

The McGuire Programme

Course Report - Perth July 2006

By Geoff Johnston, Regional Director, Australia

The annual course in Perth was held 26-30 July 2006 at the Kings Hotel, Hay Street and attended by 15 new students and 15-20 old graduates at various times during the four days.

Geoff Johnston RD for Australia was the primary course instructor assisted by Geoff Martin, Frank Cook and Perth graduates. Joe O'Hanlon from South Australia also helped.

Wednesday night provided the opportunity to introduce the programme and for people to meet each other. Nerves were soon gone as everyone realised they were amongst friends. Coaches and course instructors had all been out of control stutterers and the empathy shown to new students is always honest and genuine.

We conducted the first day videos on the Wednesday night and found our new students had the usual mix of overt and covert stutterers ranging in age from 18 up to 78. Students came from Perth, regional areas of Western Australia, Melbourne, and Queensland, one from Weipa which is on the western side of Cape York in far north Queensland, almost the other side of the earth to Perth. The videos over the new students looked forward to the course with excitement and a little apprehension.

Thursday sessions consisted of learning and drilling the breathing and speaking technique. Also covered were goals and objectives of the programme, psychological and physiological causes of stuttering and the checklist. Before lunch on the Thursday, all students were able to stand up in front of the group and say their names without any problems. Again this success reinforced the belief that a powerful breathing technique is so critical.

During Thursday and again Friday returning graduates were given 1:1 training so providing a chance to re-establish technique and confidence quickly. One young man, a covert stutterer, was full of fear of speaking and left Thursday lunch-time without speaking to the leaders of the group. It is hoped that the time might be right for him next course in Perth.

Friday sessions included fear reduction tools, overcoming the psychological aspects of stuttering and taking charge of your mind and thoughts. Our oldest student Norma at 78 fell in her room on Friday morning and broke her wrist. Thanks to Geoff Martin for taking Norma to the doctor. She returned later in the day with her wrist in a cast determined to complete the course. They don't make them like that anymore :o) ... tough and determined!

All remaining students recognised the worth of the programme by continuing after the Friday decision time. During the afternoon old graduates showed the new students how to do contacts with 100+ contacts. Friday night everyone was given a choice of split sessions Assertive Communication, Who's Driving Your Bus and Problem Solving Workshop for old graduates.

Saturday sessions included public speaking workshops, facing your fears and becoming an eloquent speaker. We then had contact sessions with everyone doing very well. Public speeches were held in the Murray Street Mall in front of perhaps 80+ people. All new students accepted the challenge and spoke extremely well with great confidence. The change in two and a half days still amazes me! On Saturday night we viewed a recovery and maintenance video.

Sunday sessions included modifying the system that is you, assertiveness training, followup provisions and allocation of coaches. Family and friends attended at 1:00pm and were provided with a course summary. Closing speeches followed with presentation of graduation certificates and encouragement awards.

Thanks again to Geoff Martin and all Perth graduates, and a special mention to Joe O'Hanlon from Port Augusta (the jewel of the north) in South Australia and Sam Allen from Sydney.

Geoff Johnston
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