



FEAR AND FREEDOM: Breaking Down the Wall that Inhibits Personal Happiness and Freedom

By Mick Constantinou

Stuttering is a problem generally faced by intelligent males, although it does indeed affect females to a lesser number. Research is now showing evidence of a neurological and genetic basis (trigger) to this problem. It is an all-pervasive problem that invades all aspects of a stutterer's life to include self-esteem, social interaction, dating, employment and career choice.

Case Overview

As a severe stutter for nearly 40 years, fear and anxiety were the greatest impediments to personal growth, happiness and improved fluency. It was a big part of the iceberg that was hidden by the waters of my life experiences. The iceberg analogy has been used for years in occupational and clinical studies. The unique geological characteristic of an iceberg is that only 25% of the iceberg is above water. The majority of the iceberg, 75%, is hidden by the waters of the Polar Regions.

In the past, I was always looking for that quick fix or magic potion. That little piece of advice or strategy that would suddenly propel me into fluency. I was only focusing on 25% of my personal iceberg. That part that was seen immediately by those around me.



While I achieved some fluency improvements in the sterile, comfort zones of clinics and pathology labs, those improvements were short-lived and non-sustainable in real world application. This is not an affront against those practitioners since I take as much, if not more, responsibility for the failure to address that 75% that was always waiting for me outside the therapists office; every hour and every day of my life.

For me, in the end what I found was that the answer had always been hidden in the depths of my own character. In front of the words I labored to form, was the WALL – FEAR; the effect of which was unhappiness.

Mark Twain once wrote, "Courage is the resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not the absence of fear."

In 2002, I began an intensive approach that included prayer, relaxation therapies, a quest for knowledge, and speech therapy. I have enjoyed rapid and significant success and have made great strides towards my life long dream of fluency because I made a conscious effort to become a student of my own disorder. It has been a truly fascinating and extremely fulfilling journey so far.

As part of my own therapy, my calling now is to reach out and share with other stutterers, both adult and children, who are battling the same beast that I have and beat! The beast is FEAR!



As a successful business professional, I am an example to others of what can still be accomplished in life and career while battling what can be a socially debilitating disorder. I have helped to start the Tampa Bay Stuttering Support and Experiential Group to reach out to stutterers, friends and family of stutterers, educators and medical and clinical professionals. There had never been such a support group our area so we have been treading new waters.

A Journey Through the Wall Strategy

The A Journey Through The Wall strategy is not a “replacer” of fluency therapies, but an “enhancer” of fluency therapies. As a business executive, I have gained knowledge and experience in operational turnarounds. The A Journey Through The Wall strategy is based on steps similar to those taken by companies initiating a turnaround or a change in corporate culture. I have simplified and applied the process to improved fluency and fear management.

Based on my experiences, there are key A.C.T.’s to overcoming fear:

- ✓ **A**dmission of fear.
- ✓ **C**ontrolling your fear and fear sources.
- ✓ **T**aking calculated risk.

The goal is becoming more capable risk-takers. The adjective capable is defined in Webster’s Dictionary as “having traits conducive to or



features permitting development." Through this definition, there are implied synonyms such as preparedness and calculated. The A Journey Through The Wall strategy involves advanced preparation and mental training to the extent that, in terms of stuttering, you feel prepared for what lies ahead. The unknown is known and embraced.

An important step in the process of taking control of your fear creating a personal Vision which should describe YOUR future state but be written in the present tense implying that the Vision is in the "Now".

The Vision should:

- ✓ Explain the changes you are commanding.
- ✓ Evoke an emotional response.
- ✓ Provide self-motivation.
- ✓ Remind you of the promise you have made to yourself.

Let me share my Vision with you now.

"I control IT to the extent that IT is a part of me but IT does not define me or my life's pursuits. When IT presents itself to me, I determine the degree of the encounter. I determine the significance placed on the encounter. IT is not a WALL in front of me that I go over, around or give yield. IT represents a bump in the road behind me since I choose to proceed on my journey towards fluency and freedom."



The A Journey Through The Wall strategy is all about re-programming your paradigms. What are Paradigms? Paradigms are established in our minds through our life experiences and beliefs. We process information through paradigms. Understanding this is so important because you cannot change what you do until you change how you think.

Transform "IT"

As my personal Vision indicates, you need to transform stuttering into an "IT." Though IT is part of you, IT does not define who you are or what you accomplish in life.

Focus on the whole iceberg, harness your fear and propel yourself past the barriers that prevent you from optimal professional and personal performance. When you can admit that you're frightened, you begin to regain control and make decisions for yourself, not for your stuttering. Remember that FEAR never disappears; it is the power that FEAR has over you that will wane over time.

Take the time. Take the step. Take the risk. Take control.

God's blessings,

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