

# Foreword



*There is hope for people who stutter.* That is the message at the heart of this comprehensive, scholarly, and moving textbook aimed at helping both students and practicing clinicians develop the skills they need to become valuable partners in the therapy process for people who stutter. In the past, studies have shown that many speech–language pathologists are not confident in their skills for working with people who stutter. The reasons for their discomfort are numerous, though many of the issues can be described in terms of two key problems: a lack of training about the procedures and processes involved in successful stuttering intervention and, more fundamentally, an underlying lack of understanding of the nature of the disorder and the daily challenges faced by people who stutter.

This book, written by an individual who is both an experienced clinician and a person who has lived with stuttering, deftly addresses both of these concerns and proves that speech–language pathologists do not need to fear this disorder. The text presents necessary background about fluent and disfluent speech, clear explanations of the factors that affect the development and maintenance of the disorder, concrete strategies for evaluating and treating stuttering in different age groups, a strong theoretical background that helps clinicians conceptualize the disorder, a comprehensive and integrated perspective on the effect stuttering can have on people’s lives, meaningful links to other disciplines that can support and enhance our interactions with our clients, direct suggestions about how clinicians can develop their skills, and thoughtful guidance about how to cultivate a genuine sense of empathy for people who stutter and their families. Just as importantly, the book does all of this using Dr. Shapiro’s gentle and accessible prose, which captures the reader’s interest and commitment from the very first page.

The result is a deeply touching and intensely personal companion that will help speech–language pathologists move toward a promising future of understanding of and empathy for people who stutter. The lessons clinicians learn through this book will help them develop the key clinical and personal skills they need to help their clients make meaningful changes in their speech—and in their lives as a whole.

Early in the first chapter, Dr. Shapiro writes that “communication is a uniquely human experience.” This book conveys a sense of how stuttering can affect every aspect of that human experience, balanced with a detailed demonstration of how people can overcome those challenges through personal growth and the support of a caring, expert practitioner. Several times throughout the book, Dr. Shapiro reflects on the notion that the therapeutic process can be viewed as a “journey.” This metaphor not only embodies the changes experienced by the speaker throughout the course of treatment but also captures the clinician’s growth and the intimate relationship that can be shared between the clinician and the client in treatment. The book provides numerous suggestions for how both parties can further their progress along this journey and move toward the freedom highlighted in the book’s title.

The book takes a long-term view of change—for both the client and the clinician—starting with the hesitant first steps of a beginner, moving to the gradual growth and expansion of skills experienced during the treatment process, and, finally, over time,

achieving ultimate mastery over the disorder. Above all, the text conveys two profoundly hopeful messages: that people who stutter of all ages can make positive changes in their lives, and that speech–language pathologists can expand their understanding of the disorder in order to help their clients reach their goals.

The value of Dr. Shapiro’s accomplishments in this book cannot be overstated, and I believe that this book reaches heights that few others have achieved. Put simply, there is a tremendous amount of information that speech–language pathologists need to learn about stuttering and about people who stutter before they are ready to become effective partners in their client’s journey. As faculty and stuttering specialists, we often despair of ever being able to communicate all that we want clinicians to know. This book comes as close as any book about stuttering that I’ve ever read to conveying the “big picture” while still keeping an eye on the all-important details of basic human interaction and daily life. It provides students and experienced clinicians alike with historical perspectives, theoretical underpinnings, balanced and respectful interpretations of the literature, real-world experiences with tested treatment strategies, personal opinions and perspectives of the author and his clients, and numerous examples of practical applications—in other words, all of the underlying knowledge and clinical sensitivity they will need to become truly effective therapists and valued partners in the therapy process.

As a professor who has used the first edition of this excellent book in my classes and referred to it countless times in my own research and writing, I can say that this second edition represents a profound enhancement to an already outstanding text. Dr. Shapiro has expanded nearly every aspect of the book. The result is a monumental achievement that not only builds on the themes that were addressed so beautifully in the first edition but also incorporates many new topics that are critical for a deep understanding of the stuttering disorder, including new and emerging treatment strategies, evidence-based practice and the evaluation of treatment outcomes, the value of self-help and mutual aid, clinical training and specialization, global perspectives on the nature and treatment of the stuttering disorder, and much more. Each subject is handled with the same grace and sincerity as the next, and throughout the book, the clear prose is a pleasure to read.

Beyond increasing knowledge, empathy, and understanding, this book leaves its reader with a strong feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. I believe that the growing sense of comfort and confidence that clinicians gain through this book will give them the foundation they need to achieve true clinical excellence, enabling them to help people who stutter overcome the challenges of their disorder and pursue their life goals. Thus, the ultimate outcome of Dr. Shapiro’s achievement in writing this book is a better life for people who stutter.

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