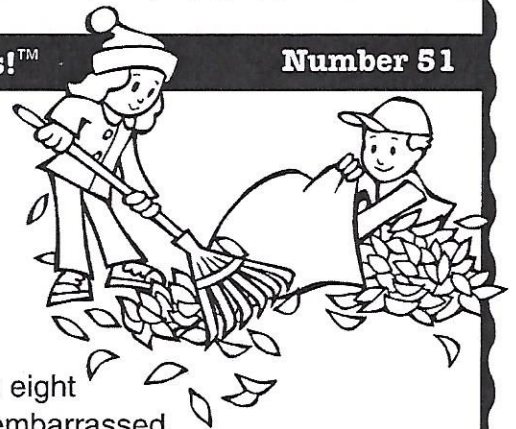


What Do You Know About Stuttering? A Parent's and Teacher's Guide to Fluency

By Keri Spielvogle, M.C.D., CCC-SLP



A child comes into the therapy room with his mother. He is eight years old. As his mother tells you about his stuttering, he looks embarrassed. He squirms in his seat and looks at the floor, but won't interject or express his feelings about his speech.

This particular example is real. The boy had a severe fluency disorder and was well aware of his speaking patterns. He experienced 42 instances of dysfluency while reading a 100-word passage from his school reading book. Upon close observation, you noticed that he clenched his jaw, gripped his leg, and shut his eyes when he stuttered, all classic secondary behaviors. He avoided speaking situations, including ordering for himself at restaurants and talking on the telephone.

Not all children who stutter are at this severity level. If this speech disorder is not treated properly, it can reach this level, negatively impacting all areas of a child's life including home, school, social, and emotional.

What should I know about stuttering?

Some of us will never come into contact with children who stutter. It is a relatively rare speech disorder, affecting more school-age boys than girls. Many agree that stuttering is caused by a variety of factors, including genetics, motor programming, emotional, and environmental.

Listen to the speech of those around you. You'll notice that no one has perfect speech, free of all dysfluencies. The difference between their speech and the speech of the stuttering child is the amount of tension associated with the moment of stuttering. These are the common types of dysfluencies found in both normal and disordered speech:

- * **Single Word Repetition** - Repeating a single word in a sentence. (I-I-I-I-I want to go now!)
- * **Phrase Repetition** - Repeating a phrase within a sentence. (I want-I want-I want-I want some more juice.)
- * **Syllable Repetition** - Repeating a syllable within a word in a sentence. (I want to hold the ba-ba-ba-baby.)
- * **Blocking** - Trying to get a syllable or sound out, but getting stuck, making no noise. (I love to eat ice (silence) cream.)
- * **Prolongation** - Holding the first sound of a word or syllable, with difficulty moving to the next sound. (Tonight I have ho——mework.)