

COURSE REPORT – SYDNEY NOVEMBER 2009

By Scott Monson – Course Instructor

The final Australian course for 2009 was held in Sydney from Thursday 12th to Sunday 15th March at the Y Hotel - and what a fitting way to end the year!

Thirteen new students graduated the course, each one giving a fantastic and heartfelt speech on the final afternoon to start their journey towards freedom. The joy was shared by family and friends, who bore witness not only to the transformation in their speaking, but to their new-found confidence and self esteem. The students were also supported by the returning graduates, who conveyed the lessons their own of mistakes and demonstrated that long term success requires more than a sprinkling of 'magic fairy dust'. We were all especially proud of the young 12 year old school boy who had stuck at it during an exhausting four days, despite "never being this tired in my life".

Armed with the Four Traits of Winning and new-found Assertiveness Skills, the students were also warned of the pitfalls of relapse and the traps for lay-in-waiting back in the 'real world'. Fellow Course Instructor, and all round nice guy, Rob Lucas and myself had shared some pearls of wisdom during the previous evening, where students took full advantage of an open Q&A session about transferring their new skills into everyday life. Nonetheless, winning was the word of the day after the success of the Public Speeches on Saturday afternoon - held at Sydney's jewel of Darling Harbour no-less. "The best day of my life" was exclaimed more than once, especially with students meeting 100 new people or more in Sydney's CDB during their contacts session.

In preparation for their public speech, students were encouraged to let their speaking skills rip during the ever popular Harrison Workshops. They also took up the challenge of speaking with Dave McGuire directly via video web link. This was of course preceded by a disciplined review of the Checklist, Laws and Rules with graduates leading the way and students recounting the message with their line coaches. On the preceding Friday night, students could choose to expand upon these foundations of the programme by attending two split sessions on Assertive Communication and Using the Stuttering/Eloquence Hexagon, led by Regional Director Geoff Johnston and myself respectively. Those wanting to face their fear of using the phone were led by Rob L.

Friday also saw students deal with the most challenging of all subjects during a course – Deliberate Disfluency. They all applied themselves to the task however and practiced their Block Release and Hit and Hold up and down the animal alphabet. The Levels of Overkill were introduced, as were strategies for Dealing with a Feared Word, which will help the students take their challenging situations from panic fear to boring as they face them head-on. Following a day of drilling the Checklist, Rules and Laws, as well as the above, students were paired with graduates to learn about contacts and all gave great reports on returning.

None of this could happen though if the students didn't learn the basics on Day 1. Geoff J and I introduced students to Approach-Avoidance Conflicts, the Stuttering Iceberg and the importance of Self-Acceptance, while Sergeant Major Rob L drilled the returning graduates into disciplined technique where only the strongest would sit 1-1 with new students. Costal Breathing was taught, as was the cycle of Pause-Breath-Speak-Release. Students started the soon-to-be-familiar drilling, where the foundation of the new, powerful breathing and speaking technique was firmly laid. The Checklist, Sports Analogy, Stairway to Eloquence and Harrison Hexagon filled out a long and exhausting introduction to the Programme, which was capped with some comic relief with a short video on The 8 Irresistible Principles of Having Fun.

What a difference four days can make! Beginning shy and nervous at Wednesday night's introduction session, especially when doing the obligatory 'before shot' first day videos, and finishing with a smile and full of confidence on Sunday, the new graduates know that this is only the start of their Road to Freedom. They are not alone though, as it is the past graduates, primary coaches and world-wide support network that makes this programme special.

Thank you to all who contributed to a fantastic final course for 2009. To the returning Graduates – we couldn't do it without you. To my fellow instructors – I can't wait to share the stage with you again. To

Dave McGuire, thank you for this great Programme which is changing people's lives world-wide. To Rob L, thanks again for your guidance and support over the four days. Lastly, and by no means least, to our standout RD Geoff Johnston – it's an honour and privilege to follow your lead and to provide hope that being a victim to stuttering can change forever.

A special mention to the two Mums who sat through the entire course – your love and devotion to your boys is obvious, and they are already winners because of it.

May we all have the Courage to face our fears, the Strength to never give up, and the Belief that we can succeed.