



Treating Stuttering in Adolescents and Adults

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Disclosures

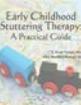
Financial

- Michigan State University (Employment)
- Stuttering Therapy Resources, Inc. (Royalties, Ownership)
 - Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering (OASES)
 - School-Age Stuttering Therapy: A Practical Guide
 - Early Childhood Stuttering Therapy: A Practical Guide
 - Stuttering: How Teachers Can Help
 - Minimizing Bullying for Children Who Stutter (and more...)

Non-financial

- National Stuttering Association (Volunteer consulting, advisory boards)




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- Our entire Stuttering Therapy Resources catalog is 10% off for attendees during this presentation only: www.StutteringTherapyResources.com
- Use Discount Code **ONSITE** at checkout
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 - JOIN our mailing list (www.StutteringTherapyResources.com)
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Outline

- What is stuttering?**
 - "Stuttering is more than just stuttering"
 - Why do adolescents and adults still stutter?
- Unique aspects of working with this population**
 - What brings adolescents and adults to therapy?
 - What are the goals of therapy?
- Treatment techniques**
 - Changing stuttering
 - Reducing shame and avoidance
 - Enhancing fluency
- What else do you need to know?**

Part I: What Is Stuttering?

"Stuttering is more than just stuttering"

What Is Stuttering?

- Stuttering is a speech disorder that affects fluency
- Stuttering behavior typically involves the involuntary production of certain types of disruptions ("disfluencies") in speech.

What Is Stuttering?

- To the speaker, stuttering feels like a “loss of control”

A moment when the speaker knows exactly what he wants to say, but is unable to say it

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What Is Stuttering?

- **On the surface**, disfluencies typically take the form of *part-word repetitions, prolongations, and blocks*.
 - Disfluencies can also be **accompanied** by physical tension, struggle behaviors, eye blinks, body movements, etc.
 - The production of disfluencies can **vary** from situation to situation, day to day, and over longer periods of time.

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What Is Stuttering?

- Stuttering is also a *communication disorder* that can affect all aspects of a person’s life

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What Is Stuttering?

- **Any aspect** of social interaction that involves communication (and that’s all of them) can be negatively affected
 - Talking to other people
 - Giving presentations at work or in school
 - Ordering food at a restaurant
 - Talking on the phone
 - **EVERYTHING**

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What Is Stuttering?

- When people who stutter are asked *what bothers them the most about stuttering, this is what they highlight:*

the way stuttering affects their lives

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International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (World Health Organization, ICF 2001)

- **Body Function and Structure:** describes the major physiological and psychological functions of the body
- **Activities and Participation:** describes the major areas of people’s daily lives
 - *Impairments in Body Function and Structure can lead to limitations in a person’s ability to perform activities or restrictions in the person’s ability to participate in life*



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The Role of Reactions

- In stuttering, the link between impairment and the resulting negative consequences is largely mediated by the speaker's *reactions* to stuttering

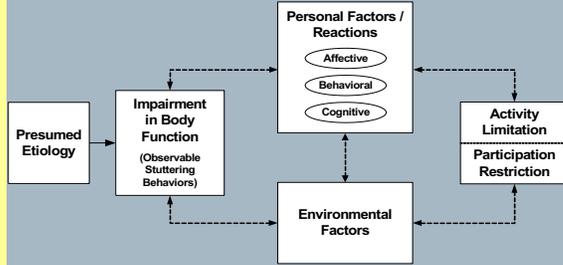
- Affective:** Feelings, attitudes, emotions
- Behavioral:** Actions (Avoidance, tension, struggle)
- Cognitive:** Thought-processes, self-evaluation



- Finally, the reactions of those in the speaker's environment also play an important role for many

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Considering the Entire Disorder



Model for representing stuttering based on the ICF
(adapted from Yaruss, 1998; Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)

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In the USA, the ICF forms the core of our scope of practice and justifies our work

- “The ICF framework is useful in describing the breadth of the role of the SLP in the prevention, assessment, and habilitation/rehabilitation of communication and swallowing disorders and the enhancement and scientific investigation of those functions.”
- The role of the SLP...includes interactions related to emotional reactions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that result from living with the communication disorder...

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Why Do Adolescents and Adults Still Stutter?

- Treatment for preschool children can be very effective in minimizing or eliminating stuttering
- Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for school-age children, adolescents, and adults

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Why Do Adolescents and Adults Still Stutter?

- As speech patterns become habituated (as neural pathways become hardwired), the chances that a person will completely recover from stuttering diminish.
- The stuttering *behaviors* may remain, though they may be reduced in frequency and modified in form
- That is what we are trying to accomplish through therapy!*

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Setting Goals – Part I

- For adolescents and adults who stutter, we must be careful not to limit their success.
 - True, there is no cure, and the speech behaviors may remain in some form.
 - Still, we must take a broader perspective about stuttering and focus not just on speech fluency.

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Setting Goals – Part I

- When we focus on *communication*, we can help people who stutter make gains in their ability to **say what they want, when they want, to whom they want, and the way they want.**
- *THIS is the true goal of therapy (regardless of the speaker's age and regardless of the type of disorder.)*

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Part II:

Unique aspects of working with adolescents and adults who stutter

People who stutter are affected by more than just speech disfluencies

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What brings adolescents and adults to therapy?

People come to therapy for a reason...

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Why now?

- One of the first questions I ask is: "why now?"
- Adolescents and adults who stutter have typically been doing so for a long period of time
- Most have had treatment in the past – typically on more than one occasion with more than one clinician

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Why now?

- Generally, they are seeking therapy at a given time *for a specific reason*
- Changes in job status (getting / losing a job), family status (having children), relationship status (getting married / divorced)
- Or, they just reach a point where they're "fed up!"

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Why now?

- Understanding what motivates a person to come to therapy ensures that you are addressing the goals that are relevant to that person.

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Why now?

- Don't assume that all people are seeking improved fluency – sometimes, fluency is the least of their concerns.
 - Some want to feel better about themselves...
 - Some want to be able to talk more easily...
 - Some want to be able to talk on the phone, give a presentation, order at a restaurant, regardless of whether or not they stutter while doing it!
 - Some want to improve their speech fluency...

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What are the goals of therapy?

Different people who stutter have different goals...

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Setting Goals – Part II

- By conducting a comprehensive evaluation (examining impairment, personal and environmental reactions, and negative impact), you can help clients determine their own individualized goals
- Although goals are individualized, there are some consistencies across different people who stutter

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Setting Goals – Part II

- The remainder of this presentation will focus on key strategies for:
 - *Changing Stuttering*
 - *Reducing Shame and Avoidance*
 - *Enhancing Fluency*

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Part III: Treatment Techniques

Changing Stuttering
Reducing Shame and Avoidance
Enhancing Fluency

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Changing Stuttering

People can learn to stutter more easily...

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Changing Stuttering?

- Recognizing that there is no cure for stuttering, we must come to terms with the fact that our clients *will* continue to stutter (in some fashion).
 - Of course, we will definitely help our clients learn strategies that reduce the frequency of stuttering.
 - Still, some stuttering will remain.

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Changing Stuttering?

- The question is: “*what form will that remaining stuttering take?*”
 - Will it be tense and disruptive to communication?
 - Can the speaker learn to stutter in a way that is less tense and less disruptive to communication?

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Step I: Learning about Stuttering

- In order to help speakers learn to change the way they stutter, the first thing they have to do is learn *what they do* when stuttering.
 - Certainly, people who stutter are aware, at some level, of the various speech and nonspeech behaviors they exhibit during moments of stuttering.
 - Many people have not considered these behaviors in detail, however, because they are embarrassing or uncomfortable to think about.
- Step I in therapy is to help speakers learn more about stuttering.

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Learning about Stuttering

- Many ways to learn about stuttering:
 - Reading about stuttering and the experiences of others who stutter (popular press and self-help literature)
 - Talking to other people who stutter (self-help groups – more on this later)
 - Observing stuttering in other people (video examples), the clinicians (pseudostuttering), or themselves (mirror, video, “live” exploration, pseudostuttering)

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Learning about Stuttering

- The ultimate goal is for speakers to be able to *produce* instances of stuttering (fake or real) and describe what they do with their speech mechanism during stuttered (and fluent) speech

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Some examples of what people “do” during stuttering

- Increase physical tension in their speech muscles
- Increase tension in muscles elsewhere in the body
- Hold their breath
- Expel all the air in their lungs
- Blink their eyes, turn their heads
- Move their arms or legs
- Tense up in anticipation of certain sounds or words
- Pretend to forget what they’re saying
- Cough, clear their throat, look away to postpone speaking until they’re ready
- Avoid talking altogether

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Step 2: Changing Stuttering

- As speakers begin to understand more about what they do during moments of stuttering, they become ready to try to *change* what they're doing.
- Initially, this will be very difficult – remember that these speech patterns have been built up over a long period of time and are often “entrenched.”

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Step 2: Changing Stuttering

- To make it easier, speakers can try to “hold on” to a moment of stuttering (“freeze”) then gradually try to increase or, ultimately, *decrease* the tension in their muscles.

The goal is learning to *stutter more easily*.

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Exercises that help speakers learn to “Stutter More Easily”

- Increasing then decreasing physical tension in various parts of the body, ultimately including the speech mechanism

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Exercises that help speakers learn to “Stutter More Easily”

- Pseudostuttering (fake stuttering) using a high degree of physical tension then a lower degree of physical tension
 - This “negative practice” exercise forms the building blocks for Van Riper’s *cancellation* technique

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Exercises that help speakers learn to “Stutter More Easily”

- Using “easy” pseudostuttering during speech to reduce the build-up of physical tension that might otherwise lead to more tense moments of stuttering

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Reducing Shame and Avoidance

Stuttering is embarrassing,
but people can learn to accept it.

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One Source of Tension

- We have been discussing the physical tension that so often accompanies moments of stuttering
- A question we have not yet answered is “where does all that tension come from?”
- *Why do people do the things they do when they stutter?*

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One Source of Tension

- PART of the answer comes from understanding the “loss of control” feeling that the speaker experiences when stuttering (more to come...)
 - People who stutter feel an involuntary loss of control at various times when they are speaking.
 - As they try to regain control, they exhibit various speech and nonspeech behaviors (“surface” stuttering).

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Tension Is Normal

- Physical tension and struggle are actually *normal* reactions to the feeling of loss of control.
 - What do you do when you are skating and suddenly start to slip and fall (“lose control”)?
 - You tense your muscles trying to regain control.
 - What do you do when you are driving and hit an unexpected patch of ice? You tense your muscles to try to regain control of the car.

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Tension Is Normal

- The increased tension does not always solve the problem – in fact, it rarely does – but it gives the skater, the driver, the speaker the sense that he is doing something to regain control.

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Overcoming Tension

- What if the person could learn to *tolerate* the feeling of loss of control?
 - Expert skaters develop an acceptance of that “almost falling” sensation.
 - Expert drivers learn to tolerate the slip of the wheels and focus on adjusting the car to maintain control.
 - Expert speakers can learn to tolerate the loss of control, and this reduces their tendency to tense up when moments of stuttering occur

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Overcoming Tension

- The foundation for learning to tolerating the feeling of loss of control is *desensitization*.
 - More about desensitization in a few minutes...

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Another Source of Tension

- Stuttering is *embarrassing!*
 - Stuttering sounds different, looks different, draws attention to itself, makes the person stand out...
 - People are often embarrassed by their speech disfluencies.
 - This embarrassment can lead to shame – the feeling of being “defective” or “broken”

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Another Source of Tension

- Increased tension is one way that people who stutter try to hide their stuttering – they tense their muscles in their attempt to not stutter
- Again, this increased tension does not make the stuttering go away, but it is often the only thing the speaker can think of to try to hide the stuttering

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Avoidance

- In addition to tensing their muscles, people who stutter may try to HIDE their stuttering.
 - Changing their words carefully or using “circumlocution” to pick only the words they think they can say fluently
 - Avoiding sounds, syllables, situations, people
 - Pretending to be sick, distracted, confused...
 - Taking jobs that do not require talking, driving to a store rather than calling to see if a product is in, not asking for directions, etc.

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Avoidance

Avoidance is a normal, understandable reaction, but it makes it very difficult for people who stutter to communicate effectively.

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Accepting Stuttering

- If people can learn to accept stuttering, they are less likely to try to hide it.
- The problem is: accepting stuttering is not easy.
 - You cannot simply tell the person “it’s okay to stutter” and expect them to believe it.
 - Adolescents and adults have a lifetime of belief systems and coping patterns built around stuttering.
 - They must go through a process of learning to tolerate their stuttering – and learning to tolerate other people’s reactions to stuttering.
- This process is called *desensitization*

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Desensitization

- Desensitization is the process of *gradually* exposing clients to the thing they are afraid of.
 - People with a fear of spiders need to be gradually exposed to spiders to build up a resistance to fear.
 - People with a fear of heights need to be gradually exposed to tall buildings.

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Desensitization

- You cannot simply “drop” people into a stressful situation and expect them to sink or swim!
 - That’s what adolescents and adults have been doing all their lives – they need help in order to overcome their fear.
- We can help by gently guiding speakers toward experiences that *reduce* rather than increase fear.

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Steps toward Desensitization

- Remember that desensitization involves gradual exposure to *the thing that you are afraid of*.
 - Spiders, tall buildings, and...stuttering

The only way to overcome fear of stuttering is by stuttering!

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Steps toward Desensitization

- Pseudostuttering (previously used for tension reduction) is also helpful for desensitization.
 - By pseudostuttering openly, beginning in safe situations, speakers can explore their feelings about stuttering and gradually learn to tolerate stuttering.
 - As shame diminishes, they can proceed to more difficult “real world” situations and continue to reduce their fear.

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Steps toward Desensitization

- This also helps them practice their tension reduction strategies and again supports *stuttering more easily*.

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Enhancing Fluency

People can speak more fluently...
...but it takes a lot of work!

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Enhancing Fluency

- Numerous techniques have been developed that help people speak more fluently
 - E.g., prolonged and other forms of slow speech, easy starts, light contact, pausing and phrasing, continuous phonation, pull-out, preparatory set, cancellation, etc.
- The sheer number of techniques is a source of confusion for people who stutter *and their SLPs*
 - How do you know when you are using the right technique?

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Enhancing Fluency

- We can simplify this by recognizing that all of these techniques are actually based on changing one of just **TWO** fundamental parameters of speech.

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Two Parameters?

- All speech and stuttering modification techniques relate to changes to *timing* or changes to *tension*
 - **Timing** changes are included in techniques such as prolonged (slow) speech, pausing and phrasing,
 - **Tension** changes are included in techniques such as light contact, easy starts, pull-outs, cancellation

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Two Parameters?

- Why timing and tension?
 - Because these are two aspects of speech production that are disrupted during moments of stuttering
 - Speech techniques involve *replacing* disrupted timing and tension with *modified* timing and tension.
 - Techniques do not fix the problem – they compensate for it!

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Fluency Takes Work!

- ALL techniques to enhance fluency involve changes to the regular speech pattern
- The regular speech pattern is disrupted by involuntary feelings of loss of control and associated reactions that we call the surface behavior of stuttering
 - Speech techniques can help prevent moments of loss of control or reduce the severity of the reaction, but they require effort *each and every time they are used.*

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Fluency Takes Work!

- The more the speaker wants to modify his speech fluency, the more effort he needs to exert
 - Difficult speaking situations require even more effort

Because of the effort involved, it is very difficult (impossible?) to make these changes all the time.

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Examples of Timing / Tension Changes

- Changes that involve reduced **timing**
 - Prolonged speech (fluency shaping)
 - Speaking slightly more slowly and with pauses between groups of words / phrases

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Examples of Timing / Tension Changes

- Changes that involve reduced **tension**
 - Light Contact (touching the articulators together with less physical tension)
 - Van Riper's preparatory set, pull-out, and cancellation

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Examples of Timing / Tension Changes

- Changes that involve reduced **timing and tension**
 - Easy Starts: slight reductions in timing and tension at the beginnings of phrases

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Treatment and the ICF model

- Earlier, we saw how stuttering can be viewed in terms of the ICF model
 - Impairment (observable stuttering behavior)
 - Speaker's Reactions (affective, behavioral, cognitive)
 - Environment's Reactions (contribute to speaker reactions)
 - Negative Impact (activity limitation / participation restriction)

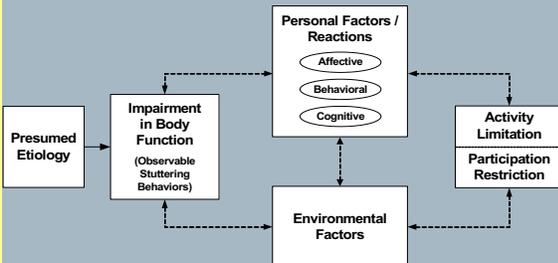
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Treatment and the ICF model

- The aspects of treatment that we have discussed can be related directly to components of the ICF
 - Enhancing fluency, changing stuttering (Impairment, Reactions)
 - Reducing Shame (Impairment, Reactions, Environment, Impact)
 - Reducing Avoidance (Reactions, Environment, Impact)
- There is more to be said, but this is a start...

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Treating the *Entire* Disorder



Model for representing stuttering based on the ICF
(adapted from Yaruss, 1998; Yaruss & Quesal, 2004)

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Part IV:
Looking forward:
What else do you
need to know?

...a lot

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We are off a good start...

- We have covered several techniques for changing stuttering, enhancing fluency, and minimizing avoidance and shame...

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We are off a good start...

- Still, there is much we have not covered:
 - Using techniques while maximizing naturalness
 - Addressing responses of people in the environment (“people who stutter live in an environment that does not understand the disorder”)
 - **Generalization** activities that move success in the clinical setting to success in the real world
 - Helping the speaker face unique situations
 - Helping the speaker maintain over time

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The more you know... ...the more questions you have

- Stuttering is a complicated disorder...
 - There is no way that training alone can prepare you to deal with the range of experiences and concerns of people who stutter. (This is true for any disorder.)

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The more you know... ...the more questions you have

- As typically (dis)fluent speakers, we cannot truly understand what it is like to deal with stuttering.
 - Imagine if every time you tried to speak, you did not know if the words would come out!

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The more you know... ...the more questions you have

- To gain a better understanding of the experience of people who stutter, *listen to them*.
 - Listen to their stories, “tune in” to their concerns, be sure that you are working on their needs (not yours).

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Other Resources

You don't have to do this all on your own.

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Key Stuttering Organizations

- Numerous resources are available to help not only clinicians, but also people who stutter
 - The Stuttering Foundation of America
 - www.stutteringhelp.org -- (800) 992-9392
 - National Stuttering Association (NSA)
 - www.WeStutter.org -- (800) We Stutter (937 8888)
 - Friends: Assoc. for Young People Who Stutter
 - www.friendswhostutter.org
 - SAY: The Stuttering Association for the Young
 - www.SAY.org
 - Stuttering Home Page
 - www.stutteringhomepage.com

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Self-Help and Support

- Adolescents and adults who stutter can benefit from participation in self-help / support groups
 - Support groups can help people come to terms with stuttering and enhance generalization of treatment gains
- For example, the National Stuttering Association (NSA) has provided education, empowerment, resources, and support for people who stutter and their families for more than 30 years
 - I encourage to you connect *all* of your clients with the NSA – www.WeStutter.org or 800 We Stutter

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Questions? Comments?
Please contact me!



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