

Overcoming Stuttering

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: Hello, I'm Ray Zardetto, and welcome to Disabilities Network here on the VoiceAmerica Business Network. Our program today is sponsored by the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disability Services.

You know, with the notoriety gained by the success of the movie *The King's Speech*, both at the box office and at this year's Academy Awards, the world's spotlight now has been focused on the condition we called stammering or stuttering. And *The King's Speech*, of course, which won a number of Academy Awards including best picture, best actor, best director and best screenplay, chronicles the struggle that Britain's King George VI had with a stammering problem or stuttering problem that afflicted him since childhood. And in fact the screen writer of *The King's Speech* overcame a similar condition in his own youth. So it's very appropriate that today's show we're going to take a look at the condition we call stuttering or stammering. It affects about one percent of the world's population which translates to some 70 million people, and here in the US about three million people are afflicted with this.

So my guests today are here to talk to me about how each of them has dealt with this condition, both in their lives and in the workplace. And so let me introduce them to you now. First Maria McGrath and Iain Mutch -- or Iain Mutch, sorry. Maria is the regional director in the United States for the McGuire Programme which provides training to promote the recovery from stammering and stuttering. Iain is also affiliated with the McGuire Programme. He's one of the program's regional directors in the United Kingdom. And third joining us is Chris Cooksey. He is a chartered accountant in the UK. And Chris has his own interesting story to tell about his condition and how it affected both his life and his professional career. So let me start with Maria first, welcome to the program, thank you for joining us. I was wondering if you might start by just telling us when you realized that you had this condition, stuttering condition, and when you knew it was something that was affecting your life.

>> MARIA McGRATH: I've always had a stutter, and I first remember it from when I was going to school. I grew up in Ireland, in the countryside in Ireland. And I can remember my first experience when I remember it is when I was at school and having to stand up and recite a poem. And I knew the poem, but I could not get the words out at school. And the teacher just made me stand there. And all the kids were laughing at me. And I was then put in detention because I didn't know the poem. So that was my earliest recollection of when I had a stammer.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. I'm curious as you got older you mentioned in a discussion with me before the program that you would try and avoid situations where, you know, you were put in the situation where you would have to talk to people or make the speech, whatever, and that affected your golf game which from what I understand is pretty good otherwise.

>> MARIA McGRATH: Yeah. I would stutter or stammer to avoid every possible speaking situation. And one of the ones I totally avoided was when I was a child we had to play golf and I was a pretty good golfer as a child, but even in juvenile competitions you have to stand up and give a victory speech if you win a competition at the end of the day, and we have to thank all the organizers. So in order to prevent me having to stand up and give that speech, I would blow my golf game on purpose so I wouldn't have to do that. That's just one example of many where you would take yourself out of any possible speaking situations.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right. Before we get to the McGuire Programme that you're affiliated with; Iain, I suppose you probably have some similar kinds of stories you can tell.

>> IAIN MUTCH: Absolutely. I kind of always remember having a stutter, and I became aware of it at the age of three or four. And all through school I just avoided, if I possibly could, anything to do with answering questions in class or reading aloud. And I avoided anything to do with speaking at assemblies or taking part in activities such as drama and debating. And I dropped all foreign languages as soon as I possibly could at the age of 13, so I can't speak any foreign languages now.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um-hum.

>> IAIN MUTCH: And it was extremely difficult. It was a matter of trying to think of a profession of education I could follow and also to avoid all these little potential speaking situations. So I ended up taking history and I became an archivist because I thought if I locked myself away in a cellar among the catalogs or documents, but the irony is that I also knew that I was quite an extrovert, so it was going against my nature to even be involved in something like that.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. And I'm just curious before we move on to Chris's story and talk about the McGuire Programme, Marie and Iain, as you were growing up with this condition, either directly or by inference, did teachers and everything suggest that, you know, the condition was really, you know, it was your fault or, you know, you weren't studying hard enough or you weren't smart enough or something like that; did you ever get a sense or an inference from them with regard to that?

>> MARIA McGRATH: In reference to my experiences, there was occasions when I would go to new schools and I wouldn't answer questions, I wouldn't put my hand up to answer questions. Or often if I was asked questions, I would

say I didn't know, so the teachers would think that I didn't know; but when it came to exam time, I would do very well on the written part of the exam. But anything orally I think the teachers would automatically think I either wasn't doing my homework or I didn't know. But once exam time came, I excelled because I put more effort into doing more work to prove that I knew everything.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um-hum. And, Chris, let's bring you into the discussion for a minute here. Iain mentioned that he started his career and he looked for his career as an archivist because it wouldn't require, I guess, a lot of interaction. That way I think you had some similar thoughts along that line.

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: Yes, I did. I really became an accountant because I saw it as a profession which wouldn't need an awful lot of talking. I was wrong. (Laughter) Of course it always does. But it was really one of the few things that I could see that was open to me because I really wasn't able to speak very well at all. So I became an accountant. And actually my stutter did rather rule all my life. It stopped me doing a lot of things that I would otherwise have done. I was very lucky, I guess, because I know lots of people and they obviously know me for what I am as it were, and they always did. So I suspect it was a rather larger thing in my mind than in other people's. But, you know, it certainly ruled all the things I did.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. And before we start talking about the McGuire Programme, Chris, just one more question just based on what you just said. What were some of the other things in your life you would say it ruled or the condition ruled for you, you just mentioned?

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: Well, I would like to have done more outward things such as acting. I would have liked to have been a member of lots of clubs and

things; but I wouldn't -- wouldn't -- wouldn't go there. I wouldn't go there because of my speech. I wouldn't be able to say who -- who I was. I felt that -- all the things, I did to be honest, were with other people. They -- they would lead and I would go after them, if you understand what I mean. I wasn't really able to do things alone. I'd have liked to have done more sport. But actually my speech, my stammer, affected more than my speech. It just made me nervous. It made me very, very nervous. And it -- it is different now. I'm definitely different now. In those days I really felt that I wasn't able to do things that others were able to do.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: All right. Then I think that's a good segue then into the next part of the show that I want to talk about. Maria, the -- the McGuire Programme that you and our other guests here are affiliated with. Would you talk about that for a moment, exactly what it is, the origin of it and what exactly it does?

>> MARIA McGRATH: Yes. The McGuire program is one of many speech therapy programs out there. And what it does -- I'll start off with the origins of it, I guess. I started in 1994 by a person called David McGuire. And he started it when he lived in Holland. And the program, itself, is based on possibly the psychological aspects of stuttering where you counteract fear of speaking.

And the third element is basically (indiscernible) therapy where you have to practice, practice, practice everything that you learn.

And David as a person who started out his life, he went to various programs and one of the places where he learned quite a lot was with Dr. Sheehan in UCLA around the late 1960's. It was something -- he learned some things which happened with anti-avoidance, where he would go out and do things that he

wouldn't normally do. Well, that helped him a little bit, but he didn't have the proper tools to physically speak when he needed to. And then when he was living in Holland, he went to an old opera singer where he learned something called diaphragmatic breathing and that helps you to retrain your consonant vowel sounds. So bringing those things together he came up with a new program and he got one or two people and tried to help them, and eventually the program basically the program took off.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I do want to talk more about the program and some specifics but we have to take our first break so -- so let me hold the discussion right there for a moment and we'll pick it up with that when we come back. So I appreciate everything so far that you've -- that you've shared with us. I think this is a very interesting story and very timely. So let's take our break first. I'm Ray Zardetto, and this is Disabilities at Work radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And welcome back to Disabilities at Work Radio here on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. One our programs sponsors today is the Kessler Foundation which is dedicated to improving the lives of the disabled

through the rehabilitation research done by the Kessler Foundation Research Center, and through the work of the Kessler Program Center, which helps prepare the disabled for the demands of the workplace.

And on today's program we are speaking with Maria McGrath and Iain Mutch of the McGuire Programme, and talking about how they have managed and overcome their problems with stuttering. And Chris Cooksey, who we will be talking with him. Chris is a chartered accountant in the UK. And all three of them have been relating how they have -- they have been dealing with their own stammering problems over the years.

And, Maria, we were talking about the McGuire Programme and you were going to take that into the next phase of that.

>> MARIA McGRATH: Yes. So the McGuire Programme is -- it's a program -- it's run internationally. It's in England, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, Scandinavia and we are trying to get it going here in US right now again. It's -- we are trying to get it going again. It's a program where we have three or four day courses where people would come and we retrain them how to talk and we also give them tools to counteract fear of stuttering because stuttering is a fear based thing and we try to counteract that. And that -- that's one of the key things. We can -- we can learn lots of tools and techniques in a room or in an office but it's trying to use them when we go out in the real world. And that's one of the things we try to teach people.

And the other key aspect to the McGuire Programme is the follow-up support that we have. And most members who come to the program find that invaluable because when you go back home after a course, it's easy for things to fall apart and not do what you're supposed to do.

But we have put a system in place where you have to keep in contact with your region director and your course instructor and a coach that you are assigned. And I think that is one of the key aspects of the program, I think Iain and Chris would agree with that.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Iain, maybe you can speak for a moment about how -- maybe how the McGuire Programme is a little bit different from other programs that are out there.

>> IAIN MUTCH: In my experience in my years, I did a number of other therapy approaches and I did conventional national health service in the UK, speech therapy. And I have spent -- I would go into somebody's office, I would speak for an hour, and they would always be a tiny bit gauged how fluent I was. I wasn't really getting any therapy. It was just, "Are you better this week?"

And I also did private speech therapy and I also did another intensive program in Ireland in 1986. And it was always the business of in the comfort zone of the therapy room I was okay because in a short period of time it become extremely comfortable, I found I could speak. And then I'd walk out of the therapy room and then I couldn't even ask my fare on the bus because I was back in the real world and all the old fears hit me.

And, honestly, the difference on the McGuire Programme is it's a residential course, and so you're protected and also isolated from the real world at the beginning of the course, and then we slowly up the ante and it ends up on the street and you can speak to members of the public.

But it's also incredibly intense. On a four day course you get something like 55 hours of intensive therapy. And I used to do an hour a week with a speech therapist, and so I wouldn't even get that in a full year. And it is -- it

is that degree of intensity that is so important because it's about altering these stammering behaviors that we've learned over the years, and we need to discard the ones that aren't helping you and we need to take on more of these other good speaking, eloquent behaviors in order to overcome it.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And for more information about the McGuire Programme, Iain or Maria, I assume you have contact information or a website or something you can direct people to?

STUDENT: Yes. You can go to the website www.McGuireProgramme.com. And it's spelled with the English spelling P-R-O-G-R-A-M-M-E, dot com. McGuireProgramme.com. Or you can also go to beyondstammering.com. And Beyond Stammering is also the name of the manual or the book that we use on the program that was written by David McGuire, and it has all the information that we used on the course in the book. But (indiscernible) I think it's also worth saying as well that everyone on the McGuire Programme has been through the program so everyone knows and understands the feelings and emotions that people who have a stammer or stutter go through. And we never ask anyone to do anything that we haven't been through ourselves. And I think that's very powerful, as well.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: All right. I'd like to talk for a few minutes. Chris, maybe you could field this first question here. Let's start talking about the workplace situation. You had mentioned earlier in the program that you decided to become an accountant because you thought it would be something you could be used to shield -- or a profession you would have to shield yourself from, your stammering situation. But I'm wondering just in the workplace in general when people realized you had this -- this stammer, did you find that they were,

you know, stand-offish about it, did you find that they, you know, reacted to it one way or another? Just in terms of your general dealing with people.

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: Yeah, different people would -- would be different. Certain people were very good, they would look at you and they would wait for you. Other people you can see that they were awkward about it, that they were hurting, too, because they could see that I was hurting because the word wouldn't come. And also you can see in the eyes of others they're almost, I don't know, backing away as it were.

Normally people were okay about it. But it's difficult when you have to make some calls and there are others around you in the office. I would have to go to a different room to see if I could hide and make the phone call. And often there wasn't an empty room so I would have to make the call in the office and others would be around me and I would feel awful.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: And it would always go very badly. I remember I took -- hip -- hip -- hypnosis for a while. And all that seemed to do was to make me think about it even more. And I can recall having to make a call after I'd been doing this hypnosis for a little while and the call went very badly. And there was another person in the office and he looked up and said, "Your hypnosis doesn't seem to be working much." (Laughter)

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Not something you needed to hear right then, right?

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: Nightmare, it was an absolute nightmare.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. Iain, I'm wondering also, I assume you probably have similar instances that you can describe similar to Chris's. But would you say that the condition and people's realization that you had the condition

could be a limiting factor in how well you could move ahead in your profession?

>> IAIN MUTCH: I think so, yes. I got a real insight as I came home after my first course on the McGuire Programme and I disclosed to all my colleagues, I said I had been away on a four day course to try and sort out my stammer.

And my boss, she -- she immediately said, "Oh, if I knew you had a stammer, I never would have employed you."

Because at the time I got the job I did anything to hide it. I was incredibly covert in how I spoke. So I was doing -- doing all the tricks and avoidances in order to portray myself as a fluid speaker. And I got away with it obviously with it and it became a bit of a shock to her to find out that I had a stammer.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm just curious how long was it before she discovered that you had it?

>> IAIN MUTCH: Well, it was after I told her.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: But she never found out on her own?

>> IAIN MUTCH: I mean it just shows that I don't -- I didn't often see my big bosses at work --

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um-hum.

>> IAIN MUTCH: -- at my place of employment. But I had managed, unbelievably, to hide it. And then instead of being supportive, it was a case (indiscernible) and you shouldn't ever have been here in the first place because I wouldn't have employed you if I knew. It was a bit of a kick in the teeth really.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> IAIN MUTCH: I remember in other situations I used to work at public

facing roles. And I kind of got sympathy from people because I get stuck and I'd be struggling and they were like, "Ahh, ahh, bless him, ahh, poor lad," it was this sort of approach. And over time it does belittle it, it gets you down, and it does start to wear away at your self-confidence.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah, I can certainly understand how that can be. And actually that's a good point for us to pause for a moment. We need to take another break and when we come back we're going to pick up on that point again specifically with regard to the workplace.

But before we take the break let me take a moment to thank Karasch & Associates and ASL Interpreter Referral Services for their generosity in making Disabilities at Work accessible to the deaf and the hard of hearing. Transcripts of our programs will be available on our website following each episode. And speaking of our website, which is disabilitiesatwork.org, please check out our new newsletter, which is posted on the website. And coincidentally enough it's called Disabilities at Work. The newsletter is free, and it provides additional information about many of the topics we discuss here on the radio program, and it's also a great source of information about the issues surrounding employment of people with disabilities. So check it out at disabilitiesatwork.org.

And don't forget to follow us on Twitter at DisabilitiesAt, and join the thousands of people worldwide who have now connected with us on Facebook. We look forward to seeing you there.

We'll be back to continue our discussion in just a moment. I'm Ray Zardetto, and this is Disabilities at Work radio.

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: And we are back on VoiceAmerica's Business Network. This is Disabilities at Work radio, and I'm Ray Zardetto. Today's show is sponsored by the New Jersey Division of Disability Services, part of the State of New Jersey's Division of Human Services. And this division focuses on helping people who have become disabled as adults so they can live their life more independently in their communities.

On today's program we are talking about stammering, a condition that affects about one percent of the world's population. And obviously as we talked in the beginning of the program there's been some renewed focus on this condition as a result of the box office success and the Academy Award notoriety that went with the film *The King's Speech*. And actually I was curious if we could talk about that movie for just a moment, because I believe you've all seen it. And I wanted to talk about it not so much to get your opinion of it as a movie, but how you thought that King George was portrayed in terms of, you know, his condition. And also what you thought of the -- what I thought anyway was a somewhat unorthodox and sometimes flamboyant way that Geoffrey Rush's character, the therapist, went about helping the king's condition. So I throw that out for any of you to take a shot at.

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: The portrayal of the king, also excellent. You got an idea of how awful he would feel when he had to make a speech. You just got

an idea of the -- all the emotions that -- that -- that -- that were going on underneath. I thought that was really well done. Happily -- or rather mercifully at the beginning when he was doing the major speech, they didn't really linger on that much.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um-hum.

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: Because I understand that the reality of it was that it was a nightmare. And Sir Lionel -- Lionel Logue, he was unorthodox. But a lot of the things that he did in the film I thought were things that we -- we would do now. There were other bits and pieces that we wouldn't do, but overall I thought the portrayal was very good.

>> MARIA McGRATH: Yes, if I can add --

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: I don't know whether Iain would think so, too.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Maria, I'm sorry. Go ahead. You were going to say --

>> MARIA McGRATH: I think it's ironic as well that Lionel Logue, he's not a qualified speech therapist, like we are not speech therapists, but he had a flare for helping people who had speech problems. And I think because all of us have been through it as well, we know and we understand the issues and the problems that people go through who have a stammer. And what Chris stated as well, there's a lot of the things in the movie that he did years ago that we wouldn't do now or we wouldn't advocate. But I'm -- the way -- it's a lot like the way we are able to help people, as well.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I was wondering if either or any of you actually could relate to the stress and the situation that the king was put through or even, you know, before he was king when he had to make these speeches, I assume any role you could relate to the situation he was in based on your own situations

where you all work, right?

>> MARIA McGRATH: Yes. And if I could just say a quick thing. I think he was in situations where he couldn't get away it from. He couldn't avoid how he would speak. He was the king. We could avoid or we could avoid not taking jobs where we have to speak, which I often did. I could have had promotions at work, I could have moved into different areas. But I wouldn't go for them, and I know my bosses wouldn't want me to go for them either because it would just cause unnecessary stress for other people. But the king had no choice.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah. I'm sorry, Iain, were you about to say something?

>> IAIN MUTCH: Well, I just thought it was realistic at the start. I was more impressed with the scene where he is about to go up the stairs to speak, because it just came over like a gallant scene, he was going to his death, in a sense. Because you can see the fear. It's as simple as that. And I've been in that kind of situation hundreds and hundreds of times.

And I suppose it is that thing that I became adept at avoiding, so I just avoid. I pull a sickie if I was King George VI, I would say I was ill, I wouldn't be able to do it, it's as simple as that. And he had a sense of honor and a sense of duty.

And as far as the therapy is concerned I think it comes across that it is a situation only -- it's only if he's got a speech to make or he's got a wireless broadcast and it's to manage only those specific situations. It's never in the outside world. It's in a comfort zone and a therapist is always there to help him. And I think it is a good and accurate portrayal of the era, but I'm just extremely thankful that our therapy has moved on and isn't the

real world and you don't have to have a chaperone, a person there, in order to create a comfort zone all the time.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And to follow up on that point a little bit more, I think it's very strongly implied in the movie or at least I drew the inference that the king's stammering condition might very well have been caused by a series of childhood traumas or stresses that manifested itself in the stammering. And I'm wondering based on your work and the research that goes on today, is that the case?

>> MARIA McGRATH: I think no one really knows what causes it. It could be. It could be related to a trauma as a child. It could be hereditary. There's no exact known cause for it. I don't know if Iain or Chris would like to add anything.

>> IAIN MUTCH: It seems at the moment that a lot of the current research they're saying is all due to the circuits in our brains and there's some sort of problem with people who stammer, that in the pathway it's going askew and there's a blockage in the circuitry and that is causing the stammer.

Whereas it used to be this thing, it is a trauma based condition and it is a product of bad parenting. And on actually both sides I see a lot of people and they've got an obvious stammer. I would say about half of them are going to say, "Oh, I've had all sorts of issues in my life," and the other half will say, "No, I come from a very good background, a loving family, and I just don't understand, it just started."

So really as far as all the cause or the concern, I really think that the jury is still out on that one.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm curious from what you know and your research and

everything, do the vast majority of cases of people who have this condition, does it start when they're very young as a child or can it sometimes not manifest itself until their fully grown and of adult age?

>> MARIA McGRATH: I think in my experience with people who have entered the program, probably 80 percent of them have it as a child. Though there are some people who all of a sudden have just had a stammer when there were like eight or nine and even older. But, Iain, you probably had more people that you can talk about.

>> IAIN MUTCH: Occasionally I do encounter people and they have developed it later in life. I think that about half a dozen cases. And it suddenly appeared, I think for a lady who came on the course a few years ago and it suddenly happened and she was in her 40's. And I've also encountered a few people that have been involved in serious accidents and then they've woken up with a stammer after being unconscious because they have had a head injury. And that's happened in a few -- in a few cases, as well.

>>CHRIS COOKSEY: I've also known -- know one -- one -- one of my clients had an operation. He was about 60 years old. Very lively, normal guy. And he went in for an operation which lasted a little bit longer than they thought it would. And after that he was hardly able to speak at all.

Now, I don't know whether it wore off or not because I didn't see him much after then. I ought to have asked after him, but that was when I really wasn't able to speak very well, so I didn't phone up and ask after him.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Yeah.

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: But it certainly happens occasionally.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: All right. Well, I think at this point we'll take our

last break. We have one more break to fit into the hour. So I think this is probably a good time to do that. And when we come back, we will talk more about this and again relate back to how this condition manifests itself in the workplace and what people maybe who are struggling with this condition now maybe can do about it. So stay with us. This is Ray Zardetto, and this is Disabilities at Work radio.

(Music)

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>> RAY ZARDETTO: Welcome back to Disabilities at Work radio for our final sergeant. Today we're talking with Maria McGrath and Iain Mutch of the McGuire Programme, and we have described what they do and how they do it. And we have also been talking with Chris Cooksey, an accountant in the UK and a proponent of the program, as well. And for our last segment here we are joined by Russell Eden. Russell, welcome to the program.

>> RUSSELL EDEN: Good evening, Hello.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Very good. And we are going to get to Russell in just a moment. He has his own story to tell about how he has dealt with his stammering program -- I'm sorry -- stammering condition over the years.

I just wanted to -- before we get to Russell specifically just ask either Maria or Iain with regard to the McGuire Programme. If someone listening to the program today is struggling with the same thing that you -- you were some years ago, what would you advise them to do with regard to how they present themselves at work and what they can do about their situation?

>> IAIN MUTCH: What I think is important if you have a stammer is not to put your hand in the sand because it is important to do something, because if you take virtually any approach, it is going to help you. But I would just do some research and I'd also -- if you're in a big organization, I'd speak to your HR department, I'd speak to the union, I'd speak to your manager and maybe ask if they can offer any help, if they can perhaps even fund you through the program. Because increasingly in the UK I'm finding that a number of people are approaching their employer and they're just saying, "Look, it would make me a far more effective employee if I could use a telephone, if I could do public facing, if I could do presentations, if I could lead meetings," all these basic --

>> RAY ZARDETTO: So don't be shy about asking for help.

>> MARIA McGRATH: If I could reiterate with that, as well. I think I've come across a lot of people whose employers don't even know they have a stammer because the employee sits back and doesn't say anything or doesn't -- didn't do as much work as they are able to and because they're afraid of their employer knowing they have a stammer and some people are able to hide it very well. But if you become forward and talk to the employer, I think employers are more than willing to help if they know it, if they know about the person's problem. And they often send people on training courses for all sorts of things. And I'm sure employers would only be too willing to help out a person who has a stammer because they're going to get more out of it in the end. The employer is going to get a more beneficial employee out of it. They're going to want to work harder, they're going to be more grateful, and I think it's a win win situation all around.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Um-hum. And let me turn to Russell now for a few moments who has joined us here. Russell, you've been in the program for some years now and you've -- you've dealt with -- with your stammering condition. Why don't you tell us a little bit about how you've done that and how it's applied to what you do or where you work?

>> RUSSELL EDEN: About eight years ago I had a really chronic overt stammer and wasn't really able to successfully slow my thinking together.

Then I joined the McGuire Programme back in 2003 and haven't looked back. I've very quickly moved into a public facing job. I'm now in a job that I really enjoy and I interview members of the public on a daily basis to work with them and help them to find a way back into the workplace. And I think ultimately my employer has been really helpful with regards to me developing my speech and attending ongoing McGuire courses to help others learn from my experiences. And that's really helped me.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Earlier in the program Iain and Maria were talking about the fact that you do need to continue, you know, you need to focus on it. It's just not something that you do for a few things but that you have to stay focused on it even afterwards. What are some of the things you do either on a regular basis or ongoing basis, you know, that helps you with regard to overcoming the condition?

STUDENT: We do a regular morning breathing warm-ups. And lots of us also do warm up (indiscernible) with other people in the McGuire Programme or (indiscernible).

Because ultimately to continue to effectively recover from stammering on the McGuire Programme, we have to work hard to desensitize ourselves against

the fear of stammering and keep on desensitizing ourselves because if we don't, that fear can soon rear its ugly head and the old behaviors can start to reappear. So during the day we continue to focus on our technique. And every now and again we may need to make a difficult conference or another inquiry or all sorts of other constant monitoring exercises to really focus on keeping on top of our speech technique and ultimately monitoring our level of control to always be on top of our game. That's really important to us.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And so I guess it would be fair to say then that part of the ongoing McGuire Programme is a constant reinforcement that you get from dealing with others on the program, as well?

>> RUSSELL EDEN: So much so. And providing you work hard actually it's an exciting journey. It's enjoyable, definitely.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And I'm wondering also, Maria and Iain, maybe if I can address this question to you. Is the therapy, is the -- are the conditions -- are the therapies that you use for the people that join the program, are they pretty much the same for everybody or do you have to tailor them, you know, based on who the person is and how they react to different parts of the program?

>> MARIA McGRATH: I think they're pretty much the same for everyone but everyone adapts to them at their own pace. Some people take to it straightaway. It's hard work. It not a cure, and it's very hard work. And some people -- I think an analogy we often use is some people are marathon runners and some people are sprinters. And it depends on what you put into it. You get out what you put in. Iain, I don't know if you have something extra to add? He can't hear me.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Iain? I don't know if you --

>> IAIN MUTCH: I would agree with that but it's -- it is ultimately -- it's up to you.

There's an expression, "If it's to be, it's up to me." And it all comes down to that. And you've got to be honest with yourself. So if you are avoiding -- in certain situations if you're afraid of speaking with authority figures, it's up to you to go out and speak to every police officer that you see on the street. You know? It's kind of a pragmatic approach like that. If you're afraid of (indiscernible) things, then you've got to go out and you've got to ask people for apples all day, you know, so you overcome that particular fear. It's a very pragmatic approach.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: It's sort of a face your fear and conquer it kind of approach then.

>> MARIA McGRATH: Um-hum.

>> IAIN MUTCH: Yeah, it is like almost any other phobic therapy out there. And as people on the program are afraid of speaking to strangers, of speaking, and also terrified of going out of control and stammering, so on the program, it's really important it goes out into the real world and they are encouraged to speak to people. If you're afraid of big hairy spiders, if you went on a phobic therapy course, a big hairy spider is in the palm of your hand at the end of the course. And that's exactly what we ask people to do, we ask people to do a speech and we ask people to speak to a hundred people out on the streets. After the course people come back and think if I can do that I can do anything, and after that support kicks in and you can see me.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: I'm curious, a question for Russell and for Chris since

they have been on the program, same question to both of you. Russell, maybe you first. How long were you on the program before you realized, you know, that you were seeing some very tangible benefits from the program?

>> RUSSELL EDEN: Certainly from my first course, almost on my first course I can see the merits of every aspect of the technique very quickly. And then from the second course and the third course, everything really starts to fall into place and make a lot of sense. And I'm really took to the technique and benefitted from it after just a few days undoubtedly.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: And, Chris, would you agree it was that quick for you, as well?

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: Yes, I would. After mine, after the first course I went on, by the end of that I was able to do things that I never imagined I'd be able to do. I could stand up and speak to people. And I was never able to do that before. For me it didn't really make me feel that I was making headway though. I didn't think -- it -- it would last as it were. But for me now having been on the program for about eight years, as well, it's the work that I do that makes the big difference. If I get lazy, then my speech will be weaker. And if I can work at it though, I can get better and better.

So it isn't over yet. It's just a battle for me, as it is for all of us, I think. But I started to see a big difference on my opening course.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Right.

>> CHRIS COOKSEY: Instantly, almost instantly.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Well, it's been an amazing hour. I think, first of all, congratulations to all of you for facing and overcoming what I know must be a difficult situation for you. It sounds like you have all made incredible

progress, and it doesn't sound like any of you plan on backtracking any time soon. So my thanks to all of you, Maria McGrath, Iain Mutch, Russell Eden, Chris Cooksey, thank you for sharing your experiences with us today. And, you know, good luck to all of you in the future.

Maria, very quickly, again we only have a few seconds, but how can someone contact the McGuire Programme again if they want to?

>> MARIA McGRATH: The best way is to go to the website, [www.McGuireProgramme](http://www.McGuireProgramme.com), P-R-O-G-R-A-M-M-E, dot com. Or in the US one is beyondstammering.com.

>> RAY ZARDETTO: All right. Thank you. And also thanks to our sponsors today, the Kessler Foundation and the New Jersey Division of Disability Services. And finally a thanks to Karasch & Associates, and ASL Interpreter Referral Services for their generosity in making Disabilities at Work accessible to the deaf and to the hard of hearing. Transcripts of our problem will be available on our website, disabilitiesatwork.org, one week following each episode.

So I thank everyone for being with us today. Join us here again next Wednesday for another program at noon Eastern Time. I'm Ray Zardetto, and this is Disabilities at Work radio.

(Music)

>> RAY ZARDETTO: Thanks for listening to Disabilities at Work. Become part of our tweam on Twitter at [DisabilitiesAt](https://twitter.com/DisabilitiesAt). And friend us on Facebook at [Disabilities at Work](https://www.facebook.com/DisabilitiesAtWork). Check out our website at www.disabilitiesatwork.org. And join us next week on Wednesday, 9:00 a.m. Pacific, noon Eastern Time, for the next Disabilities at Work radio show.

(Music)