



# Stuttering

## Simple Techniques to Help Control Your Stutter

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## **Introduction**

Stuttering is an embarrassing problem. When you are unable to communicate clearly, it impacts every area of your life. It can interfere with your relations with other people, and cause you to become withdrawn. You may be so embarrassed by your speech that you speak as little as possible. You feel as if your speech is ineffective-- that you are not getting your point across.

If stuttering has been a problem for you, do not give up hope-- there are solutions! You can learn to take control of your speech, rather than allowing it to control you!

There are many simple techniques to help control your stuttering. When you browse through all of the possibilities, you should start to feel optimistic. When you try these techniques, you will learn which ones work the best for you. From the comfort and privacy of your own home, you will find it very easy to master these techniques. You can then begin to apply them to your everyday speech.

Even if you have stuttered for many years, these easy techniques will become practical solutions to your stuttering. They will help you to learn how to communicate clearly and effectively. Talking to people, in groups, and even publicly, can be as enjoyable as it was meant to be-- each and every time.

Mastering the easy techniques to control your stutter can do wonders for your self-esteem. When you have learned the art of communicating smoothly, it will increase your confidence in your daily life.

Some people need a little extra help to control their stuttering. Sometimes there are special situations which require a special approach in order to be effective. Whichever category describes you, or a family member who stutters, they are all addressed here in this book.

Read, learn, practice, and apply-- and clear, confident speech can be yours!

## **You Can Use Easy Techniques to Control Stuttering**

For most people who stutter, mastering some basic techniques is all they need to do. Stuttering does not have to ever be a problem again. All it takes is the commitment to try out these techniques, and find which ones work the best for you. You may find that you need to use a number of techniques in order to have effective speech. With a little practice, they will come naturally. You can look forward to a lifetime of confident speaking!

There are two important points to keep in mind before you try these techniques, and when you are practicing them. First, there is no one method that works equally well for everyone. This is why there are many techniques listed here. You need to try them all to find which ones work the best for you.

Second, whether your stuttering is severe or minor, you cannot obtain perfect, complete control over your stutter overnight. It takes practice and effort on your part, and it takes time for you to see the results. If you are willing to make this commitment, and do not expect your stutter to disappear in a day, you will be able to learn which of these techniques work for you. Your speech will no longer be a cause of embarrassment or worry-- it can be one of the most enjoyable parts of your life!

- **Think About What You Wish to Convey**

There is much more to speech than simply saying words. When you talk to someone, you are attempting to convey something. Perhaps you are trying to get a point across, ask a question, or clarify something. Whenever you speak, there is a message in what you are saying. Thinking about what you wish to convey in advance has benefits which can help you to control your stuttering.

The message you wish to give has a tone all its own. It includes your mood, your attitude, your thoughts and emotions-- so much more than just words! What do you want to say, and what do you hope the listener will gain from it? It only takes a few minutes to consider these factors before you begin to speak.

Thinking about what you want to convey places strength behind your message. It can also place strength behind your speech. The way this is done is it puts your focus on the importance of what you are saying-- why it is important. This focus can, in turn, divert your self-consciousness away from your speech. It may even eliminate it entirely.

Instead of simply saying words, which you may stumble on, you will be conveying your mood, attitude, and the self-confidence which accompanies it. You will be speaking clearly, rather than guarding your speech. With practice, this method can help you to control your stutter.

- **Making and Maintaining Eye Contact**

The person who stutters often develops the habit of avoiding eye contact with the people to whom he is speaking. He has become so accustomed to his faltering speech that he does not want to see the reaction of the listener. This can cause you to become even more self-conscious, and stutter even more.

You can turn this negative habit around to your favor. While it may take some practice, it is well-worth the effort. When you are preparing to speak to someone, make a point of making eye contact with him. You can begin by reminding yourself that he really does want to hear whatever you plan to say. In most cases, you will receive a spoken or unspoken affirmation of this, before you begin to speak.

As you speak, hold eye contact with the person. If you speak pleasantly, and reflect this pleasant attitude in the eye contact rather than a bold stare, you will see that he is listening graciously to whatever you are saying to him.

This technique can help you to develop the habit of appreciating one-on-one communication. It can help you to focus on the interaction itself, instead of on your speech difficulty. You will gain control over your

verbal communications, and find them to be much more enjoyable. As these habits start to come naturally, your speech will also begin to flow more naturally.

- **Learning and Applying Deep Breathing to Your Speech**

Proper breathing can play a significant role in controlling your stutter. It is a good, healthy habit which you can learn on your own, and put into practical use.

You can begin by mastering deep breathing by yourself, in the privacy of your own home. Start by taking slow, deep breaths, inhaling purposely, and then exhale just as slowly. Doing this in a calm, quiet environment where you will not be disturbed by other people or outside noise is preferable. The fewer distractions you have, the better. Practice this easy, deep breathing technique once or twice a day-- however long you need for it to feel natural.

If you wish, you can add some rehearsal after you have learned how to do this. It can boost your self-confidence if you practice this new technique on an inanimate object, or your pet. While this may sound unusual, you may be surprised at how well it can work! You can rehearse by implementing this deep breathing technique prior to, and during, your “conversation” with your pet. Do the deep breathing technique before you begin to speak, and briefly during your “conversation.”

Deep breathing during speech provides a number of benefits. First, when your emphasis is taken off your speech and focused on your breathing, you will be more confident when you are speaking. In addition, deep breathing prepares your body for smooth, effective speech. It relaxes all of the muscles that you use when you are speaking, helping your speech to flow smoothly.

After you have learned how to do this, you can try it out on a person. It is important to keep in mind that after you have mastered this habit, the person you are speaking to will probably not even notice you are doing it. Your speech will be more purposeful, well-thought, and with less chance of stuttering.

- **Develop a Great Sense of Humor**

Stuttering is not funny. If you stutter, you already know this. However, even when you begin learning how to control your stutter, you may occasionally make mistakes. The way you approach an error can make all the difference in the world-- not only to that one particular conversation, but also in how you approach future conversations.

Being able to say “Oops!” and laugh at a mistake may not come easily. This is especially true if you have been ridiculed about your stuttering in the past. However, a sense of humor about your stutter is the healthiest method to develop.

Developing a sense of humor about your stutter is something best started when you are alone. Think of situations you have been in, when your stutter was particularly bothersome. Consider how much better the eventual outcome could have been, if you had been able to laugh and make a joke of it. It would not have seemed so devastating.

Next, think about how you can incorporate a sense of humor into future stuttering. Perhaps you can think of it in the same terms as an impromptu bout of hiccups. If a hiccup would not lead you to become embarrassed and flustered, neither should a stutter!

Knowing that you will make mistakes is the best way to be prepared for them. In fact, acknowledging the possibility of a mistake makes it less likely for one to actually occur. You realize that you cannot be perfect, and you are prepared for what to do when you are not. You will not worry about stuttering, and verbal communication will be much more enjoyable for yourself and for everyone else concerned.

- **Calm Your Nerves**

If you think of your history with stuttering, you may see how much more of a problem it was whenever you were nervous. When you are nervous, you become self-conscious; when you are self-conscious, you are less in control. It can become a vicious cycle of nervousness, self-consciousness, and loss of control over your stuttering.

Keeping yourself calm takes effort and practice. If you are nervous by nature, or if your everyday life often contains situations which provoke nervousness, it may take even more effort.

The more calm you are able to stay on a regular basis, the more control you will have over your stutter. As stuttering and stammering can be directly related to nervousness, working on this problem can reduce your stuttering and give you more control. Teaching yourself to adopt a calm demeanor and a positive outlook may not eliminate your stuttering, but it can help to reduce it.

In addition to these factors, certain products which you consume can also contribute to nervousness. Caffeine is one of the most common culprits. If you have the habit of drinking many servings of coffee, tea, or soft drinks during the day, switching to healthier, non-caffeinated beverages may be helpful. The shakiness which you feel after consuming a large amount of caffeine can affect every part of your body, including the muscles which are used during speech. Giving up this product, or at least minimizing your use of it, may be beneficial.

Some people have a similar reaction to sugar. While this is not true for everyone, it is worth investigating if you have a stuttering problem. Reducing the amount of sugar in your diet may help you to become calmer. You can try it, and see if it works for you!

- **Is Avoidance a Useful Technique?**

When it comes to the subject of stuttering, some methods are very helpful to some people, while not as useful for others. This is because each person is an individual, and each person's stuttering problem is unique to him or her. The only way to know for sure which techniques will work for you is to give them all a try.

Avoidance is a controversial issue. Some people insist it works quite well, while others do not find it as helpful. The controversy is in whether avoidance is an appropriate technique for controlling a stuttering problem. If you are serious about finding methods that work, it is a good idea to ignore the concept of controversy and try it for yourself.

The general way avoidance is practiced is to substitute words that are easy to speak in place of those which are not. If you have been troubled by your stuttering to the extent of reading this book, you are probably already aware of the difference. You have noticed that many words seem to flow rather easily, while others become “stuck” or repeat. You may have also noticed that certain sounds, or certain letters of the alphabet, are more bothersome than others.

When you are considering this technique, you may wish to look at both sides of the issue. This can help you to decide whether it is right for you, and what you may be dealing with when you try it. First, practicing avoidance can help you to feel more in control of your speech in general. When you know what you wish to say, and how you plan to say it, it can give you a decided advantage. Instead of wondering and worrying, you will be in control.

However, avoidance can also have negative implications. When you approach speaking to someone in this manner, you may become more self-conscious. For some people, this can backfire; for others, it is not a problem at all.

If you wish to give this technique a try, put a little time into the “demons” of your speech. When you know which words, sounds, and letters are most often at fault for causing a stutter, you can choose a different word that means the same thing. You will find that language is a wonderful thing indeed-- there is a synonym, or a related word, for every word you want to say! For example, if the word “box” is one of your speech demons, try saying “container” instead. You can broaden your vocabulary, while learning a new technique to control your stutter.

- **Develop the Habit of Speaking Slowly**

You may already know that when your words come out in a breathless rush, it makes your stutter even worse. You start to say a word, and many other words seem to tumble after, like a domino-effect. Developing the habit of speaking slowly is a technique which can help you to control your stutter.

Learning how to speak slowly is not very difficult. If you have not yet cultivated this habit, now is a good time to begin. When you want to speak, take a minute to prepare yourself. Form each word slowly, and allow each word to flow smoothly and naturally. Rather than being in a hurry to get a complete sentence out, think of each word as flowing from you to your listener.

When you notice that the other person is listening to whatever you are saying, this can help you to speak slowly. Communication is meant to be a positive experience. It is much more than simply exchanging words, or waiting for your chance to speak. It is one of the best ways to enjoy and appreciate the company of another person-- by exchanging thoughts, feelings, ideas, and information. Keeping these concepts at the foundation of your verbal communication can be greatly beneficial in keeping it in perspective.

This perspective can also assist you in learning to speak slowly. You do not need to get your words out quickly, because the other person is listening and cares about everything you say! He or she is truly interested! When you think about it this way, it should give you cause to stop for a moment and think. You may be appreciating your verbal interactions even more. Equally important, if you think about this when you are preparing to have a conversation with someone, it can help you to control your stutter. As your words flow smoothly and slowly, you will see how it benefits your speech.

- **How Relaxation Can Help You to Control Your Stutter**

Relaxation has a dual purpose in controlling stuttering. It works on both the body and the mind at the same time. You may not have thought of

this before, you may not be aware of the positive effects relaxation can have on you.

First, relaxation affects every part of your body-- your entire system. This includes all of the muscles that are used when you speak. From the muscles in your throat to that amazing diaphragm, the more relaxed your body is, the easier the words will flow. Relaxed muscles mean smoother speech; and smoother speech means less chance of stuttering.

Second, relaxation affects the mind. Even if you already know this, you may not have thought of how it is connected to your speech. The mind that is relaxed is better focused and more controlled. It is less bothered by small annoyances which create nervousness, tension, and self-consciousness. In turn, when the mind is relaxed and at ease, you are less likely to experience severe stuttering.

How do you learn to relax, so that you can reap these benefits? It is not difficult, even if you have a busy pace or lifestyle. You can begin with slow, deep breathing. Picture yourself in a nice, calm atmosphere, where everything is serene and tranquil. Allow yourself the luxury of dwelling in these kinds of thoughts periodically, throughout your day.

After you have learned how to do this, you can take your new practice with you when you need to communicate with other people. Before you begin to speak, visualize your calm atmosphere. Allow the comforting relaxation to fill your mind, and to fill your body. Not only will you feel more at ease, even in business or social situations, you actually will be more at ease. Your mind and body will savor the effects of relaxation, and will help you to control your stutter.

- **Develop Confidence in Your Speech**

The more confident you are, the less trouble you will have with stuttering. This includes confidence in yourself, as well as confidence in your speech. If you have been bothered by stuttering for a long time, it may take time and effort to develop this confidence. The rewards will be worth the effort you put into it.

The more worthy and valuable you realize you are as a person, the easier it will be to develop confidence in yourself. You can begin by telling yourself that whatever you plan to say is important, and that your listeners want to hear from you. Even if you are naturally shy, this can help you to become more assertive. When you get into the habit of displaying a positive attitude, it will start to increase the confidence you have in yourself. You will soon see other people responding in a positive manner to the new you!

Developing confidence in your speech can be just as easy. It requires some practice, of course, but learning how to do it is quite simple. You can even begin to apply confidence to your speech before you truly have it. This means that even if you are not yet sure of yourself, when you speak as if you do it will become a reality.

Confidence in speech means starting whatever you wish to say as clearly and concisely as possible. Tell yourself that you are knowledgeable about the subject you are speaking about, and that it is important for you to say it. This feeling of authority will make you confident about what you are saying. Let your words flow smoothly, with the same air of authority and confidence. Allow your words to progress naturally, one by one. While practicing the breathing technique you have already learned, speak without stopping to pause on individual words.

When you have developed this kind of confidence, you will be less likely to falter on those troublesome words. With practice, your stutter may become a thing of the past.

- **Does Analyzing Help-- or Does it Make Stuttering Worse?**

You may have heard of analyzing. You may have tried it yourself. The fact is in many cases it can worsen stuttering. While this book is providing you with practical techniques which can help you to control your stutter, it should be noted that this common method is rarely in a stutterer's best interest.

Analyzing is usually done by putting time and effort into trying to figure out the problem, in hope of relieving it. Analyzing can include studying the vocabulary one uses on a regular basis, seeking out those pesky “demon” words. It can also include taking special note of the parts of one’s body and muscles one uses during everyday speech.

The negative aspect of analyzing in this manner is it emphasizes the problem, rather than constructive solutions. You may find yourself so attentive to troublesome words that it increases your stuttering. You may become so focused on your muscles that it actually inhibits your ability to speak clearly. You can become so self-conscious that your stuttering worsens.

You are already aware of the problem. After all, you have been living with it for a long time. Your goal should be to gain control of your stutter, so that you can be satisfied with your ability to communicate effectively. Placing too much emphasis on your stutter is not the best way to proceed. Instead, realizing that your problem can be overcome, and that you can do it, will yield more productive results. Rather than living in the problem, you will be living in the solution-- making the very most of all of your verbal interactions.

- **Taking a Tip from a Celebrity**

Depending upon your age and interest in country music, you may be familiar with Mel Tillis. He has been one of the most popular country music singers during the last few decades. A fact which many people do not know is that Mel Tillis has had trouble with stuttering throughout his lifetime!

Mel Tillis has given interviews in the past, stating that while his speech contains stuttering, it is not present when he sings. Not only has this helped him to develop confidence, it helped him to become one of the best-loved singers in country music.

You might like to give this a try, also. You can start with one of your favorite singers, someone of your gender whose voice is similar to your

own. Purchase one of the person's CD's, and accompany him or her during songs you like. After you have become accustomed to your singing voice, you may feel prepared to sing alone.

You may find that your singing voice is as clear and beautiful, and as stutter-free, as Mel Tillis's singing voice. This can be a wonderful way to increase your self-confidence. The more able you are to sing without that noticeable stutter, the more confident you will be in your regular verbal communications.

This is a fun way to gain control of your stutter. While the other techniques require practice, work, and effort, you will surely find this method to be more enjoyable. You may even develop a brand-new hobby. You might not become a star like Mel Tillis, but you can take a tip from him to learn to control your stutter.

## **Can Medication Help?**

You may be at wit's end over your stuttering. Perhaps you have tried these or other methods, and found that nothing works as well as you had hoped. Perhaps frustration, fear, or worry is getting in the way of controlling your stutter. You may be wondering if medication can solve the problem, or at least relieve it.

A good rule of thumb is to not consider medication unless your stuttering is so severe that natural techniques do not help. While some people might disagree, using any type of medication for stuttering should only be considered as a last resort. Unless your stuttering is being caused by a medical problem which requires your doctor's evaluation and recommendations, relying on natural methods is better than relying on pharmaceuticals.

If you are considering medication, it is essential for you to seek your physician's advice. Under no circumstances should you ever attempt to self-medicate. Using any kind of pharmaceutical product without your doctor's approval can be very dangerous. In addition, devices and home remedies should also be avoided. You want relief from your stutter, but taking chances with your health is never the right solution.

This chapter will give you an overview of the medications which are commonly used to relieve or control stuttering. Many physicians agree that their use for this purpose is highly controversial. If you are thinking about trying medication to control your stutter, only your own doctor can recommend a medication for you.

Zyprexa has a moderate success rate in treating stuttering. This drug is primarily used for treating schizophrenia and other similar conditions. The experiences of people who have used Zyprexa for stuttering range from a high degree of satisfaction with the results to little effect at all. Zyprexa is a dopamine-blocker drug. Its side effects can range from reducing alertness to weight gain.

There are a number of medical conditions which contraindicate the use of Zyprexa, so it should never be used without your physician having full knowledge of your medical history. A lesser-known fact about Zyprexa is

that its tablet form contains aspartame, making it unsafe for individuals who have phenylketonuria (commonly known as PKU).

While some physicians disagree with the practice of prescribing tranquilizers for relief from stuttering, others believe that they can be useful. The general consensus amongst those who consider it an appropriate form of treatment is that reducing the person's anxiety and nervousness will, in turn, reduce his stuttering.

Although the potential side effects of tranquilizers can range from minor to severe, an additional factor is their potential to lead to addiction. Addiction to tranquilizers is common, and withdrawal from these drugs is often difficult and painful. If your doctor feels that this is the right form of treatment for you, your use of tranquilizers must be carefully and consistently monitored.

Some physicians believe that antidepressants can help to relieve stuttering. Studies have shown that while some people do gain relief from this form of treatment, others experience worse stuttering than they had before the treatment began. As is the issue with any pharmaceutical preparation, the use of antidepressants must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Even with your medical history in hand, your doctor may not be able to determine in advance whether these drugs will help you or whether your stuttering will become worse.

There are a number of different antidepressants currently available. While the side effects of antidepressants can range from sleep disturbances to sexual difficulties and others, the side effects a person experiences from the use of antidepressants is largely based on his own individual system. They can range from very minor to severe. Some people find the side effects of antidepressants to be only moderately annoying, while others consider the side effects more intolerable than the initial problem.

Two drugs currently on the market which show a considerable amount of promise in treating stuttering are Haldol and Risperdal. Both of these drugs are dopamine-blockers. While they both have the potential of causing serious side-effects in some patients, studies have shown these medications to have up to a fifty-percent success rate when used to treat stuttering.

Many physicians agree that dopamine-blocking drugs are the method of choice when using medication to treat stuttering. However, as this has not been in practice for very long, it is wise to consider the implications of this fact before becoming hasty to try medication. While deciding on whether the possibility of achieving a measure of relief from stuttering is worth risking the range of potential side-effects during the use of a medication may be difficult enough, the lack of current information on potential long-term side-effects can make this decision even harder.

You want relief from your stutter. You may be willing to go to any lengths to be free of the problem. For the sake of both your short-term and long-term health, you should not be too quick to decide that medication is the answer. As any pharmaceutical preparation has the potential to cause complications, you must clearly assess both the benefits and the risks. You must also seek the advice of a qualified physician.

The most sensible approach to using medication for the treatment of stuttering is to consider it only as a last resort. Unless all of the natural methods for controlling your stutter have failed, and you have found that your stuttering interferes with your life to the extent that you cannot cope with it, medication should be avoided.

This chapter has been included in this book because many people are hasty to think of medication as a good, fast, miracle-cure. They do not realize how harmful medication can be to their health. Unfortunately, some competent physicians also have the opinion that medication is the best course of action, without first investigating all of the alternatives.

When you have all of these facts, you will be in the best position to make the decision that is right for you. You do not need to place unnecessary risks on your health in order to relieve your stutter. Nearly everyone can achieve results which they are satisfied with, without resorting to medication.

## **Special Needs: Stuttering in Children**

You may have purchased this book in hope of helping your child with a stuttering problem. While many of the techniques described in this book are equally appropriate for children, the child who stutters has special needs which also must be addressed.

A youngster who stutters is in an especially-vulnerable position. Whether he is a young child or a teenager, stuttering can have more and worse effects than an adult experiences. When you take your child's special needs into consideration, the techniques in this book will be more helpful to him.

The most significant effect stuttering has on a child is in his relations with other people, especially his peers. Children of all ages are often subjected to ridicule when they display any kind of problem which separates them from their peers. A speech impediment like stuttering can impede a child's ability to interact with his peers. He may be targeted for ridicule and bullying.

This special problem can make it much more difficult for the child to make friends. It can stand in the way of healthy socializing. It is not uncommon for a child who stutters to become isolated and depressed. He may be fearful of basic communication, and extremely self-conscious. His self-esteem can be much lower than that of a non-stuttering child; he may develop a negative opinion of himself. He may also worry about carrying his stuttering with him for the rest of his life.

These issues are why stuttering must be addressed as soon as you recognize it in your child. The sooner you begin to help him to control his stutter, the better his overall quality of life will be. In many cases, stuttering is quite noticeable long before a child begins school. In other instances, it is not evident until he is older.

Building your child's self-esteem goes hand in hand with helping him to control his stutter. While it should be obvious, parents and other adults should never make the mistake of shaming a child about his stuttering. The more of an issue you make about his stuttering, the worse he will feel about himself. This, in turn, can result in his stuttering becoming worse. He may feel that he is to blame for his problem, which will only compound it.

While adults may not be harmed by making a joke of stuttering, this is rarely the case for children. Even the most well-meaning siblings can impede a child's progress in controlling a stutter by making "jokes" about it. It is no laughing matter to the youngster who stutters. Sarcasm and jokes can be devastating to the child.

The child who stutters needs to know that you and the other people in his life are supportive. He needs to know that he is not rejected, nor looked down on, over his problem. He needs to know that he is accepted and loved, exactly as he is-- stuttering included. This kind of unconditional love and acceptance will provide a strong foundation for helping him to control his stutter without the child seeing the problem as a reflection of himself.

Providing a calm atmosphere is the best way to begin helping your child to control his stutter. In cases of very young children, many of the techniques described in this book can be presented as games. Instead of presenting a technique as something which he must do in order to overcome a problem, allowing him to see a technique as fun and enjoyable will produce the best results.

Teaching a child techniques to help him control his stutter can be more painful and frustrating for the adult than it is for the youngster. He may not be cooperative; or you may not see any clear results. It is essential for you to not become demanding, or force him to practice a technique. It is also essential for you to not communicate your frustration when you believe a technique is useless. Both of these mistakes can quickly backfire. They can cause him to give up.

Convincing your child that learning techniques to control his stutter is something which he actually wants to do is not as difficult as it may sound. Most parents already have practice in convincing their children that certain things are a good idea. When techniques for controlling stuttering are presented in a light-hearted, fun manner, your youngster will usually comply simply because he wants to comply.

While a parent may think that rewarding a child for learning a technique is a positive method, it often is not. If your child becomes accustomed to rewards, this can make it even harder for him when he is not successful. He may even feel that he is being punished for making a mistake-- and for not being perfect. When learning how to control a stutter, errors are as common

in children as they are in adults. Simply letting him know that you are pleased with his efforts, regardless of the results, is much better than giving him rewards. A child will be eager to learn a new skill when he sees that his efforts are appreciated.

When parents notice their child stuttering, they often panic. This can mean rushing him to his pediatrician, making appointments to see speech therapists, and even considering medication. You can save both yourself and your child from a lot of unnecessary aggravation by not being too quick to conclude that he will be a lifelong stutterer without immediate intervention.

The fact is that many children stutter at times. Some very young children stutter when they are initially learning verbal skills; others stutter when they are extremely nervous, tired, or feel overwhelmed. In the interest of your child's emotional health, you should resist viewing these kinds of situations as potentially-serious problems. If you are your child's main caregiver, it should not be difficult to determine whether he is exhibiting a speech impediment or whether it is merely a stage.

Discussing the problem of stuttering in children also includes the factor of medication. As parents are often not knowledgeable about this, it must be noted that some medications which are commonly given to children can cause them to stutter, even when they do not have an actual speech impediment.

Ritalin, which is commonly prescribed for such conditions as ADHD and ADD, is one of the biggest culprits. If you notice stuttering in a child who is taking this or other medications, it should be brought to the attention of his doctor. The medication may be the cause of his stuttering. If so, adjusting the dosage or switching medications can eliminate his stuttering entirely. However, this should not be attempted without your doctor's recommendation.

The child who stutters is just as normal as other children. The way he is treated in his everyday life should emphasize this fact. Although stuttering can be harmful to a child's self-esteem and social growth, it is not nearly as harmful as making an issue of the problem. The child who knows that he is loved and accepted exactly as he is, while being offered techniques to help

him control his stutter in the most enjoyable manner possible, is the child who is most likely to be successful.

## **Is a Speech Therapist Necessary?**

Whether you are looking for help for yourself or for your child, you may be thinking of requesting assistance from a speech therapist. You may wonder if this is the right option. There are a number of points to consider when deciding if you or your child should visit a speech therapist.

One instance in which consulting a speech therapist is a valid approach is if stuttering is so severe that it impacts your functioning. If it is so extreme that it is disruptive to your everyday life, assistance from a professional may be in order. Whether the stuttering has been a long-term problem, or whether its onset has been sudden, a speech therapist can be helpful.

A second situation is if all techniques and methods for controlling your stutter have failed. Although the techniques described in this book are easy to learn and successful for many people, they may not be as effective for you. If you have put your best effort into these techniques, and have found no relief from your stuttering, a visit to a speech therapist may be in your best interest.

Another situation which makes consulting a speech therapist a wise decision is if your stuttering is related to any medical or psychological cause. In these instances, controlling your stutter on your own may be impossible. If a preexisting medical or psychological condition is found to be at the root of your stutter, a speech therapist can direct you to the professional help that is appropriate for you.

While consulting a speech therapist is not necessary for most instances of childhood or adolescent stuttering, there are situations in which it is the best course of action. The child whose stutter is so severe that no techniques provide any relief is one of these situations. The child whose stutter places an undue burden on his everyday life is another. In most cases, children respond to natural techniques as well as adults. However, if they do not work for your child, taking him to a speech therapist can be in his best interest.

The child who refuses to cooperate in learning to control his stutter is another situation which requires a speech therapist. This does not mean hurrying to make an appointment as soon as your child refuses to comply.

You must expect some degree of boredom or disinterest when teaching him these new ideas. The child who flatly refuses to cooperate at all, displays anger or resentment at your attempts to help, or firmly believes that nothing will work, can benefit from seeing a speech therapist. The youngster who exhibits psychological problems associated with his stutter can also benefit from seeing a professional. In these instances, his pediatrician or your family physician can recommend a therapist who can help him.

If you or your child will be seeing a speech therapist, these visits should not be any more disruptive to everyday life than necessary. The child who sees a therapist may resent putting his time into it, and may feel that this course of action is a negative reflection on himself. The best method for dealing with effectively with these issues is to present the visits in a positive light. If he views his speech therapist as a friend, and as a nice person who truly wants to help him, he can look forward to the visits and benefit from them even more.

Speech therapists can be costly. If this is an issue to you, you need to have all of the facts before you make a commitment. You can check to see if your insurance will cover a speech therapist, or ask if he or she will accept a reasonable payment plan. Cost should not be the deciding factor in whether to seek help from a professional.

Your pediatrician or family doctor is the best resource for locating a speech therapist. He is aware of your particular situation, and can recommend the therapist who is right for you. Do not hesitate in asking for his advice.

In most cases, stuttering can be controlled solely by learning these simple techniques and applying them to your everyday speech. However, if you or your child are in one of these special situation, a professional speech therapist can be greatly beneficial. The sooner you ask for help, the sooner you can get the stutter under control.

## **Progress, Not Perfection**

Whenever you are learning something new, success does not come instantaneously. Expecting overnight results, or expecting perfection, is a recipe for disaster. This is one of the most important points to bear in mind when you are learning to control your stutter.

Expecting too much, too soon, or expecting that you will never stutter again, places too much pressure on yourself. With this method, you may become extremely discouraged and frustrated when you do not achieve the results you want as quickly as you had hoped. This kind of discouragement can lead you to quit before you gain positive results. It can also cause you to view an error or a minor setback as a complete failure. You need to avoid this kind of pressure if you truly wish to succeed!

When you think of learning to control your stutter in terms of learning a new skill, both the results and your state of mind will be much better. As learning anything new takes time, practice, and even trial-and-error, this is also the case with learning to control your stutter. Some techniques will work better for you than others; some techniques will not be useful for you; and others will give impressive results. If you are willing to make the commitment, you can achieve success.

Patience is the necessary key in learning to control your stutter. You must be willing to put your time into learning a technique, and applying it to your everyday conversations. When you make a mistake, you must be able to let it go without allowing it to bother you. This is how to move forward and make progress.

Progress is not a guarantee of perfection. Even after you have mastered a technique and put it into practice, you may still experience an error. You may have felt that you were completely free of your stutter, only to have it occur at the most inconvenient time. Rather than becoming flustered, or worrying that you have not accomplished anything, lightheartedly brushing it off is a much better approach. You may not be perfect, but you are successful!

The concept of “progress- not perfection” is even more valid for the child who stutters. As children are more naturally inclined to view a minor

setback or error as a complete disaster, teaching him to see his accomplishments for how impressive they are is the most beneficial approach.

You can begin by instilling this principle before you start to teach him the techniques to control his stutter. Nothing truly worthwhile was ever accomplished overnight; and even in the best circumstances, mistakes do occur. When he is armed with these concepts before he starts learning the techniques, he is prepared for success and will appreciate it every step of the way.

Stuttering does not need to play a large role in your life. It does not need to interfere with your communications with other people, nor affect the way you think about yourself. All it takes is time, effort, and commitment to learn these simple techniques. When you see which techniques work the best for you, practicing them will give you a new, optimistic view of your ability to speak clearly in social situations. Applying them consistently whenever you interact verbally with other people will give you more confidence than you have ever had before.

Learning how to control your stutter is your very first step to a happier, more fulfilling life. The more you practice, the more progress you will make-- and this is the best definition of true success!