

NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION

IF YOU *stutter*, YOU ARE NOT *alone*.



Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Resilience at Work for People Who Stutter

All of us have experienced being knocked down, whether it's a failed entrepreneurial idea or not doing as well as you wanted to on that big presentation. Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties or "toughness." People who stutter often display great resilience in many situations, including at work. This webinar will examine resilience in the workplace and help us see that we are tougher than we think. Join this webinar and the discussions and interactions about resilience and brainstorm those moments of how we get back up after being knocked down.

Facilitators: Carl Coffey (NSA Board of Directors, Special Projects Co-Chair) and Ariel Mahlmann (WeStutter@Work team member)

Behind the Scenes - Chat Room Excerpt

Trinette:	In one on one meetings with my manager, he told me that he could not put me in front of his leadership because I do not speak clear or concise with comprehension.
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Douglas:	Oh wow Trinette! That is a very tough one to handle.
Trinette:	It is but I keep pressing on.
Carl:	Totally me at Chick-fil-A... I may stutter on my name, but the chicken sandwich is always worth it 😊
Oktawian:	I remember it was tough for me in school all the way thru college especially when I had to do a presentation. Meeting people and dating was a problem but in college it got better.
Lisa:	I work for a school district and we did a community Facebook live about reopening schools with a team of people. I did a huge part of the planning and worked really hard. During the community presentation my employer, who asked me to present, muted me live on zoom. I thought it was an accident so I un-muted myself and was muted again. They took over the one slide I had. No apology afterwards. In another instance a phone call representative told me she couldn't understand me (after I self-disclosed) and said someone else that she could understand should call back.
Carl:	Oh wow, Lisa, I'm sorry to hear about that. Not everyone "gets" it and that can be really frustrating.
Adam:	Worst experience----the whole staff at work played a game at lunch hour and left me out because I stuttered....excluded me.....AND a vendor came in asking me to find someone who worked at the office-another employee said "he can't talk" meaning me...I was horrible mad!!!! Both accounts!
Rachael:	I am studying to become a speech therapist, and I had a supervisor in undergrad who thought I couldn't do the job because of my stutter. Luckily now I'm at a university for grad school where one of the professors has a stutter and whose specialty is fluency disorders.
Oktawian:	During job interviews it is difficult because people are hesitant to hire people who stutter.
Carl:	https://www.frankybanky.com and https://www.frankybanky.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Ti-Ger_Analogy_of_Stuttering.pdf
Daniel:	I am finishing graduate school and recently had 2 interviews. In both, they said I should choose another career. In counseling
Stacey:	I'm so sorry. People can be so cruel.

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Carl:	That’s awesome, Rachel! Sometimes *we* need to be the people in those positions to show the world that we can do all the things.
Nakia:	Trinette, good to hear that you are being resilient. A similar thing happened to me at work when I transitioned into a different role. One of the managers said well, I like her, but I don’t think she would be a good fit for our group because she stutters and we do a lot of public speaking. It actually wasn’t a good fit for me as well. I want a manager who is an ally and not define me based on my “little” challenge.
Suyash:	Hey Daniel, Kind of in the same boat. But they don't say that straight forward to me. Have a few more interviews lined up. Someone can look beyond our stutter and see the talent we possess.
Stacey:	I've worked in Human Resources for 20+ years, tho unemployed for 14 months and interviewing a lot, mostly over Zoom. I don't interview well over Zoom. I stutter a ton. No one has ever said anything, but I'm sure the reason I haven't been hired yet is because of my stuttering. They can't look beyond it.
Oktawian:	I understand where you coming from. I'm not that good over zoom as well.
Courtney:	I’m so sad to read some of you all’s stories. But I am also glad to hear that I am not alone
Oktawian:	When it comes to in person interviews it is difficult not to get stuck. Usually the interviewer turns down your application afterwards.
Stacey:	No you're not Courtney. I feel the same way. I'm not alone.
Patrick:	To our two facilitators: President Biden is a PWS. Would you like him to become more active in educating the nation about stuttering? If you support the President becoming more involved in the stuttering community, what would you like to see him do?
Kira:	My son is 17 and is looking for a part-time job. I worry about him getting a retail or entry type job with his disfluency
Carl:	Kira - I’ve worked in retail for a majority of my life... surprisingly I think that helped me with stuttering. It forced me to put myself out there and the repetitiveness of it (I.e. asking

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	“did you find everything okay?” 100 times a day was good practice for me when I was going through speech therapy and using techniques
Oktawian:	I remember in school it was tough especially in elementary school because the kids used to pick on you.
Daniel:	I was told to mention my stutter on my cover letter, is that a plus?
Aneesa:	My previous director told me to get a machine that can speak on my behalf.
Trinette:	I was told record meetings.
Omar:	One of the things that bugs me so much is although more people know about the word stuttering, many have the wrong interpretation of it. Many think any hesitancy in speech is stuttering and a person who is unsure of what they are about to say is stuttering. Even in movies and television, and things such as Key and Peele especially, people make fun of it and use the word extremely incorrectly to the point where it becomes like an insult. At my old high school, most people know the word stuttering, but most have a wrong understanding of it. I have had to clear up the meaning of stuttering to people because they misunderstood what it is.
Anabel:	If you guys have vocational rehabilitation programs in your cities, it is a great program that helps people with disabilities obtain jobs. That is how I was able to get my first big job
Lisa:	Aneesa - Wow, that’s unbelievable
Stacey:	I’ve never told an interviewer or employer that I stutter. Somehow, I’ve been able to mask/hide it when needed. I just don’t feel comfortable doing that. My biggest pet peeve is when I stutter on my name and people ask me if I forgot my name and laugh at me. No! I want to snap at them and be a jerk, but I don’t.
Oktawian:	Long time ago I used to avoid eye contact but my last speech therapist has helped me with that.
Courtney:	I’m so glad you don’t work there anymore Adam!
Leah:	Thanks so much for sharing that Adam. You were too good for that game. I bet it was a stupid game anyway!
Adam:	Creeps!!! They are!

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Aneesa:	At my current job, I disclosed to an executive that I'm a person who stutters. And for 10 mins, he imparts what he viewed as encouragement to not be nervous & to increase my confidence. I then explained to him that stuttering is not a confidence or personality issue. At its core, it's a neurological issue! (at least in my humble opinion)
Leah:	Totally agree Aneesa. So crazy that people who have no experience with stuttering feel comfortable enough to give advice
Adam:	Ignorant people every day!!!
Omar:	Based on what I said, there was no response. Maybe some felt I deviated from the topic of stuttering at work. So, I think the NSA needs to be drastically improved as it does not focus on these things that I have mentioned.
Rachel:	Similar experiences in grade school, college, graduate school and work. I wish I knew you all when I was growing up. We are not alone! I can tell you from experience that resilience can be learned. It is something I've had to cultivate. This webinar is so important to the stuttering community. Thank you!
Aneesa:	The executive thanked me & said he learned something new! He said his respect for me increased! And that he will come to me next time he needs a data-driven answer to a question he has! He also said that stuttering is a strength, because every word I say counts.
Kevin:	Anessa that's awesome to hear!! I'm inspired by what you did!
Lisa:	It took sending out 50 resumes and 15 interviews to get my first offer for a teaching job. I taught over 1200 students in 8 years before going into administration. Several of my former students became teachers and even special education teachers. Now I support 600 teachers. I help mentor several younger administrators and teachers. Showing up and proving to them and myself that I'm amazing at what I do whether or not I'm fluent is always a good reminder on tough days and keep going. Trying to not beat myself up so much and seeing myself stutter on zoom everyday has helped desensitize me a bit this past year. Just being here doing what I do is being resilient and not giving up.

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John:	“When things get tough ... there’s light at the end of the tunnel” ... Jiayi, that’s practicing resilience at work!
Aneesa:	Anabel: that’s exactly how I begin interviews / conversations! Educating the listener on what my speech may sound like.
Carl:	Anabel... that’s awesome! You set the expectation for folks and it sounds like you’ve found a way to disclose that works for you
Rachel:	Anabel - right on target. For my most recent job, I disclosed at the interview as well. It took the burden off of me, allowed me to maintain eye contact with the interviewers, and focused on my message. The interviewers leaned in to be supportive. The whole room got lighter.
Simon:	Great words Anabel. Thank you.
Carl:	Rachel, I love that! Sounds like doing that helped to ease the tension all around and let them focus on you as a candidate!
Leah:	I love disclosing in an interview and I have given many employers the brochure that is on the We Stutter at Work portion of the website. The brochure is awesome and basically tells the employer to hire us. Employers eat that sh*it up.
Trinette; John; Courtney:	Thank you Anabel! Anabel ... Wow! Powerful story and insights!!!! Thank you so much for sharing Anabel!
Carl:	Lisa... love that! Sounds like you have impacted a lot of folks based on the example you set as an educator! Kudos to you 😊
Anabel:	Thank you guys for your kind words!! We should stutter with power and educate people so that more awareness about stuttering is spread!!
Kaylyn:	Leah I love the idea of handing out the brochure!
Anabel:	I am a case manager at Henderson behavioral health and I always disclose my stuttering to my potential clients on the first phone call and all of my clients say thank you for letting them know.
Aneesa:	I also like the idea of sharing a brochure! Anyone else have experience with sharing the brochure with employers?
Anabel:	By educating people on stuttering we are taking back our power and speaking our level of fluency!
JoAnne:	Daniel, it's not that you don't have a happy ending...it's that your happy ending hasn't happened YET. :)

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Suyash:	Wow that's great Daniel. You'll be great.
Trinette; Thomas; Leah; Sarah; Rachel; John; Shawn; Stacey; Kira:	Awesome Daniel!; Thank you Daniel!!; Thank you Daniel. You got this!; You got this Daniel!! You are awesome!! The world needs you Daniel! Don't give up. Walk into the storm with your eye opened! I also defended my dissertation! It is doable!; You will make it happen. Show your smarts tomorrow!; You will do a great job Daniel - I'm so confident of your abilities.; Good luck tomorrow Daniel!
Daniel:	Thank you everybody! I am grateful to have all of you by my side.
Carl:	Some people have no business managing other people, I'm convinced.
Nakia:	I agree with that, Carl!
John; Daniel; Carl; Douglas; Trinette; Lisa:	Bobby... we feel your pain; Bobby I feel you man.... How these little traumas stick.; If nothing else, you dodged the bullet of having to work for that jerk every day. Small victories!; Very cool Bobby!; Thanks Bobby!; Go Bobby!; Very common misconception.
Taylor:	I worry about that too Nikki.
Ariel:	Nikki, I relate! Feeling small and like people judge your intelligence because of your stutter is a real fear.
Anabel:	Also let them know how you stutter!! Very important. Good job Nikki!
Lisa:	Giving yourself the time and space to stutter on every single word no matter what is a huge step that is honestly a work in progress. But it's freeing.
Daniel:	Totally Nikki. I wish we were treated equally.
Suyash:	Go Nikki.! Thanks for sharing.
Stacey:	Yes, Nikki, it's very disheartening. I feel the same. They just look at us like we're stupid and we're not.
Trinette; Philip:	Thanks Nikki!; You're awesome Nikki!!
Nikki:	Thank you all, what great support here.
Trinette:	Wow thanks Lamberto!

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Leah; Nikki:	Wow, is that legal to do?
Daniel; Suyash:	Lamberto, thank you for your service! You are a role model for many people.; Lamberto, Thank you for your sharing.
Carl:	I feel that! If I have a meeting or something big coming up, I'll be thinking about it for days before it gets here.
Lamberto:	I'm still employed, I'm in an administrative assignment though, so no stopping cars anymore.
Carl:	Be kind to yourself.
Taylor:	A few times if my meeting isn't on video I've recorded my introduction and I just play that ... definitely a crutch but if I say what I want to for the rest of my call I try not to be too hard on myself
Kristine:	Lamberto - for your supervisor: https://westutter.org/wp-content/uploads/employers-2019.pdf and https://westutter.org/wp-content/uploads/military-2019.pdf
Leah	Omg, Taylor that is a life hack. Genius.
Anabel:	We all have so many of the same experience, it is so great to hear from everyone. It really makes me know that I am not alone. So thank you!!!!
Taylor:	I used to think I was the only person in the world who had a hard time saying their own name.
Leah; Philip; Trinette; Jiayi; Anabel:	Love that Nakia!; Yes Nakia!!!; Thanks Nakia; Go Nakia! Thanks for sharing; Nakia, thanks for sharing! Great examples; Great Nakia!!!! Keep going and keep succeeding.
Nakia:	Thanks all.
Anabel:	Samee Taylor!! My name is with a vowel and I always felt that I was the only one feeling this way!!
Taylor:	Hearing everyone's stories is very helpful, hearing everyone else's resiliency helps me get through hard moments too.
Lisa:	The Happiness Trap is a great book to read about mindfulness.
Ariel:	Ah, I'm so warm and fuzzy inside. I love this chat.
Carl:	That's a tough job, stutter or not! We need to form a support group for those of us who've worked in a call center. It's touuuuugh.

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Ariel:	Yes!! I haven't worked in a call center, but at my retail job, I had to answer the phone and call customers a lot. So hard! But...it got easier and I didn't dread it as much. It still sucked but it didn't ruin my day anymore! Just maybe 2 minutes.
Anabel:	I am a case manager so I am on the phone all day and it is tough but I don't let it get me down.
Carl:	That doesn't sound like they set anyone up for success with those hurdles...
Jiayi:	That sounds extremely challenging to have so many metrics to hit.
Stacey:	This is the first NSA event I have ever attended. I feel so at home and it's nice to feel the love and support from everyone. I'm not alone. I hope you'll have more webinars like this soon. I also never "talk" when I don't have to. I felt comfortable and safe here. Thank you to all attendees, and the moderators Carl and Ariel.
Taylor:	I had to answer phones at work and I'd avoid saying the name of the company I would just answer "hi" and I definitely think people were confused... I improved over time though and the more I said it the easier it got
Joel:	All great stories. Remember 99% of your interactions are not an issue; however, we focus on the 1%. Disclosing is good for yourself, good for the person listening, and the person listening may know a person who stutters.
Ariel:	I wish I could heart all of these messages. Stacey, thank you for joining and I'm so glad you've gotten introduced to the NSA! We do host webinars often on all sorts of different topics :)
Carl:	So glad you joined us Stacey and thanks for sharing your experiences! It's amazing how much we can relate to each other.
Anabel:	I am the NSA co-chapter leader for the Miami chapter and if you would like to attend one of our support group meeting please send me an email at nsamiami1@gmail.com.
Chyncia:	This is also my first NSA event/webinar. I've loved every minute. What's the best way to learn about upcoming webcasts/events? Do you have to continually check the website or is there an email notification we can sign up for?

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Carl:	Check out westutter.org/careersuccess - We have an upcoming webinar on April 28 on Public Speaking at Work. Sign-up will be soon - if you're on Facebook, follow the National Stuttering Association page for more info / updates.
Carl:	Dude! That's pretty big. Sometimes people see the things in us that we may not be able to see in ourselves.
Ariel:	NSA is also on LinkedIn and Instagram as well. @westutter
Nikki:	NSA emails are super helpful in knowing what is upcoming.
Jiayi:	John, wow amazing story! So inspiring and speaks to the fact effective communication and service is not about fluency.
John:	Get on the NSA email newsletter here — https://westutter.org/join-mailing-list/ and follow the NSA on FB here — https://www.facebook.com/WeStutter/
Shawn:	This is also my first NSA session. I'm so inspired by everyone!! I'm a covert stutter and I'm trying to break the habit. I know it is better to let the stutter happen. The habits are hard to break. Attending these meetings is a part of me doing things differently. I'm so moved.
Carl:	Shawn - welcome! Glad you are here. And totally agree - habits are hard to break. I try to remind myself... progress, not perfection.
Daniel:	Does avoiding of speaking for a while make the stuttering cycle and fear of stuttering worse? Even when someone was once confident about their stutter?
Shawn:	Thank you Carl, I'll whisper that to myself.
Carl:	Okay, you coming through with the wisdom Leah!
Anabel:	Thank you Leah for smiling and being confident!!!
Bobby:	We are the 1%
Carl:	We are amazing employees!
Nakia:	I agree with the interpersonal skills. Thanks for sharing, Leah.
Suyash:	Change is always hard. For anyone. It took me quite a few years to accept myself. Thanks Leah!
Daniel:	Amazing reminder Carl!!! Like we deserve too.
Leah:	Yesss *smarter* I love it.
Carl:	Yes! I love it. What we have to say is important... period.
Susan:	Has anyone heard the comedian Drew Lynch? He's great-very inspirational.
John:	JoAnne ... "I own in it now!" ... love it.

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Carl:	Yes, Susan - I saw him when he performed in Nashville. So good! A group of us who stutter went to go see him. I love it!
Ariel:	I got to meet him once! I was so excited. And nervous. I stuttered a lot on my name. But he didn't care!
Susan:	Thanks, wow super cool!
Leah:	Exactly, stuttering all the way to the bank.
Jiayi:	Thank you for your confidence! #goodpeoplefilter - that's a great mindset.
Nakia:	It's our strength!
Leah:	Yes Carl! Cancelled
Carl:	Ain't nobody got time for it, Leah! Kids are so pure!
Daniel:	Rachael good for you! Graduate school and clinics are the hardest things.
Joseph; Jiayi; Kristine; Daniel; Nakia:	Thank you Ariel & Carl for another great We Stutter @ Work webinar! Great job! I really enjoyed it!; Thanks Ariel and Carl.; Thank you Carl and Ariel!! Thank you to everyone for sharing!!; Thank you so much. So much love; Thank you so much, Ariel and Carl.
Carl:	We appreciate everyone for coming out. This has been such an awesome time.
Ariel:	Thank you all again for coming. Follow the NSA on social media and I'd love to connect with you as well!
Carl:	NSA Spring Conference 2 day virtual event, April 17 & 18.

Link:

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