****

Specialist Speech and Language Therapy Service

Willy Russell Centre for Children and Adults who Stammer

**How to support the child or young person who stammers**

Advice for parents and carers

**Introduction:**

**You will already be doing a lot to help your child to communicate.** The following advice will help you to focus on continuing to do the things that are most helpful.

**Adapting the environment to make it easier to communicate:**

**Listen to *what* your child says, not *how* they say it.** Listen patiently and calmly when they are speaking, without interrupting them or finishing their sentences. Keep natural eye contact, especially during moments of stammering.

**Give your child plenty of time to speak.** Don’t rush them, interrupt them, or finish their words.

**Slow your own speech down and use more pauses**. This is the best way to help your child to feel unhurried. Do *not* make suggestions such as ‘slow down’, ‘take a breath’, or ‘think about what you’re saying’. These will not help and may make it more difficult for your child to communicate.

**Encourage everyone in the family to take turns when talking.** Knowing that they will be listened to, without being interrupted, can help a child/young person who stammers to feel more confident about speaking. It is also important for the child/young person who stammers to understand and follow the same turn-taking rules as others in the family.

**Avoid asking too many questions.** Questions, especially those requiring complicated answers, can be more difficult for someone who stammers. Try using comments instead (e.g., ‘I hope you had a nice time at school’, rather than ‘What did you do at school?’).If you need to ask a question, it may help to simplify it. For example, change an open question (e.g., ‘What shall we do today?’) to a simpler one, (e.g.,‘Shall we go to the park?’) Give your child plenty of time to answer a question before asking another one.

**Try to find a quiet time, several times a week, when you can give your child your undivided attention for five minutes.** During this one-to-one time, allow them to decide what they want to play with or what they want to talk about. As well as being helpful for your child, it will give you the opportunity to put into practice some of the above advice.

**Reducing the impact of stammering:**

**Build your child’s confidence in their communication skills by praising them for communicating well (regardless of stammering)**. Describe what you noticed and what was good about it, e.g. ‘You explained that very well; I really enjoyed hearing all about it’.

**If your child seems unaware of their stammering, there is no need to highlight it**. If they *are* aware, they may comment on their speech, stop talking part-way through a sentence, or possibly seem frustrated. If you notice this, you could occasionally acknowledge it and reassure them. Respond in the same way as you would with anything else that they find difficult, i.e., be calm, matter-of-fact, and reassuring. For example, you could say, ‘That was a tricky word. It’s okay, I’m still listening’.

**Discuss stammering it in a relaxed way**, using neutral language about it, e.g., refer to it as a different way of talking, rather than a ‘problem’; talk about stammering more/less or finding talking easy/difficult, rather than their speech being good/bad or better/worse.

**If your child is school-aged, it may be helpful to check whether they find any activities in school particularly difficult**. If they do, try to find a solution together. Reasonable adjustments can be requested for older students taking oral exams; these could include being given extra time or incorporating a written element into the assessment.



**Health and wellbeing:**

**You may have noticed that your child’s stammering is variable.** Be aware that factors such as tiredness, illness, and changes in routine may make it more difficult for them to communicate. If your child is finding it much harder than usual to communicate, it may help to consider their sleep pattern or the pace of life in general.

****

****

This leaflet only gives general information. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about a child’s therapy. If you would like to discuss anything, please contact the Specialist Speech and Language Therapy service at the Willy Russell Centre. If you live in Sefton, please contact your local Speech and Language Therapy service.

Willy Russell Centre for Children and Adults who Stammer

Abercromby Health Centre

Grove St

Liverpool L7 7HG

0151 295 3858

WillyRussellStammeringcentre@alderhey.nhs.uk

Speech and Language Therapy Dept

Magdalen Square

Netherton

Bootle

Merseyside L30 5SP

0151 247 6109

Childrensslt@alderhey.nhs.uk

Further information can also be found at:

<https://stamma.org/get-help/parents>

For parents of pre-school children who have recently started to stammer, the Penguin app is very helpful:

<https://www.benetalk.com/penguin>

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested:

****

Tel: 0151 228 4811

[www.alderhey.nhs.uk](http://www.alderhey.nhs.uk)

**© Alder Hey Review Date: march2028 PIAG: 593**