

How I solved my stutter

Cindy was terrified her secret would be revealed

Looking at my boss, my heart was hammering. 'I'd love to take up the position,' I smiled. I had just been offered a big promotion at work, and although I knew I was supposed to be over the moon, I was already in a panic.

You see the new job involved extra responsibilities and one of those was having to give regular presentations. I had been a stutterer since the age of five and it was something I was ashamed of.

Thankfully, I had learnt to hide my stuttering by replacing words in mid sentence so a stutter couldn't come on.

As a result no-one at my current job knew about my stuttering. But now I'd been given a promotion it wouldn't last long. In high-pressure situations my replacement technique would fall to pieces.

You need to get this under control or it will hold you back forever, I told myself that night.

Years before I'd worked with a speech pathologist for six months without results.

But I'd also heard of something called the McGuire Programme and that was what I decided to sign up to now.

Walking into the four-day course, I was terrified. But when I learnt all the coaches were former

stutterers, I soon relaxed. They all spoke perfectly.

Our first day began with everyone learning a critical breathing technique to use when we spoke. It took a bit of practice, but once I got the hang of it, it really helped.

Over the next few days we also dealt with how to get over the psychological side of stuttering.

By our final day I was asked to give a speech to over a hundred people in Bourke Street Mall in Melbourne. I'm proud to say it went smoothly.

First thing Monday morning I went into work and asked to speak to the whole office. 'You may not know this, but I am a recovering stutterer,' I told everyone. By the time I had finished there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

I've now completed my exams to become a coach at the McGuire Programme.

Four simple days have changed my life forever and now I want to help other stutterers to feel free just like I do. ■

Cindy Melksham, 28,
Ferntree Gully, Vic



Me (right) with my sister Chelsea