



## Advice for Parents: Children Who Stutter

As a parent, it is sometimes difficult to know how to help support your child when she has moments of dysfluency, also known as stuttering. These tips can help both you and your child.

- Listen to what your child is saying, not how he is saying it. Focusing on the content of communication, rather than the execution, helps your child to know that his contributions matter.
- Eliminate communicative stress. This may mean adjusting your facial expressions and body language so you don't seem anxious when your child is having a moment of dysfluency in his communication.
- Don't hurry the child when he is speaking. Removing the pressure of time can support children who stutter to have more fluent speech.
- Don't interrupt him. When a child who stutters is interrupted by his communication partner, especially in the moment of dysfluency, it sends a signal to the child that his communication isn't valued.
- Don't finish what he is saying. Sometimes you may be tempted to just complete the sentence that your child is trying to communicate as a way of trying to make it easier for him. Resist this urge. Finishing a sentence for your child, even when trying to be helpful, sends a message that he isn't capable of successful communication which may have longer lasting effects than intended.
- Don't set him up to talk or put him on stage. Talking in front of others can be a highly stressful situation, especially when it is not the will of the child. Allow your child to talk in front of others when he chooses to do so.
- Present a model of easy, relaxed and SLOW speech. Your example of easy, relaxed, deliberate speech can be an opportunity for your child to imitate your speech pattern, possibly resulting in a more relaxed speech pattern for your child.
- Increase the time between the end of the child's utterance and the start of your response. This is called response time latency. It serves as a good model for appropriately taking time to respond within in a conversation and helps conversations feel more relaxed and leisurely.
- Put a short period of uninterrupted time aside every day to play with your child, modeling easy, relaxed and slow speech. This can be a fun, enjoyable way of spending time together without the pressure of communication.
- Observe your behaviors when your child is dysfluent. Be careful not to increase your attention just because he is being dysfluent. In fact, some research has shown that ignoring the child's stuttering may decrease its frequency.