

# Additional Advice for Parents of Children and Young People Who Stammer

These ideas are necessarily general. Some of them will make sense and be easy to try out, while others will feel less useful. If your child is aware of the stammer, and it feels right, ask them what they think would be helpful when they are having difficulty with their talking.

## Some thoughts:

- It may be unhelpful to tell your child to slow down. Adults find it hard enough to change their rate of talking and we shouldn't ask a child to do something that we can't do! Your child may be able to go more slowly for a moment or two, but it is unlikely that it will last - then you will both end up feeling frustrated.
- Telling your child to think first before he or she speaks has a short-term effect. It can also add to the frustration.

## Instead:

- Listen carefully to your child, concentrating on what he or she is saying, not how he or she is saying it. Try not to look away from your child when he or she is having difficulty talking.
- Slow down your own rate of talking: Speak with your child in an unhurried way, pausing frequently. Wait a few seconds after your child finishes before you begin to speak. Your own easy relaxed speech will be more effective than any advice such as "slow down" or "try it again slowly."
- Reduce the number of questions you ask and make sure you give your child time to answer one before asking another. It may be more helpful to comment on what your child has said and wait to see if he or she will add to it.
- Allow time for the child to finish what he or she has to say, rather than finishing it for them.
- Try to arrange some time during the day - perhaps five minutes - when your child can have your undivided attention in a calm and relaxed atmosphere: without TV or iPads!
- Pay attention to the number of times the child who stammers is being interrupted, or interrupts others. Explain to all the family the importance of taking turns to talk and listen.
- Praise your child for the things he or she does well, as this can help build confidence. Use descriptive phrases, e.g. "I like the way you cleared the table without being asked. You're so helpful," instead of "that's great." Praise strengths unrelated to talking such as athletic skills, being organized, independent, or careful.
- Treat your stammering child in exactly the same way as you would any other child regarding their behaviour - discipline needs to be appropriate and consistent.
- As with all children, enough sleep and a healthy diet are important to mental and physical development. Some structure to the daily routine can be helpful.

Advice collated with thanks to the Michael Palin Centre and The Stuttering Foundation.

For more information about stammering for parents, visit [www.stammeringcentre.org/parent-information](http://www.stammeringcentre.org/parent-information), [www.stutteringhelp.org/content/parents-school-aged-children](http://www.stutteringhelp.org/content/parents-school-aged-children) or <http://www.stammering.org/expertparent/secondary/index.html>.

