

Here is a letter that Dr. Charles Van Riper wrote to my first therapy group in 1987

When I did my group therapy for adult stutterers (now: teen and adults who stutter) called "The Van Riper Program As Intensive Interval Therapy" for the first time in 1987, I discussed the project with Charles Van Riper, exchanging letters. In one of these, I asked him to "write a little letter" to the therapy group. Van Riper sent the following letter which was published in the journal of the German stuttering association DER KIESELSTEIN (The Pebble) years ago, and which I still use in this group therapy and in my 5-day courses for fellow-SLPs.

Western Michigan University
Charles VanRiper Department of Language, Speech and Hearing Clinic
(616) 383-0963
July 15, 1987

To my stutterer friends in Germany:

I was delighted to receive a letter from Andreas Starke telling about the stuttering program that you are engaged in. It isn't an easy one; it demands courage and a lot of hard work but temporary unpleasantness can be tolerated and the rewards of your travail make it all the more worth while.

I suspect that most of you have sought relief before in treatment methods that sought to give you some temporary fluency. We stutterers do not need to learn how to speak fluently. We already know how to do that. All of us can speak fluency at certain times and under certain conditions. What we don't know how is how to stutter fluently. At the age of 82 I have stuttered all my life but once I learned to stutter without struggle, my life changed dramatically. You probably will continue to stutter a little all the rest of your life too but it's possible to stutter so easily and unnoticeably that the disorder becomes no handicap at all. Most of our troubles come from denial and avoidance and trying to hide our problem. It is tough to have to face our fears and indeed use them to change the way we stutter. There are hundreds of different ways of stuttering, some much worse than others, but there is an easy way too, once you have learned it. Why pretend to be a normal speaker when you are not one? Let it come out and then wrestle with it until you master it. Each person on earth has a personal demon with which he must cope; yours is stuttering and so was mine and if I and many others have been able to master our stuttering demons, you can too. But don't be seduced by the fine feeling of the fluency that results. The measure of your conquest will be how you stutter, not how many words you speak without stuttering. You need some stuttering to learn how to change it so hunt for it and be glad when you have a bit of it because it will provide an opportunity to change it for the better.

I wish you well, my sons and daughters beyond the seas. May you have as good a life as I have had, I the incurable stutterer.

Yours,

Charles Van Riper

Andreas Starke, Speech-Language Pathologist
Hoeperfeld 23
21033 Hamburg
Germany
Phone +49-(0)40-724 100 07
Fax +49-(0)40-724 100 08

Email: info@andreasstarke.de