

## YOU TELL THEM: IT'S IN THEIR HEAD

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# Stuttering

### SUE'S STORY

"Stuttering makes you tired. Saying anything becomes hard work," Sue said. Then I commented that it's also tiring for the person who does the listening. As I talked to this pretty, friendly lady who enjoyed conversation, I couldn't believe she had been a severe stutterer. She talks about so many things. She continued, "From the time I was a little girl until I was a teenager, I couldn't put three words together. It took me five minutes to say something another person could say in 30 seconds." No matter how you see it, that's serious stuttering.

Sue did what any other young girl should do that can't stop stuttering, she didn't speak much. In her words, "I learned how to get along in school without ever raising my hand in class. I'd have to get a point across with one word. I could go to a birthday party or play with other children and never speak a word. If you think about it, it's no different than a child who has a bad leg or hand; they learn how to get around in spite of their handicap. Well, I learned to get along without speaking more than one or two words at a time."

When I thought about what Sue said, I had to agree. I realized that when I speak with people who stutter, I become impatient and try to complete their sentences for them. It makes me tired to listen to them. When I think about stuttering, I realize how tough it must be for the person who stutters. How tired they must get.

For me, stuttering would be like living out a bad dream; one where you know what you want to say, but the words won't come out. To overcome her handicap, Sue mastered other skills in school. She developed excellent dexterity, learned to write well, and became very expressive with her hand and body language. Sue is good at doing things. I guess a child who stutters has to be a doer, and not an explainer. I asked Sue if her parents had sought medical help to cure the stuttering.

"Medical help? I saw every speech therapist within a thousand miles. If a school had a speech center, I went there. Anyone who had the slightest glimmer of knowledge about speech got a call from my parents. I spent 13 years in speech therapy with no summer vacation." Sue can laugh about it now, but you can imagine how difficult it must have been for her.

When you look at Sue it's easy to see that being especially pretty made the situation worse. Somehow, people expect a person with an impediment to look different than everyone else. They aren't expected to be the prettiest girl in the class.

"I was even sent to a medical hypnotist." A medical hypnotist uses hypnosis to correct something that's in your head. They help some people who stutter; they do a lot for children who don't have bladder control; they help people stop smoking; and they help people eliminate tics and twitches. "But," Sue said, "he didn't help me one bit. In fact, he told me I even stuttered under hypnosis. I think his efforts, to no avail, helped my parents accept my stuttering as part of me. I'm Sue

and I stutter." When I reflected on what she said, I could understand the dilemma her parents faced. She was doing nicely with an impediment, but they wanted to help her. We often don't realize that people born with an impediment learn to live with it, because they don't know any other way of living.

If a child is born with a deformed or missing limb, you accept it. Somehow we accept the fact that people can't grow new arms or legs, so they go on with life from there. But if all the doctors examine your stuttering child and say she's normal, what are you supposed to do? Since her speech apparatus—voice box, tongue, and so on—is normal, you conclude there's something awry in her head, so you go to a neurologist.

Then, if the neurologist does the brain scans and nerve system tests and says she's normal, you're left with but one conclusion: it's psychosomatic. Consequently, you try the therapists, hypnotists, and positive thinkers. When none of that works, you slowly stop trying, because by that time your little girl is now your big girl, and she's getting along just fine.

Sue finished high school, went on to college, and met a handsome young man. Biology took over for Ray and Sue, and they soon got married. Both of them had excellent careers and eventually started a family. Sue had adapted very well to her speech impediment and had learned to make her wishes known without saying much verbally. She would use body language with a word or two, and got along just fine.

Sue started using Shaklee products because a friend was selling them. She started with the usual product grouping of protein, Vita-Lea, vitamin C, calcium, and an Herb-Lax or two. She noticed that she had more energy. "One thing stuttering does is make you tired. Once I started on Shaklee, I noticed I wasn't tired any longer. I didn't need naps. This prompted me to start experimenting with other products."

"I used vitamins E and C, tried the skin-care products, and even used the household products," she said. "One day, I took some B-complex. If I remember correctly, I took one or two with each meal every day. After about a week, my speech seemed smoother." She talked about this experience as if it was yesterday, when it was actually over 15 years ago.

"Ray commented that my speech seemed smoother. I also noticed that it wasn't the same hard work to put a long sentence together. Since I had added only B-complex to my daily regimen, I decided to increase the amount. I took three B-complex at each meal and three more at bed-time. A day of this plan and my stuttering just about stopped immediately." Sue talks about it with detachment, but is quick to point out, "At the time it seemed too good to be true. It was like an enormous weight lifted off my shoulders. I felt like dancing in the streets."

She experimented with B-complex after that. If she stopped B-complex, the stuttering returned. By trial and error, Sue found that four B-complex at each meal and four more before going to bed is an optimum amount. I could probably get by with three, but four makes me feel safe, so why not?"

### IS THIS IN HER HEAD?

I guess you'd have to say "yes," because the speech centers are definitely part of your brain. If you have a normal voice box, tongue, and so on, it has to be in your brain. But that's evading the point. What we really want to know is if her

use of B-Complex to stop the stuttering is some sort of psychological issue, mind over matter, or wishful thinking? I think Sue proved it's not by testing herself. And if you said it was only mental, how would you explain everything else?

Sue went through 13 years of formal speech therapy, besides seeing psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, and a medical hypnotist. That's the equivalent of going from kindergarten through high school. If wishful thinking could have solved Sue's problem, it would have been solved.

A few years ago, some research was published on people who stuttered. The paper pointed out that parts of the brain of stutterers don't have good blood circulation. I guess that says it's a developmental deficiency. By itself, that observation doesn't prove anything about Sue, but if you add to that her experience, you can speculate on what went on with her.

Four B-complex tablets provide eighteen times the RDA for the B vitamins, except for folic acid and biotin, for which the four tablets provide four times the RDA. This amount of B-Complex totals over 636 milligrams of physiologically-active materials and could shift normal B vitamin levels far enough from their normal level positions to change metabolic rates or increase circulation to the extremities. By taking four B-Complex four-times daily, Sue maintains these high RDA levels consistently with the exception of a few hours at night when she's sleeping. But as she pointed out, she has sort of settled on a slight excess, so her use probably compensates for this period of time as well.

Most of us don't think of our head as an extremity, but from a circulatory or metabolic point of view, our head is an extremity. Our head and hands are usually the only extremities exposed to the environment.

Most body heat is lost or actively dissipated through the head and hands. You know from experience, that when it's cold outside, a hat often keeps you warmer than an extra sweater. Similarly for nice warm mittens. Many people observe this similar effect from B-Complex without knowing it. They notice an improvement in fingernail growth. Folks often tell me their nails and even hair are stronger. It may surprise you, but fingernails are a kind of specialized hair. Protein will cause the same effect, called thermogenesis, as B-Complex. Old-time scientists refer to it as "specific dynamic action."

So if some experts are correct about brain circulation in some people who stutter, and that it's related to, if not causing the stuttering, then Sue happened onto a solution that works for her. Will it work for other people? Who knows? I think it's worth a try. Perhaps someday a researcher will be able to get enough volunteers and financial support to rigorously study the phenomenon under clinical conditions.

One thing is certain, nothing else ever worked for Sue. And what makes her correction of the stuttering even more relevant, is that she wasn't searching for a solution. It wasn't even on her mind. She had learned to live with stuttering as if it was normal. By any measure, Sue was very successful in life and didn't need to solve what, to her, had ceased being a problem. This makes her story that much more important.

He has spent his career in research, research management, and teaching. His accomplishments include over fifty published papers on research in nutrition, biochemistry, and biology. His teaching includes courses for undergraduate, graduate, medical, and dental school students.

As a research manager, Dr. Scala held positions at Procter and Gamble, Owens-Illinois, Unilever, General Foods, and was the Senior Vice-President of Scientific Affairs for the Shaklee Corporation. He now devotes his energies to writing and speaking for the general public.

Dr. Scala lives with his wife Nancy in Lafayette, California. For recreation, they sail the ketch La Scala from its home port on San Francisco Bay.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Scala was educated at Columbia (B.A.), Cornell (Ph.D.), and Harvard (Post-doctoral studies) Universities.