

To: ISA Board of Directors; ISA Advisory Board and ISA Member Organizations  
From: Michael Sugarman, ISA Chair  
February '10 e-newsflash

2010 presents many challenges that face people who stutter such as economic recession, job loss or anxiety about employment or personal fulfillment. It is vital to create a society, in which people who stutter can develop talents, become advocates for better understanding and become active participants in their future. This year in particular there are many conferences or workshops held around the world. It is an opportunity to take personal steps in changing: you can go to [www.stutterisa.org](http://www.stutterisa.org) for a listing of conferences you can attend.

I asked Keith Boss to share BSA's reception at "10 Downing Street"

I was invited to a reception at '10 Downing Street' last December. '10 Downing Street' is the home of the Prime Minister of the UK. The invitation was from our hostess, Sarah Brown, the wife of the current Prime Minister.

The reception was for the BSA (British Stammering Association). The BSA invited many people it wanted to thank for their hard work over recent years. It was also an opportunity to meet people who had been associated with the BSA for some time and to talk with a few (Government MPs, civil servants, friends of the BSA) who might be able to help with future funding of the BSA. The guest list was like a list of 'Who is Who' in the UK stammering world.

The reception started at 6.30 in the evening and we left about 8.30 pm. Jane Fraser (SFA) flew over from the USA to the UK for the reception. It was good to welcome her. I spoke with our hostess, Sarah Brown, and Peter Howell (ISA Advisory Board); Tom Weidig (blogger); David Mitchell (Author of Black Swan Green) to name but a few very interesting guests.

Each month ISA tries to present a different perspective on stuttering to provide discussion. This is not an endorsement of therapy or definition: I asked Lee Reeves, DVM for his insight:

## ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance is an often discussed concept by those affected by stuttering. Because it is a very personal concept discussions can bring out very strong emotions and opinions. Some have argued that accepting one's stuttering is tantamount to giving up and thus deciding to remain locked in a world of fear and limited opportunity. Others suggest that acceptance means that it's not only OK to stutter but that stuttering could and indeed should be worn (or spoken) like a badge of honor. Still others believe that acceptance is a necessary step for change to occur.

Through my own journey with stuttering I have come to believe that acceptance is reaching a state of mind in which we acknowledge both externally AND internally that our inability to speak with the spontaneity and fluidity of others is real but is not our or anyone else's fault; that while stuttering is part of who we are it does not define us. The concept of acceptance does not mean that we are destined to remain at or even be satisfied with the condition in which we find ourselves. It does mean, however, that we have attained a position to make clear decisions on our own behalf without the baggage of the past holding us back or the blind optimism of the future jading our expectations. The decision to change the way we speak requires personal risk and will be met with both success and failure. However, with a foundation of acceptance, success is more sustainable and failure is less destructive.

Simply put, we cannot change the way we speak for any appreciable time until we become comfortable with the idea that we are more than our stuttering and that we alone have the power to determine what to do about it. Accepting stuttering does not mean giving up. It is not the end but rather, the beginning!

Every month I ask a ISA Board Member or Advisory Board Member to share a short bio: Keith Boss wrote: I stammered from childhood. (Uncle - overt; Father - covert.) Bullying at school was dealt with by advice from my grandmother. 'sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me'. During adult life, however much I was hurt by other people's reaction to my stammer, I reduced how it affected me. I had a happy married life with two children and was successful in my working life on and with computers. My wife died in 2001. I had to start doing my own social talking. In January 2006 I had a need to 'improve my speech'.

2006 began a new life. I began talking. I became the partner of a lady I met in 2002. At the request of the ISA I began working to raise awareness of Stammering in India and Pakistan and I became a Trustee on the BSA Board and Chair of ISA Outreach. In 2007 I became a Director on the ISA Board; I began on the path of technical meditation and learning how the brain works; I realised limits I placed on my past life. I had pleasure talking and giving workshops at various conferences / open days linked with the ISA / BSA / ODC (Oxford Dysfluency Conference) / Toastmasters / Pensioner meeting / etc.

Currently, I am going to India to meet TISA (The Indian Stammering Association) SHGs and starting an ISA project to extend ISA Outreach to many more Countries of the world.

I want to close with a Nelson Mandela quote: "The greatest glory in living lies not in never failing but in rising every time we fail"