



Principles of stuttering-affirming therapy

- **It is always okay to stutter.** Stuttering is a natural variation of speech.
- Emphasize **saying what you want to say**, not using physical tools to achieve temporary fluency.
- Reduce negative emotional responses, avoidance/escape behaviors, and physical struggle.
- Enhance **overall communication and participation.**
- Build environmental support & self-advocacy.
- Community is key - introduce students to others who stutter whenever you can, through your own caseload or organizations like Friends and the NSA.
- **Avoid** toxic positivity. Affirm your belief that it's okay to stutter, but validate and engage with any distress the child may be feeling.
- **Avoid** microaggressive language ("You did so great, you barely stuttered!").
 - Instead: "Thank you for sharing that story with me!"
- **Avoid** retraumatization. It is not helpful to push children into activities they are not ready for. Work with them to find challenges where they can feel **safe** and **successful**.
 - Use "red light, yellow light, green light" to help find safe challenges.

Create a stutter-friendly environment

- Do teachers know how to support the child who stutters?
- Does the child know how to talk to teachers and peers about stuttering?
 - Self-advocacy is **empowering** - support the child in doing their own advocacy, such as writing an email to a new teacher explaining how to be helpful.
- What messages is the child receiving at home?
 - Include parents/caregivers in speech therapy when possible.
 - Facilitate communication about stuttering between the child and the parent.
 - Encourage parents to desensitize their own reactions by listening to stuttering podcasts, watching videos, attending conferences, etc.

Treat stuttering based on impact, not frequency

- There is no correlation between % of syllables stuttered and quality-of-life impact.
- Covert stutterers may show little overt stuttering, but have a huge amount of stress and burden from the effort of hiding.

Scales like the OASES can help determine impact and track change.

Preschool

- Train parents to model good turn-taking and provide adequate listening time.
- Encourage parents to talk about stuttering in a positive, relaxed way.
- Help parents to follow the child's lead sometimes in conversation, and go at the child's pace.
- Play games that encourage turn-taking.
- Explore different voices - fast, slow, squeaky, bumpy, stretchy! - without preferencing one over another.

Grade School

- Role play!
 - Talking to peers about stuttering
 - Talking to cashiers, waitstaff, etc.
- Real-world challenges
 - Ordering for oneself
 - Conducting surveys about topics of interest ("which of these three Pokémon is the best?")
 - Interviewing family/friends/teachers about stuttering
- Stuttering awareness and desensitization
 - Child teaches the clinician how to stutter
 - Stuttering on purpose in different ways
 - Watching videos of famous people who stutter (there's an athlete for almost every sports interest!)

High School

- Draw a "stuttering iceberg," labeling three parts:
 - Above the water - what people can see and hear
 - Below the water - thoughts/feelings, choices we make because we stutter
 - The water - how your environment shapes your feelings about stuttering
- Retrain the nervous system
 - Educate about the role of "fight, flight or freeze" in the response to stuttering.
 - Explore and observe the body's reaction to stuttering with curiosity, not judgement.
 - Desensitize with gentle exposure exercises.
- Explore the physical stutter, getting curious about what the body does in the stuttering moment and how the teen may be fighting the stutter.
- Create a "best hopes" vision for how the teen wants to be communicatively and socially.