

CONNECT



Growing smiles, mending spirits, engaging children in their lives

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Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you've imagined.

~Henry David Thoreau

Let's Talk: Fluency Disorders

What is a "Fluency Disorder"?

Fluency refers to smooth effortless speech. A fluency disorder is a speech disorder in which the normal flow of speech is disrupted by frequent repetitions or prolongations of speech sounds, syllables, or words or by an individual's inability to start a word. These disruptions in speech are also known as "disfluencies".

The most common fluency disorder is "Stuttering". **Stuttering** begins during childhood and, in some cases, lasts throughout a person's life. Stuttering is often considered to be normal part of development for children between ages two and six.

Examples of Stuttering:

- " W- W- W- Where are you going?" (Part-word repetition: The person is having difficulty moving from the "w" in "where" to the remaining sounds in the word.)
- " SSSS ave me a seat." (Sound prolongation: The person is having difficulty moving from the "s" in "save" to the remaining sounds in the word. He continues to say the "s" sound until he is able to complete the word.)
- "I'll meet you - um um you know like - around six o'clock." (A series of interjections: "um-um-um" and "you know" are included in the sentence)

Why is it important for children to receive therapy for fluency disorders?

As children with fluency disorders grow older, they often develop insecurities relating to their communication abilities. They can become fearful and anxious when called upon to speak. This fear prevents them from participating in social activities both at school and home. They can feel isolated and trapped by this fear. Along with teaching techniques to smooth out their speech; one of the main goals of therapy is to reduce this anxiety and help the child develop a healthy attitude about their speech. The ultimate goal is to communicate effectively without fear.

TinyEYE Tidbit

TinyEYE has over 100 interactive online therapy games!

We strive to make therapy sessions fun and engaging for our students. They love to play games like Tic-Tac-Toe, Space Spies, or Dress Up the Dinosaur while becoming experts with their communication skills!



Class Room Tips: Working with children who stutter

1. When talking to a child that stutters:

- * **Avoid telling the child to slow down or "relax."** This is something that is commonly done by well-meaning listeners. Unfortunately, by doing this you point out that the child is making a "mistake" and can contribute to their anxiety and frustration.
- * Don't complete words for the child or talk for him or her.
- * Help all members of the class learn to take turns talking and listening. All children -- especially those who stutter -- find it much easier to talk when there are few interruptions and they have the listener's attention.
- * Expect the same quality and quantity of work from the student who stutters as the one who does not; however, if the student is struggling to talk, help him or her participate in a way that does not demand talking.
- * Speak with the student in an unhurried way, pausing frequently and avoiding long complex sentences. Children tend to imitate adult speech which can be overwhelming to them.
- * Convey that you are listening to the content of the message, not how it was said. Let the child know you like his or her ideas.
- * Have a one-on-one conversation with the student who stutters about needed accommodations in the classroom.
- * Do not make stuttering something to be ashamed of. Talk about stuttering just like any other matter. Normalize it for the student. Let him or her know that sometime you 'trip' on words, too!

2. It is okay to occasionally acknowledge that a word might have been hard. "That is a big word – sometimes it is a bumpy word for me too!!" Normalize it.

3. Maintain a relaxed, patient, and interested expression and tone. Let the child know how much you enjoy his or her ideas.

4. CLASS RULES: No teasing allowed. Enforce turn taking rules to reduce potential interruptions and rushing of ideas.

5. Most children who stutter are fluent when reading in unison with someone else. Rather than not calling on the child who stutters, let him have his turn with one of the other children. Let the whole class read in pairs sometimes so that the child who stutters doesn't feel "special." Gradually he may become more confident and be able to manage reading out loud on his own.

6. As you are asking questions in the classroom, you can do certain things to make it easier for a child who stutters.

- Initially, until he adjusts to the class, ask him questions that can be answered with relatively few words.
- If every child is going to be asked a question, call on the child who stutters fairly early. Tension and worry can build up the longer he has to wait his turn.
- Assure the whole class that (1) they will have as much time as they need to answer questions, and (2) you are interested in having them take time and think through their answers, not just answer quickly

7. The best way to encourage a child who stutters to talk in your class is to let him know through your words and actions that what he says is important, not the way he says it. Other ways you can encourage the child:

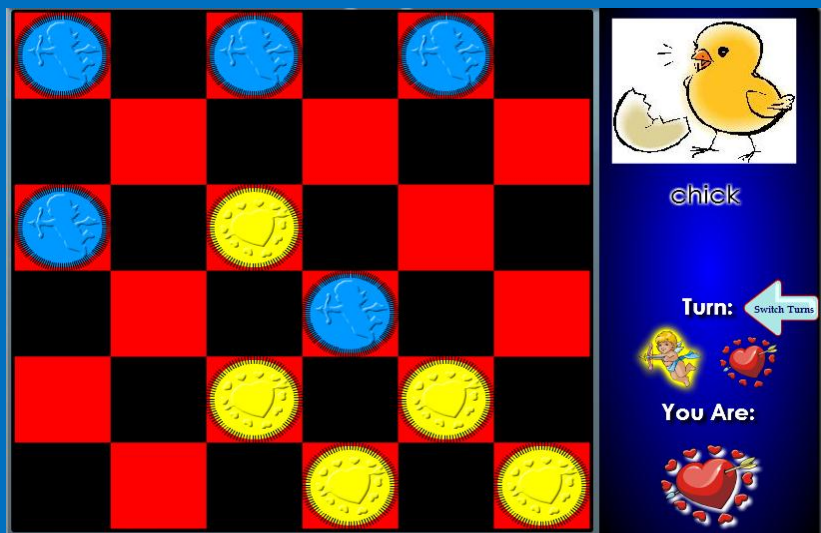
- Praise him for sharing his ideas;
- Tell him that stuttering does not bother you;
- Give him opportunities to talk, such as calling on him to give an answer or asking him for his opinion; and,
- Let him know it's ok to stutter. Anxiety can cause more stuttering. A relaxed, accepting atmosphere is best.

Normal Disfluencies vs. Abnormal Disfluencies

All children will display some types of disfluencies while developing their speech and language skills. Here are some tips on how to determine which children may need help. When in doubt always refer to a Speech Therapist for an evaluation!

	Probably NORMAL DISFLUENCIES	Probably STUTTERING
Speech behavior you may see or hear:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional (less than once every 10 sentences), brief (less than 1/2 second), repetitions of sounds, syllables, or short words <i>li-like</i> this. Sounds, syllables, or words only repeated once or twice, for example <i>hey-hey, ca-ca-can</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent (3 or more every 10 sentences), long (longer than 1/2 second) repetitions of sounds, syllables, and some short words, <i>li-li-li-like</i> this. Sounds, syllables, and short words usually repeated 3 or more times, <i>f-f-f-for ex-ex-ex-example</i>. Occasional prolongation of sounds <i>lllllike</i> this, or blockages.
Other behavior you may see or hear:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occasional pauses, hesitations in speech, or fillers such as "uh," "er," or "um," usually noticed when the child is changing words or thoughts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitions and prolongations may be associated with eyelid closing and blinking, looking away, and some muscle tension in and around the mouth. May also hear changes in pitch or loudness as child struggles to say word. Child may say extra sounds or words as starters, e.g., "<i>Well it's well it's I-I-I need a crayon.</i>"
When problem is most noticeable:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tends to come and go when child is: tired, excited, talking about complex or new topic, asking or answering questions, or talking to unresponsive listeners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May come and go in similar situations, but is more often present than absent. If noticed in most speaking situations and is consistent, problem may be more severe.
Child reaction:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None apparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May show concern, embarrassment, frustration, fear of speaking. May be reluctant to participate in classroom activities such as show-and-tell, reading aloud, or raising hand during question-answer periods.
Peer reactions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None apparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peers may ask questions, comment on, or imitate child's speech. Teasing may be present.
Parent reactions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None to a great deal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some degree of concern.
Referral decision:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No referral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer for screening.

Backpack: Valentine's Game Spotlight



Adventure: Let's play Valentine's Checkers!

How to play: Each player takes a turn moving their token diagonally onto the red spaces. Jump the other player to make the picture change. When you get all the way to the other side you become a KING! Once you're a king you can move back and forth. The player with tokens left at the end is the Checkers Champion!

Target Skills: When working with fluency, the therapist will teach the student specific techniques to promote smooth speech. Starting at the word level the student will practice these skills while having fun! Once the student is comfortable at the word level they will move on to sentences like: "I see a chick" and "I see a chair". Ultimately the student will advance all the way to putting multiple sentences together at the conversation level.

Children who stutter can develop low self-esteem. It often helps them to know that they aren't alone! There are a lot of "cool" people who also stutter.

Here's a List of a few Famous People who stutter:

Joseph Biden – Vice President of the USA

Nicole Kidman – Actress

Bruce Willis – Actor

Marilyn Monroe – Actress

Michelle Williams of Destiny's Child – singer

Tim Gunn – TV show Project Runway

Tiger Woods – Professional golfer

Bo Jackson – football star

Greg Louganis – Olympic Swimmer

King George VI – the movie "The King's Speech" chronicles his life

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Questions & Answers

Question:

I have a student in my class who stutters. I've noticed some other students teasing him. How can I help without making things worse?

Answer:

- Teasing can be very painful for the student who stutters, and it should be eliminated as far as possible.
- If the child has obviously been upset by teasing, talk with him or her one-on-one. Help the child to understand why others tease, and brainstorm ideas for how to respond.
- If any certain children are picking on him, talk to them alone and explain that teasing is unacceptable.
- Try to enlist their help. Most want the approval of the teachers.
- If the problem persists, you may want to consult a guidance counselor or social worker if one is available in your building. They often have good suggestions for managing teasing.

**Answer from The Stuttering Foundation : www.stutteringhelp.org*

Do you have a question for TinyEYE?

Contact Michele at: Michele@tinyeye.com