



SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN

SHOWING EARLY SIGNS OF STUTTERING

Don't be too concerned about simple repetition of sounds or words: Your child is probably passing through the trial-and-error stage of learning to talk. Some children hesitate more than others as they learn, and most will talk smoothly again as long as they don't become self-conscious about their errors. The suggestions below will help children speak more easily, whether or not they have a slight stuttering problem:

When talking with your child, speak slowly and pause often. Wait a few seconds after your child finishes speaking before you begin to speak again. Give your child the impression that there is no need to hurry when talking.

Refrain from direct advice to your child about speech, such as "Slow down," or "You can talk better than that. Try again." Instead, let your model of slower speech indirectly influence your child.

Show your child that you are attending to the message, rather than how it's conveyed. Keep good eye contact show by your expression that you have time to listen.

Find ways of reducing pressure on your child's speech. For example, teach your family to take turns talking, so interruptions are the exception rather than the rule. Reduce the number of questions you and other family members ask your child. Ask one question at a time and wait for a response first before asking a follow up question. Let your child decide when to speak.

When your child is going through a period of more stuttering than usual, there may be some ways you can help. Look for any extra stresses that you can ease. Make it clear that everyone has some trouble talking at times. Give your child some extra attention by 1) Spending time alone with him or her. 2) Moving down to the child's level, physically, when talking with him or her. 3) Praise strengths unrelated to talking, such as athletic skills, being independent, careful, organized or thoughtful. This will build self-confidence. Use descriptive phrases such as "I like that you were so thorough in putting away your toys." instead of vague praise such as "That's Great" to promote actions and show appreciation.

Normal rules apply. Discipline for your child who stutters should be no different than for another child without speech difficulties.

Discuss with your child's provider whether a referral to a speech therapist is warranted to help with stuttering.

A useful website resource is The Stuttering Foundation (www.stutteringfoundation.org) which provides numerous resources and information for patients and families affected by stuttering.