

SHOULD YOU WORK ON YOUR SPEECH?

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INTRODUCTION

The term sometimes used by the Speech Therapy / Coaching community to describe the question in the title of this paper is **Intervention**.

To me this doesn't say much (excuse the pun) or even mean much because it doesn't actually describe anything that is really happening or needs to happen.

We are always intervening every day in our daily lives. **Life is an Intervention**.

Some people will disagree with this saying that 95% of what we do (including and especially speaking) is automatic. From our subconscious mind we automatically run stored pattern responses from the precedent library of previously stored responses which we have put there normally from experiences. We have "learned" these responses and they have passed the filter test into our subconscious mind because at that moment in time we have found them useful or simply we have had no choice in that they have got us through that life situation. I call this unconditional *learned behaviour*.

As a qualified Clinical Hypnotherapist and Psychotherapist it is my job to have a good understanding about how the brain works. Knowing what gets into the subconscious mind and how it gets there and becomes engrained as a learnt behaviour is the key to making any change in your life or the life of your client. For the purposes of this document, I am defining "behaviour" as the associated combination of mentality and associated physical responses – thoughts, meanings and actions.

I believe that no one would consciously choose to stutter in a similar way as folks wouldn't choose to smoke tobacco products which cost lots of money and have been scientifically shown to bring forward death. The popular press tells us that society now is "plagued" with a culture of substance abuse ranging from illegal products like cannabis, cocaine, heroin and all its combinations to more legal activities such as gambling and excessive alcohol consumption. All of these have one two things in common – they have a degree of "addiction" and our subconscious mind associates them for either getting pleasure or avoiding pain, or even both at the same time.

It offends many people to think that stuttering can be thought of as being "addictive" in the same way that substance abuse is, but some similarities cannot

be ignored when you reach the point in your life that you want to make change. The key word there is “want” and let’s be brutally honest many people consciously know what they are doing is “wrong” in that it doesn’t serve them, but they don’t want to make any changes. The reasons for this MUST be understood, we can’t fudge over this.

As an aside, I am sitting outside in a coffee shop in sunny Gibraltar as I am writing this paper right now. As any good therapist (said modestly) will spend some of their time, “people watching”. I am noticing two stunning beautiful women smoking tobacco cigarettes fully inhaling and blowing out the toxic smoke. They don’t “look” happy on the outside (they have dull expressions) and they are killing themselves, however they are either getting some pleasure from this “dangerous” activity or at the very least avoiding some pain. They must be, every human behaviour is driven by that. I’m not going to go over and speak to either lady, maybe tell them that I am Working On My Speech (WOMS) and then offer my professional services to help them kick the habit of tobacco smoking. Why? It’s simple, but crucial, because they may not be ready for that, because they may not want that, because they may think I am judging them, which not only would I never do, it would not serve any possible process of change.

“The teacher will only appear when the student is ready.”

All this leads to the first point.

1. HOW BADLY DO YOU NEED TO CHANGE?

Now the semantics of this question are crucial. I could have written it, “How much do you want it?”, “How motivated are you?” but these statements don’t say enough.

I use the technique called *Scaling* in my Hypnotherapy practice where I get clients to score a number from 1 to 10. Now I could scale on motivation and I could ask, “Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 about how motivated you are to overcome your stuttering and become a better speaker, where 1 is not really fussed and 10 is super motivated.” Yea, yea, sure I’m motivated but also I’m a holding back type of person a middle-of-the-road-type so I’ll just say 7, that’s enough for me to show I’m motivated to make change. That’s not good enough, not because you aren’t motivated but because the question isn’t good enough. As Tony Robbins says. “If you ask a better quality question - you’ll get a better quality answer.”

For most adults replacing a Stuttering Speaking Pattern (SSP) with a WOMS (Working On My Speech) pattern and getting the results they desire, will be a journey of indeterminate time and effort. You almost certainly won't know what's required before you begin the journey. It's a journey without a map or time limit. Desire as a psychological phenomenon is a complex mix of want and need. The more you **need** something rather than want it, the higher the chance at subconscious level you will have, to adopt the correct mental focus and so physical actions to back up that focus – what you actually do will be totally consistent with your intention.

Similarly using the word badly rather than much gives focus to the desire to achieve change. Like me, don't you ever watch the YouTube videos where the motivational guru is shouting "How bad do you want this? Come on, how bad? How bad do you really want this? HOW BAD?" Yes, okay, no more please! Maybe he should have used the word **need** rather than want but at least she / he did interject the word, "really".

The point of asking a better quality question to get a better quality answer is to focus the brain (the subconscious mind) to stay on track and deliver on your intention. The best intention in the world is useless without action, reaction, perseverance, resilience and downright dogged determination.

Scaling on the question *"How badly do you need to change your old SSP and replace it with a WOMS pattern?"* exercises real power and positive intention and itself is the first beginnings of re-programming your subconscious mind. Using the scale of 1, meaning don't really care and 10 meaning, I need this so badly my life depends on it, will give the beginning of a good answer to the question that is the title of this document - "Should you work on your speech?"

The answer needs to be honest and the number needs to be high, or to be frank, don't bother putting the time and effort into becoming a better speaker.... BUT, there is a vital BUT that needs to be addressed. This question **MUST** be answered in isolation without any other thought processes or questions clouding your thinking. People get hung up on the HOW. How am I going to do this? How am I going to change my old SSP into a WOMS pattern? **DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT THE HOW.** Please, just for now, ignore it, we'll address this later.

So, what should be your scaled number be to the question "How badly do you need to change?" It's obvious and it needs to be as high as possible and the

highest possible number is 10, which means I want to change so bad it hurts. However, more importantly, the number needs to be honest and the reason for this is that then questions can be asked about how the number can be increased. Look, be honest with yourself, if you scale this metric at 5 or lower, stop, now and go away and live your life with the level of speech that you have now, and good luck to you.

Okay, you're still with me and you've scored between 6 and 9. You can do two things, you can move to the next question OR you can ask another question at this point. "What would it take for you to scale a higher number to this question?" and "What would need to happen for your scaled number to be higher?" are both good questions that gets you moving towards your target, even if you cannot find the answers, straight away.

2. ARE THERE ANY BLOCKERS TO YOU MAKING CHANGE?

Here we start to need to know what is required for you to make change. If you are deciding whether you want to use a particular therapist or attend a course or join an intensive therapy programme, it is vital to find out what is expected of you. Do you have the time required? Do you have the money required? Are you able or prepared to be away from your home or family? This is also your opportunity to do your own risk assessment. If you are considering a commercial programme, you may have the money, but can you afford to lose it if doesn't work? This isn't negative, it's realistic and honest, and once you have done your risk assessment, that's it, no need to re-visit that again. It takes the pressure off you.

This is such an important stage and includes so many things. When considering approaches be honest and ask yourself, are you really prepared to do those things that you will inevitably be asked to do. I mentioned this in the previous point, and this is the **how** bit. Find out what you will be asked to do. Will have to learn and use a new way of breathing? Is your respiratory capable of doing this physically? Are you going to have to sound different? Will you speak with a higher or lower voice tone? Are you okay with this? Do you mind sounding different? How long is this for? Is it forever? What will my friends and family think of me? Can I handle this? Will I sound like a robot? Can I only say a certain number of words for every breath I take? Is this okay? Will I have to take extended pauses and get interrupted by people and can I handle this? Do I have to plan every word I say, or can I just be spontaneous with my speech and is this okay? Do I have to practice my speech every day, speak to a certain number of strangers every day and is this okay for me? If I make a mistake, do I

have to repeat this word or situation and is this okay for me? Am I happy doing everything I will be asked to do? If not, be honest about what these blockers are and seriously try and resolve them before beginning to take intervention. If these blockers are too big and can't be resolved, stop, and go away and live your life with the level of speech that you have now, and good luck to you.

3. ARE YOU HONESTLY PREPARED TO MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS?

Notice now how I am using the word progress, not change; because if you don't expect to make some progress why bother?

Every therapist, coach or intensive speech recovery course will want you to achieve some sort of positive result. This will be a goal either set by you with your coach or a set of generic results templates the coach or programme will give you. They may even have their own set of "coaches" that will grade you often without you knowing.

The principle of measurement is very simple, you have to measure against something, for example a set of objectives or a goal and this can and indeed should be multi-faceted. Is it just your speech you want to change, or do you want this to have a positive impact on the rest of your life as well? Is speaking a means in itself for you, or is it, in addition to this, a means to an end? For example, do you want an improved speaking pattern to lead to a better job, more money and a better lifestyle. Maybe you want to hold back less so you can attract a life partner?

When you have a set of metrics, you can monitor yourself against these and YOU MUST in order to be able to get feedback, not for the people who are helping you BUT primarily for yourself. You will be your best coach because you are there all the time. YOU are living your life, no one else.

The 5 steps to making change still apply to changing from an SSP to a WOMS lifestyle.

1. Define objective.
2. Take action and get results.
3. Assess results.
4. Do results support your object if so repeat from 2
5. If results do not support your objective, either

- A. Persevere at step 2
- B. Take different action
- C. Re-define objective

Knowing when to persevere, knowing when to take different action and knowing when to re-define your objective is the hardest thing to do and don't be afraid to ask for help and advice from anyone you trust that could help - but try not to judge their advice.

In summary, it is vital that you have a mentality of wanting to take action and to honestly evaluate the results of that action and not to judge yourself or beat yourself up whatever results you get. Perfectionism has its place in some human activities such as specifying the molecular strength in the steel supporting concrete pillars in a multi-storey tower block, but we need to cut ourselves some slack and recognise our human qualities of frailty and allow ourselves to be less than mistake-free.

On the flip side of this, we are always allowed to congratulate ourselves for doing well and indeed we should do this. Accepting a compliment and giving ourselves praise and patting our own backs is an essential part of a successful change process.

4. HOW TRUSTING ARE YOU?

The modern internet-based world we live has many positive benefits, but the sad reality is that from time to time it does fuel "false hopes". People post YouTube videos telling you if you do this, things will go well and your speech (and your life) will be better. Many of you reading this document will probably have encountered this concept of "false hopes". You tried something, done something, paid a lot of money and spent a lot of time doing whatever intensive speech recovery course and it hasn't worked. You may have even got worse, felt guilty but more sadly been left a semi-permanent feeling of scepticism.

However difficult it may be for you; you have to be honest about this and make a lot of effort to address any scepticism and replace this with a large degree of trust **BEFORE** you embark on any future intervention. You can use scaling here as well however it is more difficult than you think. With clients I have had when doing this, I will get multi-dimensional answers. "Generally in life, I am trusting but in the area of being able to trust someone or some speech programme or approach, I am very sceptical". So you will get two scaling numbers. 8 out of 10

for trust (10 is super trusting everything without questioning anything) in life in general but only 2 for the trusting a speech programme or coach.

The important thing about this is, it's all good. At least the person is capable of 8 out of 10 trust in some things, so we can try and in fact we need to, get this to carry over to speech related trust.

When asking yourself this question you have to understand exactly what the question means. It doesn't mean blind trust. Trust MUST be earned; only then will it have any lasting value. I have heard and indeed used the expression "Just act like a sponge to begin with." What that means, is, listen to what I am saying, accept it without question, do it, see the results then decide later whether you believe it and the trust that you have temporality granted me is valid. This is the basis of all modern-day therapy / coaching and anyone thinking of making intervention with their SSP will need to honestly possess and to show a very trusting nature to be able to make permanent positive change to their SSP.

5. ARE YOU READY TO JUDGE WHEN TO BE JUDGED?

Modern-day psychotherapy, speech therapy and indeed a lot of coaching has gravitated to a very non-judgemental mentality not only from the therapist / coach BUT this is transmitted to the client or person who wants to make change. How many times have we heard the phrase "Don't beat yourself – you're human, give yourself a break". We are in the age of self-reflection and evaluations. We have questions for everything. How do you think you did? What can you do to improve? What needs to change?, is my current favourite. Questions are good but only if they are asked in the correct way. In Hypnotherapy training, I was taught: **Ask the right question, in the right way, at the right time.** Are you single-minded in your pursuit of your speech objectives and are you able to judge when to suspend the judgement of other people when you act on your intentions?

Many speech therapy / coaching approaches will involve the replacement of the SSP with another more "fluent" Speaking Pattern. I define a pattern as the combination and interaction of a pre-defined and conscious mentality and set of behaviours or actions. Sometimes these patterns are very different, not only from what you may have done in the past (which is good) but also from what "society" may perceive as being "normal". Bypassing trying to define what is "normal" for now, the ability to suspend being judgemental about yourself and

even more importantly being judged by other people, for example family and friends will be very important for the successful outcome of the approach. Judging when to accept judgement and when to ignore it is an essential life skill whatever endeavour you are undertaking.

Most human beings not only need to “seek approval” for the successful running of their lives but have an almost in-built need to seek approval of other people to co-exist in a society where inter-dependence is almost a default requirement. An unnecessary need to seek approval can be a real sabotage in the process of changing away from an SSP. Single-mindedness in implementing a pattern that may not always be understood or liked by people you are interacting with is very important. You will need that mindset. Are you okay with this? Will you make it happen?

It’s okay to accept that sometimes you will need to be judged. This is a real skill, almost an art, and leads to the expression - *judge to be judged*. There will be times when you cannot and must not allow yourself to be judged on the way you speak, with total deference to the other person, but there will be other times where you will need to respect the judgement, for example if that judgement comes from a person close to you. In these cases you will need to reframe judgement and call it opinion. The wisdom to know the difference between when you accept judgement or not is not only a very important life skill, it is also a crucial in the replacement of your SSP. You must understand this and be prepared to do it before you consider intervention.

6. BE HONEST – CAN YOU ACTUALLY DO IT?

What actually is your own personal SSP? (Stuttering Speaking Pattern) This may be an odd place to ask this question, and there are people out there that would ask this question earlier. To do this, there are no shortcuts, you will need to understand what stuttering is in general, but the good news is that you can and should get some help. Stuttering comes under the generic umbrella of communication disorders.

Let’s begin by listing some of them.

There are conditions like Selective Mutism, Cluttering, Dysphasia, Aphasia, Spasmodic Dysphonia, Dysarthria, Dyspraxia, Motor Neurons, Autistic dysfluency, Cerebral Palsy and others. However, the majority of PWS have what we know as “Psychological Stuttering” and this includes deliberate non-speaking of certain words and word-subbing. The characteristic of this

psychological based stuttering is that it is very variable, situational possibly affected by the emotional state of the PWS at the time. Often these PWS can speak perfectly fluently when they are on their own or speaking to pets, ie, a non-threatening environment.

The age you started your own unique SSP and the reason you started is important as this can be a factor as to whether you should intervene and what that intervention should take. The first thing you should consider is using Public Health Speech Therapy services especially if they are free of charge. They will be experienced at the very least in assessing what your SSP is especially if there is a possibility that it is caused as a result of brain trauma or a stroke. They will be able to arrange MRI scans and interpret the results as per their training and experience.

A great many adults who run an SSP do so for purely psychological reasons. In other words it is "*all in the mind*". I'm not trying to diminish the challenge of addressing this or being flippant about it, but I would like to bring to your attention the following phrases.....

1. My stuttering is situational
2. I can speak perfectly fluently when I am on my own
3. I can speak to my dog, perfectly
4. I can speak to my baby, perfectly
5. There are certain people I always stutter more with
6. I only stutter with my family and friends
7. Meeting members of the opposite sex always makes my speech worse
8. I only stutter when speaking a foreign language
9. My stuttering on the phone at work is always bad
10. There are some words or letters I just cannot say at all
11. I stutter very severely when I am anxious or stressed
12. I stutter sometimes in my dreams
13. My stuttering has diminished / got worse as I have got older
14. I never stutter when I am reading out loud from a book

I could go on and add to this list, but the point is to try and decide if you could have a chance of running a "fluent" speech pattern for at least some of the time or do you always stutter at all times, wherever you are, whoever you are with and whatever your emotional state is. There may be other factors such as smoking of legal and illegal substances, alcohol usage and different prescribed and non-prescribed drugs, but to avoid controversy I am going to bypass these.

Another factor, which is linked to some of the conditions mentioned above, is the educational or skill levels required to participate in the type of therapy you are being offered. Do you require a high level of academia, the ability to read, write or use technology and is a high level of memory necessary required to maximise the benefit of the approach being offered to you? Simply put – how complex is the treatment / approach?

Being honest about whether you can do it or not means evaluating the above factors and deciding on your own or with experienced professional help whether you have a realistic chance of replacing your SSP using whatever approaches you are considering or are being offered to you. This is not black and white, and help should be sought to overcome shortfalls, but this is an essential step in the evaluation of any intervention.

7. DO YOU REALLY WANT TO BE EMPOWERED?

There are a lot of important therapeutic concepts in this section which it is necessary to deal with. These are, Independence, Interdependence, Dependency, Co-dependency and Empowerment.

When you decide to trust someone to help you, that is a big thing for you and equally a big deal for them, whether they are professional or not, or whether they are being paid money or not. Whether it is their job, their means of making a living, or they are doing it for altruistic reasons or not. There may be financial outlay, but even more importantly there is also an investment in **time**. The therapist / coach is giving their time, **but** you are also giving your time. We should always appreciate that time is the most important resource we all have - time is finite. We only have so much time in our lives and we should spend it just as carefully as we spend our money.

You need to decide whether what you are going to have to do, is possible for you? Whether there are any blockers and whether you can actually do it and it has an acceptable chance of working for you. You must acknowledge and accept any risks of intervention and you must understand the mechanism, the process and relationship that will exist between your therapist / coach / intensive programme.

Let's further explore the above mentioned list

1. Independence.

This is where the therapist or coach delivers advice in a way that you are tasked with going your own way and that delivery is one way. It is the

classic therapist / patient model. It is a hierarchical model. I've been trained, I am the expert, I know what to do, you do what I say, It will work, you will be okay, everything will change and you'll never need my help again.

2. Interdependence.

This is independence but where the therapist / coach desires feedback on progress that justifies their approach to give them validity. Support or follow-up is offered in an assertive way maintaining the therapist / patient model. It's strongly recommended but not imposed as compulsory.

3. Dependency.

This is where the therapist / coach right from the beginning, builds in the fact that the only way that the client can sustain and continue their progress of change is to rely on them for help. Support and continuing therapy / coaching, often for a non-specified period of time, is a requirement. It's often done with good intentions as the therapist sees themselves as the "*guru*" but sometimes the ego of the therapist takes over and they see the one-way dependency as boosting their own self-image and respect.

4. Co-dependency.

This is the most dangerous and the most complex because by its nature it often happens as it *creeps under the radar*. The therapist / coach builds in dependency of their client on them because the therapist believes the client needs it, but also because the therapist / coach needs it them self. The relationship is created and nurtured for the purpose of helping both parties, sometimes without either really knowing this is happening. Co-dependency is a commonly used word in our modern world to describe addiction. For example heroin addiction. The addict taking the substance needs to continue taking the drug for fear of extreme physical pain from withdrawal and the heroin production and supply market needs users who are addicted to the product to keep the market alive and prosperous. They both need each other to survive.

5. Empowerment.

This is a commonly used term and is sometimes mis-understood. It means so much more than just helping someone and giving them tasks or homework and giving them responsibility for their own progress or journey.

Empowerment itself is a journey. At the beginning it means instruction with explanation of why things are being taught / suggested and immediate attention to building belief systems that change is possible, is actually happening and can be sustainable. Then it moves to eliminate any dependency or co-dependency between the coach and therapist moving forward not only to suggesting that the client becomes their own coach but actually showing them how to become their own coach. The therapist / coach when they think the client is ready for it and it won't jeopardise their journey of change should teach them what they know and how that applies to the journey of change of their client. Their job should be to do themselves out of a job.

As to which of the above approaches is best suited to the individual does depend on the nature and personality of the person. Some people will just want to be coached and told what to do all the time and have everything done to them. They instruct the therapist / coach and want that person to "fix" them. In my experience this is not how stuttering works. The person wanting to replace the SSP will have to take a very active part in their own journey of change and to be quite honest will need to become their own speech coach as soon as possible. Even more important is the person coaching them must help them to make that happen. Their job should be to do themselves out of a job.

Dependency and especially Co-dependency should be avoided in my opinion. Any therapist / coach / intensive speech recovery programme that begins with the idea that the necessity of attending repeat courses and a reliance on a set of so-called "experienced" coaches, should be viewed with caution. There should be no time barrier as to when you are ready to coach yourself, ie have been taught all the skills you need to be your own coach. A good therapist / coach / intensive programme will not only help you to change, **but** it will tell you and show you how that process of change is working for you. Don't just make it work but explain why it works and why it is working for you. This is certainly ***playing to win*** because it will arm the person being coached with all the tools they will need to help them maintain and improve their progress when the formal part of the coaching has concluded. ***This is true empowerment.***

A more advanced concept is the examining the models of intensive speech recovery programmes. The most popular commercial programmes in the UK, use the ***Pay it Back*** model. This means you attend the course with an inbuilt expectation that you do come back, not only to continue to work on your own speech, which is good, but to act as a coach for new students just beginning

their journey of change. The theory being that you gain yourself by helping other people. This may have some credence but it is limited by the fact that if you try and coach others when you are not far enough down your own journey, then not only is the advice you give less than professional but you will find yourself in approach-avoidance when continuing on your own journey. The **Pay it Back** model is also time consuming and often financially and time expensive for people to fully implement and this causes, distrust, frustration and disappointment for people locked in the **Pay it Back** model.

Another and more advanced model, is the **Pay it Forward** model. This has never fully been implemented in any intensive recovery programme, because by definition it encourages the person who is now well practiced in implementing WOMS (Working On My Speech) to branch out of the programme and go their own way and pass their knowledge, skills and experiences directly on to other people. It will diminish the size and effectiveness of programmes operating the **Pay it Back** model. Attempts have been made by the big commercial programmes to get over this by franchising and licensing but central control and unnecessary authoritarian regulation still exists to constrain and regulate their members. This further promotes Dependency and Co-dependency rather than really empowering everyone who has originally put their trust in that programme.

The **Pay it Forward** model will not be suitable for everyone and anyone trying to implement that approach will have to employ careful pre-screening (see section below). However where a person passes the criteria for entry to that approach / programme and the person wants to **Pay it Forward** because of a real altruistic desire to help other people; then this model is the most appropriate. Everyone considering working on their speech should be aware of these two models and be honest with themselves about which approach is right for them and also what they are actually capable of doing.

8. PRE-SCREENING

This is such an important subject and is worthy of a document in itself. However, I wish to set the seeds at this time as I have mentioned it above. The most important thing is that there is some sort of suitability test for everyone seeking to participate in that therapy / programme. Most importantly this needs to be done by **both** the Therapist / Coach / Intensive programme **and** the person who wants to change their SSP.

It is so vital that a therapist / coach doesn't just blindly agree to help someone without taking the time to get to know them and decide whether there is a

very good chance of what they are going to do will meet the requirements of their potential client. Some less than reputable therapists / programmes sadly don't do this - they look on **everyone** as a potential pay day. They have best intentions and will do their best, but take they view that if the client doesn't improve then it's not their fault. The treatment wasn't correct for the client, or they blame the client for not working hard enough. The "*nothing ventured, nothing gained*" philosophy is seriously flawed and should be recognised and avoided at all costs, even in the cases of intensive courses where you are allowed to attend the beginning of the course and leave before the finish with no obligation to pay and their sincere best wishes. You have paid with your time and there will be some degree of disappointment that that course has not worked for you. Why wasn't there more time spent before the course started assessing suitability?

If a person who runs an SSP is deciding whether or not to trust or not a particular therapist / coach or intensive programme they should look for many of the following things.

1. Will I just be offered one-size-fits-all or a personalised approach?
2. Is my self-motivation and desire to need to make change being properly assessed.
3. Is the therapist really spending enough time with me asking the correct questions to decide on my suitability for them or their programme?
4. Will the therapist actually say "no" to me if I'm not suitable or am I just another pay day?
5. Has the therapist asked me to make a video of myself speaking, when I am alone and in varied social situations?
6. Has the therapist assessed my physical attributes? For example my lung capacity if a breathing technique is involved?
7. Has my medication or any mental health conditions, such as aspergers, autism or learning difficulties, been taken into account?
8. Has the therapist given me enough information about what their approach is, so I can do my own pre-screening of them, so I can decide if I am right for them?
9. Is there any publicly available material, either written or in video form that describes the therapist or their programme and what they actually do in their therapy / programme?
10. Can I do any free of charge pre-treatment or pre-course work with the therapist or coach before formally being inducted into their therapy or programme without incurring any expense to me?

11. Will the therapist or coach give me as much time as I want via a video call so that we can both assess whether we are suitable for each other?
12. Does the PWS have the ability to speak without running an SSP in certain situations at certain times or with certain people? Is their SSP triggered by emotional factors or external factors such as stress or anxiety?
13. Is the PWS fluent when they are on their own or when they are talking to pets or any age group of people?
14. Does the PWS know what triggers their SSP even if they can point back to a past event in their life they believe may have caused their SSP to start?
15. Does the PWS really have a need to replace their SSP with a new more fluent speaking pattern. What are their motivations for working on their speech? Get the PWS to express this in their own words.
16. When the PWS replaces their SSP what will this then give them? How will this change their lives? What will they now do? Get them to express this, write it down and summarise in bold text.
17. Will the therapist / coach just be teaching the PWS to change their SSP without introducing any dependency with themselves or will they be teaching them how to become their own speech coach?

The key element that shines through in these points is total transparency. Without honest and total openness nothing in terms of lasting change can be achieved. I sincerely hope this document is a catalyst to make everyone more transparent and congratulations to those who already are.

SUMMARY

This is a lengthy document, but I believe a necessary read for anyone considering working on their speech. It lists the main factors I consider to be essential to consider before you make a commitment to making change. Everybody is individual and unique and there is no substitute for face to face and phone conversation with anyone and everyone who claims to be able to offer advice in how to replace an SSP with a WOMS (Working On My speech) approach.

To me the idea of somehow being able to **overcome stuttering** or even **control your stutter** as it sometimes promoted is very outdated. This should now be replaced with the attitude of being proud to Advertise that I am WOMS with a mentality of honesty, determination and perseverance with the aim to become a better speaker. It should be viewed as a journey to be enjoyed rather than a

race to be completed and using this journey to become a better speaker as a stepping-stone to enjoying a better life and becoming a more fulfilled person.

Good luck to everyone that decides on intervention and embarks on this magnificent journey. May your setbacks be small, your successes be large, your determination be gigantic, and your belief be unshakable.

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