

Course Report – Melbourne October 2009-10-12

By Rob Lucas (Instructor)

On Wednesday 30th of September, 2009 at 7.00pm 13 nervous looking people walked into the auditorium of the Victoria Hotel in Melbourne, Victoria. The anxiety was about the fear of the unknown. However, they all had shown great courage by challenging themselves by doing something about their stuttering. In a very short time new people were more at ease after realising they were amongst friends and people who had lived the life they were living regarding speaking.

Of the 13, three were female and the rest male, three under the age of 18. There were nine covert stutterers who would experience special challenges during the course by being more open about their stuttering. A video record was taken of the new people's speech before the course began. Some of the students were speaking with hardly any, or in fact without a stutter. Geoff, our Regional Director introduced the program and rules to abide by to the family and friends that had accompanied their loved ones attending the program. He asked his course instructors Chris Gerraty and Robert Lucas to introduce themselves and any other graduate could introduce themselves as well.

Thursday 8:00 am the group was split up into students and returning grads. The students were taken into the main auditorium and the returning grads were taken to another room. Chris and Geoff took the students on the basics of why we stutter, understanding the mental and emotional part of stuttering and the physical factors involved. Robert took the returning grads for an intense training in the breathing, check list, laws and the directions. During this initial session many of the stronger graduates were sent out in pairs to do 50 contacts.

After the first break the groups came together for instruction and intensive practice on the new way of breathing to control their stuttering. That afternoon everyone was up and saying their names with great technique. You could see the positiveness returning in their posture and they were starting to assert themselves more, all the time using good technique. That night every new student was saying their name and address eloquently, everyone was using good technique and resisting time pressure, everyone felt positive.

On Friday the usual contact session was held in the afternoon to show students how to approach strangers in the street. All the graduates made 100 contacts or more with one making over 200. Two split sessions were held Friday night with Geoff taking the new students for a question and answer session and graduate (and psychologist) Kari Sotamaa running a Lifeline/Timeline session for returning graduates.

On Saturday a good round of Harrison workshops got everyone in the mood for contacts and the public speaking challenge. Students performed exceptional well during contacts with most achieving the 100 target and way beyond. Public speaking went ahead after a confrontation with a busker occupying our booked spot. Everyone was able to let go and have fun speaking confidently and eloquently.

Three split sessions were held on Saturday night with Nola conducting a "Women's Issues" group, Ricky challenging people with "Who's Driving Your Bus" and Kari talking about "Your Recovery Plan".

Sunday instructors went through the relapse traps and various sessions about what to expect when you returning home. Finally the farewell speeches were held which were very moving. Geoff had to bring out the tissues. The three under 18 young men were an enthusiastic bunch. Gerald (17) took to the technique like a fish to water and was awarded a student's prize. The other lads James 13 and Troy 12 were an inspiration to the whole group. When it was time to come back from a break they would be the first to sit down and start the technique. They paid attention throughout the gruelling long days, no complaints, just concentration and discipline. It was a joy to instruct them.

Our thanks go to the graduates who stepped to take up an assignment on the course including our visitor from Denmark, coach and instructor Daniel Kusk. Well done to all the new graduates. A special thanks to my co-instructor Chris and of course Geoff.

What a course. See you all in Sydney.

Regards

Robert Lucas