

## POSSIBLE SELVES MAPPING INTERVIEW FOR ADOLESCENTS WHO STUTTER

ANTHONY DILOLO, PHD, CCC-SLP  
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY  
KANSAS, USA



### 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



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

### FEARED POSSIBLE SELVES

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



### MOTIVATION

- When a possible self Hoped for or feared) is seen as reachable or likely, certain scripts, plans, and action strategies are attached to it
- Importance of role models



### 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

- Blythe Shepard and Anne Marshall described a process for *possible selves mapping* with young adolescents in 1999.
- Their process has been adapted here for use with adolescents who stutter
- This is very early pilot data – simply an exploration of the concept



## I. EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPT OF POSSIBLE SELVES



- Read the following:
- *“Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves that we are afraid of becoming. Possible selves that are hoped for might include a creative self, successful self, rich self, loved self, and so on. Whereas, feared possible selves could be a depressed self, alone self, jealous self, or unemployed self.”*

## 2. INSTRUCTIONS



- Tell the participant to *“Relax and think about the future”*
- Then say:
- *“What do you imagine for yourself in the future? Who do you hope to become? You might consider professions you’d like to have, hobbies you hope to do, relationships you hope to have, or any other dreams you have for your future self.”*
- Then explain that today’s activity will give the participant a chance to brainstorm his/her possible selves and uncover specific strategies to help reach his/her goals.

## 3. CREATING THE MAP



- Use **GREEN** and **YELLOW** cards
- Ask the participant to visualize what he/she hopes to become in the future.
- Say something like: *“Visualize your future, think about what you hope to become.”*

## 4. HOPED-FOR POSSIBLE-SELVES INSTRUCTIONS



- Instruct the participant to write **hoped-for PS** on **green cards** (1 per card)
- **Encourage him/her to be bold and to include dreams and long-shots!**

- Have the participant start with:
  - *“Where you would ultimately like to be – the best you can be”*
  - **Mark this card with a “D” (Distal) in top right corner**
- Next:
  - Write a hoped-for PS that *“reflects you in the next month”*
  - **Mark this card with a “P” (Proximal) in the top right corner**





- Now write other hoped-for PS – these can range from PS that might be achieved in the near future (e.g., end of semester; end of year, etc.) or further out in the future (e.g., 2-5 years, or more).



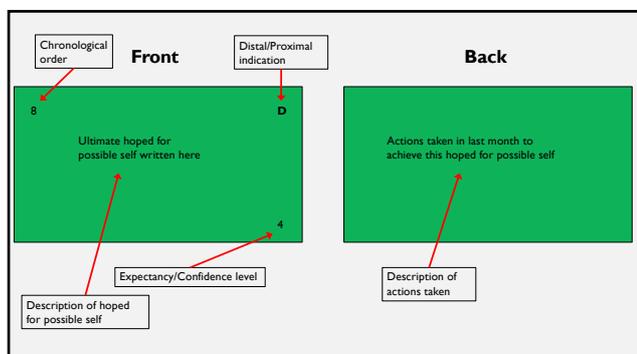
- Now order the hoped-for PS (green) cards in chronological order, starting with the “Proximal” card and ending with the “Distal” card – and number the cards in the **top left corner**, from 1 (proximal) to X (Distal)



- On the **bottom right corner** of the card, rate how likely it is that the hoped-for PS on that card will happen (expectancy), using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 as “will not happen” to 5 being “definitely will happen”



- On the **back of each card**, write any actions taken in the last month to achieve the hoped-for PS



#### 5. FEARED POSSIBLE SELVES INSTRUCTIONS

- Say:
- “Now think about what you fear, dread, or don’t want for yourself”
- Write feared PS on **yellow cards** (1 per card)



- Start with the “most feared possibility” – Mark this card with a “M” (Most feared) in **top right corner**
- Now write other feared PS



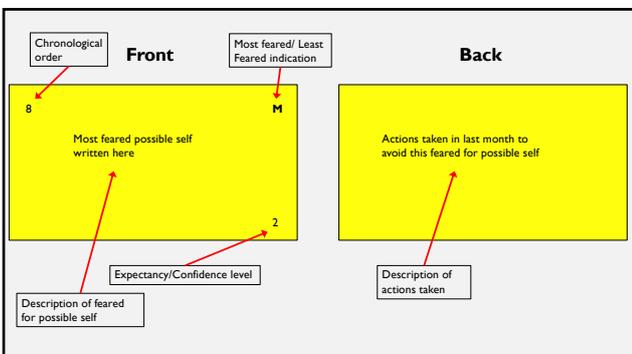
- Order the feared PS (yellow) cards in order, from **least feared to the most feared (“M”) card** – number the cards in the **top left corner**, from 1 (least feared) to X (most feared)



- On the **bottom right corner** of the card, rate how likely it is that the feared PS on that card will happen (expectancy), using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 as “will not happen” to 5 being “definitely will happen”



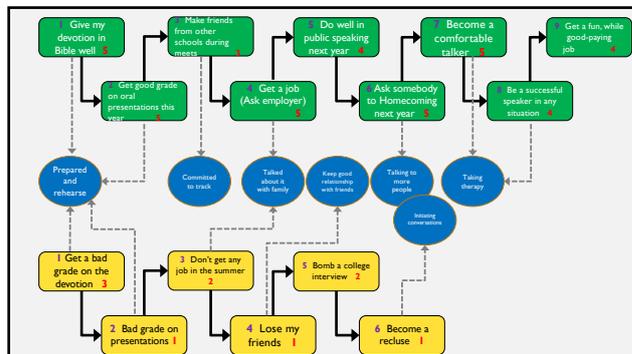
- On the **back of each card**, write any actions taken in the last month to avoid the feared PS





EXAMPLE 1: DAVID

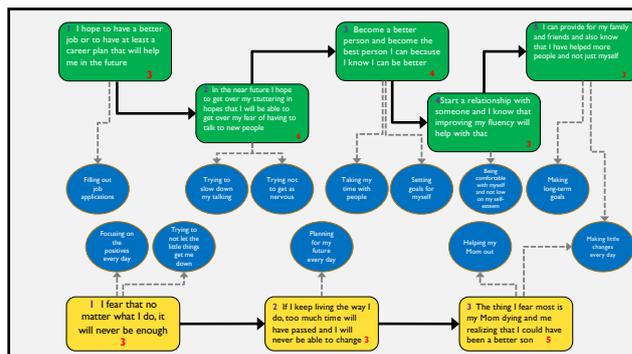
- 15 year-old male
- Moderate stuttering
- Attends a Catholic high-school
- Involved in track and field and church activities
- Attending therapy sessions at a University clinic
- Interviewed by student clinician (under supervision)
- Displayed mild-moderate stuttering during interview





EXAMPLE 2: BRAD

- 19 year-old male
- Moderate - severe stuttering
- Completed high school; does not attend college
- Works part-time
- Lives with, and takes care of, his sick mother
- Displayed moderate stuttering during interview





REFLECTIONS

- Both David and Brad liked the process
- Brad, in particular, felt like the process helped him think more specifically about the future
- Although David identified more possible selves (both hoped for and feared), Brad's map was more complex
- Although provided the same instructions, the context played a role in how each individual construed the task.
  - David (in a therapy context) focused almost exclusively on speech-related possible selves
  - Brad's focus was more broad (Brad's interview took place at his home with a friend)
- Trust played a role in the depth of responses



REFLECTIONS

- Given the domain specificity from these examples, it might be interesting to attempt multiple maps with different domains for a specific individual
- For example:
  - Speech
  - Relationships
  - Career
  - Personal
  - Educational

