Creating a Local Support Group for Adults who Stutter
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Background

- If 1% of the population stutters, then there are approximately 11,000 individuals who stutter in Portland, Oregon (United States Census Bureau, 2009)
- People who stutter (PWS) may develop the following negative emotions and attitudes (Guitar, 2006; Watson, 1988) in addition to speech behaviors:
  - social anxiety (Blood, Blood, Tellis, & Gabeli, 2001; Blumenthal, Yen, & Craig, 2010; Messenger, Onslow, Packman, & Menzies, 2004).
  - fear of negative evaluation from others (Mahr & Torosian, 1999).
  - negative self-evaluations of communication (De NI & Brubbin, 1995) and
  - avoidance of speaking situations (Mahr & Torosian, 1999).

These emotions and attitudes may negatively affect an individual’s participation in life situations and hinder fluency progress.

- Support groups for PWS provide one means of targeting the emotions and attitudes that often accompany the disorder of stuttering.
- Currently, there is no Portland-area support group for adults who stutter.

Purpose

- To create a local support group for adults in the Portland area who stutter

Benefits of Groups

- Gathman (1986): support group participants reported increased self-esteem, improved social lives, increased acceptance of stuttering, and decreased anxiety.
- Ramig (1993): participants reported increased self-esteem, increased confidence, and increased fluency.
- Yaruss et al. (2002): since becoming involved in the NSA, 94% of members reported increased self-image and 68% had improved opinions of speech-language pathologists.
- Tetnowski & McClure (2010): National Stuttering Association (NSA) members developed positive attitudes about speaking, lowered the impact of stuttering on their lives, and improved their success in therapy at greater rates compared to those who were not actively involved in the NSA.

Methods

- Establish group
  - Became NSA chapter leader, joined NSA, paid dues, completed background check, completed NSA leader paperwork.
  - Created group: established location, set meeting date and time, and set up e-mail account
  - Created agenda for the first meetings.
  - Created group binder: relevant research articles on stuttering support groups, NSA chapter leader guide, contact information for chapter members, passwords and information for updating website, login and password information for the e-mail account, past events, plans for future meetings.
- Publicity:
  - Website: purpose of the group, date, time, and location of meetings, contact information, upcoming events, and stuttering resources.

Results

Website: http://portlandnsa.weebly.com

Discussion

The Portland chapter of the NSA has had a successful start. The first few meetings were well attended and the website continues to receive viewers. Awareness of the group stems primarily from SLP and NSA referral, which was the target of publicity efforts. This presenter has learned that publicizing should start early, that co-leadership would benefit the group and that member retention needs to be a constant focus.

Next Steps:

- Continue publicizing
- Establish secondary NSA chapter leader
- Plan and implement additional social outings
- Focus efforts on member retention