The Stuttering Iceberg

Stuttering is like an iceberg (see figure on page 10): it has both a visible part and an unseen part. The visible part, that is the part of the iceberg that lies above the waterline, accounts for only 10% of the total mass. The remaining 90% lies below the waterline and cannot be seen from the surface.

The *spasmodic hesitations, prolongations or repetitions of sounds* represent the visible part of the ‘Stuttering Iceberg’ and is only a small part of the phenomenon

The hidden part of the stuttering iceberg includes the following:

1) The tightening of the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism:

This will be described in detail in the following chapter.

2) Irregular breathing patterns :

Stutterers often have irregular breathing patterns and have difficulties synchronizing breathing with speech. They sometimes attempt to speak with very little air in their lungs, or they try to speak while inhaling.

3) Negative emotions, feelings and perceptions such as shame, guilt, frustration, embarrassment, lowered self esteem, lack of self confidence :

Stutterers often feel ashamed of their inability to speak fluently and they often feel worthless because of the difficulties they have to communicate with others. They feel guilty of not being able to achieve what they feel they would be able to achieve if they were fluent. They feel embarrassed by their disfluencies and the impatience of their listeners.

4) Fear of particular speaking situation:

Most stutterers fear particular speaking situations such as using the telephone, ordering food in a restaurant, asking directions to a pedestrian etc... Stuttering is usually situation sensitive. It depends on the individual, but a stutterer typically stutters more when talking to an authority figure such as a policeman, his parents, the teacher or his boss. Stutterers usually don't stutter at all when talking alone or talking to a pet as long as no human being is around. Stutterers often stutter less when talking to their spouse probably because a spouse is a bit like a second self.

5) Use of starters and fillers :

When a stutterer feels he is going to block on a word, he often inserts meaningless words such as: "you know", "you see", "well", "yes", "uh"... Everybody tends to use such meaningless and useless words but this tendency is much more frequent among stutterers. Stutterers usually feel these junk words will give them a running start that will enable them to rush through the block.

6) Avoidance techniques:

When a stutterer feels he is going to block on a specific word, he often uses another word with a similar meaning. Quite often this other word is less appropriate and this may reinforce the perception that he is unable to communicate effectively. Stutterers sometimes say something completely different from what they would like to say.

7) Holding back :

Another way to elude stuttering is to avoid speaking. You probably remember having to listen to a person babbling nonsense simply out of a fear of speaking. This is probably one of the most frustrating situations a stutterer has to endure.

8) Eye contact avoidance :

Stutterers tend to avoid keeping eye contact with their listeners. They probably do so because they can't stand seeing the reaction of their listener when they stutter. This attitude makes it difficult to establish effective communication with others.

9) Tendency to stand still:

Stutterers may be so scared to stutter that they rarely use body language while they speak.

10) Speaking in a low voice :

Many stutterers speak in a low voice because they don't want too many people to hear their disfluencies.

11) Resistance to change :

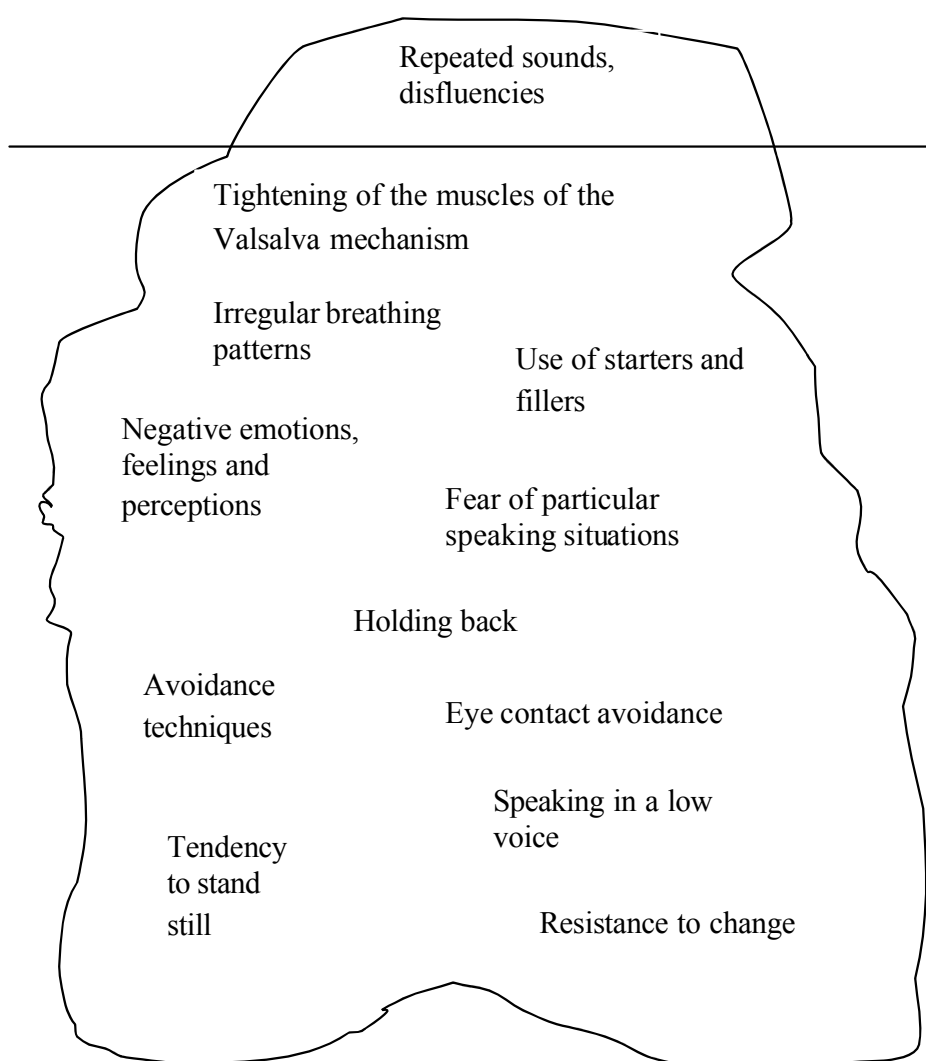
At a conscious level, most stutterers obviously wish they could become fluent. But resistance to change is inherent to the human nature. A stutterer knows that if he becomes fluent, he will be expected to speak more and socialize more and his unconscious mind might think he will not be able to handle that. The unconscious mind will therefore resist the change and sabotage any effort to become fluent.

You now start to gather the idea that stuttering is not simply a speech problem. It's a problem that spans throughout your entire body and mind. Stuttering affects the person as a whole and includes all kinds of behaviors, emotions, feelings and perceptions.

A therapy that only focuses on your disfluencies is bound to fail. Only a holistic and comprehensive approach that will also address the behaviors, perceptions and emotions that go along with stuttering can be successful.

The next chapter will describe how the tightening of the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism interferes with speech. In chapter 3, we will see how the different elements of the Stuttering Iceberg interact and reinforce one another.

The Stuttering Iceberg



Chapter 2

Tightening the Wrong Muscles

In this chapter, we will see how the involuntary tightening of certain muscles interferes with speech and triggers stuttering. These muscles belong to what the scientific community calls the “Valsalva mechanism”. This phenomenon was extensively demonstrated by William D. Parry in his excellent book “Understanding & Controlling Stuttering, A Comprehensive New Approach Based on the Valsalva Hypothesis”.

This chapter will only give you a brief overview of the phenomenon. I will give you the key elements you need to understand in order to control your stuttering. If you want to have a more thorough understanding of the Valsalva mechanism and how it interacts with speech, I strongly recommend that you purchase William D. Parry’s book. You can buy the book on www.amazon.com.

The Valsalva Maneuver

What happens when you lift a heavy box? You start by inhaling, then you hold your breath, grab the box and tense your muscles in your arms in order to lift the box.

Did you ever wonder why you first inhale and hold your breath when you have to lift a heavy object? You do that in order to inflate your chest and abdomen to make them rigid enough to withstand the weight of the object.

To hold your breath you close your larynx. The larynx is located in the throat and has two roles: phonation during speech and effort closure when we perform a strenuous effort.

Holding your breath by closing the larynx is not enough to maintain the rigidity of your chest and abdomen. You also need to tighten your abdominal muscles. By doing so you squeeze your intestines and it would have some very unpleasant consequences (involuntary defecation) if you didn't instinctively tighten your rectal muscles as well. Actually, when you intentionally defecate, you also hold your breath and tense your abdominal muscles but you **relax** your rectal muscles instead of tightening them up.

To summarize: when you lift a heavy box, you hold your breath and tighten several different muscles: the muscles of your larynx, chest, abdomen and rectum. When you simultaneously tighten all these muscles, you perform a *Valsalva maneuver*. All these muscles are used to working together. If you tighten your rectal muscles you will notice that the muscles of your abdomen, chest and larynx also tighten.

Try contracting your abdominal muscles. What happens? Your larynx and your rectum also become tight. Similarly, if you close your larynx, the muscles of your abdomen and rectum will tighten.

To fully understand what happens during a Valsalva maneuver, do the following exercise: inhale, hold your breath and build air pressure in your lungs as if you were lifting a heavy box. Do this exercise moderately as it can be lethal if you have a heart condition.

Feel how the muscles of rectum, abdomen, chest and larynx are tight. Feel how your rectum and larynx are closed.

Notice how your lips are tightly closed. Your tongue and your jaw are also tight. In fact, your entire speech mechanism is numbed by the Valsalva maneuver.

Valsalva Maneuver and Stuttering

You might be wondering why I explained what is going on in your body when you lift a heavy box. The Valsalva maneuver is certainly an interesting topic but how does it relate to stuttering?

As explained earlier, the larynx has two basic functions: effort closure (when lifting a box) and phonation (speech).

During effort closure the larynx closes completely shut preventing the air from escaping from your lungs.

During phonation, the vocal cords of the larynx do not close completely and the air can gently escape from the lungs. The airflow causes the vocal cords to vibrate and hence to produce sound.

Stuttering occurs when the Valsalva maneuver interferes with phonation by triggering the closure of the larynx. The larynx shuts down completely and the air cannot flow out of the lungs. The vocal cords cannot vibrate and you are experiencing a stuttering block.

In some instances, you might be able to briefly relax the muscles of your larynx and a syllable or one or more words will burst out. Then you will block again as you perform another effort closure. Maybe you will repeat the same syllable each time you manage to briefly relax your larynx.

The Valsalva maneuver doesn't only affect the larynx. When you perform a Valsalva maneuver the muscles of your rectum, abdomen, chest and larynx are not the only ones to tighten. The muscles of your lips and tongue will also become tight. Try to perform a Valsalva maneuver right now and notice the sensation in your lips and tongue. I am sure it will remind you of the feeling you have in your mouth when you stutter.

A Valsalva maneuver simultaneously affects speech in many different ways: it blocks airflow, it prevents the vocal cords from vibrating and it numbs the tongue and the lips.

Why do you perform a Valsalva maneuver during phonation? The reasons are not clear. Maybe you unconsciously think that words are hard objects that have to be forced out of your body and you perform a Valsalva maneuver a bit like when you want to evacuate your bowels or when you give birth. Maybe you think that speaking is difficult and should involve strenuous physical efforts and you instinctively think that activating a Valsalva maneuver will help to expel the words out of your body.

Or maybe it's due to the particular way the body of a stutterer reacts to stress. People react to stress in many different ways. Some people get a headache, others develop a stomach ulcer or lose their hair. A small minority react to stress by tightening the muscles of their Valsalva mechanism. Unsurprisingly, all stutterers belong to this small minority.

Whatever the reasons that pushes you to perform a Valsalva maneuver while you speak, it is important that you understand how it affects phonation and speech. Understanding the Valsalva mechanism is extremely important if you want to be able to control your stuttering.

Easy?

Maybe, you might start thinking: ‘It’s very easy to speak fluently: all I have to do is to avoid performing a Valsalva maneuver while I speak!’

Easy?

Next time you go to the bakery to buy a doughnut, don’t be surprised if you come back home with an apple pie! (You hate apple pies but it’s so much easier to say “apple pie” than to say “d-d-d-d-doughnut”...). You will indeed be very disappointed to realize that a mere intellectual understanding of the Valsalva maneuver and how it interferes with speech is not enough to control stuttering.

Any child has the impression that is easy to drive a car: all you have to do is press the accelerator to speed up, press the brake to slow down and turn the wheel to change direction. It’s seems very very easy. On his first day in driving school, a teenager suddenly realizes that it is not that easy and that he will probably have to drive a thousand miles before he feels somewhat at ease behind the wheel.

If you are used to driving a car with an automatic transmission and happen to rent a car with a manual transmission, you will obviously have a hard time getting used to shifting gears. You will probably have to drive a few hundred miles before you feel really comfortable. In the meantime, you will inevitably stall your engine at every red light or stop sign.

Conversely, shifting from manual transmission to automatic transmission is not easy either. Your left foot will probably need several hundred miles before it understands it has to remain idle. In the meantime, it will search for the clutch each time you approach a red light.

Speaking is very much like driving a car: it involves many processes that are performed more or less unconsciously by our body. When you change direction you don’t consciously think of which muscles in your arms and hands you should tighten or relax to turn the wheel. You just decide where you want to go and your hands and arms do the job nearly automatically. Pressing the clutch and shifting gears is also done subconsciously and it’s very difficult to get rid of this habit the first time you drive an automatic car. Similarly, speech involves the subconscious tightening and relaxation of many muscles controlling inhalation and exhalation, the movement of your vocal cords, of your lips and tongue. If you stutter, it means that effort closure subconsciously interferes with this complicated process. Subconscious habits are difficult to change and it will take several months, maybe even a whole year, before you can become nearly totally fluent. Just

like it might take several hundreds miles before your left foot understands it has to stay idle the first time you drive an automatic car.

In the second part of this book, you will find exercises that will aim at relaxing your larynx and prevent Valsalva maneuvers from interfering with your speech. By practicing these exercises, you will gradually manage to control your stuttering and improve your fluency.

References

PARRY, William D., *Understanding & Controlling Stuttering, A Comprehensive New Approach Based on the Valsalva Hypothesis*, National Stuttering Association, 1992

SCHWARTZ, Dr Martin F., *Stutter no more*, www.stuttering.com, 1991

Chapter 3

Interactions between the Different Elements of the Stuttering Iceberg

In chapter 1, we compared stuttering with an iceberg and suggested that the bulk of the stuttering phenomenon is hidden below the surface. We will now look further into this concept and see how the different elements of the iceberg reinforce one another and work together toward one self destructive goal: stuttering.

Let's have a look at each element of the iceberg and see how they interact with the other elements:

Tightening of the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism

You probably know what it feels like when the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism are tight. Your rectum and abdomen are tight and this translates into a strange feeling in the guts. When the tightening is at its worse you also feel numbness in your lips and tongue. You have difficulties ***breathing*** in a normal way.

You know that if you speak, you are extremely likely to ***stutter***. You will therefore tend to ***hold back*** and avoid speaking. If you do have to speak you will tend to ***use starters and fillers*** hoping that it will give you a running start. You will resort to ***avoidance techniques*** and use alternative words whenever you feel you are going to stutter on a specific word. You will speak in a ***low voice*** because you don't feel at ease. You also tend to ***avoid eye contact*** because you don't want to witness your listener's reaction if you happen to stutter. Because the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism are tight, you don't feel relaxed and you prefer to ***stand still*** and avoid ***using body language***.

Irregular breathing patterns

If you speak without enough air in your lungs, you will speak in a ***low voice***. You might also have a tendency to speak faster in order to be able to finish your sentence before you are out of air. Speaking faster is stressful and can induce the tightening of the muscles of your ***Valsalva mechanism***. If you take a deep breath and then hold your breath before you start talking, you are also very likely to trigger a ***Valsalva maneuver***.

Holding back

If you hold back and keep inside you what you want to say, you will be ***frustrated*** by your inability to communicate. This frustration can induce a tremendous amount of stress which in turn almost guarantees a ***tightening of your Valsalva mechanism***.

Fear of particular speaking situations

If you fear a particular speaking situation, you are very likely to ***hold back*** or if you speak, you will proactively resort to the ***use of starters and fillers*** or ***to avoidance techniques***. You will also probably speak in a ***low voice*** and be too tense to use ***body language***. Fear means stress and stress means ***tightening of the Valsalva mechanism***. Fear will also lower your ***self esteem***.

Negative emotions, feelings and perceptions: shame, guilt, frustration, embarrassment, lowered self esteem, lack of self-confidence

If you are ashamed, feel guilty, frustrated, embarrassed, have a lowered self esteem and lack of self-confidence, you will speak in a ***low voice*** and will ***avoid eye contact***. If you don't feel confident enough to claim your space, you will have a ***tendency to stand still***. If you lack confidence, you will avoid speaking situations and ***hold back***. These negative emotions and perceptions are stressful and you will tend to ***tighten the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism***.

Use of starters and fillers

If you use starters and fillers, you might be able to successfully avoid stuttering. But you will be ***ashamed*** of the way you speak. You know perfectly well that it is not normal to use so many junk words. This will

inevitably lower your *self-esteem*. You use junk words to get a running start. Once you uttered the junk word, you will rush your speech hoping that stuttering won't catch up with you. If you speak fast, you will get stressed and you will *tighten the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism*. Your mind is so busy with the starters and fillers that you don't have time to use *body language*.

Avoidance techniques

If you resort to avoidance techniques, it means you have to scan ahead for feared words while you speak. Each time you see a feared word looming ahead, you have to think hard of an alternative. All this background activity is exhausting and stressful and will inevitably induce the *tightening of the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism*. You will have a tendency to compromise your opinions or order food that you don't really like to eat and this will induce *negative emotions and feelings such as shame, frustration, embarrassment, lack of confidence*. You are so busy avoiding difficult words, that you will probably forget about using *body language*.

Eye contact avoidance

If you don't keep eye contact you will be out of touch with your listener. You will tend to feel *embarrassed* and not be at ease with the other person. This will generate stress and stutterers react to stress by tensing their *Valsalva mechanism*.

Tendency to stand still and to avoid using body language

If you stand still you won't be able to relax. You will tend to be more stressed and your *Valsalva mechanism* is more likely to tighten. If you don't use body language, you will tend to stand still and this will increase your *lack of self confidence*.

Speaking in a low voice

If you speak in a low voice, this will translate as a lack of *self-confidence*. You will be less authoritative and assertive and people will be less likely to listen to you; you will feel *embarrassed*.

Resistance to change

If your unconscious mind resists change, you will deliberately ***tighten your Valsalva mechanism and stutter***. You will learn to live with your ***negative feelings, emotions and perceptions***. You will consider the use of ***starters***, the tendency of ***holding back***, avoidance of the use of ***body language, fear of particular speaking situations, eye contact avoidance*** and ***avoidance techniques*** as normal facts of your life.

Repeated sounds and disfluencies

If you stutter, you will be stressed and you will ***tighten your Valsalva mechanism***. You will feel ***ashamed*** and ***embarrassed***. You will be ***frustrated*** by your inability to communicate. You will feel ***guilty*** of not being able to achieve goals that you believe would be achievable if you were fluent. You will ***lack self-confidence*** and have a ***lowered self-esteem***. The stuttering blocks will block your airflow and will promote ***irregular breathing patterns***. You will resort to the ***use of starters and fillers*** hoping that they will allow you to rush through difficult words. You will use ***avoidance techniques*** to bypass feared words. Your ***fear of specific speaking situations*** and your tendency to ***hold back*** will be reinforced. You will ***avoid eye contact*** because you don't want to see your listener's reaction to your stuttering. You will ***speak in a low voice*** because you don't want too many persons to hear your stuttering. Your entire body will be numbed by the stuttering blocks and you will ***stand still unable to use body language***. In some circumstances, stuttering will serve your interest; you can - usually unconsciously - use stuttering as an excuse to avoid answering an embarrassing question. This will reinforce your ***resistance to change***.

The Intricacy of Stuttering

Now, have a look on the figure on the next page. It looks very messy... I simply drew a line between each elements of the stuttering iceberg that are related. If the line has two arrows, it means that the two elements are related by a two way relationship. Each element is at the same time the consequence and the cause of the other. If there is only one arrow, it means that it's a one way relationship: one element is the cause and the other is the consequence; the arrow indicates the consequence.

This messy diagram clearly demonstrates the complexity of the stuttering phenomenon. Stuttering is not merely a fluency problem but a set of problems that reinforce one other. The only way to eradicate stuttering is to separately address each single problem. If you only address the

disfluencies, you might become temporally fluent but you are very likely to relapse a few weeks or months later because the other elements of the stuttering phenomenon will regenerate the disfluencies.

The same can be said for every other element of the Stuttering Iceberg. For example, you can use positive thinking to eradicate the negative emotions, feelings and perceptions related to stuttering. Within a few days, you will feel great. But the other elements are still there. You still react to stress by tightening your Valsalva mechanism, you still stutter, your speech remains jammed with junk words, you keep on ordering food you don't really want to eat, you still avoid looking at people straight in the eye, you still have irregular breathing patterns, you keep on speaking in a low voice and your speech remains dull because you fail to use body language. Inevitably, your negative emotions, feelings and perception will resurface...

Stuttering is like a weed

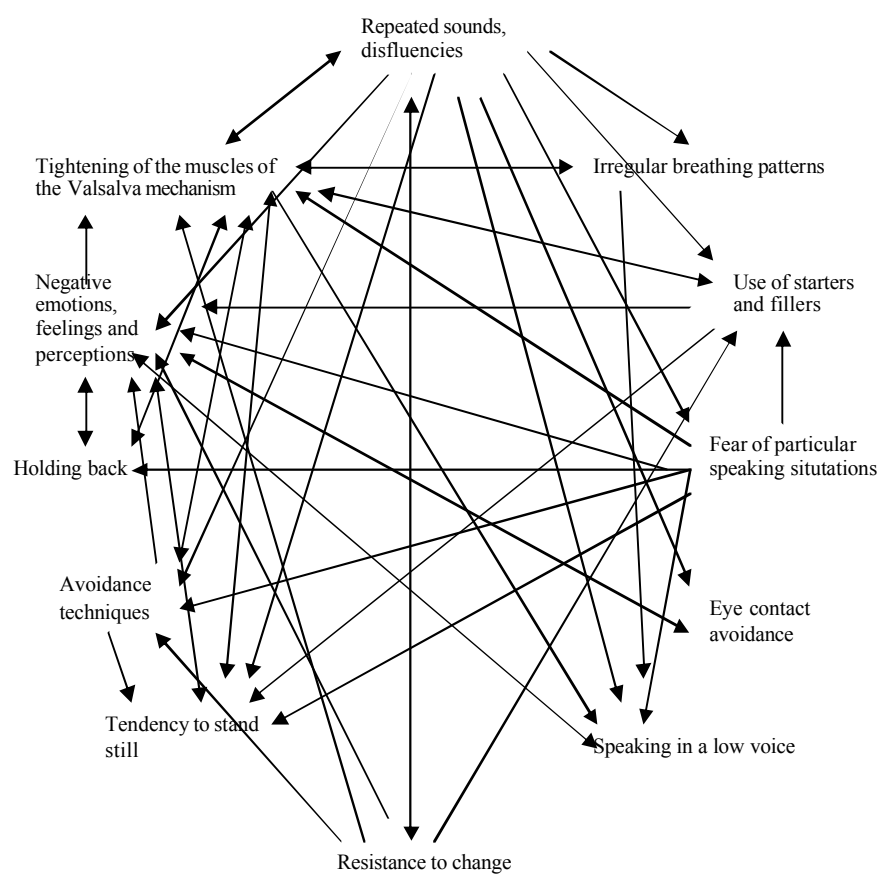
Stuttering is like a weed. If you cut the weed, you will have the impression that you solved the problem: the weed is not there any more and your garden looks neat. But cutting the weed only provides a temporary solution and the weed is likely to grow back within a few days or weeks. If you want to permanently solve the problem, you will have to dig out the roots of the weed.

In the next chapter, we will see in more details how we can dig out the roots of stuttering.

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- FRASER Malcom, *Self-therapy for the stutter*, Stuttering Foundation, 1978
- HARRISON, John C., *Conquer Your Fears of Speaking before People*, National Stuttering Association, 1989
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The Intricacy of Stuttering



Chapter 4

Fluency Iceberg

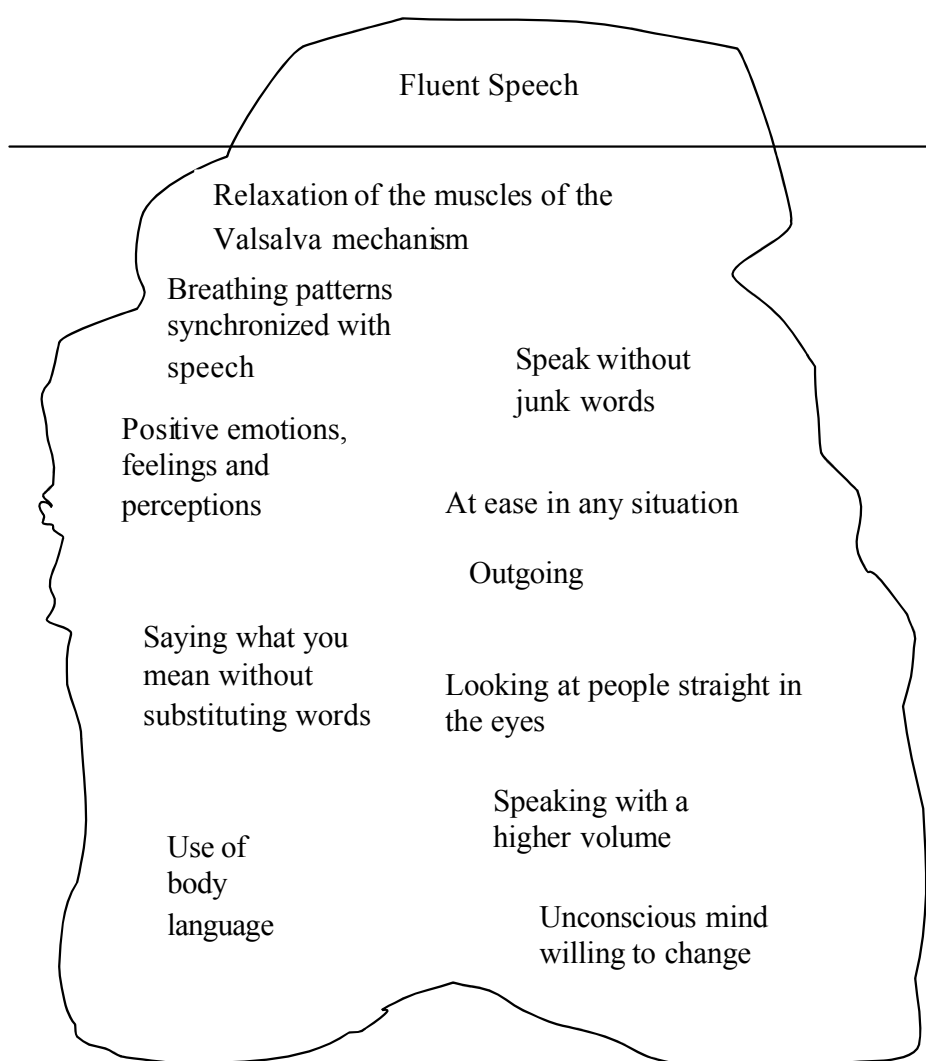
The Fluency Iceberg is very similar to the Stuttering Iceberg but is constructive rather than destructive. The tip of the Fluency Iceberg represents fluent speech. Below the waterline, you will also find 11 elements. Each element of the Fluency Iceberg is the counterpart of an element of the Stuttering Iceberg. All the elements of the Fluency Iceberg interact and reinforce one another and contribute to long lasting fluency.

You will find on the next page a figure showing the Fluency Iceberg. We will now see how the different elements interact together.

Relaxation of the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism

During this therapy, you will learn to relax the muscles of your larynx as well as the other muscles of the Valsalva mechanism. You will also learn to react to stress by relaxing your Valsalva mechanism instead of tightening it. These techniques will contribute to enhance your *fluency*. Relaxing your Valsalva mechanism will also improve your *breathing patterns*. You will be more relaxed and it will therefore be easier for you to use *body language*. By relaxing your Valsalva mechanism, the feeling that stuttering blocks are imminent will ease and you will be more *self-confident* and *outgoing*. You will be less likely to use *junk words* or *substitute words* and it will be easier for you to *look people straight in the eyes*. If you are more relaxed, you will tend to be more assertive and *speak with a higher volume*.

The Fluency Iceberg



Breathing patterns synchronized with speech

You will learn how to breathe in a relaxing way and how to synchronize breathing with your speech. This will have a direct effect on *fluency* and will contribute to the *relaxation of your Valsalva mechanism*. These improved breathing patterns will provide your lungs with enough air so that you can speak with a *higher volume*.

Positive emotions, feelings and perceptions

Some of the exercises of this therapy aim at changing the emotions, feelings and perceptions you have about your stuttering problem. You will learn to look at your problem more objectively and this will reduce or eradicate the feelings of shame, guilt, frustration and embarrassment. This will also prevent stuttering from undermining your self-esteem and your self-confidence. If you are not ashamed and embarrassed by your stuttering, it will be easier to *look people straight in the eyes*. If you are self-confident, you will be more *outgoing*, speak with a *higher volume* and *use body language*. If you have positive emotions, feelings and perceptions, you will be more *at ease*, more relaxed and therefore *less likely to trigger a Valsalva maneuver*. Your mind won't be plagued by confusion and this will improve your *fluency*.

Speak without junk words

If you avoid using junk words, the grammatical structure of your speech will improve. You will feel better about yourself and you will be more assertive. This will enhance the *positive emotions, feelings and perceptions* you have about speech. You will not waste your airflow producing meaningless and useless words and it will be easier to *synchronize breathing with speech* and to speak with a *higher volume*.

At ease in any situation

As you go through this therapy, you will gradually reduce your fears of particular speaking situations. You won't *hold back* anymore. If the fear is reduced, stress will be reduced as well and you will therefore be less likely to tighten your *Valsalva mechanism*. It will be easier to *breathe smoothly*. Being at ease, will enhance your *positive emotions, feelings and perceptions* and it will be easier to *look at people straight in the eyes* and to *use body language*. You will be less likely to resort to the *use of junk*

words or to word substitution. If you are at ease in any situation, your unconscious mind will have no valid reason to sabotage your efforts.

Outgoing

While you go through the exercises, you will be elated and energized each time you notice even a slight progress in your fluency. Being energized, you will be more talkative and outgoing and this will in turn have enhancing effects on the other elements of the Fluency Iceberg. Being more outgoing, you will be more **at ease** in any situation including the most difficult ones. You will feel great about yourself and your ability to communicate and this will enhance your **positive emotions, feelings and perceptions**. You will gain enough confidence to **look at people straight in the eye** and **use body language**.

Saying what you mean without substituting words

If you don't substitute, you don't need to scan ahead for feared words and you don't waste your brain resources finding alternatives. This will mean less stress and you will be less likely to trigger a **Valsalva maneuver**. You will say what you mean without compromising your opinion. You will eat the food you really want to eat. You will feel great about yourself and this will enhance the **positive emotions, feelings and perceptions** related to speech. You will be more assertive and it will be easier for you to **look straight into the eyes** of your listener, to speak with a **higher volume** and **to use body language**.

Looking at people straight in the eye

If you keep eye contact, you will be in touch with your listener. It will be easier to **use body language** and you will feel more relaxed and hence be less likely to trigger a **Valsalva maneuver**. Communication with others will be more effective and this will enhance your **positive emotions, feelings and perceptions** about speech. Speaking and interacting with others will be more enjoyable and therefore **less fearful**.

Use of body language

Using body language renders communications more effective and lively. If you use body language, you will become more **outgoing**. You will be more assertive and therefore more **self-confident**. You will talk with a **higher**

volume and you will want to **look at people straight in the eyes** to see how they react to your body language. Moving your body has a **relaxing effect on the Valsalva mechanism** and will help you **improve your breathing patterns**. You will be more **at ease** even in difficult speaking situations. If you are more at ease, you are less likely to use **junk words** or to resort to **avoidance techniques**.

Speaking with a high volume

If you speak with a loud volume, you emphasize phonation and this has a relaxing effect on the vocal cords and improves **fluency**. You will be more assertive, people will be more likely to listen to you and this will improve your **self-confidence**. If people are more likely to listen to you, you will talk more and become more **outgoing**. You will probably want to further enhance your speech with **body language**. If you speak with a high volume, you will need more air and you will consequently **breathe more regularly**.

Unconscious mind willing to change

If your unconscious mind is willing to change, then it will make things a lot easier. You don't have to worry about having your efforts sabotaged. Your unconscious mind will have a positive effect on each and every element of the Fluency Iceberg.

Fluent speech

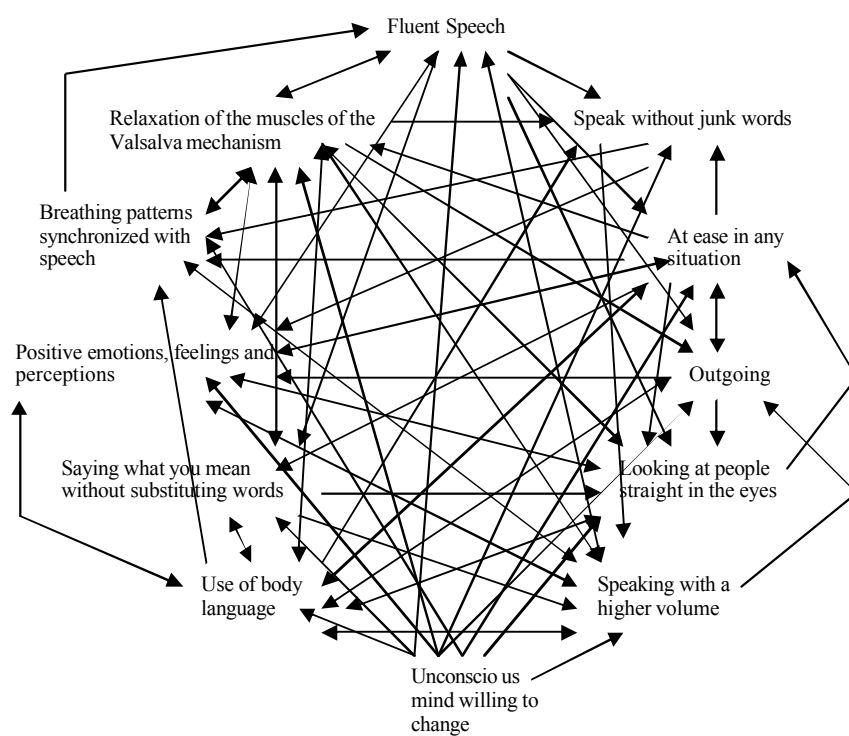
If your speech is fluent, your **Valsalva mechanism will be more relaxed**, you will have no reason to resort to the **use of junk words** or **avoidance techniques**. You will be more **at ease** in any situation. You will be more talkative and **outgoing**. It will be easier to look people **straight in the eyes**. You will speak with a **higher volume** because there won't be any stuttering blocks to conceal. You will feel great about yourself and this will enhance the **positive emotions, feelings and perceptions** you have about speech.

The Intricacy of Fluency

Now have a look at the figure on the next page. It looks about as messy as the figure describing the intricacy of stuttering. But this time it's a positive mess, it's a mess that constructively promotes fluency. On the other hand, the figure describing the intricacy of stuttering is a negative mess; it's a mess that negatively promotes stuttering.

Anyway, I think you now understand how this therapy works: you will address each and every element of the Stuttering Iceberg and replace it by its counterpart in the Fluency Iceberg. The elements of the Fluency Iceberg will reinforce one another over time and will all work together towards the development of fluency. You will create a self sustainable and stable system capable of maintaining fluency for a lifetime.

The Intricacy of Fluency



Part II

Therapy for Adult and Teenaged Stutterers

Foreword

In Part I, I provided you with the basic understanding that you need in order to control your stuttering.

Understanding the stuttering phenomenon is an important step in the right direction but is not sufficient to achieve fluency. You now need to do some exercises in order to change the stuttering behaviors described in Part I.

These exercises are divided in two sets. The first set will aim at preventing the Valsalva mechanism from interfering with speech. These exercises are extremely important because they focus on the core element of the stuttering phenomenon. This first set of exercises alone is probably sufficient to yield significant improvements to your fluency after a few days, weeks or months of practice.

But this first set is not enough if you want to achieve durable and total control of stuttering. As we have seen in Part I, the stuttering phenomenon encompasses all kinds of peculiar behaviors related to stuttering. If these behaviors are left unchecked, stuttering will sooner or later fight back and you will again find yourself stranded on the Stuttering Iceberg.

For this reason, the first set of exercises is followed by a second set specifically aimed at changing your behaviors, feelings, perceptions and emotions. You will, among other things, learn to look people straight in the eyes, fight your hidden intentions, move your body, and change your perceptions about stuttering, about yourself and about others.

Thirty exercises are waiting for you and it will probably keep you busy for the next few months. Do not rush through the exercises. Take your time and do the exercises diligently. You probably wish you could become perfectly fluent within a few days but it is, unfortunately, not possible. You

will have to go through several months of hard work before your dream comes true.

If you wish you can start by quickly reading through all the exercises in order to gather an overall view of the therapy. You should then start over again and carefully read the exercises one by one. I recommend that you work on these exercises every day. Some exercises are fairly simple and all you will need to do is read it and think about it for 30 minutes or one hour. Then you can move on to the next exercise.

Other exercises are more difficult and will include techniques that you will have to practice during several days or weeks before you can fully master them. For example, you might find that looking straight into the eyes of your listener is not easy and you might have to work on it for two weeks or more before it becomes second nature. Make sure you fully master an exercise before moving on to the next.

You should note that this book will teach you many different fluency enhancing techniques. As mentioned earlier, no two stutterers are alike and a particular technique that does wonders on one stutterer can be perfectly useless for another. Maybe you will find all the techniques useful or maybe you will find that one, two or more techniques are simply useless to you. If such is the case, feel free to skip them and spend more time and efforts on techniques that work for you. You should feel free to adapt the therapy outlined in this book to your particular case if you feel it's necessary to do so.

As you go through the exercises you will feel that you are gradually getting a grip on your stuttering. Improvements will be slow but durable. Once you have gone through all thirty exercises, chances are you will still stutter although significantly less than before. I recommend that you go once again through the exercises and make sure that you incorporated all the techniques in your new way of life. Keep on working on your weak points. Make sure that your perceptions about stuttering as well as your behaviors are adequately altered.

Keep on doing the exercises until you become fully fluent. It might take a year or more but the benefits will last a lifetime.

Don't try too hard

As explained before, stuttering occurs because the stutterer wrongly assumes that words need to be physically forced out of the body by using the Valsalva mechanism. While doing the exercises, you should be careful

not to trigger a Valsalva maneuver by trying too hard to be fluent. Keep in mind that the harder you try to be fluent, the more likely you are to stutter. Take it easy and remember that you will not become fluent overnight.

Relapse

You shouldn't expect the road to fluency to be smooth. It's more likely to be like a roller coaster ride with many ups and downs. It's only after several successive ups and downs that fluency will become permanent.

Maybe you will become fluent in a few days or weeks from now and once you achieved fluency, you might believe that you will never ever stutter again. And then some time later, you will relapse and you will have the impression that the entire world is collapsing around you.

When a relapse occurs, don't panic. Relapse is perfectly normal and should be expected. You were able to control stuttering prior to the relapse and you will soon be able to control it again. In the meantime, try to stutter freely and without shame and embarrassment. Calmly apply the techniques that previously helped you achieve fluency.

Don't Tell Everybody that You Are not a Stutterer Anymore

When you become fluent, don't tell everybody around you that you are not a stutterer anymore. If you do so, you will put yourself in a situation where you have to be fluent at all cost. You will have to try hard to remain fluent and the harder you try, the more likely you are to accidentally trigger a Valsalva maneuver and stutter.

Forget that You are a Stutterer

As Wendell Johnson puts it: "Stuttering is what you do trying not to stutter again". In other words, you stutter because you are worried that you might stutter. The simple fact that you think about stuttering and recall past experiences of embarrassing stuttering blocks might tense your Valsalva mechanism and you will be very likely to stutter again.

If you could forget that you are a stutterer as easily as I forget my wedding anniversaries, you would probably become fluent instantly. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to forget that you are a stutterer. The more you focus your mind on trying to forget stuttering, the more you will actually think about stuttering.

Instead of trying to abruptly chase stuttering out of your mind, you should turn the problem around and proceed in two steps: You first focus your mind on stuttering, you understand how it works and you learn how to control it. Then, once this is done, it will be easier to forget about stuttering.

Step 1: Focus your mind on stuttering

You first need to understand the stuttering phenomenon and fully understand how the elements of the stuttering iceberg interact with one another. Read again the preceding chapters if necessary.

You should then do the exercises contained in this book in order to enhance your fluency and replace each and every element of the stuttering iceberg by its counterpart in the fluency iceberg. By doing so, you will not only learn to control stuttering but you will also learn to eliminate the associated behaviors, perceptions and feelings. As you work your way through the exercises, you will reeducate your speech mechanism and you will gradually become more confident in your ability to speak fluently. You will behave and perceive verbal communication the same way a non-stutterer does. Your fear of stuttering and other negative feelings will slowly disappear.

Step 2: Forget that you are a stutterer

Once you are confident that you can control stuttering and its associated behaviors, perceptions and feelings, then you are ready to try to forget that you are a stutterer. Hide this book and other books about stuttering in a drawer; forget Phillip Roberts, your SLP, the fluency techniques you have learned, the web sites you have browsed and your past fears of speaking situations.

Pretend that you are a non-stutterer. Go out and speak naturally like you would if you had never stuttered in your whole life and see what happens.

If you fail, you can always step back, get this book out of the drawer, work again on the exercises and then try again later once you feel you are ready for the big jump.

Speak about stuttering with your partner

If you are married or share your life with another person, I strongly recommend that you speak with your partner about your stuttering problem. As you go through this therapy, your personality and behavior will change and your partner will have to adjust accordingly.

You will probably become more talkative and outgoing. You might want to socialize more and spend more time with your friends; and your partner might see that as a threat to your relationship. It will be easier for your partner to accept the changes if he or she knows why these changes are taking place.

Chances are that your partner is consciously or unconsciously protecting you by answering the phone or ordering food on your behalf when you go to the restaurant together. As you go through the exercises, you will probably want to be more in control of your life and you will not want your partner to do everything for you.

As you talk together about stuttering, maybe you will realize that your partner had no idea that stuttering had such a devastating effect on you. Maybe your partner perceives your stuttering as simply a funny way to speak and doesn't understand why you should spend so much time and effort to solve this apparently meaningless problem.

After you have talked, your partner will probably be very curious to know more about stuttering and you can encourage him or her to read this book. You will then be able to talk together about the progress you are making and how the different exercises are helping you.

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First set of exercises

Valsalva control

Exercise 1

Stutter on Purpose

Why Stutter on Purpose?

Your aim is to become fluent and you will probably be reluctant to do an exercise in which you are asked to stutter on purpose. You should nevertheless do this exercise diligently as it offers several valuable benefits:

- 1) It will help you understand how Valsalva maneuvers can interfere with speech.
- 2) It will help you control the Valsalva mechanism and provide you with the practice you need to release a Valsalva maneuver when it occurs during an actual conversation.
- 3) It will help you reduce the fear you have of stuttering.
- 4) It will help you go straight through a stuttering block without resorting to avoidance techniques.

Perform a Valsalva maneuver

Inhale, hold your breath and perform a Valsalva maneuver as if you were lifting a heavy box. As mentioned before, a voluntary Valsalva maneuver should be done with moderation as it can be potentially lethal.

Feel the tension in your rectum, abdomen, chest and larynx. Notice how your rectum and larynx are tightly closed. Feel the tension in your jaw and tongue. Notice how your lips are tightly closed together. Become aware of

all the muscles that work together toward the same goal: making your body rigid so that you can lift the box.

Now, try to speak... Notice how it is simply impossible to speak while performing a Valsalva maneuver. Your entire speech mechanism is blocked: there is no airflow, your larynx is closed shut; your jaw and tongue are tight. Your lips are shut. Notice how it feels similar to what you feel when you are experiencing a stuttering block. Become fully aware that it is simply impossible to speak while a Valsalva maneuver is being performed.

Now relax the Valsalva maneuver. Feel how all the muscles that were involved in the maneuver are now relaxed.

Perform a Voluntary Valsalva Maneuver while You Speak

Put your lips together as if you were to pronounce a syllable starting with the letter p for example “pa”. Then, perform a Valsalva maneuver. Notice how your lips are pressed together and how your larynx closes.

Redo the same exercise, but this time, position your tongue as if you were to utter a syllable starting with t for example “ta”. Then, perform a Valsalva maneuver and notice how the tip of your tongue presses against your palate. Notice how it prevents the air from flowing out of your lungs.

Then, do the same exercise with the letter k. Feel how the middle of your tongue presses against your palate. There again, notice how it prevents the air from flowing out of your lungs.

Now, you will incorporate these exercises in full sentences and perform a Valsalva maneuver each time you encounter syllables starting by the following consonants:

p (except when followed by an h as it would then be pronounced like an f)
t (except when followed by an h)
k
hard c (c pronounced like a k)

I suggest you read aloud written material such as this book and perform a Valsalva maneuver each time you come across one of the above consonants. Hold onto the Valsalva maneuver for a few seconds and then gently release the Valsalva maneuver before reading further. Make sure you gently release the pressure. Avoid explosive release of air from your lungs.

Keep on practicing with p, t, k and hard c until you fully master voluntarily Valsalva on these letters. Then add the other consonants to the list. Keep on practicing until you master voluntarily Valsalva on these consonants as well.

Call a Hotline and Stutter

I am sure you will want to skip this one.

Now that you practiced voluntary stuttering in the privacy of your home, you will practice while speaking with other people... I know it's a very unpleasant exercise and the mere idea of stuttering on purpose in front of other people will make you want to run away. This exercise is very helpful as it will help desensitize you from the fear of stuttering.

Try practicing with relatives or friends. You can also practice this exercise when ordering food in a restaurant. If you feel uncomfortable doing so in a neighborhood where you know many people, take advantage of a trip to a distant city where nobody knows you. You can also call a telephone hotline such as the phone directory information or tourist information. Whatever your choice, make sure you stutter as badly as you can!

Relapse

In the previous chapter (Foreword) we mentioned the fact that relapses are very likely to occur several times during the course of the therapy. Voluntary stuttering is an excellent way to help you get ready to adequately manage relapses.

After you achieved fluency, I recommend that you once in while simulate a relapse by stuttering on purpose and then shift back to fluent speech. By deliberately alternating voluntary stuttering and controlled fluency, you will feel more in control and relapses will seem less frightening. You will be less likely to panic and you will know how to shift back to fluency.

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Exercise 2

Relax Your Rectum

As explained earlier, stuttering is due to the fact that we perform a Valsalva maneuver while we speak. During a Valsalva maneuver, the muscles of our larynx are tight and the air cannot flow. The vocal cords cannot phonate and we experience a stuttering block.

To prevent a Valsalva maneuver from occurring during speech, it can be very useful to relax the muscles of our larynx. Relaxing the muscles of the larynx is not easy. There are so many muscles involved that it's difficult to relax all of them.

Why Should I Relax my Rectum?

The Valsalva maneuver involves a set of several muscles that are used to work together: muscles in your larynx, chest, abdomen and rectum. If you tighten one muscle, it will tighten the other muscles of the set. Conversely, if you relax one muscle, the others will tend to relax as well.

Instead of relaxing the muscles of your larynx, you will probably find that it is easier to relax your rectal muscle and to let the relaxation spontaneously spread all the way up to your throat. Yes this may seem very surprising but that's the way it is: the easiest way to relax your larynx is to focus your attention on the relaxation of your rectum...

Jacobson's Progressive Relaxation

I suggest that you use Jacobson's progressive relaxation to relax your rectum. The basic idea behind Jacobson's progressive relaxation technique is to first gradually tighten a muscle before gradually relaxing it.

Start by gradually tightening your rectal muscle. Notice the sensation of increased tension in your rectum. Keep on tightening your rectum until you reach maximum contraction.

Then gradually and slowly relax your rectal muscle. Notice the sensation of increasing relaxation in the area around your rectum. Once you attain maximum relaxation, start the process all over again. Gradually tighten your rectal muscle. If possible try to contract it a little bit more than the first time. Then gradually relax your rectum and try to relax it even more than the previous time.

Do this five or six times. Notice how your rectum feels relaxed and open. Notice how this relaxation spreads all the way up to your abdomen, chest and larynx. Focus on your larynx and notice how it is relaxed and open. Notice how the relaxation spreads all the way to your jaw, mouth, lips and tongue.

Practice this Exercise all Day Long

Of all the exercises contained in this book, this exercise is probably one of the most efficient one. You can practice it anytime anywhere and you should practice it several times a day.

Before facing a difficult speaking situation, I suggest that you relax your rectum and make sure it remains relaxed while you speak. After you relaxed your rectum, focus your attention on the relaxation spreading through your abdomen, chest, all the way up to your throat and mouth.

Make sure your rectum is relaxed before you knock at the door of your boss. Relax your rectum while queuing up at the bakery or at the bank. Maybe you noticed from past experiences that the longer the queue, the more time you have to worry and the more likely you are to stutter. The situation will be reversed if you practice this relaxation technique: The longer the queue the more time you will have to focus your attention on the relaxation of your rectum and the less likely you will be to stutter.

References

PARRY, William D., *Understanding & Controlling Stuttering, A Comprehensive New Approach Based on the Valsalva Hypothesis*, National Stuttering Association, 1992

Exercise 3

Abdominal Breathing

Abdominal Breathing vs. Chest Breathing

There are basically two ways to breathe: either using the muscles of your chest or using the muscles of your abdomen. The most relaxing way to breathe is by using the muscles of your abdomen. This is called abdominal breathing. When you breathe abdominally, your abdomen moves back and forth. You can easily check if you breathe abdominally by lying on a bed and placing an object on your belly. If you breathe abdominally, you will see that object moving up and down.

Abdominal Breathing and Valsalva Control

Practicing abdominal breathing will help you relax the muscles involved in the Valsalva maneuver and at the same time supply your larynx with the airflow it needs to phonate.

You should first start by relaxing your rectum using the Jacobson's progressive relaxation described in the previous exercise. Feel the relaxation spreading through the muscles of your abdomen, chest, larynx, tongue, lips and jaw.

Then inhale by slowly protruding your abdomen. Take a slightly deeper breath than usual. Don't hold your breath; gently exhale by relaxing your abdominal muscles. You shouldn't force the air out but rather let the air flow effortlessly through your open larynx. Breathing this way will help relax your Valsalva system and simultaneously supply your speech mechanism with the gentle airflow it needs. While you inhale and exhale

make sure your rectum remains open. Feel the relaxation of all the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism.

You can also practice this exercise almost anytime anywhere and you should practice it several times a day. You should practice it combined with the previous one (relaxation of your rectum) before confronting speaking situations that you perceive as potentially difficult.

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KEHOE, Thomas David, *Overcoming Stuttering in 6 months, A multifactoral Guide To Speech Therapy*, Casa Futura Technologies, 2002

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Exercise 4

Don't Perform Valsalva Maneuvers When Unnecessary

As explained before, we perform a Valsalva maneuver when we need to do some strenuous physical effort like lifting a heavy box.

In fact, we often also perform a Valsalva maneuver when it is not really needed; for example when opening a drawer or the door of the car. You might even do a Valsalva maneuver when picking up a paper clip on the floor. Of course, it's usually not a full blown Valsalva maneuver. We simply slightly tighten the muscles of our Valsalva mechanism. But this is useless anyway.

I suggest that during the days to come, you pay attention to this strange phenomenon and that you deliberately avoid performing Valsalva maneuvers unless it is really necessary. The benefit of this exercise is that you will take the habit to control your use of Valsalva maneuvers and keep the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism relaxed at all times. This will in turn help you control your stuttering.

Driving a Car

Did you notice that you tend to stutter more when driving a car than when having a relaxing walk with a friend or comfortably sitting in a sofa?

I think the reason is that you tend to perform Valsalva maneuvers when pressing on the pedals and (if you have a manual car) when changing gears and this affects your speech.

You should understand that driving a car is ~~not~~ like riding a bicycle: there is no need to press hard on the pedals! A full blown Valsalva maneuver is not necessary either to turn the steering wheel (unless you are driving an eighteen-wheeler with no power steering). Take it easy my friend: the car is doing all the hard work for you!

Or maybe your muscles tend to tighten because you are under the pressure of the traffic around you. Sure, driving in traffic is not easy and your brain has better focus on the road if you want to reach your destination in one piece. But there is no law that says that when your brain is focused on the road, the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism have to tighten.

As you drive, make sure that your Valsalva mechanism is relaxed at all time. Breathe abdominally. Relax your muscles and... stay focused on the traffic.

Talking and Driving

A few words about driving safety: about a third of all car accidents are caused by the fact that the driver was distracted. Many things can distract a driver: Tuning the radio or inserting an audio tape, watching the speedometer, talking on the phone, listening to the radio, changing gears (for this reason, automatic cars are safer) and last but not least: talking with the passengers.

It's obviously a very bad idea to have an argument with a passenger while driving. If you really need to talk while you drive, make sure the topic has a very low emotional content and that the conversation will be using only a small part of your brain cells. Don't ask your passenger to explain to you Einstein's theory of relativity!

It's also a good idea to temporally interrupt the conversation when:

- changing lanes
- driving through an intersection
- entering a highway
- overtaking
- when lanes merge
- anytime you face a potentially dangerous situation that requires full attention.

Taking the habit of interrupting the conversation in these situations will also be a step in the right direction in your quest for fluency. By doing so, you will indeed take the habit of being in control of the conversation.

Interrupting the conversation is not difficult. If you are talking; just stop talking. If the passenger is talking, simply say “wait for a sec...” In either case, the passenger will probably notice that you are very busy looking in the mirrors and watching the traffic and will immediately understand why you want him to hold on.

References

PARRY, William D., *Understanding & Controlling Stuttering, A Comprehensive New Approach Based on the Valsalva Hypothesis*, National Stuttering Association, 1992

Exercise 5

Change the Way Your Body Reacts to Stress

In Chapter 2, we saw that humans react to stress in different ways and that stutterers belong to a small minority that reacts to stress by tightening the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism. This particular way in which we react to stress is probably the basic cause of stuttering.

What you will do is very simple: during the coming weeks, you will consciously relax your Valsalva mechanism each time you are under pressure. Do it each and every time you feel stressed even if you don't have to speak. Use Jacobson's progressive relaxation. Feel the relaxation of the muscles of your abdomen. Enjoy the feeling of relaxation spreading up to your chest, larynx and mouth. Breathe abdominally.

If you consciously relax your Valsalva mechanism each time you are under pressure, it will gradually become automatic.

Sure you will keep on suffering from stress just like everybody in this stressful world. Adrenaline will still be flowing in your bloodstream causing all kinds of unpleasant side effects. But at least stress won't affect your speech.

Focus on Others

When you are under pressure, you probably have a tendency to focus your mind on the gut feeling generated by the tensed Valsalva mechanism. More generally, you tend to focus on what is going inside your mind and body. Doing so, you gradually get out of touch with the people surrounding you and this increases the feeling of uneasiness and will make communication more difficult.

You should change this behavior. When under pressure, try to focus more on people around you. If you are in touch with these people, you feel more at ease and the pressure inside you will subside. You will be open to the outside world and it will be easier to communicate.

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SCHWARTZ, Dr Martin F., *Stutter no more*, www.stuttering.com, 1991

Exercise 6

Change the Way You Perceive Words

In chapter 2, we suggested that one of the reasons we trigger a Valsalva maneuver during speech is that we perceive words as being hard objects that have to be expelled out of the body. We wrongly assume that force is needed to push the words out. During defecation, we successfully use a Valsalva maneuver to move our bowels and we think that the same strategy could be used with words.

You should realize that words are not hard objects. A word is a combination of light articulations of the tongue and lips, vibrations of the larynx and air flowing effortlessly out of the lungs. The whole process is effortless. Words are basically immaterial.

Think about it while you speak and change the way you perceive words.

If you feel you are about to experience a stuttering block, resist the urge to try hard. If the stuttering block nevertheless happens, stop immediately, relax your Valsalva mechanism and then resume speaking.

References

PARRY, William D., *Understanding & Controlling Stuttering, A Comprehensive New Approach Based on the Valsalva Hypothesis*, National Stuttering Association, 1992

Exercise 7

Phonate!

Vowel, Voiced Consonants and Unvoiced Consonants

Before starting this exercise, I should first explain the difference between vowels, voiced consonants and unvoiced consonants.

You probably already know what a vowel is. A vowel is a voiced sound such as a, e, i, o, u. In some words, y is also pronounced as a vowel.

Put your hand on your larynx and successively pronounce these vowels: aaaaaa-eeeeee-oooooo-uuuuuu. You probably noticed a continuous vibration in your larynx. A voiced sound is precisely characterized by the fact that the larynx vibrates.

You probably also know what a consonant is. There are actually two types of consonants: voiced and unvoiced consonants. You will find below the list of the voiced and unvoiced consonant of the English language:

Voiced consonants:

b
d
g
j
l
m
n
r
th (such as in this)

v
w
x (pronounced gz such as in exit)
y
z

Unvoiced consonants :

Hard c (such as in cat)
Soft c (such as in cipher)
f
h
k
p
ph
q
s
t
th (such as in thank)
x (pronounced ks such as in excited)

The difference between voiced and unvoiced consonants is as follows: the vocal cords stop vibrating while an unvoiced consonant is uttered, whereas they keep on vibrating while voiced consonant is uttered.

Put your fingers on your larynx and produce the following sound:

aaaaaabaaaaaa.

(the a should be pronounced as in the word 'cat')

You probably noticed that your larynx vibrated all the way. Now, keep your hand on your larynx and produce the following sound:

aaaaapaaaaaa

You will notice that the larynx briefly stopped vibrating while you pronounced the letter p.

You can try with any combination of vowels and voiced or unvoiced consonants and you will notice that the larynx keeps on vibrating while a voiced consonant is uttered whereas it stops vibrating when an unvoiced consonant is pronounced.

Most unvoiced consonants have a voiced counterpart. The voiced counterpart is pronounced with the same articulatory movements that the unvoiced consonant. For example, p and b are pronounced the same way; the only difference is that the vocal cords vibrate while b is pronounced whereas they don't vibrate in the case of letter p. You will find below the correspondence between voiced and unvoiced consonants:

Unvoiced consonant:

Hard c (such as in cat)
Soft c (such as in cipher)
Ch
f
h
k
p
ph
q
s
sh
t
th (such as in thank)
x (pronounced ks such as in excite)

Voiced counterpart:

hard g (such as in guy)
z
j
v

hard g (such as in guy)
b
v

hard g (such as in guy)
z
j
d
th (such as in this)
x (pronounced gz such as in exit)

NB: h has no voiced counterpart

Phonation Exercise

Now that you know what vowels, voiced consonants and unvoiced consonants are, you will do some exercises in order to practice phonation.

First you will relax your rectum. Then, close your eyes and breathe abdominally several times.

Now that your Valsalva mechanism is fully relaxed, inhale, then start gently exhaling and shortly after, produce an aaaaaaaaaa sound. It's important that you start exhaling for one second or two before produce the aaaaaaaaaa sound to ensure a soft onset. Produce the aaaaaaaaaa sound without forcing in any way. Let the air flow effortlessly out of your lungs. Feel the vibration of your vocal cords spread through your body. Feel the

Exercise 8

Air Flow and Easy Onset

The 'Air Flow and Easy Onset' technique is spontaneously used by many stutterers to control stuttering and is described in details by Dr Martin F. Schwartz on the web site of the National Center for Stuttering (www.stuttering.com). This chapter provides the basic information you need to successfully use this technique and I recommend that you visit www.stuttering.com if you want to read more detailed explanations.

Briefly Exhale Before You Speak

In exercise 3 (*Abdominal Breathing*), you learned how to breathe abdominally. Breathing abdominally helps relax the Valsalva mechanism and therefore promotes fluency. Your Valsalva mechanism reaches its maximum relaxation while you exhale. When you exhale, your larynx and vocal cords are fully relaxed. When you are in such a state of relaxation, it is virtually impossible to stutter.

An effective way to avoid stuttering is to briefly exhale just before talking. As you briefly exhale, you will relax your larynx and Valsalva mechanism and this state of relaxation will be maintained while you speak. If the trick is performed correctly, you are nearly 100% sure to be fluent.

The following steps should be followed diligently:

1. Inhale abdominally
2. Don't hold your breath. Open your mouth and immediately start to exhale as soon as you finished inhaling.

3. Briefly exhale without forcing the air out. Make sure that you don't push the air out of your lungs as this might trigger a Valsalva maneuver. Exhale calmly. A common mistake is to start positioning the lips and tongue for the first syllable of the sentence. You should exhale as if you were not going to speak. The trick is to fool the Valsalva mechanism by making it believe that you are just breathing and that you are not going to speak.

4. Start talking with an easy onset. The air flow shouldn't be interrupted before you start speaking. The first syllable should be said gently and without too much volume. You can then gradually increase the volume if you need to speak loudly. It is also important that you say the first word slowly. The best way to say the first word slowly is to stretch out the first syllable.

5. Make sure you don't speak too fast as it might induce a stuttering block. If you tend to speak too fast, slightly stretch out the syllables. This will slow down your speech. Stretching the syllables also emphasizes phonation and this will enhance fluency.

Practice

This technique is relatively simple but needs some practice. It should n't take long before you can master it in the comfort of your home but it might not be that easy when you go out and speak in a stressful environment. Before you become an expert in the 'Air Flow and Easy Onset' technique, you should do a few exercises.

Airflow

You will first relax your rectum using Jacobson's Progressive Relaxation.

You then breathe abdominally several times. Keep your mouth open at all times. Once you finished inhaling, don't hold your breath; exhale immediately. Make sure you don't push the air out. Let the air flow freely out of your lungs.

While you exhale, listen to the barely audible sound produced by the air gently and effortlessly flowing out of your lungs. Remember to keep your mouth open. Do this several times and each time notice the sensation of the air flowing effortlessly out of your lungs.

Effortless inhalation is relatively easy to achieve when you are comfortably sitting at home. It might not be that easy when you are in the

office or the classroom. This is why I insist that you spend some time at home practicing relaxed abdominal breathing. Take your time and get familiar with the feeling and listen to the noise produced by the air effortlessly flowing out of your lungs. This will help you produce effortless airflow in any situation.

Easy Onset

Inhale and then gently exhale for a few seconds and produce an aaaaaaaaaa sound with an easy onset (again the 'a' sound should be pronounced as in the word 'cat'). Do this several times. Make sure that you gently exhale without forcing the air out before producing the aaaaaaaaaa sound.

Make sure you don't hold your breath before you start exhaling and that you don't stop exhaling before you start the aaaaaaaaaa sound. Start the aaaaaaaaaa sound with a low volume and gradually increase the volume afterwards. The sound you produce should sound like this:

.....Aaaaaa aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

(The dots represent the air that you exhale before producing the aaaaaaaaaa sound).

Repeat the exercise until you master the technique with ease. Some people quickly master this technique while others might take a few days. Take your time and make sure that you carefully abide to all the rules regarding the 'Air Flow and Easy Onset' technique.

Air flow and easy onset before single words

Once you mastered the air flow and easy onset technique before the aaaaaaaa sound, you will practice the technique with single words. Take some written material and choose words randomly.

Take your time and keep on practicing until you become an expert.

Air flow and easy onset before short phrases and sentences

Once you perfectly master the technique with a single word, you should practice it with small phrases and then proceed to small sentences.

Read one phrase or sentence at a time. Make sure you diligently follow the technique. Take your time. Quality is more important than quantity.

I recommend that you work on the technique for two half hour sessions per day over several days until it becomes natural.

Keep on practicing during the day

Whenever you have spare time during the day, make sure you breathe abdominally and train yourself to produce passive air flow. If you can find a place where nobody can hear you, you can practice the air flow and easy onset technique out loud on short phrases and sentences. If you can't find a place where nobody can hear you, you can practice silently by whispering the sentences.

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Exercise 9

Voiced Speech

Exercise 7 (Phonate!) taught you the basics of phonation and its importance in the control of stuttering, we will do an exercise that you might find a bit tricky at first: You will read aloud a written material such as a book or a newspaper and you will replace every unvoiced consonant by its voiced counterpart. As mentioned before, h doesn't have any voiced counterpart, so you will simply drop every h you encounter.

Umbdy Dumbdy Zad on a Wall

Let's suppose you decide to use some nursery rhymes as reading material to practice voiced speech. Remember Humpty Dumpty?

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses,
and all the king's men,
couldn't put Humpty together again.

Here is how the misadventure of Humpty Dumpty, sorry Umbdy Dumbdy, would sound if you read the rhymes by replacing every unvoiced consonant by its voiced counterpart:

Umbdy Dumbdy zad on a wall
Umbdy Dumbdy ad a gread vall.
All the ging'z orzez,
And all the ging'z men,
Gouldn'd bud Umbdy dogether again

If you could speak like this all the time, you would never stutter. Unfortunately, it doesn't sound very natural, and I doubt anybody would understand what you say if you spoke in such a peculiar way. However, if you practice voiced speech regularly, you will tend to phonate slightly all of the time even when producing unvoiced consonants. You will speak with a constant light hum in the background. This constant phonation will not be audible but will be sufficient to significantly enhance your fluency.

In order to emphasize phonation even further, you can produce an aaaaaa sound before you start each sentence or part of a sentence. Stretching the first syllable will also help emphasize phonation. The Humpty Dumpty nursery rhymes will now sound as follows:

aaaaaaaaa Uuumbdy Dumbdy zad on a wall
aaaaaaaaa Uuumbdy Dumbdy ad a gread vall.
aaaaaaaaa Aaall the ging'z orzez
aaaaaaaaa Aaand all the ging'z men,
aaaaaaaaa Gouuldn'd bud Umbdy dogether again

Keep on practicing voiced speech until you master it with ease. Make sure that your Valsalva mechanism remains relaxed as you speak.

At first, voiced speech might make you feel a bit tense as you have to focus your mind on replacing each unvoiced consonant by its voiced counterpart. You might hence find it very difficult to relax your Valsalva mechanism at the same time as you speak. After some practice however, you should be able to speak with ease in this strange fashion.

Don't worry if you forget to replace some of the unvoiced consonants by their voiced counterparts. Keep on practicing, and you will find that these omissions will soon become rare exceptions.

If after extensive practice, voiced speech still makes you feel nervous, don't worry about it. You can forget about voiced speech. Simply practice reading in a normal way with some written material focusing on phonation and on the relaxation of your Valsalva mechanism as you speak. Emphasize the vowels and de-emphasize the consonants.

Prolong the First Syllable of Feared Words

As explained before, phonation has a relaxing effect on the Valsalva mechanism. By prolonging the first syllable of words you fear, you will

emphasize phonation and this will help prevent a stuttering block on these words. If you perceive a word as particularly difficult, you can stretch out every syllable of that feared word.

By doing so, you might not be able to completely avoid stuttering but you should at least be able to stutter in a more *easy* way. This technique is actually often referred to as “Easy Stuttering”. Your stuttering will become less stressful and more relaxed. Your listener will probably notice that you are having trouble but at least you will be able to get the word out with less tension and less struggle. Maybe stretching out the syllable will make your speech sound somewhat unnatural, but you and your listener will probably find it more manageable than stuttering.

By practicing this technique, you will gradually gain confidence in your ability to get words out. You will feel more relaxed and you will be less prone to resort to the prolongation of syllables.

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Exercise 10

Demosthenes' technique

You probably already heard of Demosthenes, the Greek orator who managed to eliminate stuttering by speaking loudly on the beach above the noise of the waves. We will build up on this ancient technique developed by Demosthenes more than 2,300 years ago and incorporate the 'Air Flow and Easy Onset' technique as well as the Jacobson progressive relaxation technique and abdominal breathing

It's all in the brain

Nearly everything you do is controlled by your brain. This is especially true with the stuttering phenomenon. If you look at the Stuttering Iceberg, you notice that the 'Emotions', 'Perceptions', 'Feelings', 'Resistance to change', and behaviors such as 'Holding back', 'Fear of particular speaking situations', 'Avoidance techniques', 'Use of junk words', are all in the brain. The muscles of the Valsalva mechanism are controlled by your brain. The muscles of your larynx, tongue and lips that are used during fluent speech are also controlled by the brain.

When you speak fluently, it means the brain is sending the correct signals to relax the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism and adequately tighten the muscles of your voice box, tongue, lips etc... When you stutter, it's due to the fact that your brain is, for some reasons, sending the wrong signals. Your brain is telling the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism to tighten.

The signals that your brain sends to the muscles use pathways running through your brain and nervous system. The goal of this exercise is to reinforce the pathways used by the correct signals. These pathways will

become super highways and, in contrast, the pathways used by the wrong signals (those who trigger the Valsalva mechanism during speech) will look like dirt roads. This way, your brain will be more likely to send the correct signals rather than the wrong signals.

If you want to win the Olympics, you have to train forcefully. Likewise, you will have to train your speech mechanism forcefully if you want to become fluent. Force is needed to impress your brain and carve very broad pathways in your brain and nervous system.

In this exercise, you will be directed to utter sounds and words with high volume. You will be expected to speak as loudly as you can. The louder the better.

Further Readings

The explanations given above might seem somewhat simplistic. If you want to read more detailed explanations about Demosthenes' technique, you can refer to the books and web sites given at the end of this chapter. They offer detailed explanations as well as therapeutic approaches based on the principles developed by Demosthenes.

Prerequisite

Before you begin this exercise, I will assume you managed to achieve fluency while doing exercise 8 (Air Flow and Easy Onset). It's perfectly normal that you still stutter when you are in the office, or in the street or even at home talking with your relatives. But you should be able to achieve fluency when doing the 'Air Flow and Easy Onset' exercise alone at home. The goal of the present exercise is obviously not to stutter forcefully! This should be avoided at all price as it would reinforce the tendency of the brain to trigger the Valsalva mechanism during speech.

If you have difficulties achieving fluency while doing 'Air Flow and Easy Onset' exercises, I strongly recommend that you seek the assistance of a speech pathologist. The speech pathologist should be able to teach you how to achieve fluency while you are in the relaxed settings of his office or alone in the comfort of your home.

Caution

In this exercise, you will be required to utter sounds and words as loudly as you reasonably can. But don't overdo it. Be careful not to strain your vocal cords. If you have a cold or sore throat, you should put off this exercise to a later date. In the meantime, you can jump to the second set of exercises (changing your behavior) and come back to the present exercise as soon as your throat is OK.

Please note that these exercises are exhausting. At times, you might feel dizzy and the vibration produced by forcefully uttered sounds might be very unpleasant. If you feel tired, pause for a few minutes and breathe abdominally and then resume the exercises.

While you go through these exhausting exercises, you should think of yourself as an athlete training for the Olympics. Training for the Olympics is tough; an athlete has to train forcefully several hours a day. He sweats and feels the pain in his legs. Sure, he would prefer to drive home, have a good refreshing shower and watch TV but he keeps on training for several hours with one goal in mind: the gold medal.

Exercise

This exercise is rather long and will keep you busy for two full weeks. Each day, you will focus on a particular aspect of the technique:

- Day 1: Vowels
- Day 2: Stretched Consonants
- Day 3: Stretched Consonants and Vowels
- Day 4: Unstretchable consonants
- Day 5: Unstretchable consonants and vowels
- Day 6: One syllable words starting with a vowel
- Day 7: One syllable words starting with a stretchable consonant
- Day 8: Stretching both the consonant and the vowel
- Day 9: One syllable words starting with an unstretchable consonant
- Day 10: Multisyllable words starting with a vowel
- Day 11: Multisyllable words starting with a stretchable consonant
- Day 12: Multisyllable words starting with an unstretchable consonant
- Day 13: Picking words in a book
- Day 14: Feared words

Each daily session should be done twice: once in the morning and once in the evening. You should spend two hours every day practicing the technique: one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening.

This might seem very demanding but you will only have to do it for two weeks. You will then be directed to do shorter sessions of half an hour each every morning and every evening.

You will need to find a place in your home where you can sit comfortably without being disturbed. If needed, you will have to explain to the other family members how important it is for you to be left undisturbed for one hour or so. Besides, these exercises are rather noisy and you should explain to your family what you are doing and why. You might find that the car is the most convenient place to do the exercises. Car seats are usually comfortable and you can shout as much as you want without disturbing anybody.

Day 1: Vowels

As usual, you will first start by relaxing your rectum using the Jacobson progressive relaxation technique. You will then close your eyes and breathe abdominally for one or two minutes.

You then produce an aaaaaaaaaaaaaa sound (pronounced as in the word 'cat') with easy onset and with low volume:

....aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

Do it five times. Don't forget to breathe abdominally and to exhale some air before moving into the aaaaaaaa sound. The dots represent the air that you exhale before producing the aaaaaaaa sound.

Then produce the same sound with easy onset but this time you will gradually increase the volume until you produce a very loud aaaaaaaa sound:

....aaaaaaaaaaaaaaa**aaaaaaa**

Do it five times and you then produce the same aaaaaaa sound but this time without easy onset and with high volume:

....aaaaaa

Do it five times also.

You will do again the same set of exercises with the other vowel sounds:

<u>Vowel:</u>	<u>Pronunciation:</u>
a	<u>a</u> pe
an	s <u>a</u> nd
e	she <u>e</u> p
e	l <u>e</u> t
e	<u>e</u> arth
i	ni <u>g</u> ht
i	shi <u>p</u>
o	ro <u>p</u> e
o	go <u>t</u>
oo	mo <u>o</u> n
u	cu <u>t</u>
u	cu <u>t</u> e
u	pu <u>t</u>

You should say each vowel

- five times with easy onset on low volume,
- five times with easy onset and progressively increased volume
- five times without easy onset and high volume.

Take your time, quality is more important than quantity. Go through the list several times. You should spend approximately one hour doing this exercise.

- five times with easy onset on low volume,
- five times with easy onset and progressively increased volume
- five times without easy onset and high volume.

Day 3: Stretched Consonants and Vowels

Five times with easy onset and low volume:

[illegible]

And then five times with easy onset and gradual increase of the volume

.....zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzZZZZaaa

And finally five times without easy onset and with full volume:

....ZZZZZZzaaaaaa

You now do the same with the other consonants: ch, f, h, j, l, m, n, r, s, sh, th, v, w and y. Go through the list several times. If you want to make the exercise more fun and enjoyable you can replace the aaaaaaaaaa sound by other vowel sounds.

Day 4: Unstretchable consonants

You probably noticed that we skipped quite a few consonants on day 2 and 3. In fact, not all consonants can be stretched. We will now work on the unstretchable consonants.

We will start with letter p. You will first utter a p sound ('puh') five times without force. Use the airflow technique but not the easy onset technique. Easy onset doesn't make sense as this consonant cannot be prolonged. It will look something like this:

....p.....

(The dots after the letter p represent the sound of the air flowing out of your mouth after the p sound was uttered)

You then produce the same sound five times with force. Again, you can use the airflow technique but not the easy onset technique.

....p.....

You then do the same with the other unstretchable consonants:

Consonant: Pronunciation:

b	<u>b</u> oard
c	<u>c</u> up
d	<u>d</u> ot
g	<u>g</u> oat
p	<u>p</u> eacock
t	<u>t</u> op

You will say each consonant:

- Five times without force
- Five times with force

Each time, you should use the air flow technique but not the easy onset technique. Go through the list several times.

Day 5: Unstretchable consonants and vowels

You will do the same exercise as on day 4, but this time the consonant will be followed by an aaaaaaaaaaaaaa sound. Let's see what it looks like with letter p.

Say it five times without force. Use the air flow technique but don't use the easy onset technique:

...paaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

Now say i five times, using easy onset on the vowel and gradually increase the volume:

...paaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa

You now do the same with the following words:

ape	aim
and	ant
eer	eel
ebb	egg
earth	earn
I'll	ice
it	ill
or	ohm
odd	on
ooze	oomph
ump	up
you	use

Day 7: One syllable words starting with a stretchable consonant

You will now do a similar exercise with one syllable words starting with a stretchable consonant. Let's start with the word 'let'.

I think you got the picture: you will say it five times with easy onset and low volume, five times with easy onset and gradual increase of volume and five times with force and no easy onset:

....let

....let

....let

Day 9: One-syllable words starting with an unstretchable consonant

You remember that easy onset doesn't apply to unstretchable consonants. But you can apply easy onset on the following vowel. You will say the word five times with low volume, five times with easy onset on the first vowel with a gradual increase of volume and finally five times with high volume. You will start with the word bow:

....b_{oooooooooooooooooooo}ow

....b_{oooooooooooooooooooo}OOOW

b_{oooooooooooo}ow

You now do the same with the words listed below:

bean	bit	bug	boat	bat
cup	cat	cut	cute	coat
dot	dig	dumb	dull	debt
go	gone	GATT	gut	game
pea	pot	pit	Pat	put
toe	tit	tat	top	tall

Day 10: Multisyllable words starting with a vowel

We will start with the word icy. You will stretch both vowels. You will first say the word five times with easy onset and low volume:

....iiiiiiicyyyyyyyyy

Then 5 times with easy onset and gradual increase of volume:

...*iiiiiiiiiii*ii*cc*yyyyy

And finally five times without easy onset and with high volume.

....*iiiiiiiiiii*ii*cc*yyyyy

You then do the same with the following words:

aiming	aging
amen	apple
easy	eager
elephant	elevator
earnest	earthling
ivy	idea
oldies	orient
over	order
oozy	oosphere
upper	under
unite	usual
ugly	unable

Day 11: Multisyllable words starting with a stretchable consonant

In this exercise, you will not only stretch the vowels, but you will also stretch the first consonant. You will say each word five times with easy onset and low volume, five times with easy onset and gradually increased volume and five times without easy onset but with high volume.

Let's start with the word 'zebra':

....zzzzzzzeeeeeeeeeebraaaaaaaaaa

....zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzeeeebraaa

....ZZZZZeeeeebraaaa

You then do the same with the words below:

cherry	chewy
follow	furrow
hollow	hello
jettison	jerky
lollipop	lyric
myself	mono
nobody	knowing
runaway	rally
silent	salute
shallow	shabby
theory	therefore
voluntary	vacate
yellow	yachting
water	weekly
zero	

Day 12: Multisyllable words starting with an unstretchable consonant

The first consonant cannot be stretched and you will therefore only stretch the vowels. We will start with the word hello and you will say it five times with easy onset on the first vowel and low volume, five times with easy onset on the first vowel and gradual increase of volume and finally five times without easy onset but with high volume.

....beeeaaaaacooooon

...beeeeeeeeeaaaaaacooon

...beeaacooon

You now proceed the same way with the following words:

below	balloon	bulky	bacon
capable	culprit	color	curry
direction	deter	dodgy	duping
gracious	grabbing	getting	gambling
partition	pinky	priceless	purely
tally	total	tasty	toaster

Day 13: Picking words in a book

You will now take some written material such as this book or a newspaper and randomly select words.

You will then say these words stretching out the vowels. If the first letter is a stretchable consonant, you will stretch it as well.

You will say each word five times with easy onset and low volume, five times with easy onset and gradual increase of volume and then five times without easy onset but with high volume.

Day 14: Feared words

You will write down a list of the words on which you frequently experience stuttering blocks. The list is very likely to include your name as stutterers often experience difficulties in saying their names.

If you can't think of any feared word, then you should postpone this exercise to another day. In the meantime, carry a piece of paper and a pencil with you and write down each word on which you block or fear to block or simply experience some mild difficulties pronouncing.

You will read these words as described in Day 13 but this time you will read them ten times instead of five. If you experience excessive difficulty in saying a particular word, stretch out every stretchable consonant including those that are inside or at the end of the word.

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Exercise 11

Daily Exercises

The previous exercises taught you how to:

- relax your rectum
- breathe abdominally
- use the air flow and easy onset technique
- phonate
- speak in a strange way that we called voiced speech
- use force in order to strengthen the nervous pathways that promote fluency.

Relaxation of your rectum, abdominal breathing, air flow, easy onset, phonation and voiced speech are key elements of Valsalva and stuttering control. We will combine these four exercises into one daily exercise. Techniques developed in exercise 10 (*Demosthenes' technique*) will also be included in the daily exercises.

Morning and Evening Exercises

You will find below two daily exercises:

- 1) a morning exercise to be done in the morning before you go out in the wild world.
- 2) An evening exercise that should be done in the evening before you have dinner or go to sleep.

The morning exercise puts more emphasis on Valsalva relaxation, phonation, air flow and easy onset. The morning exercise will of course

carry beneficial effects for the long term but it mainly serves a short term goal: It is specifically designed to get your speech mechanism ready to speak fluently for a whole day.

The evening exercise puts more emphasis on the Demosthenes' technique. Its major goal is to reinforce the pathways that promote fluency. It aims at improving your fluency in the long run.

Of course, if you work on night shifts, you might find it more convenient to do the morning exercise in the evening before you go out for work and the evening exercise in the morning when you come back home.

Also, if your neighbor invites you for a barbecue at 8.00 pm, you should do an exercise similar to the morning exercise around 6.00 pm. This will ensure that your speech mechanism is ready to speak fluently with the neighbor and his guests during the party.

Morning exercise

1. General Relaxation (1 minute)

Stretch your arms and legs, do a few facial contortions, move your neck, open your mouth and move your jaw.

If you can, try to yawn. This is probably the most natural and most efficient way to relax your body.

2. Relaxation of the Rectal Muscle (1 minute)

Relax your rectum using Jacobson's progressive relaxation. Gradually tighten your rectal muscle and then gradually release the tension. Do this five or six times. Don't forget to feel the relaxation spreading to the other muscles of the Valsalva mechanism.

3. Abdominal Breathing (1 minute)

Close your eyes and breathe abdominally five or six times. Breathe with your mouth open. Make sure you maintain your rectum and larynx open while you breathe. Feel the relaxation spreading throughout your entire Valsalva mechanism: abdomen, chest, larynx, tongue, jaw, lips. Feel the air flowing freely through your larynx. Remember that you shouldn't force the

air out. You should let the air escape gently and effortlessly out of your lungs.

4. Demosthenes' technique (8 minutes)

Take some reading material and randomly select words. If you have a list of feared words, use it. You should read each word five times with easy onset and low volume, five times with easy onset and gradual increase of volume and five times without easy onset and with force.

Remember to breathe abdominally and to passively exhale some air before you start uttering the word. Stretch every vowel. If the first consonant is stretchable, stretch it as well.

5. Relaxation of the Rectal Muscle (1 minute)

(same as 2.)

6. Abdominal Breathing (1 minute)

(same as 3.)

7. Phonation (3 minutes)

Inhale, then gently exhale for a second or two and produce an aaaaaaaaaa sound with a gentle onset. Make sure that you don't force the air out of your lungs. You should let the air effortlessly flow out of your lungs. Put your fingers on your throat and feel the vibration of your larynx. Feel the vibration spreading through your Valsalva mechanism. Remember the equation:

Relaxed Valsalva mechanism = phonation = fluency

Then inhale once more and produce an aaaaabaaaaabaaaaa sound. Do the same exercise with the other voiced consonants: d, g, j, l, m, n, r, v, w, x (gz), y and z.

8. Voiced speech (7 minutes)

Now, take some reading material and read aloud by replacing every unvoiced consonant by its voiced counterpart. Remember to emphasize on phonation by starting each sentence or part of a sentence by an aaaaaaaa sound and by stretching out the first syllable.

Make sure your rectum remains relaxed and open. Breathe abdominally and avoid forcing the air out of your lungs. Let some air passively flow out before producing the aaaaaaaa sound.

Important note: *When you first practice voiced speech, it's normal to feel a bit nervous. After extensive practice, you should feel at ease and relaxed.*

However, if voiced speech still makes you nervous after extensive practice, stop any further efforts in this area. I recommend that you skip voiced speech and that you compensate by spending more time on step 7 (phonation).

9. Natural speech (7 minutes)

You will now gradually alter your speech until it sounds natural. Make sure to keep emphasizing phonation. The best way to emphasize phonation is to start each sentence or part of a sentence with an aaaaaaa sound and to stretch the first syllable. De-emphasize unvoiced consonants and slightly stretch the vowels. Try to maintain a barely audible hum in the background of your speech.

Put your fingers on your larynx. If you feel your larynx continuously vibrating, it means that you are adequately phonating. If you keep on speaking like that all day, you should never stutter.

If you feel that your larynx stops vibrating when you utter an unvoiced consonant, it means that you should further de-emphasize unvoiced consonants and put more emphasis on the vowels.

While reading aloud, make sure your rectum is open and relaxed. Make sure you breathe abdominally, that you let the air flow effortlessly out of your lungs and that you let some air out of your mouth before you start speaking.

Evening Exercise

You will find below the timing for the evening exercise. Please refer to the morning exercise for the details of the different steps.

- 1. General Relaxation (1 minute)**
- 2. Relaxation of the Rectal Muscle (1 minute)**
- 3. Abdominal Breathing (1 minute)**
- 4. Demosthenes' technique (27 minutes)**

Keep on Practicing During the Day

You should keep on practicing throughout the day whenever you have the opportunity or feel the need to do so.

It is especially important to relax your rectum and breathe abdominally each time you expect a difficult speaking situation. Relaxation of the rectum and abdominal breathing is something you can do anytime anywhere.

Regularly check that your rectum, abdomen and larynx are open and relaxed. Make sure you are breathing abdominally. Focus on phonation at all times.

When you speak, make sure you don't force the air out. Let the air gently and effortlessly flow out of your lungs through your larynx.

Write down feared words

As you walk through the day, carry a piece of paper and pencil and write down all the words on which you block or anticipate a block. You will work on these words during the following evening and morning exercises.

Give your Brain a Break

I recommend that you practice these exercises every day. But, at the same time, I recommend that you once in a while stop doing your daily exercises and then resume a week or two later. Maybe you will notice that your fluency will improve during the time off. This may be your brain passively learning the technique.

Passive learning is not something particular to the acquisition of fluency. I noticed the effect of passive learning while taking driving lessons. I started with half a dozen lessons then stopped for several months. When I resumed, I noticed that I was driving a lot better than during my previous lesson several months earlier. I had passively learned driving skills.

Passive learning can also be experienced while learning various skills such as playing tennis, swimming etc...

I cannot recommend when and how long you should stop. No two individuals are alike and this is something that you will have to find out by yourself. If you notice that your fluency stopped improving, then it might indicate that your brain needs a break. Stop doing the daily exercises for a while and see what happens.

What to Expect?

As mentioned earlier, you cannot become fluent overnight and it will probably take several weeks or even months before you experience noticeable improvements.

In my case, the first noticeable results came from speaking situations that I perceived as the most difficult; i.e. where I stuttered about 99% of the time. An example of this is when sitting in a manager's office. After a few days of practice, I noticed that in those situations, I stuttered only 80% of the time.

I understood that I now had a grip on my stuttering. I knew that my fight against stuttering was not hopeless anymore. I knew that stuttering would fight back and it did fight back. My stuttering sometimes grew worse and then improved. But in the long run, stuttering was losing ground while fluency was gaining momentum. Week after week, I noticed that I was stuttering less and less when talking to the manager until I could finally talk to him fluently and with total confidence.

Controlling stuttering when talking to the manager was relatively easy because I had time to relax my rectum and breathe abdominally before knocking at his door. Generally speaking, it's a lot easier to control stuttering in the case of difficult speaking situations that are expected well in advance. In such circumstances, you have several minutes to focus on the relaxation of your Valsalva mechanism.

Controlling stuttering is a lot more difficult in the case of difficult speaking situations that arise unexpectedly. Let's suppose for example that you are passively listening to colleagues that are talking together. All of a sudden, one of them asks you your opinion. You are startled; you have no definite opinion and don't know what to say. They are waiting for your opinion and you obviously don't have much time to relax your rectum. In such a situation, it might prove difficult to control stuttering but you will slowly gain confidence and in the end, you will manage to be fluent in any situation.

Make a list of difficult speaking situations

I suggest that you make a list of the different difficult speaking situations that you regularly have to confront. For example, it might include talking to your manager, buying a loaf of bread at the bakery or aspirin in a drugstore, dating, asking for directions from a policeman, talking with your parents, giving your name, talking on the phone, saying the punch line of a joke etc...

Try to address each speaking situation one by one. If speaking on the phone is a problem, call several toll free numbers every day and ask for some routine information. Do it until talking on the phone is no longer a problem.

Once one situation is under control, you can celebrate. Sure you haven't won the war but you have won the first battle. You are now confident that you will also win the other battles until you finally achieve near total fluency.

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This ends our first set of exercises. These exercises focused on phonation and Valsalva relaxation. During the coming months, you will have to do your daily exercises. It probably means you will have to wake up 30 minutes earlier every morning but it's well worth it.

Controlling the Valsalva mechanism is definitely an important step forward on the path toward fluency but it is not enough. You must now focus on the behaviors related with stuttering as well as your perceptions and feelings. These behaviors, perceptions and feelings will be addressed by the second set of exercises.

Second Set of Exercises

Changing Your Behaviors, Perceptions and Feelings

Exercise 12

Listen to Others

Nobody is 100% Fluent

According to statistics, stutterers account for about 1% of the population. Does this mean that 1% of the population stutters and that 99% of the population is perfectly fluent? As a stutterer you probably think that is the case but in fact reality is not that clear cut.

Listen carefully to others as they speak and you will be amazed to notice that very few people are perfectly fluent. In fact, we can probably safely assert that nobody on earth is 100% fluent 100% of the time. Most people stutter slightly each time they open their mouth; they stutter so slightly that it usually goes unnoticed, but the fact is that they do stutter.

In some cases, it might not really be stuttering but some other type of disfluency. A person might have difficulty finding the proper word and will say “uhhhhh” for a few seconds. Or a person might start saying the first syllable of a word, realize that the word is inappropriate, stop, say “uhhh”, start the sentence all over again with a more appropriate word. Never mind if it is not really stuttering; they are having fluency problems just like you, only milder.

These disfluencies usually go unnoticed because they are so usual.

What Does it Mean to You?

- 1) You are not a stutterer living in perfectly fluent population. You are a strong stutterer living in a population of slight stutterers. I am not sure this news will really make you feel great but it should at least make you feel a bit better about yourself!
- 2) When a stutterer decides to control his stuttering, his goal is naturally to become 100% fluent. I think you now understand that this goal is impossible to achieve. Even a so-called non-stutterer cannot achieve such an unrealistic goal.
- 3) This is something very important to understand as it will prevent one from setting unattainable goals. A stutterer that doesn't understand that it is not possible to achieve 100% fluency will have the impression that he has failed in his efforts to control his stuttering each time he slightly stutters.

If your goal is to become 100% fluent, you are bound to fail. Your goal should be to become a slight stutterer. Your goal should be to stutter as slightly as the average person. Even if you stutter a little bit more than the average person, it will probably go unnoticed.

- 4) Coming to realize that everybody stutters slightly will change the perception you have of stuttering. If you stutter slightly, you know it's OK because everybody stutters slightly. If you stutter severely, you know it's not that terrible because everybody stutters. You only stutter somewhat more than the others. You now know that stuttering is a condition that affects virtually everybody. It only hits you a bit worse than the others.

Remember

Your goal should be to reduce stuttering to an acceptable level not to completely eradicate stuttering.

References

- KEHOE, Thomas David, *Overcoming Stuttering in 6 months, A multifactorial Guide To Speech Therapy*, Casa Futura Technologies, 2002
- Stuttering Foundation: *Transfer and maintenance*, 1982

Exercise 13

You Are not Alone

Why Me?

You are a stutterer and you have the feeling that stuttering is spoiling your life. You might be thinking: “Why me? Why do I stutter and the others don’t stutter? Why do others have everything to be happy while stuttering is spoiling my life? WHY?”

Yes, for sure, it’s not fun to be a stutterer. But do you think that the others really have everything to lead a perfect and happy life? You are complaining about your stuttering but are you sure the others don’t have something to complain about as well. Something that might eventually be a lot worse than stuttering? Are you sure they don’t have some kind of invisible burden to carry wherever they go?

Watch Others as You Walk Down the Street

Next time you walk down the street, carefully watch other pedestrians. As you probably already noticed before, human beings come in different “shapes, sizes and colors”. The majority of us are not so happy about our shape, size or color. Brunettes usually dream they had blond hair and blondes wish they were brunettes. Most of us would like our nose to be a bit longer or shorter or our ears a bit smaller or larger. We wish we were shorter or taller, thinner or fatter, etc...

As you walk, look carefully at each and every person walking in the opposite direction. Try to guess why all these people might not be too happy about themselves. Try to find the small details that might be ruining the perception they have of themselves.

Now keep on walking until you come across the perfect person: beautiful, self confident etc... I bet you will probably have to walk several miles before you can find that perfect person! Then, watch this person carefully. Are you sure this person thinks of himself or herself as perfect? Maybe you didn't notice some small detail, that very detail this person sees when watching himself or herself in a mirror. Or maybe that person's life is ruined by some invisible disease or condition. Or maybe this person that seems so happy and confident is actually still mourning the death of a loved one. Or maybe his or her sentimental life is a total disaster. Or...

I hope you understand that the goal of this exercise is not to be nasty and to laugh at other people as you walk down the street. You should do this exercise with compassion in mind. Virtually every human being that you see walking down the street is a wonderful person (of course with the notable exception of a small minority of criminals that the police haven't arrested yet and that might be walking on the same sidewalk as you are). Yes, despite their imperfections, they are **wonderful** human beings! Most of them are just like you carrying some visible or invisible burden. In your case, this burden is stuttering. In their case, this burden is something else and I am not sure you would want to swap your burden with somebody else's burden. It might not be a good deal.

Yes, life can be very tough on planet Earth, but all these wonderful persons that are walking down the street are all doing their best. They struggle to survive. They work hard to improve the lives of their families. They all want to be that perfect dad or mum or that perfect child or that perfect spouse or lover. Do they succeed? Maybe not completely but they wish they could and they do their best. They might be going through all kinds of ordeals but they keep on struggling, doing their best.

Nobody is perfect and you are no exception. You should realize that you are an imperfect human being living in an imperfect world populated by 5 billion or so imperfect human beings. You are not alone. You are just like everybody else on this planet: you do the best you can in order to live happily with your relatives and your friends. And it's probably not a little problem like stuttering that will prevent you from achieving your goals. Most of us are living happy lives despite our problems. You also can lead a happy life despite your stuttering. (Not to mention the fact, that if you are reading this book, you will probably manage to control your stuttering in the coming weeks or months...)

Do your best and good luck!

Exercise 14

Recall Enjoyable Speaking Experiences

In this exercise, you will try to change the way you perceive speech. As with every stutterer, you probably perceive speech as a painful experience. This perception is a key element of the Stuttering Iceberg and has to be replaced by its counterpart in the Fluency Iceberg.

Recall Pleasurable Past Speaking Experiences

Try to remember some pleasant experience you had talking with friends or relatives. It might not be easy at first. You probably have the impression that speech is never enjoyable: either you stutter or you fear you might stutter.

Keep on trying and maybe you will remember the great time you had with your friends last month when you had lunch with them in a restaurant. Remember how they enjoyed the joke you told them. Yes, you stuttered all the way but they were listening to you. Maybe they looked slightly embarrassed when you stuttered but they nevertheless enjoyed listening to you. Remember how they laughed when you reached the punch line. Remember how they congratulated you for this great joke. Do your friends question your worthiness as a person because you stutter? Certainly not!

Remember when you went fishing with your best friend. Yes, you stuttered all day but you really had a great time. Remember that dinner you had with your relatives on Christmas Eve. Remember when you were questioning your grandfather about the good old times.

Keep on recalling the enjoyable experiences you had about speech. Don't judge your memories according to fluency. Whether you stuttered or not is totally unimportant. The important thing is that you enjoyed yourself

and that your friends or relatives enjoyed listening to you. View all these experiences in a positive way.

The important thing to realize is that you can perfectly enjoy speech even if you stutter. Fluency is not a prerequisite to enjoy your life and enjoy talking to other persons.

Now that you manage to recall positive memories of your past speaking experiences, try to picture yourself in future speaking situations. Visualize yourself in as many different speaking situations as possible: talking to friends and relatives, asking for a pay raise with your boss, buying aspirin at the drugstore, buying a train ticket, asking for directions from a policeman etc... You don't need to picture yourself as fluent as it would be unrealistic. You should instead visualize yourself as a happy stutterer. You stutter without shame and others accept your stuttering. They listen to you with great interest even when you stutter badly. You stutter with ease and they listen to you because you have something interesting to say and because they like being with you. They know that you are a worthy person and no matter how much you stutter, it won't change the opinion they have of you.

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PARRY, William D., *Understanding & Controlling Stuttering, A Comprehensive New Approach Based on the Valsalva Hypothesis*, National Stuttering Association, 1992

Exercise 15

Acknowledge Your Stuttering

The acknowledgement of your stuttering is a main step toward fluency.

Many stutterers are ashamed of their stuttering. They have the feeling that others will see in their disfluency a proof of their unworthiness. They believe that their stuttering will lead others to think they have some kind of mental condition.

This feeling of shame can be so overwhelming that many stutterers pretend that they don't really stutter. You might for example avoid facing reality by pretending your listener didn't understand what you said not because you stuttered badly but because of the surrounding noise or because he or she is half deaf.

You probably avoid facing reality in order to preserve your fragile self-esteem. The trick might work for a while but sooner or later, you will have to face the truth: you stutter.

There is no point pretending that you don't stutter. There is nothing to be ashamed of. Stuttering is merely an unusual and strange way of speaking. It doesn't mean you are unworthy or that you are crazy. You can rest assured that others don't perceive stuttering as proof that you are unworthy or stupid. They perceive stuttering the way it is: an unusual and strange way of speaking.

Be honest with yourself and accept the fact that you stutter. Talk to your relatives and friends about your stuttering problem. Let them know how you feel about it and ask them what they think about it. For most non-stutterers, stuttering is a mystery and they will probably be happy to talk with you about this strange phenomenon. Explain to them what a Valsalva maneuver is and how it interferes with speech by inducing stuttering blocks.

Once you accept the fact that you stutter and share your feelings about stuttering with your friends and relatives, you can easily view your speech objectively and learn from experience. You can objectively monitor your progress as you proceed with the exercises given in this book.

You will also view stuttering in less personal terms and this will have a positive effect on the control of stuttering. You will be less worried about the possibility that you might stutter and you will therefore be less likely to accidentally perform a Valsalva maneuver while you speak. And if you do stutter, this will have virtually no detrimental effect on your self esteem. You already know that you stutter and have already accepted it.

Acknowledge all the Elements of the Stuttering Iceberg

Acknowledging your verbal disfluencies is not enough. You should also acknowledge each and every element of the stuttering iceberg. Once you have acknowledged the different elements of the iceberg, it will be easier for you to work on them and replace them by their counterpart in the fluency iceberg.

You should acknowledge the elements of the stuttering iceberg in a matter of fact way. The behaviors, feelings and perceptions related to stuttering are not proof of your unworthiness. Simply observe them in a honest way and accept them the way they are.

1. Tightening of the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism

Consciously take note of the fact that you have a tendency to tighten the muscles of the Valsalva mechanism.

2. Irregular breathing patterns

There is no point pretending that nothing abnormal happens when you accidentally speak with no air in your lungs or if you attempt to speak while inhaling. There is nothing shameful about it and it will be easier for you to solve the problem if you openly admit to yourself that you sometimes have difficulty synchronizing breathing with speech.

3. Use of starters and fillers

Acknowledge the fact that you sometimes use starters and fillers. Don't pretend that these useless words are necessary and enhance the intelligibility of your speech.

4. Negative emotions, feelings and perceptions

Take note of your negative emotions, feelings and perceptions. It will be difficult to eliminate them if you don't accept the fact that they are there. Become aware of the way they interfere with your speech.

5. Fear of particular speaking situations

Accept the fact that you sometimes fear particular speaking situations. Observe how you feel whenever you have to make a phone call, talk to your manager, speak to a policeman, etc... Acknowledge your fears and don't let them prevent you from speaking.

6. Holding back

Don't pretend that you don't hold back if you do. Acknowledge the fact that you are not as outgoing as you would like to be and that you sometimes pretend that you have nothing to say in order to avoid speaking.

7. Avoidance techniques

Carefully observe the way you resort to avoidance techniques. Acknowledge the fact that you all too often substitute words.

8. Eye contact avoidance

Accept the fact that it is more difficult for you to maintain eye contact than it is for others.

9. Tendency to stand still

Notice how you are often paralyzed by your fear of stuttering and how this prevents you from using body language to support your speech.

10. Speaking in a low voice

Notice how you often speak in a low voice because you don't want too many people to hear your stuttering.

11. Resistance to change

Acknowledge the fact that your unconscious mind might not be ready for change and that this might hinder your progress.

Stutter Openly

Don't pretend that you are a normal speaker. Don't try to hide your stuttering. If you try to hide that you stutter, you will stress yourself and will be more likely to stutter. You should instead stutter openly and without shame.

Don't Be Politically Correct With Yourself

The English language traditionally had two words to describe people with your condition: 'stutterer' (mainly used in the United States, Canada, Australia...) and 'stammerer' (mainly used in the United Kingdom, Ireland, India...).

Advocates of the use of politically correct terms thought it was an absolute necessity to coin a third word: PWS, a sweet acronym meaning 'Person Who Stutters' or 'Person Who Stammers'. There are many people nowadays who think that coining new words or altering the meaning of existing words can help solve a problem... I think it only makes talking about the problem less intelligible. The first time I encountered the word 'PWS', it took me a whole minute to figure out that it meant 'stutterer'. The media now uses so many politically correct terms that I sometimes simply have no idea what the guy on the radio is talking about...

Anyway, don't be politically correct with yourself. You are not a PWS.

You are a STUTTERER.

You are a STAMMERER.

Face it!

References

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Exercise 16

Behave Like a Non-stutterer

I am sure that when you queue up at the bakery, you keep on repeating to yourself “I would like a doughnut please... I would like a doughnut please... I would like a doughnut please”. If the queue is long enough, you will probably repeat this sentence several hundred times. Or maybe you are thinking whether you should say “I want a doughnut” or “I would like a doughnut please”. “I want a doughnut” is shorter so you are less likely to stutter. On the other hand, “I would like a doughnut please” has an extra word before the feared word “doughnut”. It will therefore be easier to get a running start and rush through the word doughnut.

The Other People in the Queue

What about the other people in the queue? Do you think they keep on repeating to themselves “I would like an apple pie please” or “I would like a loaf of bread please”? Do you think they are thinking about how they are going to phrase their order? Certainly not! A non-stutterer doesn’t think about how he is going to phrase his order until the split second before he opens his mouth. In the meantime, while he queues, he lets his mind wander. He thinks about the great weekend he had, about his new date, or about the brand new car he would like to buy. Or maybe he worries his son might be smoking pot or his daughter might become pregnant, or maybe he thinks about how the president of the United States should handle foreign affairs.

That’s the way you should behave also. Decide what you want before entering the bakery and forget about it while you queue. If you know what you want, you should be able to say it perfectly without rehearsing a hundred times. Your brain is very powerful and needs only a few milliseconds to figure out how to phrase what you want to say.

By rehearsing over and over again or by thinking hard about the way you are going to phrase your order, you stress yourself. And remember, the more you stress, the more likely you are to trigger a Valsalva maneuver and stutter.

Speak slowly when you are under pressure

When a stutterer is under pressure, he tends to speak faster. By speaking faster, he is stressing himself and this increases the likelihood of a stuttering block.

When a non-stutterer is under pressure, he does the opposite: he slows down his speech. Slowing down speech has a relaxing effect. You can take your time and collect your thoughts.

There again, you should try to behave like a non-stutterer. The higher the pressure, the slower you should speak. While you speak slowly, try to enjoy the relaxing feeling of the words gently flowing out of your mouth.

References

FRASER Malcom, *Self-therapy for the stutter*, Stuttering Foundation, 2002

Exercise 17

Mirror

You probably know that stutterers don't stutter when they are alone and speak aloud to themselves or speak to an animal. Stuttering only occurs in the presence of other people.

You can simulate the presence of another person by reading in front of a mirror.

You can also use a tape recorder or a camcorder in addition to the mirror. Watching oneself or listening to oneself is not a pleasant experience at first but you will quickly get used to it.

Whatever method you choose, it will help you progressively get used to speaking in the presence of others. It will desensitize the sensation of uneasiness you might experience when speaking in public.

I suggest that you read some written material using the 'air flow and easy onset' technique. Memorize each sentence or part of sentence and talk aloud while looking yourself straight in the eyes.

You can of course include the mirror plus the tape recorder or camcorder in the daily exercises that you do every morning and evening.

Exercise 18

Keeping Eye Contact

The Importance of Eye Contact

Avoiding eye contact is one of the elements of the hidden part of the stuttering phenomenon. Eye contact avoidance is located below the waterline of the stuttering iceberg and it is important that you alter this behavior in order to durably free yourself from stuttering.

Eye contact is an intense non-verbal means of communication between two individuals. Stutterers tend to avoid looking at other people in the eyes probably because eye contact mainly conveys emotions and feelings; stutterers have a tendency to hide their feelings and want to keep their emotions under control. Eye contact conveys a feeling of intimacy which stutterers tend to find inadequate and embarrassing. Moreover, stutterers tend to proactively look away because they don't want to confront their listener's reaction should they happen to stutter.

Although stutterers tend to avoid eye contact, they do occasionally look at the other person's eye in order to grab some information on what this person thinks or feel. You therefore probably noticed how embarrassing it can be to talk to somebody who wears dark sunglasses completely hiding his eyes. It's a bit like talking to a wall. You are not too sure of what that person thinks or feels. You are not even sure the person is actually listening to you. Is this person interested by what you say or is he/she getting bored to death by your conversation? Is this person compassionate? Can you trust this person? Now you realize how much information is blocked out by these dark sunglasses. You also realize the importance of eye contact in effective communication.

Watching the eyes of your listener can tell you a lot about what he or she thinks or feels. If the person slightly closed his or her eyes, it probably means that he or she is having a hard time following your reasoning. By noticing that, you will understand that you should slow down and explain more precisely what you mean. If the person's eyes are wide open, this means that he or she is startled and surprised. If this is what you were seeking then you know you got to the point. If not, then you know you have to explain your position in more detail. Watching your listener's eyes can also help you find out whether this person is trustworthy or not, is compassionate or has no consideration for others.

Practice Looking at Your Listener Straight in the Eyes

During the coming days, you will try to keep eye contact as much as possible whenever you speak to somebody. At first, keeping eye contact will probably make you feel terribly uncomfortable and your eyes will inevitably “run away” and stare at some “low intensity object” such as your listener's nose, lips or tie. Or maybe your eyes will focus on some piece of furniture somewhere in the background.

Your first impression will be that it is not possible to keep eye contact more than a half a second. Try to keep eye contact for longer periods each time. I remember that after two days of practicing, I finally managed to keep eye contact for about 15 minutes while talking with a colleague. Yes, fifteen long minutes... Before that, I never thought it was possible or even adequate. It didn't seem to be much of an ordeal for my colleague but when the conversation ended, I felt dizzy and exhausted. I was overwhelmed by the strange feeling of having my eyes locked on his eyes. During 15 minutes, I saw nothing else but the two black circles of his eyes; I heard nothing else but our conversation. Other colleagues that were moving and talking around were simply non-existent.

Why Do My Friends Avoid Eye Contact?

When you first try to keep eye contact, you will probably notice that people you don't know usually won't avoid eye contact with you. On the other hand, you might be surprised to notice that your friends or relatives consistently avoid eye contact with you. At first you might see that as a proof that keeping eye contact is inadequate; you might start wondering what others think of you when you insist on keeping eye contact. Maybe they think you have a staring problem? You might start worrying that this exercise will drive others to think that you suffer some kind of mental condition. Don't worry about that and keep on practicing. You will notice

day after day that your friends and relatives will gradually stop avoiding eye contact with you. In fact, the reason they were originally avoiding eye contact is that they consciously or unconsciously know that **you** have difficulty keeping eye contact and they prefer to avoid embarrassing you by looking you straight in the eyes.

Then again, they may be simply mimicking your own behavior. Humans are social animals and have a strong tendency to mimic surrounding people's behavior. I noticed that foreign tourists tend to mimic the behavior of the local population. For example, in London, people tend to walk on the right side of the sidewalk and foreign tourists tend to quickly mimic this behavior. In countries where pedestrians walk in an undisciplined fashion and occasionally stand in the middle of the way eventually creating a "pedestrian traffic jam", foreign tourists, even those coming from the most disciplined countries, tend to do the same and will not hesitate to block out the sidewalk while trying to figure out which way to go. The funny thing is that local people will eventually blame those stupid tourists for jamming the sidewalk...

As you keep on practicing keeping eye contact, your friends and relatives will gradually notice the change in your behavior and they will gradually mimic you and maintain eye contact with you

Day after day, keeping eye contact will seem more and more natural and you should keep on practicing until it becomes fully natural and spontaneous.

Establish Eye Contact Before You Start to Speak

Before you start talking to somebody, look them straight in the eyes for a few seconds. By looking your listener straight in the eyes, you will establish a non verbal communication link. You will know that the other person is ready to listen to you and is waiting for you to talk. You will know there is no need to hurry and you will feel more at ease with your listener.

Keep Eye Contact during Stuttering Blocks

An important thing is to keep eye contact even during stuttering blocks. When a stutterer feels a block is about to occur, he has a natural tendency to look away in order to avoid seeing the reaction of his listener. You should resist this urge and keep eye contact at all times even if you remain stranded on a word for several seconds. It might seem uncomfortable for you to read

the embarrassment on your listener's face but you should know that your listener will be even more embarrassed if you look away.

Talking to Several Persons

When talking to only one person, you should look into his or her eyes as often as possible. You should simply lock eyes with them. When talking to a group, you should look into the eyes of each person for several seconds. Let's suppose you are talking to Bob, John and Jane. Start by looking into Bob's eyes for several seconds and then move your eyes on to John's eyes. Then several seconds later, establish eye contact with Jane.

You should also adjust the time allocated to staring at the different person to the circumstances. For example, if the conversation focuses on John, you should spend more time looking at John's eye and once in while quickly stare at Bob or Jane to check how they feel about what you are saying. If you notice that Jane strongly disagrees to what you say, then move the focus of the conversation toward Jane and keep eye contact with her for longer periods and regularly check for Bob and John's feelings by quickly glimpsing at their eyes.

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Exercise 19

Move Your Body

Moving Your Body is Important for Effective Communication

Stutterers have a tendency to stand still while speaking, carefully avoiding moving their arms or any other parts of their body. Many fluent speakers also share this tendency but staying still is more widespread among stutterers. Maybe this is due to the fact that stutterers perceive speaking as a dangerous activity. They feel in danger and naturally resort to the same strategy used by our ancestor in prehistoric times when confronted with a lion: Stand still and hope that the beast won't notice you.

It's certainly a good idea to avoid being noticed by a wild lion: you don't really want to become part of his next meal... But other people are not lions; they won't eat you up. Why should you avoid catching their attention? If you don't catch their attention, they won't listen to you. What would be the point to speak to them if they don't listen to you? If they don't listen to you, chances are you won't feel at ease and this will make you more likely to stutter.

Moving your body will make you feel more at ease by preventing tension from building up inside you. I already mentioned this tension that we feel building up before stuttering. Moving your body is an excellent way to ease that tension.

Moving your body with ease will make you feel more comfortable and your listener will in turn feel more comfortable as well. The way you feel has a major impact on the way your listener feels. Once you both feel at ease, a relaxed and confident conversation is more likely to occur. The fact

that your listener is relaxed and focused on what you say will help you further lower the tension and make stuttering less likely.

Practice Moving Your Body

During the coming days, you will practice moving your body while talking to others. There are many things you can do with your body to make the conversation more relaxed and more effective.

If you sit on a chair, you don't need to sit straight. Try different positions. Try leaning backwards and stretch your legs. Maybe you can extend your arms and let your hands reach the back of your neck to hold your head. This position lets you take a deep breath and flush your bloodstream with oxygen. Do you feel comfortable that way?

You can also lean forward moving yourself closer to your listener making it easier to exchange confidential information.

If you are standing and speaking to a colleague sitting at his desk, maybe you can put one of your hands on the back of his chair or maybe hold the back of another chair and lean on it.

If you are both standing, extend your arm and rest your hand on a wall or put one of your feet on the crossbar of a chair. Grasp an object lying on the table and play with it.

In some circumstances, you might even touch the person to whom you are talking to. Maybe you can rest your hands on your friend's shoulder or lightly touch his elbow while talking to him. Of course, it all depends to whom you are talking to. Make sure touching your listener is adequate and socially acceptable or you might end up being sued for sexual harassment!

Practice moving your body during several days until it becomes second nature. And of course, while practicing moving your body, you shouldn't forget the previous lesson and keep on keeping eye contact. Moving around while keeping your eyes locked on the eyes of your listener: that's quite a challenge... Good luck!

References

HARRISON, John C., *Conquer Your Fears of Speaking before People*, National Stuttering Association, 1989

Exercise 20

Speak With Your Body

The Importance of Body Language

This exercise is a bit similar to the previous one but pushes the technique a lot further. In the previous exercise, you trained yourself to move your body while you speak in order to feel more at ease and more comfortable in your environment. You also noticed how moving your body could attract the attention of your listener.

Now you will learn how moving your body can actually convey meaning and render communication more effective and more enjoyable. Speaking words out of your larynx is indeed not the only way to make yourself understood.

In some cases, body language can be an alternative to verbal communication: moving your head sideways means “No” or “I disagree”. Repeatedly moving your head up and down means “Yes” or “I agree”. Pointing your finger at the bottle of orange juice can be enough to prompt your friend or relative to hand the bottle to you. Sometimes, you can even make yourself understood by pointing your eyes in a given direction.

In most cases, however, body language is used simultaneously with verbal communication. It renders communication more vivid and more descriptive. It is an excellent way to attract attention and make sure that your listener listens to you.

Wink

Wink and watch your listener's reaction. Your listener will probably smile or wink back to you. How do you feel? Don't you enjoy this kind of non-verbal communication? It makes you feel great and relaxed and your listener probably feels the same. You both feel relaxed and this will make communication easier and stuttering less likely to occur.

What is the meaning of a wink? It usually means you are in a good mood and that you are happy to be with that person. It's not something people usually say with words. It's so much easier and faster to say by winking one eye. It clearly demonstrates the importance of body language: it enables you say things faster, more conveniently and more adequately.

Speak With Your Hands and Facial Muscles

Try to use your body as much as possible while you speak. Mimic what you say with your hands. You went fishing during the weekend and want your colleague to understand how big the fish was? I guess you know what your hands and facial muscles should do. Watch your listener as his eyes open wide. Yes! He got the message: your fish was really big.

Make sure you effectively move your facial muscles while you speak. Smile if you feel like smiling, grimace if you are displeased, open your eyes as wide as you can to show that you are surprised. Partially close your eyes or shake your head if you have difficulties understanding what the other person is trying to explain.

There are so many things you can do with your face, your head or your hands to make yourself understood more effectively and communicate with others. Try to use them as much as possible and notice each time how it makes communication more efficient and enjoyable. Notice how it makes you feel more relaxed.

Try at least once a day to make yourself understood without uttering a single word. The goal is not to avoid speaking and stuttering altogether. Pure body language is not a substitute for verbal communication. The goal is to realize how effective non-verbal communication can be. The goal is to turn you in an effective communicator. What do you think when you see somebody making himself or herself understood by simply moving a little finger? You probably think this person is a great communicator. And this is a technique you can easily master no matter how bad your stuttering can be. Once you mastered this technique, other people will perceive you as an effective communicator; you will gain confidence and this will make you less likely to stutter.

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Exercise 21

How to Interrupt People

Is it Really Impolite?

You were probably told during your childhood that you shouldn't interrupt people when they talk: it's impolite.

Sure it's impolite but in the real world you often have to interrupt other people while they speak. If you have something urgent to say, you simply cannot wait until this talkative person finishes talking about the weather outside. The weather is an endless topic of conversation and you would probably have to wait for a couple of hours.

Having something urgent to say is not the only reason to interrupt people. Some people are so talkative that if you don't interrupt them, they will keep on talking all day. You also have the right to talk and you should claim that right.

The Proper Way to Interrupt People

The worse mistake would be to rush in and start talking at the same time as the other person. It's a big mistake because

- 1) It's impolite.
- 2) Nobody will be listening to you. If nobody listens to you, it will make you feel nervous and confused and you will be more likely to stutter.

It's therefore important that you first interrupt the talkative person by saying something such as: "Bob, sorry for interrupting you, but I have something urgent to say". Use body language (you can for example raise your hand) to make him understand that he should stop talking. Make sure he stopped and that you caught his attention as well as the attention of the other people who were listening to Bob. Pause for one second, look into his eyes and then start talking slowly and with confidence.

If you proceed this way, you know that everybody is listening to you. If you know that everybody is listening to you, you will feel no need to hurry thus feeling more confident and you will be in a situation where it is easy to relax and maintain control. You will therefore be less likely to stutter.

Making sure you attract the attention of your listener is extremely important. I remember a speech pathologist telling me that I stuttered in order to attract attention. I think she got it wrong. My opinion is that in many cases, I stuttered because I failed to attract attention. If you have the feeling the other person is not listening to you, you feel uneasy and worthless. You will tend to speed up your speech and will be more likely to stutter. If you know the other person is listening to you, you feel important and confident and in control of the conversation. You feel no need to hurry up and can take your time to relax and you will be more likely to speak fluently.

Exercise 22

Speak Up!

The Other Person

Did you notice how many people speak with a low voice? When I drive I sometimes have a hard time hearing what the passenger says: his voice barely covers the noise of the engine. I wish my passenger had a knob I could turn to increase the volume. When I ask the passenger to speak up, I often get the stupid usual reply that I forgot to clean my ears. Very funny!

The truth is that the passenger thinks he speaks loud enough. His ears are so close to his larynx and mouth, that the sound of his own voice probably sounds deafening to him. He cannot imagine that he can speak any louder.

What about You?

In fact, chances are that you also behave in the same way. You think that you speak very loudly but others would probably be happy if you could speak a bit louder.

If you stutter, speaking with a low voice has one big advantage: you ba-ba-ba and p-p-p-po won't be heard by too many people. You don't really want the entire neighborhood to know that you stutter. For this reason, you probably have a tendency to speak in an even lower voice than the average person.

Speak Up!

In the coming days, you will try to speak louder than usual. Don't worry if you stutter. Sure; more people will hear your stuttering blocks. And so what? We already said that you must acknowledge your stuttering and that there is no reason to be ashamed of your disfluencies. Speaking louder will be an excellent way to show to yourself and to the world that you can live with your stuttering and that you are not ashamed.

How do you perceive someone who speaks louder than the average person? You probably think that he is confident. You will be more likely to listen to him and you will tend to believe what he says.

If it works that way for others, it will work the same way for you. By speaking up, you will gain confidence, people will be more likely to listen to you and believe what you say. This will improve your fluency and you will be less likely to stutter if you are confident. Stuttering blocks will also be less likely to occur if other people listen to you. Speaking up also has a beneficial effect on the Valsalva mechanism. You will phonate more and your larynx will be less likely to close shut. You will also have to breathe more deeply and this will further relax your Valsalva mechanism.

Gradually increase the volume of your voice day after day. Don't worry about deafening your listeners. Remember that your larynx is very close to your ears and that you hear yourself much louder than your listener does. As long as your listener doesn't cover his ears with his hands, you can probably increase the volume a bit further.

Now let's suppose you need to speak to John. John is about thirty feet away. What will you do? Walk toward him and whisper to him? No, of course not! You will stay where you are and will shout over to him. It probably means that ten or twenty persons will hear what you say and will eventually hear you stutter. You are not ashamed of your stuttering so it's not a problem for you.

Keep on focusing on increasing the volume of your voice during the next few days. While you speak, notice how you feel. Do you feel a bit strange and uneasy? This is normal: you are behaving in a way you are not used to and you might take a few days to adjust. You can then increase the volume a bit further.

Do you feel more confident and outgoing than usual? Great! It means that you are adjusting very fast. You can keep on increasing the volume.

Notice how the other people react to your new way of speaking. Do they listen to you more attentively?

Do they seem more lively and outgoing? No wonder: Other people often behave a bit like a mirror. If you smile, they will smile. If you blink, they will blink back. If you speak in a low and dull voice, they will seem dull. If you speak with a loud and energized voice, they will bounce this energy back to you and they will seem lively and outgoing.

Notice how you are now interacting with other people. You are now communicating with other people instead of struggling with your stuttering. You not only exchange words and ideas but you can also influence their moods and their behaviors. You don't need to be fluent to achieve that. All you have to do is speak up, use body language, smile, wink and that's it!

Good Days and Bad Days

You probably noticed that stuttering fluctuates from one day to the next. One day you are relatively fluent and the next day, you stutter heavily. Nobody knows precisely why stuttering fluctuates from one day to the next but you probably noticed that you tend to stutter more when you are tired or sick. I suspect the reason is that when you are tired or sick, you tend to speak with a lower volume than usual and this in turn makes stuttering more likely to occur.

Keep this in mind, and next time you have a bad day, try to increase the volume of your voice. Maybe that's all you will need to turn that bad day into a good day!

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Exercise 23

Sing!

Stutterers Don't Stutter When They Sing

Stutterers don't stutter when they sing. Why? Maybe because singing is not processed by the same part of the brain as speech is. Or maybe, it's due to the fact that when you sing, you emphasize phonation and this prevents the vocal cords from closing.

An excellent way to instantly eliminate stuttering would be to sing all day. You could sing as you order a doughnut in a bakery and you could sing in the managing director's office as you ask for a pay raise but I don't think you will find this solution very practical.

Add Music To Your Voice!

What you can do is add music to your voice. If you listen carefully, you will notice that many people around you (and among them the best communicators) often change the pitch and volume of their voices as they speak. They put emphasis on some syllables in order to catch the attention of their listeners. They also want to show that they are in a good mood and that they are having a great time talking with their friends.

Listen carefully how they speak and try to do the same.

For example, instead of saying: "goodmorningandrew" in a dull and monotone voice, you can say: "Andreeeeeew! Good morning! How are you doing today?"

Andrew will be happy to be greeted with such energy and enthusiasm. Notice how he reacts. He is happy to hear you call him by his first name. What makes him feel even happier is the way you emphasized his name by prolonging the second syllable. Now that you made Andrew happy, communication with him will be easier and more relaxed. You will be less likely to stutter.

Practice adding music to your voice for a few days and notice how it makes communication with other people more lively and relaxed. Speaking will become a more enjoyable experience and you will feel more comfortable in your relationship with others.

References

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HARRISON, John C., *Conquer Your Fears of Speaking before People*, National Stuttering Association, 1989

Exercise 24

Pause!

Pauses and Stuttering Blocks Are Two Different Things

If you are a stutterer, you probably hate pauses because they look very much like stuttering blocks. If you feel you are about to stutter, you want to rush through the speech, as fast as possible. You have the feeling that if you pause or take your time, stuttering will catch up with you.

You think that pauses are your enemy. Now, you will learn to turn them into your ally. Pauses will become your friend that will help you to relax and improve communication with others.

Pauses will help you to be in control. If you pause, you control the situation. If you don't pause, stuttering will control your speech.

Pauses Will Help You Attract the Attention of Your Listeners

Let's suppose you want to talk to Walt. You know that a stuttering block is around the corner and you feel an urge to rush through your speech. Rushing won't help. You tried it a thousand times in the past and you know perfectly well that it doesn't work.

I suggest that you try a different approach. Start by using body language to attract Walt's attention. For example, you can raise your hand or point your finger. We already discussed the benefits of using body language and you know it's a good way to start. Once you are sure that Walt is ready to listen to you, you say: "Walt! I have something important to tell you." Notice how Walt is getting increasingly attentive to you. He wants to know what you have to tell him. Now, you take a pause. You know that Walt is

not going to walk away because he is so curious to know what you want to tell him. Pause for a few seconds and notice how Walt is growing increasingly eager to know what you have to tell him. You are in control of the situation. You are not begging Walt to listen to you. Walt is begging you to speak.

Take advantage of the pause to relax your Valsalva mechanism and then start talking **calmly** and **slowly**. Take several pauses as you speak. There is no need to rush because Walt is listening to you and you know for sure that he won't run away until you finished.

You can also take pauses when you tell a joke. Each time you take a pause, your listeners will become more attentive to what you say. They are eagerly waiting for the punch line and each pause is increasing their eagerness. The more you increase their eagerness, the more they will laugh when you hit the punch line. Watch your listeners while you pause. They are looking at you with their eyes wide open. They love it when you pause because it makes the joke more exciting. They are smiling getting ready for the great laugh. Look at them and enjoy the feeling of being in control of the situation. Feel how you are intensely communicating with your listener, verbally and non-verbally. Enjoy that feeling and notice how your Valsalva mechanism is relaxed.

Talk slowly and calmly

Stutterers tend to speak faster than the average speaker. Non-stutterers often wrongly assume that stutterers stutter because they speak too fast. I don't think this is true. In fact, it's probably the other way round: stutterers speak fast because they fear they might stutter and try to rapidly get the words out before they are stuck in a stuttering block.

Slowing down your speech probably won't in itself stop your stuttering. But it will be easier for you to control your speech if you talk slowly. Your listeners will be more focused on what you say and you will feel more relaxed. This will further help you improve your fluency.

References

- FRASER Malcom, *Self-therapy for the stutter*, Stuttering Foundation, 2002
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Exercise 25

Show Your Feelings

The Adrenaline Vicious Circle

If you stutter, you probably have a tendency to hold back. You tend to avoid speaking whenever you feel you might block. This is especially true when it comes to emotions. For example, if you feel angry, you will prefer to hide your feelings because you fear you might block if you speak up.

When you are angry, adrenaline is being released in your bloodstream. Adrenaline is usually released whenever you are in a “fight or flight” situation and is very useful when you face a physical threat because it provides the stamina required to either fight the danger or to flee.

Adrenaline is less useful when the danger you face doesn’t require a physical response. For example, when somebody makes you upset. In this case, you can nonetheless burn up a major part of the adrenaline by showing up your anger and speaking loudly. I mean very loudly.

But what happens if you don’t burn up the adrenaline by showing your anger? It simply stays in your body and it might cause all kinds of undesirable effects. For example, it can tighten the muscles of your Valsalva mechanism...

I think you got the message: if you are upset and don’t say anything because you are afraid to stutter, adrenaline will build up in your body. The more adrenaline builds up in your body, the more difficult it will be for you to speak. The more difficult it is to speak, the more stress you will endure. More adrenaline will build up in your body and it will become more difficult to speak... We have here a vicious circle: the adrenaline vicious circle.

Don't Get Trapped

To avoid being trapped in this vicious circle, you should let people know immediately when they make you angry and let them know that you won't let them walk over you. I don't mean that you should necessarily shout at somebody who is upsetting you. You certainly don't need to insult his mother or knock him in the face. You should under every circumstance remain within socially accepted limits. You don't really want to get into trouble as this would mean another load of adrenaline.

Ideally, you should be able to speak in a louder voice than usual but calmly and with determination. This way, the other person will understand that he or she had better avoid upsetting you again in the future. By being calm and determined, you will gain confidence and the other person will respect you. It will be easier for you to speak fluently.

Of course, as you vent your anger with calm determination, make sure to relax your Valsalva mechanism and breathe abdominally.

References

HARRISON, John C., *Conquer Your Fears of Speaking before People*, National Stuttering Association, 1989

Exercise 26

Don't Hold Back

Another person is babbling some nonsense with ease and there you are listening passively. You strongly disagree with what that person is saying. You want to speak up and voice your opinion but you prefer to stay quiet because you know that if you open your mouth you might stutter. You stay quiet and you feel that the pressure is increasing inside you. Does it seem familiar? This is probably one of the worse frustrations a stutterer can experience.

Go Ahead and Say It!

But it doesn't have to be that way: if you have something to say, then say it! It doesn't matter if you stutter. Just say it! People will listen to you even if you stutter. Maybe they will feel embarrassed by your stuttering but so what? They were probably even more embarrassed by the babblings of that other person.

Before voicing your opinion, interrupt the babbling person using a technique similar to the technique described in exercise 21 (*How to Interrupt People*): Say quietly but with confidence something like: "Sorry John, I understand your point of view, but I strongly disagree with you". Use body language to show that you disagree and that you request the right to speak; look him straight in the eyes. Make sure you caught his attention as well as the attention of the other listeners and then slowly and confidently explain your point of view.

Feel how the tension is easing out of your body. Even if you stutter, you feel great because you are in control of the conversation. You have something to say and other people are now listening to you.

Don't Wait for Fluency to Happen

You shouldn't wait until you become fluent to start speaking up and say what you have to say. The exercises given in this book will help you become fluent only if you become an outgoing person now. Regardless of your present disfluencies, you should take every opportunity you have to speak. You should experience as many different speaking situations as possible.

Each time you have something to say or a question to ask, go ahead even if you feel you will stutter.

You are not really interested in buying a water filter but are just curious to know the price. Take the yellow pages and call companies selling water filters. You don't want to set up a company but want to know what the procedure is like? Call the Chamber of Commerce and find out.

You are in a meeting and you have a great idea that would allow the company to make more profit? Go ahead and say it! Never mind if you stutter. Your boss is obviously interested in making more profit and he will listen to you with great interest.

Get involved in the community, invite friends for lunch or for a picnic. Whether you stutter or not, you should become an outgoing person and get involved in as many social activities as possible.

Don't wait until you become fluent. Do it now! Go out and speak!

You don't need to be fluent to be a good speaker. Being fluent and being a good speaker are two different things. A fluent person can be so dull and so boring that everybody will hate his company. Conversely, a stutterer can be a very lively and interesting speaker. A stutterer can very well become the most popular person on the campus or in the workplace.

References

FRASER Malcom, *Self-therapy for the stutter*, Stuttering Foundation, 2002

Exercise 27

Be a Leader

Voice Your Opinion

It's lunch time. You are about to go out for lunch with half a dozen colleagues. They are deciding in which restaurant to go and there you are listening quietly and waiting for their decision. It seems most of them want to go to a burger restaurant. You want to eat a pizza but you say nothing because you know you will probably block on the word pizza. You secretly hope that they will change their mind and will finally decide to go to an Italian restaurant. Of course, this probably won't happen and you will probably have to eat one of these damned burgers.

Does this kind of situation seem familiar to you? Probably. But it hasn't to be that way. You should always voice your opinion even if you stutter. Your colleagues all want to eat in a burger restaurant? Tell them that pizzas taste better and are a lot healthier. Be convincing. Use all your power to change their mind and you will probably succeed.

Once you are sitting in this Italian restaurant, notice how you feel great. You managed to lead half a dozen friends in this restaurant. If you hadn't voiced your opinion, they would all be eating burgers and French fries in a burger restaurant two blocks away. They are here because YOU decided. Maybe you stuttered badly but your colleagues were clever enough to understand that p-p-p-pizza means pizza and you were so convincing that they gave in. You are not a withdrawn co-worker waiting for others to take decisions. You have charisma and you are popular. You play a leading role when it comes to making decisions.

What about a Cup of Coffee?

In the following days, try to be a leader. You can lead people to do very simple things. For example, if you need to work on a marketing plan with a colleague, you can suggest a cup of coffee before starting to work. While you watch your colleague inserting a coin in the coffee distributor, take note of the fact that your colleague is standing there because you decided so. You will come to realize that you have the power to lead and interact with people.

Your life is not a one to one relationship with stuttering. Your life is all about interacting with other people. You should stop focusing on your stuttering and instead focus on your relationships with others. You should focus on leading others to action. You should voice your opinion each time a decision has to be made. This way, you will increase your self esteem and you will feel more comfortable with others.

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Exercise 28

Unveil Your Hidden Intentions

You probably already noticed that it is sometimes convenient to pretend to be deaf. If somebody asks you to do something that you don't want to do, you simply pretend that you didn't hear. I personally often resort to this technique when my wife asks me to do something I don't want to do and it usually works fine. (I asked my wife to proofread this book and I guess she is going to kill me when she reads these lines...)

Similarly, a stutterer can in some circumstances unconsciously pretend that he is unable to speak. This is very convenient when asked an embarrassing question. The other person is likely to give up after you severely blocked five or six times in a row. Stuttering becomes a kind of carapace that you use to protect your privacy.

This is not something you will acknowledge easily because it occurs at an unconscious level. You don't consciously decide to voluntarily stutter in order to avoid answering an embarrassing question. Your unconscious mind thinks this is the right thing to do to protect you.

The major drawback is that this draws your unconscious mind to treat stuttering as an ally. If you consciously try to destroy stuttering, your unconscious mind will work in the opposite direction. It is therefore very important that you understand how you unconsciously use stuttering to serve your interests. Year after year, stuttering became a way of life. You got used to living a hidden life protected by your disfluencies. You have learned to live comfortably hidden behind your stuttering and you can expect that your unconscious mind will undermine any effort you do to control stuttering.

Sure, you consciously want to get rid of stuttering. But you are at the same time subconsciously scared of becoming fluent. Once you are fluent, you will have to speak and answer every question you are asked no matter

how embarrassing it can be. You will have to alter your way of life and become more outgoing and more social. You will have to actively take part in conversations. You will be expected to speak when having lunch or dinner with friends or relatives.

Try to remember circumstances in which you deliberately stuttered. It might not be easy to remember as this is not something you did consciously and it is not something you are really proud of.

The exercise will probably become easier if you try to remember circumstances in which the fact that you stuttered badly could have been considered as an advantage. In such circumstances, your unconscious mind probably did everything it could to hinder fluent speech. Think about it and realize how this attitude was childish, irresponsible and self-destructive.

You should commit yourself to avoid such a behavior in the future. You are now a responsible and outgoing person and you cannot resort to such foolish techniques. You are in control of your speaking abilities whatever the circumstances. You cannot let hidden intentions hinder your speaking.

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The Stuttering Foundation, *Stuttering therapy: transfer and maintenance*, 2002

Exercise 29

Avoid Avoiding

Avoidance Techniques

When a stutterer feels he is going to block on a word, he usually resorts to several kinds of avoidance techniques:

- 1) He might avoid the feared word by replacing it with a word of similar meaning. This alternate word is often less adequate but the stutterer feels it will be easier to say.
- 2) He might say something completely different that might not reflect what he originally wanted to say. For example, he might say “apple pie” instead of “doughnut”. He might eventually compromise his opinions because he feels the word ‘Republican’ is easier to say than the word ‘Democrat’ (or vice versa).
- 3) Stutterers often use starters and fillers such as “well”, “you know”, “uhhhh”, “let’s see” etc... Stutterers feel that these useless words will give them a running start that will help them rush through the feared word.

These avoidance techniques can on some occasion prevent stuttering blocks from occurring. But, in most cases, these avoidance techniques are simply inefficient and useless. They won’t prevent you from stuttering. What is more, they carry a high cost: The excessive use of starters and fillers can become extremely annoying for the listener, probably even more annoying than stuttering itself. And oftentimes, you will end up saying something entirely different from what you originally intended to say.

Avoid Resorting to Avoidance Techniques

In the coming days, you will be attentive to the way you use avoidance techniques while you speak. You will try to avoid resorting to these techniques. Maybe you think that giving up the use of avoidance techniques will increase the number of stuttering blocks. It might be true on the short run.

But on the long run, avoiding the use of avoidance techniques will actually improve your fluency. Resorting to avoidance techniques indeed means that you have to scan ahead for feared words. Each time you spot a difficult word, you have to think hard of a way to avoid it. Doing so is exhausting and stressful. And this additional stress will increase the likelihood that you stutter.

What is more, resorting to avoidance techniques tends to increase your fear of stuttering. And the more you fear you might stutter, the more difficult it will be to be fluent.

Whenever you have something to say, try to say it straight without avoidance and without inserting any useless junk words. Make your best to use the most adequate words even if you feel you will block on one of them. Remember that it's usually better to stutter on the correct word than to be fluent on a less adequate alternative. You shouldn't compromise your ideas and opinions for the sake of fluency. Say what you think even if you have to block on every single word.

Make a List of your Avoidances and Eliminate them One by One

Word substitutions and fillers are not the only avoidance techniques used by stutterers to avoid stuttering. Stutterers often avoid speaking situations that they perceive as difficult or postpone a phone call in the hope they will be more fluent later during the week. Every stutterer is unique and you probably know better than anyone else what you do to avoid feared words and feared situations. During the coming days, make a list of the avoidances techniques that you often use and try to eliminate them one by one.

Proceed Gradually

Some stutterers rely so much on avoidance techniques that they might find it virtually impossible to stop using them immediately. If such is your case, you should eliminate the avoidance techniques gradually. Keep on using

them in circumstances in which you feel you can't afford to stutter and won't be able to do without them. Start avoiding using avoidance techniques in circumstances in which you feel more at ease. Once you are confident that avoidance techniques are no longer necessary in easier circumstances, try to eliminate them in circumstances that you perceive as more difficult.

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Exercise 30

Adopt a Positive Attitude

Smile!

Did you notice that confident people often have that confident smile on their face? If it works for them, it should work for you as well.

Smiling requires less muscle tension than keeping a straight face. Smiling relaxes the body and the mind, builds confidence and makes communication with others easier. All these positive effects will enhance your fluency.

Try to smile as often as you can. Smile to others and smile to yourself when you are alone. Smiling will positively change your perceptions. If you smile to yourself while you drive and happen to have a flat tire, I don't expect you to jump for joy but you will probably have a somewhat less negative perception of this unpleasant experience.

Similarly, smiling will help you change the perception you have of stuttering. If you take the habit to smile when you interact with other persons, you will be less likely to be emotionally affected if you happen to stutter. You might even find yourself spontaneously laughing with your listener about the block.

Adopt an Assertive Posture

Try to stand straight and place your shoulders back. This will increase your self-confidence and will positively alter the way other persons perceive you as well as the way you perceive yourself. Standing straight will also make it

easier for you to breathe efficiently and this will have a direct positive effect on your fluency.

You should also try to walk and move your body a bit faster. The faster you move around, the more assertive you will be. You will also have less time to worry about difficult speaking situations and about stuttering.

Healthy Lifestyle

You probably noticed that stuttering fluctuates from one day to the next. You might stutter badly today and be perfectly fluent tomorrow. The fluctuation in fluency seems to be largely unpredictable but there is probably some correlation with the state of your health. You are certainly more likely to stutter, if you are sick, if you are not in a good shape or if you didn't get enough sleep. You should therefore make sure you have a healthy lifestyle:

- 1) Make sure you get enough sleep and sleep at consistent times.
- 2) Eat healthy food. Avoid eating junk food between meals. Try to take your meals at more or less the same time everyday.
- 3) Make sure you drink enough water. Your brain won't function properly if you are dehydrated and this might increase your stuttering.
- 4) Make sure to get enough physical exercise. Physical exercise will help you be calmer, more outgoing and more at ease.

Don't Procrastinate

Avoid procrastinating. If you have something to do, do it now! This will give you the feeling that everything in your life is under control. If you have the feeling that everything is under control, it will be easier to control your speech.

If you have a phone call to make and are having a bad day, maybe you will want to put off the call to another day hoping that you will then be more fluent. This is not a good strategy. The more you wait, the more you have time to worry. You will stress yourself and this will increase the likelihood that you stutter. You should instead immediately and boldly go ahead with your phone call and swiftly lift the handset.

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Conclusion

Congratulations! You went through all the 30 exercises of this book and you probably noticed significant improvements in your fluency. If you noticed significant improvements in your fluency but still stutter, don't worry. This is perfectly normal. Keep on doing the daily exercises every morning and every evening. The improvements that you already noticed demonstrate that you are moving in the right direction. I suggest that you go through the exercises once more and make sure that you fully integrate all the techniques.

If your stuttering is now fully under control, that's great. As explained on page 32, the ultimate goal of this therapy is to forget that you are a stutterer. This can be achieved once you have replaced each and every element of the stuttering iceberg by its counterpart in the fluency iceberg. If you feel confident that your stuttering is under control and that its associated behaviors, perceptions and feelings have been adequately altered, then I recommend that you try to forget that you are a stutterer and see what happens. If this leads to a relapse, you can always get back to the exercises.

If you haven't yet noticed any improvement in your fluency, don't give up. Some persons take more time than others to master new techniques. Keep on doing the daily exercises for a few more months. Go once more through all the exercises and take your time. Make sure you perfectly master all the techniques described in this book. In the unlikely event that you still fail to become fluent, then maybe you should try another type of therapy. You should seek the advice of a speech pathologist and/or search the web for additional information on stuttering.

Feedback

In any cases, I would like to hear from you. Feel free to contact me on the contact page of <http://www.stuttering.ch> Let me know what you think about

this therapy and how it helped you control your stuttering. Your comments will be mostly appreciated and will be taken into consideration when a third edition of this book is published.

Part III

Therapy for Children

Chapter 1

Your Child Stutters

Your child sometimes repeats words or syllables and you are concerned that he might become a lifetime stutterer.

You shouldn't be overly worried: About 20% of young children stutter at one point or another and most of them spontaneously outgrow stuttering. It is therefore very likely that your child is simply going through a normal period of disfluency and will gradually become normally fluent.

However, some of these stuttering children (approximately one out of twenty) don't outgrow stuttering spontaneously and need the help of their parents and in some cases the additional help of a Speech Language Therapist in order to become fluent speakers.

What Should I Do?

The first thing to do is to avoid overreacting. As explained above, most children naturally outgrow stuttering and it is statistically very likely that your child will also do so. You should at all cost avoid showing to your child that you are concerned about his disfluencies. If you show concern, your child will become aware of his stuttering and will try hard to be fluent. By trying hard to speak fluently, he will tend to tighten his Valsalva mechanism (see chapter 2 - *Tightening the Wrong Muscles* for details regarding the Valsalva mechanism) and this will increase his stuttering.

If your child's stuttering is mild, it is not necessary to immediately seek the advice of a Speech Language Pathologist. You can probably improve your child's fluency through indirect therapy: children tend to imitate their parents and you can influence the way your child speaks by changing the

way you behave and speak with him. For example, you can have your child slow down his speech by slowing down your own speech. The next chapter (Indirect Therapy) explains in details how this can be done.

If you don't notice any improvement within one month or if your child's stuttering is severe, you should seek the help of a Speech Language Pathologist. Don't wait: the longer you wait, the longer it will take to eliminate stuttering.

Speech Language Pathologist

It is extremely important that you avoid increasing the child's awareness about his speech impediments. For this reason, you should first meet the Speech Language Pathologist **without** the child. During this first visit, make sure the therapist is comfortable and experimented in working with children and that he will be able to help your child without increasing his awareness about his stuttering. If you are not sure, try to meet another SLP.

During a subsequent visit to the SLP, you will bring the child with you and the therapist will assess his disfluencies. If the SLP is skilled, he should be able to assess the disfluencies without making your child aware of what is going on.

Whatever therapeutical approach the therapist recommends, keep in mind that you will play a central role in the therapy. Your child spends several hours a day with you and you have a major influence on your child. You should therefore keep on following the recommendations given in the following chapter.

Should I Talk about his Stuttering with my Child?

As long as your child is not aware that he stutters, you should avoid mentioning stuttering with him.

If your child shows obvious signs that he is aware of his stuttering or if he asks you questions such as "Why can't I talk?" or "What's wrong with me?", then you should try to talk openly with him about his problem. You can then gradually implement a direct therapeutical approach (see chapter 3 – Direct Therapy for details).

Is it my Fault if he Stutters?

No it's not your fault if your child stutters. Nobody knows for sure what triggers stuttering but studies indicate that stuttering is not caused by the way the child is reared by his parents.

This of course doesn't mean that you cannot do anything about your child's stuttering. As previously mentioned you can **positively** influence your child and help him develop fluent speech.

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Chapter 2

Indirect Therapy

Talk Slowly

Children who stutter have a tendency to speak faster than other children and you might think this is the reason why they stutter. In fact, it might be the other way round: it's more likely that stutterers speak faster in an attempt to finish their sentence before stuttering catches up with their speech. Doing so, they tend to stress themselves and this makes stuttering more likely to happen. 'Speaking fast' is probably not the initial cause that originally triggered stuttering but 'speaking fast' and stuttering definitely work hand in hand to perpetuate one another.

You should therefore find a way to have your child slow down his speech. It is very tempting to tell your child to slow down but it should be avoided:

- 1) It's virtually impossible for a child to voluntarily and consciously slow down his speech.
- 2) By telling him to slow down his speech, you will make him more self conscious about the way he speaks and this is likely to make his stuttering worse.

You should instead lead by example and speak slowly to him. Children have a tendency to imitate their parents and your child will tend to also slow down his speech.

Pauses

When your child asks you a question, take the habit to pause one second before answering. Take your time and pause one second between each sentence.

Again, your child will tend to imitate you and this will lead him to speak slowly and to take his time when he speaks.

Bad Days and Good Days

You probably noticed that stuttering comes and goes: one day your child is fluent or nearly fluent and the next day he might stutter severely. You shouldn't worry about these fluctuations; they are perfectly normal. The intermittent aspect of stuttering is rather puzzling and nobody knows for sure why it fluctuates from one day to the next.

You should be attentive to these fluctuations and plan your daily activities accordingly. If your child is having a good day (ie he is fluent or nearly fluent), try to have him speak as much as possible. Let him enjoy the pleasure of fluent speech. Fluency breeds fluency and this pleasurable experience will have a long term carryover effect.

On the other hand, if you notice that your child is having a bad day, try to plan some activities that require little speech such as a bike ride or swimming.

Don't Ask Too Many Questions to Your Child

Most children don't like being asked too many questions and children who stutter are no different. If your child stutters and you pressure him with questions, he won't feel at ease and this might reinforce his stuttering.

Ideally, you shouldn't force your child to talk. You should let him speak when he feels like it and let him decide the topic. If you want to ask him a question, give him ample time to answer.

Let Your Child Speak as Loudly as he Wishes

If you are like me and don't like having kids screaming like crazy around the house, you will probably find this piece of advice a bit tough to follow. I find it fascinating that a tiny child can produce more noise than half a dozen

adults all talking at the same time. Children speak with a much higher pitch than grownups and can effortlessly fill up the entire room with their little high frequency voices. After a hard day in the workplace, you will probably find it difficult to resist asking your child to speak with a lower volume.

It is nevertheless essential that you let your child speak as loudly as he wishes. As explained in Part II, (*Exercise 22, Speak Up!*) speaking with a loud voice has two beneficial effects: it builds confidence and it has a relaxing effect on the vocal cords. It's easier to be fluent when you speak loudly than when you speak with a low voice and you should therefore refrain from asking your stuttering child to speak with a lower volume.

In fact, you should even **encourage** your child to speak with a higher volume. You can easily do so by pretending to be deaf: If your child says something, curl your hand around your ear and ask him to repeat more loudly.

While doing so, you should be careful not to increase your child's awareness about his stuttering. You should start playing deaf when your child says something fluently else he might think that you are asking him to repeat because of his stuttering. You can also tell him you are getting old and that your hearing is not as good as it used to be. Children are usually amused by our weaknesses and your child will probably like the explanation.

You should also be careful not to overdo it. Try to play deaf in a playful manner and make sure your child is not annoyed by your repetitive requests to repeat more loudly. If he seems annoyed, you can postpone the exercise to another day.

You can probably also find a way to turn this into a joyful game and ask your child to repeat several times louder and louder. Children like to speak loudly and your child will probably enjoy the game. If you don't enjoy the game as much as he does, you might consider buying some earplugs!

Encourage Your Child to Sing

Stutterers usually don't stutter when they sing and you can help your child develop his speaking skills by singing nursery rhymes. This will increase his confidence in his speaking abilities. Fluency breeds fluency and the natural fluency he enjoys while singing will probably have some carryover effect when he speaks.

Of course, you can encourage him to sing in a loud voice. This way, you will kill two birds with one stone!

Maintain Eye Contact

Try to maintain natural eye contact with your child when you speak with him. By maintaining eye contact, you will show to your child that you are listening to him and you will help him develop non verbal communication skills. Don't look away when he blocks on a word.

Avoid Giving Advices to Your Child

Don't tell your child to "slow down" or "to take a deep breath and start over again". These advices are simply useless and can only make him more self-conscious about his speech.

Generally speaking, you should avoid interfering directly with your child's speech. Don't ask him to repeat fluently a sentence on which he blocked. He already had a hard time saying the sentence once and he would be really annoyed if you asked him to repeat it a second time.

Don't Interrupt Your Child

Don't interrupt your child while he speaks. Listen to him and let him finish saying what he has to say before you start talking. By doing so, your child will understand that he has ample time and that there is no need to hurry his speech.

You should also educate your other children to take turns speaking and to listen when someone else speaks. Every family member should talk one at a time without being interrupted. This way the pace of the family conversation will be unhurried and relaxed; the young stutterer will feel more at ease and will find it easier to talk.

Remember that your child who stutters shouldn't be given a special treatment. Stuttering is not an excuse to monopolize the conversation and all your children whether fluent or not should take turns speaking in the same way.

Teach Your Children to Listen

You should teach your children (including those who don't stutter) to listen when someone speaks.

This way your child who stutters will feel more relaxed because he will be sure that the other family members are listening to him. He will also learn that speaking is not merely the act of expelling words out of his body but rather an interaction with other people.

Don't Fill In the Blanks

If your child blocks on a word, patiently wait that he finishes saying the word. Don't say the word for him. Most stutterers hate it when their listeners try to finish their sentences for them.

If you take the habit to fill in the blanks for him, he will tend to speak faster in order to be able to finish his sentence before you interfere with his speech. He will feel stressed and this is likely to induce Valsalva maneuvers and make his stuttering worse.

Don't Tell Your Child to Think What He Wants to Say Before He Starts Speaking

Non-stutterers often have the impression that stutterers don't have a clear idea of what they want to say or that they think faster than their speech. Non-stutterers sometimes assume that stutterers wouldn't stutter if only they could take their time, sort out their thoughts, think of how they should express their ideas before starting to speak.

These assumptions are false. Stutterers usually clearly know what they want to say and they usually clearly know what words they should use to express their idea. Stuttering can make a stutterer feel confused but stuttering is not caused by mental confusion.

It is therefore useless to ask your child to think what he wants to say before he starts speaking. What is more, if you do so, you will increase his self-consciousness and this could in turn increase his stuttering.

Switch Off the Radio and Television during Meals

A child who stutters will find it more difficult to speak if he fears your attention will be distracted by the radio or the television. Meals are probably one of the best times for kids to talk with their parents and you should make sure your attention is fully focused on what your child is saying.

Lifestyle

As mentioned earlier, stutterers have 'bad days' and 'good days'. Although nobody precisely knows why some days are better than others; it seems that it is more difficult to be fluent when you are sick, tired and/or under pressure. Stutterers are less likely to stutter if they got enough sleep, are physically fit and relaxed. You can therefore help your child have more 'good days' by changing the lifestyle of the family:

- 1) A fast-paced lifestyle could be detrimental to your child's speech and you might consider slowing down the family's pace. This will help your child to relax his Valsalva mechanism and to take his time when he speaks.
- 2) Make sure your child is not involved in too many activities. Else he might not have enough time to relax and to rest.
- 3) You should also make sure that your child gets enough sleep and goes to bed more or less at the same time every night. Stutterers usually tend to stutter more when they are tired. In fact, even non-stutterers occasionally experience minor disfluencies when they are exhausted. Are you sure you can intelligibly name your destination to the taxi driver after flying halfway around the world?
- 4) A healthy balanced diet might also help your child to be more fluent. Try to maintain consistent times for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Don't let him eat junk food between meals.
- 5) Outdoor activities such as playing sports, swimming, cycling etc are also important. It will help him feel more relaxed and this will improve his fluency.
- 6) Make sure he drinks enough fluid. The human brain doesn't work too well when dehydrated.

Praise your child

Praise your child each time he does something well. It will increase his self confidence and this in turn will make it easier for him to speak fluently.

Be careful not to praise your child when he is fluent as this would imply that stuttering is wrong. He would then try hard to avoid stuttering at all cost in order to please you and this might trigger a Valsalva maneuver.

Teasing

If your child stutters, he will probably be teased because of the unusual way he speaks. You shouldn't worry too much about that: all children are teased for one reason or another. Being teased is part of the process of growing up and learning social interactions. You were probably also teased when you were a child and I bet you weren't durably traumatized by this unpleasant experience!

This said, if your child who stutters is teased by his siblings, you should talk to them and gently explain that they shouldn't tease their brother or sister for the way he or she speaks. Explain to them that he or she is a bit slow in learning speaking skills just like other kids are a bit slow to learn other skills such as holding a spoon. We all have our weak areas. Would they like to be teased because they are slow to learn to ride a bicycle or to properly hold a baseball bat?

If your child tells you that he is being teased for his stuttering by his school mates, you should talk with him. Explain to him that teasing is no big deal and is bound to happen anyway. Children who don't stutter are also teased for various reasons: for being too fat or too thin, too short or too tall, for having a funny family name or for being clumsy etc...

Give Your Full Attention to Your Child At Least Once a Day

At least once a day, you should try to take some time and talk with your child. You should find a place where you know you won't be disturbed. Make sure the radio, stereo and television are switched off.

Maintain natural eye contact while you speak with him. Let your child lead the conversation and make sure the conversation is unhurried and relaxed. Focus on what he says not how he says it and let him know that he got the message across by commenting what he said or by using facial

expressions. Let your child understand that you accept him the way he is and that his stuttering won't prevent you from loving him.

Don't Show Your Embarrassment

Avoid showing your embarrassment when your child blocks on a word. Maintain natural eye contact with him and try to remain relaxed. Focus on what your child is saying not on how he says it.

Perhaps, you find your child's stuttering terribly embarrassing and might therefore find it difficult not to show your embarrassment and concern. If this is the case, you should first try to change the perception you have of your child's stuttering.

Listen to other children and you will notice that virtually none of them are really fluent. Learning to speak is never easy and most children experience some kind of disfluencies. In fact, most adults also experience disfluencies once in a while. As explained in exercise 12 - *Listen to Others*, nobody on Earth is 100% fluent 100% of the time. Once you realize this fact, your perception of your child's difficulties will change and it will be easier for you to remain calm and relaxed when he happens to stutter.

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Chapter 3

Direct Therapy

If your child is obviously not aware that he stutters, then it's better not to mention stuttering with him as it might make him self conscious about his speech impediments. You should try to indirectly alter the way he speaks by following the advices given in the previous chapter (Indirect Therapy) and seek the advice of a Speech Language Pathologist if you don't notice any improvements within a few weeks time.

On the other hand, if your child shows signs that he is aware and concerned by his speech difficulties, then Indirect Therapy will not be enough. You should also find a way to openly speak about his stuttering with him and implement a direct therapeutical approach. It is also important to openly talk about stuttering if your child accidentally overheard a discussion about his disfluencies.

In many families, stuttering is a kind of taboo that nobody mentions. Parents are often afraid to mention stuttering with their child because they fear they might hurt his feelings and make his stuttering worse.

Sure, it's not easy to talk about stuttering with a child who stutters. But it's important that you find a way to do so, else your child will quickly have the feeling that he is left alone desperately fighting with stuttering. This chapter provides a few tips that will help you mention stuttering with your child.

Stuttering Is Like Making Mistakes

Explain to your child that it is perfectly normal to make mistakes when learning something new like learning to talk, to hold a spoon or to ride a

bicycle. Speech is a complicated process involving hundreds of muscles in various areas of the body and it takes some time to learn to coordinate them all.

Explain to your child that it's perfectly OK if he needs a bit more time and efforts than other children to learn to speak. We all have our weak points. You can point out to him that he was faster than other children to learn other skills such as riding a bicycle, swimming, reading, counting etc.

Make it plain to your child that it is perfectly OK to make mistakes when he speaks. It will help him feel more at ease with his stuttering and his Valsalva mechanism will be less likely to tighten.

Your Child is not Alone

If your child is aware of his stuttering, he probably thinks he is the only child in the world who suffers from this condition. This wrong perception can make him feel desperate and it is important that you point out to him that many other children stutter.

It is widely estimated that 1% of the population stutters. About one child out of twenty stutters at one time or another. Of course, your child is probably too young to understand statistics and percentages and you should explain that too him in words that he understands. It can help to mention some other children he knows and also have some disfluencies even if these disfluencies cannot be labeled as stuttering.

Avoid Those Scary Words

When talking with your child, you should avoid scary words such as 'stuttering' or 'Speech Language Therapist'. You should instead use childish terms such as 'bumpy speech' and you can refer to the SLP by his first name.

Acknowledge Your Child's Stuttering

If you repeatedly pretend that nothing is happening when your child severely blocks on a word, he might end up with the impression that his stuttering is something to shameful to mention.

You should once in a while acknowledge your child's difficulties by saying something like: "Gee! This word is not easy to say! I also had

difficulties saying this kind of word when I was your age”. You can comment further and explain to him that saying this type of word will get a lot easier as he grows up.

You can also point out to him that even adults have problem saying words once in a while.

Play with Stuttering

Your child who stutters probably perceives stuttering as something scary and shameful. Because of these negative perceptions, he feels worried whenever he opens his mouth and speaks. He tends to tense his Valsalva mechanism and this makes stuttering more likely to occur.

You can change his perceptions by turning stuttering into a game. This will desensitize him and he won’t fear stuttering anymore. If he doesn’t fear stuttering, his Valsalva mechanism will be more relaxed and he will hence be less likely to stutter.

Turning stuttering into a game might not seem easy at first. You should of course proceed very cautiously and make sure your child is ready to play with stuttering. If you notice that he is reluctant, take your time and postpone the attempt if necessary.

The first step is to acknowledge your child’s stuttering as explained in the previous section. Once you are sure, your child is comfortable with the way you acknowledge his stuttering, wait for the next time he blocks on a word and ask him to teach you how to stutter on that word. For example, you can say something such as:

“Hey! I like the way you bumped on that word. Let me try to bump the same way you did....”

Faking stuttering is not that easy and maybe your child will laugh at you because you didn’t bump as well as he did. Anyway, make sure he enjoys the game. The goal is to turn stuttering into something funny and enjoyable.

You can also have your child have fun stuttering on purpose or experiment new funny ways of stuttering. This will help him get in control of his speech.

What to Expect?

By practicing the direct therapy described in this chapter, your child will feel more relaxed and less self conscious and his fluency should gradually improve. If, however you don't notice substantial improvements within a few weeks, you should immediately meet with a Speech Language Therapist. Don't wait; the longer you wait, the more difficult it will be to eliminate stuttering.

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