



National Speech/Language Therapy Center

DBA: National Therapy Center, Inc.

The Stuttering Clinic

National Stuttering Awareness Q & A Week 2018

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Thursday's Question: Would it help my daughter to use a synonym when a particular word is giving her difficulty?

Response:

Many children and adults become skilled at avoiding stuttering by switching words, in addition to many other tricks to mask their stuttering moments (ex. pretending to think, acting like they don't know the answer, talking less, inserting filler words, etc.). Word switching may make your daughter appear to speak more fluently but maintaining this fluency may begin to take its toll on her enjoyment for talking and her ability to communicate effectively.

Some things to consider:

- It's effortful: Scanning ahead to determine which words your daughter is prepared to say and which words she'd prefer to avoid can be exhausting and takes away from her spontaneity of speech.
- Not getting what she wants: In attempt to switch to an "easier" word, your daughter may be faced with the decision of avoiding stuttering or asking for what she actually wants. For example, if "h" words have become a feared sound, does she order the hamburger she really wants or does she escape that stuttering moment and ask for a "cheeseburger".
- Sometimes there is no word substitution: Some words have no appropriate synonym. Take for example, saying your name. Each time she successfully avoids a stuttering moment, her fear in stuttering will increase, making those words she simply cannot avoid even more difficult.

If not word switching, then what?!

A comprehensive approach to stuttering treatment should be individualized to meet your child and your family's needs and treat both the observable components of stuttering as well as the potential negative thoughts and feelings about stuttering that may impact your child's quality of life. Stuttering therapy can support your family in ensuring that your child does not need to avoid stuttering to be a confident, effective communicator.

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