



Stuttering 101

When is it appropriate and when to be concerned.

Mikaila Fager, Speech-Language Pathologist, M.S.

WHEN IS STUTTERING AGE APPROPRIATE?

It is common for children ages two through five/six to go through periods of dis-fluencies and exhibit what appears to be a stutter. Dis-fluencies are likely due to expansion of vocabulary and learning of language/sounds. It is common for children to go through periods of dis-fluencies, return to fluent speech, and then again exhibit dis-fluencies. Dis-fluencies can appear for no reason, and are likely to increase when the child is tired, excited, upset, etc.

Typical dis-fluencies include repetitions of sounds, syllables, and words, likely occurring at the beginning of sentences. For example, a child may repeat the 'm' in 'mommy' (m-m-m-mommy) or repeat a full word in a sentence (I, I, I, want juice). It is typical for children with dis-fluencies to be unaware of them. Every child's language development is different, and these typical dis-fluencies can change from day to day. Most children outgrow these dis-fluencies, typically lasting around 6 months. In other cases, dis-fluencies persist and signs of stuttering become increasingly noticeable, likely needing further services.



PRO TIP: Do not call attention to the stutter, it is likely the child is unaware.

WHEN SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED?

It is okay to be concerned about your child's stuttering. Common signs for continued stuttering include, stuttering has lasted more than 6 months, child starts to stutter later in age (3.5 and on), stuttering becomes consistent, secondary behaviors are observed (blinking, head nodding, looking tense), and avoiding discussions with others. There is no one cause for stuttering. Possible causes include: family history, gender (males are more likely to continue a stutter than females), age when started to stutter (3.5 or later are more likely to continue stuttering), and brain differences. As a child progresses in age, they may become increasingly aware of their stutter. This is where you as a parent can help!

One strategy can include reducing communication stress. Reducing communication stress minimizes the pressure placed on a child in a speaking situation. You can reduce communication stress by rephrasing questions into statements/comments. For example, instead of saying "what did you have for lunch today?" you could say "I bet you had a great lunch today!"

A second approach includes discussing the stutter with your child. When a child is aware of their stuttering, it is best to talk about it and provide knowledge and reinforcement that it is okay to have 'bumpy speech'. It is important to discuss stuttering in a positive way.

A third strategy to implement includes patience. Give your child the time they need to finish their thoughts, comments, questions, etc. allowing them to feel heard. Lastly, seeking a speech language pathologist is always an option. A speech-language pathologist can evaluate and treat individuals who stutter.



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Undergraduate Degree

Communication Science & Disorders
University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire

Graduate Degree

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University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

Years of Experience

2 years

Specialty Interests

Pediatric Speech and Language
Therapy, Syndromes

Philosophy

I believe that an individual does best when communication strategies are incorporated into a meaningful, fun and natural environment. My therapy involves collaboration with family members and caregivers in the intervention process, as well as collaboration with other professionals within CP Therapy Services. I like to work close with the families and other professionals in my clients' care to ensure consistency of treatment and to enhance generalization of progressing communication skills.

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