

# **Live Without Stutter**

by Othman Safdar

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(An unfinished book)

By Othman Safdar

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Note: This book is not complete yet

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1.

## **The Beginning**

I must have been around five years old back then...

Careless and rebellious...

The “my way or highway” kinda chap...

Bossing around, not listening to anyone and picking fights with my sober siblings at my own behest.

“Mmmm..mm.. Mama”!

That was me, mocking and making fun of my elder cousin who stuttered.

“If you mock others, God will make you like them”...

... Someone told me this back then. I don't remember who told me that. I just barely remember these words falling on my ears.

I should've paid attention...

Because what happened the next day changed the course of my life forever.

I was an entirely different person in school. Shy, quiet and a disciplined kid who always obeyed what the teacher said. Unlike anything I was at home.

It was like two personalities living in one body.

I distinctly remember that one particular day in school when I first began to stutter.

Or at least when I first REALIZED that I had some problem with my speech.

It used to be a routine in our class that students would be asked one by one to stand up and read passages from the textbook.

It was my turn.

I stood up. Held the book. And started reading.

“Pppp.... Ssssss.... Tttt”!

“It’s okay Osman you can sit down” my teacher said.

“Did I just stutter?” I wondered with a guilty conscience.

“Is this God’s punishment?!”

That was the first time I became consciously aware of my stutter.

I may have stuttered well before that. But I can't confirm that since no one ever told me.

This is my earliest memory of my stutter.

They say that the mental associations we make early in our lives dictate how the rest of our lives will roll out.

In retrospect I think that day in school when I stuttered for the first time, my childish brain must have concluded that my stutter is but a fulfilment of God's promise... that he made me like those whom I mocked!

I reckon this mental association would have stayed with me long enough to turn my initial stutter into a lifelong habit.

I have stuttered ever since.

(Until the last few years, when I finally began to get my answers)

It inhibited the development of my social skills at school.

As a kid I'd rather stay quiet than risk the embarrassment that came with stuttering. So I opted to keep quiet most of the time.

The next 20 something years of my life in school all the

way to college was marked by solitude. I'd sit quiet at one place minding my own business. I'd only speak up when there was an absolute necessity. I preferred being alone than being with other kids because being with them would seem intimidating.

As a result, I became the least trouble-making kid in the class. I didn't make any friends but I earned a lot of appreciation from my teachers. Whenever other kids would wreck havoc and throw tantrums, teachers would tell them, "Be like Osman! Just look at him, he's always quiet, learn something from him!" I was flattered whenever I heard that. It made me feel good. I concluded that what makes me good enough is to be in the good books of my teachers was showing utmost obedience to my teachers... and to remain quiet in the class.

Upon reaching home I would somehow mutate and evolve into a completely different person. I was the most confident and talkative among my siblings. I would create trouble and easily get away with it just by throwing tantrums.

I was the “jolly” kid of our family. I used to boss and make life hell for my mom and dad. Some cute facial expressions and teary eyes and I would instantly win everyone’s favor. My brother and sister had a hard time matching my social skills at home.

Yes, that too was me.

I stuttered at home too... in fact I stuttered a hell of a lot more at home than at school. But the big difference was that my parents and siblings never made me feel bad about it. They never judged me. They never even mentioned that I stuttered.

It was school, not home, where I first became aware of my stutter. My family was always very supportive.

It’s like I shifted personalities between home and school. And I was both personalities...both of them were me.

If stuttering continues into adulthood as it did in my case, then it’s mostly because it’s become a habit.

What’s really worth looking into is the earlier childhood experiences that can give us some cues as to what might have triggered or reinforced the habit of stuttering.



Here's some of my embarrassing confessions about my school days and how I think it relates to stuttering:

- Sympathy plays a key role in subconsciously strengthening the stuttering habit. When I was 11, I had my first crush...it was my teacher! I liked her and I presumed she thought I was cute. Whenever I started to stutter she showered her sympathy for me and ... I liked getting that sympathy.

Psychologically speaking, it's like Pavlov's dog experiment. If you haven't heard of Pavlov's experiment, here are some details about it:

- In his experiment, Pavlov used a bell as his neutral stimulus. Whenever he gave food to his dogs, he also rang a bell. After a number of repeats of this procedure, he tried the bell on its own. As you might expect, the bell on its own now caused an increase in salivation.
- So the dog had learned an association between the bell and the food and a new behavior had been learned.

So my mind got conditioned to associate stuttering with

the pleasure that I derived from getting sympathetic attention from others.

When I was 12, I had my second crush! This time when I stuttered, the girl sympathized with me with a cute little “Awwww” reaction. I could’ve stuttered a hundred more times to hear that “awww” again. :-)

So there it is. Once our minds create these links and associations, they stay with us forever (until we learn to unlearn them)

- Stuttering can also be reactionary. I notice I don’t always stutter the first time I say something... but when someone asks me to repeat what I said, that’s when I began to stutter. It’s as if I did something wrong when I said it in the first instance. This goes back to school days. During class quizzes, when a kid said something wrong the teacher would go “What? What did you just say?!” implying that the student had given wrong answer. It also happens with adults. You can try it too. You can cast self-doubt in anyone just by asking them to repeat what they said. Just say this in the I-Can’t-Believe-You tune

“Wwwwhat did you say?” and watch the reaction!

Long after school was over, I still stuttered in the pattern I explained above.

- I also noticed I have a hard time speaking when I had to “explain” something to someone. It feels like a burden. Like lifting something heavy. This goes back to school days too. When you’re explaining your answer to the teacher or other kids and they don’t seem to take any interest, you may as well conclude that it’s difficult to make someone interested in what you have to say. I am sure my kiddie brain would’ve made up this conclusion too (which is what prevents me from engaging in situations, even today, where I may have to explain stuff to people.) It just feels difficult, on the gut level.

- In another embarrassing situation, the phone rang and I picked it up... it was the same girl I had a crush on when I was 12. “Hello Osman! How are you?” she asked. And me: “Hhhh...hh...h”. I handed the phone to my mom who was

standing beside me. I couldn't even utter a simple "Hello". Since then I had difficulties talking to girls on the phone. I'd rather let the phone keep ringing and pretend as if I can't hear it.

Anyhow, stuttering became a permanent feature of my life. Stuttering impacted me in many ways: home, school and later on, in the workplace.

But note that I didn't have a traumatic childhood. Not at all. Stuttering, in my case, seemed to be hereditary. My dad stuttered too (but he got over it during his teens). Some of my uncles too stuttered.

Even though I may have "inherited" stuttering, that doesn't mean that it's not curable. Even if it's in your DNA, it still is not incurable. According to Dr Bruce Lipton, author of "The Biology of Belief":

*"... genes and DNA do not control our biology; instead DNA is controlled by signals from outside the cell, including the energetic messages emanating from our positive and negative thoughts."*

So it boils down to mindset and thoughts. I'll show you

later on how I changed my mindset and thoughts and achieved an almost natural fluency.

2.

## **Towards The Solution**

During school says I had confined myself to writing poetry. Sitting all alone all day long, I wouldn't talk to anyone, I would just write and write. I would pour out my feelings in poetic verses.

I picked up on the writings of William Wordsworth and tried to emulate his style. I responded to his love of nature. Trees, daffodils and all that.

As things progressed, I went from writing poetry to article writing. I started writing for a magazine. Then I started my own blog. Among my family and relatives, I earned the reputation of being a gifted writer (although I never thought of myself as a gifted writer).

Some friends suggested that I should venture into journalism, so as to turn my passion for writing into a profession.

“Nothing wrong with that” I thought... and I did venture into journalism.

But it turned out journalism was unlike anything I ever

expected. During my internship itself, I learned that journalism required as much, even more, social skill as it requires writing skill.

While I learned a lot about journalistic writing, I couldn't muster up the courage to keep up the pace with socializing. Being a journalist requires you to be a very social person by nature. You've got to make phone calls, interview important people, participate in team meetings and lead cover stories.

I tried to fake it at first but I couldn't continue. It was just too much pressure for me. Heck I couldn't even talk on the phone without stuttering/

Stuttering... that was the biggest hurdle for me to conquer. So I had to leave my journalism job.

I preferred a laid-back or "behind the scenes" kind of a job. And I did land one such job and it went pretty smoothly for a couple of months.

I still stuttered in other areas of life. And I wanted to get rid of it. So I started looking for a mentor who could help me overcome stuttering once and for all.

One day I was browsing through expatriates.com, a popular classifieds website. I saw an ad where a guy offered to help anyone cure their stutter in 6 months. He claimed he had taken speech therapy courses in USA.

I immediately called up this guy and signed up for his one month program.

To be honest it was a good experience. He was honest and genuinely wanted to help. And even though he said he didn't stutter anymore, I could still see signs of struggle when he spoke. If you just listened to him you couldn't hear him stuttering but his facial expressions said it all. The clinching of lips, the sudden change of words... this wasn't the kind of fluency that I was looking for.

The problem with his approach - and same goes for any traditional speech therapy program - is that instead of helping you restore natural fluency, they teach unnatural speaking habits, which often results in relapse.

I don't blame them. They all have good intentions. They genuinely want to help. It's just that the traditional approach doesn't have the right solution for this problem.

Consider this:



- These traditional outdated programs have you practice speaking in different situations for example in a flower shop, supermarket, chocolate store etc. But does any of that address the real fundamental causes and childhood scenarios that caused you to stutter in the first instance? No. These situational practice sessions work only as long as you're enrolled in the program. Once you're out, it starts to happen all over again.

- Can you really unlearn stuttering by avoiding “difficult” words and replacing them with “easier” words? But that’s exactly what the guy from classified ads had been teaching me all along. Yes, it makes you good at the skill of quickly replacing words but think about this for a moment: Do normal people have to think about replacing difficult words with easy words? Do normal people even think in terms of difficult and easy words? No, right? It’s against nature. You can’t gain “natural” fluency by following unnatural speaking habits.

- You must have heard about the “passive airflow technique”. It’s quite popular and some famous names attached to it. It involves speaking only during exhaling air from your lungs. It might generate an effect temporarily, but then again let me ask you: Do you think normal people have to think about inhaling and exhaling while speaking?
- Speak slowly. That’s also a popular advice out there in books and courses. They say the reason stutterers mess up is because they tend to speak too fast. So, they say, speak slowly. Again, that’s an unnatural way of speaking and fails to address the fundamental issues, which lead people to stutter. Ask yourself: do normal people think about how fast or slow they are talking while they are talking? No. They simply talk!
- A Russian doctor suggests breaking down syllables so as to remove blocks and “stupors” from speech. Although I have a lot of respect for innovators in this field and the Russian doctor’s idea is a brilliant innovation in itself, I think it too falls short of being an adequate solution. Ask

yourself the same question: do normal people need to break down their syllables in order to speak fluently? Do they need to stop and worry about not mixing up syllable sounds? Nah. So why should you? After all, you want to achieve “natural” fluency. Not a “made up” or artificial fluency.

- NLP. This one is my favorite. NLP is promised to be a one-stop solution for mental and psychological problems. Law of attraction. Positive thinking. “You can do anything” they say... “Just believe in yourself” they say. Well so, can I get rid of stuttering using NLP? I actually asked this question to a master NLP practitioner. He paused for a moment and replied “NLP can solve anything that is related to mind” (thanks for such a vague answer).

I think you know where I am going with this.

Any NLP or positive thinking type programs that promises to solve all mind/soul problems.... I test them using stuttering as the litmus test.

If it can't solve stuttering, it's not worth my time. And I couldn't find the solution for stuttering in NLP. You may

as well sit there and keep chanting positive thinking “I can speak fluently” affirmations and mantras all day long... but that won’t move you towards even an inch of progress. My personal experience attests to that.

- Then we have quantum physics. NLP’s close cousin. Apparently you can heal cancer with quantum physics. You can get an “ageless body, timeless mind”. But sorry, quantum physics has no cure for stuttering. Hilarious isn’t it?!

Let me take this a step further and say that even medical doctors don’t have a reliable cure for stuttering. I consulted a doctor regarding this and all I got from him was: “Hey, it’s just mind over matter!”

That’s as reliable as it can get. 😊

No wonder stuttering is still considered to be a mystery.

There’s an article on a world-renowned stuttering organization’s website. The article ends with the following words:

“... stuttering cannot be cured. Like it or not, your stutter will always be with you in some form...”

These are not my words, I promise. They actually have this written on their official website.

See the dichotomy here. We talk about positive thinking. We talk about achieving the impossible. We talk about being free. But when faced with real problems like stuttering, we simply surrender and give up.

I didn't give up though. I continued to look for the solution. I continued to tread the road less travelled. And today, I can talk fluently... without stuttering.

3.

### **Challenging Existing Dogma**

I was a member of Toastmasters for over three years. Almost every speech that I delivered earned me the “Best Speaker’s Award”. Right from my ice breaker’s speech all the way till the end, I owned the stage. But the best part is that..... I NEVER stuttered during any of my speeches.

Not even once.

I left Toastmasters. Then few years later I went there as a guest and was asked to deliver an impromptu speech. Again, I got the Best Speaker award.... and no stutter.

Folks the problem is that stuttering is not an issue of one-sided talking. It’s a problem that shows its ugly face mostly during “interpersonal” communications.

Even though being good at public speaking, I still stuttered during my one-to-one talks. Look, speaking from the stage is different. It’s just you who’s doing the talking while the

audience is there to listen to what you have to say. That's what the audience is there for. There's no interactivity or spontaneity there. So that doesn't simulate the normal everyday spontaneous conversations which is exactly where seeds of stuttering germinate.

I say this because I have read and heard quite a few gurus advising stutterers to join Toastmasters. Join it by all means, but don't be surprised if your stutter seems to stay right where it was.

Same goes for singing. So many famous singers happen to be stutterers. Yours truly too used to sing to crowds of over 200 people without even a hint of stuttering.

I think the main reason is that be it singing or public speaking, the content that we deliver is "memorized". Contrast that with our normal daily conversations... its all spontaneous, it's all about being in the moment, it's all about just saying what's in your head.

A friend of mine came up with an interesting idea that seems to work well for him: The idea is to think of specific situations where you normally stutter in, and then write

down various responses you could come up with in those situations. Then memorize those responses.

It's not the same as practicing to talk at a flower shop, restaurant or money exchanger.

So for example I know that if my Uncle Pop asks me about my job... I might get anxious and start stuttering. Using my friend's strategy, I can plan ahead of time... I can think of various things I might get asked and then I can create a response for each.

Write them down, memorize and practice them. By the time I actually get to meet my uncle, I am ready to tackle any question because I've already practiced it a 100 times in my head. It's like giving a speech. The element of spontaneity has been removed.

I like this idea. I think it's good even if it's just to improve the overall quality of communication.

But as far as stuttering is concerned, this idea has the exact same pitfalls as all the previous ones I discussed.

Do normal people have to memorize their responses for various situations? No sir.

So what's stuttering and how to solve it?



Before digging that, I need to get some things out of the way.

This will enhance your understanding of stuttering at a much deeper level.

There are three different ways of knowing something:

1. By understanding it
2. By experiencing it
3. By distinguishing/creating it

We're all familiar with the first two ways. For example I can describe to you the ingredients of Kentucky fried chicken, what it's made of, how it tastes, what it smells like etc. You can understand this chicken after I describe it to you. You may even want to eat it. You may even be salivating by the way I describe the food to you.

But that's very different than experiencing and eating the food yourself. When you've actually tasted the "KFC" chicken, you come to know about it on an entirely different level. Right?

But there's a third way of knowing, and that is by distinguishing or creating it yourself. When you create the

KFC chicken yourself, you know **for sure** what it's made of.

You know **for sure** what it's **not** made of.

You know it's not some other quality of chicken.

You know it's not breaded with white bread crumbs.

You've **distinguished** it from everything else.

What you now know about this food is something you know with 100% certainty and for sure.

Same goes for everything else in life.

In the following pages I am going to be making some distinctions so you get crystal clear clarity on what stuttering actually is. Once you'll be able to distinguish stuttering from everything else, you'll then be able to treat it in a laser-targeted way.

So I'm going to line up, one by one, various things which people confuse with stuttering. My responses will follow.

As you read it you may realize you've been focusing on things which didn't cause stuttering to begin with. Getting this kind of clarity will help you in reducing stuttering down to its bare skeletal essence and strip it off from

everything else the society has confused with stuttering.  
So here we go...

- **They say: It's about your self-confidence**

My answer: Stutterers make up only 1% of total world population. Whereas introverts (those who lack confidence) makeup over half of the world population. If confidence (or the lack of it) had anything to do with stuttering, more than half of the world population would be struggling with stuttering. But that's not the case. Almost every other person we meet is shy and anti-social. But they don't stutter. So please, if you lack self-confidence, don't think that's the fundamental cause of your stutter. Being shy and introvert is no crime. It's actually very good. Some of the world's best leaders are introverts. If you still want to improve your confidence levels, please do so by all means but not in the pretext of solving your stutter. Keep confidence separate from stuttering.

- **They say: You need to reduce your weight**

My answer: Obesity and being overweight have nothing to do with stuttering. Obesity has become an epidemic, stuttering has not. It's good to be fit and healthy and if you're fat then you definitely need to work on that flab. But keep in mind that lack of exercise and accumulation of fat were never the primary causes of your stuttering.

- **They say: Breathe properly**

My answer: Many gurus say that stuttering is caused by irregular breathing. And they teach breathing techniques like the passive airflow technique. But people get breathing problems even as they get older. But that doesn't mean that as you get older you start to stutter. There's no relation.

- **They say: Speak slowly**

My answer: They say stutterers try to talk fast and that's why the suggestion to speak slowly.

But there are many people out there who speak fast but

they don't stutter.

Do you remember how you began to stutter?

Were you like trying speak fast and then all of a sudden you got stuck and blocked and since then you've been stuttering all along...?

Speak slowly, but not as a way to conquer your stutter but just to make it easier for the other person to listen to you. Don't make 'em run after your words. Say each word with slow and good articulation so that your words will sink into the listener's heart and he could come in great rapport with you. This is a good communication advice which even non-stutterers should follow. You can put this advice aside while you work on your stutter... and then later on come back to it.

- **They say: Don't say uhms and aaahs**

My answer: Uhms, aaahs and pauses are natural characteristics of almost everyone's speaking behavior. It's again a good communication strategy to reduce these pauses but it's not related to stuttering at all. You don't have to worry about it right now. Go work on your stutter

and once you've successfully eliminated stuttering then later you can improve your overall communication skills... which includes reducing umms and aahs. But if you have ums and aahs in your speech right now, that's not stuttering. So don't worry about that.

- **They say: Don't ramble and mumble your words**

My answer: A lot of people start rambling as they get older. That doesn't mean they stutter. If you ramble and mumble, please work on this AFTER you get rid of stuttering. Right now your focus should be only on stuttering, that's it. You can always deal with rambling and mumbling later on. If you've been trying to reduce your ramblings and you thought you were trying to fix your stutter... you were wrong! You were shooting in the dark. You were mis-targeting.

- **They say: Say short and to-the-point sentences**

My answer: Haha, this one is funny. It's actually good to use shorter sentences and omit unnecessary words, but doing that won't magically heal your stutter. By using

shorter sentences to get your message across, you're just reducing the time it takes you to communicate your message. You're being concise. But you'll still stutter on those concise short words! Remember: Stuttering has nothing to do with how long or short your sentences are. If you use loooong sentences while talking... that might get the listener bored to death.... and so? Even if your sentence is just three words long, how can that guarantee that you won't stutter? Many stutterers stutter on saying their name! It's not even a sentence! Just one word!

So I have distinguished stuttering from every other crap that people think stuttering is. Many of these household advisories that people like to bestow on us are actually meant to enhance your overall communication skills.

I'll tell you something.... I don't stutter anymore but I still ramble.

I still tend to use long sentences to say what I want to say.

I still use uhs and aams while I'm talking.

I am working on getting rid of these little devils. But guess what, I don't stutter! If that's what you want too, if you want to speak without stuttering, then clear your mind of all

these things which have nothing to do with stuttering. When I say clear your mind, I mean stop trying to fix these problems because these are not “stuttering” problems to begin with. These are general communication problems which even plagues the non-stutterers.

Somehow stutterers always idealize those who are highly fluent and fast talkers.

I know because I used to do that too.

They appeared to be superhuman creatures. How do they do that?

How do they speak so flawlessly? Words flowing out like river..... Isn't that what you think too?

Here's the problem with this kind of thinking: It sets our expectations too high. We mistakenly assume that being a non-stutterer means having all the above qualities that our almost fictitious character has. In fact that's not the case in reality.

Normal people, those who don't stutter, have imperfect speech too. They have ahhs and umms. They ramble and mumble. They sometimes say one thing only to realize they shouldn't have said it. Their fluency doesn't flow in a



smooth manner. Rather it's marked by zigzags and ups and downs too.

I have a friend who never says anything straight. Ask him a question and he'll take ages to come to the point. You literally have to remind him what the question was. It's a pain listening to him. I'd rather not bother talking to him. But he doesn't stutter! He's like thousands of others around you who don't stutter either. Why don't we idealize these people? Why do we think that not stuttering means having an all-round perfect speech?

Lower your expectations.

You can get rid of stuttering but in order to reach optimum communication skills, you'll still have a lot to work on.

It's about prioritizing.

Do you want to have a crisp polished speech... every word perfectly chosen to convey the exact meaning that you want to put across, without any uhms and pauses, without rambling and dragging the sentences here and there... just the right words at the right time.... BUT stuttering on every single word...?!

Or do you prefer a rather imperfect speech with occasional

humps and slumps, but stutter-free ?!

If you get this part, you're half way across. Good job.

4

## **Self-Sabotaging Beliefs**

“Speaking” is not something that just happens. It’s a “thing”. At least in the mind of stutterers.

I first got aware of this concept while reading Dr William Parry’s book “Understanding and Controlling Stuttering”.

Apparently what happens is that stutterers think of their speech as something that needs “physical effort” to “get it out”.

Much like the effort that’s needed to lift something heavy – our muscles get all tensed up.

Imagine lifting a bucket of water from the ground. As you attempt to grab it and lift it off, notice how your stomach squeezes in and how your lips press against each other and how your throat gets tight only letting some portion of the air out - notice the struggle. This is the “Valsalva mechanism” acting out in your body... and it’s the same Valsalva mechanism that gets activated when we stutter

while attempting to speak.

Credit goes to William Parry for the this ground-breaking research.

I read Parry's book and it got me thinking why we stutterers subconsciously treat our speech the way we do?

If speaking means exerting effort, then it must trace back to some beliefs about speech that we hold true in our minds.

I have long been a fan of Morty Lefkoe's work. He's a psychologist par excellence and his work on the role of beliefs and how to eliminate them is ground-breaking to say the least.

I took what I learned from Parry and Lefkoe and tried to tie them in... to see if I could trace the stuttering problem back to some problematic beliefs that might have taken stronghold in our brain during our early childhood interactions with our parents, teachers and peers. We're not talking about religious beliefs here. Beliefs, in the context of our discussion, is anything we think is true... like we KNOW its true... it's what reality is for us (as far as our gut feeling goes).

For example if you've been stuttering for a long time, then by now it would seem true to you that "It's difficult to speak".

That's your belief. That's the reality for you. You can almost point out to it and say "Can't you see.... it's so difficult to speak!"

Your observation is itself enough evidence or a proof.

Imagine you're talking to a friend over the phone and all of a sudden your friend hangs up the phone. You'd get angry. You'd think "How rude! She dare she hang up the call right in my face! She doesn't care about me!"

That's the reality for you, that your friend doesn't care about you.

And your observation is all the evidence you need. "Didn't you see she doesn't even care about me!" you'd say.

We also create a lot of our beliefs by observing what happens to our peers.

Our beliefs are nothing but the conclusions we draw from what we see. These conclusions are nothing but our mind's attempt to make sense of what happens around us.

The following was a typical every-day scenario I used to observe in our class in school: We are told to learn a chapter and get ready for class test the next day.

Next day the teacher comes in and throws a question to each one of us, one by one.

We're supposed to stand up and answer the question. If we said the wrong answer, our teacher would ask rather rhetorically "What did you say?!" Then we would change the answer even if we thought that our original answer was correct.

Sometimes this was coupled with a touch of humiliation. "Do you really think that's the answer?" the teacher would say and other kids would burst out in laughter.

Talk about shattering the kid's self-confidence.

Blair Warren writes in his book "The Forbidden Keys to Persuasion"...

"Anytime we are repeatedly asked to explain something... we begin to doubt our own thinking. And the more certain we were before being questioned, the faster and more powerfully doubt can overtake us."

You may say it's hardwired in our brains. But I think its linked to the beliefs we form in our early school days. The class test example that I described above can easily lead a child to form this belief "If I am being asked a question, it means I must have said or done something wrong."

This becomes a vicious cycle that repeats itself in a loop:

I said something wrong that's why I am being asked questions because I said something wrong that's why I am being asked questions because... {never-ending cycle}

That's called circular logic, and even though all circular logics are a fallacy, *detecting* circular logic is not always easy.

Especially if it gets hard-wired in the brain in early childhood days.

Even non-stuttering people seem to have hesitations and self-doubt when they are asked questions in this manner.

Even so, many years after completing school and college, I still stuttered when I said something in response to someone's question - any question.

When we observe something happening, we try to make sense out of it. Any conclusion that we reach at that

moment (whether it's right or wrong) is actually our mind's attempt to make some sense and logic.

This sense-making activity keeps on happening in our mind all the time. We look at events and we form conclusions and assumptions about it. If it happens repeatedly, the conclusions that we draw take a stronghold in our psyche and becomes a belief. Then these beliefs run the show of our life... on autopilot. We normally are not consciously aware of the beliefs running in the background. We just think what we are doing is “right”, like that's how it's supposed to be.

Rarely do we stop to ponder over the reasons why we do what we do.

Besides speech feeling like a “thing” that needs effort to get it out, I also noticed a few other manifestations of speech that had me struggle for it.

Let me explain.

For us stutterers, speech overall feels like a thing that requires physical effort. That results in creating the stutter and blocks.

But I also told you that I always stuttered when saying



something in response to someone's question. So that's one manifestation of speech.... speaking when replying to a question.

Here's another manifestation: I also always stuttered when I felt like I have to do some "explanation".

I felt like the person I am talking to won't understand me, or I am not capable of making people understand me.

So I feel like I have to work up my mental muscles and waste a lot of mental energy and exert effort to "explain" myself. It felt like hard work.

Notice how this too links up with speech feeling like "effort" Normal people don't think like that. They don't have to flex their mental muscles just to "say" something.

As I look back at my childhood, I recognize some oft-repeated scenarios that could have lead me to form these beliefs:

"People don't understand what I say"

"People always misunderstand me"

"I better keep quiet than saying something wrong"

"It's difficult to explain things"

“I am not capable of easily saying what I want to say”

Any or all of these beliefs can induce anxiety while speaking and consequently stuttering.

Beliefs that cause stuttering occur during the early years of our life, since its then that we start to stutter. I was 5 when I started to stutter, so I need to look around at that phase (when I was 5 or 6) for events that may have lead to formation of self-sabotaging beliefs which further lead to stuttering and stammering.

Did you notice that my childhood events that lead me to form certain beliefs... are not really unique events? Almost any child would have gone through similar events and form similar beliefs.

If that's true, then why do these beliefs create the stuttering problem in some people and not all? In fact stutterers comprise only 1% of total world population.

So what explains this inconsistency?

My conviction is that - and I don't have any scientific proof to show for it - but my personal conviction is that these

beliefs cause stuttering only in those who are already vulnerable to stuttering; for example if stuttering runs in your family... then you are genetically more prone to stuttering than those who don't have a history of stuttering in their family.

There are shy and introverted people everywhere... those who don't like to talk, those who hesitate to speak up in social situations, those who fumble while talking to authority figures.

Or those who ramble, eat up words, mix phrases and mispronounce. But they don't necessarily stutter.

(This also serves as a reminder to not assume that after getting rid of stuttering you will magically start talking like a Hollywood actor. No! You might still have hesitations and feel awkward in social gatherings.... in fact everything might remain same with the only difference being that you won't stutter anymore. )

That's why those who stutter need to put in the extra effort of eliminating our sabotaging beliefs. It might take some effort... but it's not impossible.

(This is a work in progress, so it is to be continued.)\_