



# Stuttering: A Life Bound Up in Words

*Marty Jezer*

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## **Stuttering: A Life Bound Up in Words** Marty Jezer

“As a stutterer who is always afraid of speaking but is rarely able to keep his mouth shut, I have a story to tell.” So writes Marty Jezer in this insightful and invaluable book about stuttering that, by necessity, is also a work about speaking, silences, and the pleasures and pitfalls of everyday communication. With eloquence and passion, Jezer delves into his lifelong struggle with fluent speech. “I live on both sides of the disability dilemma,” he says. “As long as I keep silent, I look like a normal fluent person. But every time I talk, I put this identity on the line. The need to speak and the probability of stuttering are the dominant facts of my life.” This is a book about denial, fear, persistence, pluck, and ultimate triumph. With humorous and poignant personal anecdotes, Jezer recalls being a student, too embarrassed to speak in class yet humiliated by his own chosen silence. Afraid to phone girls, he found ingenious ways to ask them out on dates. Apprehensive about raising children, he delighted in reading to his daughter. Told at a job interview that he was unemployable, he created his own career. In an endless effort to “cure” his stuttering, Jezer has tried many kinds of speech therapy and psychotherapy; he’s meditated, practiced oration, and done deep breathing; he’s even volunteered as a guinea pig to test an experimental drug for the National Institutes of Health. Supportive, though critical, of existing therapies, he is insistent that issues of identity, self-acceptance, and self-esteem are as vital as fluency techniques. Through the examples of new-found friends in the self-help movement for people who stutter, he learned to take responsibility for his speech. Although Jezer still stutters, he is no longer afraid to speak. However unique stuttering is as a disability, the daily embarrassments and deeper psychic indignities that stutterers face are commonplace. The defeats of giving into them and the triumphs of overcoming them are, as Jezer writes, the drama of life. Aristotle described the stutterer’s tongue as “too sluggish to keep pace with the imagination.” Quite the contrary; Marty Jezer may stutter, but he is seldom at a loss for words.

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