

# Fluency Treatment for Big Kids

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# What's your comfort level?

## Choice A:

I LOVE working with big kids who stutter!



## Choice B:

I'm a bit apprehensive about working with a big kid who stutters.



## Choice C:

I don't want to see a big kid who stutters  
walk through my door!!



# What can I do for you???

## Goals for today:

Group A: A few new ideas and/or resources

B & C: Increase level of comfort by giving  
you some tools



# Definition of “Big Kids”

Children between the ages of 9-18.

OR, anyone who is in the pre-adolescent or adolescent stage of maturation.

# Assessment for Those Big Kids

## Components:

- 1) Thorough case history/interview with parents/teacher/child
- 2) Evaluate speech & language abilities
- 3) Good description of features of child's stuttering
- 4) Evaluation of awareness and attitudes of about stuttering
- 5) Find out child's interests/goals

# 1) Interview

- Interview child, parent, teacher(s)
- Good templates for questionnaire forms in Guitar (1998) “Stuttering: An integrated approach to its nature and treatment”



# Teacher Questionnaire

sample questions

from Chmela & Reardon (2001)

Some things I have noticed about this child's communication are...

When this child answers questions in class he/she...

When this child speaks to me at my desk...

When this child reads aloud...

My knowledge about stuttering is...

Most importantly, right now I need to know...

# Parent Questionnaire

(from Chmela & Reardon, 2001)

My greatest concerns regarding my child's speech problem are...

I feel my child is/is not concerned about his/her speech problem because...

When my child stutters, I feel...

When my child stutters, I say/do...

My knowledge about stuttering is...

From previous therapy, if any, I learned...

## 2) Evaluate Speech & Language Abilities

- Children who stutter are more likely to have co-occurring speech and/or language problems
- Be sure to check for this through case history & screen for these areas
- Evaluate in-depth as needed

# 3) Description of Stuttering

- Types of disfluencies
- Presence of struggle behaviors  
e.g. effort while speaking, tension
- Presence of avoidance behaviors  
e.g. word substitutions, avoiding speaking situations

## 4) Evaluation of Awareness/Attitudes

- Do not assume that a child is not bothered by his/her speech based on their verbal report.
- Older children and teens are prone to give non-specific answers.
- Give attitude scales/have them evaluate scenarios/etc.

## 5) Determine Child's Goals

- Ask your big kid what bothers them the most about their speech.
- Ask them what they are interested in or willing to work on.
- Just as importantly, ask what they are not willing or interested in working on.
- Compare child's answers to parental wishes/expectations

# Treating Stuttering

- Fluency-Shaping = train child to alter mode of speaking to produce speech that is 100% fluent.
- Stuttering Modification = focus on shaping stuttering to more easy, less disruptive form; focus on feelings/attitudes
- Best Bet = Combination of both, tailored to fit child.

***Canned programs fit about as well as those  
one-size-fits all garments!!***

# Goals of Fluency Therapy for Children (Manning, 2001)

- A. Gain understanding of speech mechanism
- B. Enhance speech fluency
- C. Manage stuttering that occurs
- D. Deal with emotions and attitudes
- E. Address relapse



# A. Understand the Speech Mechanism

- How it works for normal speaking.
  - What happens to me when I get stuck on words.
  - Learn about stuttering: what it is, who stutters, reasons why, etc.
- \*\*Don't assume that an older child already knows all of this!!**

## B. Help child choose tools that enhance speech fluency

Goal = speech that is smooth, produced without effort

Typical tools:

- gradual and relaxed use of vocal folds (easy onset)
- slower rate of speaking (stretching)
- gradual, smooth transitions sound-to-sound
- light articulatory contacts (light touch)
- keeping an open vocal tract

# Choosing Fluency Tools (continued)

When selecting tools be sure that:

- The tool(s) are comfortable for the child.
- The tool(s) is/are used in such a way that speech sounds as natural as possible.

This will help *tremendously* with generalization.

## C. Help child manage their stuttering

Goal: Learn to change the form of stuttering that occurs, modify

- Learn terms and explain concepts.
- May want to have child try new ways of stuttering.
- Voluntary stuttering as a tool.

## D. Help child deal with emotions and attitudes related to stuttering

This area frequently needs to be addressed.

Some ways to do this:

Desensitization Activities

Focus on the Message

Problem-solving

# Desensitization Activities

- Voluntary stuttering-have a contest
- Water balloons, water pistols (Bill Murphy)
- Art work
- Journaling
- Writing stories
- Interviewing about stuttering

**BE CREATIVE!**



# Message Therapy

(Cooperman & Bloom, 2001)

What makes a good message?

- good content
- clear presentation
- good eye contact
- saying what you want to say

Get away from over-focus on fluency.

This therapy was designed for younger children, but I find the ideas very useful, even with adults.

# Engage child in problem-solving

Child can learn to solve their own problems related to speech, e.g., teasing, oral presentations, etc.

- classroom presentation about stuttering, paper

- writing letters to teachers

- figuring out ways to tell people

  - not to interrupt

  - not to complete sentences



## E. Address the issue of relapse

- For older children, relapse is a likely possibility.
- help child and parents develop plan for how they will handle, if occurs. Learn to:
  - see themselves as good managers of their own speech
  - reduce likelihood of depression when relapse occurs
- **MAKE A PLAN WITH CHILD**—“here’s what I’m going to do if I start to get stuck again...”

# Indicators of Progress in Therapy

(Manning, 2001)

- Increase in ability to self-monitor
- Increase in ability to produce ‘open speech’
- Decrease in frequency/duration of fluency breaks
- Increase in normal speech formulation breaks
- Increase in naturalness of speech
- Metalinguistic changes
- Increase in open decision-making/decreased avoidance
- Increased sense of self-worth/self-esteem

# Working with Classroom Teachers

- Teachers can be good allies in working with children who stutter.
- Help educate them about stuttering & engage them
- Regular in-servicing for teachers with students who stutter is vital—they need information and feedback.
- Student can become more involved in dealing with teachers as he/she progresses through grades.

# Working with Parents and Siblings

- Parent/sibling education about stuttering
- Engage parents in treatment when possible
- Creating a ‘Stutter-Friendly’ Home
  - Stuttering is O.K.
  - No teasing at home
- Involve in support group
  - FRIENDS & NSA sponsor annual conventions and local family-based events

# Resources

- Internet resources
- IEP Goals
- Therapy Ideas and Materials
- Reference list

[See your handout]

# Good Videos for Big Kids & Their SLPs

- Stuttering Foundation of America series include:
  - Straight Talk for Teens
  - Straight Talk for Teachers (watch this one)
  - Stuttering: For Kids by Kids

# Question & Answer Time

(The answers won't all come from me!)

Now get out there and have fun!

