

Chapter 16

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Creativity and Humour: The Fun of Building Confidence in Children and Adults Who Stutter

Introduction: it is OK to be different!

It is OK to be different. That is precisely why I will be using a different style of writing to share this chapter with you. Picture this: I am going to relax and enjoy a friendly conversation with you over a cup of coffee. Capture my passion whilst sharing my clinical experience and reflecting upon what I have learnt from children and adults who stutter.

My roadmap for this chapter will be:

- *Stuttering is a gift: turn the elephant in the room to a butterfly on a flower*
- *The Smart Intervention Strategy ... with a twist!*
- *Good-natured teasing and people who stutter: permission to laugh!*
- *Humour is fashion: know it and use it!*
- *Re-shaping stuttering modification: would Dr Van Riper be amused?*
- *Planting the seeds of creativity: the secret of success*
- *Upgrade yourself and start living: public speaking training*
- *Conclusion: it is OK to reflect and be thirsty for knowledge.*

“Thank you for changing my life. I am proud of who I am,” wrote Chloe, a sixteen-year-old girl who stutters. My passion for dealing with people who stutter flourished when I received that particular letter of thanks. During that same week, I was moved when a child’s mum shared with me that when her boy who stutters was asked what he would like to become when he grew up, his response was “I want to be like Joseph” adding that “Joseph understands how I feel”. My highest ambition in my profession since has always been to ‘make a difference’.

My journey in the field of stuttering continued with my deep desire to understand stuttering and find ways to inspire children and adults who stutter. The eventual development of an iOS application for speech language pathologists to use



with children who stutter was a major breakthrough. Using creativity and humour, speech pathologists can help a child who stutters to enjoy the fun and pleasure of speaking. This chapter therefore discusses the importance of creativity and humour in stuttering and describes the application *Smart Intervention Strategy* (SIS). It also highlights the value of public speaking skills in training to improve communication skills, build confidence and become 'wow' speakers. Let us first start with the concept: stuttering as a gift.

Stuttering is a gift: turn the elephant in the room to a butterfly on a flower

A while ago, I was sitting on a bench besides this very elderly fisherman. We soon began chatting and he mentioned that he had eight nephews and nieces. Then he pulled a photograph out of his pocket and with a twinkle in his eye whispered "and you know what? She is my favourite". It was a photograph of this young, pretty little girl, curly hair, big blue eyes with a lovely smile. He remarked that whenever he spent time with her, he felt in heaven. He was able to appreciate the pleasant smell of flowers and listen to the soft waves of the sea while enjoying the cool, crisp breeze. He learnt so much from her and it was so much fun. He just loved it. Then, he said with a smile "she is blind and I really enjoy her company." I reflected upon this. He could easily have said, "I have eight nephews and nieces. They are all 'normal' but we have a problem with one of them". What he actually said on the other hand was that he enjoyed her company the most. Grandpa chose to talk about his niece being blind as a positive thing. So if we turn our focus to people who stutter, are there any particular strengths that an individual who stutters has, in comparison to someone who does not stutter?

When we launched the Stuttering Association of Malta (SAM) a few years back, we invited the founder of the College of Public Speaking, London, Mr Vince Stevenson, as a guest speaker. Internationally renowned, he is known as 'the fear doctor'. At the launch, we introduced the concept of the 'gift' of stuttering, prompting newspaper articles to celebrate this notion. The following is an excerpt from an article by Calleja (2015) in *The Times of Malta* entitled "The 'gift' of stuttering". The journalist shared the experience of The President of the SAM, a nurse who stutters:

I went home after a lecture and started crying. I thought: I cannot even say my name. I have to do something about it". She made an appointment with speech pathologist Joseph Agius who told her that 'stuttering is a gift'. She continued, "I remember thinking: he has no clue what he is saying!" However, she later realised something which changed her outlook for the rest of her life. She was sen-

sitive to others, a good listener, humble and creative. “When I sat for my nursing exam, I started talking fluently – but I wanted them to know that I stuttered. So, I made an effort to get stuck. I got stuck and I thought ‘OK now I’m back’. This is who I am. I did not want them to see me without my stuttering.

I was speaking at an international conference in Paris and a young lady who stutters came up to me and claimed she had just graduated as a lawyer, and wanted to apply for a particular job with the most prestigious law firm in her country. She told me that as a guru in stuttering and creativity I could help her secure the post. We drafted her curriculum vitae, and in the language section included: ‘English plus’ and ‘French plus’. When she went for the interview the first question they asked was to clarify what she meant by her ‘English plus’. She answered that she knew how to stutter in English but also in French. She told them that even Vice President Joe Biden is a person who stutters. She was so comfortable with the stuttering that she was selected, and she remains one of the firm’s best lawyers to date.

A question we need to ask is what are the benefits of stuttering? Most people who stutter can honestly state ‘I am a good listener’, ‘I am caring’, ‘I am sensitive’, ‘I am a better communicator’, ‘I am good in public speaking’, ‘I am creative and have a good sense of humour’, ‘I make people smile’, ‘I am a positive thinker’, ‘I am humble’ and much more. Stuttering has the power to develop these characteristics: creativity, good listening skills, wittiness, humaneness and humility.

This can also be used as an asset during interviews. Some time ago, I met an ex-student of mine from Ireland. She told me that the week before, her brother who stutters had had an IT interview. At the end of the interview, the interviewer asked, “What will you do if we do not choose you?” His reply was, “I will get a guitar and start rapping.” Sometime later, this same manager phoned him up and said: “Do you know why we chose you? Well, the 130 applicants before you were so boring. You were unique, you were different. We like you.”

Another example was a young man who had just graduated as a teacher, yet was working as a waiter. He claimed that no one wanted to employ him as a teacher. He had just applied for two teaching vacancies – at primary and secondary levels – with a particular school. He went for one interview but received a message that he had not been chosen for the post. I asked him whether he had mentioned that he stuttered during the interview. He said, “of course not”! I suggested that next time he should try a new strategy, which was to tell them that he stuttered, and to explain about the benefits of stuttering. The week after, he was invited, purely by mistake, to a second interview with the same school and there happened to be the same interviewers. They had not expected the same person. During the interview he stated that he stuttered. He also dared ask the Head of School, “How many flu-



ent teachers do you have who do not bore kids to death?” The Head laughingly responded, “almost all of them!” The client stated that he, on the other hand, would never make children sleep in class. He was also being trained in public speaking. He related that he had been stuttering since he was three years old and had developed a sensitivity thanks to this, and that just by looking at the children’s eyes he could immediately identify those children who were having problems and those children who wanted to ask questions. Just by looking at their eyes. This is what stuttering had thought him. He also recognized that he was a good listener, very caring and sensitive. A few hours after the interview, the Headmaster phoned him to say that he had been chosen to teach at both primary and secondary levels. He is now considered to be one of the best teachers in this school.

David Seidler, screenwriter of *The King’s Speech*, also remarked that “the greatest gift that I have received from stuttering is being a stutterer.” How can we help people who stutter change their perception of stuttering? Both creativity and humour can broaden perception and can help in looking at exactly the same thing in a different way. One shoe salesman said: “This is a terrible market! No one wears shoes.” The other salesman said: “This is a wonderful market! No one wears shoes.” Using creativity and humour, we can change the way we look at situations. The iOS application Fluency Smart Intervention Strategy uses both creativity and humour to make speaking pleasant and fun.

The Smart Intervention Strategy... with a twist!

What inspired me to research the relationship between stuttering, creativity and humour? I was inspired by a client of mine, Kyle, who was a lively ten-year-old boy who actively and joyfully participated in my fluency group therapy sessions. He was full of fun and wit, and was always smiling. He was truly an inspiration to his friends. He also stuttered severely in a variety of situations. Student clinicians were impressed by his charm, confidence, wit and popularity. Eight years later, now a young man aged 18 years, he was referred again for stuttering intervention. This time he presented as a serious young man, anxious, tense and having lost his smile. When I asked what happened he quickly retorted, “I lost the younger Kyle.” He had lost his zest for life, his wit and his excitement. If only our intervention could bring back the harmony, serenity and wit of the ‘younger Kyle’. I wondered how essential and important it is to include working on positive attitude with children who stutter. How can we broaden people’s perception, to look at things differently and in a positive way?

I decided to run a study to seek preliminary evidence of a treatment effect from a thinking skills program titled *Think Smart, Feel Smart Program* (Agius, 2007). The study explored changes and aimed to investigate shifts in the feelings and attitudes of thirty school-age children who stutter in clinical real-life situations, following a ten-week thinking skills program based on creativity activities. The results of this study led to the development of the *Smart Intervention Strategy* (SIS). This model provided a framework that can be used with school-age children who stutter.

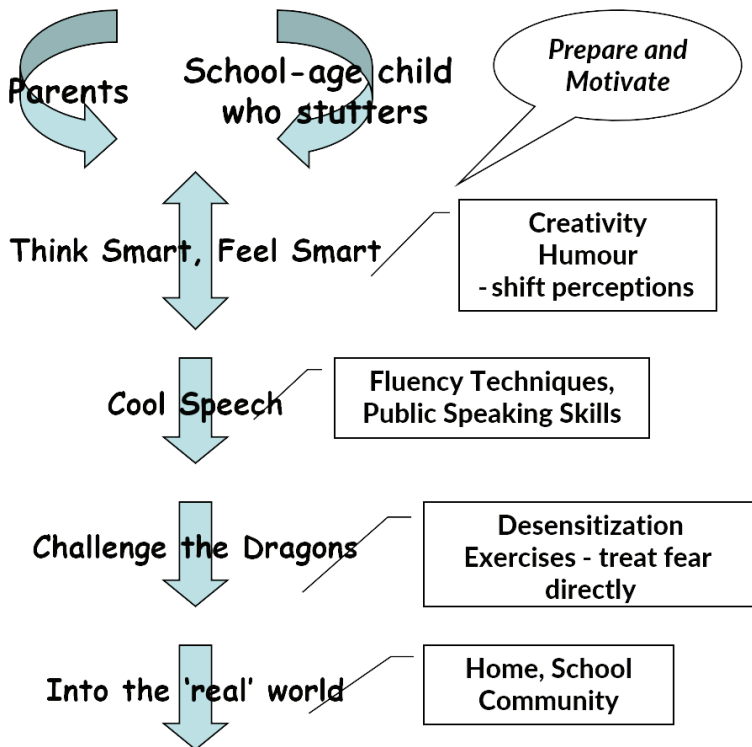


Figure 1: Overview of the SIS for school-age children who stutter (Agius, 2012)

The *Fluency SIS iOS* application (Agius, 2013) is designed as a tool to be used by speech language pathologists and students when working with children who stutter aged eight to twelve years. It provides a framework for a program which encourages creativity and humour during intervention sessions. Using creativity and humour, speaking becomes fun and enjoyable. Intervention aims to develop confidence in speaking and give permission to stutter. The goal is to become an efficient, confident communicator. The application includes activities to encourage change in perceptions. Creativity and humour are used as therapeutic techniques to shift



perceptions, such as perceiving stuttering as a gift. The most creative aspect of language is humour, and it is one of the most important topics in the study of communication. Pedagogical trends in recent decades have also shifted toward the promotion of a more relaxed learning environment which focuses on making learning fun. The SIS consists of four components containing different activities. The four components of the SIS are:

- a) Think smart, feel smart
- b) Cool speech
- c) Challenge the dragons
- d) Into the 'real' world.

The *Smart Intervention Strategy* is based on the following premises (Agius, 2015):

- Stuttering is a multidimensional and complex condition (Harrison, 2004).
- Activities need to be fun, and children need to be motivated.
- Creativity and humour can help children broaden their perceptions, and improve their attitude towards communication (Agius, 2007).
- Public speaking skills needs to be addressed (Agius, 2007).
- Activities need to focus directly on the specific feared situations of each individual.
- Speaking skills then need to be generalized in the home, school, and community situation.

The following components are included within the iOS application: *Think smart, feel smart*.

Think smart, feel smart

Humour and creativity are first introduced. Both can broaden perceptions to shift attitudes towards positive communication and the self (Agius, 2018). Sections on a blackboard type screen include 'shifting perceptions', 'word play', 'exaggeration', 'playful incongruity' and 'self-deprecation'. Each section has a variety of fun exercises such as 'create a crazy story', 'nicknaming pals', 'sense of non-sense' and 'goofy sketch'. These exercises encourage children to be creative without the fear of being wrong or seeming ridiculous. During the specific exercise on 'nicknaming pals', clinicians are encouraged to discuss with the child, highlighting that pro-social teasing can be beneficial. As will be discussed later on in this chapter, teasing can in fact be both playful and affectionate.

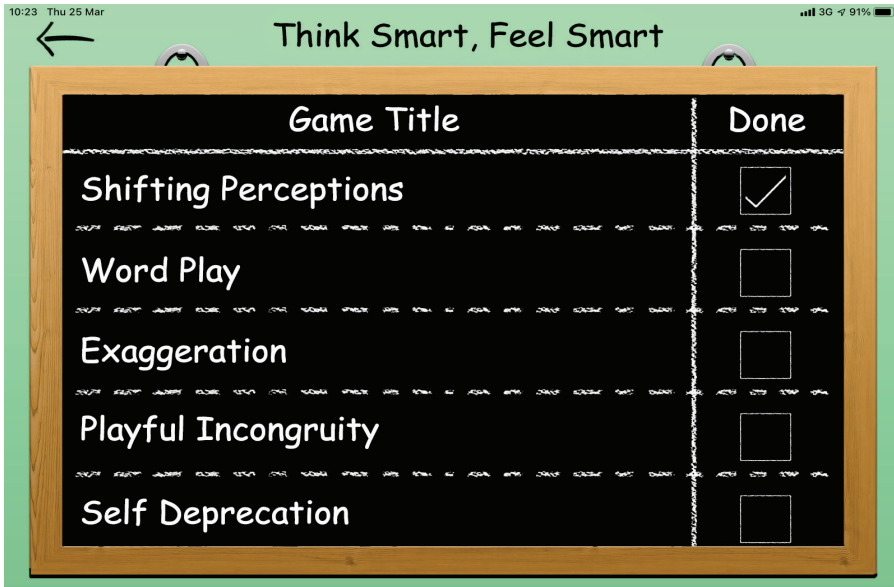


Figure 2: Screen shot of the blackboard type screen

Cool speech

Public speaking skills are also offered in the programme. Sections include 'practice in low battery speech', 'reading words and jokes', and presenting 'the wow speech'. Via the use of jokes and funny stories, children start associating public speaking with fun.





Figure 3: Screen shots of 'public speaking' exercises

Challenge the Dragons

Desensitization exercises focus directly on the specific speaking-situation fears of children. Through the repeated pairing of a humorous response with exposure to a feared stimulus, there is a gradual diminishment of the feelings of anxiety evoked by the stimulus (Martin, 2007). Sections include 'phone-a-mate', 'un-secret your secret' and 'the yummy experience'. During these exercises, children are encouraged to use the telephone, speak about their stuttering, and buy food items from different shops.



Figure 4: Encouraging the student when task is completed

Into the 'Real' world

Children are encouraged to use thinking tools and fluency techniques in specific situations at home, school and in the community. Parents at home and teachers at school are pillars of support for successful experiences. The sections include 'humour and laugh times' and 'the final frontier'. Finally, with the help of the clinician, the child experiences being an expert speaker by preparing a presentation on stuttering for his classmates. The child is then certified as 'Young Consultant of the Smart Intervention Strategy and Expert Teacher on Stuttering'.



Figure 5: Certificate: Young Consultant of the Smart Intervention Strategy and Expert Teacher on Stuttering

The application uses a motivational cartoon character to encourage children during the activities. Ah-ha Diamond guides the children to uncover the joy and fun of speaking. Diamond symbolizes being unbreakable with the potential to shine. Diamonds are also made under pressure and move from rough to brilliant. Eventually the child can also become a 'brilliant speaker'. After each section, the child can save a screen shot of Ah-ha Diamond, stating 'I am a Good Speaker!' A very important pillar of this application is humour and the importance of having fun with permission to laugh.





Figure 6: Ah-Ha Diamond

Good-natured teasing and people who stutter: permission to laugh!

According to Mahr and Torosian (1999), people who stutter avoid social situations because of the fear of stuttering, not because of social anxiety. However, could it be that people who stutter avoid social situations due to being over-sensitive when laughed at? Gelatophobia is the fear of being laughed at. This particular phobia also blurs the range of emotional responses to ridicule versus good-natured teasing (Platt, 2008). Platt, Agius and Ruch (2012) surveyed 189 participants over 18 years of age: 66 people who stuttered and 123 people who did not. The instruments used were the PhoPhiKat 30 (Ruch & Proyer, 2008) and the *Ridicule and Teasing Scenarios Questionnaire for Stuttering* (Platt & Agius, 2010). This questionnaire consists of a 23-item self-report instrument. Four scenarios on general ridicule exist such as: 'When you were in school, a teacher picked up a piece of your work and showed it to the class as an example of how NOT to do the work and the other kids all laughed at it.' Four scenarios on general teasing are included, such as: 'After lunch with a group of friends, one tells you that you have your jumper on inside out. All of the group laugh and make joking comments to you.' Five scenarios on non-social laughter follow such as: 'You are reading the local newspaper comic section and see a cartoon of people laughing.' Five scenarios on stuttering specific ridicule are presented such as: 'You are speaking to a friend and you get stuck. A stranger passes by and mimics you.' And finally, five scenarios on stuttering-specific teasing are presented, such as: 'You are reading in front of your friends. You get stuck, and one of your friends tells you to 'get it out' and you all laugh'. After each scenario, seven emotions: joy, sadness, anger, disgust, surprise, shame and fear are presented and rated on an 8-point Likert scale from 0 (least intense) to 8 (most intense).

Correlations for level of gelotophobia, were separated for non-stutterers and stutterers in three different types of scenario: general ridicule and teasing, stutter specific ridicule, and teasing and non-social laughter. In general ridicule, the more gelotophobic a person is, the more they experience the range of negative emotions such as fear, anger, disgust, sadness, shame, as well as surprise, which can have both positive and negative valance. This is not the same for those gelotophobic stutterers where general ridicule does not correlate with any emotion. In general teasing (pro-social, playful) of non-stuttering gelotophobes, the higher their gelotophobia, the lower their level of joy, as well as higher levels of fear, anger, sadness, disgust, shame and surprise. The correlation for the lack of experiencing joy in playful scenarios is the same, but more so, for stutterers, meaning that they do not see teasing as enjoyable or playful, but rather as something shameful and fearful. Non-stuttering gelotophobes experience only negative emotions. This shows that non-stuttering gelotophobes have an overall sensitivity to all laughter-related scenarios, surprisingly even ones that are not specifically directed at them. However, those who stutter experience feelings of shame when they are being ridiculed, and low joy and shame in the stutter-specific teasing. What we found most interesting is that it seems that people who stutter experience low joy emotions in both non-social laughter and playful teasing. Could it be that people who stutter do not experience laughter and smiling from their interaction partners as something positive, but as something others do in order to put them down?

This is why I included an exercise 'nicknaming friends' in my application. In this section, clinicians are encouraged to discuss with the child, highlighting that pro-social teasing can be beneficial. Teasing can be playful and affectionate. It is playful interaction during which both teaser and teased laugh! Ridicule on the other hand is laughing at someone in a mean-spirited way, and is negative.

Humour is fashion: know it and use it!

Humour is universal and, as a creative aspect of language, it is one of the most important topics in the study of communication (Levey & Agius, 2019). Just imagine if I had to ask these questions to a hall full of people: "How many of you wish the people you work with had a better sense of humour? How many of you wish your partner had a better sense of humour? Are you interested in being more attractive to others?" I have no doubt that almost all the people would answer in the affirmative. Therefore, it is clear that laughter is not just OK – it is essential. What appears to be an important set of skills for getting through our daily life has not always been considered important enough for researchers to study in a serious fashion. It



was not until the 1980s that researchers began to systematically look at the ways in which humor contributes to both physical and emotional health and well-being. Research on humour mainly started in the 1980s when Norman Cousins published the book *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient: Reflections on Healing and Regeneration* (1979). Cousins had very severe and painful arthritis and wanted to be discharged from hospital. He later realised that when he watched comedies such as the Marx brothers or *Candid Camera*, he did not need medicine to reduce his pain, and he subsequently published the book about his experience. Researchers started looking seriously at whether humour really has benefits. During the same time, the movie *Patch Adams* was released. This is the true story of a medical student who used humour and fun in hospitals. Humour is one coping technique that has been used in dealing with people with job burnout in various professions. Humour is also an ideal teaching tool (Friedman & Weiser Friedman, 2019), and has the ability to bring the teacher closer to his or her students (Berk, 1998).

Just imagine that I ask another set of questions: How many of you use fun and humour with your clients? What type of humour do you use – is it mild teasing, making fun of yourself, or making fun of a therapy task?

Now let me share with you some interesting data on humour and stuttering therapy which I gathered some years ago. It was 2014, and I had asked 21 speech-language pathologists from all over Europe whether they used humour in stuttering therapy, and 95% claimed to use it. This was followed by asking their clients who stutter whether the speech-language pathologists did actually use humour in therapy. Results indicated that only 17% of clients thought that humour was being used. What happened to the other 68% who claimed that they use humour in therapy? It is interesting to note that 94% of clients who stutter wanted humour to be used in stuttering therapy. They mostly wanted speech-language pathologists to make fun of themselves and also make sessions fun.

Humour can be viewed as a catalyst for change in stuttering intervention (Manning & DiLollo, 2017). Agius and Levey (2019) describe a number of child and adult stuttering intervention programmes which use fun, humour and play. Humour also enables an individual to better cope with life when dealing with serious communication problems, while allowing individuals to gain insight and objectivity regarding the disorder.

Humour and fun are used by Schneider (2008) during identification/desensitisation in the treatment of preschoolers and children. Within this programme, the focus is on decreasing tension, shame and guilt, increasing tolerance concerning mistakes, and increasing self-esteem as a speaker. Play schemas are used in treatment.

Waelkens (2018) notes that play and fun are central, and can provoke a feeling in the child that can act as compensation to the experience of stuttering. In Greece

a current structured therapy program for children who stutter is 'Lexipontix'. Fourlas and Marousos (2015) developed a fun programme that addresses the needs of the whole family. It is an artful masterpiece in which complex therapeutic concepts translate into child-friendly language.

Re-shaping stuttering modification: would Dr Van Riper be amused?

Would Dr. Charles Van Riper have agreed to include 'creativity' and 'humour' in stuttering modification therapy? Van Riper (1973) used the following stages: identification, desensitization, modification and stabilization. We could easily also include creativity and humour. Picture this: if Van Riper was alive today, he would certainly have watched the film *The King's Speech*. I think he would have enjoyed it so much that he would also have watched the film *Harry Potter*, in which there is a curse to make people think about their most feared object. And then there is a counter curse, the 'ridiculum curse', which changes this most feared object into something ridiculous. In psychological terms, 'the repeated pairing of a humour response with exposure to a feared stimulus gradually diminishes the feelings of anxiety evoked by the stimulus' (Martin, 2007, p. 339). Therefore, my main notion in this chapter is the use of humour as a desensitization technique. The *Smart Intervention Strategy* is a re-shaped stuttering modification approach, in which intervention aims to develop confidence in speaking and permission to stutter, rather than change the way the child speaks. The goal is to become an efficient, confident communicator. Using creativity and humour, speaking becomes fun and enjoyable.

Planting the seeds of creativity: The secret of success

Why is creativity so essential in life? One of my clients, a science professor, was reflecting on his life as a child. He said 'If only I had had love, compassion, [...] and fun-loving experiences, I would have grown up believing myself to be as equally valid as my fellow human beings'. My initial research was mainly about the use of creativity in stuttering treatment. Einstein claimed that creativity is intelligence having fun. However, unfortunately, creativity is inhibited. Why? It is because we have a fear of being wrong, and we fear seeming ridiculous. The basis of creative potential is developing and generating original ideas. In my study (Agius, 2007), I recruited thirty participants aged between eight and twelve years. Fifteen children who stutter were randomly placed in the experimental group while another fifteen children who stutter were placed in the control group. For ethical reasons, the pro-



gramme was administered to the control group at a later stage that year. I also invited two 'young consultants' to participate in the programme. These were two young children who stuttered, who had been on my caseload for some years. They participated in the research study by giving me feedback after each session. Interestingly, one of the 'young consultants' graduated as a lawyer earlier this year. I developed a ten-week programme using thinking skills and creativity. Direct attention thinking tools by Edward de Bono (1986, 1994) were used during the sessions. These were simple, practical, clear and focused activities to broaden perception, so that in any thinking situation we can see beyond the obvious, immediate and egocentric. Results from the creativity programme indicated a more positive attitude to communication, as measured by the *Communication Attitude Test* (CAT) developed by Gene Brutton (2004).

Upgrade yourself and start living: public speaking training

The European Union Programme Agency (EUPA) is an agency that supports Maltese individuals and entities in availing themselves of funding under the various educational programmes provided by the European Commission. At the beginning of every summer, the EUPA randomly selects thirty children aged between eleven and thirteen who are following a national summer school programme. I am then assigned to deliver a twelve-hour public speaking skills training programme. During the first week of September, the children are then invited to the Maltese Parliament for a debate with the Speaker of the House and other members of Parliament. During the final presentation, one twelve-year-old boy spoke of his dream to attend an Ed Sheeran concert. His father had taken him to an Ed Sheeran Concert the weekend before at the O2 stadium in London. They were standing at the back of the stadium. Then, he claimed "I remembered what Dr Agius always tells us: believe in yourself. I pulled at my father's trousers and he lifted me on his shoulders. Then I started screaming Ed Sheeran, Ed Sheeran, Ed Sheeran." And suddenly Ed Sheeran called him on stage and sang two songs with this child sitting next to him. When he concluded the presentation, I asked if he had any proof of what he was saying. He said "Yes of course! I have lots of photos, but I will only show them to you. I am embarrassed to show them to my friends because I was crying throughout the whole two songs." Do we realize how powerful our words can be? Why is teaching public speaking so important?

Some people trained to speak in public are taught to use blocks and pauses as it gets people listening, sounds eloquent and keeps the speaker concentrated. Some years ago, I was asked to deliver a workshop during a national congress in Portugal.

There was no simultaneous interpretation, so I asked whether there was someone who stuttered who could act as interpreter at the back of the room. This young lady who stutters and who had followed 'interpreter training' but had never used her skills in public, came forward and offered to do so. She did it perfectly and I congratulated her. Sometime later she wrote on her Facebook page:

Joseph Agius delivered a presentation in my country last year during our national congress, which I enjoyed very much. He said that people who stutter could really have the ability to become successful public speakers. I had never thought of stuttering in that way. I was a speaker at that congress and he even said all the people had been interested and attentive to my speech. This had a tremendous impact on me and the way I saw my problem. Being a person who stutters, I never in my life would have thought I would actually be good at speaking in public. Thank you for everything. Probably he will not react to this comment, but I am very grateful for having met him.

In France, Mounah Bizri and Juliette Blondeau, together with the Association Parole Bégaïement (APB) (French Stuttering Association) organise an 'eloquence competition' for people who stutter (Bizri & Blondeau, 2019). Their vision is 'to leave our comfort zone to evolve, to do what seems impossible' (Bizri, 2019). People who stutter are trained for six weeks, followed by a competition. The training is composed of masterclasses delivered by eloquence specialists as well as speech therapists. The participants learn how to build an argument, as well as how to use body language and voice variations to express a message more effectively

Public speaking skills improve self-esteem and self-confidence. Practice makes perfect. People who stutter can join Toastmasters Clubs and practice public speaking, improve communication and build leadership skills. Interestingly, the winner of the 2015 World Championship of Public Speaking was a person who stutters. Mohammed Al-Qahtani 'ignored his stuttering obstacle with courage and went to deliver one good speech after another' (Al-Husein, 2015). With over 30,000 participants from 100 countries, the title of his speech was 'The Power of Words'. I rest my case!

Conclusion: it is OK to reflect and be thirsty for knowledge

The role of humour, fun, creativity and training in public speaking is essential in stuttering therapy. Through the use of humour, people are able to form relationships and celebrate life through laughter. Learning thrives in environments filled with joy, laughter, fun and enthusiasm. Both humour and creativity can be an effective and valuable therapeutic tool. Desensitization strategies in treatment can help children



and adults overcome their fears about stuttering. Desensitization involves exposing people to the things they fear. Some approaches include training in public speaking skills. It might seem ironic that people who stutter can become 'wow' public speakers. However, it is amazing how developing these skills can increase self-esteem and improve quality of life.

I am delighted at this opportunity to share my thinking, my reflections and my findings on the importance of creativity and humour in fluency intervention. I am convinced of the impact we have on the children and adults who stutter. We all have a moral obligation to help them live their dreams and improve their quality of life. Your coffee has gone cold. Sorry about that, but I notice your deep reflection and a desire to 'make a difference'. In this era when we have Google, Wikipedia, on-line journals and libraries, education cannot just be about teaching facts. It is about generating questions, reflecting, and having a thirst for knowledge. According to W.B. Yeats "Education is not filling buckets; it is lighting fires." I hope you enjoy iced coffee. The bill is on me!

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which one of the following is not a strength of people who stutter:
 - a) Creative
 - b) Good listeners
 - c) Gossipers
 - d) Sensitive
 - e) Quick thinkers
 2. *Fluency SIS* stands for:
 - a) Stuttering Intervention Strategy
 - b) Smart Intervention Strategy
 - c) Systematic Intervention Strategy
 - d) Stammering Interaction for Students
 3. Van Riper techniques include which of the following:
 - a) Desensitization
 - b) Decreasing ability to avoid stuttering
 - c) Increasing ability to avoid stuttering
 - d) Decreasing tension associated with stuttering
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