



Bill Walton

On Stuttering



Thank you for your interest in my life long problem with my speech and communication skills. I was a very shy and reserved young man who could not speak at all without severely stuttering

until I was 28 years old. Always a success in the classroom and on the basketball court, I took refuge in the things that I did well as a youngster. A straight A student, my athletic abilities covered the deficiencies that limited my overall growth and development. The game of basketball was my religion, the gym my church. It was a convenient way of avoiding my responsibilities of developing my human relation skills.

When I was 28, a chance encounter at a social event with Hall of Fame broadcaster Marty Glickman completely changed my life in so many ways that things have never been the same since, nor have they ever been better. That day, in a very brief, private conversation (one way, mind you, since I literally could not speak at the time) Marty explained, patiently and concisely, that talking, communicating was a skill not a gift or a birthright and that like any skill, whether it be sports, music, business or whatever, needed to be developed over a lifetime of hard work, discipline, organization and practice. Marty gave me some simple tips that day and then encouraged me to take those keys and apply them to methods of learning that I had received from the special teachers that I had come across in my life, particularly the 6 Hall of Fame basketball coaches that I had played for throughout my career. The beginning of my whole new life was as simple as that. No gimmicks, tricks or shortcuts. Just the realization that with some help, guidance and a lot of hard work that I too could do what seemed so easy, simple and natural to everyone else, yet seemed impossibly out of my reach and comprehension.



I am not a doctor nor a speech therapist, neither of which I consulted at any time with my problems. I am not saying what worked for me will do the same for you. This is my story. This is what I have done and continue to do each and every day. What Marty gave to me, the gifts of how to learn, of how to practice, have changed my life; have given me a whole new life. I have gone from a person who literally could not say thank you, to someone who makes his living as a television commentator and public speaker. I have also become a spokesperson for the National Stuttering Foundation. I urge you to contact the Stuttering Foundation and give it your best shot. As we say in basketball, "Never up, never in".

The tips that Marty Glickman gave me almost 20 years ago that I still use and apply every single day are (in no particular order):

- Slow your thoughts down---think about what you are saying now, not 3 or 4 sentences ahead---don't be in a hurry---you will not successfully communicate with speed, but rather with concise, analytical content.
- Chew sugarless gum---to strengthen the muscles in your jaw and to get your mouth/jaw moving.
- Read out loud---it doesn't matter what the subject is, just do it...a lot. When you are comfortable reading out loud, move in front of the mirror and watch yourself, as others will see you speaking.
- Identify the sounds that cause you the most trouble-for me they are D's, H's, S's, Th's and W's (although on some days I can't say a single one)---find written material that contain a lot of these sounds and go back to the start of this list and start over.
- Become a teacher - to anyone, anywhere, on any subject---start with young children with a topic that you know-they won't care about your limitations-all they care about is that you are willing to spend time with them and are trying to give them the gift of knowledge.
- Move forward and don't be afraid to fail---confidence will come from repetition---if I can do it, why can't you?
- When you stumble---stop, then start again---find your pace, your rhythm, your game---everyone makes mistakes---it's what you do after those mistakes that will determine your ultimate success and happiness---turnovers out of commission are what people are looking for---they mean you're a player.

Marty then instructed me to incorporate these tips into the 4 laws of learning that I had picked up from the top teachers/coaches in my life:

1. Demonstration
2. Explanation
3. Correction
4. Repetition

That's it. For me, no magic, no medication, no gimmicks, no shortcuts, no tricks...Just a plan, a vision, a dream that maybe someday?...And a lot of hard work.

Good luck and let me know how I can help. I know it's not easy and it takes a lifetime, but believe me the rewards are incredible.

Your friend always...let me know how you're doing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Walton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B".