



The  
Speech, Voice  
& Language  
Clinic

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## A Speech Pathologist's New Year Reflection on the Meaning of Work

January is a month of transition. Moving from the old to the new. It is often a time of reflection, self-evaluation and serious pondering. This explains the tradition of New Year's resolutions.

As a speech pathologist returning to her practice after too much turkey, family fun and merry making, I think of some whose holidays have not been so blessed. With diagnosis of serious illnesses or the death of a loved one over the holidays-- festive times can remind us of how fragile life is.

With the fragility of health and life, working meaningfully with our clients is so important. January is indeed a time to reflect on "why do we engage in this work" and "what gives meaning to the work of a Speech-Language Pathologist?"

Our work can vary from young children's speech impediments, communication problems in autistic children, school age literacy, teen age stuttering, voice difficulties in a young executive, voice problems in singers, speech and language difficulties which result from stroke and other neurological conditions, and the special challenges of seniors with dementia. Our work involves evaluation, program planning, therapy and counseling.

What makes our work satisfying is the connections we share with our patients. We journey along a path to better communication. Sometimes our associations with clients last only a few hours and sometimes our work spans years. At times our goals for clients represent dramatic change as in the speech development of a preschooler. Other times our goal for a client is adaptation to an unideal situation, as in the case of someone with an acoustic neuroma or a traumatic brain injury. Sadly, at times we work with families to prepare them for communication decline as in a loved one with Alzheimer's.

Not all cases are dramatic or sensational. But what is the common thread of working with all individuals is: skilled problem solving, creative solutions and finding the joy and triumph however and wherever possible. Our clients expect empathy, and not sympathy. They expect us to listen not only with our ears, but also with our hearts. To cry with them when invited to do so, and laugh only if they laugh first.

We must transcend the difficult or uninteresting parts of the job such as completing forms, dealing with insurers, implementing legislation, coping with shrinking resources, meeting demands of other professionals, and so forth.

Meaning in work life comes from relationality and resonance with people. We can all find greater meaning in our work life, no matter what it is we do, if we work with greater mindfulness. Our clients benefit and so do we.

Kimberley, Melissa and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our clients who make our jobs a pleasure all year long. Our work would not be possible without the continued support you provide your children, or the efforts you take to care for your own communication health. We would like to wish you and your family all the best in the New Year.

**Mary-Anne Zubrycky is a Registered Speech-Language Pathologist and proprietor of The Speech, Voice and Language Clinic of Nepean/Ottawa. She works with Kimberly Matthews and Melissa Moloissa, a talented team of Registered Speech-Language Pathologists. For more information call 613-820-4722 or visit our website at [www.speechvoice.ca](http://www.speechvoice.ca)**

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