

Folks: This is a two-item article but both deal with the issue of disability. Read, digest, and be prepared to be tested on it.

The King's Speech Highlights the Plight of Those who Stutter

By Stuttering Foundation

Speech Therapy Gets the Royal Treatment...

With the release of the new movie, *The King's Speech*, starring Colin Firth and Geoffrey Rush, it is most timely to highlight the plight of those who stutter and the resources that are available to them. This incredibly complex disorder affects more than three million people in this country alone.

The movie deals solely with King George VI's debilitating stutter and his relationship with Lionel Logue, the Australian speech therapist retained to help him overcome his disability.

"I am delighted that *The King's Speech* will introduce a new generation of young people to the inspiring story of King George VI," noted Jane Fraser, president of The Stuttering Foundation. "He continues to be a powerful role model whose broadcasts of hope kept the spirits of the British people alive during the dark days of World War II. He even inspired my father, Malcolm Fraser, who founded The Stuttering Foundation."

Malcolm Fraser felt the same dread of speaking in public that the King experienced in the 1940s. Fraser, a successful businessman, went on to establish and endow the 64-year-old nonprofit in 1947.

"While the film will be viewed as entertainment by the movie-going public, it will particularly resonate for people who struggle with stuttering on a daily basis," Ms. Fraser added.

Today's research shows that stuttering does indeed have a biological cause and can be treated effectively. There are speech-language pathologists worldwide who can help, and the Foundation provides a free list of these specialists at www.stutteringhelp.org or by calling 800-992-9392.

[Disabled World](http://www.disabled-world.com) (www.disabled-world.com) provides a large range of worldwide health and disability information.

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Speaking Proudly of “The King’s Speech” April 15 2011 | by [John Williams](#)

I was very slow to see the movie “The King’s Speech.” I had wanted to see it for many months, and am overjoyed with having seen it. It’s a movie I will watch many times — I enjoyed it that much. I also drew many parallels between the sometimes despicable ways that speech therapists and others treat people with stuttering problems, including me.

“The King’s Speech” is the story of British King George VI (formerly Prince Albert Frederick Arthur George, Duke of York) and his personal struggle to control his stuttering, or as the King calls it, “stammering.” For Albert (Colin Firth), dealing with stammering is a constant struggle internally, physically, psychologically and socially.

Throughout the movie, Firth, who plays the future king, does a wonderful job portraying the hurdles people who stutter face daily. Firth plays Albert’s character so authentically that I almost believed the actor stutters in his personal life.

Many times during the movie you experience the King’s anger, pain, humiliation and self-doubt about his abilities and manhood as he stutters. You can feel the alienation between him and his father, King George V (Michael Gambon), who expresses anger over his son’s stuttering. In one scene the father shouts at his son, “Relax. Relax!” Albert sits silently unable to respond. Tears are rolling down his cheeks. A situation I have been in hundreds of times.

In another scene with Albert and his brother King Edward VIII (Guy Pierce), Albert shows the hurdles his stuttering poses when he is unable to respond verbally to his brother’s mockery of his stuttering. Albert shows tears, pain and humiliation. I sympathized with the King in this situation because I experienced such situations in my younger years. It took a while to forget them.

There are five lessons regarding stammering one can learn from this movie. First, Albert’s speech therapist, Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush) points out, “no one is born stammering.” Second, stammering cannot be cured. Third, no single therapy dominates the field. Fourth, stuttering usually begins around age four or five. And fifth, stuttering may be caused by a terrifying or traumatic incident. It is only once these lessons are realized that real hope for stutterers can truly begin.

Albert tells his speech therapist about one such incident: He was forced to change from being left-handed to right-handed when he was young. This was about the time he started stuttering. Similarly, I started stuttering when I was almost eight after a traumatic experience with my second-grade teacher, who for months wanted me to change from writing with my left hand to writing right-handed. After months of fruitless efforts, one day she repeatedly pounded my left wrist and knuckles with a steel ruler until my hand and knuckles started bleeding. Psychologists and speech therapists attribute this incident with the onset of my stuttering.

There are so many other similarities between Albert’s story and my own. Albert is nearly always fluent when he is angry and cursing, and so am I. That’s because anger can produce fluency for someone who stutters.

At one point, Albert’s therapist gives him some steel balls to put in his mouth and speak. This venture fails and convinces Albert that he’ll never be fluent. I, too, had several speech therapists who suggested that I put a pebble or two in my mouth and speak. This therapy technique was, as you may have guessed, not successful.

As a way to gain fluency, Albert was asked to sing while speaking. I was too. This is an abnormal way of speaking and draws attention to the stutterer’s speech. However, I have never met a person who stutters while singing, particularly while singing in a group.

“The King’s Speech” is also about love, friendship and faith. Albert’s wife Elizabeth (Helena Bonham Carter) will not give up trying to find a speech therapist who can help him. She finds Lionel Logue and persuades Albert to visit him. She has faith in Albert that he can control his stuttering and be King.

Logue is certain that he can help Albert and is relentless in pushing Albert to his limits. The two men develop a lasting friendship when they realize how important they are to one another, especially Albert, who realizes that Logue’s methods are producing moments of fluency.

“The King’s Speech” is also about Albert’s ability to rally a nation to take it to war. King George VI’s first major test of leadership rests on his speech to the world, via radio, telling listeners why England must go to war. Past experiences standing in front of a microphone resulted in Albert developing an irrational defeatist fear about public speaking. However, thanks to his therapy, Albert delivers a nearly flawless speech. Afterwards, Albert is brimming with confidence. He is a changed man. He has conquered his nemesis. He is a leader. A true King.

“The King’s Speech” is well written, superbly directed and showcases *tour de force* performances by Firth, Rush and Carter. It’s also devoid of sex, violence and explosive-after-explosive special effects. Despite some cursing, “The King’s Speech” is a family movie, and deserves every single one of its accolades.