

What You Need To Know About Stuttering

Basic hallmarks of stuttering, such as the complex nature of its variability and the desire for people who stutter to hide and conceal the disorder, are difficult for many to grasp. In this section the disorder of stuttering is discussed and demystified for you as a clinician. These discussions are intended to separate facts from fiction—to give you a firm grasp of what stuttering is and is not.

Separating Fact from Fiction

When entering into therapy, many stutterers and families hold misperceptions about the disorder. For example, it is not uncommon to hear a child or a parent say that stuttering was caused by an occurrence such as receiving a bump on the head or watching a scary movie. One adult in his late 20s was convinced that his father caused and maintained his stuttering as the result of insensitive parenting. By understanding stuttering, you are able to begin the process of replacing such misperceptions about the disorder with essential facts and knowledge. Walter Manning (2000), a speech–language pathologist who stutters, wrote about the positive experience he had working with clinicians who understood the nature of stuttering:

I [have] encountered clinicians who not only knew about the surface features of the problem but also showed me that they had insight about how this problem influenced my responses to my predicament. They understood something about the deep structure and the intrinsic nature of the problem. They knew that at the center of my decision making was the fact that I often felt helpless. I had little or no sense of being able to control my speech. Sometimes I had what felt like “lucky fluency,” which, at the time, I regarded as a good thing. But a moment later I would be unable to communicate even my most basic thoughts. Even when I wasn’t overtly stuttering, I experienced the problem as I constantly altered my choices and constricted my options due to even the possibility of stuttering. (p. 116)

What Is Stuttering?

To put it simply, stuttering is two things: Stuttering is a disorder of talking, and stuttering is also a disorder of not talking. Stutterers not only struggle to speak, they often struggle to avoid speaking. Stutterers struggle to get the words out, and they struggle

Stuttering 11 Homework

Name _____

Date due _____

Think about something that happened to you recently that includes your stuttering. Maybe a friend asked you a question about stuttering, or maybe you had an easy or a difficult stuttering day in school. Using a separate sheet of paper, write a few sentences describing what happened and put pausing marks (commas) after the first word in every sentence. Then read your homework to your parents. Be sure to stop briefly at each comma.

Parent signature _____

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Stuttering 11 Homework

Name _____

Date due _____

Read "My Turn" by Jeff Shames to a relative while using your pausing. Jeff dreaded having to sit in class and wait to be called on to speak. What are two ways that your teacher could make speaking easier for you in your classroom?

1. _____

2. _____

Parent signature _____

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Stuttering 11 Homework

Name _____

Date due _____

Read "Stutter Ball" by Angel Soto to a relative while using pausing. Angel's brother Eric helped Angel laugh about stuttering. He called the game they were playing "Stutter Ball." This was a nice way to tease about stuttering. What are some other nice or funny ways to talk about stuttering?

Parent signature _____

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Stuttering 11 Homework

Name _____

Date due _____

Read "My Frozen Mouth" by Sarah Kaplan to your parents while using pausing. Sarah described her mouth as feeling "frozen" when she stuttered. How does your mouth or body feel when you stutter? _____

Parent signature _____

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It's Showtime

Purpose

- To provide students, through role-playing, with ways to handle teasing situations and stressful speaking situations
- To provide students with the opportunity to express their feelings and attitudes about stuttering and bullying situations

Materials

Stuttering Plays
 Write Your Own Stuttering Play handouts
 Prop-making materials for plays (i.e., paper, markers, and tape)
 Homework



Directions

Many children who stutter report that being teased, mocked, or bullied is one of the worst parts about the disorder. Clinicians often use role-playing to help students face their fears and manage difficult situations.

Acting Out Plays. To begin this activity, explain:

Today we are going to practice dealing with people who tease you and who are mean to you because you stutter. We will be acting out several plays about teasing. Let's see if we have any good actors among us!

Choose an appropriate play and hand out a copy to each student. Sometimes students do not understand that they should act the part of the character they are assigned, and they end up reading in a monotone. To prevent dull readings, assign yourself a role so that students observe you acting or even overacting instead of simply reading lines.

Students often enjoy arranging the therapy room in a special way for each play. For example, when practicing the Restaurant Play, students may wish to set the scene by using folders as menus, moving tables and chairs, and drawing a restaurant sign to hang on the wall. When acting out the plays, tell students performing in roles other than the "Stutterer," such as a "Cashier" or "Friend," it is okay if they happen to stutter.

You will notice that in Buying Ice Cream, the Stutterer and the Friend characters respond to a rude cashier by politely addressing his behavior three times. Whereas

Tips for Talking with the Child Who Stutters

1. Do not tell the child to slow down or "relax."
2. Speak with the child in an unhurried way, pausing frequently. Wait a few seconds after the child finishes speaking before you begin to speak. This slows down the overall pace of conversation.
3. Help all members of the class learn to take turns talking and listening. All children—and especially those who stutter—find it much easier to talk when there are few interruptions, and they have the listener's attention.
4. Use your facial expressions, eye contact, and other body language to convey to the child that you are listening to the content of her message and not how she is talking.
5. Expect the same quality and quantity of work from the student who stutters as from the one who does not.
6. Try to decrease criticisms, rapid speech patterns, and interruptions.
7. Do not complete words for the child or talk for her.
8. Have a one-on-one conversation with the student who stutters about needed accommodations in the classroom. Be respectful of his needs but not enabling.
9. Do not make stuttering something to be ashamed of. Talk about stuttering just like any other matter.