



**AIS** AMERICAN  
INSTITUTE FOR  
STUTTERING

Speak Freely. Live Fearlessly.

# HELPING YOUR CHILD WHO STUTTERS



**A guide for parents**

# Getting started

---

When you notice your child beginning to stutter, it can feel scary. You might be feeling worried, unsure, or confused. You may also have questions about what to do now, or what this means for your child.



**First, know this: you are not alone, and you did NOT cause your child's stuttering.**

**Your concern shows that you care. We're glad that you're here!**



By seeking information and support, you've already taken an important first step in helping your child.



This resource was created to help you better understand stuttering and how to support your child.

Let's start with some facts (and **myths**) about stuttering.



# What Is Stuttering?

---

- A neurological communication difference
  - Common in young children who are learning to talk
  - Variable - it can change from day to day, and from situation to situation
- 
- 

- NOT a sign of low intelligence, laziness, or lack of effort
- NOT caused by anything you did or didn't do as a parent
- NOT a reflection of confidence or comfort



# How You Can Help

---

There are lots of things you can do at home to help. It is NOT necessary to do all of these all the time - even subtle changes can have a big positive impact.

Start by taking small steps towards creating a healthy, stutter-affirming environment for your child.



These are some general suggestions to get started. Consult with an AIS specialist who will tailor therapy for you and your family.



# Focus on Content Rather Than Fluency

---

## What?

- Focus on **what** your child says, not **how** they say it
- Place value on your child's ideas and message

## Why?

- Teaches your child that what they have to say matters
- Supports self-expression and participation
- Feeling heard helps build confidence and courage
- Reduces pressure to "talk right"



## **Try this:**

- Comment on what your child says: *"That was an exciting story, thank you for sharing it with me!"*



# Reduce Time Pressure

---

## What?

- Let your child finish speaking on their own (when they stutter and when they are fluent)
- Teach your child there's no rush to speak

## Why?

- Less pressure = easier communication
- Allows your child to speak at their own pace



## *Try this:*

- Wait calmly without interrupting while your child speaks
- Choose a time when together as a family and use an object in the room as the "microphone" - take turns where only the person with the microphone is allowed to talk



# Model Relaxed Speech

---

## What?

- Speak in a relaxed, unhurried voice
- Use natural pauses when talking

## Why?

- Children learn how to communicate by watching and listening to those around them
- When you are calm, your child will mirror that in their own speech

## **Try this:**

- Pick a few times a day to slightly slow your own speech rate, making sure not to rush or hurry when talking
- Pause 1-2 seconds before responding



# Respond Calmly to Stuttering

---

## What?

- Respond to your child's speech the same way you would in any other conversation
- Calm responses teach your child that their communication is okay

## Why?

- Builds emotional safety
- Prevents/reduces struggle around speaking from developing
- While it may be tempting to encourage your child to "slow down" or "take a breath," these seeming helpful suggestions may increase pressure on your child



## *Try this:*

- Maintain natural eye contact when your child speaks (including when they stutter)
- Instead of giving advice, just listen



# Talking About Stuttering

---

Many parents wonder whether it is “okay” to talk about stuttering with their child.



The answer is yes—talking openly about stuttering helps your child understand their speech, reduces shame or confusion, and shows that stuttering is not something to hide. Normalizing stuttering helps children feel safer, more confident, and more comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings.



# Talking About Stuttering

---



**Try this:**

**Incorporate healthy language around communication in general: “I love hearing what you have to say - thanks for sharing that with me!”**



**Try this:**

**Child: “I want oooo-water.”**

**Parent: “It seemed like you wanted to say orange juice, not water. It’s okay to say the one you want, even if it takes a little longer.”**



# Talking to Teachers

---

- Ensure they are on the same page
  - Giving your child time to speak
  - Reducing interruptions
  - Praising content, not fluency
  - Avoiding phrases such as “slow down,” “take a breath,” or “start over”
  
- Discuss your goals
  - Building your child’s confidence
  - Creating a supportive, stutter-friendly environment
  - Supporting continued participation



Handout: [Stuttering Information for Teachers](#)



# Additional Tips

---

## Environmental Supports

- Create a relaxed, unrushed home environment as much as possible
- Apply good communication rules for the whole family (not just your child)



- Engage in 1:1 child-led time (talking, reading)
- Model making mistakes with grace
- Support healthy sleep and rest routines
- Avoid over-programming; kids need downtime

- Connect with other families in the stuttering community



# Additional Tips Cont.

---

## Communication Supports

- Give full attention when listening
  - Avoid squeezing conversations in when rushed or distracted
- Allow silence



- Reduce demand- or performance-based speech ("Show grandma your ABCs")



# Moving Forward

We understand that stuttering can bring up a lot of different emotions, and that navigating this process can sometimes feel challenging or overwhelming. We're here to walk with you on this journey. Together, we will learn how to support your child and their communication so that they can **Speak Freely and Live Fearlessly.**



# Welcome to AIS.



# Resources

---

Set up a [consultation](#) with an AIS specialist

Visit our [website](#) for more information and resources

Hear what [AIS parents](#) have to say

Interested in learning more? Check out our [blog posts](#) or click the icons below for our **social media!**

