

COURSE REPORT – SYDNEY MARCH 2010

By Scott Monson – Course Instructor

Sydney hosted Australia's first course for 2010, from Thursday 25th to Sunday 28th March at the Y Hotel. And what a course it was, with up to 80 people joining in at any one time over the four days and a visit from the program founder himself, Dave McGuire!! Twenty-two new students arrived from around the country for an introductory session on the Wednesday night. While the pre-first course nerves were clearly evident on their faces, the returning grads met them with a welcoming smile and some reassuring words to help put their minds at ease.

At the introductory session, our tireless Regional Director, Geoff Johnston, gave the new starters an overview of the philosophies of the programme and outlined what they could expect from the next 4 days. Dave McGuire also gave us an insight into his thoughts behind the techniques used and reinforced that success could be achieved by those who were prepared to work hard, be courageous and persevere. The new students then faced their first challenge for the course, and recorded their first day videos to provide a future reminder of where they had come from.

Thursday started with split sessions – Geoff J and myself taught students about approach-avoidance, the iceberg and the importance of self-acceptance, while Sergeant Major's Rob L and Scott H, with Dave McG, led the grads in drilling the checklist, laws and directions to re-establish the baseline for a good technique. The stronger grads were sent out in pairs with the aim of making 50 contacts as quickly as possible. After a mid-morning break, costal breathing was taught and voice soon added to begin building the foundation of a new, powerful speaking technique. By lunchtime, students were saying their names with confidence.

After lunch, students were introduced to the pleasure of reading drills, which really started to embed the basics of the technique. Stuart W then introduced the Sports Analogy, and the effervescent Bradley H explained the Stairway to Eloquence. Rob L and myself then led the group through the checklist, with the inside and outside lines relaying each point to the other. Dale R then took the new students and refreshers through Mantras and Kinesthetics, while Geoff work-shopped the 'Magic Fairy Dust Myth' with graduates. After a well-earned dinner break, the Harrison Hexagon was explained and students showed how far they had come on day one by punching out their names, addresses and phone numbers with confidence and a big smile on their faces – what a difference a day can make!!! To finish a long day, some inspiration messages were delivered via two short videos on the '8 Irresistible Principles of Having Fun' and '212 Degrees'.

Friday started at 8:00am with breathing practice followed by drilling and reading aloud. The returning graduates led the group through the checklist, followed by some Harrison-like workshops aimed at having fun with speaking. Decision time came at lunch on Friday and all but two new students signed up to the Programme. Friday afternoon was spent on Deliberate Disfluency with Dave McG and Levels of Overkill. A highlight was Jade and Terry's unique presentation of the Laws with Jade wielding her truncheon on the hapless Terry for disobeying the Laws. The grads hit the streets with new students in tow to show them the ropes of making contacts – always a challenge in Sydney at 5pm on a Friday afternoon. After dinner, the new students reported back on their graduate's contact session (all making 100). Split sessions were then held with Staff Trainers doing their thing, Rick N leading a "Who's Driving Your Bus" workshop and Geoff J and myself having a Q&A session with the new students.

Saturday started with Scott H leading a 'walk and talk' through Hyde Park at 7.30. The morning session started proper at 8am with breathing practice, followed by reading drills and an exercise in voice projection. Rob L and Scott H then led a rowdy and very enjoyable Harrison workshop to encourage the new students to let go and really enjoy their new speaking skills, but with good technique of course! It was time to head to the beautiful Darling Harbour for the public speeches, with most new students making 25-30 contacts on the 20-minute walk through Sydney. When it

came time for their big moment, none of the students held back from facing one of their biggest fears and the grad speeches that followed were equally inspiring – even after 7 courses at least one of the speeches on these days is guaranteed to bring a tear to my eye! All too soon it was over and students hit the streets again to complete their 100 contacts, with some going well beyond. The Saturday evening session kicked off with grads reporting back on their students, and with the students relating their feelings having just lived on of the most amazing days of their lives. Split sessions were then held with the ladies getting together to discuss “secret woman’s business” and the guys splitting into two groups – one focusing on phone technique and the other on using the Hexagon in our recoveries.

Sunday morning kicked off again at 8am with breathing and reading drills to set a really good foundation for the day, and the leapt into the Four Traits of Winning, Assertiveness Skills, Relapse Traps and Goal Setting. Coaches were allocated, support groups promoted and the recovery Workbook explained. It was then time to invite family and friends to join us for an overview of the course and what to expect when their loved one’s return home. Students then gave their final speeches, and with some supportive words from the graduate it was all over for another course.

This was the biggest course I have seen in my three years with the programme, and it was one of the most smoothly run as well!

To my fellow instructors – Rob L, Scott H and Phil J, – it was a pleasure to share the stage with you guys and I really do look forward to my next opportunity to do so.

To Geoff Johnston – None of use could do it without the time and effort, and the blood, sweat and tears you put into keeping this program going in Australia. You give us all hope that being a victim of stuttering can change forever, and in return all we ask is that you look after yourself also!

To Dave McGuire – Thanks for visiting and for the insight into your years of experience in putting this programme together. None of it would be possible without your unique mix of strategies.

Last but not least, 12 returning Grads undertook staff training throughout the 4 days to become coaches and instructors. I commend you all on your commitment and perseverance in putting in the long hours of study needed to achieve your goals – good luck with your results, and I look forward to seeing you coach and/or instruct on future courses.

The next Australian course will be held in Adelaide 15-18 July – I’ve already booked my tickets and I look forward to see you there!!

*May we all have the **courage** to face our fears, the **strength** to never give up, and the **belief** that we can succeed.*

Scott Monson