

Stuttering Can Be Confusing

When you are talking to someone who is having trouble producing sounds and words smoothly, they are most likely stuttering. You will probably react appropriately by instinct, but if you are not sure what to do, you are not alone.

Stuttering is often misunderstood. When a person is having difficulty speaking, it can cause listeners to feel anxious or uncertain about how to respond. If you keep the following suggestions in mind, the experience can be more comfortable for you and for the person who stutters.

Thank you for being interested enough to learn more about stuttering

What To Know

About 1% of adults and 5% of children stutter. That translates to approximately 3 million people who stutter in the United States.

Stuttering typically starts in childhood. Most people start stuttering between the ages of 2½ and 5 years. Boys are three times more likely to stutter than girls.

People who stutter are normal. They simply have difficulty producing sounds and words smoothly.

Stuttering is not a psychological disorder. Although we do not know exactly why people stutter, we do know that it is *not* caused by psychological or emotional factors.

The cause of stuttering is complex. Current research suggests that many different factors may be involved.

People stutter in different ways. Some repeat syllables and others stretch out sounds or “block” while speaking. There are as many different ways to stutter as there are people who stutter.

Stuttering varies. Some days, it is harder to speak smoothly, and other days it is easier. It is not always possible to figure out why a person stutters more at one time than at another.

Stuttering is not easy to change. Stuttering may look like an easy problem that can be solved with some simple advice. For most adults who stutter, however, it is a life-long disorder.

There are no limits to what people who stutter can do. Many people have learned to manage their stuttering so it has little or no impact on their daily lives.

What to do When Speaking With A Person Who Stutters

Be patient. Most people who stutter strongly prefer to speak for themselves. You may be tempted to finish a person’s sentences or “fill in” words, but this does not help.

Remember that it’s okay to stutter. Don’t give advice such as: “slow down,” “take a breath,” or “relax.” Maintain eye contact, listen, and wait patiently until the person is done speaking.

Remember that stuttering varies. Don’t be surprised when a person stutters more in some situations than in others.

Remember that stuttering is NOT caused by nervousness. While a speaker may appear nervous, keep in mind that the nervousness is a result of embarrassment about their stuttering rather than a cause for it.

Be a good listener. Let the speaker know, by what you say and do, that you are listening. Focus on the message and not how it is said.

If you’re not sure how to respond, ask the speaker. Although some speakers may be uncomfortable talking about their speech, most will appreciate your interest.

More About Stuttering

Changing speech is not easy. However, therapy and support have helped many people who stutter improve their ability to communicate.

◆ For young children who stutter, early detection and intervention is key.

◆ For adults who stutter, achieving and maintaining fluent speech is a life-long process.

For More Information

There are many organizations devoted to increasing awareness and understanding of stuttering. The National Stuttering Association website can provide more information and links to other resources and organizations.

The NSA also produces many pamphlets, booklets, and newsletters designed to help people who stutter get the most out of their lives.

Go to <http://www.westutter.org> or call the NSA at (800) 937-8888 for more information.

The National Stuttering Association

Meeting the needs of people who stutter since 1977

The National Stuttering Association is the largest self-help/support organization in the US; with over 80 chapters and 3,500 members nationwide. The NSA provides information, advocacy and support for adults and children who stutter, their families, and the professionals who work with them.

The NSA is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization supporting people who stutter and their families since 1977. Contributions are welcome and tax deductible.



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Notes To Listeners

What to know and what to do when speaking with a person who stutters



We brighten the world for people who stutter