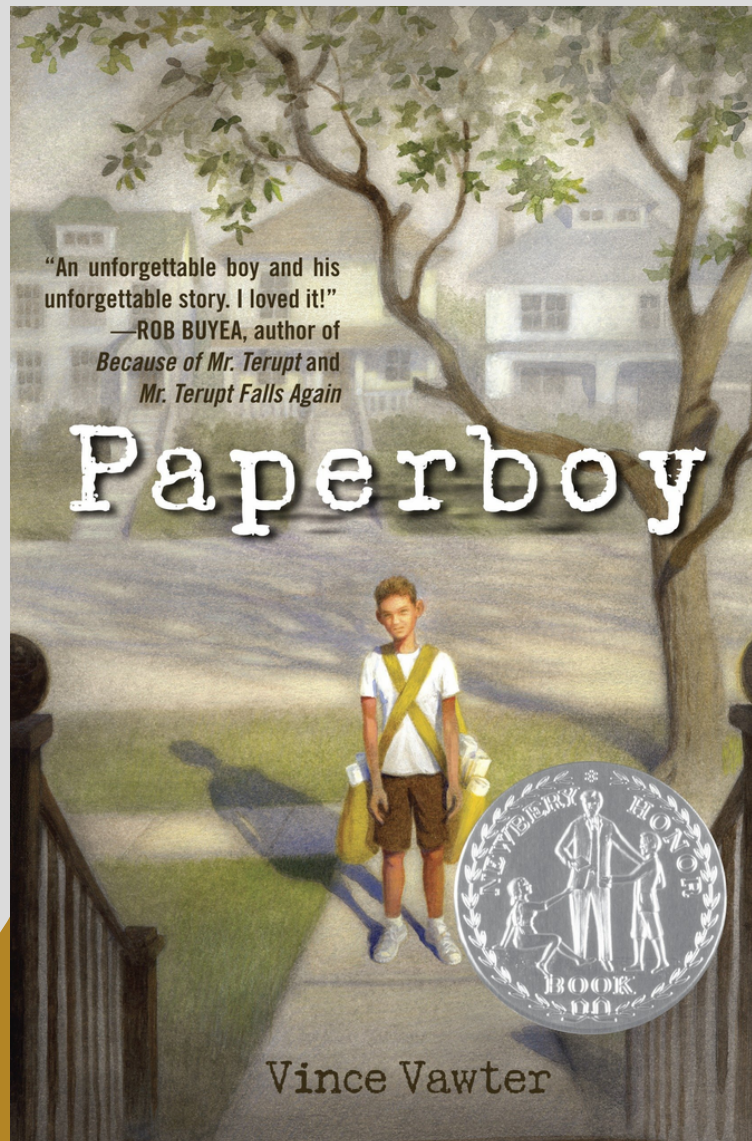


BOOK CLUB CLINICAL TOOL



Developed collaboratively by Ana Paula G. Mummy, SLP and clinical professor, Kellie Deutsch, SLP Graduate Student, and the Class of 2022 at the University of Kansas

BOOK CLUB CLINICAL TOOL



HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

This clinical tool is meant to facilitate rich discussion and self-reflection regarding the stuttering experience. Questions for each chapter are sorted into themes to enable the clinician to flexibly go in directions that are most beneficial given the needs and desires of participants. Some questions may overlap, but they are there for consideration in the event a different theme of a previous chapter was the main topic of discussion. Therefore, it is NOT necessary or recommended to address each question.

This guide models person-first language, such as “person who stutters.” It is recognized that some people prefer identity-first language, such as “stutterer.” It is the right of the individual to choose the language of their identity. Therefore, clinicians should modify the language used during book club discussions based on client preferences.

BOOK CLUB CLINICAL TOOL



CHAPTER 1

Feelings Toward Stuttering:

- What feelings does Little Man portray about his stutter at the beginning of the story?
- Why does Little Man say he writes the novel without commas? How is writing different from speaking for him?

Speaking Techniques:

- A speech therapist taught Little Man to use a technique called “Gentle Air,” or letting a breath out when anticipating a stutter. Have you ever been taught a technique to manage your stutter? Was it helpful?
- Little Man shares his reasoning for using the “Gentle Air” technique even though he makes a hissing sound when he uses it. He says, “When you’re eleven years old it’s better to be called a snake than a retard.” What do you think he means by that?

First Introductions:

- We learn that Little Man is going to take over his friend Rat’s paper route while he goes out of town for a month. He says, “The idea of going up to a house and ringing a doorbell was swelling my insides.” Are there any situations you have been in or can imagine that “swell your insides” upon thinking about them?
- Little Man says, “The reason I hate talking to people who don’t know me is because when they first see me I look like every other kid. Two eyes. Two arms. Two legs. Crew-cut hair. Nothing special. But when I open my mouth I turn into something else.” What does he mean by this? How do you feel about talking to strangers for the first time?

Safe Communication Partners:

- Little Man mentioned that when he gets nervous he likes to talk to Mam. Is there a person in your life that you feel comfortable confiding in like that? What do they do that makes you feel comfortable speaking to them?
- What does Rat do to show Little Man he supports him? What makes their friendship work? Do you have a friend like Rat?

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CHAPTER 2

Resolving Misunderstandings:

- Little Man has an unfortunate interaction with Mrs. Worthington on his first day of the paper route when she mishears him rehearsing the word “pitch” and thinks he calls her an offensive name. How does Little Man resolve this misunderstanding? What would you have done in that moment if you were in Little Man’s shoes?
- Little Man states, “Mrs. Worthington seemed like a different lady the second time I saw her.” What was different about their first and second encounter? Do you think there is something Little Man could have done to make his first encounter go more smoothly?
- Have you ever been in a situation where a stranger misunderstood you? How do you feel when you are misunderstood?

Feeling Safe/Comfortable:

- One of the ways Little Man calms himself down when he is nervous, especially when thinking about speaking, is by going and talking to Mam. Is there anything you do when you get nervous that helps you calm down?
- Little Man mentions that he likes reading all the street signs as he passes them. He says, “The streets are like friends that I don’t have to talk to.” What do you think he means by this? Why might he feel this way?

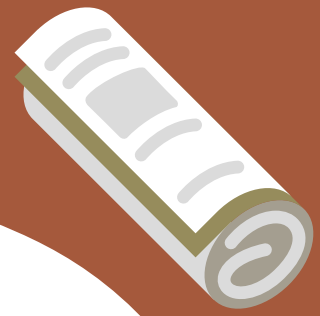
Avoiding Certain Words/Sounds:

- Little Man explains how he must choose his words wisely when he speaks because he knows that certain words will be harder for him or not come out at all. Do you have any words or sounds that you avoid saying for this reason? Do you have any strategies that help the difficult words come out?

Physical Tension:

- Little Man’s speech teacher said the problem was that Little Man’s lips tightened like a “clenched fist” and the air couldn’t get through. Little Man says that the more he tries to say words that start with B and P, the tighter his lips become. How would you describe your stutter? What does it feel like to you?

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CHAPTER 3

Speaking Tricks:

- In order to say “ninety-five cents,” Little Man uses a trick that he doesn’t like using very often. What did he do? Why do you think it helped him ease the words out of his mouth?

First Introductions:

- When Mr. Spiro asks Little Man to say his name, Little Man thinks, “But what Mr. Spiro couldn’t have known was that asking me to say my name out loud was like asking me to recite the Gettysburg Address.” Do you agree with this comparison? Why do you think Little Man has such a difficult time saying his name? Have you ever had a hard time saying your name?
- The first time Little Man introduces himself to Mr. Spiro, he passes out and busts his lip trying to say his name. Have you ever experienced a similar situation when trying to say your name?
- How do you think Little Man could share his name with people without becoming so flustered and having such a tense physical response?

Safe Communication Partners:

- Little Man wrote a letter to Mr. Spiro thanking him for helping him when he fainted. How did Mr. Spiro help him through that embarrassing moment?
- Little Man states, “The way Mr. Spiro talked to me was exactly the way Mam talked even though the words they used were different. They both looked straight at me and made me feel like I belonged right where I was.” Who are some people in your life who make you feel that way?

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CHAPTER 4

Bullying:

- Little Man confronts Ara T about getting back the yellow handled knife he had given him to sharpen. Upon asking for his knife back, Ara T insists that Little Man say the word “knife” before he can give it back to him. How does Little Man respond? What would you have done in this situation?
- Have you ever been bullied because of your stutter? What did you do? What could you do if that ever happens again?

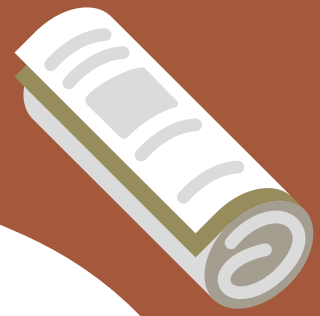
Avoidance:

- When Little Man goes back to Mr. Spiro’s house after fainting on his front porch he says, “Whenever I stuttered a lot in a certain spot, I tried never to stand there again.” Are there any places or situations you avoid because of your stutter?
- On several occasions in chapter 4, Little Man avoids working through conflict and facing his fears. Do you tend to face your fears? How might it be helpful to face your fears rather than avoid them?

Beliefs About Your Identity/Stutter:

- What does Little Man share he believes about himself because of his stutter?
- Can Little Man stutter, exhibit secondary behaviors, *and* be smart and competent all at the same time? Or can Little Man only be a competent person when he speaks fluently?
- What do you believe about yourself and your stutter? Do you think those thoughts and beliefs are helpful or unhelpful?

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CHAPTER 5

Speaking Freely Versus Fluently:

- Mr. Spiro tells Little Man, “I’m interested more in content rather than how well one might vocalize it.” How do you think this statement changed things for Little Man and Mr. Spiro’s relationship? In what ways might this have changed the way Little Man views communication?

Beliefs About Your Identity/Stutter:

- Little Man’s coach compliments Little Man’s pitching skills. Little Man says, “When the coach said things like that it made me feel like I was a somebody instead of just a kid who couldn’t talk right.” How does Little Man want people to see him? How do you want people to see you? Is there anyone in your life who recognizes you this way?

Preferred Responses to Stutter:

- Little Man writes how, unlike the way some people ignore his stutter, give him fake smiles, and finish his sentences for him, Mr. Spiro talked to him directly about his stutter. How do people typically address your stutter? Do you prefer for people to ignore or acknowledge your stutter?
- How will people know how you want them to address your stutter? What can you do to help people know what you prefer?

Speaking Tricks:

- Little Man reveals that he likes to speak while he is on a swing. What reason does Little Man give for liking the swing? Is there anything that helps you to speak with ease?
- Throughout the book, Little Man shares several tricks he uses to get through a stutter (e.g., tossing a pencil, using gentle air, shouting the word, etc.). In chapter 5, he talks about substituting words so he doesn’t get stuck. What are your thoughts about substituting words? Is it a helpful or hurtful trick?

Fear of Future/Finding Voice:

- Little Man’s speech teacher tells him to “just do his speech exercises and not worry about the future.” In response, Little Man shares, “How could I not worry about my future if I was going to be stuttering all the time in it?” What do you think about the SLPs advice to Little Man? How do you view your future with stuttering?
- Little Man states that Mr. Spiro was the first person to tell him that he had a fighting chance. Why was this such an important moment for Little Man?

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CHAPTER 6

Making Compromises:

- When Little Man discovers that Mrs. Worthington needs help, he says that he wants to go back and help her but that “the stuttering part of [him] said to ride away. That was the part [he] usually listened to.” What does Little Man mean by this?
- Has the “stuttering part of you” ever prevented you from doing something that you wanted to do? Looking back, what part of you do you wish you would have listened to?

Disguising Messages:

- Little Man shares, “I didn’t feel like trying to finish my sentence because I was disguising what I really wanted to say like Mr. Voltaire had talked about.” Do you ever disguise or limit what you really want to say? Does your stutter *make you* disguise or limit what you say or do you *choose* to do this?
- How might disguising what you really want to say impact your relationships and communication with others?

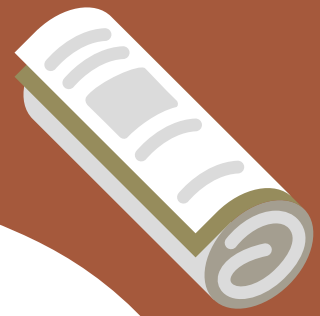
Physical/Emotional Struggle:

- At the end of chapter 6, Little Man has had a tough day and is feeling pretty down. At the dinner table, his dad asks him, “Anything you want to talk about?” Little Man shakes his head and reveals that he wishes he could tell his father how he feels but that “it was all so jumbled up in [his] head that there was no way [he] could start picking through that many words.” How might Little Man be feeling?
- Are there times when talking feels like too much work? What choices do you have when talking feels like too much work?

Feeling Alone:

- After dinner, Little Man hugs a pillow in bed and writes, “Whenever I started feeling all alone it felt good to have something to hang on to.” Does your stutter ever make you feel isolated from others? If so, what can you do to cope with these feelings of loneliness?

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CHAPTER 7

Handling Negative Reactions:

- Little Man orders his favorite dish, spaghetti, when he is at a restaurant with his parents and their adult friends. He knew he was going to have trouble saying spaghetti but orders it anyway. Have you ever anticipated trouble saying a word but said it anyway? How did it go and how did not backing away from that word make you feel?
- When Little Man stutters on his order, he is met with laughter by one of his parent's friends. She tells his mom that he is "darling." How did his parents handle their friend's inappropriate response? What could his parents have done differently in response to this woman?

Denial/Acknowledging Stutter:

- The morning after the restaurant experience, Little Man apologizes for what transpired at the restaurant. His mom says, "Don't worry. Everyone gets a bug now and then." Why does Little Man have such an intense internal reaction to his mom's response?
- Little Man overhears his parents talking when his dad says, "I wish he wouldn't pretend that he doesn't have a stutter." Who do you think is pretending he doesn't have a stutter? How do you think Little Man feels when he hears his dad say this?
- Do you feel that acknowledging your stutter helps you? What can you do to let people know what is helpful for you?

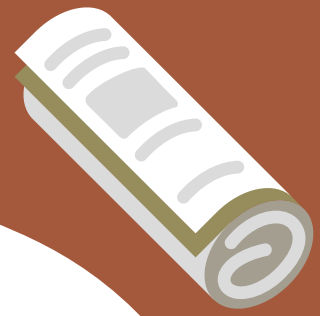
Cause of Stuttering:

- Little Man hears his parents talk about his stutter being "genetic." What do you know about the cause of stuttering? Is there anyone in your family who stutters?

Communication Partners:

- Why does Little Man prefer talking to his father over his mother? Do you have someone in your life that you feel comfortable talking to?

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CHAPTER 8

Harmful/Helpful Coping Strategies:

- Little Man talks about his “secret trick” of pushing a thumbtack in his palm if he knew he was going to have to read or recite in class. He shared, “I kept hoping the pain would make me forget about stuttering but it never did... You can't replace one hurt with another one. You just end up with double hurts.” What does he mean by this? Do you agree?
- Is there anything physical you do to distract yourself from your stutter that leaves you with “double hurts?” How might these tricks help or harm you?
- How do you cope with your feelings after a stutter? What are healthy ways you can ease the pain of stuttering?

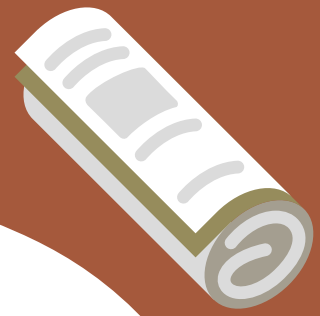
Supporters:

- Little Man considers the unconditional love and acceptance his father shows him despite not being his “real” dad. Who are some of your biggest supporters in your life?

Little Man's Poem:

- Little Man mentions to Mr. Spiro that he wrote a poem. What does Mr. Spiro do to help Little Man recite it? Have you experienced less stuttering when reading or saying something in unison with another person?
- How does Little Man's poem make you feel? Do you relate to his poem?
- Little Man shares his poem with Mr. Spiro out loud, and Mr. Spiro refers to him as “my Stuttering Poet.” Little Man says, “If someone had called me a Stuttering Boy or a Stuttering Sixth Grader or a Stuttering Pitcher I would have probably tried to pick up something and bust them. But Stuttering in front of Poet seemed to make stuttering a good thing for the first time in my life.” How does this interaction change Little Man's stuttering identity? Do you see him embracing his stutter in this moment? How so?

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CHAPTER 9

Forgetting Stuttering:

- Little Man says, “When I was thinking hard about something else it seemed like I forgot to stutter. But I always remembered it again soon enough.” Do you ever find that the less you think about stuttering, the easier it becomes to communicate freely?

Desiring Fluency:

- Little Man mentions two reasons he wants to be a grown-up: in hopes of getting over his stutter and in order to figure out the feelings deep inside of him. Do you have specific reasons for wanting to be a grown-up?
- Do you think that Little Man would still want to “get over” his stutter if he no longer had those negative feelings deep inside of him? Why or why not?

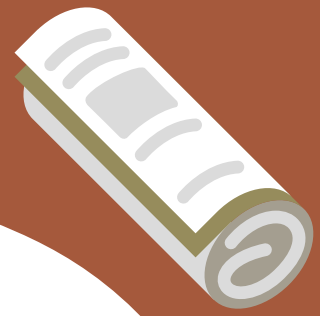
TV Boy:

- Little Man expresses frustration with the boy who he sees sitting in front of the TV every day on his paper route. He assumes he has no problems in life and is lazy and/or dumb. What about Little Man’s life makes him so quick to get angry at the “TV Boy” whenever he sees him staring at a screen and doing nothing?

Fluency ≠ Happiness:

- In this chapter, Little Man watches two people he admires, Mam and Mrs. Worthington, face their own pain and problems. What might Little Man be learning through this? Do people who speak fluently lead simple and easy lives? Or can they also face challenges?

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CHAPTER 10

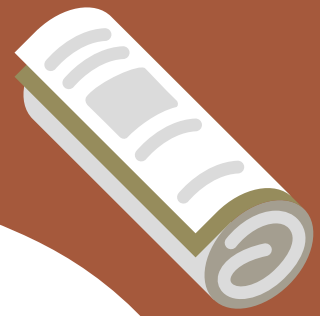
Facing Fears/Character Growth:

- Do you think Ara T represents more than just a character in this story? Could he represent something bigger in Little Man's life? What could that be?
- How is Little Man's relationship with Ara T similar to or different from his relationship with his stutter?
- Do you think Little Man would have been brave enough to enter Ara T's shed before he started doing the paper route? How is Little Man demonstrating growth through this brave act?

Feeling Out of Control:

- After Little Man's run-in with Ara T in his shed, Little Man says, "A kid should be able to choose what he thinks about and to say any words he wants. Neither one worked for me." What is Little Man feeling when he shares this?
- Do you ever feel out of control over certain things? What things feel like they are out of your control? Is this your perception or your reality?
- Little Man might not have control over how he says words, but does he have control over what he says or what he believes about himself?

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CHAPTER 11

Facing Fears:

- Little Man shares that he realized he didn't care about losing his knife because he has plenty of money to buy a new one. Rather, he writes, "What I hated was that Ara T had tricked me out of the knife and my fifty cents because he probably thought I was just some kind of a dummy who talked funny." If he can buy a new knife, what is he trying to prove? Is he proving something to himself or Ara T?

Making Compromises/Letting Stutter Control You:

- Little Man recalls a game Rat and his cousins played with granddaddy spiders while they were all visiting Rat's grandparent's farm. Why didn't Little Man play the game? Are there any fun games or activities you avoid because of your stutter?
 - What would happen if you participated in the game/activity and stuttered? Could you choose to play the game and have fun even if you stutter during it?
- Rat's cousins assumed that Little Man didn't play the game because he was afraid of spiders when he really didn't play the game because he knew he'd stutter saying "granddaddy." Have you had a similar experience in which someone misunderstood something about you because of your stutter? How did that make you feel?

Supportive People:

- Mam and Little Man have a strong relationship with one another. How would you describe it? What makes their relationship so strong? Do you have a similar relationship with someone in your life?

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CHAPTER 12

Denial/Acknowledging Stutter:

- Little Man says, “Mam didn’t like to talk about certain things. I guess I didn’t either but it was starting to come to me that not talking about something didn’t make it go away.” What does Little Man mean by this? What does talking about something do?

Dealing with Bullying:

- Little Man tells Mam that he gets mad when kids laugh at him because he can’t help how he talks. In response, Mam asks him if it helps to get mad. He says that it doesn’t but that he can’t help it. Do you relate?
- Although you can’t control what your peers say or do, you can control what you say and do. What are some ways you can respond to peers who hurt you? What responses might make bullying easier to handle?

Fearing Stuttering:

- While at the zoo, Little Man tells Mam that he’s more afraid of words than lions. Do you agree? What do you think Little Man could do to face his fear of words?

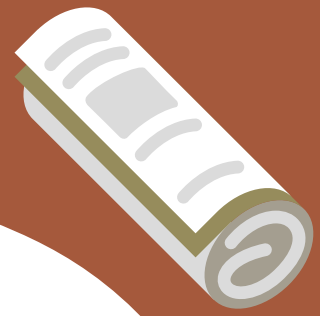
Taking Advantage of Stutter:

- Little Man writes, “If there was anything good about being a kid who stutters it’s that sometimes people felt sorry for me because they thought I had a simple mind and they did things for me they wouldn’t do for somebody else.” How do you feel about this? Have you ever used your stutter to get something you wanted?

Stuttering Freely:

- Little Man and Mam are joking with each other on the bus and laughing a lot. Little Man is also stuttering a lot, but he doesn’t seem to mind. Why do you think he doesn’t mind that he’s stuttering in that moment?

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CHAPTER 13

Healthy Coping Mechanisms:

- Despite the hot weather, Little Man still goes outside to throw his baseball after his practice is cancelled. Why do you think he feels the need to throw his baseball? What do you do when you have a lot on your mind?

Dealing with Bullies:

- Little Man is called a mean name by one of the older paperboys, Willie. Little Man thinks about throwing a rock at the back of his head after Willie steals his newspaper bundle. How does Little Man respond? Would you have responded in the same way?
- Little Man writes, “It didn’t take much guts to send a rock through the air to bust somebody in the back of the head. It would take a lot of guts for me to send words in the air to tell Willie what I thought about him.” Do you agree that standing up to a bully with words takes more guts than retaliating in a physical way? What are some things you could say or do when someone bullies you?
- Is there a time you *did* stand up for yourself? How did it make you feel?
- On his bike ride home after the incident, Little Man is happy he hadn’t thrown the rock. He says that he thinks Mam would have been proud of him too since he had seen Mam stand her ground with a bully. What do you think Little Man learned from these experiences?

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CHAPTER 14

Handling Bullies/Character Growth:

- Little Man stands up for himself the next time he sees Willie, and it goes better than expected. Little Man expresses that he wouldn't have said anything to Willie a month ago. He says the route was "changing him." In what ways do you think the route was changing him?

Learning from Experience:

- Little Man started out fearing the paper route but reflects on how much he's going to miss it. Why was he so sad for it to be over when it had been so difficult for him?
- Little Man stepped out of his comfort zone and became more confident through the route. Can you think of a similar opportunity where you might have to step out of your comfort zone?

Wrongly Judging Others:

- On his final day of the paper route, Little Man learns the truth about "TV Boy." What does Little Man discover? How does his opinion of "TV Boy" change after learning this? Have you ever wrongly judged someone before knowing their full story?
- Why do you think Little Man thinks he and "TV Boy" could be good friends? What do they have in common?

BOOK CLUB CLINICAL TOOL



CHAPTER 15

Supportive People:

- Why is Little Man so upset about Mr. Spiro leaving town for the rest of the summer and Mrs. Worthington cancelling the paper?

Stuttering Triggers:

- Little Man says that Mr. Spiro threw him a curve ball by leaving town, and his stuttering gets worse with curve balls. Why do you think news of Mr. Spiro leaving caused Little Man to stutter more? Are there situations that make you stutter more?

Mr. Spiro:

- What does Little Man still want to talk about with Mr. Spiro?

CHAPTER 16

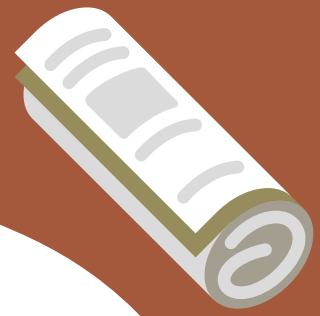
Dealing with Ara T:

- Little Man finds out that his money, wallet, and picture of him and Mam have been stolen by Ara T. Why do you think Ara T broke into Little Man's room?
- Little Man is more upset about Ara T stealing his photo with Mam and the pieces of the dollar bill than he is about the money. Why do you think these items meant more to Little Man than the money?

Loyalty in Relationships:

- Little Man refuses to let Mam go find Ara T on her own. He states, "I was going wherever she was going next and there wasn't anything she could do about it." Why do you think Little Man wants to go with her even though he knows the situation may be dangerous? What do you think this says about his relationship with Mam?
- Little Man and Mam are very protective of each other. Do you think stuttering plays a role in their loyalty and protection of one another? What role does stuttering play in your relationships with your closest people?

BOOK CLUB CLINICAL TOOL



CHAPTER 17

Growth from Stuttering Experience:

- What characteristics do you see in Little Man that might have been formed from the obstacles he faced with stuttering?
- What characteristics do you see in yourself that might have been formed from the obstacles you have faced with stuttering?

Facing Fears/Character Growth:

- Do you think that Mam and Little Man “defeating” Ara T holds a deeper meaning? Is there a theme that this event represents?
- How could Little Man use the confidence he displayed with Ara T and direct it to his speech?

Physical Feeling of Stuttering:

- Little Man writes, “I thought I knew what being strangled felt like because I choked on my words.” How do you relate to this physical feeling when you stutter? How would you describe how it feels when you stutter?

Not Stuttering When Yelling:

- As Little Man throws the bottle at Ara T to save Mam, he yells his name without stuttering: “Vowel sounds aren't my best but this one came blasting out of my mouth and no stutter in the world could have stopped it.” Why does Little Man not stutter at this moment? How do you think Little Man felt in that moment and why?

CHAPTER 18

Mr. Spiro:

- Why do you suspect Little Man didn't open the envelope from Mr. Spiro right away?

Reacting to Difficult Memories:

- Little Man and Mam discuss Ara T for the last time. At the end of their discussion, Little Man shares, “The tears started from deep behind my eyes without me knowing they were coming and then came gushing out like water out of a busted pipe. I never cried much but I couldn't turn these off and stopped trying after a while.” Why do you think this conversation evoked such strong emotions in Little Man?
- Have you felt overwhelmed from difficult memories? What did you do to try and feel better?

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CHAPTER 19

Dollar Bill Words:

- Little Man finally gets all four words from Mr. Spiro: Student, Servant, Seller, and Seeker. What do these words have in common? Why do you think Mr. Spiro chose these four words? How do these words apply to Little Man's life or journey as a person who stutters?
- Could these words be applicable to your journey as a person who stutters? Would Mr. Spiro have given you different words than the words he gave Little Man?

Being Honest and Direct:

- When Little Man's parents come back from their trip, his mother gifts him a box of pralines. Little Man writes, "She always made a big deal about buying me pralines even though I didn't like them. I guess she thought if she liked them then I must like them too." Why is it significant that Little Man told his mom that he didn't actually like pralines and give them back to her?

Stuttering More Around Certain People:

- Little Man's speech teacher told him that stuttering is what happens when people try extra hard not to stutter. Little Man wonders if that's why he stutters around his father more than anyone else. He says, "I could tell he worried about me and I wished I could get over my stutter for him as much as for me." What is your experience? Do you stutter more around certain people? Why do you think that is?

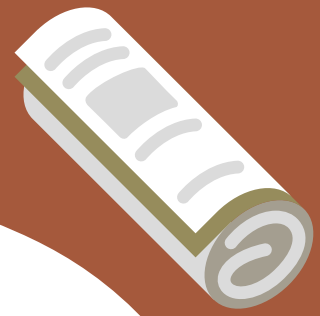
Sharing Personal Truths:

- When throwing pitches to his dad, Little Man shouts Mr. Spiro's four words. When saying the words, his pitches were accurate. Little Man explains why he shouts the four words to his dad. He writes, "I guess I was trying to tell my father about the four special words in the best way I could think of." Have you ever had an experience that you wanted to share with someone, but you felt like your stutter limited you from sharing your story? What would happen if you shared your thoughts and feelings freely even if you stuttered?

Finding Your Voice:

- Reading this chapter, do you feel like Little Man is finding his voice? If yes, how so? Do you feel you're on a journey to find your voice?

BOOK CLUB CLINICAL TOOL



CHAPTER 20

Common Experiences:

- Little Man spends more time with “TV Boy.” He says that they do not really need to talk to understand each other. Why do you think they are able to understand each other so well? How are they able to relate in their friendship?

Speaking Freely Versus Fluently:

- School begins again and Little Man expects to get nervous when his teacher asks everyone to introduce themselves. Little Man acts bravely when he introduces himself to his class and discloses his stutter. Even though he “stuttered about the same as always,” he wasn’t concerned with what people thought. He said exactly what he wanted to. Why was this such an important moment for Little Man? How do you think he felt? How did this moment make you feel?
- Compare his introduction at school to the moment he fainted when trying to introduce himself to Mr. Spiro. How has Little Man’s perspective of his stutter changed since the beginning of the book? What do you think brought him to this change?
- After getting home from school, Little Man tells Mam he learned that what he says is more important than how he says it and that his soul doesn’t stutter. How did realizing this make him feel? How does hearing Little Man’s thoughts make you feel? Do you relate to Little Man’s revelation?

Self-Disclosure

- During his introduction, Little Man says, “I stutter when I talk but I like words anyway.” What do you think of him sharing openly that he stutters? Have you ever done something similar? Why or why not?

Career Aspirations:

- Little Man says he might like to be a sports journalist someday. Because Little Man stutters, do you think it is impossible for him to be a sports journalist? Why or why not?

Takeaways:

- How did the paper route help Little Man get to this point in his relationship with his stutter? What has helped you or could help you get to this point, too?
- At the end of the book, how do Little Man’s summer experiences change the way he views his stutter? How does this affect his approach to communicating with others?
- What is your biggest take away from this book? What do you think is the main message of the book?