

The McGuire Programme

Course Report – Sydney April 2007

By Geoff Johnston, Regional Director, Australia

The April course in Sydney was held at the Y Hotel in the middle of Sydney. Unlike the last course in Sydney we had warm and sunny weather for the entire course.

The course was attended by 13 new students and up to 40 graduates who were there to strengthen their own recovery and to help the new students. Thank you to those returning graduates. We would not be able to conduct a course without you. Many people, who have done very well with their own recovery, now have a passion to help other people who stutter.

Instruction on this course was shared by many people with Scott Harper, Sandra Dennison, Adam Robinson, Phil Jeffrey, Justin Vietz and Geoff Johnston playing leading roles. Senior graduates also helped out with everyone doing extremely well.

New students and returning graduates met on the Wednesday night and being part of a large group of recovering/recovered stutters, immediately put the new people at ease. First day videos were conducted on the Wednesday night with most of the new people being very covert with their stuttering behaviour.

Thursday am and all the returning graduates were taken to another room to use the technique while drilling the checklist, laws and directions. Only when they had proved themselves to be a great example of the McGuire Programme at work were they allowed to join the new students.

By mid-morning all but a few old graduates had joined the main group to help with the introduction to breathing and speaking. We also explained the psychological and physiological causes of stuttering. By lunch-time all new students were able to stand up in front of the group and say their names without any problems.

We had a separate group of graduates running in conjunction with the main sessions practicing the points on the checklist using the Harrison Workshop format. We tried to rotate all graduates through that group to provide them with additional challenges. By mid-afternoon all students were giving names, addresses, telephone nos. etc to the main group without problems.

Friday sessions included fear reduction tools, overcoming the psychological aspects of stuttering and taking charge of your mind and thoughts. Decision time Friday lunch-time and 12 students decided to stay and joined the programme. One young man didn't feel ready for it but has committed to do the course later in the year. He had seen enough progress to know he can move forward to realise his true potential.

During the afternoon old graduates showed the new students how to do contacts with people in the streets of Sydney. Most achieved near to 100 contacts with a few exceeding 120. Several new students felt ready to have a go and were very successful. Friday night split sessions were Assertive Self-Acceptance, Changing Attitudes and a Q&A session for the new students.

Public speaking workshops were conducted on the Saturday morning followed by students doing contacts. Our public speeches at Darling Harbour were a real highlight using a large PA system with over 50 people speaking, all wonderfully well. About 100 people listened to the speeches and many came up after to find out about the programme and to congratulate us including a Minister of the Australian Government who was most complimentary.

On Saturday night participants had a choice of split sessions, Letting Go and Having Fun, Implementing Change and Assertive Communication.

Sunday sessions included assertiveness training, relapse traps, maintenance and transfer activities and allocation of coaches. Family and friends attended at 1:00pm and were provided with a course summary. Closing speeches followed with presentation of graduation certificates and encouragement awards.

It's always a pleasure to see people who declare at the start that they won't make a public speech during the course, eager to get to their feet at every opportunity and doing so well. Every new student was 100% "fluent" at the end of the course but fully realising that their recovery had only just started.