

National Stuttering Association

...for kids and teens
who stutter,
their parents,
SLPs and others who
support them!

family Voices



National Stuttering Association

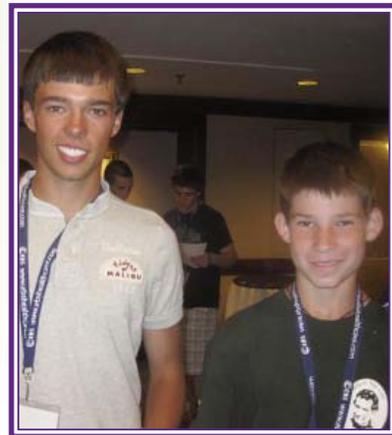
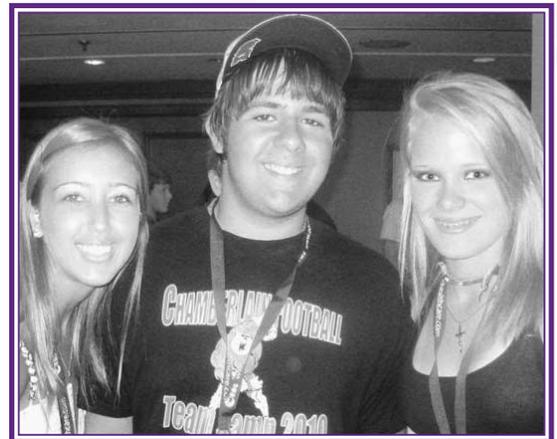
Changing the lives of people who stutter

Applying for a Job or College

Tips on Including Stuttering in your Essays and Personal Statements

Present stuttering in a positive light
Consider the language you use.

- “Living” with stuttering is better than “suffering” or “struggling” with stuttering.
- Stuttering can be a “difference” rather than a “disorder”, “impairment”, “disability”, “impediment” or “handicap”.
- Write about how you have grown, changed, or matured because of your experiences with stuttering, therapy, or support.



Include how your unique experiences and qualities will be positive contributions to the college community.

- Using words such as “diversity”, “inclusion”, “tolerance” and “acceptance” in your ideas and plans might be helpful.
- Example... Consider participation in groups such as “Best Buddies” if the college has a chapter.
- Consider ideas for community service within the college community.

Include a description of how you have changed/grown by including a real story or experience, something the reader can visualize.

- Consider writing about an experience characterized by fear/avoidance, contrasted with an experience that demonstrated courage/confidence.
- Include emotional content when describing these experiences (how you felt and what you thought).

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Ask The Expert

by Diane C. Games, Speech Language Pathologist
Board Recognized Specialist-Fluency Disorders

Some Questions about Childhood Dysfluency



The following questions, posted on the NSA website or developed in a discussion group, concern issues related to the early onset and treatment of stuttering in the preschool population. I have summarized or explained some of the issues of working with families and extended family members to facilitate treatment of stuttering. The “themes” in these questions included the following; 1) does my child really need treatment; 2) how do I get family members to support a decision to seek treatment; and 3) why is progress difficult to see or slow for some children?

Here are the three questions from families:

Question 1: My immediate family (my mother & father, my child's aunts/uncles) think I'm being too hyper/worried about my son's stuttering/they think he will outgrow it. We're starting therapy and I'm working with the SLP (speech-language pathologist), but my mother babysits a lot. So I'd really like to get them on board with me. What are some good ways to do this?

It is important that your extended family members understand the reasons for treatment and provide support. I would ask your family to read some of material on the National Stuttering Association web page: www.westutter.org. I also encourage family members to come to treatment sessions. Your therapist can explain the treatment approach and provide ideas for the family members to help the child in the home situation. I have attached a short summary of risk factors in this column for your reference. It is important for your family to respond to your son's stuttering in a positive way. Good Luck!

Question 2: I'm not sure that I should start speech therapy with my 4-year-old son who has been diagnosed with stuttering even though he doesn't seem to care about it. Won't taking him to speech therapy just be telling him that he has a problem?

If your son has been diagnosed with stuttering at this age, he probably has some awareness of his stuttering. In addition, we know that early intervention is effective. While all children are different, his awareness may increase as others ask questions about his speech or make comments about the stuttering. So, I would talk to him in a positive way about therapy. Use terms such as “fun”, “learning about talking” or working on “bumpy speech”. Many therapies for this age range provide for carryover into the home where you or family members could spend some “special talking time” with him to practice. In the process, you will learn more about how to respond to his stuttering.

Question 3: I have a 5-year-old boy who stutters. He has been receiving services from the school since he has been 3 years old. There are moments/days/even months when my son goes without stuttering. Other times, he can hardly get words out. He has an IEP at school and gets speech 3 times a week and his speech teacher is great. However, he is still stuttering and it is not getting better. I just want this to go away for him and it is not. He is also “impulsive” as the teachers put it. He has difficulty sitting still, and he calls out in class a lot. He just started kindergarten. They say he needs to “slow down” and take his time. He rushes through

everything. They think this has to do with his speech? I try to be “calm”, “make eye contact”, “talk like Mr. Rogers” and “talk slow” but nothing seems to help. I get frustrated and with a new baby it is not so easy not to scream and to be patient.

I understand your concern (and frustration) about your son's behavior and the ongoing issues with stuttering. Despite some wonderful gains in understanding why people stutter, there are some children who continue to stutter even with wonderful treatment. Your school speech language pathologist is providing valuable support for your son with sessions scheduled three times each week and contact with his teachers. Unlike some speech disorders, stuttering is a combination of underlying neurological factors and learned behaviors. It is important that you continue to support him and the therapist in the school setting. Your description of your son's other behaviors would suggest the need for a comprehensive neurological evaluation to rule out attentional and/or learning issues. Some of the most effective treatment comes from everyone “putting their heads together” to figure out why your son may be demonstrating continued stuttering and impulsivity.

Some Additional Comments:

The pre-school years are a time of intense development. Factors that make a child predisposed to stuttering include a family history of stuttering, neurological factors, rapid speech and language development accompanied by demands from the environment, and unrealistic expectations in the home environment. So parents, teachers and family members can help by making some simple changes.

First, most pre-school children have dysfluencies during the rapid growth periods of the early years where vocabulary, sentence structure and expanding communication is at an all time high. However, children who stutter demonstrate almost double the number of “stutter-like” dysfluencies (repetitions, blocks, prolongations) than pre-school children who do not stutter during this period. In fact, preschool children who stutter may have as many as “twice” the number of iterations (a-a-a-after) as the child who does not stutter. Also, children who have developmental stuttering often show a quick decline in stuttering.

In addition, there are some predictors of determining if children will continue to stutter. These include 1) Family History of stuttering; 2) Gender (males more likely to continue over time); 3) Age of onset (later onset may mean a higher likelihood of persistent stuttering); 4) Duration of the stuttering beyond one year (esp. for girls); 5) The length of the dysfluent moment; and 6) The type of dysfluency and the coexistence of other speech/language problems.

Some behaviors/changes that parents/teachers/family members can do to help the preschool or school aged child who stutters:

- Modify/slow your rate of speech when speaking with/to a child who is stuttering...in turn, the child will usually match the slower pace of speech. This slower pace of speech may facilitate more fluency without the verbal reminder to “slow down”.
- Turn-taking: Delay your responses/avoid interruptions of your child's speech. Turn taking and using pauses before you reply frequently decreases the “pressure” of time for your child and naturally reduces the “stress” of a quick reply.

Youth Day and Stuttering Workshop

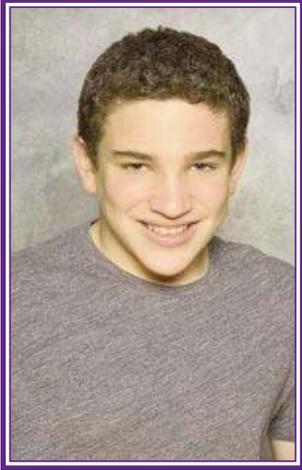
NSA workshop for School-Age Kids and Teens who Stutter, their Families and Speech/Language Pathologists.

Southeast Michigan
Beaumont Hospital
April 16th, 2011

For details and registration
visit westutter.org

My Stutter Story

by Myles, Huntington, New York



My name is Myles and I am 14 years old and I live in Huntington, New York. I am attending Cold Spring Harbor High School, and I am in 9th grade. I have been stuttering since I was really little but I never noticed it until I was in 2nd grade. When I started to notice my stuttering I thought there was something wrong with me even though there wasn't. Whenever I get bullied it is usually because of my stuttering, and yes it does hurt but you also have to learn to accept yourself for who you are and not let those words bring you down.

A few months ago I was bullied about my stuttering so bad that the kid went up to a microphone and read a story while pretending to stutter. I knew the kid was making fun of me because he mentioned my name and I was so upset that I started to cry while over 100 kids looked at me laughing. I decided to run out of the lunchroom while my friends followed me. My friends were with me the whole time not even laughing when the kid made fun of me.

The principal came up to me asking what's wrong so I told him why and he called the kid into his office. The next day the kid came up to me, saying, "Myles I'm awfully sorry, I didn't think it would hurt that bad" While me being me, I decided to accept his apology and moved on. I am currently in speech therapy with Lori Melnitsky. She has helped me overcome the fear of stuttering and also helped my fluency.



Ask The Expert, continued from page 2.

- Use more comments rather than questions when talking with your child; Commenting decreases the anxiety of formulating a quick response.
- Let your child finish no matter how much he/she is stuttering: This delayed reaction/response indicates interest in your child's thoughts no matter how he/she speaks. Comment about what your child is saying, not how he/she is speaking.

While there are many wonderful experts in early childhood stuttering, I have utilized basically one resource: Early Childhood Stuttering for Clinicians by Clinicians by Ehud Yairi and Nicoline Grinager Ambrose. This text reports information gained from a longitudinal study of preschool children who demonstrated stuttering compared to those who did not develop stuttering. This project has provided wonderful information concerning the development of stuttering in the preschool years. In addition, I have added some information from my experience as a clinician who sees many pre-school aged children for treatment.

The NSA has some of the most passionate SLPs today committed to helping everyone in the stuttering community. Diane Games is the recipient of the "SLP of the Year" award. Being an SLP is about having a great capacity to care, and greatly improve the lives of people who struggle with the challenges of their speech every day. It is truly appropriate that she is the winner of this award, as coincidentally she runs her own practice in the Queen City of Cincinnati. She has held the presidency of the Southwestern Ohio Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and hosts the Fluency Friday Plus program for children and teens in her area. www.fluencyfriday.org



National Stuttering Association
t.w.s.t.
Teens Who STutter

What's new with Family Programs?



The Family Programs committee has been very busy these past months! One of our areas of focus is a strategic planning

initiative in which the committee is revamping the processes and procedures necessary for the creation of a NSA Family Chapter. Our goal in doing this is to promote a formidable support group base that will be successful and sustained. Additionally, Family Programs will soon be sending a calendar of monthly themes to Chapter Leaders to assist with topics of discussion and activities at Family Chapter meetings. These themes are voluntary, but we hope you will find them useful. We welcome comments and suggestions. Please feel free to contact us at any time. In the meantime, we will keep you posted on what Family Programs is up to. All the best! Stephanie, sdccopen@gmail.com and Sheryl, shunter@tampabay.rr.com

A Family Affair: Karen, Hope and Justin Spohn

by Patrick M. Hildebrandt

When it comes to managing his stuttering, 13-year-old Justin Spohn's support system is actually more of a family affair. That's because Justin relies not only on the NSA but also his mother, Karen, and his sister, Hope, 21, who are both heavily involved in his speech.

The Spohn family's NSA odyssey started at the 2010 conference in Cleveland, Ohio, but the seeds were actually planted a year earlier, when Karen found the NSA through the internet. "We were going to go to the 2009 conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, but we couldn't afford it, so it got pushed to the side," she explains.

Despite the delay, she continued to stay involved with the NSA website and share its content with her son, as well as to educate family members and other people who knew Justin. By the time the Cleveland conference rolled around, the Spohn family was scheduled to go, courtesy an NSA sponsorship. "It was such a blessing," she says, although a recurring nightmare forced her to keep checking his paperwork. "I kept dreaming that we wouldn't be signed up and people would keep asking why we were there."

Those troubles were forgotten once they got to the conference. "We're not really around a lot of people who stutter, so we didn't really know what we'd find when we got there," she admits. "Talk about going from a place where nobody stutters to a place where everybody stutters, well, it was a little weird."

Nonetheless, Karen's eyes were opened, and her approach to Justin's stuttering changed. She and Hope have become tireless advocates for Justin, and they're even working with Marybeth Allen, co-chair of the Family Programs Committee, to get a kids and teens chapter started for Orange and Los Angeles counties.

Justin is appreciative of his family's role in his speech. "I like it, because I know I have them behind me, that they support me" he says. He has also started to take a more active role himself. "He's started to discuss it with his teachers," Karen says. "A lot of them already knew, but it was important that he take charge and be more open. And he has—he's more direct and confident now, and he's grown more vocal."

NSA Member Highlights

Hope, who Karen calls her son's "biggest defender," found that the NSA increased her perception of stuttering. "When we got back home, I noticed other kids that stuttered. I had

never picked up on that before," she says. "It reinforces that no one stutters in the same way, and you don't always know how much is out there."

For those questioning whether or not to join the NSA, Justin doesn't hesitate. "If you like being part of a big family, yeah, absolutely," he says. It's that connection that has made the most lasting impression on Karen. "Best part is knowing that we're not alone," she says. "I never felt alone out here until we went to the conference, and now we have so many contacts and Facebook friends. It's overwhelming, and we realized that it wasn't just our battle anymore, it's an NSA battle."

What's your favorite movie? Justin: All of the Star Wars movies.

Do you have any hidden talents? Karen: Justin plays video games really well; Hope can write backward.

If you could have dinner with one person, who would it be? Karen: Jim Carrey, because it would just be hilarious. I'm not sure I would even eat! Justin would eat with Yoda.

What's your favorite vacation spot? Karen: Anywhere the NSA goes. Hope: the beaches near San Juan Capistrano, California.

Do you prefer apples or oranges? All: oranges.

If you could be one animal, which would it be? Justin: Koala.

What's your favorite superhero? Karen: Batman.

Patrick M. Hildebrandt is an award-winning writer and editor living outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.


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Here To Help

from Alexis D., Cox's Creek, KY

Dear Stutter Buddies, *(I wrote this letter to my brother.)*

I know it feels stressed to you with your speech but sometimes I can help you with your speech but Dr. E. can help you instead if it feels better to you. I will talk to Mom and Dad and see if I can help you a little bit at home but it's okay if you don't want me to help you but just tell me and I will help you a little bit at home like I said.



Stutter Buddies

The Sister Page!

The NSA conference is a special place for kids who stutter and very important for their siblings too. There is a workshop dedicated to siblings to share with each other their questions and concerns with stuttering. Read these Stutter Buddy letters from sisters who write to and about their brothers who stutter.

Stuttering is Hard

From Sarah C., Ringgold, GA

Dear Stutter Buddies,

I know that stuttering is hard. My brother is struggling with stuttering.



Conference First Timer

From Gianna C., Bow, New Hampshire

Dear Stutter Buddies,

I came to this convention for the first time because my brother stutters. It is very different being here because a lot of people in my town and school don't stutter. I am enjoying it a lot so far. The End.



Life With Stuttering

From Rachel C., Louisville, KY

Dear Stutter Buddies,

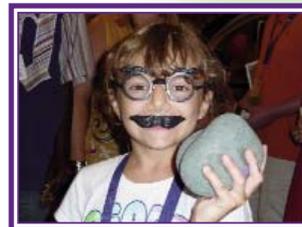
I know that stuttering is hard. But you should not let it get in the way of life. I was wondering how it is to stutter and how does it feel.

Words From Julia

From Julia W., Auburn, NH

Dear Stutter Buddies,

I came to a convention. I met one person at the convention. My brother stutters. I have a dog and 2 fish. My dog's name is Katie!



Stutter Buddy Letters were collaborated by Bonnie Weiss and Gary Rentschler. E-mail Bonnie and Gary your letters at Blweiss1@verizon.net and rentschler@duq.edu

My Great Experience

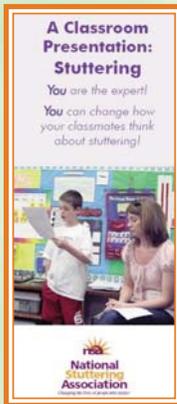
by Chase

Hi. My name is Chase. I'm 12 years old and I stutter. Recently I got the chance to be on my school's announcements. At first I was pretty scared. But then I found there's not a whole lot to be scared about. The day after the announcements, I got to go to a stuttering workshop. It was my first stuttering workshop, so I didn't know what to expect. When I got there I started having fun right away. I met new friends and played games and we even did a play for our project. The play was about what to do if you get bullied. I played the victim. It was pretty cool. A few days after, I was on my school's announcements again. I was excited about it. I actually couldn't wait to do it. It went pretty smooth. I stuttered a few times, but I kept on talking.



At my school, I also got a chance to write a report about anything I wanted, so I picked stuttering. I got a lot of good reviews after the speech and I talked a lot more with my friends in that class and things weren't so tense. I have to give a lot of the credit to my speech therapist though. She taught me to be ok about stuttering.

In speech, my speech therapist would have me go up to people and tell them that I stutter. At first I was a bit scared but after I did it a few times I learned it was fun. So now if I order at a restaurant I advertise to the waiter and say "hi I stutter". And this has been my great experience with stuttering. Well, thanks for reading this.



The NSA's website store has helpful brochures including:

A Classroom Presentation About Stuttering



LOOKING TO VOLUNTEER?

Join a committee? Write an article?
Contact the NSA today!

Applying for a Job or College

Continued from page 1

Ideas for content when describing yourself:

Personal Growth

- Insight into your own behavior
- Problem solving based on what you learned in therapy or in a support group.
- Acceptance of things you can't change and working to change the things you can. "I am more than my stuttering".
- Applying therapy concepts to other areas of life (ie. facing fears).
- Ability to accept feedback and learning to evaluate yourself (successes/failures)
- Maturity inherent in knowing that ultimately you are responsible for the change you create.

Leadership Skills

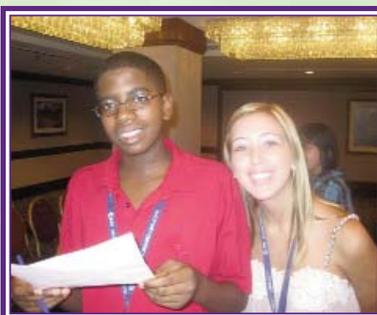
- Supporting and reaching out to others new to the therapy process (or to the support group).
- Sharing your own strategies in the hopes of helping others.
- Taking responsibility for group dynamics by setting a model of contributing and responding to others.

- Being open about stuttering to help shape positive public perceptions of stuttering (advertising).
- Writing about stuttering, presenting about stuttering, making videos about stuttering in order to inform or educate others (consider what you have done in school, church, social groups, etc.)
- Taking a stand against teasing and bullying in your school and social networks.

Personal Qualities and Character

- Taking responsibility for your own behavior and for the changes you make.
- Taking initiative in seeking out speaking opportunities or opportunities to advertise stuttering.
- Awareness and sensitivity to all differences (not just stuttering), and setting an example of acceptance and tolerance.
- Diligence in working toward personal goals.
- Planning and organizational skills needed to carry out assignments and change long standing habits.
- Demonstrating courage in the face of fear.

Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BRS-FD
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Dad's Voice

by Matt Coppen

When I was asked to write about my perspective as I've experienced my son grow up a stutterer, lots came to mind. One thing in particular sticks out above all the rest, and that would be courage. Arguably, I am not that far away from childhood, so that I can't remember how difficult it is to wind ones way through childhood and adolescence. Dealing with the everyday drama of being a kid, of any age, can be hard enough. What amazes me most about Cameron, is the courage with which he meets all the daily trials and tribulations, that fluent people take for granted. I'm certainly guilty of that, but I can assure you that Cameron changed my perspective forever. I can see how difficult it is for Cameron, when he wants to communicate with us, or his friends, or someone more random. As difficult as it is, that's not stopping Cameron from saying what he wants to say, and in my mind that's real courage. Doing that which is most difficult, yet most important, on a daily basis. Doing it when I can tell it bothers him, but doing it nonetheless. This display of courage is something that will need to continue for the better part of his entire life, but the fact that he continues to display it, during such a difficult and unforgiving time as childhood makes me proud, and confident that he will succeed in anything he does.

I wasn't always this confident. The moment when I was most fearful for my son and his future, came a number of years ago when my wife Stephanie and I attended a support group meeting in New Haven, CT.

There I listened to several adult stutterers talk about their experiences navigating through those things that most of us take for granted. A job, a relationship, friendships... Life. I cried on the way home because my fear for my son, his wellbeing, and his future, was overwhelming.

As a parent, I'm still concerned, but less so now than that night years ago. Some of which is because I've learned so much about stuttering from the NSA, and my wife (Thank you!), and learned that for stutterers it's a difficult journey to make, but by no means impossible. I've met, and become aware of, many happy and successful people that stutter. The most significant factor in why I'm not as quite as anxiety ridden about Cameron's future, is Cameron himself. His "everyday courage" makes me increasingly confident in knowing that he will be just fine. I hope his courage rubs off on me, I should be so lucky.



Tips for Family Support Group Chapters

All Family Chapters must follow the NSA's Safe Environment Policy. This policy has two primary components: (1) screening of volunteers; and (2) requiring that minors (under 18) not be alone with only one adult NSA volunteer, regardless of whether that volunteer has been screened and approved.



Screening of Volunteers: The NSA screens all volunteers who may have contact with children under 18. This includes all Family Chapter Leaders, youth day leaders and annual conference family programs session leaders, among others. The purpose of the screening process policy is to protect minors who participate in NSA activities. We view this as a profound moral and legal obligation and call upon chapter leaders to ensure that this requirement is adhered to at the local chapter level.

Rules Governing Volunteers and Minors In order to help ensure the safety of minors participating in NSA events, no minor or group of minors can be alone with only one NSA screened adult volunteer during a NSA sponsored activity. Instead, if minors are going to be separated from their accompanying adults (parents, legal guardians, etc) then there must be two unrelated and screened NSA volunteers present with those minors. If only one screened NSA volunteer is able to attend a Family Chapter meeting or event, then each minor must remain in the same room with the adult who accompanied that minor to the meeting or event. Thus, the minor children should not be in one room alone with only one screened volunteer while the accompanying adults meet in a separate room.

If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact Sheryl Hunter at shunter@tampabay.rr.com.

The NSA Annual Conference is right around the corner!

This year we will meet in Fort Worth Texas July 6-10th and it's sure to be BIGGER than ever! There are activities for the whole family- kids and teens who stutter, parents and siblings. Get ready for dynamic, informational, and moving workshops, along with presentations from a new panel of NSA All-Stars. Don't forget the emotional closing ceremony, where you might shed a tear or two of joy from realizing what a great conference you just experienced. And of course the closing banquet, where everyone is dressed-to-kill and ready to dance the night away! Contact NSA's family program with any questions or suggestions.



Early Bird Special! Book your Room Today!

NSA's 2011 Annual Conference is coming soon. Get a great rate when you book your room at the Worthington Renaissance Fort Worth Hotel in Texas. Go to westutter.org for the link.



From Skydiving to Stuttering: Laura San Martin

by Patrick M. Hildebrandt

Laura San Martin knows a thing or two about fear.

The twenty-something Los Angeles resident is an avid skydiver, and has completed over 470 jumps since picking up the hobby in 2008.

Her ability to conquer fear, then, made her a natural choice to co-present a workshop on the topic with Joseph Diaz at the 2010 Cleveland conference last summer.

"With teen workshops, the main goal is to get them talking," says Laura, who delved into the idea of fear by comparing and contrasting skydiving with, for example, using the telephone.

"I wanted to show the strange nature of fear, how we're afraid of things we shouldn't be and not afraid of things we should be," she says, pointing to her own experience of getting over skydiving far easier than she got over her fear of making phone calls.

"It's not to say fear is bad--fear can be good, can keep you thinking logically and reasonably," she explains. "But it can also be a game in our heads and doesn't always make sense, and we have to understand that and use it."

It's certainly been a radical change for Laura, who only four short years ago didn't want to confront her stuttering head-on. It wasn't until her childhood speech therapist recommended she attend the 2006 Long Beach, California conference that she started to reconsider.

"At the time I was very covert and didn't want to be involved with stuttering or think about it more than I had to. It was like, 'Oh, great, a whole conference of people who stutter? I don't know if I'm ready for that,'" she says.

"But I thought, I haven't done a great job of dealing with it in my life, so why not? It was within driving distance, too, so I could always go home if I wanted to."

She didn't need to. Within 20 minutes, she was hooked.

"I was floored and amazed, meeting all of these successful, happy people who held down real jobs and stuttered. I had honestly never known if I would be able to do that in my life."

The NSA gave Laura the confidence and support to go after her dreams. Roughly nine months after the conference, she re-entered speech therapy and completed a six-month program. Today, she's co-leader of the Los Angeles - San Fernando Valley chapter. And there's the successful workshop, which will likely lead to future ones.

"Not that I have a choice!" she says with a laugh. Future topics might include advertising, which Laura admits was a big problem for her. For Laura, the NSA has been all about mindset.

"The best part is meeting other people who stutter and who are successful and happy in their life, and lead full lives that they want to lead. There was a part of me that thought that, for my whole life, I'd be stuck in certain jobs or certain tasks."

For the girl who jumps out of airplanes regularly, that fear was the hardest and most rewarding to conquer.

What's your favorite band? There's no clear favorite, but Linkin Park and Evanescence are two good ones.

If you could be one animal, which would it be? A bird of some sort. An eagle or some other big bird.

Do you prefer pie or cake? Pie. Pumpkin, to be exact.

If you could have dinner with one person, who would it be? Galen, a doctor from Ancient Roman times. He was very advanced for the time--he understood diseases and designed hospitals. I like people who are ahead of their time.

Do you have any hidden talents? Skydiving is pretty much the obvious choice here.

Who's the best James Bond? I don't watch many of the Bond movies, but I'd have to say Sean Connery.

What would you want people who don't stutter to understand about people who do? The lifetime of pain we have. A lot of them don't, even my good friends. Understand the pain and the difficulties that we face every single day doing the "simplest" things.

Patrick M. Hildebrandt is an award-winning writer and editor living outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

NSA
Member
Highlights

