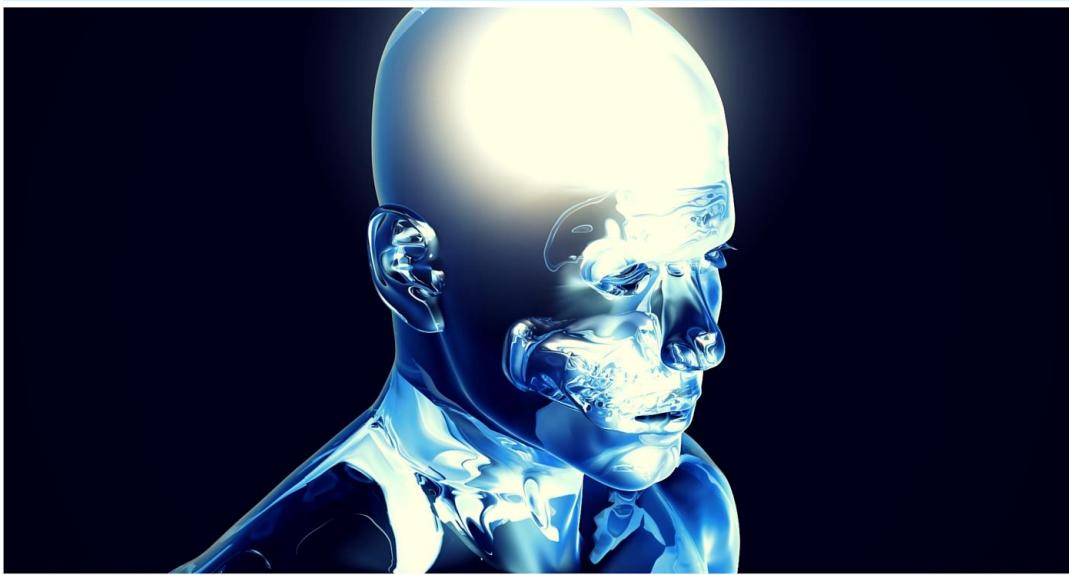


Understanding Dysfluency

Unraveling the Enigma of Stuttering



Matthew O'Malley

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By Matthew O'Malley

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About the Author



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It has occurred to me occasionally, as I write content that people may want to know a bit about who is writing it. As you're evaluating the material you might ask yourself, "Who the heck is this guy?" Well, I've decided to dedicate this section to answering that question. What

I share is of course a very shortened and brief summary.

My name is Matthew O'Malley. I come from a family of five and I am the youngest of three brothers. I am originally from Pennsylvania, however I moved around growing up living in four different states; Pennsylvania, California, New York and Indiana. I had a great childhood that I look back fondly upon.

As this book is about stuttering, it's fitting to share that I did not stutter for most (if not all) of my childhood. I started stuttering when I was 11 years old in 6th grade. My life became significantly more of a struggle instantly upon starting to stutter. Around this time, as students, we were being asked to give oral presentations for the first time. I'm not sure, but I think these early experiences with oral presentations (I did not do well with them) could be a contributing factor to the onset of my dysfluency.

My late teens and early twenties were a struggle mainly as a result of my trials with stuttering. I felt very caged and bottled up. I was covert in regards to stuttering (I hid it) and felt I was only

able to express a tiny fraction of who I was and what I had to offer.

My struggles with dysfluency domino-ed into more life challenges. While I felt I had a lot to offer as a person, I also felt I could not show it nor communicate it.

Instead of pursuing a traditional career which I likely would have done if not for the stuttering, I poured myself into music. By 26, I had crafted four musical albums. I spent a lot of my twenties honing my musical craft as well as exploring the depths of life. I spent a lot of it struggling to overcome stuttering. I spent a lot of it exploring the depths of my spirituality as well as studying human development and consciousness. I spent a lot of it working very hard on my own personal development.

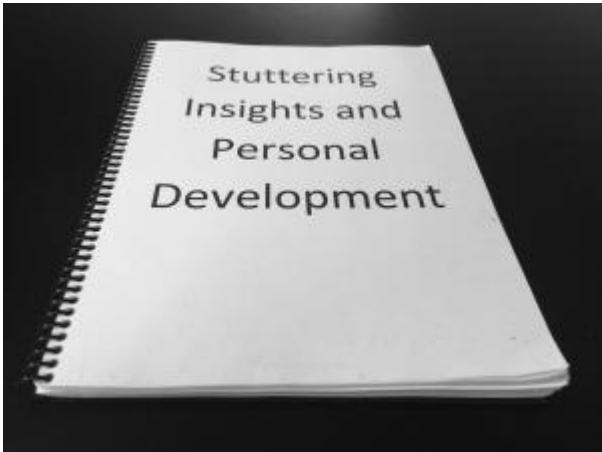
At this point I would like to stop and reflect on a couple quotes I like, to accurately capture the perspective I have on my life.

"Do not pray for an easy life. Pray for the strength to endure a difficult one." — Bruce Lee

"There is only one road to human greatness; through the school of hard knocks." — Albert Einstein

I stop to reflect on these quotes because I have talked significantly about my struggles above. I am using these quotes to frame my struggles in the way that I see them myself. I do not view them from a place of self-pity, sympathy nor negativity (I actually despise pity or sympathy from others). Quite contrarily, I view them as powerful tools for self-transformation. As a result, I am quite thankful for my struggles and feel they have

pushed me to know myself and to learn about the nature and purpose of life far beyond the level I would have, had my life been easier. I truly believe that our biggest challenges can become our biggest blessings.



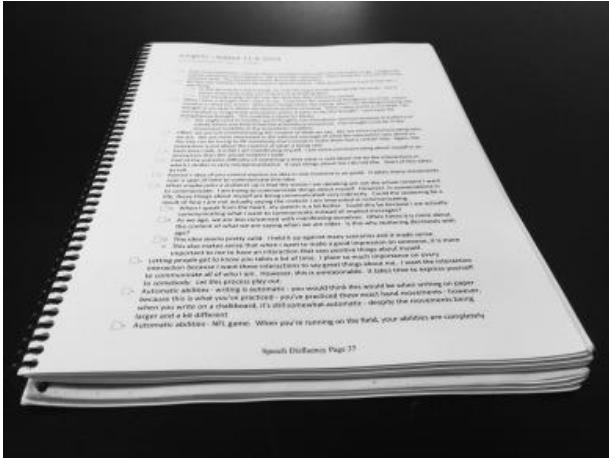
100+ pages of insights gathered

received my bachelor's degree in this area; going on to graduate school is in the plans.

My goal when I decided to go to school for speech pathology three years ago was ultimately to come to understand what stuttering/dysfluency is and design a treatment regimen for it.

I felt I had learned tons on my odyssey of life challenges. I have always been a very deep thinker and have been passionately curious about life and existence. I believed if I could look at dysfluency myself and pursue its understanding with this passionate curiosity and deep thinking, then I might be able to make some discoveries.

In continuing, at age 28 (after spending most of my twenties on music, self-discovery and exploring the depths of life) I felt purpose-grounded enough to make a wise decision on my life's career. I decided to go to school and begin my work in the field of speech & language pathology. This past May I



One page of insights

Not long after deciding to go to school, I got very serious about this goal of mine to understand stuttering. I abandoned everything I had been taught about stuttering and decided to only trust what I observed myself.

On a daily basis, I began analyzing my own experiences with stuttering from every vantage point I could. I carried around my smartphone with a speech-to-text app on it. Five to ten times per day I would talk into my phone's speech-to-text app about a new observation or insight I made about stuttering. At week's end I would review all of my insights to refresh my memory and allow these observations to better solidify in my mind.

In addition to this, I would spend over an hour in deep contemplation, specifically focused on understanding the nature of dysfluency four to six time per week. It's amazing how much focused contemplation can reveal truths that previously went unobserved.

I am pleased to say that through this process I feel I've made some discoveries about stuttering that make a lot of sense. I am personally seeing the practicality of my discoveries as I am going through change in regards to my speech as well as other areas related to myself as a communicator and as an expressive being. I am very confident I have found some definitive and concrete truths in regards to the nature of stuttering.

I certainly am not stopping here. I continue to gather more insight and pursue deeper understanding of dysfluency through the same methods I have mentioned above in addition to some new ones.

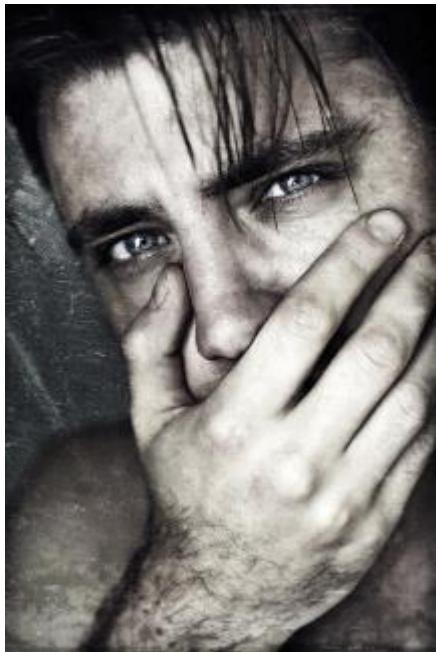
Based on the understanding I have gained, I have designed my own treatment regimen that I am currently using on myself. As I learn more, and as I go through my own transformation, I am documenting exactly how I do this and why what I do works. I am not taking some stab in the dark as to how I go about treating my stuttering. All of my treatment ideas are based on clear understandings of dysfluency. I will not use a treatment idea that is not based on something I understand about the nature of stuttering.

In the end, I hope to see significant transformation in my own speech and my whole self as an expressive being. I hope to be able to generalize my discoveries and practical insights so much so that I can use a treatment regimen on others.

My goal when deciding to go to school was to design quality treatment for dysfluency that provides real help and real results. My motivation for wanting to do this was that despite massive effort on my part, this was nowhere to be found when I pursued treatment earlier in my life as a person who stuttered. I know how hard living with stuttering can be and I know how devastating it can be to dedicate yourself to trying to overcome it and not succeed. I've done this a few times. Therefore, I deemed attempting to design truly effective dysfluency treatment a noble cause and worthy of dedicating a lot of my life to.

I feel I have made significant progress towards my goal of designing effective treatment. I plan to continue to work diligently on it and I feel confident at this point that I will be able to do what I set out to.

CHAPTER 1: A Brief Introduction to Dysfluency



"What is dysfluency?" you might ask. Dysfluency is stuttering. The field of speech and language pathology is moving more towards the use of the term "dysfluency" which I think is a more fitting term for what is traditionally called stuttering. So, in this book, dysfluency means stuttering (I will use these terms interchangeably).

Why is it a more fitting term? Well, when most people hear "stuttering" they think of the repetition of sounds. While this

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is one form and one aspect of stuttering, it is very far from all encompassing. Stuttering can manifest as silent involuntary "blocks" in speech as well as various other forms. The nature of the condition is not the repeating of sounds; it is the inability of the person who stutters to speak fluently. It is the lack of control the person who stutters has that is at the core of the condition. It is the inability to willfully initiate speech as well as maintain its flow. More concisely, it is the inability to speak fluently. This is why "dysfluency" is a much more fitting term.

In diving deeper, the inability to speak fluently is usually accompanied by a wide range of emotions, behaviors and coping strategies implemented by the individual who stutters in an attempt

to deal with the condition. The effects of dysfluency on an individual's life are likely beyond the imagination of someone who has not experienced it first-hand. I'll save this complex topic for down the road.

Now, as is obvious, the book's title is "Understanding Dysfluency: Unraveling the Enigma of Stuttering". Aptly, I will be exploring the nature of dysfluency in this book in an attempt to better understand it. Now, if you know anything about dysfluency, you understand this is a tall task. Charles Van Riper (a person who stuttered and one of the founding fathers of the field of speech & language pathology) described stuttering as "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." (a quote borrowed from Winston Churchill who was also a person who stuttered)

Dysfluency has been around for as far back in time as we have records and we still do not understand it. There is an Egyptian hieroglyph that is thought to be depicting stuttering. It is widely thought by Christian scholars that Moses was a person who stuttered. The first known "treatment" for dysfluency came in Ancient Greece where Demosthenes was known to have a stutter. He was advised to speak with pebbles in his mouth or so the story goes. Many individuals and institutions have attempted to understand the nature and cause of dysfluency as well as design effective treatment regimens for it.

It is now the 21st century. It's been over 2 millennia since Demosthenes was instructed to put pebbles in his mouth to fix his dysfluency. Many have tried their hand at understanding this puzzling condition. So, after all this time and work, where are we in terms of treatment efficacy in the 21st century? I'll answer by telling you a couple quick things about myself.

I am a 31 year old adult who has been stuttering for 20 years (yes, I atypically started stuttering when I was 11). My journey, my life as a whole as a person who is dysfluent has been extremely difficult. I have searched high and low for a way to resolve my dysfluency. I have sought out the most highly-qualified, world-renowned professionals in the area of stuttering. I have followed their direction to a T. I have sought out outside-the-box thinkers with intriguing vantage points on stuttering. I have dedicated myself to disciplined regimens of treatment involving hours of work per day for extended periods of time. I have taken spiritual and psychological approaches to treating different aspects of stuttering. I have done everything I can think of to remove the struggle from speaking and interaction. Yet, here I am at 31 still significantly struggling with dysfluency.

This should tell you something about our current level of understanding about stuttering and the efficacy of the treatments that currently exist. It should tell you that for the most part, we are still at a loss.

Another piece of information that should reveal how effective today's treatments for dysfluency are is one of today's cutting edge therapies. It's basically acceptance therapy. The extremely complicated nature of stuttering has put experts in the field at a place of surrender. It's basically, "OK, we don't know how to fix it, we don't understand it. We've tried many methods without much effectiveness. Currently, there is not much we can do about it. Therefore, we need to focus on acceptance of dysfluency and finding ways to live full lives with stuttering."

Now I am not balking at "acceptance therapy." I think for professionals in the field this is currently one of the most

responsible ways to approach treatment with a client. I also think that for a lot of people, acceptance therapies make a significantly positive impact on their lives and how they deal with dysfluency. However, the fact that this is the new wave of treatment in today's world reveals how helpless the field of speech & language pathology feels towards improving the actual speaking aspect of dysfluency.

Now that I have communicated the lack of proven options currently available to enable a person who is dysfluent to become a relatively normal speaker, you can better understand my intentions for this book. It is estimated that 70 million people are dysfluent worldwide. Many of these individuals share a lot of the struggles and frustrations I have experienced. Myself and the other 69,999,999 people with dysfluencies currently have nowhere to turn to get real results. Something needs to be done.

Like most people who stutter, I have spent a lot of my life casually pondering its nature. For most of this time, I looked to others for answers in helping me to remedy this problem. Well, over the past year or so, I have turned that nonchalant pondering into organized and focused insight gathering. I have oriented myself to look in the mirror for answers about this puzzling condition instead of looking to others. I have come to the realization that the current state of the speech and language pathology field cannot help me. I am going to have to figure it out myself.

It is likely that I will fail in remedying my dysfluency. However, before I accept my stuttering, I feel I must exhaust all resources and ideas that may free me from what I have experienced to be an extremely frustrating and debilitating condition. I have tried everything others have told me to try. In contrast, I am now on

a journey to try and solve it myself. If 5 years from now, I am at square one and have made no progress, I may finally accept my dysfluency, as I will truly believe there is nothing I can do about it. Maybe I won't. Who knows?

For now though, I would like to go back to the quote by Winston Churchill/Charles Van Riper. It stated that stuttering is "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." In playing off of this quote I would like to add that dysfluency is a fickle and fluctuating phenomenon. (hope you don't have trouble with /f/)

To very briefly broach this enigma that we're dealing with, let's look at the scenario below. What I describe is typical of many (not all) people who stutter.

Example:

A person who stutters stands in front of a door. There is no one in the room with him. He looks at the door and says, "Hi, my name is John. It's nice to meet you." (I know people don't speak to doors, but just go with it for the sake of the example.) The speech flows normally and naturally.

Next, the same person is standing in front of the same door. He pushes the door open. There is nothing outside the door. Facing the open door, he says, "Hi, my name is John. It's nice to meet you." The speech flows normally and naturally.

Next, the same person is standing in front of the door again. It's closed again. He pushes the door open and there is a person standing on the other side. He goes to say the exact same thing in the exact same way but can't. He blocks. He stutters. He is

at a complete loss as to how to regain control. It comes out like this, ".....Hi.....m.....my name.....is.....J..J..John. It's nice.....to.....meet.....y...y..you."

Welcome to the enigma of dysfluency.

Chapter 2: Automatic Abilities - Physical Speech - Metaphysical Thought

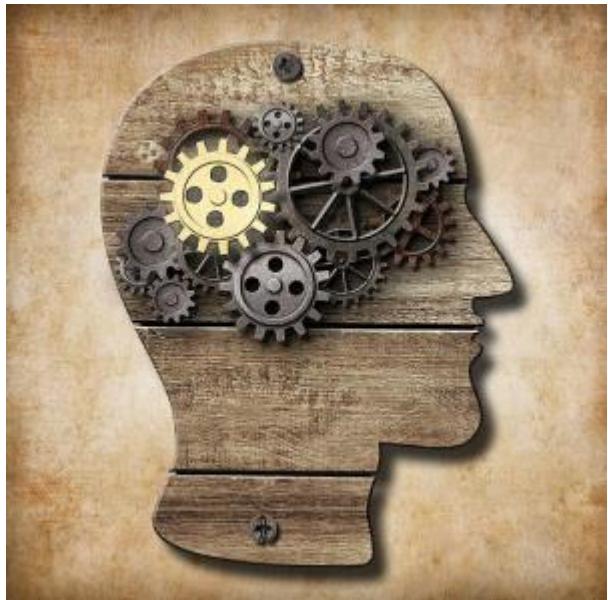


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About 9 months ago, I had a realization. It seems obvious to me now but I was blind to this fact for quite some time. In dealing with the fluctuating nature of stuttering (good days, bad weeks, good months etc.) the difference between good days and bad days had finally occurred to me. On the days my speech was good, where I was highly fluent, I had a high ratio of "automatic"

speech. On days where my speech was bad (less fluent) I had a significantly lower ratio of "automatic" speech and had to control my speech more manually and consciously to get my words out. This realization felt relatively powerful to me.

At this time, I was already on this journey of insight gathering and trying to learn about stuttering, so I started to look more into automatic abilities. And just to define the term, an automatic ability is an action that can be performed nearly effortlessly. It does not take much attention, if any. It is usually a skill that a person has mastered. People have many different automatic abilities. For example, if I am sitting on my couch and I want to walk to the fridge, I just get up and walk to the fridge. I do not think about it nor have to lend any attention to the mechanics of flexing my leg muscles to stand or anything like that. I just know how to do it and I just do it. This is an

automatic ability. A list of automatic abilities would include walking, running, driving, biking, etc. These are things we just know how to do without thinking about them. Now, for most people (except people who stutter) speaking is an automatic ability. For people who stutter (myself included) speaking on "automatic" mode does not happen consistently.

Building off of this realization, I posed what I believe to be an interesting question to myself. Why is speech the only automatic ability that breaks down (stuttering)? Why does nobody have blocks or stuttering-like behaviors with any of the other automatic abilities? Why is there not a disorder for someone's automatic mode of walking/running/driving/biking etc. ending up broken (for lack of a better term), but there is a condition we call dysfluency/stuttering where the automatic mode of speaking is not functioning properly? What is different about the automatic skill of speaking that leads to this disorder we call stuttering/dysfluency in comparison to the automatic skills of walking etc. which do not lead to stuttering-like disorders? More concisely, nobody "blocks" when they walk. So why do people "block" when they talk? Both are skills that can become automatic.

A simple answer would be speaking is a more complex task. It is dealing with fine motor, breath, vocal fold vibration etc. While there may be some credence to this view, I looked deeper and do not think the above is a significantly contributing factor.

Upon an abundance of reflection, I have come to some theoretical conclusions. I will first answer very concisely. Then I will expand. First, the very intertwined nature between thought and speech plays a role. Also, time plays a role. Also, the desire to control plays a role.

Let's start with the first one I listed. Now this gets somewhat technical so bear with me. I stated, "The very intertwined nature between thought and speech plays a role." Let me explain further. Thought is metaphysical. Speech is physical. Thought is in the realm of consciousness. The production of speech itself is a physical act involving the contracting and relaxing of muscles. Thoughts and words are completely unphysical. They are ideas and symbols in the human mind. You cannot show me a thought in the form of matter. So speaking is a physical act but thinking is metaphysical.

When we speak (a physical act), our goal is to share thoughts, words and ideas (all metaphysical things and in the realm of consciousness). So speaking itself (vocal fold vibration, articulator shaping etc.) is a physical act whose intent is to express things that are not physical (words, thoughts and ideas). So, more concisely, the goal of the physical activity of speaking is to express things that are not physical (words, thoughts, ideas).

This is a key difference between speaking and the other automatic abilities I listed. With the automatic ability of walking, the intent of the physical activity of walking is to physically walk. Physical intent is paired with physical action in this case. It's the same thing with riding a bike. Riding a bike is a physical activity and so is the purpose of riding a bike. The purpose of riding a bike is to move your body physically. So again, as with walking, the intent of bike riding is physical and the action is also physical. In these examples the intent and the actual action are in the same realm; the physical realm. This pairing of intent and action both being in the physical realm is

a significant reason nobody "blocks" on the automatic abilities of walking, riding a bike etc.

On the other hand, with the physical act of speaking (moving articulators, vocal fold vibration), the intent of the act is not physical but metaphysical. The intent of the physical act of speaking is not the physical movement of your speech apparatus. This is not the intent at all. The intent is actually the sharing of metaphysical thoughts, words and ideas. So, in the case of speaking, the purpose of the action is metaphysical (sharing ideas, words and thoughts), however, the act itself is physical (speaking). In this case the purpose of the act and the act itself are in different realms. One is metaphysical (expressing thoughts) and the other is physical (physically moving your speech apparatus). This is one reason the automatic ability of speech can become stuttered however nobody has a "stuttered" walk or blocks when they walk. This is partially why nobody "blocks" when riding a bike but they do block when speaking (people who stutter). With speaking, the intent of the action is in the metaphysical realm (sharing ideas). However the actual action (physically moving speech apparatus) is in the physical realm.

Let me explain further. Words, thoughts and ideas exist in our minds. In our minds, they are whole. They are timeless. They completely lack a physical nature. You cannot make a thought manifest physically. You cannot show me the physical matter that is your thought. However, in this physical world, the only way we can communicate with another being is through physical action. The way that we communicate our thoughts and ideas with relative precision is through language. The way we express language in this physical world is through sequential movements of our speech apparatus. So, in order to express these words, thoughts and ideas

that are whole, timeless, and metaphysical, takes broken down physical speech acts in a sequence over time.

Interestingly, people who stutter show more activity in the right hemisphere of their brains when speaking than their fluent counterparts. Fluent speakers show more activity in their left hemisphere when speaking. The right hemisphere deals with holistic things. It deals with complete pictures and things in their whole form. The left hemisphere is more linear. It deals with things like sequence and time. This lends some credibility to the view I am sharing. The person who stutters is trying to share the whole meaning of their expression with the right side of their brain. The person who is fluent is using the left side of their brain to sequentially string together speech sounds that will communicate meaning to their listener.

Just a quick note on words. A word is a unit of meaning. However, we express words through sequential movements of our speech apparatus that result in sound. The person who stutters sometimes may be trying to share whole words at a time which is impossible. You must sequence the speech movements that correlate to the word over a span of time to express the thought you are trying to communicate.

So one piece of the puzzle of stuttering is that we who stutter, want to express our thoughts. We want to make our thoughts manifest. We try to make meaning manifest physically. This will cause a block as meaning (ideas, words) cannot manifest physically. What can happen, and this is relatively deep, is we can cause a change in the physical environment with our speech apparatus that will be interpreted by our listener as meaning. The

physical world functions as the medium through which we share metaphysical ideas in our minds.

However, we must be aware subconsciously that speech itself is a purely physical act. When we move our lips, tongue, jaw etc., these movements have no inherent meaning. It is simply a physical act. People who stutter (myself included), pair meaning with the movements. There is no meaning in the movement. It is as though we think the speech movements themselves carry meaning. There is meaning in your thought, however you must make inherently meaningless physical movements to express that thought. People who stutter try to make meaning manifest physically. This is impossible.

As people who stutter, we must separate the physical act of speaking from the metaphysical thought. Part of the problem is we have these two things intertwined.

Try babbling. There is no meaning to babbling. Babbles are simple meaningless movements of the speech apparatus. Ironically, this is also true of making speech sounds that are interpreted as words. However, when people who stutter, according to my theory, speak in words, we attach meaning to the movements. This can cause blocks.

I know I could babble all day long and not stutter once. I am working on designing other treatment practices that help to separate physical speech from metaphysical thought. Babbling is one exercise I currently use. Observe the meaningless nature of moving your speech apparatus as you babble.

My view is not complete. As I mentioned earlier, time plays a role and control also plays a role in dysfluency/stuttering and in some ways all of these elements play off one another to create stuttering.

I will address the role of time and control in the next chapter.

I want to close with this. The ability to express the metaphysical (our thoughts and ideas) is among the most mind-blowing things in existence when you really get to reflecting. Speech and language are truly fascinating areas of study and they speak to the essence and nature of the human soul.

Chapter 3: Unraveling the Stuttering Enigma: The Role of Time & Control



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REFRESHER

In the last chapter, I talked about automatic abilities quite a bit. To refresh you and further solidify some of this information, I would like to define an automatic ability again. When we are learning any skill (walking, talking etc.),

it requires attention and conscious effort to execute properly. However, once we have worked on a skill enough times, we reach a level of mastery. At this time, the amount of conscious effort and attention that is required to execute the now mastered skill is extremely minimized. When we are at this level we are able to execute the skill virtually on "automatic". This will tie in later in this chapter.

Let me talk a little about the skill of speaking. Again, for most people (people who do not stutter), speaking is an automatic ability that they are able to do with minimal effort. They just know how to do it and they just do it.

To demonstrate the nature of an automatic ability to yourself, take out a pen and piece of paper. We are going to use the mastered skill/automatic ability of writing in this example:

Write three sentences in your native language and observe the movements of your hand. Observe how you write each letter properly without thinking about how to make the movements; without

dedicating a lot of attention to properly controlling the movements. I find it kind of miraculous. We are just able to do it. We know how to do it and we just do it. We have mastered this skill and therefore we can make these movements on automatic. To me it is almost ghostly when I observe myself writing in that I am not consciously controlling my hand but it is perfectly executing the proper movements to write exactly what I intend to write.

SIDENOTE: Imagine if you were watching somebody write, and all of a sudden they started writing the first letter of a word over and over. You could tell they were struggling and embarrassed. They experienced a block in between the writing of these letters. Then after about five first letter repetitions they wrote the whole word they were intending and continued on to the next word. A few words later, the same thing happened. How would you feel and what would you think if you came across this? This is fairly analogous to what a fluent person observes and goes through when interacting with a person who stutters.

So in continuing, in the last chapter I also explained why the skill of speaking is different from skills like walking, jogging and riding a bike. I explain this in detail in the previous chapter but will be concise here. Speaking is different in that you are expressing thought which is metaphysical. Jogging, biking etc. are skills whose intent is to do something physical; not express something metaphysical (thoughts, words etc.). But one might rebut, that the skills of writing and typing also express metaphysical thought. Why don't people have stuttering behaviors and blocks with these skills?

The answer: Time. Let me explain.



TIME

Time's relationship with speaking:

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cc*

The skill of speaking is a profound form of self-expression. We are quickly able to express our thoughts, ideas, dreams and personality through speech. What we express through speaking manifests and is heard by our listeners in real time. In other words, as we execute the skill of speaking (moving our articulators (lips, tongue etc.), vibrating vocal folds, breathing etc.) we are heard, evaluated and judged based on what we say and how we say it, immediately. Our listeners react to what we say very shortly after we say it. The skill of speaking is used for real time interactions. Therefore, at the time we speak, we immediately get feedback from our listeners about what we expressed and how we expressed it.

This feedback can be good or bad. If we tell a joke and everybody laughs we are pleased with the immediate feedback we have received. We feel good about the interaction. If we say something inappropriate, can't carry a conversation or are awkward in how we speak and interact, the feedback is negative. During and after the speaking interaction we likely feel bad or embarrassed. Again this feedback comes virtually instantaneously. Concisely, as we speak in real time, we are judged in real time. With the act of speaking there is time pressure.

This is different from typing and writing.

Time's relationship with typing and writing:

Like speaking, in typing and writing we can also express our thoughts, ideas, dreams and personality. However, with these skills, we can take as much time as we want crafting what we write or type before "releasing" it and receiving feedback on it. In other words, with writing and typing there is no time pressure. We can sit in the comfort of our homes or offices, without observing eyes and ears and take our time to craft a message to be exactly what we want before we share it with another individual. With these skills, there is no time pressure. We craft a message exactly how we want it to be using as much time as we want before anybody sees it.

The fact that how we speak and what we say is heard and judged in real time results in a desire/need to control our speech to prevent negative feedback. This results in stuttering and is a huge cyclical problem as I will explain next.

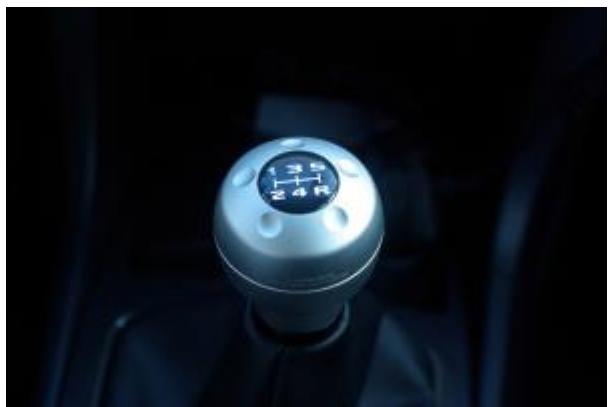


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CONTROL

As humans there are two elements that are part of our nature that result in stuttering. Each element individually does not cause stuttering and is usually advantageous to us, but the clashing of these two elements of human nature results in the condition we call dysfluency/stuttering.

Element number one is our ability to master skills. As stated earlier, once a skill is mastered we are able to do it on automatic/unconscious mode requiring very little attention and effort. This automatic/unconscious mode is far more efficient

than a manually and consciously controlled skill. As a matter of fact, once a skill has been mastered and can be done on automatic mode, manual control by the conscious mind will significantly interfere with and inhibit the efficiency of the execution of the skill.

To demonstrate this to yourself, try controlling every movement of your writing manually to consciously shape each letter. It will significantly slow you down. Now, let go of control, write naturally, and let your writing be automatic and you will see which one is more efficient.

Being able to execute skills on automatic is a human ability and one element of human nature. When we master a skill, doing this skill becomes virtually automatic. On its own, this is a great ability and allows us to be very efficient at many things.

The second element of human nature at play here is the mind's ability to identify situations that can cause us harm, embarrassment or pain. When the mind encounters a situation that resembles a past experience that caused some form of significant negative emotion, it will go on higher alert. It goes on this higher alert in order to allow you to better control the situation to prevent the same negative experience that happened as a result of being in a similar situation in your past.

Usually, this ability and element of human nature is beneficial. After all, if a situation caused me harm in the past, I would like to be on high alert so I can better control it and avoid the same result.

Quickly, I must tie in what I shared about speaking and time to this. Because speaking is judged in real time, if we have had situations in our past where we had a significantly negative experience during a speaking interaction, our minds will begin to identify speaking situations as potentially harmful. As a result it will go on high alert in an attempt to control the situation to avoid the same pain.

In continuing, the two elements of human nature I shared (1. Automatic abilities 2. Mind's ability to identify potentially harmful situations and its attempt to control them) combine to cause stuttering. When we, as people who stutter, enter a speaking situation, our minds go on high alert and want to control the situation to avoid past embarrassment we have experienced as a result of dysfluency/stuttering cropping up in interactions. This heightened awareness and need to control runs counter to implementing the automatic ability of speaking.

The mastered skill of speaking is only meant to be executed on automatic. The conscious controlling mind is incapable of executing the quick, precise movements of the speech articulators in conjunction with vocal fold vibration as well as breath control all in sync. Let me repeat. The conscious mind is incapable of executing all of the elements of speech at a rate that is required for normal fluent adult speech. It must be done on automatic by the subconscious.

The problem is people who stutter, like myself, have had so many negative speaking experiences. As a result, every time we interact with another human being, the natural ability of our mind to identify situations in which we might be harmed alerts. As a result of this higher alert, the mind also triggers a desire and

need to control our speech to avoid the same pain we have experienced in past speaking situations.

In addition, the very experience of stuttering or "blocking" is an experience in which the person stuttering or blocking feels as though they have lost control. They are at a loss as to what happened and feel helpless in regaining control. It is only natural to try harder to control. However, this effortful attempt to gain control is exactly what perpetuates the stuttering.

In summary, the minds' desire to control potentially harmful situations interferes with the inherently automatic nature of speech, resulting in the condition of dysfluency/stuttering. Fluent speech has to be automatic and controlled unconsciously. The unconscious mind must operate the speech mechanism without interference from the conscious controlling mind. There is no other way to do it. However, when the mind begins triggering high alert in every speaking situation, the conscious mind attempts to control an ability that only functions properly on automatic (speaking). This is what causes stuttering.

SIDENOTE: Stuttering may partially originate as a result of normal dysfluencies during speech development or some type of negative speaking interaction which begins to trigger the mind to control speaking situations.

This is why "the more important the speaking situation" the more likely we are to stutter. Because the situation is important to us we feel there is a lot on the line in the interaction. We really want it to go well. This causes us to want to control it more. This causes the mind's awareness to be even more heightened,

triggering a stronger desire to control the situation and control our speech, which results in more stuttering.

When we are alone or talking to our dog the mind does not go on heightened alert because it knows there is nothing at stake in the interaction. This removes the trigger to control your speech, which paradoxically allows you to speak using your "automatic mode" of speaking, thus resulting in fluent speech. The enigma and paradox of stuttering: *Letting go of control gives you control.*

This cycle is self-fulfilling. Every time we speak, we go on higher alert which causes us to try to control our speech to avoid embarrassment etc. As a result of trying to control our speech, our speech cannot go on "automatic" mode, resulting in stuttering/dysfluency because we are trying to control an ability that can't be executed through conscious control. As a result of stuttering again, our fear of speaking situations is reinforced and worsened, thus causing the mind to go on even higher alert in the next speaking situation. This higher alert will cause an increased need to control our speech to avoid pain resulting in more stuttered speech. This cycle continues and the stuttering condition perpetuates.

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This chapter and my last one explain a lot about the nature of stuttering. It allows you to better understand dysfluency. However, the content does not provide much practical information that can be applied to free you from the condition. My first goal was to understand stuttering and then based on this understanding, design practical treatments that reverse the

condition. After all, how can you treat something you don't understand? Well, you can't.

I have ideas as to how to reverse the stuttering process based on my understanding of its nature. I am going to make my next chapter very practical and treatment oriented.

To leave you with a little practicality before the next chapter, part of the formula for becoming fluent is learning to let go of control. To do this, you must teach your subconscious that it does not have to go on heightened alert, nor does it have to control your speech during interactions. Easier said than done. But the main way the subconscious learns is through experience. A blog I write has a post on how the subconscious learns. Check it out if you want a head start.

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Chapter 4: Reshaping the Subconscious of the Person Who Stutters



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I want to start by saying as a person who stutters, I am still a work in progress. Some of my revelations about stuttering are relatively new and I am just starting to design treatment based on what I have learned. I am currently designing and implementing a treatment regimen for myself, based on my understanding of the nature of dysfluency. This treatment regimen is something I will be adding to and tweaking in the future. The next few chapters will be about some of my current ideas as to

how to treat stuttering. This chapter is specifically about treating the subconscious of a person who stutters. Chapters that follow will focus on other areas.

Now, as promised in the last chapter, I want to start converting some of my theory into ideas that can be practically applied by the person who stutters to make change. In that chapter, I talked about how when the mind senses some form of danger it goes into a state of heightened awareness to allow you to control the situation. To further summarize, if the mind encounters a

situation that is similar to one in your past in which you were hurt, embarrassed or had your ego damaged, it will go on heightened alert to try to prevent the same result. Essentially, it goes on heightened alert to try to allow you to control the situation better.

Again, as was stated in the last chapter, in order to speak fluently, our speech must be uncontrolled by the conscious mind and allowed to run on "automatic" mode. However as people who stutter, we are confronted with a problem. We have a long history with an abundance of experiences where we have been hurt or embarrassed in situations involving speech interaction. This causes our minds to go on heightened alert in speaking situations which causes us to try to control our speech; a process that can only be done correctly on automatic.

In transitioning to practicality, the question becomes "how do we fix this?"

Well, as stated, the problem is, in most interactions, people who stutter go on heightened alert (thus causing us to try to control our speech) because our subconscious believes we can be harmed. In order to change this, we have to reteach our subconscious that we are safe in interactions. Even better, we have to teach our subconscious that interaction is fun and enjoyable. If we can achieve this goal, our subconscious will stop going on heightened alert in interactions (which will cause us not to feel the need to control our speech) and will then better enable us to implement the automatic mode of speaking.

So one element of the puzzle of overcoming stuttering has been identified: we need to teach our subconscious that it should not fear interaction, but enjoy it.

That answers one question but it begs another. How do we teach our subconscious to enjoy interaction? To answer this question, we must ask, yet another. How does the subconscious learn?

Before I am able to get more practical, I must explain some ideology on the subconscious. I must explain how it learns. Concisely, it learns most profoundly through its own personal experience. Below, I explain this in more detail.



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The Subconscious and How it Learns

Everyone has a subconscious belief system. The amount of individual beliefs that make up this subconscious belief system are extremely numerous. This system has a very strong influence over how we feel about things in our lives and what decisions we make. It is a very powerful force in our lives.

Many of the beliefs we have in our subconscious are irrational. We can logically know things and reason them out in our mind, but the subconscious often believes something different and this subconscious belief usually trumps the conscious logic in terms of influence over our lives.

Why do we have lots of irrational beliefs in our subconscious?

The reason we have lots of irrational beliefs is because the most influential factor in shaping our subconscious is our own very limited personal experience; not reason nor logical data presented to us. The subconscious learns through its own individual experience; not through observation of others' experiences nor observations of the world; not through logic. When the subconscious experiences something, it forms a belief. Observation and logic play a small role in shaping the subconscious, but compared to personal experience, their impact is minimal. The subconscious believes what it experiences itself; not what it observes others experiencing nor data being presented to it.

For example, let's say the first time you ever fly, you get into a plane crash and lose a family member who was on the plane with you. Logically, you know the odds of this happening again are extremely minimal. However, you likely develop a fear of flying and avoid it as much as you can. This is because, despite clear logic to the contrary, your subconscious has formed a belief through its very limited personal experience with flying, that flying has devastating consequences.

This single experience with flying trumps the data that can be presented to the logical mind that millions of people fly daily and nothing happens. This is because the subconscious learns most powerfully through its own personal experience. This one personal experience carries significantly more weight than any facts presented to it.

SIDENOTE: I have more on the subconscious in the link following if you want to get more in depth. However, I did not want to go

too far off on a tangent about the subconscious. The above should suffice for what I am trying to get across.

<http://www.operatingconsciousness.com>

Applying This to Dysfluency

The above should demonstrate that the subconscious learns powerfully through its own personal experience of the world. I cannot tell myself to calm down in a speaking situation and expect it to work. I cannot have my friends or family tell me that there is no need to be nervous in interactions and expect it to change my feelings about interaction. These methods do not comply with how the subconscious learns, and in order to have an impact on the subconscious, we must work with the laws of how it learns.

This means that in order to change our subconscious, we must use its most powerful teacher; experience. This means that in order to change, we need to go through a wide range of experiences (the more powerful the better) that teach us that speaking and interaction are both safe and enjoyable.

The language that the subconscious understands is experience. It will conform to what experience teaches it. It will not conform to much else. Therefore we must use experience in a skilled way to shape the subconscious to become what we want it to become.

Now, as stated, our subconscious as people who stutter goes on heightened alert and is in a slight state of fear during interaction based on our past experiences of pain in interactions.

To reverse this, we must accumulate new interaction experiences with positive outcomes that teach our subconscious that interaction is safe and enjoyable. The key to successful new

experiences is how you feel immediately after the speaking experience/interaction. You must design experiences and build your life to maximize the number of interactive experiences that result in positive emotions following the interaction. This will begin to teach the subconscious that interaction is enjoyable and safe. Over time, these new experiences will teach the subconscious to let its guard down in interactions.

There are many experiences that can positively reshape the subconscious. Below I will list a few ideas and suggestions you might find helpful. I have other ideas for overcoming stuttering outside of reshaping the subconscious through experience. However, the ones I list below are **experiences** specifically geared to reshaping the subconscious. You've likely heard of some of them. However, it is not about knowing about them. It is about **doing** them. Experience is what changes the subconscious; not knowledge.

1. Most people who stutter have extreme fear of stuttering; probably deeper than we realize. In a safe place, like online stuttering chats, stutter an extreme amount on purpose. Block an extreme amount on purpose. Do this consistently for a year or longer. Time and repetition matter. You cannot stutter on purpose here and there. You must do it repeatedly for an extended period of time.
2. Toastmasters - For those who don't know, Toastmaster's is a safe place to learn to give public speeches. This may take a lot of courage so you should feel really good about yourself when you part-take. You are accomplishing so much! Make sure you feel this way. This experience can be a powerful subconscious changer.
3. Interact with people you are comfortable with as much as possible. If you have friends or family members with whom you interact where

you do not go into a state of heightened alert or fear, spend a lot of time with these individuals. Enjoy their company.

4. Part-take in one-on-one online chats or group chats with people who stutter. Go to a local stuttering support group like an NSA (National Stuttering Association) chapter. The more you can speak with a comfort level the better.
5. This idea is far from original but voluntary stuttering and blocking can reshape the subconscious to not fear these experiences so much. However, I would not advise doing a couple voluntary stutters here and there every few days. I would advise spending a full day doing it excessively all day in a place you feel comfortable once a month or so.
6. Visualize very positive interactions - While these imaginary interaction experiences are not real experiences, they still carry some weight with the subconscious as they feel somewhat real. If you imagine three powerfully positive interactions per day (maybe in situations in which you normally struggle) this can start changing the subconscious.
7. Go somewhere where there will be opportunities to chat with a person or people for a long time who you don't know. Stay for a high number of hours and just talk with them. Just talk as you normally do. Stutter as you normally do. Focus on enjoying their company. Focus on learning about them and getting to know them. Don't worry so much about yourself. Treat it as an experiment. They're a stranger so don't worry about your impression. Just enjoy the company of another human being.
8. Joining an improv group is gaining in popularity in the stuttering community and I believe this could be helpful. If you can find one in your area, I suggest you do it.
9. There are many more exercises and experiences you can incorporate into your life to further mold the subconscious into one that feels safe in an interaction and enjoys it. Be creative. Come up with

some ideas that fall in line with the philosophy of how the subconscious learns. You can do it!

Following these suggestions, I want to say that it is important you feel as good as you can when going through the above experiences and after them. Mentally prepare yourself as best as you can to feel good about them. It is important that the subconscious begins to associate the above experiences with positive emotions. This plays a significant role in reshaping it.

Also, as a general rule, the more experiences you have which reshape the subconscious to believe it is safe in interaction (and can enjoy interaction), the more it will free up your speech to run on automatic. The amount to which you go through these experiences is up to you and will determine how much change your subconscious goes through.

SIDENOTE: I believe implementing REBT (Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy) and/or neuro linguistic programming with a qualified practitioner can also be helpful in reshaping the subconscious.

In closing, I'd like to share a vantage point that I find fascinating. Throughout most of my life, the state of my subconscious has dominated the will of my conscious mind. It has done what it does regardless of my wishes. In moments when I wanted to control it, it has always exerted its own agenda, often in the form of mild to extreme anxiety despite my efforts to suppress it. I find it very interesting that there is a way for the executive-functioning conscious mind to tame the beast of the subconscious through well thought out plans exerted over time. The conscious mind and its executive function can use its abilities of

planning and drawing up strategies to eventually reign in the untamed beast of the subconscious to mold it into what the conscious mind desires it to be. Some of the strategies I have listed above are ways to give the conscious mind control over the powerful subconscious. Fascinating.

Chapter 5: The Dysfluent Bully: The Critical Speech Voice



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I would like to preface this by saying that often times, the most obvious things are the hardest to see. They are so obvious, they're

invisible. Sometimes

when things are omnipresent; when they are always there and never go away, they elude observation. Our mind is good at detecting change. Therefore if something is always there, it often doesn't notice it.

In further prefacing, I think as people who are dysfluent, we know that we're hard on ourselves in terms of speech. However, the level to which you observe and criticize your speech is likely beyond the level you are aware.

This is where, what I term "the critical speech voice" comes into play. As I have shared in previous chapters, I began a journey of insight gathering about my own dysfluency a while back in hopes of understanding it and treating myself. Relatively early in this journey I identified this "critical speech voice".

What is the "critical speech voice"?

The critical speech voice exists in my mind nearly twenty-four hours per day. The presence of this voice grows louder as I am about to interact, during interaction and after interaction. However, it is there even when I am away from interaction.

This "presence" constantly demands rapid and perfect speech; perfect interactions; zero blocks; and zero stutters. This "presence" (the critical speech voice) is acutely observing every sound that comes out of my mouth; every movement of my body language; every pause; and every listener's reaction.

Based on what it observes, it criticizes me and compares my interaction to the idea I have of what the perfect interaction should look like. Every time I fall short of this "perfect interaction", the critical speech voice pummels me and beats me down for not measuring up to it.

SIDENOTE: I personally did not experience much bullying, but I once heard this saying which strongly applies to the critical speech voice: "I thought bullying ended after high school. Then I listened to how I talked to myself."

In continuing, the critical speech voice is prominently present before, during and after interactions. Let me list some possible thoughts it directs at us at these different times.

Critical speech voice before an interaction:

"MAKE SURE YOU LOOK GOOD HERE!"

"This is an important interaction coming up. Don't mess it up."

"Don't block here. They'll think you're weird."

"Please don't block..."

"This is your first impression with this person, you better speak well."

"DO NOT STUTTER!"

Etc. etc. etc. The messages it sends are endless.



Critical speech voice during an interaction:

"OH MY GOD, THAT PAUSE WAS TOO LONG! I SENT THE WRONG MESSAGE!"

"OH NO! I can feel a stutter coming on!"

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"Don't mess up the goodbye!"

"Hurry up and get your words out!"

"You're botching this bad!"

"They think you're weird and nervous!"

Etc. etc. etc.

Critical speech voice after an interaction:

"That was painful."

"YOU JUST MADE A HORRIBLE IMPRESSION!"

"They think you're weird."

"YOU BLOCKED!"

"You should just avoid all interaction."

"You came off like an idiot!"

"You couldn't get your point across. All they saw was your stutter."

Etc. etc. etc.

The presence of the critical speech voice is there even when we are alone. Here are some things it might say:

"You have to do a lot of interacting tomorrow. Hopefully you're not blocking all day."

"How are you ever going to become what you want to become? You can't talk right."

"Do something about fixing your speech! Do you want to live like this forever?"

"I blocked a lot earlier in the day. It was painful."

"I'll probably struggle all day at work tomorrow talking."

...

I could go on for eons about phrases the “critical speech voice” blasts in our minds all throughout the day. However, it doesn’t only manifest in thoughts made up of words. It exists in the form of emotion. When an interaction of mine does not measure up to what I think the ideal interaction is, the critical speech voice will make me feel shame and embarrassment. The critical speech voice will manifest itself during an interaction in the form of emotion as well. It comes in the form of a self-applied nervous pressure; a pressure to get my words out fast; a pressure to look good and come off well; a pressure to measure up to the perfect interaction. The critical speech voice also shows up leading into interactions in the form of anxiety and nervousness.

In summary, the critical speech voice is brutal on you and is always there. It constantly demands perfection and will harshly ridicule you when it doesn’t get it.

...

Now that I have explained “the critical speech voice”, we are at a state of awareness of it. As always I want to turn knowledge into practical application as my goal is not only to understand the aspects of stuttering, but to be able to treat them. So the question becomes, “What can be done to rid ourselves or at least minimize this omnipresent critical speech voice?”

The method I currently use is affirmations; but not just any affirmations. These affirmations must be specifically designed to counteract the critical speech voice.

I suggest you make them in print form and read them a lot. I also suggest you make them in audio form. You can easily record on

your computer and transfer it to your phone or burn it on a CD. The beauty of having affirmations on audio is you can play them in the background while you're doing things. You can put them on in your car. You can go for a walk with your headphones on. After all, the critical speech voice is always there. You are going to have to bombard yourself with affirmations that contradict the critical speech voice in order to have much of an impact on lessening it.

In crafting these affirmations, you want them to say some phrases that are opposite what the critical speech voice says. For example, the critical speech voice always wants you to speak with more speed. To counteract this, make an affirmation that says, "Take your time when you speak." The critical speech voice is always screaming at you not to stutter. Make an affirmation that says, "It's ok if I stutter. As a matter of fact I can stutter as much as I want."

Get creative. Be sure to make the audio tape and play it as much as possible for as long as possible. Make new ones every once in a while. Bombard your mind with thoughts that are opposite the critical speech voice to begin to reverse it.

Below, I list a few possible ideas for affirmations for you to both read and put on audio. There are an abundance more you can create. These are just a few suggestions.

Your speech is good enough.

There is no law on how you should speak or sound.

Pauses are good.

You accept limitation in your speech.

You are a good person no matter how an interaction goes.

You speak how you can; not how your mind demands.

Only tell your speech mechanism to do things it is capable of.

Allow yourself the freedom to speak how you can.

So what if you block? You do the best I can. This is always good enough.

Allow yourself as much time as you want and need to say what you want to say.

Slow down. Pause more.

You do the best you can and are proud of yourself for this.

You are allowed to pause between words as much as you want.

You do not have to speak a certain way for anyone.

Allow yourself the freedom to make speech mistakes.

You are not a perfect speaker. You will never be a perfect speaker. Nobody is.

Everybody makes a lot of speech mistakes.

You are free to speak any way you want.

There are no laws on how you should speak.

Chapter 6: Brainstorm: Treatment Ideas



Photo Credit: wanderingbert via Compfight cc

I want to start by saying, I am still in the process of building an effective treatment regimen for dysfluency. Below, I list a few of the ideas I have come up with or use with the current state of my regimen. Feel free to take advantage of what you think might be helpful.

I am continuing to perfect and modify my treatment regimen. I hope to end up (I don't know how long it will take) with a highly effective treatment plan for both improving fluency and reducing/eliminating stuttering related anxieties etc.

A few ideas I have come up with based on my understanding of stuttering are below:

Sync your body and mind into the present moment. Your body is incapable of escaping the present moment. However, your mind is capable of projecting itself into the past and the future and it does this quite often. When your mind is projecting into the future or going over past memories, it is not in sync with the

body. I believe that syncing the mind with the body in the present can improve fluency. Ideas for achieving this include:

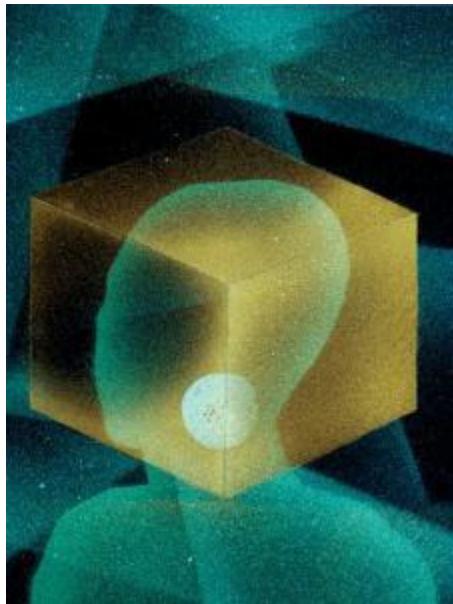


Photo Credit: DominoFreely via Compfight cc

1. Throughout the day ask yourself, "Where am I?" and answer yourself "Here." Also ask yourself, "What time is it?" and answer yourself, "Now." This will bring you out of your head and into the present moment. This simple exercise a few times a day can bring your mind and body more in sync with the present moment.
2. Meditation: Meditating and focusing on your breath brings you into the current moment. As you meditate, you will notice your mind drift into past and future. When you notice this, do not ridicule yourself. Simply bring your focus back to the breath which is happening in the present moment.
3. Mindfulness: As you do activities throughout your day, focus on each individual action it takes to accomplish the task and feel the sensations of it. For example, when you brush your teeth, first you have to walk to the sink. Notice and feel each step. Then you have to move your arm to get your toothbrush. Notice this and feel the toothbrush etc. This not only aids in bringing you out of your head and into the current moment, but it also teaches you that all things in the physical world happen in a sequence; something that is necessary for speech. You must sequence your speech movements to make speech

sounds. You cannot communicate whole words in a single moment. Mindfulness is good for teaching this as well.

In a previous chapter, I talked about how part of the reason we block is because we must do a physical act (speaking) to express the metaphysical (thoughts, words, ideas). In other words, we must move our speech mechanism (lips, tongue etc.) in order to express thoughts, words and ideas which have no physical form. Below are some ideas to allow your mind to better separate physical speech from metaphysical thought:

1. Spend time in silent meditation observing the metaphysical nature of thought. Observe how thought is completely in the realm of mental processes and consciousness. It is completely separate from the physical world.
2. Let thoughts bounce all around in your head without moving the speech mechanism. Observe how your thought still exists and does not need the physical body. Make your body completely motionless while thoughts move around at different speeds. Let thought race and say all kinds of words in your head without moving a muscle.
3. Execute thoughtless physical speech movements. To experience speech movements that are separate from thought, speak in non-words. Basically, babble. Move the articulators and activate vocal folds while expressing no meaning. The actual movements and sounds the speech mechanism make are completely meaningless. Demonstrate this to yourself by executing thoughtless speech movements. Observe the meaningless nature of your babbles as you execute them.

In explaining treatment ideas that come next, I must get a bit theoretical first. This is a very brief explanation but here it goes. In my view, there are two parts to a human being. One is the metaphysical soul or the consciousness. The other is the physical body. At your essence, you are only the consciousness. The physical body is something you inhabit and is simply a means and a tool for you to access the physical world. You are intimately attached to the physical body and are its controller, but the body is not you. YOU are consciousness. YOU are the soul/essence that is inside the body and is operating it. You move the body through your will.

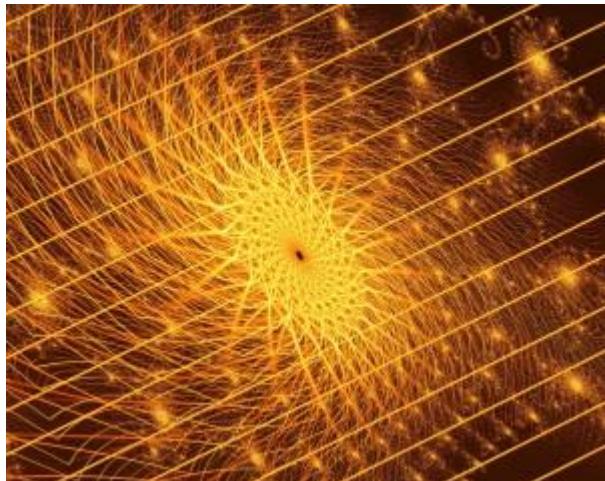


Photo Credit: fractales75 via Compfight cc

Before I continue to the treatment ideas, I must explain a key difference between YOU (consciousness/soul) and the physical body. The nature of consciousness (you) is unlimited and boundless. However, the body is limited by the physical laws of the physical world. As a result, the consciousness and the body can conflict. Your

consciousness (which is limitless) can try to operate the body as if it has no limits; as if it is limitless like itself. This is a problem in stuttering. It can manifest in trying to say whole words at a time instead of sequencing speech movements over time through movements of the body. Below, I make suggestions on how to counter this:

Accept struggle and limitation. Limitation and struggle are a part of life. Often times we resist these things with all our

will, all the time. If you can have an attitude where you can accept that there will be some struggle and limitation in how you speak and in life in general, the result paradoxically (as is so often the case) will be an increased sense of freedom and usually higher fluency. Yes, by accepting limitation and struggle; freedom, joy and fluency usually increase. Below are a few notes on this.

1. The physical body is limited. Consciousness (you) is unlimited. In operating the body, you must accept its limitations. You must not operate the body nor speech mechanism, as though it is like consciousness; as though it is limitless. The speech mechanism is part of the body. It is limited. You must obey its limitations in order for it to function properly.
2. Accept struggle. Interactions will not always go as planned. You will fail sometimes. Sometimes life is painful. Accept it. You will never be perfect in this life. You are always a work in progress.
3. Accept that you might not be at the level of speakers who have been fluent all their lives at this point.

Another treatment idea is to fully separate consciousness from the physical body. Work to fully realize that you are only consciousness and the body is something you simply control and command. Physical speech (the movements that result in sound) is a completely physical act that is totally separate from thought and consciousness. Do anything you can to fully realize this truth. It will contribute to eliminating dysfluency.

I'd like to share one exercise I implement to separate my consciousness from my body and speech mechanism. Spatially, where does it feel like you reside in your body? For me, it is behind the eyes and between the ears. This is likely because we receive an abundance of sensory data from these places so it feels like the bulk of our consciousness resides here. To further explain, "I" do not feel like I reside in my legs or my feet. I feel like I reside behind my eyes and between my ears.

Building off of this, the goal is to separate myself ("I" am the consciousness/soul) from the body and in particularl, separate my consciousness from the speech mechanism. This may sound like an odd exercise but I think it aids in separating your consciousness from the speech mechanism.

Wear a disk that goes all the way around your head. Put it under the nose so the mouth is below it and have it go all the way around your head so the eyes and ears are above it. Once it's on, perform speaking exercises like reading out loud while wearing this. Because your consciousness mainly resides behind the eyes and between the ears, this disc serves as a physical barrier reminding you that you are not your speech apparatus, you are simply the being/soul that is operating it. It may seem funny but I think it can be effective.

The last idea for treatment I will list is to speak on automatic as much as you can. If you read fluently by yourself, do it as much as you can. If you speak on automatic fluently with certain people, talk to them a lot. When you do this, your subconscious observes how possible it is for you to implement automatic speech. It also may serve to strengthen neural networks for normal automatic speech.