

HOW CAN I HELP A CHILD WHO STUTTERS?

Tips for Parents

Everyone has minor dysfluencies or “bumps” in their speech some of the time. They happen most often when we are speaking fast or when we are nervous, tired, upset, or excited. Prolonging sounds, starting and stopping talking, and repeating words is normal at these times. Dysfluencies are not necessarily a problem unless a person produces too many of them.

WAYS TO ENCOURAGE FLUENT SPEECH:

- **Speak with your child in an unhurried way, pausing frequently.** Wait a few seconds after your child finishes speaking before you begin to speak. Your own slow, relaxed speech will be far more effective than any criticism or advice such as “slow down” or “try it again slowly”.
- **Reduce the number of questions you ask your child.** Children speak more freely if they are expressing their own ideas rather than answering an adult’s questions. Instead of asking questions, you can simply comment on what your child has said, thereby letting them know you heard them.
- **Use your facial expressions and other body language** to convey to your child that you are listening to the content of his/her message and not to how he/she is talking.
- **Set aside a few minutes at a regular time each day when you can give your undivided attention to your child.** During this time, let the child choose what he/she would like to do. Let your child direct you in activities and decide himself/herself whether to talk or not. When you talk during this special time, use slow, calm, and relaxed speech, with plenty of pauses. This quiet, calm time can be a confidence-builder for younger children, letting them know that a parent enjoys their company. As the child gets older, it can be a time when the child feels comfortable talking about his/her feelings and experiences with a parent.
- **Help all members of the family learn to take turns talking and listening.** Children, especially those who stutter, find it much easier to talk when there are few interruptions and they have the listeners’ attention.
- **Observe the way you interact with your child.** Try to increase those times that give your child the message that you are listening to him/her and he/she has plenty of time to talk. Try to decrease criticisms, rapid speech patterns, interruptions, and questions.
- **Above all, convey that you accept your child as he/she is.** The most powerful force will be your support of him/her, whether he/she stutters or not.



Try **NOT** to:

- Interrupt your child when he/she is talking
- Express concerns about the child in his/her presence
- Finish words or sentences for your child



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