



National Speech/Language Therapy Center

DBA: National Therapy Center, Inc.

The Stuttering Clinic

National Stuttering Awareness Q & A Week 2018

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Friday's Question: As a parent, is there anything I can do to improve my 3-year old's chance of outgrowing stuttering?

Response: Although stuttering is not caused by the ways in which parents interact with their child, there are certainly interaction strategies that are recommended for parents to incorporate once their child has begun to show signs of childhood onset stuttering. Here are some ways you can help and support your child while facilitating confident verbal expression.

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1. Increase the length of pauses between speaking turns. Children may feel pressure to get their words out before somebody else begins talking. Allowing for slightly longer pauses between conversational turns can decrease this perceived time pressure and may help to reduce the demands on the child's speech system associated with that pressure.

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2. Reducing your own rate of speech. It's common to hear parents and other adults tell children who stutter to "slow down". While well-meaning, this could make children feel even more frustrated because stuttering just isn't that simple! With that being said, it does help to model an unhurried manner of speaking.

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3. Reduce the amount of questions you ask in succession. When reading to or playing with your child, it's easy to slip into the role of "teacher" and inadvertently pepper them with questions to test their knowledge. An alternative interaction style is using a more even balance of comments and questions. This reduces the demand for rapid, accurate responses. Rather than constant questioning, you could make statements beginning with "I think" or "I wonder" as a conversational prompt or you can make comments that may elicit your child to share (ex. instead of asking "What did you eat for snack" you can say "I had an apple for snack.")

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4. Following the child's lead in play. Following your child's lead helps to reduce the amount of verbal instructions and questioning during play. Allow the child to direct play and support him by using good eye contact and providing encouragement and praise to help boost confidence.

5. Decrease length and complexity of language. Children will often imitate the grammar and vocabulary used by their parents. Reducing linguistic complexity (grammar, vocabulary, sentence length, etc.) when communicating with your child creates a less demanding speaking environment.

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