

# **WHEN I STUTTER Practical Approaches to Intervention and Discussing the Psychological Impact of Stuttering**

**Gail Wilson Lew, M.A. CCC-SLP**  
ASHA Board Recognized Fluency  
Specialist  
2596 Mission St. Suite 203  
San Marino, CA 91108  
(626) 799-3397  
gailsmail@gailsspechpage.com

**Scott Palasik, Ph.D., CCC-SLP**  
Co-Writer of **WHEN I STUTTER**  
&  
Professor at The University of Akron  
spalasuk@uakron.edu

**John Gomez, M.A., CCC-SLP**  
Director/Producer of **WHEN I STUTTER**  
www.whenistutter.org  
keeneyeproductions@rocketmail.com

## **About the Film**

WHEN I STUTTER is a documentary film which movingly and accurately reveals the profound impact that stuttering may have on one's life. Public perceptions and even those of speech-language pathologists often emphasize only the physical manifestations of stuttering. However, stuttering frequently has long-term effects that adversely affect the quality of one's life. Speech pathologists are professionally and ethically obliged to seek understanding of the client as a whole person, strongly considering and addressing his or her emotional well-being. This is not a new idea.

Charles Van Riper, Barry Guitar, Vivian Sheehan and many other stuttering specialists taught that the most effective way to help a person who stutters is by decreasing the focus on fluency and treating them holistically. It is essential to reintroduce and reinforce this concept in order to provide effective intervention and contribute to a client's positive sense of self, regardless of speech imperfections. Parents, friends, and the public at large need to know what may result from a lifetime of stuttering and what can be done to improve the lives of those who contend with it.

WHEN I STUTTER is the culmination of 4.5 years of filming and post production work. The film is comprised of stories from nineteen individuals from various backgrounds who openly talk about how stuttering has impacted their lives. These stories run the gamut of human emotions... Some stories are dark, some are funny and others are triumphant! Interspersed throughout the documentary, are "educational vignettes" that help elucidate some of the mysteries and questions that surround stuttering. In addition to interviews and vignettes, a young man is followed on his journey through stuttering therapy. The relationship that he forms with the speech-language pathologist and the progress that he makes is truly heartwarming.

## **Presentation**

Thank you for attending WHEN I STUTTER Practical Approaches to Intervention and Discussing the Psychological Impact of Stuttering. This presentation will be broken down into three segments. Each segment is approximately 22 minutes in length. After each segment, the film will be paused and further discussion/analysis of the therapy portion of the film will be provided by Speech Language Pathologists Gail Wilson Lew and John Gomez.

- Segment 1: How to initiate a conversation with a client in order to bring awareness to and later modify the way one stutters.
- Segment 2: Identify ways to help their clients generalize the skills learned in the therapy room to the "outside world." In particular desensitizing oneself from the fear of using the phone.
- Segment 3: Using assessment video footage to help the client get past plateaus in therapy.
- At the conclusion of the film the psychological impact of stuttering will be discussed in addition to ways in which this film can directly and indirectly be used to help your clients.

### **Ongoing goals are for the client inside the therapy room and in the real world:**

1. Not avoiding any words or any situations.
2. Going directly into blocks and not using any secondaries or avoidances.
3. Eliminating all "garbage" words (um, uh, well, like).
4. Using good eye contact.
5. Being open about his/her stuttering.

### **Objectives of Stuttering Modification Techniques (Prolongations, Easy Onsets, Cancellations, Pull-Outs)**

1. To teach a person who stutters that he/she can alter their stuttering pattern. People who stutter frequently feel that their stuttering cannot be changed.
2. To learn a new desirable behavior to take over for the old undesirable behavior. A person who stutters must have something to substitute for their old stuttering pattern, as we generally do not unlearn a behavior.
3. To teach a person who stutters to attack his/her feared words without hesitancy.
4. To teach the person who stutters to begin his/her feared words with the first sound immediately, instead of preceding his/her speech attempt with various secondaries and avoidances.
5. To give the person who stutters confidence in speaking so he/she no longer avoids words and situations.

6. To learn a pattern which is more socially acceptable and also easier for the person who stutters to do.
7. To keep his/her speech on a voluntary level.
8. To demonstrate that the person who stutters controls his/her stuttering; stuttering no longer controls him/her.

### **Eye Contact**

One of the first goals to work toward is eye contact. It is very important for the development of a healthy attitude toward stuttering. The reason people who stutter (PWS) look away is because they are ashamed/embarrassed and/or they just do not want to look at the negative reactions of their listeners. Also, listeners compound the problems by looking away thinking that they are helping the PWS.

Good eye contact begins with looking at a person normally, not staring. Try to maintain eye contact, especially when blocking. Sometimes you may have to redirect the client by using a hand signal or other cue. By maintaining good eye contact the PWS is stuttering with dignity. Many times the stuttering will decrease once the shame and embarrassment are gone.

Remember to praise, praise, praise. Examples are: "That was great eye contact."

"Wow, that was a tough block but you hung in there with good eye contact."

### **Possible/Goals Objectives Concerning Eye Contact**

1. The client will maintain good eye contact when stuttering in 9 of 10 disfluencies during 5 minutes of conversational speech.

### **Mirror Work**

Mirror work is especially good to use for improving eye contact, analyzing and identifying stuttering symptoms, and learning how to control stuttering. The PWS must learn to look at his/her eyes and face and analyze their habitual behaviors.

This at first is very hard to do because the PWS does not like looking at his/her stuttering. Many are totally unaware of what types of secondaries they are doing.

This is an effective way of determining how a PWS stutters, and later, a method to decrease and eliminate secondary behaviors and mannerisms. Mirror work should be done with one or more people around, because most PWS seldom stutter by themselves. The notable exception is when using the telephone.

### **Possible Goals/Objectives Concerning Mirror Work**

1. While looking in a mirror, the client will maintain good eye contact with himself in 9 of 10 moments of stuttering.

2. While looking in the mirror, the client will analyze his disfluencies and identify where and how he got stuck in 9 of 10 moments of stuttering.

### **A Stuttering Survey for the Client**

Pardon Me. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a person who stutters. I am working on my speech in a speech therapy class. May I ask you a few questions on how you feel about stuttering?

1. What do you think causes stuttering?
2. Do you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed when you talk to a person who stutters?
3. What do you think a person who stutters should do to overcome their stuttering?
4. Do you know anyone else who stutters?
5. If so, what was their stuttering like?

### **REFERENCES**

Blood, Gordon, The Power Game, Managing Stuttering, Stuttering Foundation of America (800) 992-9392.

Breitenfeldt, Dorvan H., and Rustad Lorenz, Delores, Successful Stuttering Management Program, For Adolescent and Adult Stutterers, Speech Bin- 800 4-speech.

Chmela, Kristin A., and Nina Reardon The School-Age Child Who Stutters: Working Effectively with Attitudes and Emotions, Speech Foundation of America 800 992-9392

Dell, Carl, Ph.D, Treating the School Age Stutterer, A Guide for Clinicians, Stuttering Foundation of America (800) 992-9392

Guitar, B. (1998). Stuttering: An Integrated Approach To Its Nature and Treatment (2nd ed.). Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins

Walton, Patty, and Wallace, Mary, Fun With Fluency, Direct Therapy with the Young Child, Speech Bin- 800 4-speech

#### **Stuttering Foundation of America DVDS**

Therapy in Action The School-Age Child Who Stutters # 1079

Working With Preschoolers Who Stutter: Successful Intervention Strategies  
#0162

Footage from "Adult Stuttering Therapy by Dr. Charles Van Riper" Courtesy of The Stuttering Foundation of America. All rights reserved.