Newsletter



We are a UK based charity seeking to transform the world of work for people who stutter – and for employers and society too.

Welcome to our latest newsletter which we hope includes something interesting for all our supporters across the world. Whether it's our next Practice Interview event, People news, or examples of working successfully with inclusive employers, we've got it covered!

Thank you for your great support in many different ways as people who stutter, allies who don't stutter, employers, volunteers, trustees, country leaders, speech therapists, researchers, friends, family, and more.

Plus a special 'Thank You' to all our funders whose generous donations keep us going.

All donations welcome through our website



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FVFNTS

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Practice Interviews- 21-28 October, 2024



Our flagship event - Practice Interviews for people who stutter - offering 1-1 and panel practice interviews and learning sessions will run from 21-28 Oct, aligning with International Stuttering Awareness Day (ISAD) on 22 Oct. Applications for Interviewers and Interviewees will open on 26th August through our website: www.50millionvoices.org. Stay tuned for more updates on LinkedIn

Stay tuned for more updates on LinkedIn page.

Thames Path Challenge coming up 14 September!

Several of our team including lain (our chair) and Helen (Trustee) will be walking 22k of the Thames Path Challenge on Saturday 14th September from Hampton Court to Runnymede to raise money for our Practice Interviews programme.



If you would like to join our team of walkers, contact Iman Sheperia, our team manager by16th August, at the email: events@50millionvoices.org.

Welcoming new country leaders

We are happy to welcome new country leaders - Voon Pang from New Zealand and Anna Karina Espinoza from Chile.

With these new additions, we are expanding our network to help more people who stutter, welcome allies and guide employers from these two beautiful countries.

Good news from 50 Million Voices team

Congratulations go to our Trustee Elias Apreko, who recently got married to Bervlyn and also to Shilpa Sagwal, on the birth of her second child, who is named 'Dhairya' meaning 'Patience' in Hindi!

My intersectionality experience of motherhood and stuttering- Shilpa Sagwal

Not a fan of the words 'Maternity' & 'leave' put together but here we are!

I am re-joining my work after my second maternity leave. I am feeling grateful for working from my home when my baby is just in the adjacent room and I am available to tend to him at a little sound of his cry/play. I talk to many mothers having to quit working or suffering from mother's guilt leaving the baby to go to work in the care of someone else and I truly acknowledge this privilege of mine.



Shilpa with her elder son Maahir when he was 4 months old

I opened LinkedIn and got to know it is the start of the 'Disability pride' month. Where have I been? Somewhere between changing nappies, feeding the new born and running after the elder one who is still a toddler meanwhile trying to train him to not soil himself every now and then, trying to brush his teeth and give him a bath and make him eat his food without his screen time (although I do enjoy Peppa Pig) and tending again to new born in between, burping him, cleaning his spit milk, wearing the same t-shirt may be for third day in a row, making both of them sleep in the same room by patting the elder one and rocking the younger one, sterilizing the pacifier and swinging the swing for the new born to settle him, consoling the elder one when he is throwing a fit when I denied him punching the new born in the eye and preventing him from falling off the terrace, etc, all these things not necessarily in the same order.

In my universe of motherhood, I forgot that there is a month to mark my disability. The one with which I am living every day, a month is not enough, not even close. Compounded by the fact that I had a difficult pregnancy, I found my stutter getting stronger and my confidence getting low. Every visit to my gynaecologist, who was tending to multiple patients at the same time in a government hospital in India, has become a session of embarrassment where my voice would shake when asked about my health records and my stutter would be diagnosed as low blood pressure. Oh, the look on the faces of everyone when I would announce that this is the way I speak. My one week at the hospital where I was recovering from a c-section operation and simultaneously taking care of a new born and getting the hang of breastfeeding meanwhile going through post-partum hormonal changes, I was surrounded by a team of doctors bombarding me with questions regarding my recovery with a less than a minute to answer with my stutter, was definitely a scary yet humbling experience for me.

So, I needed this month (if not a whole year) to write, discuss, share, announce and celebrate my stutter.

My disability is hidden and is only noticeable when I talk, for example, when I am unable to say my name sometimes without a block or a prolongation, or with a lack of breath and eye contact. A hidden disability is not obvious but might be equally debilitating, as the general public have a limited knowledge about it.

My whole life I have got numerous suggestions on how to 'cure' it but none on how to 'manage' it. Even my first class master's degree in Chemical engineering from a leading institute in India could not save me from the pitiful suggestions from people on how to 'cure' it – including pasting magnets at specific points on my hand, blowing a candle, reading a newspaper aloud everyday to name a few.

It is not very thrilling to be nearly in my mid-thirties and 'still carrying my stutter' which was 'supposed to be gone when we grow up'- words of wisdom coming out of people who have seen someone's nephew or a boy in their community growing out of it in their teenage. Well, guess what Mrs. Sharma, I did not 'grow' out of it and carry it well into my adulthood and most likely to carry it as I grow older.

India being the most populated country in the world with 1000's of people competing for 1 position, intersectionality of having a stutter and being a woman who is also a mom with a career break is not a quite thrilling circumstance to be in. But my journey with TISA (The Indian Stammering Association) (https://stammer.in/home/) and 50 Million Voices (https://stammer.in/home/) has helped me tremendously to casually mentioning it any conversation and not feeling bad about it.

Motherhood comes with its own set of challenges and one of the biggest

Motherhood comes with its own set of challenges and one of the biggest worries I have now developed is passing the stutter on to my kids, not only through my genes, but also through my spoken words as kids tend to pick up what their parents do, right?

I would love for stuttering to be 'normalised' and perceived as another way of speaking, but will it happen in my lifetime or theirs? As a South Asian woman and a mom, this is my worry. Commemorating the 'South Asian heritage month' I would like to highlight this aspect as well.

I would love to create a world for my kids where they can stutter freely, if they do stutter. I would love them to be proud to speak up, to get their voice heard, to claim what is rightfully theirs, to be able to defend themselves, if need be, and to love themselves unconditionally, with or without a stutter!

Sorry, got to go! My babies allows me only few mins of me- time. Will continue

it later!

Award and praise for 50 Million Voices

Richly deserved congratulations go to our Founder and Chair, Iain Wilkie as the World Stuttering and Cluttering Organization (WSCO) recognised him with their 2024 'Individual award for improving the lives of people who stutter or clutter', including 'for his unique contribution to the community of people who stutter' at their World Congress in Austin, Texas in May.

lain insists this is a team achievement for everyone involved in 50 Million Voices and all we are achieving together.



Sharon Millard, chair of the WSCO Awards & Congress Bursaries Committee, presenting award to lain Wilkie.

Credit: Blank Center for stuttering

Increasing Our Reach

We are delighted with two articles that feature members of the 50 Million Voices team

1. Why DEI should include people who stutter (14th May 24)

https://www.fastcompany.com/91122170/why-dei-should-include-people-who-stutter

Through contact with our Trustee Chris Gemmell, Fast Company, a major business media brand, published this article, featuring Chris and how he successfully navigates his career with his stutter.

2. BBC article - A part of me was crying for freedom. The people embracing their stutter

https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240131-the-people-embracing-their-stutter

Published in BBC future and written by Krupa Padhy, Presenter BBC World Service & Radio 4's Woman's Hour, this article shines light on some of the brave souls who embrace their stutter, also featuring our global co-ordinator - Shilpa Sagwal, Trustee Elias Apreko, our chair lain Wilkie and our leader for chinese speakers Jia Bin.

Awareness and educational sessions for employers

Here's a few examples of sessions recently delivered for/with employers.

Rolls-Royce - Virtual session – almost 500 participants from several countries

Theme: 'The Courage to Speak Up and create a workplace culture inclusive of all different voices'.



Co-delivered with Natasha Whitehurst, Joe Dixon (both Rolls-Royce) and Jon Dyke (AMS).

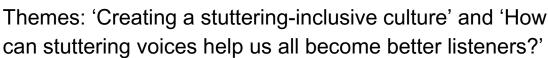
'I was overwhelmed with feedback from colleagues, with one person telling me 'it was the first time they felt seen at work''. Natasha Whitehurst – Head of Diversity, inclusion and belonging'

Cargill - In person session – 30 participants from UK Theme: 'Making a difference together by focussing on creating stuttering inclusive cultures.'



Supported by Martin Humphreys and Grace James (both Cargill) sharing their learning from being interviewers in our recent Practice Interview event. "We were so lucky to hear about your experiences and learn more about 50MV" - Grace James, Senior Treasury analyst

British Council - 4 virtual sessions – 994 participants from over 25 countries





Co-delivered with Jane Franklin, Reece Waldron, and Joseph Field, and hosted by Kate Ewart Biggs OBE (all British Council)

"We have loved the learning that we gained from collaborating with 50 Million Voices. We've had great feedback from colleagues around the world. Looking forward to more" – Jane Franklin, Global Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion."

EY- Virtual session – multiple participants from Europe, Middle-East, India & Africa



Theme: In a world that doesn't listen, how can stuttering voices help us become more inclusive listeners?

Hosted by Marta Snopek (EY)

"Thanks to our amazing speakers Iain Wilkie, Shilpa Sagwal and Elias Apreko for bringing different perspectives on how can stuttering voices help us all to become inclusive listeners. I must say, it did make me pause and realise how much more impact we can make when we are really listening. Some great takeaways." – Marta Snopek, EMEIA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion manager

Please contact us if you think your employer may be interested in learning more about stuttering in the workplace and the multiple opportunities arising from unlocking the potential of people who stutter.

Impact - 50 MV 6th Practice Interviews Event 4-7 March 2024

"I had a real interview, just five days after the practice interview and felt really confident." Interviewee'- UK

As well as the 1-1 and panel interviews, the event started with an educational briefing including a thought-provoking session on Stammering pride led by Speech and Language Therapist (SLT), Sam Simpson.



The event also included a dynamic panel session specifically exploring solutions to workplace barriers faced by women who stutter.

Claire-Louise Partridge from the Civil Service (UK) expertly chaired this session, with contributions from Aashima Gogia (India) and Jia Bin (USA/China). They gave compelling personal accounts of their experiences and how they had learned to face down discrimination, for example by calling it out, advocacy work and refusing to accept the societal stigma placed on women who stutter across different cultures and settings.

Feedback from participants included "That was incredible, you guys! Such a good panel." – Iman Sheperia, young woman who stutters - UK

StutterFEST24 conference 4 May 2024

Organised by the World Stuttering Network, 50 MV ran a panel session with contributions from Chris Brady (USA - Talent Acquisition Leader), Rohit Sachdeva (India - software developer) and Iain Wilkie (UK).



This provided us with a great opportunity to present different perspectives on interviewing successfully with a stutter. Chris, Rohit and Iain are former participants in our Practice Interviews programme.

StammaFEST 14-18 August 2024

We are looking forward to running a session jointly led by Rory Sheridan from the UK and Iain Wilkie on '50 ways to be stammering assertive at work'



Resources

Check out <u>this</u> page for a range of resources covering different work-related stuttering topics and personal experiences.

Donations

We are a small charity making a big difference; any donation whatever size, will help to to "Create a world where everyone who stutters can enjoy a fulfilling working life". Please visit us here to donate and learn more about our impact.

Contact us

For more information, please contact Shilpa Sagwal, our global co-ordinator at info@50millionvoices.org or events@50millionvoices.org