

Stammering Therapy from the Inside

New Perspectives on Working with Young People and Adults

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This book is an in depth exploration of the experience of many therapy approaches for stammering written by people who stammer (PWS) and by clinicians. If you are looking for a manual on how to reduce the severity of overt stammering behaviour this is not for you, but if you are interested in understanding more deeply the multi-layered and individual experience of stammering and the journeys that people undertake in therapy, then this is a very valuable resource.

The book starts with a foreword by Walt Manning and an introduction by Sam Simpson describing how the idea for the book came into being. Each chapter then explores an approach to stammering therapy; each is written by someone who stammers or by a clinician with significant input from PWS. The chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1, "Self-advocacy for people who stammer" by St John Harris, describes his experience of attending a self-advocacy course at City Lit. He discusses the social model of disability and how it applies to people who stammer. He also looks at stammering in the media and society's understanding of and prejudices about stammering.

The second chapter: "1:1 therapy revisited" by SLTs Jan Logan and Sam Simpson and clients Dan Durling and Ed Balls describe how a client-centred approach in flexible 1:1 therapy supplemented by therapeutic documents can suit some clients best. The key to satisfactory outcomes is trust between client and clinician.

The third chapter "new stories of stammering therapy; a narrative approach" by Jan Logan SLT, describes ways of enabling a client to tell and explore the narrative of their own experience, separate the stammering from their identity and help them to develop a new more supportive story.

The fourth chapter by Carolyn Cheasman and Rachel Everard covers group therapy as offered by the City Lit for interiorised (covert) stammering and the special value of the group setting for these clients who can often feel isolated.

Integrated therapy by Rachel Everard is the topic of the next chapter. This describes therapy based on integrating the "stammer more fluently" and the "speak more fluently" approaches in a group setting.

"The teens challenge: stammering therapy, learning and adventure" by Claire McNeil describes the residential course for adolescents that combines outdoor adventure activities with stammering therapy. Key elements of the course are the use of solution-focussed practice and the group residential setting. Claire includes quotes from students experiencing the course and post-course and also feedback from parents.

Carolyn Cheasman's chapter on "A mindful approach to stammering" describes mindfulness, the research into its effectiveness, her own experience and its application to work with stammering. She includes reflections by PWS on the experience of attending a mindfulness course adapted for PWS at the City Lit.

Chapter 8 “Embrace your demons and follow your heart; an acceptance and commitment approach to work with people who stammer” is written by Carolyn Cheasman and Rachel Everard with contributions from students who have attended the 3 day acceptance and commitment workshop at City Lit. The students experienced positive psychological and speech changes and described applying the principles to their speaking experiences and to other areas of their lives.

“Therapy within a CBT framework; a reflective conversation” is written by Jane Fry and includes detailed observations from herself and one of her clients on the process and benefits of using CBT as a major part of a therapy programme.

In chapter 10; “Stammering, imagework and self-esteem” Debs Plummer talks about the meaning of self-esteem and her experience in using imagework; she quotes examples from her clients and students.

In “Feelings and stammering - Finding a way forward” Peter Cartwright, a Gestalt counsellor and a PWS describes an evening course presented by himself and Carolyn Cheasman at City Lit on managing the difficult emotions that are often associated with stammering.

In chapter 12, “Revealing Resources”, Debbie Mason introduces us to Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and describes how she has used it with clients who stammer. Some of her clients describe ways that they have made significant changes in behaviour, thoughts and feelings by using aspects of NLP to tap into their own hidden resources and how these have helped them with more fluency and confidence in speaking.

This book gives a very clear picture of how different types of therapy are experienced by people who stammer and how various approaches can be valuable to different clients at different stages. The stand-alone chapters mean that this is a book that can be dipped into or read in its entirety. It would be very valuable reading for SLTs and students looking to develop their understanding of this client group. Some of the therapy approaches described are most suited to a specialist centre and some require the therapist to have extra training and qualifications, so it is not possible to just read and put into practice all the approaches as described. However, reading may prompt a new aspect to explore with specific clients or point to further training courses that would be beneficial. For the PWS, this book may give an introduction to therapy approaches that they may not have been aware of or considered. For all readers it gives a richly varied overview of the experience of different therapy approaches.

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