

COURSE REPORT - MELBOURNE NOVEMBER 2008

By Geoff Johnston - Regional Director

The Victoria Hotel was the venue for the recent Melbourne course held 13-16 November 2008. As luck had it, the course coincided with the Christmas Parade in Melbourne on the Saturday so our transference of technique and beliefs activities to the real world had many more choices of people and situations.

Nine new students attended the introductory session on the Wednesday night. The number of overt and covert people who stutter was about even with seven from Victoria and two from New South Wales. About 25 returning graduates attended the Wednesday night session to welcome and support the new people. Graduates came from every state in Australia, some flying 3-4 hours to attend.

Dave Simpson from Perth was attending his 50th course, a wonderful example of commitment and willingness to share his knowledge and to help other people. Considering that Dave is in his mid-80s, the man's a legend on the programme.

Thursday laid a strong foundation by teaching breathing and speaking techniques and drilling those skills in lines. Everyone worked hard and by late afternoon were speaking in front of the group without stuttering. During the Thursday afternoon several pairs of returning graduates were sent out on the streets of Melbourne to do 50 contacts with strangers. Later that day Justin and Rick led their popular session for returning graduates "Who's Driving Your Bus" looking at controlling our thoughts rather than allowing them to control us.

Friday started at 8:00am with drilling and reading aloud followed by an explanation of the Checklist. This was followed by Harrison type workshops emphasising different key points on the Checklist during the storytelling in small groups. New students by this time were participating confidently.

Late morning Nick Tunbridge (refer <http://www.nicktunbridge.com/>) conducted a workshop on strategies for recovery, issues in the workplace and having the right attitude. Although not a McGuire graduate, Nick's attitude to his own ongoing recovery from stuttering presents valuable lessons for everyone, stutters or not!

Graduates continued to go out on the streets to do 50 contacts throughout the course as well as their 100 on Friday and more on Saturday.

Decision time came at lunch-time with everyone joining except one person who believed he was OK 95% of the time and wouldn't put in the work required to overcome the remaining 5%.

Graduates demonstrated contacts to new students late on Friday with everyone achieving their 100 contacts.

Three split sessions were held on the Friday night:
Q&A session with new students
Facing your fears and phobias;

and the physical process of blocking.

Staff Training was conducted in parallel with the course during the weekend with two people training to be certified coaches on the programme and several to be course instructors.

After early morning phone calls, Harrison workshops were conducted on the Saturday followed by the contact session by the new students with most achieving 100 contacts. Public speeches were held in the City Centre Park next to the giant Christmas tree. They turned off the Christmas music especially for us. Everyone spoke powerfully and had a ball a great achievement for those new people who said no way would they be speaking in public. Incredible what can be achieved in two days!

Three split sessions were held on the Saturday night as well as staff training:

How to use the Hexagon in your recovery

Social Skills

Becoming a conversation sensation

It was interesting to note that a predominant theme in the last two groups was how to approach women, obviously a significant concern for young men who stutter.

Sunday was about the recovery process, relapse issues, allocation of coaches and support groups and how to use the Graduates' Workbook for goal setting and monitoring progress. Family and friends then joined the group for a summary of what to expect from their loved one, speeches by now new graduates and the old graduates, and presentation of certificates and awards.

Eight new graduates left the course and from evidence in the past week, the course has been life-changing for many of the new people.

On this course we had at least six course instructors and a dozen really strong graduates/coaches. Thank you to everyone for their help and their continuing commitment to the programme in Australia. The urge to come back and help others after we ourselves have been helped is one of the elements that set the programme apart from other treatments world-wide. With persistence and hard work with support from coaches on the programme, being a victim of stuttering can change forever.