

# Center for Stuttering Therapy

*Dedicated to bringing freedom of speech to people who stutter*

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## **General Advice for Parents of School-Age Children Who Stutter**

### **Listening and Turn-Taking:**

- It is important to listen carefully and pay attention to what your child is saying.  
If you are busy and can't give your full attention, tell your child that you will listen to him/her when you have finished what you are doing (and make sure that you do).
- Focus the content of your child's speech rather than the form.
- Each person in the household should have the opportunity to have his/her "say."
- Your child needs to know that he/she will have a turn and that then it will be someone else's turn to speak. If, while listening to your child, he/she becomes "longwinded," you might discuss the value of being brief and not monopolizing a conversation.
- Be careful not to inadvertently interrupt or ignore your child's attempts to communicate.
- Try to ensure that nobody is allowed to interrupt during a person's turn to talk.
- Reduce the sense of time urgency by increasing turn-switching duration. That is, the amount of time between the end of your child's comment or question and your response.
- Try to have your child and family follow these simple rules for talking:
  - wait for your turn to talk
  - don't talk while others are talking
  - listen when others are talking

### **Decreasing Communicative Pressures:**

- Try to foster a pleasant and peaceful atmosphere at home. Regular (relaxed) routines will provide your child with a sense of structure and security.
- Try to avoid hurried situations. Decrease "time pressure" within your family life style.
- When your child is excited and in a hurry to say something, help him/her to relax and say something like "I have time and want to hear what you have to say."
- Avoid practices that put pressure on your child for good speech. Don't persuade him/her to speak or recite before friends, visitors, or strangers. However, encourage your child to speak as often as he/she wants.
- Be careful not to inadvertently hurry your child with regard to his/her speech. Be patient. Give your child time to say what he/she wishes to say and remain undisturbed by any long pauses, blocks, or repetitions which may occur.

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- Discourage talking when your child is under time pressure.
- Look for pressures at home and school when your child shows excessive speech disfluency. Notice the situations or activities that seem to precipitate speech breakdown. Discuss your observations with your speech-language pathologist.

## **Sharing Feelings**

- Help your child to express his/her feelings by doing so yourself.
- Talk openly with your child about stuttering, if he/she expresses a desire to do so.
- Listen to your child's feelings and reflect on them.

## **Disciplining Your Child:**

- Use the same discipline as with any other child. Don't let your child avoid normal responsibilities because of his/her speech.
- Be consistent with your child. Consistency provides predictability.
- Give clear statements of your expectations so that your child will be able to predict the outcome/consequences of his/her actions.
- Remember that structure reduces anxiety. Discipline and controlled behavior is important in fostering relaxed speech

## **Dealing with Moments Disfluency:**

- When your child is stuttering, don't supply him/her with words. Let your child get his/her words out himself. Also avoid suggestions as: "Think before you speak." "Talk slower." "Wait until you can say it." Instead, try to relax, be patient, and listen to what your child is saying.
- Don't ask your child to stop and start over when he/she stutters.
- Calmly acknowledge the occurrence of any long effortful or forceful disfluencies especially if your child indicates concern and/or awareness of these obvious disruptions. A statement like "That was hard for you wasn't it?" can defuse some of your child's concern and show him/her that the same lapses do not upset you. You can also acknowledge an instance of stuttering nonverbally (e.g., touching your child). Follow your natural instincts.
- After a disfluent utterance, you might repeat back the content of what your child said. This will help you make sure you are attending to the content of what is said. In addition, you are telling your child that you are listening to him/her.

**Having Realistic Expectations:**

- Be careful that you do not expect too much from your child, both in terms of fluency and in other areas. Try to keep realistic expectations.
- Remember that traumatic events such as illness, accidents, and emotional conflicts, cannot be avoided. Be aware that these events may be accompanied by more disfluency in your child's speech.
- Remember that behavior change takes *time*. Children (particularly older children) have "practiced" the behavior of stuttering for several years will have the tendency to revert to old speech behaviors until they practice their new speech skills for some time.
- There will be variability in your child's speech abilities. His/her speech skills will probably wax and wane. Expect and be prepared for this variability.