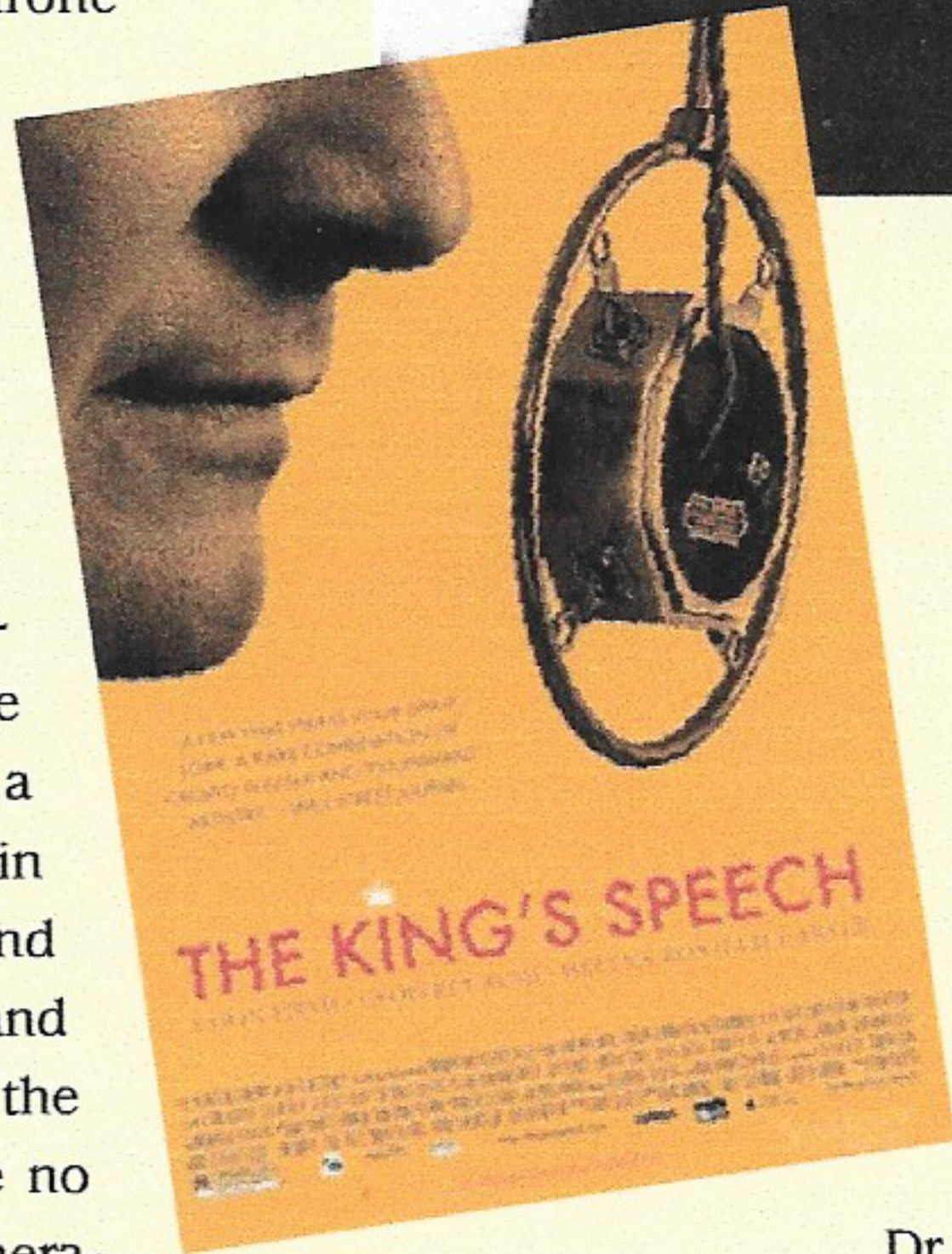


Recently, I saw the film *The King's Speech*. As the mother of a child with a disability, I was anxious to see how the therapeutic model of speech therapy was to be presented.

The film tells the story of Prince Albert and his quest to overcome stuttering. He tries many therapies and they all fail until his wife finds an unorthodox therapist. One therapy begins to take hold just as Prince Albert takes his place on the throne as the King of England.

The film is one of the finest films I have ever seen and I think the point it makes about therapy reinforces what every parent of a child with a disability already knows. Therapeutic intervention, in order to be successful, must be relational. The Prince and therapist formed a bond between them and it is in that bond where learning and healing can happen. Therapy and education when done outside the realm of relationship will have no effect. A therapist who does therapy by merely focusing on technique or a teacher who merely delivers information will leave no impression.

When I watch the film, I think of one of my sons, Zachary, who stutters from time-to-time. I also think of my other son, Andreas, who has cerebral palsy and spends much of his day with his therapists. Lastly, I think of my students in the community college where I teach. When I noticed that Zachary started to stutter, I brought him to Phil Schneider who has devoted his career to trying to understand the enigma of stuttering. He explained to me that stuttering is not a psychological issue, as it was described appropriately for the time in the film, but instead an interpersonal issue. Stuttering occurs in an interpersonal context. It would then follow, as it shows in the film, that the healing then must also happen in an interpersonal context. Dr. Schneider did a wonderful job of building a relationship with Zachary through play. I remember learning once that to a child, if you do not play, you have no value. This idea gave me so much to think about



Movie Review: **The King's Speech**

By Janet Farrell Leontiou, Ph.D.

because my son is physically limited, so engaging with play is difficult.

Dr. Schneider got down on the floor and "dropped in" the therapy in the context of the play. It is the same approach that I have seen good therapists use with my son. I remember once, when Andreas was three years old, an occupational therapist who worked with him at preschool told me that she couldn't get Andreas to do what she needed him to do. I told her that her response revealed that she was not the therapist for us.

Andreas now works with amazing therapists who are in relationships with him. They care about him and he loves them. He is making tremendous strides. His therapists are skillful enough to know when to drop the pre-established idea of what they want to teach and when they can attach what they want to teach to something Andreas is already doing. They meet him where he is and that has made all the difference. The therapist in the film models this kind of intervention. Before the prince's coronation, Prince Albert discovers that the therapist is really not credentialed and does not hold a Ph.D. Prince Albert turns away from his

advisors and continues to work with the therapist. The therapist in the film is unorthodox and he has some methods that he trusts. The Prince comes to trust the therapist and his unorthodox methods.

I teach Communications at a community college. I get results where many of my colleagues do not because I enter into relationships with my students. Each semester I have 150 students and I tell them that if the class works, it is because of what happens in between us. Education, as it turns out, is also interpersonal.

I think that the film should provide us with a model of how to be in the world. If we are people who want to make a difference either through therapy or education, all the technique and the technology in the world is not going to save us. The transformation will happen when we, as the therapist/educator, open ourselves up to being in relationships with those whom we serve. It is reassuring, as well as a little scary, to know that we already have all that we need. •

Janet Farrell Leontiou, Ph.D., is the mother of eight-year-old twins and assistant professor of communications at Nassau Community College. Dr. Farrell Leontiou is the author of *What Do the Doctors Say?: How Doctors Create a World Through their Words* (iUniverse: Bloomington, IN), 2010.