

## HELPING CHILDREN WHO STUTTER

### What is stuttering?

Stuttering is a communication disorder that is characterized by a disruption of flow in someone's speech. Examples of stuttering include:

- “**Repetitions**” of words or parts of words (c-c-c-can I have juice?)
- Stretching or “**prolongations**” of sounds (wwwwwwwhy can't I have juice?)
- Or complete “**blocks**” – no airflow or voice lasting for a moment or longer (can I have \_\_\_ juice?)

Here are a few strategies that can be used at home or at school while waiting for services:

#### 1. Be a good listener

- Maintain good eye contact while your child is talking
- Give your child lots of time to finish speaking
- Do not fill in words or give advice such as “slow down”, “stop and think”

#### 2. Slow down your own rate of speech

- As you slow down your own rate of speech, your child will be more likely to slow down theirs as well
- A good rule of thumb is to imagine talking as if someone was trying to write down what you were saying

#### 3. Increase wait time

- Try to wait 1 second or so before responding to your child after they have finished speaking. This will help to keep the pace of the conversation at a nice and relaxed rate
- Pausing before responding to your child will also reduce the chances of accidentally interrupting them

#### 4. Do not interrupt

- When possible do not interrupt your child or allow others to interrupt
- Frequent interruption can increase a child's dysfluency because there is more pressure being placed on them to express themselves quickly and clearly in order to be heard and understood

#### 5. Avoid high pressure questioning

- Avoid asking too many questions at once or asking a second question before they have had a chance to answer the first question
- It is okay to ask questions that will help your child communicate e.g. "who did you play with today?" rather than those questions that test their knowledge or memory "tell me what you are learning at school"

#### 6. Encourage good turn taking habits

- Encourage everyone to take turns talking and listening
- You can explain to the child ahead of time that everyone will get an opportunity to speak

#### 7. Acknowledge when speech is difficult

- It's important to let your child know that you accept them for who they are and that you are not upset or angry with the way in which they speak. You can do this by casually commenting "that was hard for you to say" or "that was a tough word"
- It's important to only use statements like the ones above when your child is visibly upset or expresses fear or anxiety with their speech
- You could also offer some positive feedback when your child is having "a good speech day".

#### 8. Create a special talk time

- It is important to set aside some time each day to interact with your child. This time can be spent playing or having a conversation. What makes this time special is that it is a time where you and your child will not feel hurried or distracted. It is also a great way to see which of the above strategies works best for your child

- 5 minutes a day can go a long way and make a huge difference in your child's speech
- It is also important for your child to know that they are not alone, and that everyone stutters every now and then.

**Here are some websites that may be helpful:**

**The Stuttering Foundation** [stutteringhelp.org](http://stutteringhelp.org)

**Canadian Stuttering Association** [stutter.ca](http://stutter.ca)

**The Speech and Stuttering Institute** [speechandstuttering.com](http://speechandstuttering.com)