

The Voice



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The Newsletter for The McGuire Programme (by Geoff Johnston)

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For the password to the Graduates' Section please contact Geoff Johnston.

Hi McGuire Graduates,

Another year has past and I hope everyone is still on the road to recovery or have reached a level of eloquence at which you are happy? If you've found it all too hard for the stage of life and "busy-ness" you're at, I urge you to decide that 2007 is a period of renewed energy to improve your speech with the support of the McGuire Programme. Relapse from any speech programme is common and should not be seen as failure but rather an opportunity to learn and come back stronger and wiser! I wish you and your family a happy and safe Christmas and hope that 2007 will be an exciting year of moving forward and achieving your goals.

This issue of *The Voice* contains information about courses available to you during 2007, an application form to reserve accommodation on those courses, information about support available and some stories and articles that you might find inspirational and informative.

I encourage all graduates to attend a course this year whether you've fallen off the bike somewhere along the Road to Eloquence and want to get back on, or you just want to lift your recovery to the next level. The McGuire Programme does work with hard work and perseverance and for many Australians has been life-changing. You've paid for your membership. Please use it as needed!

2007 Course dates

Melbourne, 7-11 March, Victoria Hotel
Sydney, 11-15 April, Hotel Y on the Park
Brisbane, 16-20 May, venue to be advised
Perth, 20-24 June, Kings Hotel
Adelaide, 18-22 July, Rockford Hotel
Sydney, 19-23 September, Hotel Y on the Park
Melbourne, 21-25 November, Victoria Hotel

There will be several course instructors attending every course with at least one from interstate if possible. Graduates/coaches attending courses will be given ample opportunity to challenge their comfort zone by participating fully and possibly leading split sessions.

If you plan to attend one of these courses please let me know and if you require accommodation complete the form on the bottom of this newsletter and send to me with the amount required at least four weeks prior to the course. Graduates are encouraged to stay at the hotel to gain the fullest benefit from the course.

You'll notice that there is a course in Adelaide scheduled the first in at least three years in SA. Please support this course. Adeladians know how to have a good time!

Toastmasters' Success

McGuire graduates continue to have great success competing against "normal" speakers in public

speaking competitions run by Toastmasters, Rostrum and other clubs. Graduates who are doing well in their recovery have one thing in common; they are being brave about challenging their feared speaking situations by expanding their comfort zones. Notice what is working for other people and copy them!

Staff training

Staff training will be scheduled during 2007 according to the demand. People who want to further progress their recovery or put something back into the programme by coaching or instructing are encouraged to let me know of their interest to attend a staff training weekend.

Temporary coaches are also reminded of their obligation to attend the training to formalise their coaching status.

The Rules of Block Release and Cancellation

These rules are not new and apply to anyone recovering from stuttering.

Firstly, the concept of Block Release. If you block, stumble, fumble over a word, STOP and let it go immediately, maintain good eye contact, release your air, PAUSE, smile and do it again using great technique. NEVER push through a block.

Cancellation has a broader meaning than Block Release. If something is NOT correct or NOT to your satisfaction, go back and do it again. Basic learning theory is the last thing we do is what gets reinforced!

If you stutter badly in any situation, do it again using exaggerated technique (5 words per breath). An example is ringing to book a table at a restaurant. If you make a mess of it and you're not happy, ring up again, disclose that you are a stutterer and ask to make the booking again. Just make sure that you don't end up with three candle-lit tables by the window?

Assertive Self-acceptance

One of the most difficult things we face as people who stutter is accepting that we have a problem, accepting that we aren't the same as others, accepting that we aren't a normal speaker. As a result we may try hard to hide our little "secret" from others by substituting words, avoiding certain words or sounds or just by avoiding speaking at all.

Some of us are so highly skilled at this that people in our worlds don't think we really have a problem. "What's the big deal? You only stutter on rare occasions?" However, only we know the fear, anxiety, stress and nervousness that for most people who stutter, is a part of our daily lives from morning to night.

So why do we try so hard to hide our stuttering behaviour? Obviously we're ashamed that we stutter, people regard it as a weakness (discrimination is alive and well against people who stutter), we all want to be perceived as normal, we just want to be accepted, loved and respected. Therefore, we have this little "secret" that we try to keep hidden, although people in our lives "know" but don't like to mention it in case it embarrasses us.

In trying to hide our stuttering by trying to be "fluent" we create approach/avoidance conflicts within ourselves, that is, wanting to speak but holding back because we're afraid we might stutter. This state of "fight or flight" manifests itself in blocking/stuttering behaviour.

What can we do about this to bring about a more positive result?

ASSERTIVE SELF-ACCEPTANCE!

What do I mean by this?

1. Accept that we are not fluent speakers?

Totally accepting that we aren't a fluent and normal speaker frees us up to do something about it! The basis of Alcoholics Anonymous I understand is to firstly admit and own that you have an issue around drinking. We have an issue around speaking!

2. We've spent our lives trying to be fluent speakers – has it worked for you?

It's not very intelligent to keep doing what we've always done, and expect a different result!

3. We need to think of ourselves as RECOVERING stutterers.

Yes, we are people who stutter but in the process of working on our communication, a work in progress if you like! There is no shame about being a recovering stutterer. It takes great courage, something to be proud of.

4. Stop trying to be perfect.

Allow ourselves to be imperfect speakers and be comfortable with that! Perfectionism seems to be a common personality trait with people who stutter! Even the best ABC announcers aren't perfect speakers. Why do we think we have to be perfect?

5. Self-acceptance requires ACTION not just thinking!

Be comfortable in doing a disclosure at the start of an interview, phone call, presentation, whatever. Talk about your "secret" and let the audience in on it leaving you with nothing to hide. This frees you up to be you, not the pretender who's trying to hide that they stutter! An effective way of doing a disclosure is by voluntary stuttering or by simply saying, "Before I start I want to say that I'm a recovering stutterer so I'll be using a technique to help me. Please be patient." People respect this honesty and straight away are on your side.

6. Not care about other people's opinion of us!

What other people think of us is really none of our business! When we feel fearful and anxious talking to others, we've trespassed into their personal "power zone". Focus on what you have **control** over, and what you are **responsible** for!!!

In talking to and coaching graduates of the McGuire Programme, I find the lack of Assertive Self-acceptance is perhaps the biggest issue we face; the one that people who stutter have most problems with! Stuttering in adults is only in a minor way, a problem with speech. It has more to do with how we perceive ourselves in regard to people and the world around us. The solution therefore has to be holistic with changes in attitudes required for long-term success. A speaking technique is only useful as a tool to go out into the real world and to change our perceptions and beliefs about ourselves.

Assertive Self-acceptance is a great start!

How to improve confidence and eloquence

We must realise that to recover from stuttering is NOTHING to do with being "fluent". It's about feeling good about ourselves and looking forward to and enjoying speaking situations.

1. Revisit and LIVE the Five Directions.

2. Assertive self-acceptance that you're a recovering stutterer working at "getting good" at the sport of speaking.
3. Regular contacts – not five but 50-100 per session.
4. Join Toastmasters, Rostrum or a drama class and enjoy the experience of speaking.
5. Use your McGuire and personal support networks to help and support you.
6. Demote this personal trait stuttering that we are overcoming to the rank it deserves in who we are, not number one or even in the top ten!

Support groups

Adelaide – Rob Lucas – 0403 117 120

Brisbane – Gerry Hill – 0416 200 389

Perth – Geoff Martin – 0439 901 373

Melbourne

1. Heidelberg – Peter Jumeau - 0417 481 403
2. St Albans – Geoff Stevens - 0419 095 025
3. Springvale – Tom Fiala - 0417 146 208

Sydney – Parramatta

– Peter Ghisla - (02) 9484 1758

– Adam Robinson - 0412 998 252

Telephone support: International and Australian phone list and myself on (08) 8388 4663

Communicating with graduates

The main means of communicating news to graduates is via the website: www.beyondstuttering.com.au
Contact me for the password to the graduates' section.

If you haven't access to the Internet, access and assistance is available at little or no cost at your local Library. While you're there, check out the updated international website on: www.mcguireprogramme.com

Advertising the Australian programme

I devote considerable time and money to advertising the Australian courses. However, it's really important that graduates help in this task. The health of local support groups and networks relies on new people coming into the group thereby revitalising ideas, attitudes and enthusiasm. Expand your comfort zone by talking to TV, radio, local media and let others know about how the programme has changed your life.

Neurosemantics Course

Some graduates have worked hard at their recovery using the resources and tools of the Programme but find there are still situations in which they struggle.

If this description applies to you, there is a course available which may provide additional tools in controlling your mind around stuttering behaviour.

Lorna Bukkland-Vitetta is conducting the 5-day "Letting Go and Expressing Yourself" workshop in Brisbane 17th

– 21st January 2007. This workshop explores further the cognitive approach to overcoming stuttering.

For recent graduates of the McGuire Programme it is recommended that you give McGuire your full focus for at least the first 12 months of your recovery to prevent any confusion and dilution of focus that participating in another programme may cause.

For further information about Lorna's course check out the website www.fluency.com.au/fluency/workshop.htm or email Lorna on lorna@fluency.com.au

Asset-Based Thinking versus Deficit-Based Thinking

Stuttering is so much more than a problem with speech. Stuttering is more about the experience in communicating with others and how we see ourselves in relationship to the world around us and the people with whom we interact.

We have learnt and drilled a speaking technique. This enables us to speak very well. However, for many people they have been unable to transfer that skill into real life with its often perceived pressures, judgements and fearful situations. It follows then that to recover from stuttering long-term we have to change the system which is supporting the stuttering behaviour. We have to change ourselves, our perceptions, our beliefs and the way we look at the world around our speaking.

Which brings me to talk about a great book I have just read? "Change The Way You See Everything" by Kathryn D. Cramer Ph. D and Hank Wasiak. Published in 2006 the book is available through good bookstores for \$39.95. I bought mine from Angus and Robertson.

The book explains the great personal gains to be made by focusing our thinking on our assets rather than our deficits and goes on to explain how this might be achieved.

If we focused our attention on:

- Opportunities rather than problems
- Strengths more than weaknesses
- What we can do rather than what we can't do

we build our energy, self-belief, enthusiasm and are able to move forward with our life and perhaps even our recovery from stuttering?

The authors claim that most people are "hard-wired" to focus on deficit-based thinking. That is, personal gaps and weaknesses, problems, what bad things might happen and fear and anxiety around those things. Our nervous system works really hard to protect us from harm. However, this type of negative thinking, encouraged everyday by our media, often prevents us from doing the very things that will fill us with energy,

hope and self-confidence...and we all know there's a direct relationship between how confident we feel and our quality of speech!

Asset-based thinking is not just "positive thinking". It requires that action be taken to use your own personal assets and those around you, to everyone's advantage. True empowerment is taking charge of your own "power-zone", not being oversensitive about what others think of you, stop being your own worst critic and moving forward with faith, hope and optimism.

Sound good? How might we start to achieve this?

1. Stand guard over your mind and your mouth:
Listen and be aware of everything you say and think, never say or think anything negative about yourself and never put yourself down

Remember, our thoughts determine our emotions about an event and our emotions result in the behaviour. Think negative and self-defeating thoughts about an impending speaking situation and guess what the behaviour is? More often than not, blocking and stuttering!

2. Focus on our intentions rather than our expectations (forget 100% perfection – just do the job)

If we have the expectation that our speech must be perfect or else we've failed, we won't have many positive speaking experiences. Approach every speaking situation with the intention of using our technique to the best of our ability and above all to enjoy the speaking experience. Don't forget to smile ;o)

3. Magnify what's best. Focus on what's next.

- Set your sights on what you want/need
- Move past fear with the attitude, "No matter what happens, I'll handle it."
- Start from where you are with enthusiasm and self-abandon
- Practise as if no one is judging
- Build on what you already know how to do.....gain new skills and apply them
- When you experience victory...celebrate; that best speech at Toastmasters, ordering exactly what you want for lunch
- Set your sites on the next step. Set baby-goals every day and follow through with "personal honour"

4. Respect yourself and respect others by standing up for yourself and the things in which you believe.

Why, on a McGuire 4-day course do we teach assertiveness skills? Because people who stutter in the main have been passive people who sacrifice their own needs to satisfy the needs of others. Self-respect leads to a healthy self-image and to self-confidence and we all know what that helps?

As the book says:

"Change the way you see everything.....
(+) Change the way you see yourself
(+) Change the way you see others
(+) Change the way you see situations

for the better, from this moment on."

Please book my accommodation for the course indicated below:

Tick one please:

- I have enclosed a cheque/money order made payable to "The McGuire Programme (Aust)".
- I have transferred the required amount to the McGuire Programme's bank account.

Tick one please:

- Melbourne, 7-11 March 2006, Victoria Hotel, Little Collins St - \$250 accommodation**
- Sydney, 11-15 April 2006, Hotel Y on the Park - \$230 accommodation**
- Brisbane, 16-20 May 2006, venue to be advised – cost to be advised**
- Perth, 20-24 June 2006, Kings Hotel - \$220 accommodation**
- Adelaide, 18-22 July 2006, Rockford Hotel Hindley St - \$260 accommodation**
- Sydney, 19-23 September 2006, Hotel Y on the Park - \$230 accommodation**
- Melbourne, 21-25 November 2006, Victoria Hotel, Little Collins St - \$250 accommodation**

Name.....Telephone No.

Address..... Email:

Return to: PO Box 344, Balhannah, SA 5242. **Accommodation guaranteed only if payment is received at least four weeks before course commencement.**

PS You may also make a direct credit to: (If you do so, please advise me via email or phone)
Savings & Loans Credit Union, Gawler St, Mt Barker