

Does your child stutter?

Strategies to talk with a child who stutters



1 Talk serenely and unhurriedly



Your speech should be relaxed, slow and smooth. You'll become an excellent role model and your impact is much stronger than any advice, such as "talk slowly" or "try again". The child will feel reassured that her/his parents are available and willing to listen.

2 Do not end, complete or guess what your child is trying to say

With the best of intentions, it is quite common to complete or try to guess what a child who stutters is trying to say. However, by finalizing your child's words you're not helping. Quite the contrary, you're interrupting and negatively reinforcing her/his communication. Give some time, that's what s/he needs.



3 Respect each person's time to speak



Given the need to gain people's attention, a lot of children stutter more in the beginning of a sentence. Wait a few seconds after your child finishes what s/he has to say, before starting yourself to speak. Create a good model of communication at home. Respect each person's time to speak and listen to each other.

4 Pose less questions



Instead of posing a lot of questions, comment on what s/he's doing and show that you're listening. There's nothing more pleasant to a child than the feeling of being heard, which positively reinforces her/his communication skills.

5 Use facial and body expressions

To communicate with your child use facial and body expressions, showing that the bulk of your communication is in its content rather than in the speech itself. Smile, encourage and 'fully embrace' your child's communication.



6 Create a special communication moment



Reserve a few minutes of your day to pay exclusive attention to your child, putting away TV, mobile or laptop. Talk calmly and use a lot of breaks. Compliment your child's non-speaking qualities, e.g. kindness, collaborative spirit, artistic talent or sports skills, amongst others. These moments reinforce your child's confidence.

Most importantly, **show acceptance** towards your child's personality and characteristics. The most powerful strength is your unconditional love and support.

References:

- "If your child stutters – A Guide for Parents (8th Edition) – The Stuttering Foundation, 2006"
- www.stutteringhelp.org