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THE PLIGHT OF THE STUTTERER AND SOME VITAL SOLUTIONS

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## THE PLIGHT OF THE STUTTERER AND SOME VITAL SOLUTIONS

After working as a Speech therapist for over fifteen years it became quite evident that students with communicative difficulties were not receiving the assistance needed for correction. This was especially true of The Stutterer.

Consultations with a psychoanalyst regarding stuttering over a period of years, bore out the investigator's belief that the problem of stuttering was psychological in scope unless there had been brain damage or physical maladjustment.

A review of allied literature and other informative sources proved that the stuttering problem had not been portrayed with a visual approach which would be beneficial for the classroom teacher who is in contact with the stuttering child most of the school day.

To show how the stutterers lashed out at friends, family, teachers, and others in authoritative positions, it was deemed necessary to use a visual portrayal. In this manner it gave the investigator the opportunity to show some of the vital causes and solutions encompassing the problem.

The vehicle, a sixteen millimeter film, (in color), had mobility and could be shown to large audiences. There is a well-known Chinese Proverb to the effect that (ONE LOOK IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS). It was found that the classroom teachers very rarely had the opportunity to seek out the necessary information or just did not bother, hence adding to the problem.

The pupils selected for speaking parts in the film were real stutterers. Some had been corrected. Some had not been corrected.

Each stuttering problem was found to be unique and fascinating. Most stuttering students were very sensitive and most, in the writer's experience, were very bright. These students presented a real challenge not only in the correction of the problem but in trying to find its cause. Oftentimes the therapist needed the help of a psychiatrist.

The difficulties of the stutterer were enormous and varied. Hence, only selected problems and solutions were presented in the film.

In the opinion of the writer a complex explanation seemed unnecessary as the project was visual and hopefully told the story.

Classroom teachers, although kind and gentle, having the students interests at heart, were often uninformed regarding the problems of the stutterer. Many did not realize the fear and torture a student went through when asked to recite when he was unable to do so successfully at that particular time.

It was planned that this film would help correct or eliminate some of the mistakes made unknowingly by the teacher.

The classroom teacher must be made aware of the fact that not only does she have a stuttering student to cope with but a young person who is emotionally maladjusted as a result of his speech problem. Such an individual may often skip school since he is unable to communicate well and is afraid or embarrassed to be in a situation where he would have to speak. He may lash out at society in many ways. He may become bitter and cynical toward his family and peer group. He may withdraw from society. He may compensate, and rationalize in a hundred different ways.

Not all stuttering students have stolen cars, sold drugs, or landed in jail but in the writer's experience several have. Sometimes a student knew why he compensated but most of the time long hours were spent guiding the student to voice and to understand why he compensated for his stuttering problem.

Several authorities supported the belief, as did the writer, that stuttering was due to the interaction of numerous factors, constitutional and physical but also psychological. Psychological was considered especially in the project because most of the students used in the film had passed rather successfully the two, four and six year hurdles. Many individuals are non-fluent at these particular stages of their development.

During the filming of the movie there was little time to work with the boy most used in the film but he did have an opportunity to learn much about stuttering and to meet other stuttering boys. He was much encouraged by the results that the other boys had attained. He became more nervous during the filming because he was facing a problem that he had repressed much too long. He, also, was determined to follow the program which had been recommended for him, namely:

1. Relaxing exercises at night.
2. Varied exercises during the day.
3. Concentration on and manner of making the sounds correctly.
4. Discussion of his problems openly and frankly with an adult of his choice preferably a very well-trained Speech therapist.

After good rapport has been established in Speech class, the therapist must attempt and succeed in getting the student

to talk. Some students will talk honestly and frankly about themselves while others are in the room but some will not. It is wise to suggest that you, the Speech teacher, are available after school for talking sessions.

Stutterers presented problems far too numerous and diversified to be encompassed in a project of this nature. Only those scenes which could be dramatized and presented visually were taken into consideration.

When a student who had been unable to communicate successfully gained enough insight to overcome the psychological block, he became less inhibited and Controlled-Speech was well on its way.

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