

COURSE REPORT - SYDNEY OCTOBER 2008

By Geoff Johnston - Regional Director

The course in Sydney was held at the Y Hotel from 7pm on Wednesday 8th October to 3:30pm on Sunday 12th October.

Everyone and many members of family met on the Wednesday night for an introductory session. New people were quickly made welcome and realised they were with people who understood exactly what it was like to live with a stutter.

16 students came from NSW, WA, Qld, ACT and one young man from the Ukraine who had just moved to Sydney. The group was very much multi-cultural with a variety of languages spoken with English being the secondary language for many.

There was about a 50/50 mix of people who were overt and obvious stutterers and covert people who on the surface appeared to not stutter at all. However, only a covert stutterer knows the anxiety and avoidance they experience every day of their lives. This 4-day intensive course was a new start for all the new students.

Thursday was spent laying the foundation by teaching breathing and speaking techniques and drilling those skills in lines using great eye contact. By early afternoon on the first day everyone was able to say their names before the group with eloquence and confidence. By evening all new students were able to say their name and address and were able to join in speaking in small workshop groups on elements of the McGuire checklist.

One young man left on Thursday evening because he wasn't ready to make the required commitment. We may see him back when he gets a little older.

Friday started at 8:00am with drilling and reading aloud followed by more foundation laying by drilling the breathing and speaking technique. Quizmaster Rob led a quiz speaking exercise for the new people with choccie frogs as prizes. Decision time came with everyone signing up except one making 14 new graduates to the programme.

The returning graduates and coaches took out the new people to show them that talking to strangers on the streets wasn't as scary as you might imagine. Most graduates made in excess of 100 contacts with strangers with many funny stories being related later that night.

Split sessions were held after dinner with the choice between a Social Skills workshop and a group looking at "changing the way you see everything." Both sessions went far longer than planned with participants wanting more time. The Social Skills workshop is

particularly relevant to people who stutter because of the lack of story telling and interacting skills caused by their stuttering behaviour.

Saturday morning started with breathing and reading aloud followed by the fun Harrison public speaking workshops. Everyone let go and had a ball some feeling the power in their speech for the first time. Perceptions and beliefs about their speech started to change after such a positive experience. We had a question and answer session via video Skype with Dave McGuire from Santa Barbara, USA. There's nothing like hearing it directly from the horse's mouth (sorry Dave).

Despite nervousness at the start of the course about speaking in the real world, students were excited about going out on the streets to make contacts with most achieving the 100 contacts goal. Public speeches were held at Darling Harbour using a PA system and everyone spoke strongly and without stuttering. Even 1-2 or two who said they wouldn't make a public speak at the start of the course had a go and proved to themselves it was easy. What a powerful experience and belief changing experience.

More split session on Saturday night with a question and answer session for the students, a telephone practice group and a "letting go and having fun" group with raucous results.

Sunday was about what to watch out for when you go home, allocation of coaches and support groups and how to use the Graduates' Workbook for goal setting and monitoring progress. At 1:00pm family and friends joined the group for a summary of the course and speeches by now new graduates and the old graduates.

A wonderful time was had by all with 14 people leaving the course and set to embark on a new speaking path with life-changing experiences.

Thank you to the five course instructors who shared the teaching and to all the old graduates and coaches for supporting and contributing to the course. A special thanks to the new people who had the guts and bravery to walk through the door on the Wednesday night. With persistence and hard work with support from coaches on the programme, being a victim of stuttering can change forever.

Regards,

Geoff Johnston, Regional Director

Observations of the Sydney McGuire Course - October 2008 - By Elaine

There was a notable serious air to this course. The new people showed collectively a serious work ethic quickly embracing the breathing technique and practising fervently. Initial reticence was soon overcome with all the new students committing to the

delivery of their eloquent speeches both at Darling Harbour and at the Sunday speech opportunity.

The dynamics of this group certainly had its magic. Each one contributed in a most unique way and thus contributed to the wonderful success of the course.

Eve-Tara practised the word "Dominoes" ad nauseum - always with a huge smile and an ever-ready and tireless motivation to do it again.

Matthew's sincerity shone as he was never shy to show his feelings, courageous enough to smile and philosophical enough to show his confident air.

Terry proudly introduced his beautiful fiancé to all. All were taken by his enthusiasm and excitement about his speech progress and pending marriage. We all wish you everything of the very best!

Perhaps the crown for the king of smiles and of hard work should be placed upon Patricio's head. Language was no barrier to Patricio. His progress was exceptional. We salute you, Patricio.

Mohammed, always on time, showing great commitment, mastered the technique with great resolve. We applaud your commitment and honesty in describing your goals.

Salah most certainly showed exceptional dedication to his beliefs and a very strong self-belief. With such strong dedication, your speech progress will be monumental, Salah!

James enriched our group demonstrating monumental insight, sensitivity and marvelous intellect. Questioning the status quo can only be healthy. Congratulations on showing such courage and determination. Such qualities can only stand one in very good stead.

Then Bogdan's recent arrival in Australia and English language issues demonstrated to all that these should not be seen as obstacles. Bogdan showed us that with strong courage and resolve, we can and will achieve anything!! All courses need a Bogdan!

Boban is getting married soon. We wish him every success and much happiness. Boban emphasised the importance of believing in you. We all needed to hear this Boban.

Wojtek showed us that a quiet confident manner helps us all. This will help your speech progress immensely.

I now want to mention Mark. You see Mark, you are not always signaled out to be first!! Mark we want to wish you and your wife richest blessings for the pending birth of your child. You worked very hard during the four days. Your willingness to participate and contribute was certainly noticed by all.

Dayne, a special message from Elaine, don't hide your smile - everyone wants to see it - and it certainly helps your speech!!

Andy has showed us how positive, courageous and mature a young man you are. We wish you all the very best at school and let this venue be a practice area for your speech progress.

Luke is a man of great resolve. You showed us all just how brave a young man you are. Keep up the excellent work you began on the course and you will succeed. You are an inspiration to your family and to us all.

Welcome all the new McGuire graduates to our McGuire family. Thank you for contributing to another most successful course. Please remember that the "proof of the pudding" is in the usage of the ongoing support offered uniquely by this course. Practise as much as possible - do what you planned to do and your speech will love you for it!

We wish you all the very best. Congratulations to all.