

2018 ECSF Antwerp
Symposium Presentation
Possible Selves Mapping with Adolescents Who Stutter
Anthony DiLollo, PhD, CCC-SLP
Wichita State University
anthony.dilollo@wichita.edu

Possible Selves

- Concept developed by Hazel Marcus and Paula Nurius in a 1986 paper in *American Psychologist*
- Possible selves derive from representations of the self in the past and they include representations of the self in the future.
- They are different and separable from the current or now selves, yet are intimately connected to them.

Hoped for Possible Selves

- Possible self one desires to become
- May or may not be realistic

Feared Possible Selves

- Possible self that one does not want to become, yet fears becoming

Clinical Application

Possible selves can be used clinically to:

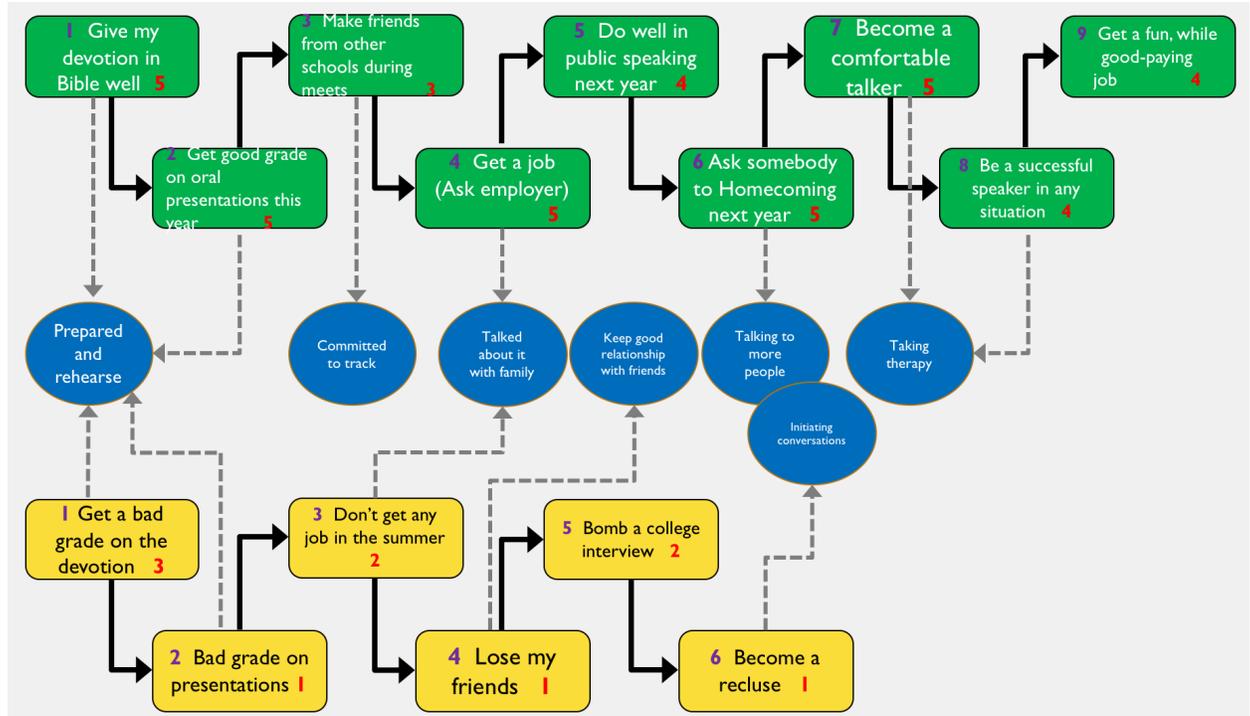
- Help clients generate and explore options
- Increase self-awareness
- Formulate plans to achieve goals
- Recognize fears and avoidances
- Motivate clients to work toward hoped for PS and to avoid feared PS

Possible Selves Mapping

Shepard and Marshall (1999) developed a process for mapping possible selves, based on earlier assessment methods described by Markus and Nurius (1986). The Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) was developed for use with adolescents in career-life planning but appears to have potential to be useful in exploring the experience of stuttering with adolescents.

The PSMI process

- Participants are asked to describe, order, and rate expectancy for as many hoped for and feared possible selves as they can (starting with hoped for possible selves).
- A set of standard instructions are used to guide participants through the process.
- Green (hoped for PS) and yellow (Feared PS) note cards are used to record information.
- Once the interview is completed, a map is created from the information on the note cards (see example below).



Issues related to administration of PSMI:

1. Trust between participant and clinician will impact depth of responses
2. Specific attention to ensure that responses are not confined to one specific domain (e.g., speech therapy)
3. Care should be taken to ensure that participant does not misconstrue the activity as looking for an “ideal” self – the distal hoped for possible self should be encouraged to be viewed as the best version of him or her self that the participant can imagine attaining (i.e., a preferred self)

Conclusion

Possible selves are a construct that might be useful in helping adolescents who stutter to expand their thinking and goal setting into a future orientation, while also confronting and strategizing to avoid outcomes that they fear.

Additional Resources:

Markus, H. & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves. *American Psychologist*, 42 (9), 934-969.

Shepard, B., & Marshall, A. (1999). Possible Selves Mapping: Life-Career Exploration with Young Adolescents. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 33 (1), 37-54.