

FROM
ALABAMA
TO
NEW HAMPSHIRE
(A Story Of My Journey)

by
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and
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From Alabama to New Hampshire A Story of My Journey

Roddy Grubbs with Bobby G. Bodenhamer

FROM ALABAMA TO NEW HAMPSHIRE A STORY OF MY JOURNEY

The old man sat in his recliner, watching his TV and waiting for someone to stop by. His right leg was propped up on the cushion on which he sat and he rubbed that knee with a hand whose fingers were bent by arthritis.

He lost his wife the year before, and he's been a little stunned and bewildered since. I knocked on the door very briefly before letting myself in.

Turning and recognizing who was entering, he said in that high-pitched, stylized tone of voice he sometimes used, "Hey, hey boy; how're you doing?"

"Hey, Granddaddy", I replied.

"Come over here and give your ole Granddad a hug", he said.

It was good and comforting to be in this very familiar place. The cotton mill village in this little south Alabama town was a long way from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, but, this spring of my freshman year, I'd much rather be here than back on campus.

The memories from my childhood years are here in south Alabama, too; either at Granddaddy's house in the cotton mill village, at other family homes in this little town, or at our home in this town or in another nearby town. Those memories are about many different and wonderful things, but they are also about stuttering – something that I felt cursed with as an adolescent and something that I've often felt was the bane of my adult life. "Why me? What did I do to deserve this cursed plague?" I've wondered on more than one occasion.

Well, I'm over 50 years of age now. I've learned to live with some things: I've learned how not to be so emotionally devastated by stuttering – even stuttering badly at the most inopportune time. Everyone has moments of dysfluency, everyone gets their speech jumbled at times – so they say;

well..., yes..., but....

I've tried to get help for this stuttering on several occasions during my adult life. There was more than one year of counseling sessions when I was in my late twenty's. There were some helpful books in my thirty's and more counseling also.

For the last 15 years I've just been living with this thing, wishing that I could find a way to make it disappear; but always pushing forward and pressing on to make sure that somehow I'd get through life even if I stuttered my way through all of it. I wanted things to be different; but, sometimes I thought, one just has to live with the hand one's been dealt and do what you have to do to get by.

I don't know for sure exactly when nor how my stuttering started, but I was a young child who lived in a world with many very expressive, very vocal, fast talking adults (or so it seemed to me). That was in a day and time and culture when children were viewed as 'meant to be seen but not heard'. You never talked back nor argued with any of these adults.

First of all, there were a lot them and just one of you; and you didn't want to pay the price for 'back-talking'. You are the child; they are the ones in charge. Whatever they say is how it goes. They have the power and they control all situations; you, the child, do not. If they say "jump", you just ask "how high". If they say "2 + 2 equals 5", you don't dare tell them they are wrong – you know to keep your thoughts to yourself.

Anyway, this is how I felt and saw things as a child. Please don't misunderstand this: I'm not saying that this is exactly how it was and exactly how everyone acted. I'm saying that these are the kind of impressions of that world that I registered when I was very young.

When I was in the first grade of school, I became very much aware that I stuttered as I had a great deal of trouble reading out loud in class – embarrassing and painful memories that I carried into my adult years. Throughout these school years, I felt, in general, like I didn't have many friends and that people didn't want to be my friend. I felt bullied and picked on. I was painfully aware that I stuttered. "Why didn't people like me?" I often wondered. I was big for my age.

Did I sound like some big ole dumb freak because I stuttered? I always did

real well in the first nine or ten years of school – better than most anyone I knew. Did people not like me because of some mixture of all these things? I did not know.

By the time High School was approaching, I didn't like me and I felt like no one else did either! But then something happened that was wonderful for me – we moved to a totally different part of the country where there was a totally different culture. The two years we lived there were very positive times for me – positive for my self-esteem. However, we then moved down south again, and I felt like I was right back where I started.

When High School was completed, I went off to the University of Alabama, which brings me back to the front door of Granddaddy's house that fine spring day.

These, then, are my impressions of both the world of the adults and the world of my peers in which I lived: I had strong feelings of fear, apprehension, intimidation, inferiority, and tension when it came to interacting with anyone. I always felt that people really didn't like me nor want me around. I felt that people thought I was stupid and that they laughed at and made fun of me all the time. I brought these feelings to every interpersonal interaction. I was not usually aware of them on a conscious level, although some of them would bubble up into conscious thought from time to time; but these feelings and this mind-set were always 'just under the surface'.

This pervasive fear and apprehension were generally about anything and everything, but nothing in particular. And, above all, I can't let myself say what I really think! All of this was registered in my brain, and it all said "this is how the world works and how you fit into the world". I didn't know why things worked this way, and I wished that they worked differently; but I accepted that the world did in fact work this way, and that 'this place' was 'my place' in the world. I've been aware of these impressions in one form or another for many years.

Their intensity and the extent to which I could sense them have waxed and waned through the decades of my adult life. But I sense them and feel their impact to this day.

I've been in the world of jobs and careers now for 25+ years. I find that in every job I've had, across many companies, I have the most difficulty

stuttering in stressful situations with peers and supervisors, and especially with my immediate supervisor. I seem to bring all of the old tension and fear and apprehension to every conversation with an authority figure, and I stutter a lot. Sometimes I stutter less than other times, but I always stutter very noticeably on the telephone.

Every few years during this time, my level of frustration at stuttering would peak, and I would again get interested in 'finding a cure'. Within the last year I felt motivated to start looking again. I had listened to tapes by Anthony Robbins several years back and had found some very helpful and useful coaching in his message. So, when I started looking this time, I would 'google the web' for "NLP and stuttering". I found many books on NLP and I bought some.

I then pretty quickly found links to Neuro-Semantics® (NS), Bob Bodenhamer, and Michael Hall. I saw some articles by Bodenhamer, along with several intriguing lines from his new book and from those articles. I read something like "If you can speak fluently in just one context, you can learn to speak fluently in all contexts". I thought, "Man, don't you dare tease me like that!" In the various counseling sessions and other efforts that I'd experienced over the years while trying to find a cure for stuttering, I had twice reached a point where I felt "I've found it!"

However, within a short period after achieving a high level of fluency, I reached a point where I felt "I've lost it!" I can guarantee you that I did not want to experience that kind of emotion swing again – I'd rather stutter from now until I die than to find it but then lose it again.

And besides, didn't the world of therapists and academicians pretty well accept that stuttering must be the result of some physiological problem, or some alteration or mutation in one's DNA? "Weren't you just wired wrong?" or "Weren't your wires just broken?" I thought. After all, there are several people in my larger extended family who stutter.

It stretches across three generations. How could all of this have occurred if there wasn't some defective gene being passed down? Looking at stuttering from a purely physiological point of view, it made a great deal of sense to me that someone stuttered because of a malfunctioning or miss-wired or over-active Valsalva Mechanism, as one author clearly and cogently described. Bodenhamer approached the problem as a cognitive problem that mimicked a panic attack. This was different and,

simultaneously, very interesting and intriguing.

A lot of what I read in the various books and articles that I was just discovering grabbed my attention and intuitively made sense to me. I read about the connection between mind-and-body. I read how memories, coupled and reinforced with emotions, get ingrained into cells and muscles – a person is a ‘mind-body’ and not a ‘mind encased within a body’. And I was impressed with some exercises from some NLP books that demonstrate how the body reacts differently to one set of thoughts versus another set of thoughts. I had learned in earlier counseling sessions that I could speak fluently in some circumstances.

I had also experienced how my speech and my general level of self-esteem changed when I had worked actively and intensively to focus my mind on a set of thoughts that defined who I am and what I can do in a positive, powerful, and enabling way.

What I initially perceived of both this new material and Bodenhamer’s conceptualization of the basic problem of stuttering made a lot of sense to me on a purely intuitive and experiential level; but I had some nagging doubts, too. I was interested and willing to try this approach some. However, one thing was crystal clear: I wanted a trained coach. I was not going to go at this alone.

So I sent Bob Bodenhamer an e-mail asking for a recommendation for someone trained in his technique who lived in my area. He replied that he did not know of anyone, but that he did provide some therapy sessions over the phone. “Would I be interested?” he asked. I replied, “Yes”, and I provided him with a lengthy personal history prior to our first phone session.

SESSION ONE: April 26, 2005

This first session occurred via phone about 2 weeks after our e-mail exchanges and our agreement to talk. I had supplied Bob with a personal history, and I had also done a little more reading in Bob’s book and in some of the NLP books which I recently purchased.

The text for this section is based on Bob’s notes which he wrote up, at my request, and sent to me. As such, this section reflects the sometimes detailed and sometimes disjointed notes and recollections that do not always reflect an actual transaction log of a conversation. We were talking about some very personal feelings and impressions, and this incomplete

retelling of that reflects those kinds of feelings.

In all of the following, Bob's comments, reflections or any portion of a dialogue will start at the margin, and Roddy's will be indented; for example: I asked Roddy what he wanted to achieve.

"I want to be the best that I can be."

Roddy had provided me with his bio information and with a history of his stuttering in an 11 page document. These notes provided me with an excellent overview of his life and of the development of his stuttering. Roddy has also seen counselors who were most helpful to him. In addition, Roddy has "stepped outside" of his stuttering and done a fantastic job of self-analysis. Having this foreknowledge from studying over his document, I was able to go immediately into interventions during our first session.

I asked Roddy what he wanted to achieve.

"I want to be the best that I can be. That's what I want to achieve."
Roddy's outcome: "Be the best that I can be."

I picked up on that statement immediately figuring that the same mental frames that stopped him from "being the best that he could be" were the same frames that caused the blocking and stuttering.

I asked him what stopped him from being "the best that you can be"?

He immediately said "fear". With further questioning I learned that this sense of "fear" was with Roddy all of the time. He had over the years learned how to control it at times and speak fluently or well enough that other people wouldn't always know that he had a problem. But, it was "always" there.

I associated Roddy (had him step inside the fear) into a recent time when he "really" felt this fear (He chose a recent time with his supervisor at work.) I then asked him "Where in your body do you feel this fear?"

"I am tense. It is in my upper chest and in my neck. My muscles are tense." (I knew that was the kinesthetic for blocking and stuttering.) His breathing became very shallow. Having him "associated" in this state I then ran the Drop Down Through Pattern to uncover both the unconscious

mental frames supporting the fear plus the discovering of resources. Roddy immediately did the pattern. The mental frames uncovered from his being associated into the fear by being with his supervisor in a recent event were:

I did not know what this Drop Down Through Pattern was. Bob asked me what I felt. We discussed and explored that. Then he would say something like 'OK, drop down underneath that set of feelings and tell me what's there'. It was like peeling the layers of an onion. It was also almost as though the initial layers hid or were code for the underlying layers. These are the layers of feelings that I sensed as I dropped down from one level to the next underlying level of feeling:

- 1) "Why is he doing this?"
- 2) "If he really **respected** me and **liked** me, he wouldn't be doing this."
- 3) "I don't like this and I would like to tell him to go jump off a bridge but I can't do that."
- 4) "I can't tell him what I really feel; I am not supposed to."
- 5) "I don't deserve this."
- 6) "Why in the hell are you doing this to me?"
- 7) "I feel angry and confused. I want to stop this but **it would be wrong** for me to do that."
- 8) "He must be upset at something. **I didn't mean to do it!**"
- 9) I asked Roddy how old he felt when he said the above statement. (Roddy was now sounding like a little boy in his tonality.)
- 10) "I feel like a 3 or 4 year old."

Roddy then digressed from the flow of the conversation by stating:

"I am thinking about work that I did previously with a counselor; his approach was psychoanalytical and he also used hypnosis. We tried to identify the first time I stuttered. As we 'went back in time' we came to a time when I was about 4 or 5 and we were living in my maternal Grandparents' house in south Alabama. I'm in some kind of trouble. One of my uncles is mad or is yelling at me. I either had wet my pants and he was mad about that, or he was mad at me and I then wet my pants – I don't exactly know which. I felt like I was in a lot of trouble."

"What did your uncle's yelling at you and your getting into trouble **mean** to you?"

"My uncle **didn't love me anymore**. I didn't mean to do whatever I did. I didn't mean to make him mad."

"Can you say to your uncle what you feel?"

"Well, no. I hear a voice saying, '**don't you talk back to me, boy.**' '**Don't**

you argue with me.”

“Hearing that voice saying, ‘Don’t you talk back to me; don’t you argue with me’, how old do you feel?”

“I feel about 3 years old, or 4, or 5, or 6.”

“Now Roddy, go back to that incident with your supervisor at work. What thoughts come to mind being with him now?” (I am going back to the Drop Down Through Pattern.)

11) “He is in control.”

12) “Whatever he says goes.”

13) “I can’t say anything.”

14) “I am just a boy. This all feels wrong.”

15) “I feel powerless.”

16) “I had better be careful of what I say.”

17) “I can’t say the words I want to say. I have to keep myself from saying what I want to say because if I don’t, they will not **like** me.”

18) “I always have the feeling when I first meet people that they will not like me.”

“I would like to say something aside again. It doesn’t relate directly to what we are doing but I feel I need to say it.”

“Sure, Roddy. You go right ahead and say it.” Roddy was getting quite emotional. I could hear him sobbing over the phone.

“I have this vision. It’s my paternal Grandfather. His face just appeared in my mind as we were talking. Awhile ago when you were saying something about ‘giving myself permission to say the things that I want to say’, you said some of those things in sort of a higher-pitched, stylized tone of voice. My Grandfather would sometimes speak in a similar tone. You sounded just like my Grandfather when you said that.”

(Roddy is really sobbing by now.)

“My Grandfather was very, very important to me. I loved him very much. I knew that he loved and cared for me. His being there helped me move through life. One time, when I was very young, I even asked him if I could call him ‘Daddy’. That let’s you know just how much I loved him and how important his presence was to me. When you spoke in that stylized tone of voice, the vision of my Granddad was immediately in my mind.”

“Roddy, you said that you had a vision of your Grandpa. What did you see?”

“I saw my Grandfather’s smiling face.”

“What state did that put you in?” (I could tell by the tone of his voice that he had gone into a really resourceful state.)

“I feel relaxed; I feel in control; I feel wonderful; I feel great; I feel that the world is a great place to live in; I could care less if people don’t like me.

“What would you say to someone that acted like they didn’t like you?”

“I will tell them just like my Granddaddy did; just to ‘bug off, get lost’.”

(I knew that I had a powerful resource state here to use in Roddy’s healing of the fears.)

“Roddy, now imagine yourself back in that event with your supervisor at work and at the same time, Roddy, I want you to see your Granddad’s smiling face and apply that relaxed-controlled state to speaking with your supervisor. What happens?”

“I first felt fear, and then it just went away as I saw my Grandfather’s face and felt the relaxation and the peace. The fear is gone.”

“That is great.”

“When I imagined myself in front of my supervisor, the fear started coming up. Then, I saw that picture of Granddaddy beside me. I ‘stepped back’, took a deep breath and spoke to my supervisor from a controlled state.”

“Was it an ‘adult state’?”

“Yes, that is exactly what it was.”

“Now Roddy, I want to teach you the Perceptual Positions. When you ‘step back’ from an experience, you are looking at it from another perspective. There are 5 of them. We call them ‘The Perceptual Positions’.”

I walked Roddy through each of them using the event with his supervisor as an example.

First Position: This is when you are in your own body, experiencing the event

from totally within yourself. I explained to Roddy that when he blocks, he is in first position to his fears.

Second Position: This is when you are in the other person's body, seeing you from that person's perspective. It's like being in your supervisor's body seeing the event from his perspective; you know like 'walking in the other guy's shoes' and seeing things like he sees them.

Third Position: "This is what you did when you 'stepped back' from the experience. You step outside your body and see both you and your supervisor from a dissociated state. It is how you get 'distance' from the experience. It is what people do when they say something like, 'that doesn't bother me any more. I have **distanced myself** from it'. They have popped out of their bodies; seen themselves in the experience from the dissociated state; and moved that picture of themselves off into the distance. This is the position of objectivity. When you are in 1st Position, in your body, most people tend to feel their emotions much stronger. When you are in 3rd Position, most people's emotions from the experience diminish allowing them to be more objective about the situation. Indeed, 3rd Position is the position of objectivity.

Fourth Position: This is the system's position. "Do you work in a team at work? If so, then your position in that team is the 4th Position."

Fifth Position: "This is an important position. It is the position of universality. It is the position of seeing the broader perspective. I have added another perspective to this position. For most people, when they go way out far above this world they go out into the realm of spirituality. What kind of spiritual beliefs do you have?"

"I believe that there is a 'force' or a 'power' that is much greater than we are. I believe that this force is very 'benevolent'."

"So, you believe that there is a 'benevolent force and power that is much greater than we are?'"

"Yes, that is correct."

"Roddy, now I want you to imagine that you are 'in that force' – that you are now within that 'benevolent force and power' and that it is a part of you for you believe that you came from that benevolent force, don't you?"

"Yes, that is right. Wow. I'm imagining myself there, I'm 'seeing' myself there in the midst of that force. This is benevolent power; it has infinite knowledge."

“Now, Roddy, being in that benevolent force fully experiencing it I want you to bring that benevolent force **to bear** upon that fear that you had in your chest and neck. Just allow the benevolent force to **permeate completely** and allow it **to transform and enrich** the fear. (Pause) What happens to the fear in the presence of this force?”

“I hear a voice saying, ‘why are you afraid?’ Actually, all of that fear that I felt is now a pretty trivial thing.”

“That is great Roddy, fear cannot reside in the presence of the benevolent force, can it?”

“No, it sure can’t.”

“Roddy, how do you experience this ‘benevolent force’? Do you see it, feel it; have words about it. How do you represent it in your mind?”

“It is an awareness. I am relaxed. I am at peace.”

“Roddy, if that benevolent force was a picture, what would it look like?”

“It is Granddaddy’s face. I see his smiling face. I see *him!*”

“So, your 5th Position of the Benevolent Force and Power is one and the same with your Grandfather’s smiling face?”

“Yes, it is.”

“That is not a surprise. Now Roddy, what happens to that fear and tension in your chest and neck as you apply this benevolent force to it?”

“It is gone. In the benevolent force I am who I want to be; I am in control of me; no one can wrest that from me. I am not going to give it to them.”

“Roddy, can you imagine any situation out there in the future where, should you experience fear, you can see your Granddad’s smiling face and the fear *will not* disappear?”

“No, there is no occasion that could take this state from me. No occasion.”

“Your outcome was ‘to be the best that you can be.’ Is this it?”

“Yes, it is. It is exactly what I wanted.”

“Roddy, just to make sure, what happens to those old feelings of anger and confusion in the presence of the Benevolent Force and Power?”

“I feel clear of those feelings. The dynamic of the anger and confusion is no longer there. It just isn’t there. I am completely clear of them and feel relaxed and at peace.”

“This is great Roddy. I believe that now would be a good time to stop the therapy session and let you do some integration for a few days. We have done a lot of work in one hour. At any time over these next few days should any of those old fears come up, just see your Granddad’s face and the fear will disappear.”

“I agree. I will let all this integrate”

We scheduled another appointment for the following week.

IN THE INTERIM BETWEEN SESSIONS ONE AND TWO:

In the days between sessions one and two I reflected on what we’d discussed and I wrote the following notes.

1. The state that I am in when I stutter is composed of the following themes:

- a) I feel an all encompassing sense of fear and tension about conversing with people. This is a fear of anything and everything. It’s just a fear that is always there and everywhere. The specific “thing” that I might focus on varies from encounter to encounter. The tension grips my torso and chest; I realize that I’m breathing rapidly and very, very shallow. It’s almost like I’m in a “grip of fear”. Sometimes this feels like I’ve been startled and there’s a little feeling of panic. I realize that I often feel a ‘fear of people’; I often feel, in general, ‘afraid of people’.
- b) I feel a pervasive sense of apprehension and dread. I’m apprehensive that the people around me will not like me, will want to bully or hurt or embarrass or make fun of me. I dread that the next word I want to say I’ll stutter on, I’ll stumble all over myself in my speech, look and sound stupid, and then the people around me will laugh and poke fun at me. I know that these types of things did happen when I was a kid, but I also know that they don’t happen to me as an adult – I just feel a fear that they will. I feel the sense of apprehension during the time that I’m struggling with stuttering. It’s not until later, should I pause and reflect back on what

actually occurred that any specific source of dread might be identifiable. When I'm stuttering I just feel a general sense of apprehension, tension, and fear.

- c) I feel a sense of being wronged or of being wrongfully blamed. I feel like a little kid being scolded by an adult. The adult is 'getting on my case about something'. Yet I feel that what they are saying is either a wrong impression on their part – they didn't correctly understand, or something of which I am totally ignorant and have no idea what they are talking about. Again, the point about feeling this in a general sense applies; it's only when I pause later and reflect that I identify specific thoughts such as these.
- d) This is all reinforced with the feeling that I cannot – I am not supposed to – say what I really feel and want to say. I have to suppress my real feelings and to prevent myself from saying what I am thinking. I feel like a child when I feel this. I can hear my dad's voice saying "don't you talk back to me, boy"; "don't you argue with your mother". So, I want to say things but I believe that it's wrong for me to do so, and if I block, then I won't get in trouble.

These themes are various threads of feelings, emotions, and impressions that compose the state of mind that I am in when I am stuttering. These are almost always not part of my conscious awareness when I am actually stuttering. Sometimes, at the moment I am stuttering, I do have a vague intuition that some of these themes are influencing me.

However, I usually only become aware of them, and their depth, later when I might focus my mind on 'what was happening back there'. I can then identify many of these themes in a particular episode of stuttering as I take time to think, reflect, and explore any feelings about that episode. I can begin to realize that I felt 'this' or 'that' set of feelings, that I felt like 'such and such' in that conversation. I don't reflect back on many episodes of stuttering. Most of them I just 'plow on through' and keep going. I'd just as soon forget about almost all of them. However, I do occasionally reflect back upon some, and, when I do, I come to realize that I was feeling 'some of this' or 'some of that' when I was stuttering.

When I stutter, I am usually trying to say words and I block on them. There is silence usually. Sometimes I repeat a syllable of a word on which I'm blocking. If I really put forth an effort to push on through the blocking, then I might repeat some syllable several times. Sometimes my speech speeds up and I repeat several different words in a sentence several different times. During these times, I may not be doing a lot of what most folks easily recognize as stuttering, but my speech is noticeably dysfluent, rough, uneven in tone and speed; I feel a great deal of tension and anxiety. My stuttering is most noticeable when I am speaking on the telephone.

When I'm in a state where I'm feeling some group or set of the feelings that are

described above, then my body reacts automatically with a specific physiological response. My torso and chest and neck muscles tighten up. I begin to breathe very shallow. It's as though I'm not breathing out at all. My chest muscles and diaphragm tighten up. I've inhaled, but I don't seem ever to exhale. Any attempt to speak right now is going to fail because of this physiology.

A person cannot speak when their body is in this physiological configuration. A person can inhale, they can exhale, or they can 'not breathe at all' (i.e., they either hold their breath or they breathe so shallow as to be virtually not breathing). Speech only occurs when air passes *out* over the vocal cords through the larynx – i.e., only when you are exhaling. If you are not exhaling regularly and normally, then you are not going to be able to speak.

The 'physiological response' I have is automatically associated with the 'set of feelings and impressions' I feel. These feelings are an unconscious 'frame of mind' that I have when I interact with people. When I begin to interact with someone then I enter this 'state' and my body responds as described. The set of feelings and the physical response both come as part of the same package. It all works very much like a 'panic attack'. I am startled and my muscles stay tensed and will not relax. The net effect is that I then stutter when I try to speak.

2. I had learned on my own, prior to ever speaking with Bob or to reading his or any other book on NS or NLP, that there was imagery on which I could focus which changed how I felt and induced a different set of physiological responses in my body. This formed part of the reason why I felt, as I did some initial reading in these new books, that the basic themes and approaches about which I was reading made sense to me intuitively. So, it was not surprising to me at the conclusion of our first session that "an image of something" could induce the resulting change in physiology and feelings which I felt upon focusing on the image of my Grandfather. I had learned how this works on two previous occasions.

1. The second time this occurred was about 12 years ago. The situation is one of going into a public men's bathroom and trying to urinate at a row of urinals along the wall when there were many other guys standing there shoulder-to-shoulder also trying to do the same thing. I was 'blocked' in my attempt to urinate and it would take a long time to be able finally to finish (usually the crowd had to thin out first). Some folks call this kind of episode "shy bladder". I realized once, while I was standing there trying to urinate, that my chest and torso and abdominal muscles were tense and tight. I grasped that this muscle constriction was preventing me from urinating. I thought "I need to relax those muscles". I had learned before, in a counseling

- setting, that when I focus on imagery that is relaxing, then my muscles and body respond to this focusing by relaxing. So, as I stood there, I stared at the wall in front of my face and I began to think of imagery that I felt was relaxing. I thought about the texture of the light, the temperature of the air, the sounds, and the smells from that relaxing scene. After a few moments the tense muscles began to relax and I was then able more easily to finish urinating.
2. From that point on, regardless of the 'size of the crowd', I made sure immediately to focus consciously on this relaxing imagery in this very directed way *any time* I entered a public men's bathroom. During the first several times that I tried this and there was a crowd, I found that it might take a few moments before I relaxed and urinated. During these moments I just kept actively visualizing the relaxing scene while I stood there. After several episodes like this, I then found that my muscles relaxed much more quickly. After still more episodes, they began to relax almost immediately. I was training my brain to respond automatically in a new way to this stressful situation. Soon, I didn't have to work to engage this state change in this situation. I could walk up to a urinal, stare at a spot on the wall in front of me, focus and visualize the relaxing imagery, and urinate. If the place is really crowded, well, then I might need to focus consciously and actively on that relaxing scene that I conjure up, but all goes well – even when the crowd is shoulder-to-shoulder.
 3. The first time I learned that focusing on specific imagery could change my body's responses occurred about 30 years ago. I had the occasion to speak before a small audience on a regular basis. I wanted to speak, but I was afraid and apprehensive about stuttering. While driving to the first occasion where I would be speaking, I happened to hear a sport's highlight show that included highlights of my favorite sports team from their previous game (which I had attended). It was as though I was 'back at the game'. I was energized and felt the same excitement listening to the radio as I had when I saw the actual plays occur. That energized state stayed with me as I went to my first speaking engagement. I had very little difficulty speaking to the small crowd. I made sure thereafter that each time I drove to the next speaking engagement that I listened to that sports highlight show and got 'all jazzed up again'.

1. In our first session, Bob used the 'Drop Down Through Pattern' as we discussed a specific instance where I was stuttering. We dropped down to 10 or so different levels. There it tied in with feelings that I remembered from childhood – feelings about stuttering and how I felt in light of that. We 'dropped on down some more' being focused on another situation that I recalled from my childhood. As Bob and I were conversing, I had this very powerful and emotion-packed image of my paternal Grandfather's face. I told Bob that I wanted to talk about this. The emotion was very, very strong. I just sobbed for a minute or so before I could begin to speak. I told Bob that the tonality of his speech had sounded "just like" my Granddad's voice, and that sound had cued this image. The notes for Session One explain the dialogue we had about that, and how Bob had me apply that imagery to a situation in which I was stuttering.
1. Over the next 2 days, the mere thought of my Granddad would bring this powerful imagery and its effect on my state of being (or frame of mind), along with its associate physiological responses, flowing back through my body. I would relax immediately. Over the 2 days following that, I began to have some difficulty 'getting the same physiological effect' from the imagery. By day 5 and 6 following our first session, I was having even more difficulty.
1. Emotionally I was not getting the 'big bang' or the 'big charge' out of the imagery as I had at first. I began to have the feeling that "I'd found something to help, only to lose it again". That feeling was most frustrating and irritating and depressing. It was very, very bothersome.
1. However, intellectually, I knew that there was no damned way in hell that I had lost those feelings that I got from 'seeing my Granddaddy's face'. He had been dead for 24 years, but those feelings, I knew, were imprinted and burned into every cell of my being. There was no way possible that they were 'lost'. Fortunately, I could hold on to what I knew intellectually at the same time that my emotions were 'telling me' otherwise.
1. I also began to have second thoughts about how we had used this powerful imagery for my advantage during our first session, and that bothered me too. To state things simply, when I stuttered I looked at the people with whom I was conversing and I felt all kinds of negative feelings. The use of the imagery of my Granddad said "when you see your Granddad's face it puts you into a positive resource state that changes how your body reacts – your body goes

from being tense and anxious to being relaxed and at peace”. I began to realize that these two states, one negative and one positive, were just the flip sides of the same coin. The coin was that I looked to other people and had them determine how I felt! Some made me feel bad, some made me feel good. But there’s a problem when others determine your internal state: the problem is that your state depends on what others do or say. I felt that my internal state needed to be a function solely of what I did or said or felt. I just did not know how to bridge the gap between these two thoughts. I needed a coach to help me find the pathway out from this jumble.

SESSION TWO: May 3, 2005

This second session occurred via phone 1 week after our first session. The text for this section is based both on Bob’s notes, which he wrote up, and my recollections and reflections. We were talking about some very personal feelings and impressions, and this incomplete retelling of that reflects those kinds of feelings.

I wrote an initial draft of the above notes prior to our second session. I started the second session by first discussing note #3 ‘a’ though ‘c’, then ‘d’.

Roddy stated that since the last session, “It has been a mixed bag. Wednesday I felt great – I could easily associate into my resource state. But by Thursday I couldn’t get into the resource state. I tried different ways but I couldn’t get into the resource state as I did while speaking with you.”

Roddy stated, “This triggered an old feeling that he has found something that has helped him but now he has lost it.” Roddy told me about this belief during our first session. I knew that this limiting belief could very well act as a higher level structure that could very well sabotage all of our work. This belief must be dealt with and reframed.

He knew ‘intellectually’ that he hadn’t lost the resource state but that feeling popped in. His outcome was “to make the new resource state stronger than the old state that believed that NS wouldn’t work for him.” The main theme of this limiting belief was that he had a feeling, a feeling like a child, that can’t say what it wants to say. It wants to talk but cannot talk. It isn’t permitted to talk.

Bob next talked quite a bit about a person’s perception of reality versus

reality itself. Using colors as a topic, we discussed 'what is happening when you see the color green'. The fabric is absorbing all colors except green, which it reflects back. Your eye captures the photons of light in the retina and your brain gets a message over the optic nerve. Your brain then 'sees' green. Yes, but one of my buddies is color blind and he doesn't see green. So, there's the reality of the 'green color itself' and there's the perception of the green color by the brain, which can vary from person to person. Clearly, the perception is different from the reality. Later, one might 'recall' the image of the color green, and this is yet a third variation ('recalling' the color is not the same as 'seeing' the color, which is different from 'the color itself').

We applied this to a situation in which I stuttered. I have the impression in my mind that the other person must feel 'this way' or 'that way' about me. This results in me feeling fear and tension and apprehension. When I feel these things, then there is an automatic physiological response associated with it. But where do the fear and apprehension and tension that I feel really exist in such an encounter? Do they exist in the person with whom I'm conversing? Or do they really simply exist in my mind? That's right, they exist in *my* mind and nowhere else. What's in the other person's mind? Who knows?!

Now extend this one step further. When I focus on the image of my Grandfather, I feel something that is extremely positive and empowering. I feel loved, cared for, validated, and affirmed around him. Hence, in that state I then feel relaxed and at peace. I don't feel fear, tension, and apprehension. I have a different physiological response when I have these feelings than when I feel the other feelings.

But where is that taking place? It is taking place in my *mind*! Is my Grandfather really standing there? Of course not; I only 'see' an image of him in my 'mind's eye'. When he was there years ago, was he thinking 'I want to treat you in such a way that you feel validated and affirmed'? No. Most likely he was thinking about what he would do on his next shift at the cotton mill or when it might work out that he could go fishing again! In his presence back then, I felt in my being that he was treating me in ways that I cherished and wanted. ***And because I perceived this, I gave myself permission to feel*** relaxed, at peace, and OK! In the presence of my Grandfather, I gave myself permission to feel relaxed and at peace and not to feel tense or fearful or apprehensive. I gave myself permission to feel OK around everyone, and to feel that I fit in just fine with the world around

me.

So, today when I actively recall the image of my Grandfather, I also strongly feel those associated good feelings and emotions, and I respond in the same way. Namely, I give myself permission to feel relaxed and at peace. Because I do this, then the physiology of my body changes automatically: it relaxes; I am at peace; I do not feel tension and fear and apprehension; my torso and chest muscles are relaxed; I breathe regularly and normally (both inhaling and exhaling). When I breathe like this, then I do not stutter.

What do I do to start visualizing this image of my Grandfather? Sometimes I use the visual cue of my Grandfather's face. I can 'see his smiling face' in my 'mind's eye'. Sometimes I use an auditory cue. I can say "Hey, Hey boy" in a high-pitched, stylized tone of voice that in my 'mind's ear' sounds just like him saying it. The auditory cue is as strong a trigger as the visual cue. Sometimes I just say the word "**permission**". I might say it softly or out loud. But I pack a great deal of emphasis into saying it – "**per-MIS-sion**". After I cue myself with any or all of these cues, one or more times, then my brain focuses on an image of my Grandfather and that then triggers a state change. And I'm not getting any of this *from* him. I am giving all of this *to* myself. Hence, the feelings about myself are actually coming from within me.

Bob and I discussed how the impressions that I formed from childhood on about 'how the world works' and about 'how I fit into the world' formed my '**map**' of the world. I use this map to navigate every interpersonal interaction that I ever have. This map has been ingrained into my 'mind-body' to such an extent that I always automatically use it – I always expect the world to be this way. That's not surprising. That's the way it works for everyone. Every person has a map, and their map programs their brain to understand how the world works.

Their brain uses this program to navigate its way around the world of interpersonal interactions. The only difference from person to person is that each individual has their own map that's formed by their own experiences. Everyone has their own 'map' of the world – their own programming. So the content of the program varies from person to person; but, everyone has a map that programs their brain and everyone's brain faithfully follows that programming.

Your brain will only function as programmed. So, when one realizes that one's brain is programmed in a certain way, then one has a big task in front of them to re-program their brain to function differently. First one has to define what the steps in this new program are, then one has to work with oneself to 'write' and imprint that new 'way of working' (that new program) into one's 'mind-body' so that when the important situation occurs, the brain will automatically execute the new programming. The brain gets trained to do this by repetition that is associated with strong emotion – put yourself into the state where you have resources and where 'things go as you want them to go' and then transfer that to the important situation (i.e., apply that power to the important situation). Repeat this until your new desired response becomes automatic. When this happens, you will have reprogrammed your brain.

Roddy discussed that as a kid, he felt bullied and picked on. His peers might say "don't come over here" or "don't do such and such" – "if you do then we'll hit you". He did it, and he got hit. Coupled with beliefs he had that 'Children are to be seen and not heard' and that 'You'd better not talk back to adults or you'll get in trouble', Roddy concluded that "If I say and do what I want to say and do, I am going to get hurt one way or the other. So it is better not to talk, i.e., it is better to 'block' any attempts to speak otherwise I'll get hurt."

What did that unconscious part of him that wanted to be able to speak and not get hurt need? What did it need to be healed and give Roddy permission to speak? Roddy, "It needs validation and affirmation to come from within him and not to come from somebody else."

When Roddy would visualize a picture of his Grandfather, Roddy immediately began to feel like an "OK person. There is nothing wrong with me." But Roddy was having problems with the idea that this resource state came from somebody else and not from him. I immediately challenged Roddy. "Roddy, your Grandfather is dead. So, where did that state of being OK come from? Did it come from your Grandfather or did it really come from within you?" Roddy then realized that the validation and affirmation did not come from his deceased Grandfather but that it came from within him as a gift to him from his Grandfather. That resource state belongs to Roddy!

"So, Roddy, when you see your Grandfather, when you create an image in your mind that reminds you of him, know that you are a person worthy of

being validated so when you see that image of your Grandfather go ahead and validate and affirm yourself.” Roddy nodded in agreement.

When Roddy creates that image of his Grandfather, he feels a sense of “peace”. The “sense of anxiety” is gone. Before this, he had a knotty feeling in his stomach; this knotty feeling carried the meaning of struggle. When he focuses on this picture of his Grandfather, the knotty feeling is gone. By seeing the image of his Grandfather, he was able to ‘drop’ the ‘knotty struggle’.

Interesting, while Roddy focused on his Grandfather’s image, his speech slowed down. He enunciated clearly every syllable that he spoke. Now Roddy says “I can give myself permission to ‘be all that I can be’.” This left him with a sense of peace. Roddy stated, “Yes, I was having difficulty Friday and Saturday. I can now let it go. I can focus on this one thing with my Grandfather and everything else will just go away.”

Map-Territory Distinction

We then discussed what our session had thus far been about – it was about challenging the map-territory distinction exhibited by Roddy. He, as do practically all PWS, had carried his childhood map (perceptions) with him into the territory of an adult. Roddy’s perceptual map said, “I am still a child. I can’t say what I want to say or I’ll get hurt”. Even though Roddy is now an adult living in an adult world, when he became tense and nervous about speaking, he immediately regressed in his body as a child. Roddy is now bringing his perceptual map into congruency with the adult world in which he lives and in which he is.

I asked “When do you stutter or block the most?”

Roddy answered that he blocked the worse when he was speaking to someone that he really was trying to please, but with whom he was instead having a disagreement. Sometimes it was just that he and the other person were unable to see each other’s point of view. Sometimes it was that he and the other person were using almost the same words, but they meant totally different things by those words. These kind of situations create a lot of confusion and anxiety in Roddy’s mind. He wonders “Why can’t you see my point of view? I have given you all this information. Don’t you understand what I am saying? Are you trying to understand what I’m saying?”

At the root of this was not the other person’s inability of seeing Roddy’s

point of view; at the root of all this was Roddy's desire for the person not to think that he is "dumb". Herein was the problem. And, how old did Roddy feel in this confused state? He felt like a teenager. Whoops, here we go again; we have a map-territory issue. Roddy isn't a teenager. He is a grown adult but he is operating off of a perceptual map of a teenager who is fearful that the other person would think that he is dumb. In checking Roddy's structure for this feeling, he was recalling this experience associated – he was mentally a teenager looking through his eyes as a teenager; he was totally experiencing that teen age event as if he were a teenager. Obviously, he isn't a teenager. He is 53 years old – his map doesn't match the territory that he is living in.

This teenager carried these beliefs:

- "Adults are always right."
- "I am always wrong."
- "I can't clear it up."
- "I can't fix it."
- "It is my fault."
- "It is my responsibility."

These limiting beliefs come from the "map" of Roddy as a teenager trying to get an adult to understand his point of view. No wonder Roddy is confused.

Suddenly, another unconscious part surfaced. Roddy feels that the authority figure in the conflict is saying that 'he is wrong; that he doesn't know what he's talking about'. Roddy replies, "Damn it, I am right! I know that I'm right. I am going to show him that I am right." In checking into and discussing this, we discovered that this part was a 10 to 12 year old Roddy – another map-territory disconnect. The part continued, "I know that I am right because ... I am the best baseball pitcher in town – we win every game when I pitch. The world says I am wrong but I know that I am right. And I'm gonna prove it to them."

As Bob and I work in this area and try to identify the various levels of impressions and feelings that I bring with me to situations in which I stutter, we had first found (in session #1) that I bring one set from my childhood. The way that I felt the world worked back then is what I bring with me now. This mind-set is operating and present in my subconscious (i.e., I'm really never consciously aware of any of those feelings and impressions when

I'm struggling while trying to speak with someone, but this mind-set heavily influences every interpersonal interaction I have). That mind-set is like a pair of sunglasses that I wear all the time: it colors and tints and casts, in exactly the same way, every interaction I have. Every interaction today looks the same to me as those interactions back then, because I'm 'wearing this pair of sunglasses that tints everything in the same color'. Now we find another set of feelings and impressions that I bring from my adolescent and teenage years.

I don't know how I 'fought back' during my childhood, but I do know that I 'fought back' in my adolescent and teenage years by excelling in school and through sports. I guess that with such a 'map of the territory' as I had, I could have just curled up in the corner in some catatonic state and let all the negative feelings of this mind-set run me over. But I did not. I fought back. Something inside me said "I'm gonna show them". It found expression in sports and school. This part of me has been a subtle theme of which I have been somewhat aware during my adult years. I believe that it's one main reason why I've achieved or attained anything in life.

Roddy excelled both in sports and in academics. Both these accomplishments let him know that he wasn't wrong in all things no matter what anyone may have said.

We discussed the map-territory distinction further; specifically, how operating off of those old things that we learned in childhood – even when we are an adult – can create most of our problems and can lie behind most blocking and stuttering. Roddy, "Does that old map work for you?" Roddy, "No!" Is there any objection to you creating a more useful map?" "No, none at all."

"So, Roddy, we now want to bring the new things that you are learning to bear on that old childhood map. Would it be OK for me to call the map that you are now creating your 'adult map'?" "Yes." "OK, Roddy, being in your 'adult mind' (i.e., put yourself in your 'adult mind'); what happens to the thought "I am always wrong." when you apply your 'adult mind' to it? How does your 'adult mind' transform and enrich your childhood map of 'I am always wrong'?"

"I get several things:"

1. "That old belief comes from childhood. I hear in my 'mind's ear', 'you

are 53; not 3'."

2. "Don't let the past remind us of what we are not now."

(I loved that statement. Roddy informed me that this line is from "SUITE: JUDY BLUE EYES" by Crosby, Stills and Nash.)

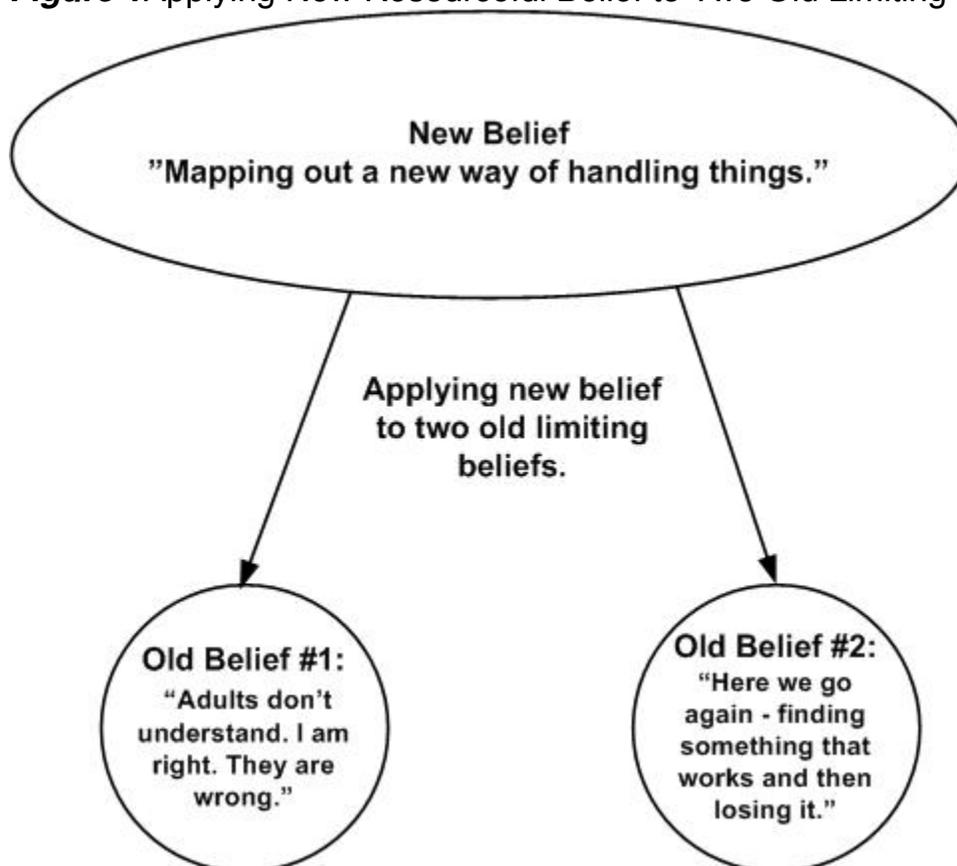
3. "It is not the case that 'I am always wrong'. We are just not communicating clearly."

4. "I have been running an old tape from another time."

5. "I am mapping out a new way of handling things. I feel positive, relaxed and encouraged."

"That is great Roddy. Now, we want to take what we have learned and to apply that to the old way of viewing things. The new things we've learned create a new state. The old limiting beliefs (i.e., the old way of viewing things) had created their states. Now we want to apply the 'new' to the 'old' and see what happens. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1 Applying New Resourceful Belief to Two Old Limiting Beliefs



Results of the Application

"Ok Roddy, now take that thought-feeling of 'mapping out a new way of handling things' and apply that to each of the two limiting beliefs:

“Limiting Belief #1: “I’m always wrong and adults are always right.” “Adults just don’t understand; I AM right!”

“Limiting Belief #2: “Here we go again – finding something that works and then losing it.””

“What happens as you do that?”

“I get several things. With the first one I get:”

1. “That is not what is going on.”
2. “I am an adult. I am not a child. I don’t have to concern myself with proving that I am right. There is no cause for fear and anxiety.”

“With the second limiting belief, I get:”

1. “My first feeling: that is a wrong idea. What we’re doing is not some technique that if I do it correctly or ‘just right’, then everything will be OK.”
2. “I don’t see the problem in those terms. That is the wrong description of the problem.”
3. “Finding something and losing it feels childish. I am not stuck in it. I can think as an adult.”

“That is great Roddy. Do you sense any objection to carrying these new beliefs out into your future life?”

“No, there are no objections.”

“You are doing really great Roddy. I am excited for you. Now, to test our work, I want you to get an image of your Grandfather and tell me what happens.”

“It is a pleasurable thought.”

“I feel safe and secure.”

“I feel OK about me whether I see him or not.”

“All I need to say is, ‘I give myself permission not to feel anxiety but to feel fine, OK and at peace.’”

SESSION THREE: May 10, 2005

“This past week has been wonderful. When I felt a little anxiety, all I had to do was to pause and say to myself, ‘I give myself permission to feel fine, OK and at peace.’ When I did that I immediately went into a peaceful state and spoke clearly.”

We spoke for around 30 minutes but couldn’t at this point find any reason

for us to continue with therapy. Roddy is doing great.

THE NEXT TWO WEEKS

I'm very happy with the progress which I've experienced these past two weeks following our last session. I feel and sense that the 'new program' that I'm trying to teach my brain is steadily replacing the 'old programs'. I work daily at re-programming my brain by spending various amounts of time at different points in the day doing the following: (1) either I actively recall the imagery of my Granddaddy or I focus on the thoughts "*I give myself permission*"; (2) I spell out in great detail what I give myself permission not to do and what I give myself permission to do; I go over this as much as I feel a need to do; and (3) I think about how this new map of the world which I am creating is actually working for me and how much pleasure it brings me, and I think about how painful it would be not to focus and not to train myself to view and to relate to the world differently.

I have to work at this every day. After all, that's how things work with people anyway, isn't it? If you play golf or tennis, if you ski, if you hike or climb, then there's a set of body movements that constitute the right techniques which will enable you to make the 'right play' in any situation in these endeavors.

Once you 'see' and experience that those techniques bring you the outcome that you wanted to achieve, then you are motivated to practice them so as to build a memory in your muscles that will result in automatically performing them next time – i.e., you want to work at training your body to react as you desire. Likewise, I have 'seen' that when 'I give myself permission' I am able to be in a state of being where I feel empowered to 'be all that I can be'. The most ancient place in my life where I felt the ability to 'give myself permission' was in the presence of my Granddaddy. I have now learned how to recall that imagery and I have learned that when I do, then I also feel an associated empowering set of emotions which together create a new state of being wherein I then 'give myself permission'.

When I 'give myself permission', then I am relaxed, I am at peace, and the physiological response that automatically occurs with this is one in which my muscles are relaxed and I inhale and exhale regularly and normally without restriction or interruption. As a result, I speak fluently.

I see the progress that I'm making, as do others. I see it in a bunch of small and subtle ways. For example at work, I now engage in random 'chatting'

and conversation with people fairly freely. Previously, I would avoid this because I was always 'afraid that I will stutter'.

I always felt like people did not want to just 'chat', while waiting for coffee, with someone who stammers and stutters and struggles just to talk lightly about unimportant topics. So, I would not initiate any such casual conversations and I would be silent while others around me talked and joked. Today, when several of us are walking down the hall or going for coffee or tea, I'm walking with them and I'm smiling and I feel relaxed and I'm just talking and chatting like everyone else – I feel good because I feel and sense a new song playing in my head: "I give myself permission to be relaxed, to be at peace, to fit it, and to feel OK with the world". When this new program is executing in my brain, then my automatic physiological response is to be relaxed, not to have muscle constriction or contraction in my torso and chest and neck, to inhale and exhale regularly and normally, to feel at peace with myself and with the world.

I see progress when I'm in situations that historically are difficult for me. I've participated in one meeting and have led another meeting involving peers and supervisors in these past two weeks. In the time leading up to those meetings and during those meetings, I frequently and consciously focused on my new mind-set.

Sometimes I felt a little fearful that I might not be able to stay focused on this 'new program'. I frequently would take a moment to imagine the presence of my Grandfather. I would use a visual or auditory cue. I would linger with the imagery. I felt the feelings. I knew that I was giving myself permission to feel relaxed and at peace.

I would also just focus on the thought "I give myself permission" as something I was doing for myself. This did not involve any other imagery. I would expand the thoughts to cover what I felt needed covering. I would say many "I give myself permission not to feel such and such". I would say many "I give myself permission to feel such and such". In these situations, there were some times when I got tense and I stuttered.

I'm learning to sense when I'm not in the new state that I want to be in. I would find a way to pause then. Maybe I just paused as if reflecting on something, maybe I coughed, maybe I got silent, whatever. But during that pause I would just sort of step back, then focus and call to mind the imagery of my Grandfather and I would say to myself "I give myself

permission...” I would always be able to put myself back into a resourceful state of mind by doing this kind of thing.

My wife has commented that I seem much more relaxed, and that my speech seems to flow much more freely and easily. She says that she especially notices that I speak on the telephone much more easily than ever before. She said that I seem to rarely stammer or stutter on the phone over these past several weeks.

The objective that I’m trying to achieve in all of these situations is **not** “never to stutter again”. I’m focused on allowing myself to feel relaxed and at peace; that’s all, nothing else. I’m giving myself permission to feel this way and I’m viewing interpersonal interactions with a newfound adult-level objectivity. This is my new mind-set of how the world works and what is my place in this world.

Why would I say this? Why would I not be focused on “getting to a state where I don’t stutter”? I’m going to say something that may seem controversial. If someone had just walked up to me 3 months ago and said this without any context or background, then I would have had various reactions to it and none of them would have been acceptance! Through this little journey I have come to realize that stuttering is only the *symptom of a problem*. It’s only a symptom. It’s not the problem itself. It’s caused by a real problem, but it is not in and of itself the real problem.

When one has the flu, then one can purchase all kinds of medicines to combat the various symptoms (fever, body aches, nausea), but that medication only deals with the symptoms (that’s why it’s call ‘symptomatic relief’). That medicine cannot treat the cause of the flu. One can take tons of this medicine, but one will never address the real cause of these symptoms.

There is value in alleviating the symptoms, but what one really needs is to attack the flu virus. Stuttering, I now realize, is a symptom for some other problem. In my case, the problem was the subconscious mind-sets that I brought to every interpersonal encounter. I felt fear and apprehension to such an extent that it triggered a panic-like attack. The resulting physiology made it impossible to speak fluently. There are many approaches to dealing with stuttering. I am of the opinion that most of them are just ‘measuring the temperature of the fever’, ‘providing relief from the nausea’, and ‘easing the body aches’. They all do something, but that something is

only addressing the symptoms. Alleviating some of these symptoms is really appreciated and it brings some feeling of relief to the person that struggles with stuttering. But the cause of all of these symptoms is not addressed directly by these approaches and so the symptom of stuttering will and does return.

Bob's therapeutic approach identifies the root cause of stuttering as a panic attack. All in all, that fit with me pretty well. Now, I know 'me' pretty well. I don't know 'others' nearly as well. So I don't know if this fits everyone or nearly everyone else who stutters. I'm sure that we all have our own variations on this theme. But I am convinced that stuttering is a symptom of a problem that involves how a person views the world and what is their place in it.

SESSION FOUR: May 24, 2005

Roddy called from the Atlanta airport which turned out to be a good thing for it served as a trigger for one of his major problem frames around his stuttering.

He said that he had been doing very well and was comfortable with the way things were going. There were two things he wanted to work on today:

1. He was having difficulty while in a huge crowd of people such as in the Atlanta Airport. He was tense in those situations, which always led to more blocking.
2. Second, when at work he was sitting at a desk focused completely on his work and someone would interrupt him and would start questioning about some job, he would feel the blocking tension coming on. If not checked, he would start blocking.

"Roddy, did you feel the tension in your body when you are in the crowd at the airport?"

"Yes."

"I want you to imagine yourself being in the place in the airport where you felt that tension the strongest."

"Ok, I am there. I'm in the middle of a large crowd, everyone is hustling and bustling about. There's close quarters with a bunch of people."

"Do you feel the tension?"

“Yes.”

“What does that tension *mean* to you?”

“I am apprehensive; I am fearful around all these folks.”

“What is that fear about?”

“I am afraid somebody is going to do something to me. I should be wary of these people?”

“Who should you be wary of?”

“Ahhh. The adult me says that that feels like I am 8 years old and my peers are on the other side of the street saying “If you come on over here on this side of the street we’ll hit you”. Taking their dare, I go to the other side of the street and sure enough, ‘pow’. They hit me up side my head!”

“It sounds to me, Roddy, that you are running the same old pattern while you are in crowds that you have been running elsewhere which results in your tensing up and stuttering.”

“Yes it is; I think so too. When I felt this as I was walking along down the concourse, I knew and sensed that I was feeling something like I’ve felt many times before. But I could not describe it to myself very completely; however, I sensed that it was pretty strong. So, I just stepped over to the side where there were some chairs and I sat down. I wanted to access my resource state. Mentally I said a few lines of “I give myself permission ...” But that didn’t help a whole lot. I could feel this strong sensation of apprehension and tension. It was stronger than my first attempts to access my resource state.

I then began to stare at my briefcase in my lap and focus my mind on the image of my Granddaddy. I even muttered a couple of “Hey, hey boy” phrases. I stayed focused ‘seeing’ him in his living room, smelling the smells, feeling the heat in the room from the gas space heater. I just kept doing these kinds of things that always make that image ‘real’. In a few short moments I felt my body relax. I felt a sense of peace flow over me. I then started saying things like “I give myself permission not to be a frightened little boy, but to be the adult that I am. In control of myself; aware of my surroundings; able to express any thought or emotions; and capable of handling whatever I encounter”. I said a lot of these kinds of

things: many things that I give myself permission not to be, and many things that I give myself permission to be. As 'all of that sort of took hold', I then went on to say to myself "Who are all of these people? Why they're just ordinary folks who are traveling and are trying to get some place in a hurry". I described the situation to myself as my 'objective adult side' sees it.

In all of these ways, I'm redefining how I interact with people today. These are the kind of things I do when I "don't let the past remind you of what you are not now".

"Do you need anything else to take care of this problem when you are in crowds or has you're the imagery of your Grandfather taken care of that for you?"

"Thinking about the imagery of Granddaddy did it! I'm working to train myself to react differently to every interpersonal encounter that I have. Sometimes, now, I get to the new state really quickly. I can just say to myself something like "per-mis-sion" or "Hey, hey boy". Sometimes I have to work harder than that. I have to visual an image and to stay focused on the details that make that picture 'real'. All of this is how I am working to train myself to go into each new encounter as an objective adult – and not as a frightened little child.

"Bob, Is there anything else that I need to do? Any other 'things' that I need to learn and to do as I work to re-program my brain?"

"You only need me if you cannot consciously handle the problem and access your adult relaxed state."

"You know, I can see that there are some fundamental shifts taking place inside me – shifting from thinking like a kid to thinking like an objective adult. It takes time to re-program your brain: it's not easy to change what I've been doing instinctively for almost 50 years. But I know that staying focused on what works, and using and doing the things that provide me with resources to accomplish what I'm trying to accomplish is the pathway to success.

I know that re-programming my brain is taking, and will take, a lot of concentrated effort and work. I now 'know' what works and how to change. I experience that every day. However, I also know that merely 'knowing

what works' and 'knowing what to re-program my brain with' will not in and of itself change me! My brain is not like some storage media that one erases or re-formats so as to have a clean slate with which to start. There are patterns that are entrenched in my being with almost 50 years of reinforcement. It's going to take concerted and continuous effort on my part to write permanent new patterns over the old. But that's not bothersome nor troublesome – really good things often take a little time to setup and put in place.

It's sort of like what I experienced when I took up downhill skiing. In January 1999 – at age 47 – I decided that I was going to learn to ski. I made progress that first year and I absolutely had a ton of fun, but I was still a beginner. The second year I took more lessons and learned how to make real turns on the snow. I learned how to link turns together so that I could then really enjoy skiing down a 'green' or even a 'blue' slope – I no longer needed the 'snow plow'. I was a more accomplished skier the second year than the first, but I was still a beginner – maybe an 'advanced beginner'.

Today, my wife and I ski all of the groomed 'black-diamond' and 'double-black-diamond' slopes that we can here in the northeast. We especially love learning how to ski powder filled bowls in Utah. So, I've come a long way in my trek to ski, but:

1. The first two years were lots of fun even though I was learning rudimentary fundamentals; I was working hard as I learned, but the joy of skiing even at that level then was fabulous(!); and
2. I only made the progress that I made because I was out skiing every weekend – I skied 12 times the first year and 16 the second. My wife and I are out 15 to 20 times a year. We improve every year. If we were to start going just 3 to 5 times a year then we'd stop improving in a heartbeat.

Likewise, I'm in the early stages of 'changing my frames of reference' about all of my interpersonal interactions. Some days I am able – or I remember – to think about my resource state more than other days. Those are days that I'm more frequently in a resourceful state, and so I stutter less. When I get lazy or when I am caught up in a lot of ongoing work, then those days I tend to be in a resourceful state much less, and so I stutter more.

Just like skiing, I have to keep working at this new way of 'framing things'

in order to achieve my desired results: to be all that I can be by dealing with every interpersonal encounter as the adult that I am. Practice does make perfect. If I'm sloppy in my practice routine, if I just go along and don't pay attention to what's happening in each encounter, then I'll likely not reach my goal. I'll continue to repeat the pattern of the past. I'm working hard, but I'm not bothered or discouraged by the need to practice and work hard. I like where I am now and I just know that I'll really like where I'm gonna be in the future!"

"OK, you are doing 'good' Roddy. Now, when you are sitting at a desk absorbed in your work and someone interrupts you and asks you a question, what happens?"

"OK, this happens when I've been sitting there working uninterrupted for the past 30 to 45 to 90 minutes, for example. I'm keenly focused on something. Someone comes to my cubicle and maybe knocks or maybe doesn't, but immediately jumps into asking me some questions about something they're focused on. Before I can answer, I have to pause and verbalize in my head just what the question was simply to make sure I heard it. I was really focused on what I was doing and what they said did not consciously register with me at first. I have to run back over what 'I think' they said."

"I immediately feel that I have to respond quickly and clearly. I feel a lot of pressure to respond this way. These folks are extremely intelligent people. They talk pretty fast."

"What does that do to you, Roddy?"

"I feel pressure that I need to respond in the same style. I want to try to speak as fast as they do and to respond to their question as quickly as I feel they respond to questions."

After making the above statement, Roddy immediately shifted from a tense state to a more relaxed state as he stated:

"You know, I just need to relax with myself here. 'Get an image' of Granddaddy; give myself the space and time I need to formulate an answer before I reply. I'm not some frightened little child being confronted by some authority figure here. These people are just my peers and co-workers. I just need to give myself permission to move from interpreting this like a child to a position where I respond to it as an objective adult. I

mean, I'm from south Alabama. I'm gonna talk a whole lot slower than these northeastern folks. It's just A-OK for me to take my time to formulate a response and to verbalize it in whatever way is natural for me – even if it's twice as slow as these folks speak! Slow talking is A-OK. It's alright if I never speak as fast as they do, and anyone in this situation who is acting as an adult will see it this way too.”

In working with both of the issues today, Roddy began to shift on his on from thinking like a child resulting in tension and pressure – tension and pressure that before expressed itself in blocking and stuttering. During the session Roddy immediately went from the problem state of thinking like a child to the resource state of thinking like an adult. This is most encouraging. Roddy is practicing what he is learning. With practice I have no question but that Roddy will transfer this behavior from the therapy session to the ‘real world’.

We concluded the session after 45 minutes.

EPILOGUE

I realize more and more each week that re-programming one's mind is not a quick-fix or a short-term endeavor. Talking with Bob and developing this new insight and comprehension provides a great deal of motivation and encouragement. There are times that I feel or think that I ought to be able to throw a big internal switch, and suddenly and permanently all things will have changed. I sometimes feel (sometimes wish) that, given this new understanding, I could just purge all of the old patterns and instantaneously replace them with new patterns; that I could, from that moment, just go forth a totally and completely changed person who never experiences any old patterns and their associated physiological responses ever again. I mean, ‘I comprehend what Bob is saying, I do believe in it, I know that it works because I demonstrate that to myself every day’. Sometimes I think “Why can't I just have a big ‘Ah-Ha’ experience and then be forever changed?”

You know what that sort of sounds like? It sort of sounds like a little frustrated 4 or 6 or 8 or 10 year old boy that operates with a mindset of “I want what I want, when I want it; and I want it *right now*”.

But my objective adult side says, and knows, that not only are things not working out that way, things won't ever, can't ever, work out like that. The

old patterns are burned into the cells and muscles of my mind-body through nearly 50 years of repetition. There's no way to instantaneously purge that. They did not get established in the first place by some massive in-flooding of these patterns into some internal storage device. Those patterns were burned into my being through countless repetitive interpersonal encounters where I felt fear, apprehension, uneasiness, and anxiety about interacting with another person. My objective adult side comprehends that they have to be replaced through a slower moving effort of repetition, repetition, and more repetition.

I'm on the leading portion of this new trend curve. First of all, I am now aware of things that 6 weeks ago I had no comprehension. Second, I bring to many interpersonal encounters each day an awareness of the mind-set, and its associated dynamics, that have been the characteristic way, almost the instinctual way, that I have brought with me for almost 50 years. I also bring, at the same time, the knowledge of how to change my internal state of mind, how to access resources that empower me, and how to re-frame or alter that old mind-set and to operate out of a new mind-set. Some days I achieve 'what I'm trying to achieve' less than on other days. At the end of some days, I feel like 'Wow! What a great and successful day!' At the end of other days I feel like 'Darn! That wasn't nearly as good as I had wanted'. Some days I realize that somehow the day just 'got away from me'.

So, I step back from this and acknowledge that I'm not where I want to be ultimately. But I also acknowledge that I've come a long way in 6 weeks, and I'm sure as hell not where I was! It's like that first year or two of skiing. I'm just getting to see and feel and know 'what this is all about'. Man, I'm having a ton of fun so far – and I'm just a beginner! Although those black-diamond runs scare me today, I instinctively know that I will get there before too long! Will it take 50 days? 50 weeks? 50 months? 50 years? I can not tell you; I have no crystal ball. But my 'gut response' is that it's somewhere between 50 days and 50 weeks. I'll check back with you and let you know one year from today.

Thank you for reading this and thereby allowing me to share my very personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences with you. Roddy Grubbs

