

LettingGO

SPRING 2015

MY 2ND CONFERENCE

NO LONGER A FIRST TIMER

IT REALLY IS OKAY
TO STUTTER

DON'T BANISH
THE DRAGON

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE

LIFE'S
ROLLERCOASTER

THE HIGHS & LOWS OF STUTTERING

The TAC Celebrates ISAD 2014

Common Stuttering Acronyms

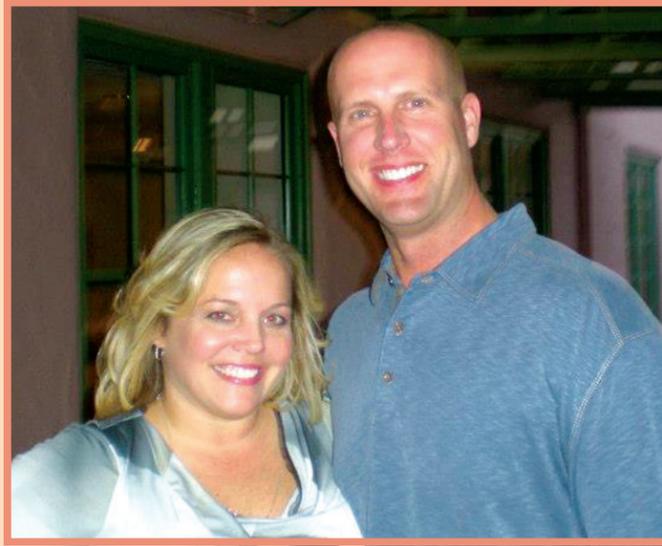
2014 Recap

2015 Annual Conference

Thank You Note

NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION

CHANGING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO STUTTER



As an organization devoted to people who stutter, we know that words can sometimes be a challenge. Even when people who stutter know exactly what they want to say, it can be a struggle. But when it comes to thanking our supporters, finding the right words themselves can also be difficult.

How do you say thank you to the incredible NSA Chapter Leaders, Presenters, and Volunteers who truly make life-changing differences for people who stutter?

How do you say thank you to the individuals and organizations whose support make that kind of work possible?

How do you say thank you to the speech-language pathologists and researchers who work each and every day to advance our understanding of this disorder?

There is no gift, gesture, or amount of money that could matter. What matters is the acceptance a child who stutters feels when connecting for the first time with others like her. The satisfaction a PWS gets from saying exactly what he wants to. The smiles shared at an event like our Annual Conference. These intangible things are the true rewards.

This year, the National Stuttering Association's 32nd Annual Conference will be held in Baltimore at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront from July 1st through 5th. We have a great program planned for this year's conference and are looking forward to seeing you and your families there!

We continue to be amazed at the support of individuals and many organizations that provide financial donations to the National Stuttering Association. As a support-driven organization, these donations help fund not only our daily operations, but also the many Family Fun Days, events for speech-language pathologists, and logistics for our conference every year.

Thank you – we couldn't do all of this without you!

Tammy Flores, Executive Director & Kenny Koroll, Chairman

DATES TO REMEMBER!

Our 32nd Annual Conference in Baltimore is right around the corner and deadlines are quickly approaching. Grab your calendars and mark these dates so you don't miss out on our best conference yet! Still on the fence about attending? Head over to WeStutter.org and check out our 2015 Conference Brochure for a preview of what's in store.

For the latest details and updates on everything Annual Conference, to find a roommate, or just connect with other conference attendees, head over to our 32nd Annual NSA Conference Facebook event and click 'join' today!

JUNE 1:

Scholarship Application Deadline

Thanks to the generosity of corporate sponsors and many of our members, we are pleased to offer financial assistance for people who stutter who would like to attend our Annual Conference. Please complete and postmark/email/fax our 2015 Scholarship Application Form no later than June 1st!

JUNE 6:

Hotel Discount Deadline

The last day to book your hotel reservation at our deeply discounted group rate is June 6, 2015. However, the property will likely sell out, and quickly, so we suggest booking as soon as possible. Right now the property is nearly 83% sold out, so don't delay, reserve your room(s) now!

JUNE 19:

Online Registration Deadline

After June 19th you will only be able to register on site. Please note that there will be no on-site tour/event sales. Bottom line: register early online or sending in the 2015 Annual Conference Registration Form via mail/fax/email!

JULY 1:

32nd Annual Conference Begins

Get ready to hit 'Charm City' neatly nestled along the scenic water's edge of the Inner Harbor – Baltimore, MD, for our 32nd Annual Conference to be held July 1-5, 2015, with our Research Symposium preceding the conference on June 30 & July 1!



The NSA Conference is happening this year in Baltimore. A few weeks ago a friend of mine (whom I met last year at my first conference — also his first) texted me to remind me that the hotel was filling up fast. So I took care of that before registration even opened up. Well, it's open now! I'll get that taken care of today probably. I'm guessing there will be even more people this year than last.

So while I do have enthusiasm for going to the conference again, I also have some tinges of apprehension. It's that deep-down stuttering-built-this social anxiety, I guess. For a First Timer, it ends up being easier — you have a workshop where you're forced to meet other First-Timers! (Well, you don't know that it's going to be that easy until you get there).

WHAT ABOUT SECOND TIMERS, THOUGH? DO WE GET A WORKSHOP? CAN WE JUST CRASH THE FIRST-TIMER PARTY?

I remember some people (non-first-timers) randomly coming up to me and introducing themselves. Maybe I should try that approach? That'll take quite a bit to just go up to someone and ambush them, but I've done it before! I saw that there was an NSA e-mail about workshop ideas. Maybe I could come up with something and host that? I'm sure I'd meet plenty of people that way.

I thought about this a little more, and I think I have a plan. Volunteer! I saw it on the side of the NSA registration page. This is perfect! Meet people by force! So I'm starting another conference adventure! ☺



NSA FAMILY PROGRAMS: COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENCE & CHARACTER

By Stephanie Coppen - Family Programs Administrator

I always find it enjoyable to answer the question, “Where do you work?”, and the inevitable follow up question, “Oh. That seems really interesting. What do you do?” These simple questions, common in most small talk, present a wonderful opportunity for me to educate people about stuttering and about the National Stuttering Association.

Over the past three years in my role as Family Programs Administrator, I have been fortunate enough to meet so many courageous individuals who stutter, the family members who support them, and the many amazing speech-language pathologists who have dedicated their professional lives to our stuttering community. I get to share in all of their stories and accomplishments as they have educated those who otherwise may not have known anything about stuttering and may never have met a person who stutters, or who are completely unaware of this wonderful organization that provides support, encouragement, and empowerment to those who need it most.

I know that I am blessed not only to be able to work for an organization that I believe in, but to work on behalf of families, each on their unique journey with stuttering. I am often reminded through these innocent exchanges just how lucky I am to do something I love. Not everyone is so fortunate to bring out confidence and develop character in children, some who need it most.

As we approach the 32nd NSA Annual Conference in Baltimore, I find myself re-energized in my role as FPA and find new inspiration in the part that I can play in making a difference in the life of a child who stutters and their parents and other loved ones. To that end, the Family Programs team and I are once again hard at work planning a conference that will inspire, educate, and empower our family membership. We are committed to offering the highest level of conference programming as well as creating an environment that is safe and accepting for every conference attendee, regardless of whether this is their 1st or 15th conference. We are also pleased to offer scholarships for those who would like to attend our Annual Conference, but may need financial assistance. For additional information about Conference Scholarships, please visit the Conference Scholarship Information section of our website – WeStutter.org.

I look forward to seeing you all in Baltimore, July 1st-5th for another great Annual Conference! ☺

IT REALLY IS OKAY TO STUTTER

By Sarah Onofri

The unofficial motto of the National Stuttering Association is “It’s okay to stutter.” As an adult person who stutters this is something I am a firm believer in but this was not always the case for me.

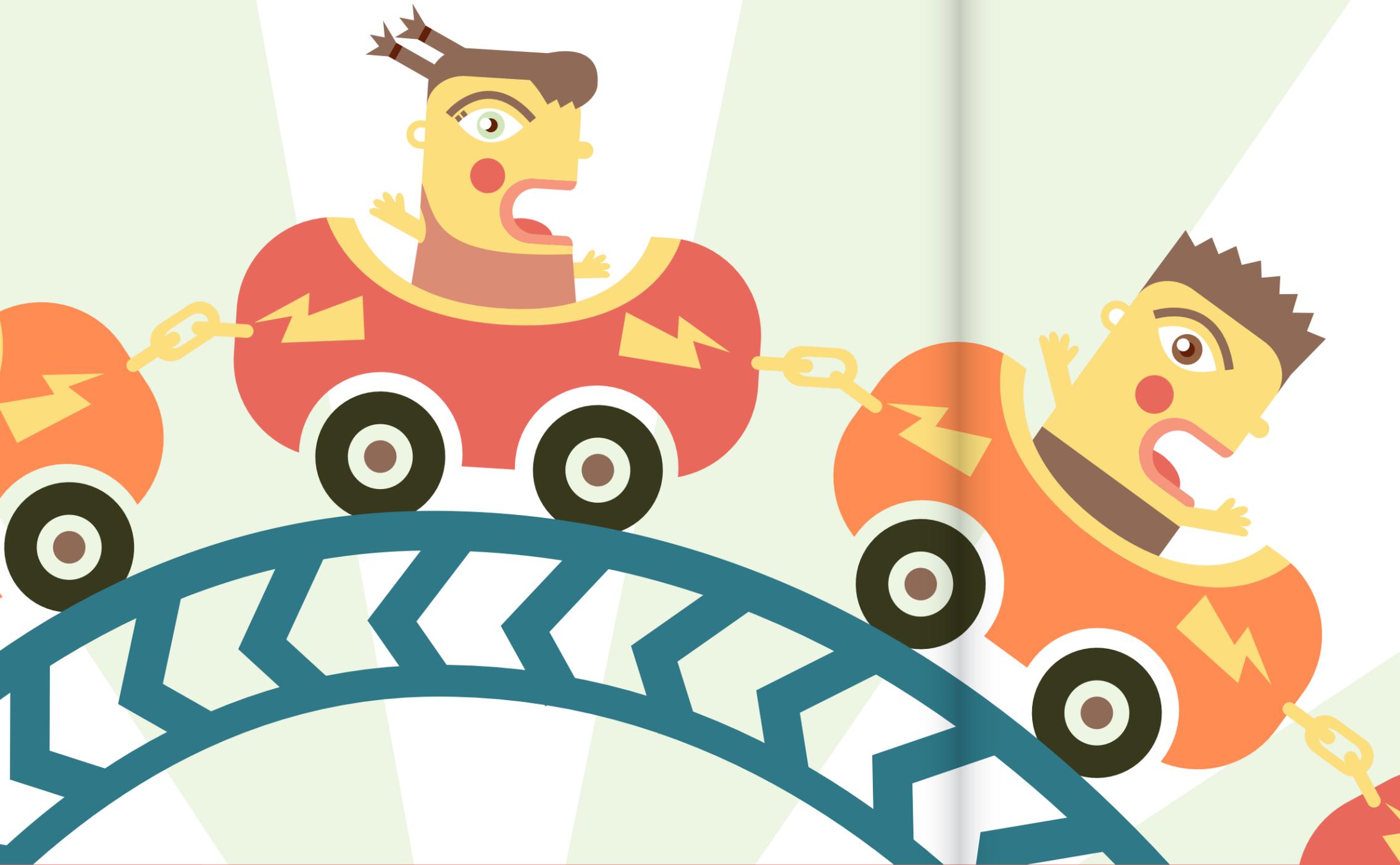
Growing up, I knew that I stuttered, but I also imagined that somehow, when I grew up and became a successful adult, I just would not stutter anymore. I imagined that I would finish high school, go to college, graduate, get a job, and my life would come together, and just like that, my stutter would disappear.

When I attended my first NSA conference almost ten years ago, I was sixteen years old, and I was starting to realize that my stutter just might not be going away. Suddenly, I was surrounded by other people who stutter, both teenagers like myself as well as children and adults. The first workshop I attended was led by a panel of older teenagers and 20-Somethings and was focused on advertising, which is the concept of telling other people that you stutter. For the first time in my life, I had encountered people who were

clearly successful, even “cool,” and also happened to stutter, just like me. The next three days were filled with opportunities to meet other people who stutter and connect on common ground, as well as attend many exciting workshops.

Towards the end of the conference, I had the opportunity to meet an elementary school teacher, who also happened to stutter, just like me. I had grown up wanting to be a teacher, but in the back of my mind I thought it would be more challenging, almost impossible, because I stuttered. After meeting this teacher who also stuttered, I realized that my dream of becoming a teacher could actually come true. Finally, after stuttering for all of my life, I had realized that it really is okay to stutter.

Fast forward to my life today, I am an elementary school teacher who happens to stutter. I could not have made it to the point where I am now if it weren’t for accepting my stutter as a part of who I am. ☺



LIFE'S ROLLERCOASTER

By Elizabeth Reneau

Throughout my life I would describe my stuttering as a giant rollercoaster. My rollercoaster of stuttering consists of many highs and lows. I went through hours and hours of practicing easy onsets, cancellations, pull-outs, pausing and phrasing, and much more. Going through this practice helped immensely, but I still have some fears. Some of the lows were the fear of speaking in front of my friends, the fear of ordering a meal at dinner, and even the fear of how people would receive me as a person because of my stuttering. When I was younger, sometimes I could get through the day and other times I had such a huge amount of nerves to speak in front of my class that it would make me feel sick. I had negative thoughts and questions such as, "Will they laugh if I block on this word and will they tease me for having a bounce on this letter?" All I have to say to these overwhelming thoughts, feelings, and emotions is IT GETS BETTER!

One major experience of these overwhelming thoughts and feelings occurred in the third grade when I said the Pledge of Allegiance on the school monitors. I know that this may sound like something easy, but for me it was not. Once a year I had to say the Pledge of Allegiance in front of the entire school on the televised announcements, and I could barely comprehend even the thought of having to get in front of my peers this way. Ms. Nina, my speech therapist, will tell you that this was a major part of my rollercoaster of stuttering. I would practice for hours on end, and still not feel prepared. Now that I look back I can tell you why I felt this way. I felt this way because I let my nerves get in the way of who I was. I let my nerves control me instead of being me. 'I am a stutterer' - I could not accept this statement. It makes me who I am, and I am so grateful for it.

At the end of the day on every rollercoaster there is the most fun part - getting to the very top, the high part of the rollercoaster. It is the same way with my walk through my stuttering. I had some low and high parts of my roller coaster, but the best part is the top, that moment when you can enjoy the scary parts and the sense of accomplishment when you know, I did it. It is the same exact thing through my life. Knowing that I did it wiped away my nerves and helped me speak to others with confidence.

It helps to think of your stuttering as a gift rather than a curse. This took me a long time to understand, but stuttering can really open your eyes to many things about yourself that you may not have even known. It did for me. It opened my eyes to a whole new part of me that I had not seen before. I saw that I needed to be more confident and brave. It also showed that I can endure some hard things, and that I was strong through everything. I hope it can do the same for you. Stuttering made me who I am.

Do not let your stuttering overwhelm you, but instead, let it be you. While you learn about your stuttering and the thoughts and feelings it gives you, let it mold you into a better person. Let it make you more bold, confident, and brave. That statement took me forever to understand and accept. This will not happen overnight, but it could help those who are struggling. Like my dad says, "It only takes 20 seconds of courage," and I promise it will pay off. You just have to be brave and trust in yourself. Have the courage to speak in front of your friends, teachers, family, and more. Do not be self-conscious, but treat your stuttering like a gift rather than a curse. I hope some of my experiences with my stuttering will help you in the future. ☺



The TAC participated in **International Stuttering Awareness Day (ISAD)** this past fall by raising awareness for stuttering and the NSA in their communities or on social media. This year the TAC tried especially hard to show they are not ashamed to stutter whatsoever, as well as the benefits of advertising. Whether you are wearing an NSA shirt or telling your peers “I stutter”, you’re advertising and raising awareness for other people who stutter, and that’s exactly what we wanted to accomplish this year. Below are some of the things that members of the TAC did:

“For my ISAD project I wore my stuttering shirt to school. There were many people that greeted me with a “Happy Stuttering Awareness Day” and gave me a lot of positive support about my speech. Also, for those who didn’t know I stuttered, as well as some of my teachers, asked about my stuttering shirt and it provided me with a very good conversation topic, and a great way to advertise” – Dan Haus

“This year for International Stuttering Awareness Day, I advertised my stuttering to my friends at lunch. Some of them already knew because they have known me for a long time, but the friends that I just made this year found out for the first time. I wasn’t sure what to expect because everyone reacts differently. Overall though, it was a good reaction” – Danny Wood

“This ISAD was my first one while in college. Now while I still in pledge-ship was not able to wear my NSA shirt due to our dress code for pledges but what I did was inform my pledge class of 32 guys about what stuttering is and what it isn’t, as well as disproving common myths about stuttering. I haven’t had any issues with being made fun of or anything of that matter. Every brother and pledge I know has given me the respect and patience that all stutters want and I am grateful to have people like that surround me” – Eddie Brown

“It was ISAD, my first year at college, and I wanted to raise as much awareness as I could to everyone I knew and to my professors. We had a paper due that day and had to read it aloud. I wrote my paper about my life as a stutterer and the struggles I overcame to be the man I am today. Well, I read mine first (which

was terrifying) and as you can probably guess some people did snicker and crack jokes but overall it went extremely well. After I read my paper my professor asked me questions about the NSA and about stuttering more. That hour and a half class of reading papers aloud became an hour and a half class of questions about my stutter and the NSA” – Ian Watson

“For International Stuttering Awareness Day, I thought that I would use the great information outlet that social media is to advertise about stuttering. I created a post which included basic information about stuttering, frequently asked questions and common myths about stuttering, tips on how to speak with a person who stutters, links to StutteringHelp.org and WeStutter.org, and a little about my own personal experience with stuttering, and posted it to several social media sites. Although my post didn’t go viral at all, it did have over a thousand views, and I received many comments from complete strangers voicing their support of people who stutter” – Isabel Szilagyi

“On International Stuttering Awareness Day I spoke in two of my classes, my history class and my American Sign Language 2 class. I didn’t really get a response from my history class about my stutter but just speaking made my history teacher understand me more. But with my ASL2 class I got a very good response back. My whole class loved my speech and laughed very hard when I made jokes and that helped me a lot with my nerves. After class when it was time to go this girl came up to me that was in my class and told me, ‘your speech was amazing I just love how confident you are.’” – Samantha Green



“For my ISAD, I wore my NSA Conference 2014 t-shirt around campus and a few of my fraternity brothers offered to show support and take a picture with me. Without telling myself to advertise I know that none of that would have happened, purely because they probably wouldn’t have known, or they would have felt it was an awkward topic to discuss. I believe that it’s the fact that I advertised to everyone I met when I came to college over a year ago that put me in a position where I have 50 guys who have my back if anyone were to say anything.

Advertising is always something that’s good to do, because it helps educate others on what it means to be a stutterer, because that’s really a lot to comprehend. People who don’t stutter rarely realize everything that people who stutter go through, and that’s to no fault of their own, it’s incredibly hard for everyone to understand all the little things that we go through. This is why advertising is so important; it gives us a chance to teach them what it’s like so that they don’t accidentally hurt or make fun of another person who stutters in the future. It also might be awkward for the person you’re talking to if you haven’t addressed it. Either way, there is practically no downside to advertising, especially on ISAD. From my personal experience, I know that the practice of advertising has taken me from hiding my stuttering to wearing it as a badge of honor. Advertising can seem difficult, but what the TAC wants to show is that when you start doing it, advertising becomes an incredibly useful habit that is actually very easy.” – Ben North

STUTTERING ACRONYMS

NSA – National Stuttering Association

NSP – National Stuttering Project

BRS-FD – Board Recognized Specialist in Fluency Disorders

ABFFD – American Board of Fluency and Fluency Disorders

BCS-F – Board Certified Specialists in Fluency Disorders

PWS/AWS/CWS – Person/Adult/Child Who Stutters

SLP – Speech-Language Pathologist

SLPA – Speech-Language Pathology Assistant

CEU – Continuing Education Unit (also referred to as CE)

RCC – Regional Chapter Coordinator

TWST – Teen(s) Who Stutter

FP – Family Programs

IEP – Individualized Education Program

FFD – Family Fun Day

TAC – Teen Advisory Council

BOD – Board of Directors

ISAD – International Stuttering Awareness Day

NSAW – National Stuttering Awareness Week

DAF – Delayed Auditory Feedback

ASHA – American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

OTHER STUTTERING ORGANIZATIONS

SFA – Stuttering Foundation of America

AIS – American Institute for Stuttering

BSA – British Stammering Association

ISA – International Stuttering Association/Irish Stammering Association

GSA – Canadian Stammering Association

SAY – Stuttering Association for the Young

Friends

Camp Shout Out

DON'T BANISH THE DRAGON

By Rita Thurman

For many children and adults who stutter, it isn't the dark that frightens them, it's the light. An onstage spotlight and microphone, the light of a classroom where they might be called on at random, even the light coming in through the bedroom window in the morning as they think about speaking situations they may encounter that day – these ordinary situations can fill them with panic.

Overcoming this fear is important, but hard to achieve. After all, most speech therapy takes place in an insular therapy room. That's why it's so important to provide situations for our clients to experience successful communication outside their comfort zones. The challenge is changing their reaction to speaking situations outside of therapy to manage fear in the moment and continue to venture into light-filled situations.

I have worked with people who stutter for 37 years, but I don't stutter. I can imagine the feeling, make parallels to running a marathon (the diligence required to achieve a goal,) losing control of a car on ice (losing control during a stuttering block), losing weight (accepting the need for change), or the endless other ways people who don't stutter try to conjure up or try to relate to the sensation of stuttering. But, given that I truly don't know what that feels like, I have stopped saying those analogies to my clients...except the Whack-A-Mole analogy. If you think of stuttering as an elaborate game of Whack-A-Mole (and if you don't know what this is, get down to Chuck E. Cheese ASAP!) you will realize that it can be unexpected, unpredictable, and the reaction may also be erratic.



Let your client describe the sensation. Allow both of you to recognize that speaking can be a fearful situation. Let him/her try to make you understand so you can empathize. Describe, recognize, empathize that person's individual experience, because as a wise friend once told me: If you know one person who stutters, you know one person who stutters.

One day I had a mom drop her teen off at a store so that I could walk through the store with him asking questions to people in the store. I was so proud of him. He asked questions. He was polite, yet assertive. He seemed confident. At the end, I said: "So, how did that feel?" His response: "That was the weirdest thing you have had me do so far. It was creepy!"

Next, don't minimize the reaction. Don't try to tell the child or adult how he feels after a step outside their comfort zone. Yet also, look at that moment without passing judgment. "Yes, your throat clenched, your eyes closed tight, you felt??....., you thought??...."

I was in the observation booth observing a graduate student work with a teen with significant struggle behavior initiate a phone call. It was painful for me to watch her set him up for a situation that he was unprepared for physically, emotionally, and cognitively. When he blocked on the first three words, and took over four minutes to ask, "What time do you close?" he ended the call and hung his head to hide his tears. The graduate student said: "See, that wasn't so bad!" I understand what she wanted to do; fix the situation, make him feel better, put a positive spin or manipulate the feeling. Instead, she minimized the emotion and confirmed to the client that she had no clue what his reaction was to that call.

As a therapist, I am often asked: "How can you tell someone it is OK to stutter and in the next breath say, but you need to stop stuttering? Isn't "fluency" the primary goal? Actually, it is not. I like to think of it as changing the reaction to the stuttered moment. Instead of pushing through a block, release it. Instead of avoiding a feared word, recognize that it is scary and say it anyway. Instead of thinking of five ways you could replace that word or a way to rearrange the sentence so the word falls before a vowel so that it is easier to ease into it, use that cognitive power to focus on the sensation of moving forward through the word

One therapy session I asked a young girl to go to the offices in my building asking if they had a can opener she could borrow. We talked ahead of time about the feeling she might encounter, the thought process, and the speech production. When, we realized that the lawyers down the hall had one, tucked away in a very elaborate liquor cabinet, we added amusement to our reaction, and of course secrecy.

We often encourage our children, teens, and adults who stutter to get outside their comfort zone. I want mine to also feel success with that adventure. Building on speech hierarchies and writing out zones of comfort help start the dialogue for building on success.

One day I was preparing a teen to make phone calls. The first step was talking to each other on two phones in the therapy room. Even with this step I saw his breathing quicken, but he did it. Then, I said that I was going to leave the room and call him from the hall. As I went into the hall and rang the phone in the therapy room that he was to answer, I heard him scream: "Mrs. Thurman come fast!" I ran into the therapy room and said: "What's wrong?!" His panicked response: "The phone is ringing!" We both laughed as he saw that it was only me. I had only just told him that I would call; however, the amygdala had taken

over his body, locking out all cognitive function.

The amygdala is responsible for the Fight or Flight response. Research has shown that its primary role lies in the processing of memory, decision-making, and emotional reactions. It is capable of taking over unpredictably; clouding our thought and changing our body reactions. As you work through your hierarchies, anticipate to feel the fear. Then, you are not caught off guard when it happens.

Recognize and celebrate all successes, whether it is fluency, confidence, or completion. Brene Brown in her book *The Gifts of Imperfections* talks about the three Cs: Courage, Compassion and Connection. Talk about these as you review each speaking situation and prepare to approach new ones.

Parents are always the first to blame and the last to praise. If anyone followed the re-



cent thread in the ASHA-Div 4 list serve they will see how this happens. (This is a national list serve that allows speech language pathologists to raise and respond to questions about stuttering therapy/research.) A five-year old develops secondaries. The first five responses concerned what the parents must be doing to cause this. Why would you want a parent to develop a narrative of self-blame?

We need to know that parents are doing what they think is right. Yet, they need guidance from therapists. Parents must get outside their comfort zones as well.

I was reviewing a phone call with a teen before entering into what I call a "Three Tiered call." It involves at least three interchanges with the person on the other line. This was his first time and his mother, sitting across the room was visible worried. As the phone rang, she whispered: "take some deep breaths, make yourself calm and just relax...." Clearly, she was the one with a challenged comfort zone.

In his new book: *Far From the Tree*, Andrew Solomon says "It is both essential and impossible to tease apart the difference between the parents' wanting to spare the child the suffering and the parents' wanting to spare themselves the suffering." As a parent, I know that suffering overlaps. As a therapist, I will assert it is hard to differentiate. When a child suffers, the parents feel it as well. So, it makes sense that they would want to minimize suffering for all involved.

Developing resilience is an important part of the therapeutic process. I believe that you can talk about resilience at any age, even if you have to modify the language. Sometimes resilience is implied to be extraordinary, but everyone has the potential to develop resilience. Build on previous successes. Help your client find effective thoughts to move through the barriers and cultivate resilience.

I like to tell my kids: If you banish the dragons, you banish the heroes. Without making that phone call, without raising your hand in class when you know the answer, when you only run the Power Point in a group presentation, the dragon has won. ☹️



NSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

JULY 1-5, 2015

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