

# EVERY CHILD HAS SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY

## WHAT IS STUTTERING?

Stuttering is a disruption in the flow of speaking. This is something we all experience from time to time, such as repeating a word or phrase. Children who stutter experience this much more frequently and in addition may display more severe disruptions to their speaking. They may repeat a part of a word or sound many times, stretch out a sound, or experience a period of time where they are unable to speak, known as blocking.

## WHAT CAUSES STUTTERING?

We still do not know the exact cause of stuttering. It is NOT caused by poor parenting or a traumatic childhood event. We do know it is influenced by a variety of physiological, psychological, environmental, and linguistic factors.

## HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

Stuttering is inconsistent. Stuttering may be worse when a child is sick, tired, during times of transition (such as holidays, starting school, etc.), or under stress of any kind. While stuttering may fluctuate, there are still some things parents can do to support a child who stutters.

The following suggestions are designed to create an interaction between you and your child that promotes their natural fluency. Try to find a few minutes each day that you can spend with your child when they have your complete attention. Try to make the environment quiet and calm. This is the time to turn off the TV and put down your iPad or phone. Then pick one of the suggestions below to add during this time each week. Just a few minutes a day of focused time with your child may help!

### Week 1: LET YOUR CHILD LEAD THE CONVERSATION

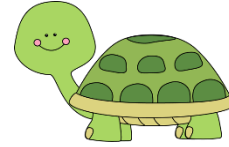
How? Let your child guide the topic and flow of conversation. Maintain good eye contact and show them you are interested. Focus on WHAT they are saying rather than HOW they are saying it. Resist the impulse to take over and let your child be the conversation boss!

Why it helps? When your child is directing the flow of conversation rather than adapting to yours, they may feel more relaxed, comfortable, and confident.

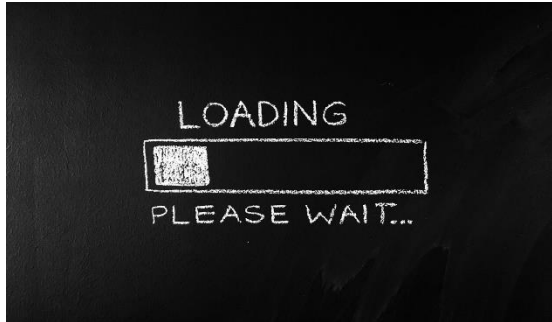


## Week 2: SLOW DOWN

How? Use a slow relaxed rate and pause frequently between phrases and thoughts rather than telling your child to slow down.



Why it helps? Modelling a slow rate naturally encourages your child to slow their own rate. It shows your child that it's ok to take time to put their thoughts into words. Talking slower may also lessen the sense of competition to quickly take a turn and may help your child feel more relaxed when speaking.



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## Week 3: USE MORE WAIT TIME

How? Wait about 2 seconds after your child is done talking before speaking. While they are speaking, use facial expression and body gestures to show you are listening.

Why it helps? This ensures your child is done speaking and won't feel rushed to finish before being interrupted. It also models a way for your child to gather their thoughts before speaking.

## Week 4: BALANCE COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

How? Try not to ask many questions in succession and find ways to comment when possible. For example, if your child says something, try to paraphrase or comment on what they have said. Or, if they aren't speaking, try to comment on something your child is doing or focused on. Some questions are okay but make sure you are balancing them with comments.

Why it helps? Asking children frequent questions can increase feelings of pressure and anxiety. Children may feel more comfortable when they are not always required to respond to questions and can comment when they are ready and wanting to participate.



## Week 5: BUILD SELF-CONFIDENCE

How? Find ways to praise WHAT your child is saying rather than HOW they are saying it. You can also praise strengths unrelated to talking (e.g. "I like the way you organized your time studying today"). If your child is aware of their stuttering, make it okay to talk openly and matter-of-factly about it. Offer to help prepare in advance for oral activities (e.g. presentations, phone calls, inviting a friend to a birthday party).

Why it helps? Building confidence may reduce some of the anxiety around speaking.