Interprofessional Education: Stuttering Therapy Meets Sport Psychology
The Center for Stuttering Therapy at Boston University
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**Parallels to Stuttering**

**Why Sport Psychology?**

Sport Psychology is intended to enhance the performance of athletes from a psychological viewpoint. People who stutter might be considered “vocal athletes” who would benefit from strategies used by athletes when they want to modify their speech in challenging situations such as public speaking or interviewing.

**Performance Anxiety:** an emotional state of apprehension in response to stress placed on an individual to perform optimally.

**The Strategies**

**Before**

**Strategy:** 4-7-8 Breathing
How to: Relax your body and mind by inhaling through your nose for a count of 4, hold your breath at the peak of inhalation for 7, and exhale through your mouth for 8. Repeat for four breath cycles. 4X/day 8 weeks (Dr. Weil).

**Strategy:** Visualization
How to: Visualize yourself speaking effectively; make a “highlight video” and watch it before the event. Frequency of stuttering reduced when speakers repeatedly watched self producing fluent speech (Bray & Kehle).

**During**

**Strategy:** W.I.N = What’s Important Now
How to: Practice identifying what is most important to focus on in various anxiety-inducing situations; then, use that as “go to” during those moments to get your mind back on track.

**Strategy:** Use your “Go-To’s”
How to: Use the 2-3 strategies that are most helpful in reducing your performance anxiety, e.g. positive self-talk, focus on your “why” /purpose, feel the movements of your speech muscles, etc.

**After**

**Strategy:** 3-2-1 Growth Mindset
How to: After an anxiety-provoking event, write down the following:
- 3 things you did well
- 2 things you could improve on
- 1 take away from the experience

**Strategy:** Debrief with “Go-To” person
How to: Discuss your 3-2-1 with someone you trust and who will provide honest feedback. The people who listen without judgment and help you cope positively.

**Case Example**

Client: 13 y/o boy  
Event: Class Presentation

**Before:**

Say: “I don’t know these people so it doesn’t really matter what they say”  
Relax by: 4-7-8 breathing  
Go-to People: Friends, teachers

**During:**

Say: “I’m almost done” “I got this!”  
Relax by: remember W.I.N, Communicating what I have to say  
Go-to People: Friends among classmates

**After:**

Say: “That wasn’t as hard as I thought it would be!”  
Relax by: 3-2-1 Growth Mindset  
Go-to People: Parents

**Future Directions**

1. Develop a measure for evaluating performance anxiety in individuals who stutter to collect baseline data and measure progress.
2. Conduct a Pilot study on usefulness of sport psychology strategies for people who stutter in comparison to traditional CBT techniques.

**Key References**