

Positive Living Skills: Skating through Adversity

Stephanie **McMahon**, Stefanie **Partridge** & Terry **Orlick**, Canada

Stephanie **McMahon** is exceptional 14 year old who has chosen to not let an absence of eyesight interfere with her participation in figure skating, downhill skiing, or teaching others, skills for positive living.

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Stefanie **Partridge** completed her Masters Degree in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. She is a former international level competitive figure skater and figure skating coach who also teaches positive living skills to children and teenagers. She coached Stephanie, the blind skater who was interviewed in this article.

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Terry **Orlick** is an author, focus coach and professor at the University of Ottawa. He was also Stefanie Partridge's Master Thesis supervisor.

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Abstract

Stephanie McMahon is a 14 year old figure skater who happens to be totally blind. She has been figure skating for almost 10 years and has been an inspiration for many children, coaches, teachers and parents. When Stephanie was introduced to Dr Orlick's Positive Living Skills Program at her skating club, she embraced it fully and later began teaching these activities to other children and youth. Stephanie wanted to meet Dr Orlick so he invited her to attend one of his graduate level classes on Sport and Performance Psychology and Quality Living. She was excited about coming to his class and agreed to allow him to interview her during that class. This article outlines what transpired during that interview and how the graduate students in attendance responded to Stephanie and to the interaction between Terry and Stephanie. Her contagious-positive spirit and openness has brought joy and freshness to not only the Gloucester Skating Club where she trains, but also to her school and yoga classes and Terry's graduate students.

Introduction

Stephanie was first introduced to Terry Orlick's Positive Living Skills (PLS) CD's in the fall of 2005. Since that time she has

been consistently listening to the audio tracks at home and in the car and successfully applying PLS skills in her daily life. As a result of her personal use and benefit from

the program Stephanie began to share the program activities with others. She has captivated children, teens, special needs students, and adults as she guides them through Dr. Orlick's Positive Living Skills activities such as Spaghetti toes, Changing channels, and Calm lake. The following interview below captured one of Stephanie's 'magical moments' with Terry Orlick in his 2006 Masters class.

An interview between Stephanie McMahon (Steph) and Terry Orlick - November 9th, 2006

As Steph walked into the room with her parents, Terry went directly over to her, held her hand and said, Hi Stephanie, I'm Terry – Thank you for coming to our class. He then walked with her over to a chair that was in the front of the room, helped her sit down and sat down directly across from her so that he was close to her in another chair. She folded up her white cane and placed it next to her chair. As soon as they sat down in their chairs together, Steph said to Terry out loud, "I like this class, it has a good feel". Terry responded, "yes this is a great class, lots of good energy." Terry picked up on her comment about "having a good feel" to lead into his first question.

Terry: Has your skating coach, Stefanie (one of Terry's graduate students) done anything with you to try to help use those good feelings to try to learn your skating skills and get better?

Stephanie: Yeah she holds my hand, Katie (another coach) usually holds my hand when I am on the ice, but when I am off the ice Stefanie normally holds my hand and helps me to do it (the skills) the proper way and get the proper feel in my body.

Terry: That's good. Do you feel free out there skating?

Stephanie: Yes, I feel free and safe.

Terry: Are there any other places that you feel free and safe?

Stephanie: Um ...

Terry: Or other places that give you that kind of feeling?

Stephanie: Ummm, not really.

Terry: Tough questions I am asking you, aren't they?

Stephanie: No, you are not asking me tough questions.

(Giggles in whole class)

Terry: So how did you know it was me when you walked into this room? Did you recognize my voice, from listening to my CD's?

Stephanie: Yes, yes

Terry: When I say, "Get yourself in to a comfortable position....." (Note - this is how I start my CD tracks)

Stephanie: (Steph jumps in) I also say that part when I do relaxation with people.

Terry: Great. I am hoping you can maybe do one or two for us...

Stephanie: Yes, I will I will do one for you.

Terry: OK, which one do you want to do?

Stephanie: I think I will do the Quiet Lake.

Terry: Oh, I like that one.

Stephanie: Yeah, that one makes me feel really calm.

Terry: Do you want to do that one right now?

Stephanie: Oh sure.

Terry: These bigger people (in the class) are pretty stressed so they probably need it.

(Laughing though class)

Stephanie: Sure I can do that now.

Terry: I will follow what you tell us to do too. You just take us through it.

Stephanie: (Slowly and calmly Steph guides the whole class through the entire script from the Positive Living Skills CD track, Quiet Lake, with no notes, no CD and no prompts from anyone).

OK, get yourself into a comfortable position, close your eyes, be very quiet and just listen to my voice. Breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly, let yourself relax. Feel the relaxation run through your body. Today we are going to visit a calm, peaceful lake. The water is very still, the sky is big and blue, the air smells really nice. You can feel the warmth of the sun, shining upon your face, making you feel warm and excellent all over. You are so quiet and so still. The mist is rising slowly and gently off the lake and you feel quiet, calm, and very, very happy. A loon swims by and greets you with its special sound. It makes tiny waves across the lake and everything goes completely quiet. If you are scared or angry, or something hurts, imagine the lake. Go there to find peace and tranquility. When you open your open you will feel calm and safe.

(Clapping from the class)

Terry: Steph, I think you do it better than I do!

Stephanie: No, you do a good job too.

Terry: Thanks. I am going to have to get you to come into a recording studio with me.

Stephanie: I was wishing to do a relaxation CD with you.

Terry: Yeah that would be good, let's see what we can do about that. Maybe we can figure out a way to do that.

Stephanie: Oh WOW!

Terry: When have YOU used Quiet Lake ... the script that you were taking us through just now?

Stephanie: Well, sometimes I use it, usually when I am at my cottage, when I am relaxing in my chair at the cottage. And sometimes I relax to it at my house. When I listen to it, and your music is just so beautiful, it is just so relaxing before going to bed.

Terry: I like that music too.

Stephanie: Um yeah, where did you get all your music?

Terry: I listened to a bunch of CD's that have different types of music at the recording studio and said, I like that one or I like this one.

Stephanie: Thank you.

Terry: What else have you used (from my audio CD's)?

Stephanie: I did the Spaghetti Toes and I also heard about the Highlights.

Terry: Do you do that one, that Highlight script with anybody, tell them about highlights?

Stephanie: Um, mostly just the relaxation ones.

Terry: Did you think more about highlights after using the CD?

Stephanie: Yes I did, I had some happy highlights this year and last year.

Terry: What kind of happy highlights?

Stephanie: Well last year I got to go in my Grandmothers golf cart at a golf course where my sister does golfing, and my highlights were during summer vacation. This year I am going to have many happy highlights because I am going to go figure skating with my school with lots of friends.

Terry: Oh that is great, when is that going to be?

Stephanie: Next Tuesday.

Terry: Tuesday? How are you going to wait that long?

Stephanie: I am pretty sure I can do it.

Terry: I know you talked to your coach Stefanie Partridge about Spaghetti Toes and you talked about Changing Channels. Do you want to take use through one of those (scripts)? Are you comfortable doing that?

Stephanie: I will take you through Changing Channels!

Terry: OK, let's do that one.

Stephanie: OK. Get yourself into a comfortable position, close your eyes, be

very quiet and just listen to my voice. Breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly, breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly. Let yourself relax. Today I am going to tell you a story about Changing Channels. You know on a T.V. or a computer that are all kinds of channels? Well in your mind you have all different kinds of channels inside your head, happy channels, sad channels, angry channels, scary channels, laughy channels, fun channels, funky channels, good channels, bad channels, jumping up and down channels, and goofy channels. All of those channels are inside your head. The good thing about being a person and not a T.V. or a computer is that you can change channels anytime you want! All you have to do is to think of that channel you want right now, every day. The bestest way to change channels is to push your thumb against your finger and to change channels in your mind. Let's play a little changing channel game. During the game I want you to think of a worry or an anger that you have or once had. Have you thought of one? Now imagine that you are changing yourself into a happy channel. Push your thumb hard against your finger.

Good job. And that is all you have to do every time you are scared, change channels.

Thank you.

Clapping throughout class.

Terry: When have you used Changing Channels? Do you have an example of where you have actually used it?

Stephanie: Sometimes I use it when I am scared.

Terry: Like what would be an example?

Stephanie: Usually when I am trying something new and I feel a little bit nervous, I usually just think of something happy I like to do, or something funny that I have seen on T.V. or watched or heard of..

Terry: Then after that what do you do, try to focus on doing something good?

Stephanie: Yeah and then I try the new activity, and then after that I feel much more comfortable doing it, and I am ready to do it no problem without being scared.

Terry: Do you have an example of activity where you felt scared recently?

Stephanie: Well this year I had to get a needle in September and I was very scared.

Terry: So what did you do?

Stephanie: I just took a couple of breaths, and when I got it all done I took some more breaths and then was ready to go on with my day.

Terry: Did you push your thumb onto your finger or just think of something else?

Stephanie: Um, I just thought of something relaxing, I just imagined something that I found very relaxing. Or sometimes I just think of a funny show or told a joke in my head.

Terry: Good. Do you have any examples where you used changing channels to change your mood, or are you always in a good mood?

Stephanie: I am pretty much always in a good mood.

Terry: Good plan. I like that one! Did you ever use Changing Channels in school?

Stephanie: Sometimes I'm focusing on other tasks, other than my work, so sometimes I just change myself onto a concentrate channel.

Terry: Do you do that right in the classroom when you realize you are thinking of something else or

Stephanie: Well if I am thinking about swimming when I am trying to get my work done, or something else I like to do besides my work, sometimes I will just change myself into a happy channel, into a focusing channel, and then I will just do whatever my teacher is asking me to do.

Terry: Does that work well for you?

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah it does.

Terry: Do you just think, do your work, do your work, or something like that?

Stephanie: I just say to myself "Steph do your work" (in a whisper)

Terry: And then you focus on doing that?

Stephanie: Yeah.

Terry: Good. How about in skating, do you do it there?

Stephanie: I pretty much focus when I am skating actually.

Terry: That 's good. Does it feel natural to focus there?

Stephanie: Um hmm, yes.

Terry: Were there other things that you have listened to on the CD that you like or use?

Stephanie: Oh I really like, love, the Special Place Relaxation. I love that one, it has to be my favorite.

Terry: Special Place Relaxation?

Stephanie: Special Place Relaxation and Your Own Special Place - yeah.

Terry: You like that one.

Stephanie: Yeah.

Terry: So where do you go (for your special place)?

Stephanie: I go to an outdoor place where it is always warm and it is an imaginary place. I make it up in my mind and I imagine it before I go to sleep at night.

Terry: Can you describe it to me?

Stephanie: Well, its got a really calm big, big beautiful lake. And the water is like really fun for swimming and there is a huge boat. And when you are done you can get massaged before you go to sleep at night and it has an outdoor bed that you can sleep on.

Terry: Wow. I think I am going to come there with you sometime.

Stephanie: You should!

Terry: Can you hear that lake?

Stephanie: Yes, I can hear the waves laughing on the lake and the loons and all different kinds of stuff.

Terry: And can you feel the sun on your face?

Stephanie: I can feel it all over me.

Terry: And are there noises around?

Stephanie: Probably, insects buzzing around me.

Cell phone rings....

Heather (Steph's mom): Oh Sorry.

Stephanie: Don't worry mommy.

Terry: Just change channels.

Terry: So Steph, when your coach Stefanie introduced these activities to you, what did she do?

Stephanie: She introduced them to me in the beginning of last year. She introduced me to Spaghetti Toes, and Special Place Relaxation, Relaxing to the Music, and the Laughing one.

Terry: Did you like that one?

Stephanie: I love it! The children kind of make me laugh too (Steph starts laughing).

Terry: You have a nice laugh.

Stephanie: Thank you (giggling)

(The whole class starts laughing!)

Terry: Thank you.

Terry: Did you like the CD activities right away or did it take a while?

Stephanie: As soon as I heard them I liked them. My most favorite are the Calm Lake and the imaginary Special Place.

Terry: Did you listen to Flowing Stream?

Stephanie: Yes I heard flowing stream.

Terry: And that wasn't your favorite?

Stephanie: It is my favorite, but it is not my most favorite, it's like middle favorite.

Terry: What about the Great Little Listener?

Stephanie: Yes I heard the great the great little listener.

Terry: Are you a good listener?

Stephanie: Yes I am a good listener.

Terry: I can see that.

Stephanie: And I am always nice on friend's feelings.

Terry: I was wondering about that, so you did listen to Nice on My Feelings?

Stephanie: Yes, and I was nice on everyone's feelings, and no one was not nice on my feelings.

Terry: Are people usually nice on your feelings?

Stephanie: They are very nice on my feelings and I am always nice on their feelings, then you can feel good and so should you.

Terry: We need to do more of that nice on my feeling stuff, right?

Stephanie: [Laughs].

Terry: We have to get that message out to more people.

Stephanie: Um hmm.

Stephanie: I have all 3 of the CD's you have made so...

Terry: I actually have another one.

Stephanie: What is it called?

Terry: Focusing through distractions. I will give you one.

Stephanie: Thank you.

Terry: You're welcome. That one talk about how to really focus.

Stephanie: I am pretty sure I can do it. I want to do it. I am able to do it.

Terry: I am sure you can. Did you listen to the one on positive thinking?

Stephanie: Yes, and I have done lots of positive thinking.

Terry: What types of positive thinking do you use or say?

Stephanie: I say I am going to do this, I am capable of doing this, I am going to try this, I know this is fun.

Terry: Great.

Stephanie: And I practice doing it a lot, just like on my waltz jumps (skating move) and stuff, I thought positive about my stuff... and I can now land a waltz jump on one foot all by myself without even holding Katie. That happened once in a competition, last year at Morrisburg. I landed a waltz jump on one foot.

Terry: How did it feel when you landed it?

Stephanie: I felt pretty proud of myself. I got a blizzard from my coach Debbie from Dairy Queen.

Terry: What felt better landing on one foot or getting a blizzard?

Stephanie: Landing on one foot.

Terry: Good, we've got to keep the priorities in line.

Stephanie: I can even do a loop jump by myself, I can do a toe-loop. I can do all kinds of stuff all by myself.

Terry: When you started figure skating, did you think you would be able to do those things?

Stephanie: Yes I did actually.

Terry: When you do most things, are you going in thinking "I can do this no matter what it is"?

Stephanie: Yes, I think I can do this, I know I can do this, I want to do this, I am capable of doing this.

Stephanie: I thought it by myself, but (in skating) Katie would tell me if I did it right or not.

Terry: And if it wasn't right what would she say?

Stephanie: She would say, Steph the only thing you need to focus on is landing on one foot, and jumping a bit higher and pushing a bit harder, and I finally did it.

Terry: Great, maybe you can coach me sometime because I can't do any waltz jumps – yet.

Stephanie: [laughing] maybe I will one day during the winter.

Terry: Yeah, I could probably do it, if I think I can do it, I am capable of doing this, I want to do this, I know I can do this!

Stephanie: Well that is good.

Terry: There are some people in my class here today who are going to be working on teaching kids how to do these activities that you have been talking about so those kids can be more positive, more focused and relax better.

Stephanie: Yeah.

Terry: Do you have any advice for them on how they might do that?

Stephanie: Well if you guys are scared about teaching them relaxation, just take a couple big breaths or just imagine the calm lake or something like that ,or just put yourself on a calmer channel

Terry: Great, I think they will remember that because I feel they are listening.

Stephanie: Oh they are great listeners!

[whole class laughs]

Terry: You are right. I am lucky to have all these great listeners in this class.

Stephanie: You've got a really nice class Mr. Orlick, I really appreciate it.

Terry: You can feel that, can you?

Stephanie: I can feel it through my body.

Terry: That is amazing, and you are absolutely right. This is a great class. I can feel it in my body as well.

Stephanie: This class is so nice, [sigh]

Terry: Thank you. Did hear that class? One of my best classes I have had is this one in this room.

Stephanie: I absolutely believe that.

Terry: They are going to go out there and do a good job helping people. Can I ask them if they have any questions for you?

Stephanie: Go ahead.

Terry: Does anybody have any questions?

Student # 1: Why did you choose figure skating?

Stephanie: I don't think it was really me that chose it. I started figure skating when I was about 5.

I think it was my mom that chose it because my mom coaches it.

Stefanie Partridge (coach): What did you do on Tuesday with the off-ice skating class?

Stephanie: I did spaghetti toes for you Stef.

Stefanie (coach): I needed it that day.

Stephanie: I also explained it to Stefanie's off-ice class.

Terry: How old were they?

Stefanie (coach): They were 8-13 years old.

Terry: How did that go?

Stephanie: I think they liked it.

Terry: I am sure they did, because you do a great job.

Stephanie: Thank you.

Terry: Because you make a lot of people feel really good.

Stephanie: Thank you very much.

Terry: It comes from my heart.

Stephanie: Uhhh (a very positive sound).

Terry: Can I ask your parents a question?

Stephanie: Sure go ahead.

Terry: Thank you, so what have you seen in terms of Steph using these CD's?

Heather (Steph's mom): Well she first started by listening to them and she would go in her room with the CD and I have seen her do some of the activities like this [pushing her thumb into index finger].

Terry: Oh yeah, for changing channels.

Stephanie: And I can now ski all by myself down the hill and I didn't even hold onto the poles The only thing my instructor has to tell me is to turn left or right or when there was bumps.

Terry: Do you remember using the changing channels with your fingers before skiing down the hill?

Stephanie: Yes.

Terry: Do you remember what you shifted focus to?

Stephanie: I was feeling a little scared about going down the hill all by myself, so I put myself on a fun channel.

Heather: What about going on the chair lift?

Stephanie: The chair lift, I got a little used to it, but the year before I didn't know about relaxation, and when I got on the chair lift I felt a little more comfortable.

Terry: Now are you ok on the chair lift?

Stephanie: Yes I am fine on the lift. I was even a little bit scared when I skied down the hill, but I was just nervous that I was going to fall down the hill, when I skied down the hill by myself.

Terry: So you did the changing channels to try and get into a happy, more relaxed channel.

Stephanie: Yeah, I just put myself on a more calm or happier channel.

Terry: Then did you just go?

Stephanie: Yeah, I just said to myself just go, you can do it.

Terry: That's great. How did that make you feel?

Stephanie: I feel very proud of myself, the fact that I can now do it.

Stephanie: Now I have a question for you Mr. Orlick.

Terry: Yes, go for it.

Stephanie: How did you come up with Spaghetti Toes? How did it come up in your head?

Terry: Good question. Well, I was thinking, what would be something that children, younger than you, could understand that would help them learn to relax. What would help them to get an image or feeling of relaxing, that they might be able to relate to? And I thought about hard spaghetti and I would actually take the hard spaghetti and ask what does it feel like?...

Terry: What does hard spaghetti feel like?

Stephanie: Sort of stiff and breakable sometimes.

Terry: Yeah, and then I would take a piece of cooked spaghetti out of the pot and put it in their hand and ask them what it feels like.

Stephanie: That feel soft and relaxed, it feels good.

Terry: Yes, I thought that would be a good thing to imagine or feel. So I made up the story of Spaghetti Toes to help people move from feeling like stiff harder spaghetti to being very relaxed. I started by asking them to try to do that with their toes. You can think into your body to tell it to go soft and relaxed like cooked spaghetti. When I start thinking about how I can do things like that, the answers often just seem to jump into my head – and then I try them.

Stephanie: What about Changing Channels, how did that come up to your mind?

Terry: Well I asked myself, what is the simplest way I can explain how to change your thinking from something that is not helping to something that will help you. Changing Channels was the simplest thing I could think of in terms of going from one channel or place in your mind to some place else, to a better place. So if you are scared or afraid, it means you are focused on

something scary, or if you are thinking you can't do something you are focusing on why you can't instead of why you can. The idea of a TV channel changer popped into my mind when I started thinking about how to help kids to understand how they can change their own channels. Did it work for you?

Stephanie: Yes it did, you are really talented.

Terry: Thank you very much

Stephanie: You're welcome

Terry: What would you have thought of?

Stephanie: Umm I might come up with a relaxation.

Terry: You can still do that. You don't have to do it right now, but you can come up with a good one on your own.

Stephanie: I know, I will do some of yours and I will make up some of my own too

Terry: That is a good idea.

Stephanie: Yeah.

Terry: Steph, our class time is almost over. We feel very privileged that you came into our class today. You are the first young person that has come into our class to share your thoughts and experiences. We have all learned from the great things that you are doing and are capable of doing. You have done an excellent job of expressing yourself and I wish you all the best in whatever you choose to do. Remember that anything is possible when you believe it is possible.

Stephanie: Well thank you guys for letting me come to your interview and thank you

very much Mr. Orlick, and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Terry: Thank YOU Stephanie.

Graduate Student Reflections on Steph's visit

Terry asked each student in this class to email him their personal reflections on Steph's visit to the class. The reflections presented below are direct quotes from each student's submission.

Having Stephanie come into our class was a truly unique experience. Although Stephanie entered the room thinking she was the one who was privileged and honoured to be there (to meet Terry), by the time she left, I think the whole class realized we were the lucky ones. Her enthusiasm and excitement were very endearing and more than a little contagious. I found the whole interview completely fascinating and was absorbed in listening to everything Steph and Terry had to say.

Steph knows that when she does an activity from the CD, she feels better, and when she feels better she is less afraid (of skiing down the hill by herself, for example). The impact that these good feelings have had on her life was evident in her awe and admiration of Terry.

The actual effect that these skills (learned from the CD's) can have on a child's life...to see the positive benefits demonstrated right in front of my face was inspiring. Imagine being brought up learning the very skills that we, as adults, are struggling to master?

I was thoroughly impressed with Steph's motivation to share the skills that she has learned from Terry. By leading her peers through relaxation activities she is not only furthering her own ability to relax and 'change channels', but she is trying to help others achieve the same great feelings she has received.

All in all, I found Steph to be a caring, motivating, enthusiastic, and brave young lady. It was a privilege to meet her and I am sure she will continue to inspire many others in the near future. (Jenny Dalton)

If I were Terry, I think that I would have been a little bit unsure of how to react to her disability. This was another thing that amazed me- the way that he interacted with her seemed to be very natural and unforced. He was able to build a strong rapport with Steph before he even asked her any "interview" questions. I think that this is a skill that I need a lot of work on, so it was nice to see Terry do it with such ease.

Terry seemed to be very attentive and interested in what Steph was telling him and he always seemed to be listening to her instead of thinking of responses. He took an extra second to think about what she said before he replied.

I had to hold back tears a couple of times during the interview because I was truly moved by Steph's positive personality and determination. She had so much positive energy and zest for life that it made me realize that she was not sitting back and feeling sorry for herself, instead she was

making the most out of what life has to offer. I could see the energy that she had as soon as she entered the room and that she was so excited to be in the presence of "Mr. Orlick".

I also enjoyed her sense of humor as she always seemed to have something to say back to Terry- she was very witty.

It was obvious that Terry's tapes have been very beneficial for Steph's growth as a figure skater and as a human being. I was amazed when she sat there and led us through two relaxation exercises. She knew every word, every pause, and the right tone of voice. It was really neat to listen to her do this with such confidence. I think that this was an amazing presentation and it is definitely something that I will never forget. (Hilary Foster)

I was really impressed with the way that Terry interacted with Steph before the interview even began. I think I would have been a little apprehensive in leading her to her chair and helping her sit down because I wouldn't know how to act appropriately but Terry was confident in letting Steph lead while he acted as a guide.

I also thought it was very cool that she takes her peers through the relaxation scripts. When she took our class through spaghetti toes and changing channels I was in awe of how she was able to reproduce the quality of Terry's voice with such accuracy. I almost started to laugh when I heard her say "b - r - e - a -

t - h - e in slowly” because it sounded so much like Terry.

*I have tried to describe this interview to others in my life but I feel like my description cannot do it justice. I wish everyone I know could have witnessed this memorable exchange. Steph is truly one of a kind and I will never forget that interview. (**Anne Vant Erve**)*

*I thought that Steph had such great energy around her. She was so funny to listen to and so many times she reminded me of Terry. I was able to really tell the effects of the program by how positive she is and how relaxed and focused she can be. Steph is a great mentor to anyone of any age who thinks that they can't do things. At one point she even said, “I can, I will and I am capable”. Hopefully one day I will be able to watch her skate and see first hand just how amazing she is. (**Jamie Hoffman**)*

*One thing that really touched me is the way she kept repeating ‘I know I can do it’, ‘I can do it’ and ‘I will do it.’ She showed an amazing confidence in being there and so confident in her abilities or at least her desire to want to accomplish what she wants. (**Marie-Josée Dion**)*

When an athlete becomes so in tune with the sport psychology delivery that they are able to run through relaxation scripts as if they themselves had written them, then that certainly represents an example of the consultant no longer being needed for that particular component. It was obvious that there had been a tre-

mendous period of personal growth while Stephanie was talking and it was great to see the impact of such an intervention.

*I also found it fascinating to listen to an athlete who does not appear to succumb to setbacks. I loved her “no-excuse” mentality as she listed her positive affirmations (“I know I can do it, I’m going to do it, etc). It seemed that there was nothing she couldn’t do if she simply decided (or perhaps “do-cided”) to do it. (**Andrew Friesen**)*

*Overall, her visit brought me joy and happiness. She is resilient and funny. (**Mélanie G.M. Perras**)*

She made me realize that although vision is precious, I should try to experience life with my other senses. Her laugh was adorable and contagious, she was so happy and in such a good mood about being in the class and getting to talk to “Mr. Orlick”.

I also found it interesting because her parents were in attendance and Terry asked them some questions but also to see their reactions to some of the things Stefanie was saying. She is so mature for her age. She seemed a lot older than she is because of how articulate she is.

She does not let obstacles get in her way if she can help it, she jumps right over them and moves on to the next thing

I think the greatest thing about the session was to see the excitement from Steph, the class, and Terry as well. There was an atmosphere to the

interview that was impossible to ignore. It was also nice to see Terry in action. We have heard a lot about how he interacts with people, but seeing this first hand was enlightening. (Allison Tovell)

If I could one thing to take from the experience, it would be appreciating all the things that I have, and not taking things for granted. Unfortunately, it takes losing something most of the time, before we realize its importance. If we can somehow live our lives with that appreciation for what we have before it is lost, then we would live more fulfilling lives. To have an outlook on life like Steph is pretty amazing. She is definitely an inspiration. (Jamie Smith)

Steph offered a beautiful perspective to us of how we can help people overcome obstacles and barriers in their life so that they may truly embrace a greater quality of life. Steph is a perfect example of a bright young woman who has learned to step past her challenges and live a rich and joyful life. Not only have the skills she learned impacted her quality of life, but she is able to share these skills with the people she meets in life including classmates, teammates, and family. She has great passion and conviction when she discusses mental training techniques and positive living skills and I believe that this will allow her to really succeed personally and in building positive relationships to reach other people. Steph asked Terry about recording a track on a CD saying she would like that very much. I was blown away by her youthful and bold spirit to step up

and say that she would like to do that. I believe we can really be restricted by our own concerns and fears to the point that we ultimately may miss out on a great opportunity. I was most moved by how I felt she was a very kind hearted person because she was always offering kind words to other people (to Terry and to the class). (Laura McEwen)

How would I react if I didn't have this sense of vision? Would I take advantage of life as much as Stephanie did? Would I know how to live my life fully? I ask myself these questions imagining that I didn't have this sense of vision in my life but these questions force me to reflect on whether I am fully living my life right at this moment.

Often, we think to ourselves that we are incapable of starting something or doing something but there is truly nothing preventing us from doing it other than ourselves; our perceptions and our beliefs that are often irrational or self defeating.

This experience gave me another way of understanding non-verbal and non-visual expressions. Now, I see what is important as a consultant when we express ourselves in different ways. I also see that we have to adapt to different kinds of individuals. Some are more auditory, others more visual, others more kinesthetic. I really enjoyed learning from this experience. (Francois Cholette)

One aspect of Stephanie's visit that was very apparent was the support system that she had in place. Due to the nature of her disability, she obvi-

ously needs help with certain aspects in order for her to perform. Stephanie used some of the skills she learned with her parents, and her parents were certainly aware of how these mental skills had affected Stephanie. (Aman Hussain)

I have been talking about Stephanie ever since her visit on Thursday. I've told my family, my students, friends I meet on the street. I ask myself, why did it have such a big effect on me

She wore her heart on her sleeve. When Terry said "Well, it comes from my heart", she had such a visceral reaction. It was such a pleasure to be in the company of someone who is so transparent, so real. Especially a teenager.

I was similarly moved by Terry's reaction to her. It was like watching a dance between them.

I watched half of the class's reaction by seeing past Stephanie from where I sat. They were so present and engaged. It was a great exercise in engaged listening.

I was fascinated by her movement (I'll admit to being fascinated by everyone's movement). She didn't

have the same body orientation as a sighted person: namely movements that are led from the eyes. In sighted people this often causes problems in posture and specific tension in the face, neck and shoulders. Stephanie was leading mostly from her ears and sometimes from her hand, often to reach out to Terry.

I was amazed at Stephanie's recall of Terry's scripts and that she included all the visual imagery in them – big blue sky, big still lake. When she said these words, there was so much feeling. And maybe that's it – she associates imagery with rich feeling. Maybe she can feel the sky differently than we can, and the lake. She was certainly able to feel the class.

I have since thought of so many more questions to ask. Like: "what is your sense of gravity – what does it feel like to jump away from the earth and to feel yourself coming back?", "what is the feeling of a big blue sky or loons....or a lake?", "is there a sense of aliveness in all things?"

Mostly I wanted to hang out in the magic a little longer. (Anne Pittman)